



TRILEPIDEA

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW ZEALAND PLANT CONSERVATION NETWORK

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

Postal address: P.O. Box 16-102, Wellington, New Zealand

E-NEWSLETTER: No 67. JUNE 2009

Deadline for next issue: Monday 13 July 2009

Message from the President

Ecosourcing! For some reason, several people throughout New Zealand and in the U.K. have recently been in communication with me about the topic of 'ecosourcing'. I hasten to say that we are talking about the sourcing of local native plant material for local native plant projects. I mention this because the term 'ecosourcing' has wide usage in connection with recycling and waste recovery. There is a huge market in the sourcing and provision of waste materials and there are ISO and other professional standards that are widely used. Similarly, with ecosourcing (is that really the best word?) of native plant material, there has recently been much discussion about a need for standards with respect to the source of the material. I think there is another aspect to this that is rarely discussed and that is plant community assemblages. On one hand, it is important to obtain material from local sources but then, all too often, the species mix that is used is random and bears no relationship to the original assemblage. We talk a lot about species conservation but little is said about plant communities and all the interactions therein.

From all the communications that I have received, it seems that many individuals, NGO groups, plant nurseries and local government have an interest in ecosourcing native plant material and all seem to have a view about a need for standards or certification. I will refrain from mentioning any particular group because there appear to be so many. I imagine that all readers of this newsletter would be very familiar with the reasons why ecosourcing is so important and equally familiar with the arguments for some kind of certification. So is there a 'dilemma'? I am pleased that Pim de Monchy has provided the newsletter with a brief example and no doubt this will lead to more useful discussion. So please have your say. Do you agree that there is a need for 'certification' of suppliers of ecosourced native plant material? Who would administer the certification? Who would pay for it or how would the certification be funded? Should the Network play a leading role and if so why? I am sorry if this sounds like a list of examination questions but I am currently in the middle of marking many examination scripts.

In my opinion, the definition of 'news' should embrace both the bad and the good. All too often the media promote the bad news whereas there is a lot of good news. This applies to the world of plant conservation and one example, indeed a milestone for plant conservation, is the news from Waitakere City. That city has a new protection policy for threatened species! This is thought to be the first of its kind in the Auckland region. So well done and let's hear more about these kinds of milestones. Having mentioned this, I am reminded yet again about the many previous discussions about whether New Zealand should have legal protection of our most threatened plant species. There are some people who continue to try to promote more discussion but little seems to be happening. Here's another chance for you to have your say! Should there be legislation for protection of plant species in New Zealand? Let's here your views and don't forget to give your reasons. Now back to those examination scripts!

*Ian Spellerberg
Lincoln University*

PLANT OF THE MONTH – *Mida salicifolia*



The leaves of *Mida salicifolia* are typically narrow (above) but tend to be broader in the north (top).

Photos: Jeremy Rolfe.

Mida was described as in gradual decline in 2004, threatened by possum, goat and deer browse. In some places, it is almost extinct from the depredations of these animals. However, it is also common over large parts of its range, though perhaps most abundant on possum-free islands.

The Network fact sheet for *Mida salicifolia* can be found at:

www.nzpcn.org.nz/vascular_plants/detail.asp?PlantID=186

Plant of the month for June is *Mida salicifolia* (maire taike, or willow leaved maire). The genus *Mida* is endemic to the North Island of New Zealand with *M. salicifolia* the sole species in the genus. It grows in lowland forests, forming a small tree up to 6 m tall. It is a member of the sandalwood family (Santalaceae) and, like many other species of this family, can be partially parasitic; often augmenting its nutrient supply by pilfering a feed from another plant's root system.

Mida leaves are shiny mid-green or dark green, and mostly alternate in arrangement, which distinguishes it from similar looking *Nestegis* species that have an opposite arrangement. Small pinkish flowers appear in spring, followed by bright red fruits in late summer.

