

***Atalaya brevialata* Cowie & G.M.Wightman**

SAPINDACEAE

[Synonymy](#)

*Atalaya* sp. Elizabeth River Cowie & G.M.Wightman

**Common Name:** Atalaya

**Description:** Suffruticose subshrub, aerial parts annual, to 45 cm tall, stems slender, to 21 cm, rootstock perennial, woody, 8-15 mm diam. Branchlets thinly pubescent, hairs stramineous, 0.1-0.3 mm long. Leaves simple, sessile, alternate, linear, 65-410 mm long, 1.4-7.5 mm wide, concolorous, intersecondary venation reticulate and prominent, with a marginal vein or intramarginal vein c. 0.5 mm from margin, both surfaces with scattered short, patent or ascending hairs to almost glabrous, base attenuate or rounded, margin entire or indistinctly crenate; apex acute, rounded, rarely spatulate. Inflorescence paniculate or sometimes corymbose, axillary, supra-axillary or terminal, to 70 mm long, stems thinly pubescent, hairs patent, short, white. Pedicels 1.5-4.5 mm long, with short patent hairs. Flowers monoecious, creamy white. Sepals 5 or 6 unequal, ovate to elliptic, widely obovate or suborbicular, 1.5-2.5 mm long, 1.5-2 mm wide, adaxial surface glabrous, abaxial surface thinly pubescent, hairs appressed to patent, short, white, margins ciliolate, apex rounded, cream to pale brown. Petals 5 or 6, oblanceolate, ovate or lanceolate, 2.5-3.5 mm long, 1.1-1.2 mm wide, adaxial surface thinly pubescent, hairs scattered, c. 0.5 mm long, weak, ascending, white, abaxial surface thinly sericeous, hairs c. 0.5 mm long, white, base attenuate and shortly clawed, margins long-ciliate; apex rounded or truncate; scales entire or shortly bilobed, suborbicular to transversely oblong, apex villous. Disc annular, entire or slightly lobed, undulate or flat. Stamens 7-9, more or less equal, 3-3.5 mm long, often exerted in male flowers; filaments 2-2.5 mm long, hairs scattered in lower 2/3, c. 0.5 mm long, weak, ascending to patent; anthers c. 1 mm long. Ovary puberulent, 3-lobed. Fruit divaricately 3-lobed, separating into indehiscent, 1-seeded samaras. Samaras 3, oblong to ovate or broadly elliptic, 11-22 mm long, 7-12 mm wide, thinly pubescent, hairs 0.1-0.5 mm long, straight to slightly arcuate, ascending to patent, hyaline to stramineous, base turgid; wing, dorsal, erect, 0.5-6 mm long; apex rounded, entire, irregular or erose, brown when mature. Seed 1, obovoid, c. 8.5 mm long, c. 8 mm wide, surface uneven but otherwise more or less smooth, pale brown.

**Diagnostic Characters:** Distinguished from *A. variifolia*, *A. hemiglauc*a and *A. salicifolia* by the smaller, sericeous petals, reduced wing on the samara, the simple, linear leaves and the suffruticose growth habit.

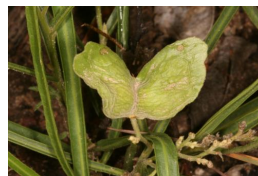
**Similar Taxa:** *A. variifolia*, *A. hemiglauc*a and *A. salicifolia*. Vegetatively, the plant is grass-like in appearance (but with pinnate venation) and may also be confused with juvenile *Grevillea pteridifolia*.



Whole plant (or habit)  
Image: I.D. Cowie



Inflorescence  
Image: I.D. Cowie



Fruit  
Image: I.D. Cowie

**Notes:** With clear threats, only 5 subpopulations, an area of occupancy of just 4.5 hectares and an extent of occurrence of 7.6 km<sup>2</sup>, the species is regarded as threatened. The current population estimate is 302,247 ± 15,088 mature plants.

## Distribution

**Introduced Status:** Native to NT

**NT Endemic:** Y

**Distribution Notes:** The species is known only from a small area in the Elizabeth River valley south of Darwin, in the Northern Territory.

**Bioregion:** Darwin Coastal

**Habitat:** It grows in woodland to open woodland with varying proportions of *Eucalyptus tectifica* and *Corymbia foelscheana* but also with scattered *Xanthostemon paradoxus*, *Terminalia grandiflora* and *Acacia hemignosta* in the overstorey with an open layer of perennial

## Ecological Attributes

**Flowering:** Aug - November

**Fruiting:** November

## Other Attributes

**Conservation Status (TPWCA):** Data Deficient

**Conservation Status (EPBC):** Critically Endangered

**Restricted Range Taxon:** Y

**Etymology:** The epithet *brevialata* means short-winged, from the Latin *brevis*, short, and *ala*, a wing, a reference to the short wing of the samara.

**Flora Description Source:** Unpublished notes prepared for FloraNT

**Taxonomic Literature:** Cowie, I.D. & Stuckey, B. (2012). *Atalaya brevia* (Sapindaceae), a new species from the Northern Territory, Australia. *Nuytsia* 22(6): 363–370.

