NEW ZEALAND PLANT CONSERVATION NETWORK

TRILEPIDEA

Newsletter of the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network

No. 127.

June 2014

Deadline for next issue:
Monday 14 July 2014

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE TO THE NEWSLETTER

Contributions are welcome to the newsletter at any time. The closing date for articles for each issue is approximately the 15th of each month.

Articles may be edited and used in the newsletter and/or on the website news page.

The Network will publish almost any article about plants and plant conservation with a particular focus on the plant life of New Zealand and Oceania.

Please send news items or event information to events@nzpcn.org.nz

Postal address:
P.O. Box 16102,
Wellington 6242,
NEW ZEALAND

PLANT OF THE MONTH, p. 2

Lastreopsis velutina

Plant Conservation Awards 2014

The prestigious New Zealand Plant Conservation Network Awards are now in their tenth year. We are now calling for nominations for the 2014 awards. The purpose of these awards is to acknowledge outstanding contributions to native plant conservation. The award categories are:

- Individual involved in plant conservation
- Plant nursery involved in plant conservation
- School plant conservation project
- Community plant conservation project
- Local authority protecting native plant life
- Young Plant Conservationist of the Year (under 18 years on 30 June 2014)

Information about the awards and nomination forms are available on the Network website (www.nzpcn.org.nz) or print out the final page of this issue of the newsletter.

We look forward to your nominations; you can make multiple nominations under different categories. Anyone is eligible to make nominations, not just Network members. The awards will be presented at the Network **Annual General Meeting** to be held in Wellington in **November 2014**. Nominations close **Friday 19 September 2014.**

What's growing in the red zone[1]?

Associate Professor Glenn Stewart Lincoln University (Glenn.Stewart@lincoln.ac.nz)

In mid-2012, some conservation biology graduate students and I started looking at what plants were coming up in Christchurch's residential red zone after the properties were abandoned. The sudden cessation of mowing, weeding and spraying raised some interesting ecological questions for us: What plants will regenerate? Will they be native or exotic species? What native trees were on the properties anyway? Which ones should be saved? What were the threats to them thriving? And so on.

We expected to see lots of exotic species pop up, since many exotics have quite long-lived seeds. They can lie dormant in the soil for decades and only germinate when the conditions are right, e.g., when the soil has been disturbed. In comparison, the seeds of most native species aren't long lived and need to germinate in a year or two or they will die. So it was a bit of a surprise (and very exciting) to find that oodles of native species were regenerating—cabbage trees for Africa (*Cordyline australis*), akeake (*Dodonea viscosa*), karamu (*Coprosma robusta*), taupata (*Coprosma repens*), ngaio (*Myoporum laetum*), pittosporums (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*, *P eugenioides*), lacebarks (*Hoheria sextylosa*, *H. angustifolia*), hebe (*Hebe salicifolia*) and ribbonwood (*Plagianthus regius*). Why? It seems that birds were the answer. About 75 per cent of the tree and shrub species that were regenerating have fleshy fruits and were being dispersed by native (silvereye, bellbird) and exotic (blackbird, thrush) birds.

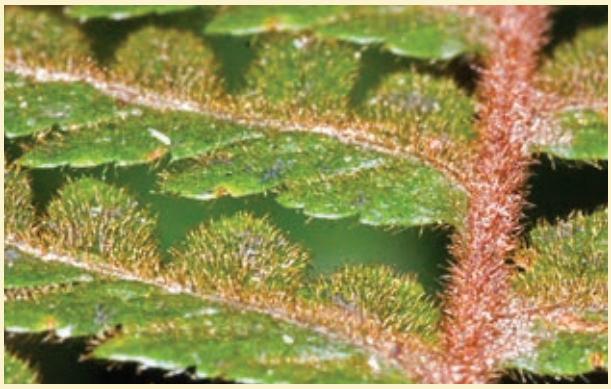
1 The 'red zone' refers to that part of Christchurch that has been deemed, for the moment at least, as unsuitable for rebuilding; virtually all houses have been demolished.

PLANT OF THE MONTH – *LASTREOPSIS VELUTINA*

Plant of the month for June is *Lastreopsis velutina*, the velvet fern.

