

Department of Conservation publications, such as the new threatened species classifications and lists, may be ordered by contacting:

DOC Science Publishing
Science and Technical Centre
Department of Conservation
PO Box 10420
WELLINGTON

Phone: (04) 471 3285
VPN: 8285
Fax: (04)496 1929
Email: science.publications@doc.govt.nz

Web Sites and a Bulletin Board

TAXACOM: A Botanical Bulletin Board System

David Orlovich

Taxacom is an email list that has been around since the days when the internet was still the special domain of University students and geeky researchers, before our society was thrown headfirst into what we now know as 'the web'. In 1987, it's quite possible you had a personal computer at home, but email wasn't common outside universities or research organisations, and there you had to log in to a 'mainframe computer' (not as powerful as my office computer) without the benefit of drop down menus, fancy graphics and auto-completing address books.

On the 12th January 1987, Richard Zander, the Curator of Botany at the Buffalo Museum in New York State started a bulletin board, where botanists around the world could meet - in virtual space that is - and discuss the exciting new world of 'taxonomic computing' - or Taxacom for short. The original plans were grand - to even include an online electronic journal called Flora Online that was free from the constraints of the paper press. I joined and left Taxacom several times over the 16 years that it has been running as my interest in taxonomy and systematics has woven it's winding path to where I am today (wherever that is!).

On any given day I might have between 0 and 30 emails from Taxacom subscribers. On a quiet day, I can only presume Taxacomers (as they're known) are busy slaving over plant presses, microscopes and 150 year old species descriptions written in a language now only spoken by peasants in Lesser Antillies. On a busy day - well ... emails fly from one bunker to another as Taxacomers argue about anything related to their increasingly threatened, but increasingly important jobs - the impact of molecular biology on 'traditional' taxonomy, fighting the revolutionaries who are trying to defile the Linnaean system of classification by introducing a new code called the Phylocode (or 'defile-o-code' as someone said!).

The debate between cladistic and 'eclectic' classification always gets people typing, and even - you guessed it - a good discussion on the use of humorous, trivial or altogether

outrageous names people give to new species of plants or animals. You can subscribe to Taxacom at http://biodiversity.uno.edu/mail_archives/taxacom/ - you don't have to post any emails - just lurk for a while and see if you like it. I've found that being part of Taxacom is a great way to become part of a wider taxonomic and systematic community. Taxacom's subscribers also include a healthy number of entomologists - so it's not just for botanists. You'll find that the diversity of people and personalities make Taxacom a lively, interesting, educational and sometimes downright annoying email list - one that is certainly worth a try if you've got an interest in taxonomy.

Curiosities of Biological Nomenclature

Allison Knight

Val S, of Melbourne, another TAXACOMer, passed on the home page of Doug Yanega, who, among other things, collects quirky plant and animal names. Even *Hebejeebie* featured there, but since then the site has been hit by a virus and is out of action. But checking it lead me to Mark Isaak's home page: - <http://home.earthlink.net/~misaak/taxonomy.html>, which has a funny and informative page on the rules for naming animal, plant and microbiological species. It also has a long list of curious name, mainly animal, but with a few raunchy plants thrown in.

How to identify a macrolichen

Allison Knight

Quite a few of our lichens have affinity with North American lichens, so the website of the Farlow Herbarium at Harvard is worth a look. Try out the section on identifying macrolichens: <http://www.huh.harvard.edu/collections/lichens/howto.html> It could be useful, especially if you are coming to our Lichens on Twigs Workshop.

NZ Threat Classification System Update

Rod Hitchmough

The documents describing the New Zealand Threat Classification system (Molloy et al 2002; Threatened Species Occasional Publication 22), and listing the taxa identified as threatened or data deficient (Hitchmough 2002; Threatened Species Occasional Publication 23) were published at the end of 2002. The initial print run immediately ran out, but a reprint is currently under way. **Please note that with the publication of these new lists, the Molloy and Davis (1994) A,B,C etc. categories, and de Lange et al (1999) lists have become obsolete and should no longer be used.**

The DOC documents can also be accessed on the internet and the lists are available as an excel spreadsheet, which is easier to search for individual species. To access the documents, open the DOC website : <http://www.doc.govt.nz/> then follow the following series of links: Publications>Science & Research>Biodiversity Recovery Unit Publications>Threatened Species Occasional Publications>Numbers 22 & 23.

(abridged from NZ Botanical Newsletter Number 72, June 2003)