

## Taraxacology

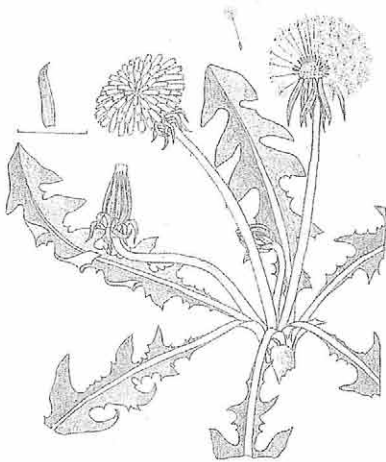
I welcome the contributions in Issue 28 from Lloyd Esler, at the southern edge of our Society's range. Lloyd does a superb job awakening enthusiasm for nature in the youth of Southland. A whole generation there will be inspired by his efforts. His idea of Science Badges seems to be yet another excellent idea for enthusing them.

Lloyd mentions a number of badges, but says they decided not to include taraxacology. I ask him to reconsider this. There are more than 1200 species of *Taraxacum* (dandelion) in the world. We have no idea how many of these, or which ones, we have in New Zealand. The Flora of N.Z. admits that we are totally ignorant of this, and lists only two: one native and one exotic. I see this as nothing short of disgraceful. In what other group of plants do we have no idea what species are present in New Zealand?

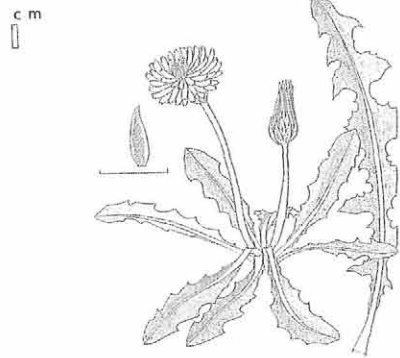
Taraxacology is an ideal subject for the amateur botanist. Most of our Taraxaca have probably arrived from Britain, and their Taraxaca are well known (Dudman & Richards 1997). University and Landcare botanists would find it difficult to justify such basic research these days, but if Lloyd could inspire just one amateur by instituting a badge for taraxacology he would have done yet another service to botany in New Zealand.

**Reference:** Dudman, A.A. & Richards, A.J. (1997) *Dandelions of Great Britain and Ireland* [B.S.B.I. Handbook no. 9]. Botanical Society of the British Isles, London.

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*Taraxacum officinale* (dandelion)



*Taraxacum magellanicum* (native dandelion)

Illustrations from Hugh Wilson's Field guide: *Stewart Island Plants*, Field Guide Publications, NZ