

## 4. Marine flora

There is a rich abundance and diversity of macroalgae at the Poor Knights Islands with 121 species of algae recorded from the islands. A thorough taxonomic survey of the macroalgae of the Poor Knights Islands has not been conducted, and therefore this is likely to be a conservative estimate of the number of macroalgal species present. Some of the lushest kelp beds in New Zealand can be found at Nursery Cove and Cleanerfish Bay and subtidal reefs are covered with the golden seawrack, Carpophyllum angustifolium, the strap kelp, Lessonia variegata, and the common kelp, Ecklonia radiata (Ayling & Schiel, 2003). The marine flora of the Poor Knights Islands is an unusual mixture of species common to northeastern New Zealand such as C. angustifolium and Gigartina alveata, subtropical species such as Pedobesia clavaeformis, Microdictyon umbilicatum, and Palmophyllum umbracola, and southern New Zealand species, such as Durvillea antarctica and Caulerpa brownii. Bull kelp (D. antarctica) is a common species in southern New Zealand, but is not found in the North Island between North Cape and East Cape with the exception of some exposed offshore islands including the Poor Knights Islands. It is possible that at high levels of wave exposure D. antarctica can withstand higher water temperatures (Creese & Ballantine, 1986).

Several rare species of macroalgae are found at the Poor Knights Islands. In 1994 the rare, endemic red alga, *Gelidium allanii*, was discovered with a sample of *Pterocladia capillacea* taken from the Poor Knights Islands in 1978. Prior to 1994 *G. allanii* had only been recorded from the type locality in the Bay of Islands. The alga is typically found growing in intertidal pools on calcium carbonate substrata (Nelson *et al.*, 1994). A new species of green alga, *Palmophyllum umbracola*, was found at the Poor Knights Islands in 1982 (Nelson & Ryan, 1986). This subtidal species is found at the Poor Knights Islands, the Kermadec Islands, and occasionally on the mainland in waters down to 30 m in shaded areas such as caves and overhangs (W. Nelson, NIWA, pers. comm.). An unusual green alga, *Pedobesia clavaeformis*, was discovered at Nursery Cove in 1980. This species has also been recorded from the Kermadec Islands, the Three Kings Islands, the Bay of Islands, and Cape Rodney–Okakari Point Marine Reserve (Hawkes, 1983). An undescribed species of *Rhodymenia* that has previously been reported from the Three Kings Islands has also been collected at the Poor Knights Islands (W. Nelson, NIWA, pers. comm. in Shears & Babcock, 2004).

## 4.1 Intertidal macroalgae

Sixty two species of intertidal macroalgae have been recorded from the Poor Knights Islands (Table 5). While there have been several studies conducted on the subtidal communities at the Poor Knights Islands no recent studies have been conducted on



intertidal communities at the islands. Published information on the intertidal macroalgal community at the Poor Knights Islands is limited to two early studies by Cranwell & Moore (1938) and Creese & Ballantine (1986). There is also some information on macroalgal species collected at the Poor Knights Islands in Battershill (1986) and Nelson & Adams (1987). Unpublished algal collections taken from the Poor Knights Islands are held at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, and the Auckland Museum Herbarium (W. Nelson, NIWA, pers. comm.).

The intertidal substratum at the Poor Knights Islands is primarily volcanic rhyolite rock, with very limited areas of sand or shell. The majority of the intertidal region consists of steep rock walls. Gently sloping rocky platforms, such as at Ramariki, Hope Point, and Bartle's Bay, account for only a very small percentage of the intertidal area (Fig. 7, Section 5.1). On rocky shorelines there is a general pattern of algal zonation down the shore. Blue-green and filamentous algae grow high up on the shore in areas of freshwater runoff or where there is sustained sea spray. In the upper littoral zone the drought resistant red alga, Porphyra columbina, is common. Porphyra columbina has a seasonal abundance, being most prolific in spring but is often absent from large areas in summer. Below the high tide mark the predominant alga is a small endemic encrusting red alga, Apophlaea sinclairii. This alga is extremely resistant to desiccation and wave exposure, forming a dense, deep-red crust on the rocks. Within this region, P. columbina occurs sparingly. In the lower limits of the A. sinclairii zone, around mid-tide level, two other species of red algae, Catenellopsis oligarthra<sup>19</sup> and Catenellopsis sp. are frequently present. On pitted rocks, especially those kept damp by brackish water from the land, Enteromorpha sp. and Ulva sp. can be found. Apophlaea sinclairii appears to have a high light requirement, and does not grow much lower than mid-tide level. The rocks on the lower shore are covered with thin, encrusting red algae (Hildenbrandia sp., Melobesia sp.), and various types of coralline algae. This base provides a suitable substratum for the attachment of small gelatinous algae such as Nemalion sp., Trematocarpus acicularis, and dwarfed forms of Gigartina alveata. In shaded areas, tufts of Ulva sp., Polysiphonia sp., Ceramium sp., and Callophyllis decumbens occur. In areas of moderate exposure the brown alga, Xiphophora chondrophylla, dominates the lower intertidal zone. Interspersed between X. chondrophylla are several other algal species including Pleurostichidium falkenbergii, Melanthalia abscissa, Pterocladia lucida, Rhodymenia leptophylla, and Champia sp. In regions were wave exposure is extreme Durvillea antarctica replaces X. chondrophylla as the dominant alga. In the lower limit of the intertidal zone Carpophyllum ausgustifolium forms a dense band that extends into the subtidal zone. Other algal species commonly found in this zone include Calophyllis decumbens, Champia sp., Rhodymenia leptophylla, Plocamium sp., Pterocladia lucida, P.

