

Chiloglottis trapeziformis

COMMON NAMES

dainty bird orchid, ant orchid

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Orchids

FLOWER COLOURS

Brown, Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial orchid forming dense clonal masses within deep, partially rotted leaf litter, in shaded pine plantation forests. Flowering plants 70–140 mm tall. **Leaves** sessile to shortly petiolate, 22–55 × 7–20 mm, dark green to red-green, narrow-oblong to elliptic. **Flower** solitary on a long peduncle held well above foliage; brownish-green or reddish. **Dorsal sepal** 10–13 mm long, erect, incurved, spatulate, with prominent apical point. **Lateral sepals** 9–12 mm, spreading, often recurved, divergent, linear-lanceolate. **Petals** deflexed against ovary, 11 mm long, broadly linear, somewhat asymmetric. **Labellum** on long claw, 10 mm long, erect, broadly rhombic, angular, apex obtuse; calli dark black, glossy, aggregated at base of expanded part of labellum and on common stout stalk, bearing two elongate compound calli usually at distal and apical ends of main calli cluster, the distal calli projected out from main cluster; tiny calli irregularly scattered on claw. **Column** with upper ½ broadly winged, the rounded wing apices positioned higher than the anther. **Capsule** rarely produced in New Zealand, few seen narrowly ellipsoid 5–10 mm long, terminal on greatly elongated peduncle.

SIMILAR TAXA

Chiloglottis formicifera is similar but can be distinguished by the undulating leaf margins, shorter and larger flowers, and labellum which is more heavily ornamented with calli, with the central cluster having a remarkable resemblance to an ant. *Chiloglottis cornuta* could be confused though its flowers are borne on much shorter peduncles (often immersed within the foliage), and it has a greenish flower with deltoid rather than rhomboid labellum, and well spaced, rather closely packed and clustered stalked rather than sessile calli.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North Island (formerly known from pine forest near Hokio Beach, Levin, on the Horowhenua Coast. That population was destroyed following logging. However, plants were rescued and planted nearby by people skilled in orchid management). Also Australia.

HABITAT

Known naturally in New Zealand from a coastal pine plantation near Hokio, Levin where it was discovered in 2001. Here it grew in several patches in dense drifts of semi-rotted pine needles. This population was destroyed in 2003 by logging. It is now regarded as extinct there. Plants were moved to other parts of the country—their exact fate is unknown.

THREATS

By 2003 there were no natural populations of this species left in New Zealand. The only known population was destroyed because the site it had appeared in was a privately owned pine forest due to be logged. This species is abundant in Australia. It has been planted by New Zealand Native Orchid Group members in several North Island locations. The fate of these plantings is as yet unknown. This species does not readily set seed in New Zealand because its insect-pollination vector is apparently absent.



GENUS

Chiloglottis

FAMILY

Orchidaceae

AUTHORITY

Chiloglottis trapeziformis Fitzg.

SYNONYMS

Myrmechila trapeziformis (Fitzg.) D.L.Jones et M.A.Clem

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Chiloglottis trapeziformis (as *Myrmechila trapeziformis*) was formally admitted to the New Zealand flora by de Lange et al. (2007) based on a population discovered near Hokio, Levin. Recently (Miller & Clements 2014) have treated the segregate genera *Myrmechila* and *Simpliglottis* proposed by Szlachekto (2001) and Jones & Clements (2005) as synonyms of *Chiloglottis*.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

July–December

FRUITING

November–February (rarely produced in New Zealand)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a moist, well drained, gritty soil freely mulched with semi-rotted pine needles and bark. Prefers semi-shade. An attractive species whose flowers with their remarkable ant-like calli are most unusual within the New Zealand orchid Flora.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to native orchids of New Zealand](#)

NVS CODE

CHITRA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.40

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO

2009 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: EW, SO

2004 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange P, Rolfe J, St George I, Sawyer J. 2007. Wild orchids of the lower North Island. Department of Conservation, Wellington. 194 p.

Jones DL, Clements MA. 2005. Miscellaneous Nomenclatural Notes and Changes in Australian, New Guinea and New Zealand Orchidaceae. *The Orchadian* 15: 33–42.

https://ia802309.us.archive.org/14/items/orchadian15austb/orchadian15austb_bw.pdf.

Miller JT, Clements MA. 2014. Molecular phylogenetic analyses of Drakaeinae: Diurideae (Orchidaceae) based on DNA sequences of the internal transcribed spacer region. *Australian Systematic Botany* 27(1): 3–22.

<https://doi.org/10.1071/SB13036>.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 2007: Description from de Lange et al. (2007).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/chiloglottis-trapeziformis/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/chiloglottis-trapeziformis/>

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