This endemic fern can be found in scattered locations throughout both islands, preferring drier coastal and lowland forest. Populations are found scattered throughout the North Island and are limited to the east coast of the South Island.

The common name of velvet fern is richly deserved. Fronds that can reach up to 40cm in length have a dense covering of soft, brown, velvety hairs.



Above: Lastreopsis velutina. Right: Close-up view of frond showing velvety hairs. Photos: Jeremy Rolfe.

While not threatened the velvet fern is uncommon. It grows best in a heavier soil, in shade.

The Network factsheet for *Lastreopsis velutina* can be found at: www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.aspx?ID=900

We also found quite a few exotic species. These included bird-dispersed species like yew (*Taxus baccata*), elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*), *Prunus* spp. (plums and cherries), and some nasty invasive species like gorse (*Ulex europeaus*) and broom (*Cytisus scoparius*).

But, on the whole, the future looked bright for a regenerating native forest.

We have continued to visit the properties, and some new ones as well, to see what species are thriving. But, sadly, we are now being limited as contractors are mowing and spraying herbicide over properties to "lower the fire risk". Not only that, but with demolition occurring at an increasing rate, our treasured seedlings are being scraped away by heavy machinery. Those diggers are also disturbing the soil on the abandoned properties and exposing the seeds that have lain dormant, which means a lot of the invasive exotic seeds are now germinating.

There's another force at play that's giving the exotics the upper hand – species that were being controlled by gardening practices now have free rein. *Buddleja davidii* (butterfly bush), golden locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), elm (*Ulmus*), ash (*Fraxinus*), *Prunus* spp., blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*), sumac (*Rhus* sp) and elderberry (*Sambucus*), and many other species are sprouting up in many places.

In the course of our surveys, we have also discovered some awesome native treasures that have survived on residential properties: a huge hard beech (*Nothofagus truncata*) in Avonside, several miro (*Prumnopitys ferruginnea*) loaded with fruit, a massive hinau (*Elaeocarpus dentatus*) in

Dallington, kauri (*Agathis australis*), native beeches (black, red and silver beech), kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*), kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*), totara (*Podocarpus totara*)—the list goes on.

There are some majestic old exotic trees as well, especially in older suburbs such as Avonside and Dallington: walnuts (*Juglans* sp.), weeping elms (*Ulmus*), maples (*Acer* sp.), magnolias, rhododendrons, and many others. We don't need the silver birches; they are allergenic and this could be a good time to get rid of them. As for sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), now is also a perfect opportunity to get rid of this nasty, invasive tree as well.

One thing that has become quite noticeable on recent red- zone visits is that many treasured old native and exotic trees are now dying for some inexplicable reason. Maybe it is exposure caused by the removal of houses and surrounding trees that were sheltering them. Maybe the demolition heavy machinery is damaging their roots. Whatever the cause, these trees will be lost.

We don't yet know what the future will be for this land. John Key has said that by the middle of this year we might have a clearer picture. It's now the middle of this year. At the moment the cleared areas are being grassed and fenced into small parklands of scattered trees and shrubs. But that is not a long-term, biodiverse, or even sustainable solution.

Grassed parklands need mowing and weed control. They are expensive to maintain. A biodiverse forest, dominated by native trees and shrubs but also containing components of the cultural and historical heritage of the area is a much more sustainable option. We could speed up the return of our iconic wildlife by allowing the remaining small patches to regenerate and by supplementary planting of native species known to attract the native birds, invertebrates and geckos that are essential in our native ecosystems. This would include the large, long- lived podocarps that naturally grew in parts of what is now the red zone: matai (*Prumnopitys taxifolia*), kahikatea and totara. The native vegetation has tremendous resilience, but only if we understand nature and how it works.

In years to come, our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren could have a huge biodiversity asset in the form of an amazing native forest running through their vibrant green city. But to achieve that for them, we need to take care of what is left and make sure the invasive exotic weeds don't get a stranglehold. You can help. We need to know what's happening in all parts of the residential red zone. So we've set up a project on www.naturewatch.org.nz for people to post photographs of the plants and animals they see there.

