



Psilotum nudum

Common Name(s):

whisk fern, skeleton fork fern

Current Threat Status (2012):

Not Threatened

Distribution:

Indigenous. New Zealand: Kermadec Islands (Raoul Island), North Island (North Cape south to the southern shore of Lake Taupo and Tokaanu).

Habitat:

Coastal to monatanic. In the northern part of its range *Psilotum* is usually a local component of coastal forest where it grows on the forest floor, in rock piles and on cliff faces. It is also occasionally epiphytic on trees such as pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*). On Raoul Island it is an abundant ground cover in the "dry" forest type on that island. In the North Island outside Northland and the Coromandel Peninsula, *Psilotum* becomes increasingly tied to geothermally active sites where it usually grows on cliff faces and warm soil around fumaroles. In the ignimbrite country north of Lake Taupo, and also along the western shore of Lake Taupo, *Psilotum* is at times a very common species growing in the joints of columnar ignimbrite. On the western shoreline of Lake Taupo in this type of habitat plants can grow very large, and they may grow right down into the flood-line where they are often associated with *Lindsaea viridis*. Around Auckland City *Psilotum* is a very common, though easily overlooked plant of stone walls (especially basalt or concrete retaining walls).

Features*:

Epiphytic or terrestrial plants. Rhizome branching, short- to long-creeping, usually clumped. Aerial shoots 50-100-200(-900) mm, dark green, green or yellow depending on growing conditions, erect, firm or sometimes flaccid in shaded situations, branched repeatedly in different planes in the upper part. Branches prominently ribbed 3-7 \times , subterete in cross-section, to 4.5 mm diameter; stomata restricted to furrows between ribs. Sterile leaves 1.0-2.5 mm long, pale yellow (translucent toward apices), restricted to ribs, subspiral, terete. Synangia 1.5-2.0 \times 2.0-2.5 mm, yellow, globular, partitioned in 3 segments.

Flowering:

N.A. Spore producing

Fruiting:

N.A. Spore producing

Threats:

Not Threatened

*Attribution:

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (7 May 2011). Description adapted from Chinnock (1998).

References and further reading:

Chinnock, R.J. 1998: Psilotaceae. Flora of Australia 48: 47-53.

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=2229



Caption: *Psilotum nudum*

Photographer: John Barkla



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