

Carex berggrenii Petrie - A NEW NORTHERN LIMIT

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During a foray into the wetlands of the southern Kaingaroa Plateau with Peter de Lange and Paul Cashmore, in mid-March 2006, we made a brief stop to look for and this time found *Hypericum* aff. *japonicum*, a highly threatened species, in a small wetland at the corner of Matea Road and State Highway 5 (Grid ref. NZMS 260 V18 097 492). During this visit Peter pointed out a plant and called it *Carex rubicunda*. Not being well versed in the niceties of this plant Paul and I accepted Peter's identification.

Overnight I perused Johnson & Brooke's "Wetland Plants in New Zealand" and began to scratch my head. The following day I questioned Peter (as the bold and ignorant tend to do) and didn't really come away any happier. Further research and a visit to Chris Ecroyd in the National Forestry Herbarium (Rotorua) indicated that there were obvious differences between the Matea Road plant and the herbarium voucher of *C. rubicunda*.

An email was sent to Peter (who had by this time returned to Auckland) apologising "for being a pain but I am still not happy with your *C. rubicunda* at Matea Road. I had a look at Chris's *C. rubicunda* herbarium specimen and it looks nothing like the Matea Road plant your *C. rubicunda* doesn't fit in too well with Moore & Edgar's (1970) description - leaf width 0.5 - 1 mm against *C. berggrenii* 1 - 2.5 mm, with tips strikingly obtuse which fit in well with Johnson & Brooke's drawings 224 & 225".

Peter's reply "I think you are correct - last weekend I went straight to Oratia to check my plants of *C. berggrenii* and they look the same. This, of course, is a hilarious find because *C. berggrenii* is only supposed to be known from the North Island at one site in the Moawhango."

The colour of *C. berggrenii* plants at Matea Road is orange-red whereas that of the South Island is bronze-green according to the photos on the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network website (www.nzpcn.org.nz) and this, Peter admits, influenced the initial identification.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

Moore L.B. and Edgar E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand. Volume II. Government Printer, Wellington. 250p.

Johnson P.N. and Brooke P.A. 1998: Wetland plants of New Zealand. Manaaki Whenua Press, Landcare Research, P.O. Box 40, Lincoln 8152, New Zealand.



Figure 1: *Carex berggrenii* in Matea Rd wetland.