You don't have to be expert. You don't even need to know what it is you're photographing—experts on Naturewatch can help to identify species for you. But by contributing, you're helping us understand just what's going on. The environment we leave for our children is in our hands. Help us to ensure it's one they will thank us for.

(Editor's note: First published in the The Press, Tuesday 27 May, printed here with permission.)

New Zealand Maori story featured in a French chateau garden

Eric Scott (mescott@clear.net.nz)

On a visit to Chaumont Chateau in the Loire Valley, France, we found that there was an International Garden Festival. The theme of the festival was 'The Seven Deadly Sins'. We were most interested to discover that a Maori story had provided the inspiration for a garden illustrating. The story concerned Mounts Taranaki, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu, all of which were shown as volcanically active with steam coming from their respective summits. The plants used in the garden had a good smattering of New Zealand plants like flax, manuka, and *Dicksonia* tree ferns. Conversely, there were some other plants that looked like no New Zealand Plant I am aware of. Unfortunately, I had not taken my camera with me on this chateau visit so cannot present an overall view of the garden for jealousy. Among the other 24 gardens on show, New Zealand flax in many of its horticultural varieties was well represented.

Lichen notes 3—new substrata for the "map lichen", *Rhizocarpon geographicum,* in New Zealand

David Galloway (*gallowayd@xtra.co.nz*)

The "map lichen", *Rhizocarpon geographicum,* is well-known from subalpine to alpine rocks on all continents, its name deriving from the green-yellow patches of thallus separated from adjacent thalli by lines or zones of black prothallus (Figures. 1, 2), the composite communities thus developed looking like countries on a map, hence the name bestowed upon it by Linnaeus in 1753. Linnaeus's Latin description reads "…Lichen leprosus flavescens: lineolis nigris mappam referens…" (Linnaeus 1753: 1140; Jørgensen et al., 1994: 317), which is about as descriptive of the name as you can get. *Rhizocarpon geographicum* has wide application in mountainous and glaciated regions in studies of lichenometry, being used to date ages of rock surfaces (Beschel 1961; Innes 1985; Galloway 2008: 476-476). Growth rates in populations of *R. geographicum* have also been much studied by Dr Richard Armstrong and his colleagues over the years (Armstrong 1983, 2005, 2006, 2011; Armstrong & Smith 1987; Armstrong & Bradwell 2001; Bradwell & Armstrong 2007). The species has a very wide altitudinal range and though it is generally very commonly found on alpine rocks (it was recorded from the summit rocks of Aoraki/Mt Cook at 3500 m by Hugh Wilson and Chris Livesey on 1 March 1972) you can also find it on sea level rocks from Foveaux Strait to Cable Bay in Northland.

Figure 1. *Rhizocarpon geographicum* on rocks, Mt Alexander, Kakanui Range, with Prof. Alan Mark. Photo: Janet Ledingham.

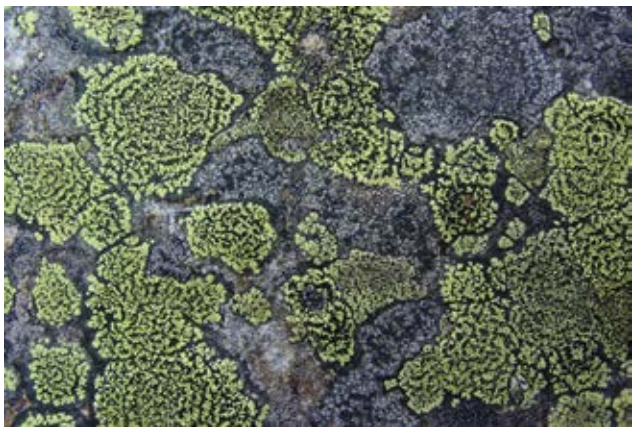


Figure 2. *Rhizocarpon geographicum* mosaic on Central Otago rock, Photo: Barrie Wills.

Figure 3. *Rhizocarpon geographicum* on Middlemarch stockyards railing. Photo: Janet Ledingham.

Figure 4. *Rhizocarpon geographicum* on Conroy's Gully signpost railing. Photo: Janet Ledingham.