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<sup>19</sup> Previously Nemostoma oligarthra



capillacea, Rhodymenia sp., Griffithsia traversii<sup>20</sup>, and Osmundaria colensoi<sup>21</sup> (Cranwell & Moore, 1938).

Intertidal macroalgae recorded from the Poor Knights Islands. Table 5

Family	Species	Reference
CLASS BRYOPSIDO	DPHYCEAE	
Order Bryopsidales		
Derbesiaceae	Bryopsis plumosa	Battershill (1986)
	Derbesia novae-zelandiae	Battershill (1986)
CLASS ULVOPHYC	<del></del>	
Order Cladophorale	es	
Cladophoraceae	Cladophora crinalis	Battershill (1986)
	Cladophoropsis herpestica	Nelson & Adams (1987)
	Rhizoclonium riparium	Battershill (1986)
Order Codiales		
Codiaceae	Codium convolutum	Battershill (1986)
	Codium cranwelliae	Nelson & Adams (1987)
Order Ulvales		
Ulvaceae	Ulva lactuca	Nelson & Adams (1987)
CLASS PHAEOPHY	CEAE	
Order Dictyotales		
Dictyotaceae	Dictyota ocellata	Battershill (1986)
	Padina sp.	Battershill (1986)
Order Durvillaeales		
Durvillaeaceae	Durvillaea antarctica	Nelson & Adams (1987)
Order Fucales		
Sargassaceae	Carpophyllum plumosum	Nelson & Adams (1987)
	Cystophora retroflexa	Battershill (1986)
Hormosiraceae	Hormosira banksii	Battershill (1986)
Fucaceae	Xiphophora chondrophylla var. minus	Nelson & Adams (1987)
Order Ralfsiales		
Ralfsiaceae	Ralfsia verrucosa	Battershill (1986)
Order Scytothamna	les	
Splachnidiaceae	Splachnidium rugosum	Battershill (1986)
Order Scytosiphona	ales	
Scytosiphonaceae	Hydroclathrus clathratus	Battershill (1986)

Previously *Pandorea traversii*Previously *Vidalia colensoi* 



Family	Species	Reference
Order Sphacelariales		
Stypocaulaceae Stypocaulon paniculatum		Nelson & Adams (1987)
CLASS RHODOPHY	CEAE	
Order Bangiales		
Bangiaceae	Bangia atropurpurea	Battershill (1986)
	Porphyra columbina	Cranwell & Moore (1938)
CLASS FLORIDEOPI	HYCEAE	
Order Ceramiales		
Ceramiales	Centroceros clavulatum	Nelson & Adams (1987)
	Ceramium sp.	Cranwell & Moore (1938)
	Cladhymenia oblongifolia	Battershill (1986)
	Griffithsia traversii	Cranwell & Moore (1938)
	Microcladia novae-zelandiae	Battershill (1986)
Rhodomelaceae	Aphanocladia delicatula	Battershill (1986)
	Laurencia distichophylla	Battershill (1986)
	Osmundaria colensoi	Nelson & Adams (1987)
	Polysiphonia sp.	Cranwell & Moore (1938)
Order Corallinales		
Corallinaceae	Arthrocardia corymbosa	Nelson & Adams (1987)
	Corallina officialis	Battershill (1986)
	Haliptilon rosea	Nelson & Adams (1987)
	Jania micrarthrodia	Battershill (1986)
	Jania novae-zelandiae	Nelson & Adams (1987)
	Melobesia sp.	Cranwell & Moore (1938)
Order Gelidiales		
Gelidiaceae	Gelidium allanii	Nelson et al. (1994)
	Gelidium caulacantheum	Battershill (1986)
	Gelidium pusillum	Battershill (1986)
	Pterocladia capillacea	Nelson & Adams (1987)
	Pterocladia lucida	Nelson & Adams (1987)
Order Gigartinales		
Areschougiaceae	Placentophora colensoi	Nelson & Adams (1987)
Catenellopsidaceae	Catenellopsis oligarthra	Cranwell & Moore (1938)
	Catenellopsis sp.	Cranwell & Moore (1938)
Caulacanthaceae	Caulacanthus ustulatus	Nelson & Adams (1987)
Gigartinaceae	Gigartina alveata	Cranwell & Moore (1938)
	Gigartina chapmanii	Battershill (1986)
Halymeniaceae	Pachymenia Iusoria	Battershill (1986)
Kallymeniaceae	Callophyllis decumbens	Cranwell & Moore (1938)
Plocamiaceae	Plocamium sp.	Cranwell & Moore (1938)



