

A NEW SPECIES OF *EUCHITON* (GNAPHALIEAE: ASTERACEAE) FROM SOUTHERN TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

by Alex M. Buchanan

(with one text-figure and one plate)

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Tasmanian Herbarium, GPO Box 252-04, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia 7001.

Euchiton litticola (Asteraceae) from western and southern Tasmanian coasts is described as new. Ecological notes and a distribution map are provided.

Key Words: *Euchiton*, coastal zone, angiosperm, Tasmania.

INTRODUCTION

Fieldwork on the southwestern coast of Tasmania has focussed attention on a previously overlooked, diminutive member of the genus *Euchiton*. Formerly this species would have been included in *Gnaphalium* sens. lat., but most Australian taxa are now placed in *Euchiton*, which is distinguished by the two papillae on each epidermal cell of the achenes and, usually, its stoloniferous habit (Drury 1972, Holub 1974, Anderberg 1991). This small plant inhabits the salt-spray zone and extends out onto the slopes of headlands above the surf.

TAXONOMY

Euchiton litticola A.M. Buchanan sp. nov.

Euchiton collino Cass. affinis sed habitu minore rosulatoque, scapo brevi, modo ad 60 mm longo, capitulo plerumque solitane, folus linearibus, 10–30 mm longis et 2–3 mm latis.

Type: Tasmania, southwest region, mouth of Oxley Creek, Spero Bay, 42°37'S, 145°19'E, A.M. Buchanan 2581, 16.i.1984.

Holotype: HO 98736!

Isotypes: MEL, NSW, PERTH.

Stoloniferous perennial, forming leafy rosettes to 50 mm wide (pl. 1); leaves narrow-linear (10–30 mm x 2–3 mm), grey-green and glabrous above, white-tomentose below except on the midvein; scape short, especially when flowering, but elongating in fruit to 10–20 mm, occasionally to 60 mm, tomentose, with 3–4 linear bracts 5–8 mm long; capitula solitary (occasionally several together), 6–9 mm in diameter; involucre bracts 15–20, linear-oblong, to 5 mm long, outer ones wider and tomentose on abaxial face; disk glabrous, pitted; bisexual florets 5–8, narrowly cylindrical; female florets c.40, filiform; corollas purple tinted, 3–4 mm long, almost equalling the pappus; achenes fusiform, flattened, with scattered clavate hairs, 1 mm long.

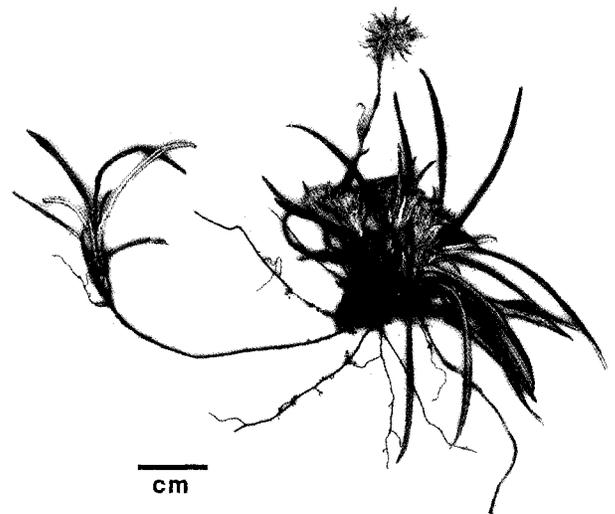


PLATE 1

Habit. Four short, flowering scapes are visible among the leaves. The one long, fruiting scape has already shed its achenes.



FIG. 1 — Geographical distribution. Each dot represents a herbarium specimen held at HO.

ETYMOLOGY

The epithet *litticola* is from the Latin: *littus*, the sea shore and *cola*, dweller.

DISTRIBUTION AND ECOLOGY

Euchiton litticola is endemic to western and southern Tasmania where it occurs along the coast between Rupert Point in the west and Dolomieu Point in the east (fig. 1). It is confined to the narrow littoral zone, to the seaward of the usually windswept coastal shrubbery, extending out onto rocks that are drenched with salt spray during storms. It is among the few angiosperms, e.g. *Plantago triantha*, that reach such limits. On cliffs it forms dense, mat-like colonies within rock crevices.

NOTES

Euchiton litticola is unlike any other species of *Euchiton* in Tasmania in having narrow-linear leaves. It has, however, been mistaken for *Helichrysum pumilum* var. *pumilum* which is common in sedgeland communities adjacent to the coast in southwestern Tasmania. In the field, it can be distinguished from the latter by its narrower, soft, curved leaves and its narrow, pale-brown, gnaphalioid involucre bracts; in contrast, the leaves of *Helichrysum pumilum* var. *pumilum* are rigid and mostly straight, and the involucre bracts are elliptical and conspicuously white or pink in colour. Two similar species of *Euchiton* with solitary heads and narrow leaves are *E. traversii* of southeastern Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand, and *E. ensifer* of New Zealand, but in neither do the leaves attain the long, narrow-linear shape as in *E. litticola*. Furthermore, these are plants of montane and subalpine habitats.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Euchiton litticola is common on coastal rocks in the South West National Park and does not fulfil the criteria for listing in the schedules of the *Threatened Species Protection Act*, 1995.

REPRESENTATIVE SPECIMENS EXAMINED (ALL AT HO)

Listed in sequence from west to east: Rupert Point, *W.D. Jackson 51*, Jan 1954; Remine, *L. Rodway s.n.*, Oct 1893; 1.5 km north of Gorge Point, *A. Moscal 16872*, 8 Jan 1989; Pennerowne Point, *A.M. Buchanan 2809*, 26 Jan 1984; Niblin Point, *A.M. Buchanan 2481*, 13 Jan 1984; Pegg Creek, Hartwell Cove, *A. Moscal 10039*, 17 Mar 1985; near mouth of Flat Creek, *A.M. Buchanan 5778*, 22 Feb 1985; Mainwaring Inlet, 1 km from mouth, *A. Moscal 9755*, 23 Feb 1985; Mulcahy Bay, *A.M. Buchanan 8015*, 19 Jan 1986; SE shores of Bathurst Harbour, *J.B. Kirkpatrick s.n.*, 12 Apr 1978; Wilson Bight, *A. Moscal 13984*, 14 Jan 1987; Hidden Bay, *A.M. Buchanan 522*, 26 Feb 1981, duplicate at CHR; Cox Bight, *A.M. Buchanan 3388*, 22 Apr 1984; Louisa Bay, *A. Moscal 9641*, 18 Feb 1985; Shoemaker Bay, *A.M. Buchanan 3518*, 27 Apr 1984; South Cape Bay, *J.B. Kirkpatrick s.n.*, Jan 1982; between Bivouac Bay and Dolomieu Point, *A.M. Buchanan 11890*, 30 Jan 1991.

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