Wahlenbergia cartilaginea

COMMON NAMES
scree harebell

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS
Violet/Purple, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
A perennial deep-rooting rhizomatous scree plant with distant rosettes of very thick, glaucous, (sometimes yellowish) sessile leaves, glabrous or pubescent. Leaves 8 × 5-25 × 15 mm, spathulate, obtuse, narrowed to a thick flat petiole; margins entire, thickened, cartilaginous. Scapes 20-30 mm long, stout, glaucous, with 1-3 small bracts, usually simple and stiff. Flower Insect-pollinated, c.12 mm long, 8-12 mm diameter, lilac or white, scented. Corolla broadly funnel-shaped, 5-partite, tube c.5 × 6 mm, lobes c. 7 × 5 mm, enclosed within the large calyx lobes which are thick and coriaceous, glabrous, linear-oblong, obtuse, 6 × 2 to 10 × 3 mm. Capsule glabrous, often glaucous, globose to broadly turbinate, c.8 × 8 to 10 × 10 mm. Seeds larger than in other species, 1 mm long, ellipsoid, glossy brown when mature.

Island Saddle. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 28/01/2018, Licence: CC BY-NC-SA.

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SIMILAR TAXA
Easily separated from other *Wahlenbergia* Roth by its restriction to mobile scree habitats; its thick greyish or yellowish leaves borne in widely spaced, separate rosettes; short thick flower stems, calyx lobes about as long as the corolla, and by its fragrant insect-pollinated flowers.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Inland Kaikoura and Amuri Ranges from Mt Tapuaenuku to Mt Terako and Mt Percival, and drainage areas of upper Wairau, Waiau, Clarence, and Awatere Rivers).

HABITAT
Mostly subalpine to alpine (rarely within montane areas on shingle beds and slips along riversides). Endemic to deep fine greywacke screes and semi-consolidated debris slopes.

THREATS
A naturally uncommon, narrow range endemic that is sparsely distributed over a wide area of scree in eastern Marlborough. Although not considered threatened, some populations suffer from browsing by sheep, goats, rabbits, hares, and other livestock.

GENUS
Wahlenbergia

FAMILY
Campanulaceae

AUTHORITY
Wahlenbergia cartilaginea Hook.f.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
December - January

FRUITING
January - March

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Can be grown in a rockery or an alpine house but generally regarded as difficult. Best from fresh seed.

ETYMOLOGY
wahlenbergia: Named in honour of Wahlenberg, a Swedish botanist and author of A Botany of Lapland.
cartilaginea: Like cartilage

NVS CODE
WAHCAR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 36

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon
2004 | Range Restricted
Jump to current conservation status

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Petterson, J.A. 1997: Revision of the genus *Wahlenbergia* (Campanulaceae) in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 35*: 9-54.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact Sheet Prepared by P.J. de Lange 12 June 2007. Description adapted from Petterson (1997).

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/wahlenbergia-cartilaginea/

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25 August 2026