Mida was described as in gradual decline in

The following article was published by The Press, Christchurch, on Friday 5 June. It is reproduced here with permission.

Native plants need help as exotics push them harder

Ian Spellerberg urges New Zealanders to opt for native plants

Today, 5 June, is World Environment Day and Arbor Day. Trees will be planted in New Zealand and throughout the World.

Launched in the USA in 1872, Arbor Day marks the start of tree planting programmes that will take place not only on that day but at intervals throughout June. It is perhaps time to take stock of the health of nature and particularly our native plants.

If you were looking for any trends, then useful places to start are New Zealand's State of the Environment Reports published in 1997 and 2007. In 1997, Simon Upton wrote in the Preface that 'soil degradation has worsened in some areas, water pollution is common in rural areas, solid waste has increased in many urban areas, greenhouse gas emissions are continuing to increase, and energy wastage through overuse of motor vehicles and inefficient heating in the home and workplace are still the norm'. Twelve years on, are any of these familiar topics?

What about the state of nature in 1997? Nearly 30 percent of the land area was in the conservation estate but at the same most of the landscape was 'ecologically hostile to many native species'. Habitat

destruction had been extensive, particularly in the lowlands and wetlands. Widespread removal of riparian vegetation was noted as an example of 'how, in building our agriculture economy, we have turned much of New Zealand into a biodiversity desert'. Were these emotive words or was it simply stating the facts?

The state of our indigenous plants was also being addressed at that time by both the Department of Conservation and the New Zealand Botanical Society. They produced lists of threatened plants that amounted to just over 300 species (about 13% of native flowering plants). The habitats in which most losses were occurring were coastal areas, grasslands, rock outcrops and wetlands.

Since 1997, the Resource Management Act has been an important vehicle for protecting the natural character of rivers and their margins. Regional and District Councils have been addressing these issues, and so to have organisations such as Fish and Game and the Royal Forest and Bird Society Protection Society. We have seen the launch of many community initiatives to try and restore water quality in our streams and rivers.

The 'Environment New Zealand 2007' report noted that the area of both public and private conservation land had increased, that pest control had received greater attention and become more effective and that conservation efforts had been extended to ecosystems. Loss of native plants was due less to habitat loss and caused more by exotic species. However, lowland forests and wetlands remained as New Zealand's threatened habitats and ecosystems. What about the state of our native plants? It was reckoned that 868 species threatened (about 36%).

A couple of years on, over one third (38%) of our native flora is now considered to be threatened or uncommon according to a recent report in the *New Zealand Journal of Botany*. Overall, the state of our plants is said to be getting worse with 7.6% now regarded as threatened with extinction! The authors of that report conclude that 'we stand to lose from the wild a wealth of botanical diversity, including such iconic species as the kakabeak'. What doesn't help is the fact that we have relatively few people in New Zealand with the expertise to provide the science on which to base conservation of our native plants.

In the lowlands of Canterbury the fate of native plants has not been good and is typical of the historical loss of native plants on lowlands throughout New Zealand. More than 99.5% of native plant cover has gone from the Canterbury plains and downs. Where are the native hedgerows and shelterbelts? Less than 0.3% of roadside verges in lowland Canterbury have native plants. The Canterbury landscape looks clean and green but there is hardly a native plant to be seen!

It's not something that we would promote to tourists but the fact is that since humans arrived in New Zealand, this country has had one of the highest rates of extinction of species in the world. This has been due to habitat loss and the introduction of plants and animals. There are now more naturalised exotic species of plants in New Zealand than there are native species. Between 12 and 15 exotic plant species become naturalised in our environment every year. In brief, every exotic tree is displacing a native tree. Do we really want our children to grow up believing that macrocarpas, poplars, pampas grass and lupins are natives?

Exotic plants are fundamental to our agriculture, horticulture and plantation forestry. Our native plants and native plant communities are our heritage and we should rightly be proud of unique flora. Unique they are because 82% of the vascular species are found only in New Zealand. We have native orchids, there are native plants pollinated by native bats, our native plants have extraordinary features. They can weave resilience into our working lands. They have historical, cultural, ecological and economic value.