Family	Species	Reference	
Sarcodiaceae	Trematocarpus acicularis	Cranwell & Moore (1938)	
Order Gracilariales			
Gracilariaceae	Curdiea coriacea	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Melanthalia abscissa	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Order Hildenbrandia	ales		
Hildenbrandiaceae	Apophlaea sinclairii	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Hildenbrandia sp.	Cranwell & Moore (1938)	
Order Nemaliales			
Galaxauraceae	Nothogenia pulvinata	Battershill (1986)	
Liagoraceae	Liagora harveyana	Battershill (1986)	
	Nemalion sp.	Cranwell & Moore (1938)	
Order Rhodymenial	es		
Champiaceae	Champia laingii	Battershill (1986)	
Lomentariaceae	Lomentaria sp. Battershill (1986)		
Rhodymeniaceae	Rhodymenia australis	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Rhodymenia leptophylla	Nelson & Adams (1987)	

## 4.2 Subtidal macroalgae

Seventy nine species of subtidal macroalgae have been recorded from the Poor Knights Islands (Table 6). Distribution of subtidal macroalgae around the Poor Knights Islands is greatly influenced by wave exposure and light intensity. On the exposed eastern side of the islands the sublittoral fringe (<2 m) is dominated by *Carpophyllum augustifolium* and red turfing and foliose algae including *Pterocladia lucida, Rhodymenia* sp., *Osmundaria* sp., and *Pachymenia crassa. Lessonia variegata*, coralline turf, and red turfing algae dominate the 4–6 m region, and coralline turf and red turfing algae dominate the deeper waters (<18 m).

Sites of moderate exposure such as Cleanerfish Bay are dominated by *C. angustifolium* and red turfing algae in shallow waters (<2 m). Red turfing algae (e.g. *Gigartina macrocarpa*), red foliose algae (*Osmundaria, Placentophora colensoi, P. crassa, Nesophila hoggardii*), *Ulva lactuca*, and *E. radiata* dominate the 4–6 m region, while deeper regions are predominately covered by an *E. radiata* forest interspersed with patches of *Caulerpa flexilis*.

In the more sheltered locations such as Nursery Cove, Skull Bay, Landing Bay, and Labrid Channel, a mixture of species is present in the shallow region (> 2 m) including; Carpophyllum maschalocarpum, C. angustifolium, L. variegata, E. radiata,



coralline turf, red turfing algae, red foliose algae (*Osmundaria*, *P. lucida*, *Pterocladia capillacea*, *Rhodymenia* sp.), and *Melanthalia abscissa* (Shears & Babcock, 2004). *Carpophyllum angustifolium* reaches a mean density of > 130 plants/m² in the shallows, but is quickly replaced by *L. variegata* and *E. radiata* at 4–6 m depths (Choat & Schiel, 1982). *Ecklonia radiata* dominates the deeper regions reaching densities of >70 plants/m² (Ayling & Schiel, 2003). Occasionally dense stands of *Carpophyllum flexuosum* can be found at depths between 10–20 m (Choat & Schiel, 1982). Underneath the *E. radiata* canopy a diverse assemblage of other species is present including *Distromium skottsbergii*, *Carpomitra costata*, *Phacelocarpus labillardieri*, *Delisea elegans*, *Plocamium* sp., and *Curdiea coriacea* (Shears & Babcock, 2004).

