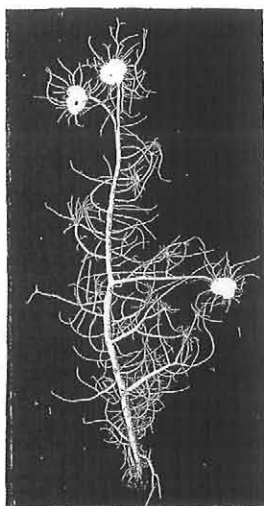


Permanent photographic points for following vegetation trends:
A 29-year record from Mt Aspiring National Park, New Zealand.

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A vegetation survey of the extensive (287 200ha), generally mountainous and remote Mt Aspiring National Park in 1968-69 coincided with a drastic reduction in the uncontrolled feral red deer populations through commercial hunting using helicopters. The generally depleted vegetation was monitored with 88 permanent photographic points established in 1970-71 to represent the wide range of vegetation zones (lowland to high-alpine) and types (forests, shrublands, tussock grasslands, fellfields, snowbanks). They were marked on site (metal stakes) and on aerial photographs. Precise photographs and descriptions of local plant cover, using ranked values for species, with notes on any animal sign, were recorded. Sites have been remonitored four times up to 1999. Fourteen have been lost to date, mainly through snow removal of markers, but sufficient remain to provide a reliable record of trends. Vegetation condition has generally improved as animal numbers have remained very low. Numerous bluffs have provided refuges and seed sources for palatable species. Responses have varied with community type: subalpine scrub and low-alpine snow tussockland communities show the greatest recovery (they may now be close to their pre-disturbed state in many areas); forests have generally improved but high-alpine communities show little change. This monitoring information is valuable for park management and interpretation and, despite its high cost (c. NZ \$10000), should be continued at about decade intervals while threats of exotic ungulates (and some aggressive exotic plants, e.g. *Hieracium lepidulum*) persist.



Usnea sp.

One of the 'Old Man's Beard'
lichens that hang from branches in
'Goblin Forests'