The stock take of the state of our native plants reveals a sad state of affairs. So what's being done? There are unsung native plant heroes doing all they can, often at their own expense, to restore and replace our native heritage. They are doing the right thing by not only using native plants but using locally sourced plants.

Native plant nurseries provide not only the locally sourced plants but also heaps of valuable tips about choices for colour, fast growing species, ground cover, plants for dry sites, plants for attracting insects and birds, plants for shelter and even native plants for lawns.

A wealth of information is available from several organisations including the Department of Conservation and the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. The latter has a web site that is a one stop shop for all you need to know about native plants.

The quality of nature conservation in New Zealand has received world recognition, thanks in part to the Department of Conservation's mainland island projects, species recovery programmes and the conservation programmes on offshore islands.

However, despite all these good efforts, the results of the stock take show that we need to do more. In my opinion, we should ask all councils to adopt a policy of planting only natives on public land. This would help to offset the historical loss of native plants. Native trees could be used far more widely as street trees and in school, college and university grounds. Native plants can also be used in the rapidly increasing number of community gardens and orchards. Combining native plants amongst vegetable allotments and orchards makes good sense because the native will help to attract native wildlife.

In my opinion, we should re-assess the role of botanic gardens. In parts of Australia, some of their botanic gardens have native only policies. Their argument is based on a pride in their local flora. People travel from all over the world to see these examples of native botanic gardens.

If there were to be a theme for this year's Arbor Day and World Environment Day, I suggest it should be 'plant a native for Arbor day'. Check out the Arbor Day planting projects of your local council, school or club and go plant a native with pride!

Conservation of *Brachyglottis kirkii*

Rewi Elliot, Curator/Manger, Otari Native Botanic Garden (rewi.elliott@wcc.govt.nz)



Brachyglottis kirkii, Tararua Forest Park.
Photo: Andrew Townsend.

Recently, two colleagues in the plant conservation field and I made a couple of trips to gather *Brachyglottis kirkii* var. *kirkii*, which is critically threatened in the Wellington region. We visited two areas, spotting fewer than 20 plants in all. Not all plants were large enough to propagate from, but several dozen cuttings were taken. The resulting plants will be planted into conservation areas such as Otari Native Botanic Garden and the Karori Sanctuary, as well as back into the wild.

It was great to visit these sites and make some progress with this species, but what also made these two trips for me was that the two people I went with were from the Department of Conservation and Greater Wellington Regional Council. With Wellington City Council as my employer, we have a trio of local, regional and central government battling for Kirk's daisy. The respective roles we had on these two instances show how we all have a part to play.

On this occasion, DOC initiated the trip and will facilitate the distribution of the plants, Greater Wellington supplied a four-wheel drive vehicle and keys to the gates (the plants are on the

Greater Wellington estate), and Wellington City Council the facilities for propagation. We now look forward to continuing this work with other species and, although I know similar collaboration goes on all over New Zealand, I encourage anyone who sees the occasion to work in partnership to seize the opportunity.

Eco-sourcing dilemma

Pim de Monchy Environment Bay of Plenty (pim.demonchy@envbop.govt.nz.)

Neither the NZPCN website nor the references I have available distinguish between two ‘forms’ of kowhangatara (*Spinifex sericeus*)—eastern and western. Until now, Coast Care Bay of Plenty has always used eastern spinifex because it is the form occurring naturally in the Bay of Plenty. However, the western form appears more vigorous and has a wider leaf blade, potentially making it a more effective sand binder. This has been recognised by Coromandel Coast Care folk (and nursery staff). They have started using western spinifex in their work even on the east coast of the Coromandel. I would like to trial a few thousand western form plants in the Bay of Plenty in places where we are struggling to get a foredune established because of both human and natural pressures. This presents a dilemma between purist eco-sourcing and taking the nurseryman’s approach of searching out the most suitable plants for a particular job.

