

Veronica plebeia



Image by Richard Schahinger

FAMILY: SCROPHULARIACEAE

BOTANICAL NAME: *Veronica plebeia* (R.Br., *Prodr. Fl. Nov. Holland.*: 435 (1810))

COMMON NAME: Trailing speedwell

COMMONWEALTH STATUS (EPBC Act):
Not Listed

TASMANIAN STATUS (TSP Act): rare

Description

Veronica plebeia is a stoloniferous perennial herb to about a metre long. Its leaves are roughly triangular in outline, 8 to 20 mm long by 5 to 16 mm wide, the margins with 3 to 8 pairs of irregular teeth. The leaves are on stalks 3 to 20 mm long and are arranged opposite one another along the stem. The inflorescence consists of 3- to 10-flowered lateral racemes, mostly 2 to 5 cm long; individual flowers are about 5 mm long, the calyx lobes are 3.4 to 7 mm long and shortly ciliate; the corolla is 2 to 3.5 mm long, with a short tube and four spreading lobes, and is pale lavender in colour. Flowering occurs from spring to early summer. The fruit is a rounded capsule 2.5 to 4.5 mm long. (Description from Walsh & Entwisle 1999) **Confusing species:** *Veronica calycina* has leaves with lobes that are rounded rather than acute, and the hairs on its stems are comparatively long: 1 to 2 mm cf. less than 0.4 mm for *Veronica plebeia*.

Distribution and Habitat

On mainland Australia *Veronica plebeia* occurs in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland (Walsh & Entwisle 1999). In Tasmania the species' stronghold is the Tamar Valley in the State's central north; there are also scattered records from the east coast, though these lack supporting collections and their identity remains in question. Habitat is typically dry to damp sclerophyll forest dominated by *Eucalyptus amygdalina* on dolerite (or Tertiary sediments), but also includes *Eucalyptus ovata* grassy woodland/forest and *Melaleuca ericifolia* swamp forest.

[Curtis (1967) described the distribution of *Veronica plebeia* in Tasmania as '... recorded only from limestone rocks at the River Gordon, Macquarie Harbour': the collection in question was redetermined in 1973 to be *Veronica novae-hollandiae*.]

Key Sites and Populations

Long Reach, Rowella, Trevallyn.

Known Reserves

Kate Reed Nature Recreation Area, Trevallyn Nature Recreation Area (and possibly Buxton River Conservation Area, St Marys Pass State Reserve and St Patricks Head State Reserve). The species has also been recorded from private properties in the Tamar area that are covered by conservation covenants under the Tasmanian *Nature Conservation Act 2002*.

Ecology and Management

Veronica plebeia has been recorded in Tasmania from a range of disturbed situations, including power easements, track margins and areas subject to recent weed control and/or burns, indicating its colonising ability. The species typically occurs in low numbers at a given location, with its scrambling stoloniferous character making quantitative estimates difficult. Insects are the most likely pollination vector for this species (A. Hingston pers. comm.). The main threat to *Veronica plebeia* in Tasmania is clearance of its habitat: instances in the past decade include subdivision for housing, agriculture (vineyards) and a proposed pulp mill.

Conservation Status Assessment

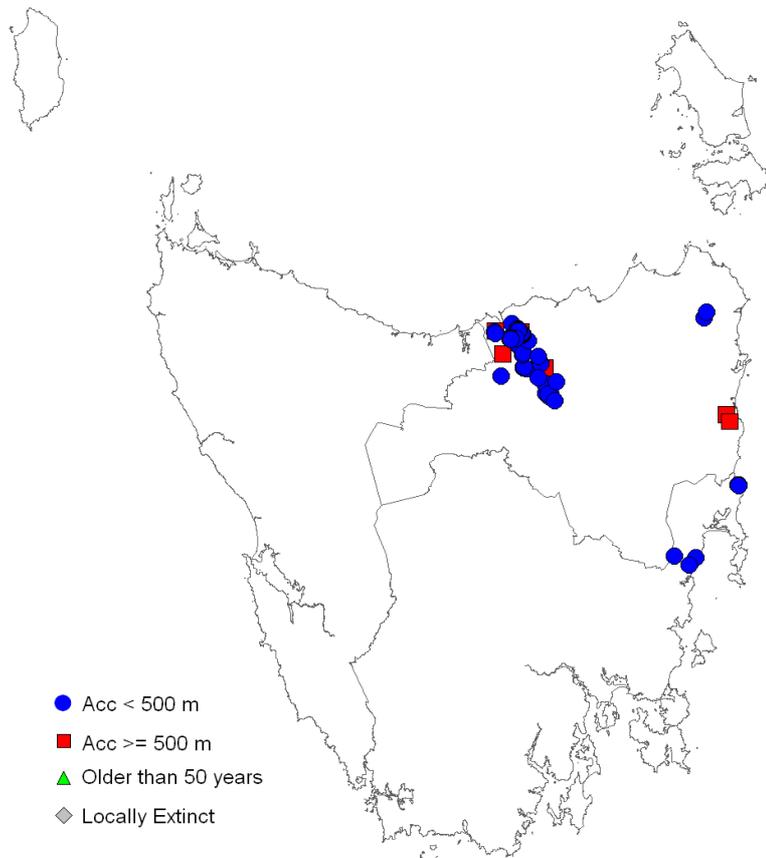
Good *Veronica plebeia* was first collected in Tasmania in 1978 (by the late Dennis Morris), surprisingly late in botanical terms given that its main concentration, the Tamar Valley, has been subject to European settlement since the early 1800s, an anomaly explained perhaps by its close similarity to *Veronica calycina*. At the time of its listing as rare on the TSP Act in 1995 *Veronica plebeia* was known from just four locations, two on each side of the Tamar. Additional populations have been discovered in the interim and the species' reservation status has improved; however, plant numbers (where estimated) tend to be low (in the 10s), and the total population is thought to consist of fewer than 1000 plants. A re-assessment of its conservation status may be warranted, though, as noted earlier, there are identification issues for sites in the State's east, issues that require resolution before a meaningful reassessment can be undertaken.

Further Information

- Curtis, W.M. (1967). *The Student's Flora of Tasmania, Part 3*. Government Printer, Hobart.
- Walsh, N.G. & Entwisle, T.J. (1999). *Flora of Victoria. Volume 4. Dicotyledons: Cornaceae to Asteraceae*. Inkata Press, Melbourne.

Tasmanian Distribution

(As per Threatened Species and Marine Section records, May 2014)



1:25 000 Map Sheets

Beaconsfield, Bell Bay, Bicheno, Dilston, Exeter, Falmouth, Ironhouse, Lanka, Launceston, Lilydale, Mayfield, Prospect, Tooms.

Date last modified: 26/05/2014

View

<http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/threatenedspecieslists>

Contact details

Threatened Species and Marine Section, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, GPO Box 44, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, 7001. Phone (03) 6165 4340; fax (03) 6233 3477.

Permit

It is an offence to collect, disturb, damage or destroy this species unless under permit.