Nineteen years ago when we bought a property in the Teviot Valley, Central Otago, our gateposts were topped with hard, polished "Chinaman" (stained, naturally polished quartz) rocks collected from nearby paddocks and, on their upper surfaces small colonies of *R. geographicum* were happily growing. I subsequently saw *R. geographicum* colonising gravel chippings in bitumen, on walls, bridge cappings and gravestones in cemeteries in lowland and urban habitats (Galloway 2007: 1538). Over the past few years, I have also noticed the characteristic yellow thalli of *R. geographicum* on old, rusted number 8 wire of high-alpine fence lines on the Old Man Range, Kakanui Mountains and above Poolburn on North Rough Ridge, and particularly on rusting, abandoned coils of wire. Indeed, *R. geographicum* seems to like growing on hard mineralised surfaces such as rusting iron and you can sometimes find it on rusty iron framing around sheepyards (Figure 3) and on signpost supports (Figure 4). In my home suburb of Opoho, not far from the Dunedin Botanic Gardens, *R. geographicum* has established very happily indeed on the upper surfaces of smooth brick fences, reaching diameters of 1–5 cm of individual thalli and composite thalli of up to 16 cm diameter, on the top of a fence built c. 70 years ago (Figure 5).

Figure 5. *Rhizocarpon geographicum* on Opoho brick fence. Photo: Janet Ledingham.

Recently, while recording lichens on fences and walls in Roxburgh, Central Otago, I discovered to my surprise, colonies of *R. geographicum* colonising the upper surface of a white-painted wooden fence in the main street (Scotland Street), together with a variety of other lichens. I searched the literature for any records of *R. geographicum* on wood and even contacted the *Rhizocarpon* authority, Richard Armstrong of Aston University, Birmingham, to see whether he had heard of *R. geographicum* colonising a wooden fence, albeit a painted wooden fence. He replied that he had never seen or heard of such a thing. Searching along the fence revealed colonies of *Rhizocarpon* growing only on the paint surface itself and not on any patches where the paint had weathered away to expose tantalised wood. The largest colony of *R. geographicum* on the painted fence had, in fact, died centrally and a flake of paint had come away leaving a small area of wood that is being colonised not by *Rhizocarpon*, but by *Lecanora polytropa*, a species that responds to the metals in the tanalised wood. I realised then that the painted surface covering the tantalised wood of the fence and acts as a hard, mineralised surface akin to a bare rock surface. Subsequent investigations of several white-painted wooden structures, both in Central Otago and Dunedin, failed to show any additional communities of *R. geographicum*, although it is quite often seen on weathered iron structures in a variety of places. I would be most interested to hear of any additional substrata for the map lichen in both urban and inland environments in New Zealand, because it seems to be actively extending its range at the present time, along with a number of other lichens. I have already noted that a number of our lichens appear to be "on the move" (Galloway 2009) so, as a group, lichens are well worth keeping an eye on, especially as new substrata become available for colonisation.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Janet Ledingham and Barrie Wills for the provision of images, and to Dr Richard Armstrong (Aston University) for discussions on habitat selection by *Rhizocarpon geographicum*.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

If you have important events or news that you would like publicised via this newsletter please email the Network (events@nzpcn.org.nz):

10th Australasian Plant Conservation Conference (APCC10)

Conference: The organising committee invites you to submit an Abstract for the **Conference (APCC10), to be** held in **Hobart, Tasmania 11–14 November 2014. T**he four sub-themes are: • Securing biodiversity, • Prioritising actions, • Animals in plant conservation, • Engagement and communication in the modern world. Submissions close **5.00 p.m. 27 June 2014**.	**Abstract Submission Form:** please click here. For more information on the conference, click here.

Auckland Botanical Society

Field Trip: Saturday 19 July to Maungawhau/Government house/ rock forests. .	**Leader:** Ewen Cameron. **Contact:** Maureen Young, email: youngmaureen@xtra.co.nz

Waikato Botanical Society

Field trip: Sunday 13 July to Te Reti Scenic Reserve. **Meet:** 9.00 a.m. at Landcare, Gate 10 Waikato University or 9.30 a.m. at Te Awamutu Info Centre, 1 Gorst Ave. **Grade:** medium.	**Leader:** Paula Reeves, email: pnreeves42@gmail.com, ph: 07 854 7259 (hm), 021 267 5802 (mobile).