I would welcome feedback from NZPCN members. I can be reached by e-mail at: pim.demonchy@envbop.govt.nz.

Waitakere’s threatened species get new policy protection

Ensuring threatened plants and animals in the west do not become extinct is the purpose of a new policy adopted by Waitakere City Council. The threatened species policy details projects that will help the recovery of species such as the kererū, long-tailed bat and fernbird as well as threatened plant species in the urban area.



The new policy aims to preserve Waitakere’s unique environmental heritage

The Waitakere Threatened Species Management Policy sets out clear goals for the protection of species and methods for their recovery. It also provides guidance to staff on how best to manage these species.

“The overall goal is to have the number of threatened species not only reduced, but to get their populations thriving,” says [Policy and Strategy Committee](#) chair [Penny Hulse](#). “There is no doubt urban development is putting pressure on our natural environment, which is why this policy is important because it gives staff a tool to guide them when they are planning projects.”

The policy is believed to be the first of its kind in the Auckland region and cements the council’s commitment to protect the unique environmental heritage of Waitakere. A pioneer member of the of Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI’s) [Local Action for Biodiversity](#) (LAB), the council is one of 21 cities worldwide involved in the project. LAB participants focus on local action and delivery according to a five-step process. Each city has to produce a biodiversity report documenting its biodiversity and management, sign the Durban Commitment on Biodiversity, develop and implement long-term strategy and action plans and agree to implement them, and five new biodiversity initiatives. Waitakere has completed four of these initiatives and is working its way to the fifth.

Waitakere was also the first city to produce a Local Biodiversity Action Plan, which has been recognised as an example for others to follow. Waitakere has 46 animal and 160 plant species that are considered to be threatened, as reported in the most recent audits of the region’s plants and animals (including invertebrates) carried out last year.

The definition of threatened can mean anything from just a few examples still living, to a recognised dwindling of numbers. “As we prepare to move into a new era of regional governance, in Waitakere we want to make sure that we have done what we can to ensure policies are in place to ensure the west’s biodiversity is in good health for future generations,” said Cr Hulse.

Information on the status of New Zealand lichens needed

The Department of Conservation is calling for information on the current population status of New Zealand's lichens to allow the department to assess their threat status. This information will be used in the same process as that used recently to assess the current threat status of New Zealand's vascular plants and avifauna.

People with information about the population status of any lichen, or who feel that a particular lichen is threatened, are invited to submit the information via email (threatstatus@doc.govt.nz), or to the DOC website under "Getting involved" (web address: www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/consultations/current/new-listing-of-threatened-status-of-new-zealand-lichens/).

An expert panel will assess all the available information and the results will be published. The deadline for submissions is 30 September 2009.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Auckland Botanical Society

Field trip: Saturday 20 June to the Upper Huia Dam walkway.

Contact: Maureen Young (e-mail: youngmaureen@xtra.co.nz).

Meeting: Wednesday 1 July at 7.30 p.m. a talk by 1 July Nick Waipara titled "Kauri PTA disease". Venue: Unitec School of Natural Sciences Gate 3, Building 023, Room 1018.

Contact: Maureen Young (e-mail: youngmaureen@xtra.co.nz).

Field trip: Saturday 18 July to the QE II forest at Whitford.

Contact: Maureen Young (e-mail: youngmaureen@xtra.co.nz).

Waikato Botanical Society

Field trip: Saturday 11 July will be a Threatened Plant Collection Working Bee. Please bring gloves, old clothes and boots for weeding, planting and propagating activities. Meet: 9.45 a.m. at Waikato University Gate 9, Hillcrest Rd.

Contact: Liz Overdyck
ph: 846 0965,
e-mail: eg3@waikato.ac.nz.