In deeper waters light intensity is the major environmental factor determining the distribution of macroalgae. Light penetration in the clear waters of the Poor Knights Islands is at least three times deeper than at nearby inshore coastal regions, and as a result algae can survive at more than twice the depth they are normally limited to in inshore coastal waters (Ayling, 1968). For example, light intensity governs the lower limit of *E. radiata* and in areas where light intensity is reduced, such as on a vertical rock face, the lower limit of *E. radiata* is around 28 m. However, on more gently angled rock slopes *E. radiata* can be found at 48 m depth at the Poor Knights Islands, whereas, the lower limit of *E. radiata* in the Hauraki Gulf is around 12 m (Doak, 1971). Ocassionally, in depths of 30 m and more, towering tangled 3 m high columns of *Sargassum sinclairii* can be found (Ayling, 1974c).

Shears and Babcock (2004) conducted a survey of nine shallow subtidal sites  $^{22}$  ( $\leq$ 18 m depth) around the Poor Knights Islands (Fig. 1 in Shears & Babcock, 2004). Total average algal biomass was 475.6 g/m². The three most dominant species in terms of biomass were *E. radiata* (52.8 g/m²), *C. angustifolium* (18.2 g/m²), and *Lessonia variegata* (5.7 g/m²). The most abundance algae in terms of percentage occurrence were crustose coralline algae (mixed species) (99.4%), red turfing algae (mixed species) (90%), coralline turfing algae (mixed species) (79.4%), and *E. radiata* (66.7%) (Table 7).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Lighthouse Bay, Rocklily Inlet, Nursery Cove, Cleanerfish Bay, Skull Bay, Bartle's Bay, Matt's Crack, Frasers Bay, and Labrid Channel (see Fig. 2 for locations).



Table 6 Subtidal macroalgae recorded from the Poor Knights Islands.

Family	Species	Reference	
CLASS BRYOPSIDO	OPHYCEAE		
Order Bryopsidales			
Caulerpaceae	Caulerpa brownii	Schiel (1984)	
	Caulerpa flexilis	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Caulerpa geminata	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Derbesiaceae	Pedobesia clavaeformis	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
CLASS ULVOPHYC	EAE		
Order Cladophorale	es		
Anadyomenaceae	Microdictyon umbilicatum	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Order Codiales			
Codiaceae	Codium convolutum	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
	Codium cranwelliae	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Order Tetrasporales	s		
Palmellopsidaceae	Palmophyllum umbracola	Nelson & Ryan (1986)	
Order Ulvales			
Ulvaceae	Ulva lactuca	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
CLASS PHAEOPHY	CEAE		
Order Dictyotales			
Dictyotaceae	Distromium skottsbergii	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Glossophora kunthii	Schiel (1984)	
	Taonia australasica	Battershill (1986)	
	Zonaria turneriana	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
Order Ectocarpales			
Chordariaceae	Leathesia difformis	Schiel (1984)	
Ectocarpaceae	Ectocarpus sp.	Schiel (1984)	
Order Ralfsiales			
Ralfsiaceae	Ralfsia verrucosa	Battershill (1986)	
Order Sporochnales	s		
Sporochnaceae	Carpomitra costata	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Order Fucales			
Cystoseiraceae	Landsburgia quercifolia	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Fucaceae	Xiphophora chondrophylla var. minus	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Sargassaceae	Carpophyllum angustifolium	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Carpophyllum maschalocarpum	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
	Carpophyllum plumosum	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Cystophora torulosa	Battershill (1986)	
	Sargassum sinclairii	Ayling (1974c)	



Family	Species	Reference	
Order Laminariales			
Alariaceae	Ecklonia radiata	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Lessoniaceae	Lessonia variegata	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
Order Scytosiphonal	es		
Scytosiphonaceae	Colpomenia sinuosa	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
	Hydroclathrus clathratus	Battershill (1986)	
Order Sphacelariales			
Stypocaulaceae	Halopteris paniculata	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
CLASS FLORIDEOPH	IYCEAE		
Order Balliales			
Balliaceae	Ballia callitricha	Battershill (1986)	
	Ballia scoparia	Battershill (1986)	
Order Bonnemaisoni	ales		
Bonnemaisoniaceae	Delisea compressa	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Delisea elegans	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
	Delisea pulchra	Battershill (1986)	
	Ptilonia mooreana	Schiel (1984)	
Order Ceramiales			
Ceramiaceae	Antithamnion sp.	Battershill (1986)	
	Callithamnion sp.	Battershill (1986)	
	Euptilota formosissima	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Spyridia sp.	Battershill (1986)	
Delesseriaceae	Abroteia orbicularis	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Hymenena sp.	Battershill (1986)	
	Phycodrys profunda	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Platyclinia purpurea	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Rhodomelaceae	Aphanocladia delicatula	Battershill (1986)	
	Dasyclonium bipartitum	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Dasyclonium incisum	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Laurencia distichophylla	Battershill (1986)	
	Osmundaria colensoi	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Order Corallinales			
Corallinaceae	Amphiroa anceps	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Arthrocardia corymbosa	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Cheilosporum sagittatum	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Haliptilon rosea	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Order Gelidiales			
Gelidiaceae	Pterocladia capillacea	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
	Pterocladia lucida	Nelson & Adams (1987)	