Rotorua Botanical Society

Field trip: Sunday 6 July to Papamoa Hills Regional Park. **Meet:** the car park Rotorua at 8:30 a.m. or Papamoa Hills Regional Park entrance, end of Poplars Lane, Papamoa, at 9:15 a.m. **Grade:** moderate to steep.	**Leader:** Graeme Jane, ph: 07 570 3123; email: gtjane@clear.net.nz.

Wellington Botanical Society

Meeting: Monday 21 July at 7.30 p.m. for a panel discussion on 'Eco-sourcing of plants: what, why, where and how?' **Panel members:** Paula Warren, Stephen Hartley, Chris Horne, Leon Perrie, **Chair:** Carol West.	**Venue:** VUW Lecture Theatre M101, Murphy Building ground floor, west side of Kelburn Parade.

Nelson Botanical Society

Field trip: Sunday 20 July to the Nature Walk, Tinline, Bay Abel Tasman National Park. **Meet:** Church steps at 9.00 a.m.	**PLEASE register with the Leader:** Beryce Vincenzi, ph: 03 528 4549
Meeting: Monday 21 July at 7.30 p.m. for a talk by Carlos Lehnebach, Te Papa, titled 'Orchids'.	**Venue:** Jaycee Rooms, Founders Park, Nelson.

Canterbury Botanical Society

Field trip: Saturday 12 July, Christchurch Botanic Gardens. **Meet:** 10 am at the old Botanic Gardens Visitor Centre near the Armagh Street carpark. **Bring:** Packed lunch, warm clothes.	**Leader:** TBA.

Botanical Society of Otago

Meeting: Wednesday 9 July 5.20 pm. A talk about the Larapinta Trail, Central Australia. Last winter John and Marilyn Barkla walked the 230 km Larapinta Trail in the desert of Central Australia. It was a place of stunning landscapes, botanical surprises, scarce water and strange encounters with dingoes and scorpions. Come and hear how the journey unfolded and help John put names to the many unfamiliar plants they found.

Dunedin Botanic Garden Bioblitz

Saturday 12 July 10 am – 3 pm: Call for volunteers. Come and join us build a wild plant species inventory in New Zealand's first botanic garden. We are looking for experts, amateurs and beginners to help find, identify and map as many wild plant species as possible. With your help we have the opportunity to extend scientific and public knowledge of diversity in the Botanic Garden. The BioBlitz is a wonderful opportunity to share your knowledge or learn more.	**Contact:** Tom.Myers@dcc.govt.nz if you are able to be there.
BioBlitz—Birds New Zealand: How many different kinds of birds can we see, hear and identify? Accompany ornithologists from Birds New Zealand to several parts of the garden to find the birds that live there. Hear life stories of some of the birds. Learn the differences between native and introduced birds. Please bring binoculars if you have them. **10–10:45am** Free.	**Bookings essential:** Email: dcc@dcc.govt.nz or Phone: 03 477 4000.
BioBlitz—Funky Fungi: Fungi are nutrient recyclers and they are everywhere—in soil, on plants, on our skin and even in many foods and drinks we consume. Many fungi are plant decomposers and many others help plants to grow, so fungi connect much of life on Earth. The Dunedin Botanic Garden is rich in fungal diversity: we will search the gardens for fungi and discover how important they are for a healthy environment. Bring a camera. **11–11:45am** Free.	**Bookings essential:** Email: dcc@dcc.govt.nz or Phone: 03 477 4000. **Led by David Orlovich.**
BioBlitz—Leaf Litter Fine day: Leaf litter in the Botanic Garden will be put through a hand-held sieve onto a tray and the invertebrates will be identified using hand-held trays. **Rainy day:** A demonstration on sieving leaf litter for invertebrates will be quickly presented. Then, using microscopes set up on tables in the Botanic Garden Information Centre near the Winter Garden, some of the sieved insects, mites, pseudoscorpions and minute wingless wasps will be viewed under binocular microscopes and identified using books and keys. People will help themselves to the bag and look at the litter inhabitants in a petri dish under a microscope. **12noon-12:45pm** Free.	**Bookings essential:** Email: dcc@dcc.govt.nz or Phone: 03 477 4000.

