



## NEW ZEALAND PLANT CONSERVATION NETWORK

E-NEWSLETTER: NO 4. MARCH 2004

Please send news items or events to [events@nzpcn.org.nz](mailto:events@nzpcn.org.nz)

### Message from the President

As a result of Dean-Baigent Mercer's letter to the Network in December, Council has written to Chris Carter MP, Minister of Conservation, asking for his assurance that mining of the Mount Burnett area (Golden Bay, upper South Island) is not affecting this nationally important plant area and that the nationally threatened plants that occur there, such as *Carex dolomitica* and *Myrsine argentea*, are secure.

Council has also written to the Director General of the Department of Conservation, Hugh Logan to arrange a meeting to discuss improved collaboration between our organisations. We will also be discussing the need for improved legal protection for native plants, recently highlighted by the arrest and subsequent conviction of, two Czech men in Auckland for possession of native orchid species (see below).

The redevelopment of the Network website has begun with additional resources being added. These include a web-based plant conservation bibliographic search engine and a tool for generating lists of New Zealand threatened plants by category and a complete list. We will let you know when these developments are on-line.

### Plant of the month



*Pittosporum patulum* is Nationally Endangered. It grows to a small tree and is found naturally only in the South island (in north-west Nelson, and from eastern Nelson south to the head of Lake Hawea). It occurs in sub-alpine scrub, and canopy gaps in mountain beech forest. It flowers from late spring to mid summer. *Pittosporum patulum* is affectionately known as Pitpat, and has distinct juvenile and adult growth stages similar to pokaka. The Network's factsheet about this species may be found at

[http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/nz\\_threatenedplants/detail.asp?PlantID=92](http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/nz_threatenedplants/detail.asp?PlantID=92)

The Department of Conservation's species recovery plan for this species is available at:

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/Publications/004~Science-and-Research/Biodiversity-Recovery-Unit/PDF/tsrp28.pdf>

### Arrest of Czech botanists

Two Czech men, one of them a government official and the other a University professor, have been convicted and fined in Manukau District Court for smuggling New Zealand native orchids and taking plants from conservation areas. Between them, the men had illegally collected 83 individual native orchid plants from 22 species (including *Microtis*, common *Pterostylis*, *Winika*, *Earinas*, *Bulbophyllum*, *Chiloglottis*, *Gastrodia* and *Orthoceras*) and specimens of other native plants, such as native sedges and ferns, taken from national parks.

Mr Jindrich Smitak is an inspector in the Czech Government environmental protection agency and Mr Cestmir Cihalik is a professor of cardiology from a Czech university. They were both fined \$7,500 and ordered to pay \$1000 each toward prosecution costs. The men were charged under the Trade in Endangered Species Act (TIES), which prohibits trade in New Zealand native orchids and

can carry penalties of up to a \$100,000 fine and five years imprisonment, and the National Parks Act, under which offenders can be fined up to \$2500 and imprisoned for three months.

As Network members will know, it is illegal to take native plant material from conservation land without a permit, it is illegal to export plants that are listed in the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (i.e. orchids). That means native plants have no legal protection where they occur on private land. Recent events have highlighted the limitations of legal protection for New Zealand's native plants. Had the Czech men collected native plants other than orchids from private land then they could have left the country legally. We believe this is not sufficient protection for our flora but if you have any views on this subject please send them to [info@nzpcn.org.nz](mailto:info@nzpcn.org.nz)

The Network will be writing to the Minister of Conservation in the near future to ask what steps will be taken to ensure native plants, and in particular the acutely threatened plants, are legally protected more effectively.

Members of the Network can help prevent plant collection of this nature by reporting suspicious activity in national parks and reserves to the Wildlife Enforcement Group. This is an agency of representatives from Customs, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Department of Conservation.

### **Flora of Australia is now online**

Flora of Australia Online delivers the publication series Flora of Australia to a potentially vast audience via the internet. This is good news for Network members who wish to find out about Australian weed species and native plants that we share with Australia. This is a world first for delivery online of an interactive, flora resource at a national level with a flexible, user-defined search interface.

Clients can customise data delivery to suit their own needs. Information is available for a wide range of uses, such as school projects, habitat information for land managers, identification keys for naturalists, or species lists for environmental impact statements and land surveys. The information links to electronic distribution maps and much of the line art from the books. Around 8,500 taxa have been published so far in the Flora of Australia book series, and to date 4,500 of these are available in Flora of Australia online.

There are three web sites for the information: <http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/abrs/online-resources/abif/flora/49/>

(Flora of Australia volume 49: Norfolk, Lord Howe and surrounding Islands);  
<http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/abrs/online-resources/abif/flora/50/>

(Flora of Australia volume 50: the remaining Oceanic Islands);  
<http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/abrs/online-resources/abif/flora/main/>

(Information for over 50 families extracted from the following nine volumes of the Flora of Australia book series: 3, 11A, 11B, 12, 16, 17A, 17B, 35 and 48).

### **Contact us**

If you have any questions about the Network you can contact Council members directly (contacts are listed in the 'Key People' section of the website [www.nzpcn.org.nz](http://www.nzpcn.org.nz)). Our postal address is P.O. Box 16-102, Wellington or email the Network at [info@nzpcn.org.nz](mailto:info@nzpcn.org.nz)

### **Help needed with improving the website**

We are very keen to hear from anyone interested in helping us fill the blanks in the species information on the website. This may include entering data onto the site or may involve writing new descriptions for species or investigating habitats, flowering and fruiting times and where species are in cultivation. If you are able to help with this work please contact us at [info@nzpcn.org.nz](mailto:info@nzpcn.org.nz)

## **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](mailto:events@nzpcn.org.nz)).

### ***Coastal Dune Vegetation Network – conference 2004***

To be held in Wellington from 10-13 March. For programme and registration details see [http://www.forestresearch.co.nz/topic.asp?docid=501&contenttype=general&topic=Coastal%20Dune%20Vegetation%20Network%20\(CDVN\)&title=Events](http://www.forestresearch.co.nz/topic.asp?docid=501&contenttype=general&topic=Coastal%20Dune%20Vegetation%20Network%20(CDVN)&title=Events)

### ***Open Day at Percy Scenic Reserve***

Percy Scenic Reserve, Western Hutt Road, Petone, is holding an open day on Saturday 27 March 2004. This is an opportunity for the public to view the threatened plant and alpine collection which are seldom seen. Tours of the collections start at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 12 noon, and 1 p.m. Meet at the Aviary. Any queries should be directed to Jill Broome, Plant Collections Supervisor, Percy Scenic Reserve, Phone (04) 570 6505, Fax (04) 570 6506.

### ***2nd World Botanic Gardens Congress, Barcelona, Spain, 17–22 April 2004***

The congress is an essential event for all involved in plant conservation, with a comprehensive programme of lectures, symposia, roundtable discussions, workshops, debates and posters developed around the congress themes, which include biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, environmental education, botanic research and heritage. Full details of the congress programme—including information on special events, pre-and post-congress tours, excursions and social events are on the congress website: <http://www.bcn.es/medciencias/botanicgardens2004>.