

# Leptopteris superba

## COMMON NAMES

heruheru, crêpe fern, Prince of Wales feathers

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Ferns

## FLOWER COLOURS

No flowers

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

**Trunks** up to 1 m tall. **Stipes** 15–80 mm long, pale brown, woolly hairy, with ear-like lobes at base. **Fron**d delicate, membranous, translucent, laminae elliptic, tapering equally to base and apex, 3-pinnate, 0.25–0.1 m long × 80–250 mm wide, dark emerald green, woolly hairy, veins free. **Primary pinnae** in 35–60 pairs, crowded, basal pinnae 5–10 mm long. **Ultimate segments** linear, sticking up at 90° to plane of frond. **Sporangia** scattered on underside of pinnae (not in discrete sori), though tending to be more abundant toward frond centre. (Description modified from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth (2000)).

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Leptopteris hymenophylloides* differs by its longer stipe, triangular frond, longer and broader pinnae, and by its ultimate lamina segments flattened in one plane. Where both species meet they commonly hybridise.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (from Waipoua Forest south but scarce north of Auckland), South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura.

## HABITAT

Widespread in dense forest though it is mainly found in montane forest in the northern part of its range. It is especially luxuriant in areas of high rainfall reaching its greatest densities on the West Coast of the South Island

## GENUS

Leptopteris

## FAMILY

Osmundaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Leptopteris superba* (Colenso) C. Presl

## SYNONYMS

*Todea superba* Colenso; *Osmunda superba* (Colenso) J.B.Armstr.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes



*Leptopteris superba*, Mount Cargill, Dunedin. Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 29/04/2020, Licence: CC BY.



Sori, Rimutaka Forest Park. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 25/08/2012, Licence: CC BY.

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

N.A.

## FRUITING

N.A.

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Minute spores are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al. 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Rather difficult. Best results are obtained where specimens are planted in a shaded, cool, humid site in deep humus enriched soil. Plants must never be allowed to dry out. By and large this species is only suitable for specialist cultivation and it is probably best to admire it in the wild rather than to try and grow it.

## ETYMOLOGY

**leptopteris**: Thin fern; from the Greek leptos and pteris

**superba**: Superb

## NVS CODE

LEPSUP

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 44

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland](#)" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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, Smith-Dodsworth JC. 2000. New Zealand Ferns and Allied Plants. David Bateman, Auckland, NZ. 168 p.

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 10 March 2011. Description modified from Brownsey & Smith-Dodsworth 2000.

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/leptopteris-superba/>

