

Yellow wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) (Gentianaceae) growing near Warkworth

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In the June 2005 issue of the Auckland Botanical Society Journal an article by Ewen Cameron (2005) gave an introduction, and the history, naturalisation and distribution of the pretty little yellow-flowered annual exotic herb, yellow wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) (see footnote), in New Zealand (Cameron 2005). Ewen pointed out that in Britain it occurs on calcareous grassland, bare chalk and dunes, and in New Zealand it seems to be found on dunes and in areas where limestone is common. At that time, on the distribution map shown in Ewen's article, there were no herbarium specimens collected from the Rodney District.

Since then, I and several others (see Table 1), have found yellow wort to be quite common along the edges of some roads around Warkworth, almost exclusively on unsealed roads. Ewen was puzzled

Footnote: The opposite leaves of yellow wort are united at the base so they look as if there is only one double-ended leaf, and the stem appears to pass through this leaf. The species name, *perfoliata*, refers to this – “per” through, and “folia” leaf.

that the locations I described were nowhere near the limestone deposits for which Warkworth is well known. It has taken some time for the penny to drop with me, as to why this might be. When I was a child most of the unsealed roads in the district were paved with limestone, as this was the most easily accessible stone (girls never had to worry about cadging a piece of chalk to draw hop-scotch grids, as there was always a lump of limestone to hand). As a teenager, when I and my friends rode our bikes to Sandspit in the school holidays so we could go sailing, we would arrive home, not looking quite like polar bears, but still covered with a good dusting of white powder from the limestone-paved roads. Even now, after many years of greywacke being the gravel of choice, the white pebbles of limestone are still visible along the edges of the roads, and no doubt they still raise a bit of dust.

The population that first set me thinking along these lines grows along the sides of the unsealed Wilson Road leading down to the Old Cement Works on the banks of the Mahurangi River, downstream



Figs. 1 & 2: 1. Yellow wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) growing on the unsealed Wilson Road, Warkworth. 2. Close-up of yellow wort flower, approx. 26 mm diam. Photos: Vivienne Patterson, Nov 2022.

Table 1. Voucher specimens from Rodney District in Auckland Museum herbarium (AK)

Voucher No.	Notes
AK 297731	A big population, clay road cutting, Waiwhiu, Conical Peak Road; <i>ME Young s.n.</i> , 28 Oct 2006
AK 329742	Many plants, roadside bank, Matakana, Valley Road; <i>CD Kilgour 1269</i> , 8 Dec 2011
AK 329769	Locally common in roadside drain, Port Albert Limeworks, Underwood Road; <i>CD Kilgour 1479 & JR Robertson</i> , 14 Dec 2011
AK 336909	Locally common, roadside, edge of road shingle; Pohuehue, forestry road; <i>J Salter s.n.</i> , 12 Jan 2013
AK 375908	Abundant, edge of gravel road; Whangateau, Birdsall Road; <i>ME Young s.n.</i> , 14 Dec 2015
AK 380959	Common along roadside for c.1 km (limestone gravel common), Warkworth, Wilson Road leading to old cement works; <i>ME Young s.n.</i> , 30 Nov 2019

from Warkworth. When I noted the yellow wort growing abundantly on the road sides it was a very pretty sight with the yellow, many-petalled flowers at their peak. Since then, some roadside tidying has reduced the population, but there are still some plants to be found (Figs. 1, 2). This road also has a layer of greywacke gravel,

but limestone from previous days is still visible scattered among the grey stones.

Acknowledgement

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Reference

Cameron, E.K. 2005: Yellow wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) (Gentianaceae) hitchhikes south? *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 60(1): 42-45.

Book Launch: "*Nature in the city*" at The Bistro, Cornwall Park, Auckland, 3 March 2023

Mike Wilcox



Fig. 1. Bec Stanley, Auckland Bot Soc President, and MC for the occasion. All photos (except Fig. 2) by Joshua Salter, 3 Mar 2023.

A convivial group of 50 or so Bot Soc members and invited guests gathered at 4 pm at the Bistro in Cornwall Park to celebrate the arrival of *Nature in the City*. It was a memorable occasion. Refreshments were provided by Andrew Bell and staff of Cornwall Park Eateries Ltd.

Bec Stanley, MC and Auckland Bot Soc President

Bec welcomed everyone, outlined the history and activities of the Auckland Botanical Society, and introduced the speakers (Fig. 1).

Anthony Wright, Auckland Bot Soc Life Member and a former Auckland Bot Soc President, Director of the Canterbury Museum

*Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa
Piki mai, kake mai, tauti mai, ki ngā maunga o tēnei
hui, Maungakiekie*