BioBlitz—Lichen walk: This guided walk will reveal some of New Zealand's exceptionally rich lichen flora. Explore the Botanic Garden and Lovelock Bush to discover the diverse growth forms and habitats of these amazing symbiotic organisms. **12noon–12:45pm** Free.	**Bookings essential:** Email: dcc@dcc.govt.nz or Phone: 03 477 4000. **Led by David Galloway**
BioBlitz—Is the Leith dirty or healthy? Ask the bugs living in it: The organisms living in the bed of a stream or river can tell us much about how clean or dirty this stream is. Many of these organisms are excellent bioindicators because they are sensitive to pollution and also reflect the conditions over several months before they are collected. During our walk we will visit several sites at the Water of Leith where we'll collect the aquatic larvae of insect groups such as mayflies and caddis flies. You will learn what these creatures can tell us about how healthy the aquatic community is. After the walk we'll take some of these animals to the Information Centre so we can study them under the microscope – they often look very impressive! **1pm–1:45pm** Free.	**Bookings essential:** Email: dcc@dcc.govt.nz or Phone: 03 477 4000.
BioBlitz—Plants and how to look at them: We all know what plants are, but just how well do we look at them? Could you describe a plant to someone who has never seen it before? Can you even describe it to yourself? If not how can you know it? This walk will encourage you to take a closer look and think about what you are actually looking at. **2–2:45pm** Free.	**Bookings essential:** Email: dcc@dcc.govt.nz or Phone: 03 477 4000**.** **Led by John Steel.**
BioBlitz—Cryptic Corner: Mosses, liverworts and lichens are a large, but often overlooked, part of our native flora. Luckily it's not hard to stop and take a closer look and appreciate the huge diversity of cryptic species we have in New Zealand. Come along to our workshop to have a hands-on experience alongside some experts in bryophyte and lichen identification and see this tiny flora in a whole new light! **3–3:45pm** Free.	**Bookings essential:** Email: dcc@dcc.govt.nz or Phone: 03 477 4000**.** **Led by Kelly Frogley**
BioBlitz - Flora Finder Demonstration: See how to instantly identify New Zealand native plants using the camera on your smart device. Flora Finder is an electronic field guide to help you identify some of the most common New Zealand native plants from photographs of their leaves. Throughout the day. Free admission.	**No bookings necessary.**
BioBlitz—Love Nature at Lovelock Bush: Join a team of experts from Orokonui Ecosanctuary and Landcare Research to systematically survey life in Lovelock Bush! Learn how to detect, collect and identify native plants and assess bush vitality; introduced pests from bite marks, footprints and poo; birds from calls, flight styles and nests; invertebrates in the leaf litter, soil and beyond! Take home skills to make your backyard a beautiful sanctuary. **10am–2pm**. Free.	**No bookings necessary.**

NEW ZEALAND
PLANT CONSERVATION NETWORK
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PLANT CONSERVATION AWARDS: 2014

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The award categories are:

- **Individual** involved in plant conservation
- **Plant nursery** involved in plant conservation
- **School** plant conservation project
- **Community** plant conservation project
- **Local authority** protecting native plant life
- **Young Plant Conservationist** of the Year (under 18 years on 30 June 2014)

More information about the awards and additional nomination forms are available on the Network website - www.nzpcn.org.nz. You can make multiple nominations under different categories. Anyone is eligible to make nominations, not just Network members. The awards will be presented at the Network **Annual General Meeting** to be held in Wellington in **November 2014**. Nominations close on **Friday 19 September 2014.**

NOMINATION FORM

Category (please circle):

Individual *Plant* *Nursery* *School*

Community *Local Authority* *Young Plant Conservationist*

NAME OF NOMINEE: _____

Contact details for person, school, nursery, community group or local authority:

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____ Email: _____