Family	Species	Reference	
Order Gigartinales			
Acrosymphytaceae Acrosymphyton firmum		Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Areschougiaceae	Placentophora colensoi	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Caulacanthaceae	Taylorophycus filiformis	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
Gigartinaceae	Gigartina macrocarpa	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
	Melanthalia abscissa	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Halymeniaceae	Pachymenia crassa	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Kallymeniaceae	Callophyllis dichotoma	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Kallymenia berggrenii	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
Peyssonneliaceae Peyssonnelia sp.		Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Phacelocarpaceae	Phacelocarpus labillardieri	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Plocamiaceae	Plocamium costatum	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Pseudoanemoniaceae	Hummbrella hydra	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Rhizophyllidaceae	Nesophila hoggardii	Nelson & Adams (1996)	
Order Gracilariales			
Gracilariaceae	Curdiea codioides	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
	Curdiea coriacea	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
Order Halymeniales			
Halymeniaceae	Cryptonemia latissima	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Order Nemaliales			
Liagoraceae	Liagora harveyana	Battershill (1986)	
Galaxauraceae	Scinaia sp.	Battershill (1986)	
Order Rhodymeniales			
Champiaceae	Champia novae-zelandiae	Shears & Babcock (2004)	
Faucheaceae	Gloioderma saccatum	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Gloiodermatopsis setchellii	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
Rhodymeniaceae	Rhodymenia australis	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Rhodymenia leptophylla	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Rhodymenia sp. aff. R. hancockii	Nelson & Adams (1987)	
	Rhodymenia sp.	Nelson & Adams (1987)	



Table 7 Percentage occurrence of subtidal macroalgal species recorded from the waters of the Poor Knights Islands  $\leq$  18 m deep (Table adapted from Shears & Babcock, 2004).

Species	% occurrence	Species	% occurrence
Large brown algae		Foliose red algae	
Ecklonia radiata	66.7	Nesophila hoggardii	40.0
Xiphophora chondrophylla	23.9	Osmundaria colensoi	32.8
Carpophyllum angustifolium	20.0	Pterocladia lucida	26.1
Lessonia variegata	20.0	Plocamium sp.	25.0
Carpophyllum	18.3	Euptilota formosissima	21.7
maschalocarpum			
Sargassum sinclairii	16.7	Curdiea coriacea	21.1
Carpophyllum plumosum	8.9	Pachymenia crassa	16.1
Carpophyllum flexuosum	7.8	Rhodymenia undescr. sp.	13.3
Landsburgia quercifolia	5.6	Placentophora colensoi	10.6
		Rhodymenia sp.	8.3
Small brown algae		Delisea compressa	8.3
Zonaria turneriana	21.7	Melanthalia abscissa	6.7
Brown encrusting algae*	8.9	Phacelocarpus labillardieri	2.8
Distromium scottsbergii	7.8	Callophyllis sp.	2.2
Carpomitra costata	4.4	Kallymenia berggrenii	1.7
Halopteris sp.	3.9	Taylorophycus filiformis	1.7
Colpomenia sinuosa	1.7	Plocamium costatum	1.1
Brown turfing algae*	0.6		
		Red turfing algae (<5 cm)	
Green algae		Red turfing algae*	90.0
Ulva sp.	58.9	Coralline turfing algae*	79.4
Codium convolutum	42.8	Gigartina macrocarpa	10.0
Codium cranwelliae	8.9	Champia novae-zelandiae	3.3
Caulerpa flexilis	7.2		
Caulerpa geminata	7.2	Encrusting red algae	
Pedobesia clavaeformis	1.1	Crustose coralline algae*	99.4
Green turfing algae	0.6	Red encrusting algae*	46.7
		Curdiea codioides	7.2

<sup>\*</sup> Mixed species.