

	1	2	3	4
<i>H. multifidum</i>	x	x	x	
<i>H. pulcherrimum</i>	x			
<i>H. rarum</i>	x		x	
<i>H. revolutum</i>	x		x	
<i>H. sanguinolentum</i>	x	x	x	
<i>H. scabrum</i>			x	
<i>Hypolepis ambigua</i>	x		x	
<i>H. distans</i> (E.K. Cameron)				x
<i>H. lactea</i>			x	
<i>H. rufobarbata</i>	x		x	
<i>Lastreopsis glabella</i>			x	
<i>L. hispida</i>			x	
<i>Leptolepia novae-zelandiae</i>			x	
<i>Leptopteris hymenophylloides</i>	x		x	
<i>L. superba</i>	x			
<i>L. hymenophylloides</i> x <i>L. superba</i>	x			
<i>Lindsaea trichomanoides</i>			x	
<i>Lygodium articulatum</i>			x	
<i>Paesia scaberula</i>	x		x	
<i>Phymatosorus diversifolius</i>	x		x	
<i>P. scandens</i>			x	
<i>Pneumatopteris pennigera</i>	x		x	
<i>Polystichum richardii</i>	x		x	
<i>P. silvaticum</i>	x			
<i>P. vestitum</i>	x	x		
<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>	x	x	x	
<i>Pteris pendula</i> ( <i>P. macilenta</i> auct.)			x	
<i>P. tremula</i>				x
<i>Pyrrhosia serpens</i>			x	
<i>Rumohra adiantiformis</i>			x	
<i>Schizaea bifida</i> (CHR 371334)				x
<i>S. fistulosa</i> (CHR 371333)				x
<i>Sticherus cunninghamii</i>	x			
<i>Trichomanes endlicherianum</i>			x	
<i>T. elongatum</i> (CHR 371346)			x	
<i>T. venosum</i>	x		x	

## Mistletoes: are urban parks ideal habitats?

*Syd Moore<sup>1</sup>*

An article "Where have all the mistletoes gone?" by Colin Ogle and Peter Wilson (*Forest & Bird* 16(3), August 1985) suggested that possum browsing is a significant cause of marked regional declines of mistletoe occurrences.

"Forest & Bird" must be commended for publishing well-illustrated items such as this for the lay person. It so raised my awareness of mistletoes that I recognised there are many of them in Benge Park, next door to my home. The species of mistletoe here is *Ileostylus micranthus* (Colin Macdonald, Colin Ogle, and Tony Druce, pers. comm.).

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This population of *I. micranthus* seems to contain at least 22 specimens, on at least three different mature host species. Eleven of 15 bushes of poataniwha (*Melicope simplex*) host up to five plants of *I. micranthus* each. One of three rohutu (*Lophomyrtus obcordata*) host one specimen. One mistletoe specimen was seen in each of two of the 25 or more mature totara (*Podocarpus totara*) in the reserve.

One large mistletoe specimen 4 m up in a totara was brought to my attention by Don Merton of the Wildlife Service. He lives by the park and had seen this one several years ago, but was unaware of the others. The second mistletoe on a totara is 10 m up and about 100 m north of the other.

There are many fully mature titoki (*Alectryon excelsus*), kowhai (*Sophora microphylla*), matai (*Prumnopitys taxifolia*), and manatu (*Plagianthus regius*), and several semi-mature kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*) at Benge Park, but none of these appear to host mistletoes.

It seems reasonable to suggest that this pocket is a remnant of the forest which once covered the floor of the Hutt Valley. Benge Park covers 0.98 ha and arose as a reserve contribution from a sub-division of a pocket of bush by timber-miller Arthur Clouston about 35 years ago. This bush pocket had been surrounded by farmland for at least the previous 30 years. It lies on part of an old river braid, now isolated from the main Hutt River by a stopbank. Kowhai trees line the old braid. Apart from tall, sub-canopy shrubs of rohutu and poataniwha, there is no undergrowth as the park is mown regularly. The western half of the park has no tree cover at all, and there are children's swings and seesaws on the south-east corner.

Some surrounding residential sections have retained mature trees from the same bush pocket. In particular, two properties to the north which total 0.43 ha have about 30 tawa trees between them. No mistletoes can be found on trees surrounding Benge Park.

Partial, and even possibly complete, isolation from browsing by the valley's burgeoning possum population was enhanced by housing development completely around this park. Maybe this ensured the mistletoes' survival?

Note the only other recent record of leafy mistletoes in the Wellington region, made, incidentally, in the Wellington Botanical Society's inventory of the region's threatened plants, was for a plant of *Ileostylus micranthus* on an isolated rohutu shrub, 7 km south of this park (ibid).

The hypothesis that isolated reserves protect mistletoes against possums could be tested by Botanical Society members examining their local parks which have isolated remnants of bush.

#### Editor's Note:

In December 1986 Dr George Gibbs of Victoria University of Wellington showed me a small specimen of flowering *Peraxilla tetrapetala* from a black beech tree (*Nothofagus solandri* var. *solandri*) in forest above Eastbourne. He has seen only a single mistletoe shrub in that area recently. The specimen was lodged with the National Museum herbarium.