Hypolepis amaurorachis

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, EF, PD, SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Ferns

FLOWER COLOURS
No flowers

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Rhizome long-creeping, 20–25 mm diam., covered in red-brown hairs. Stipes 70–230–(450) mm long, 1.0–3.5 mm diameter, dark red-brown, bearing abundant colourless or pale-brown glandular hairs up to 2 mm long. **Laminae** narrowly ovate to ovate, 150–550 × 100–350 mm, bipinnate at apex, tripinnate at base. **Rachis** dark red-brown at base becoming paler above and often green at apex, densely covered in colourless or pale-brown glandular hairs up to 1.5 mm long. **Primary pinnae** in 15–30 pairs + pinnatifid apex, opposite or alternate, lower arising at (20)–30–70°, upper ones at 70–90°, longest ones below the middle 50–200 × 20–90 mm; lowest pairs 30–100 mm apart, middle ones 15–50 mm apart; upper ones parallel-sided or narrowly ovate, lower ones ovate or narrowly ovate. **Secondary pinnae** ovate to ± parallel-sided, longest 5–45 × 10–20 mm, those on the lower pinnae decreasing markedly in length along the pinnae. **Tertiary pinnae** up to 6 × 10 mm, deeply incised reaching margin at a tooth apex. **Hairs**: colourless glandular hairs (0.3–0.7 mm on laminae, up to 1 mm on midribs) interspersed with a few bristly colourless hairs densely covering both surfaces of lamina, lamina margins, and pinna midribs and costae. **Sori** in 1–3 pairs on ultimate pinnules, originating away from margin, slightly protected by reflexed margins of pinnules. **Spores** pale brown, echinate.

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SIMILAR TAXA
Most frequently confused with the hybrid *Hypolepis ambigua* × *H. rufobarbata*, which has a superficially similarity. However, this hybrid is sterile (the spores are aborted), and has much larger, coarser, dark green to reddish-green fronds that are scarcely as glandular hairy, and so less sticky. It could also be confused with *H. lactea* but that species has more strongly deltoid dark green fronds, darker rachises, and shorter, colourless glandular hairs on the fronds. These often rupture leaving a milky exudate covering the frond surfaces. *Hypolepis amaurorhacis* could also be confused with *H. ambigua*. However, that species has much larger, more coarsely divided non-glandular hairy fronds.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand: southern South Island (Catlins and Fiordland coastline), Rēkohu / Wharekauri / Chatham Island, Auckland Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku. Australia: Victoria and Tasmania.

HABITAT
A short-lived species favouring freshly disturbed ground in coastal habitats and lowland forest (Not far from the coast). Often frequenting the margins of seal haul outs, and sea bird colonies, also present along track sides. On Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku it grows where elephant seals congregate and also in and around tussock grasses in places kept open by the passage of seals and sea birds.

THREATS
Hypolepis amaurorachis is a naturally uncommon, biological sparse species occupying freshly distrubed coastal and lowland habitats. It is probably short-lived and so transient, appearing in suitable habitats as and when the opportunity arise.

GENUS
Hypolepis

FAMILY
Dennstaedtiaceae

AUTHORITY
Hypolepis amaurorachis (Kunze) Hook.

SYNONYMS
Hypolepis subantarctica Brownsey et Chinnock; Polypodium rugosulum sensu Hook.f.; Polypodium viscidum sensu Hook.f.; Hypolepis rugosula sensu Dobbie; Hypolepis subantarctica Brownsey et Chinnock; Polypodium punctatum sensu Cheeseman; Cheilanthes amaurorachis Kunze; Dryopteris punctata sensu Cheeseman

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Minute spores are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Unknown. However, probably easily grown in a cool, peaty soil in full sun.

ETYMOLOGY
hypolepis: From the greek hypo (under) and lepis (scale), referring to the position of the sori on the ferns

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 104

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, EF, SO, Sp
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: EF, SO, Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: SO, EF
2004 | Sparse
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, Rel, Sp Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Brownsey PJ, Chinnock RJ. 1984. A Taxonomic revision of the New Zealand species of *Hypolepis*. *New Zealand Journal of Botany 22(1)*: 43–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/0028825X.1984.10425234.
Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11*: 285–309. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (6 March 2008). Description from Brownsey & Chinnock (1984).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/hypolepis-amaurorachis/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026