

Gowardia nigricans

COMMON NAME

Gray witch's hair

SYNONYMS

Alectoria nigricans, *Cornicularia ochroleuca* β *nigricans*

FAMILY

Parmeliaceae

AUTHORITY

Gowardia nigricans (Ach.) P.Halonen, L.Myllys, S.Velmala & H.Hyvärinen

FLORA CATEGORY

Lichen – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Lichens - Fruticose

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2018 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Characterised by the terreticulous habit; the erect to decumbent, rather straggling growth form; the terete to basally compressed branches which are dark-brown to black at the apices and pale pinkish to pale fawnish brown towards the base; pseudocyphellae (use $\times 10$ lens) on mature branches, elongate, fusiform, white, to 0.8 mm long, plane, concave or subconvex; and the fleeting KC+ rose and C+ rose reaction. It frequently stains herbarium packets brown on storage.

DISTRIBUTION

North Island: Gisborne (Mt Hikurangi), Wellington (Kaimanawa Ranges, Ruahine Ranges, Tararua Ranges). **South Island:** Nelson (Cobb Valley, Mt Arthur, St Arnaud Range, Mt Peel, Crimea Range), Canterbury (Craigieburn Range) southwards to the mountains of Fiordland, though mainly occurring on drier ranges E of the Main Divide, and throughout the Central Otago ranges. **Stewart Island/Rakiura:** (Mt Anglem). **Campbell Island:** (Mt Honey). It is a circumpolar species in the Northern Hemisphere and also in the Southern Hemisphere where it is known from Tierra del Fuego, Tasmania, New South Wales, The Falkland Island, South Georgia, South Orkney Island, South Shetland Island and the Antarctic Peninsula.

HABITAT

On soil and rock and overgrowing mosses, subalpine to high-alpine, in exposed cushion vegetation and fellfield, 1000–2500 m. Often a dominant component in subalpine *Sphagnum* bogs where it forms extensive swards in lichenfield, together with clumps of *Thamnotia*, *Cetraria*, *Cladonia* and *Cladia*, or developed in fellfield and on windswept soils on the exposed Central Otago tops where it associates with *Solorina crocea*, *Brigantiaea fuscolutea*, *Tetramelas confusus* etc.



Nelson Lakes National Park. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 08/01/2022, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Thallus erect sometimes becoming decumbent, prostrate and straggling, but then erect at the base, 5-10 cm tall, branching irregular to subdichotomous. **Branches** terete, becoming compressed basally, slightly faveolate, to 1.5 mm diam., surface matt, rarely shining, pink to pale brown towards base, dark brown to black towards apices, sometimes dark brown to black throughout, lateral spinules, soralia and **apothecia** unknown in New Zealand material. **Pseudocyphellae** sparse to abundant, conspicuous on median and thicker branches, elongate, fusiform, white, to 0.8 mm long, plane, concave or subconvex.

Chemistry: Cortex and medulla K+ faint yellow, KC+ rose (fading fast), C+ rose (fading fast). Pd+ yellow; containing alectorialic acid and barbatolic acid (tr.).

SIMILAR TAXA

Usnea torulosa appears similar.

SUBSTRATE

Terricolous

ETYMOLOGY

nigricans: Blackish

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by Melissa Hutchison (17 January 2022). Brief description, Distribution, Habitat, and Features sections copied from Galloway (1985, 2007).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Galloway DJ. 1985. Flora of New Zealand Lichens. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 662 p.

Galloway DJ. 2007. Flora of New Zealand Lichens. Revised 2nd edition in two volumes (Vol. 1 pp 1–1006; Vol. 2 pp 1007–2261). Manaaki Whenua Press, Lincoln, NZ. 2261 p.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/gowardia-nigricans/>