

Centipeda cunninghamii



Images by Richard Schahinger

FAMILY: ASTERACEAE

BOTANICAL NAME: *Centipeda cunninghamii* (DC.) A. Braun & Asch., *Index Seminum Hort. Bot. Berol. App.* 6 (1867)

COMMON NAME: Erect sneezeweed

COMMONWEALTH STATUS (EPBC Act):
Not Listed

TASMANIAN STATUS (TSP Act): rare

Description

Centipeda cunninghamii is an erect or ascending aromatic perennial herb with multiple stems to c. 30 cm high. The stems are glabrous or somewhat cottony near the growing tips. Leaves are arranged alternately along the stems; they are oblong or narrowly obovate, 7 to 30 mm long and 2.5 to 7 mm wide, with serrate margins; the leaf surfaces are glabrous and dotted with resin globules. The inflorescence is a stalkless (sessile) compound flower-head, hemispherical or subglobular at anthesis, 4 to 8 mm in diameter; surrounding (involucral) bracts occur in 3 to 5 rows and are obovate, 1.5 to 3 mm long. The flower heads consist of c. 200 to 350 outer (female) florets in 7 to 12 rows, with 20 to 70 inner (bisexual) florets. Flowering occurs between spring and autumn. The fruit (cypsela) is oblong, 1.2 to 2 mm long, truncate or rounded at the apex, with 4 prominent ribs that are united into a spongy apical portion at or above three-quarters of the cypsela length (Walsh 2001). **Confusing species:** *Centipeda elatinoides* is the only other species of *Centipeda* in Tasmania (de Salas & Baker 2015); it has a prostrate rather than erect habit, flower heads that are shortly pedunculate rather than sessile, fewer florets (< 100) per flower head, and ribs on the fruit that extend virtually to the apex (Walsh 2001).

Distribution and Habitat

Centipeda cunninghamii occurs in all Australian States (Walsh 2001). In Tasmania the species has been recorded from the Sea Elephant River on King Island, the lower reaches of the South Esk River near Launceston, and Panatana Rivulet near Port Sorell (with an unconfirmed non-riparian site near Railton). It occurs on a range of substrates at the margins of creeks and rivers in areas subject to flooding; on King Island the species has been observed growing in gaps — natural and man-made — in *Melaleuca ericifolia* swamp forest.

Key Sites and Populations

Sea Elephant River, South Esk River, Panatana Rivulet.

Known Reserves

Counsel Hill Conservation Area, Trevallyn Nature Recreation Area, Public Reserve (Hadspen).

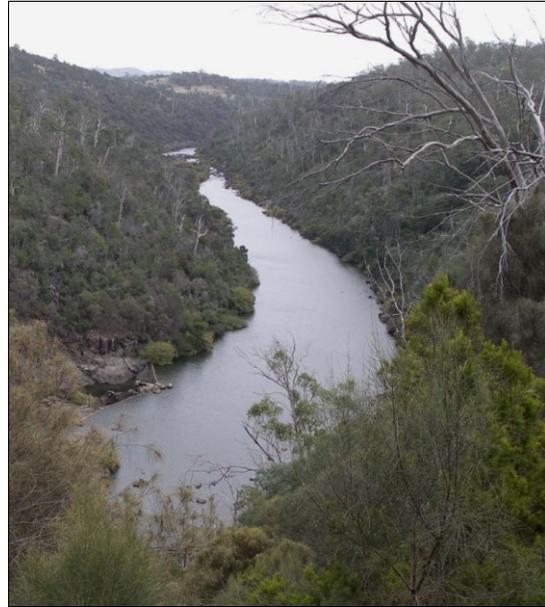


Plate 1. *Centipeda cunninghamii*: habit and habitat along the South Esk River

Ecology and Management

The fruit of *Centipeda cunninghamii* persists on the plant for a period after maturity, though generally fall in the same growing season (Walsh 2001). The fruit are somewhat buoyant, assisting in their dispersal by water, and the presence of hairs and viscid globules on the fruit may aid in their long-distance dispersal by birds (Walsh 2001).

The species is susceptible to habitat loss and modification through wetland/lagoon drainage, dam construction (Plate 1), conversion to agricultural uses and stock access.

Conservation Status Assessment

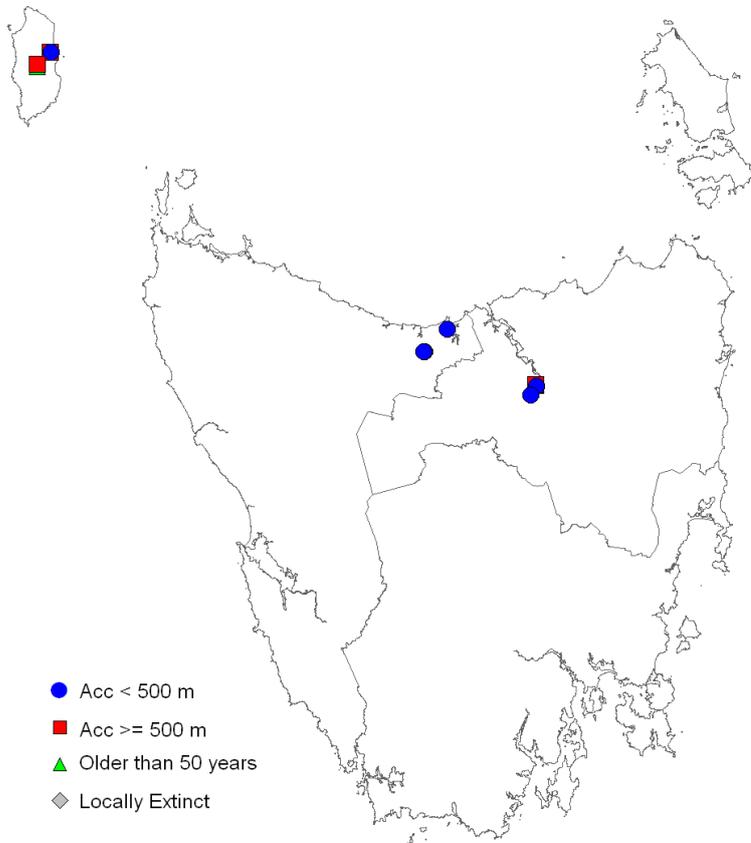
At the time of its listing as rare on the TSP Act in 1995 *Centipeda cunninghamii* was known in Tasmania from the Sea Elephant River on King Island (1967 and 1979) and the lower reaches of the South Esk River near Launceston (1937 and 1991), with no estimates of either plant numbers or the area occupied. The species has been relocated at both sites in the interim: Sea Elephant River in 2007 (200 to 250 plants) and South Esk River in 2010 (4 plants at Deadmans Hollow (Plate 1) and about 20 plants ten km upstream at Hadspen), while an additional site was discovered in 2010 along Panatana Rivulet near Port Sorell (2 plants). It is considered likely that additional small patches will be uncovered given a targeted survey effort, especially along the Sea Elephant River.

Further Information

- de Salas, M.F. and Baker, M.L. (2015). *A Census of the Vascular Plants of Tasmania, including Macquarie Island*. (Tasmanian Herbarium, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Hobart) www.tmag.tas.gov.au.
- Walsh, N.G. (2001). A revision of *Centipeda* (Asteraceae). *Muelleria* 15: 33–64.

Tasmanian Distribution

(As per Threatened Species Section records, May 2016)



1:25 000 Map Sheets

Launceston, Port Sorell, Prospect, Railton (?), Sea Elephant.

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View

www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/threatenedspecieslists

Contact details

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Permit

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