Rotorua Botanical Society

Meeting: Monday 22 June will be the Annual General Meeting. Venue: 99 Sala Street, DOC office (to be confirmed). Time: evening (to be confirmed). Following the AGM and a meal there will be a slide show. Everybody is asked to bring along some slides of their botanical expeditions to share with the group.

Field Trip: Sunday 5 July to Pongakawa Ecological Area. Meet: The car park at 8.30 a. m. or the corner of Pongakawa and Rotoehu Roads Grid ref V15 178 511 at 9.15 a.m. Grade: Medium.

Leader : John Hobbs
ph: 07 348 6620,
e-mail: jffhobbs@paradise.net.nz.

Wellington Botanical Society

Meeting: Monday 20 July at 7.30 p.m. a talk by Heidi Meudt, research scientist, Te Papa, on "Biogeography, phylogeny, and taxonomy of *Ourisia* – A research synopsis".

Venue: Victoria University, Wellington, Lecture Theatre 101, Murphy Building, Kelburn Parade.

Field trip: Saturday 4 July to Otari-Wilton's Bush. Meet: 9.00 a.m. at Te Marae o Tane Information Centre, Otari-Wilton's Bush, 160 Wilton Rd, Wilton. Transport: catch no. 14 Wilton bus Kilbirnie 8.00 a.m., Courtenay Place, 8.15 a.m., Molesworth St 8.19 a.m.; alight at stop in Warwick St.

Co-Leaders: Rewi Elliot (walk), ph: 04 475 3245 (w), Bev Abbott (recording session), ph: 04 475 8468.

Nelson Botanical Society

Field trip: Sunday 21 June to two Orinoco covenants.

Leader: Philip Lissaman, QEII, ph: 03 5266114.

Meeting: Tuesday 23 June, 7.30 p.m. Cockayne Lecture, a talk by Professor Peter Lockhart, Massey University, on "Recent discoveries and new sequencing technologies being used to understand the nature and future of New Zealand plant species". Note the date.

Venue: Lecture theatre A211, Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology, 322 Hardy St, Nelson. Gold coin entry.

Field Trip: Sunday 19 July to Golden Downs wetland. Meet: Nelson Cathedral steps at 9.00 a.m.

Leader and contact: Diana Pittham 03 545 1985.

Meeting: Monday 20 July, 7.30 p.m. a talk by Uta Purcell titled "Plants of Nepal". Uta will show slides of her latest trip to Nepal including many alpine plant species she found while botanising the flanks of the Himalayas.

Venue: Jaycees Room, Founders Park, Nelson.

Canterbury Botanical Society

Meeting: Friday 3 July at 7.30 p.m. a talk by Jenny Ladley, Biological Sciences, University of Canterbury, on "Recent research in pollination and germination".

Venue: Room A5 University of Canterbury.

Field trip: Saturday 4 July to Christchurch Botanic Gardens newly renovated fernery and the new native plant demonstration gardens.

Meet: at 10.00 a.m. outside the Botanic Gardens Information Centre.

Show Weekend Camp 2009: 13–15 November, South-Eastern Bays, Banks Peninsula.

Contact: Gillian Giller, ph: 03 313 5315, for further information.

Summer Camp 2010: 15–22 January at the Glen Mary Ski Club, Lake Ohau.

Contact: Gillian Giller, ph: 03 313 5315, for bookings or further information.

Botanical Society of Otago

Field trip: Saturday 20 June, to Sullivan's Dam for a ferns field trip. Meet: 8.30 a.m. Botany car park.

Contact: [John Steel](#), ph: 03 479 4572.

4th National Wetland Restoration Symposium

Wetland Management and Restoration (Freshwater and Estuarine): The symposium will held in Rotorua on March 3–5, 2010. Online registration: www.wetlandtrust.org.nz; earlybird registrations opened 1 June 2009.

Contact: National Wetlands Symposium 2010, The Organiser, ph: 07 343 1732, e-mail: theorganiser@RotoruaNZ.com.
