

A TAXONOMIC PERSPECTIVE ON CONSERVATION

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of plant taxonomy is to provide a stable and reliable system of classification that reflects natural biological patterns and processes in the plant world. Taxonomic research provides the knowledge for biodiversity studies and inventories, and underpins a wide range of disciplines including conservation. Plant taxonomists have made significant contribution to conservation in New Zealand. For example, during the past 10 years over 50% of the new species described from New Zealand have been ranked on the New Zealand threatened plant list. In the New Zealand flora recent and rapid radiations and widespread and variable species pose difficult taxonomic problems that often limit our understanding of biodiversity and patterns of endemism. Contemporary evolution and the continuing loss of biodiversity are current issues that are of concern to both the taxonomist and conservationist. Future taxonomic research on genera with substantial numbers of putative unnamed taxa will continue to underpin biodiversity and conservation management.

Editor's note. Peter Heenan wrote a full version of this paper. Appraisal of the paper in the course of editorial procedures applied by Landcare Research that are needed to obtain approval for the submission of papers for publication required changes that Peter was not prepared to implement.