

Usnea contexta

FAMILY

Parmeliaceae

AUTHORITY

Usnea contexta Motyka

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 terricolous/corticolous habit; the decumbent, straggling, rather flaccid (when moist), dichotomously divided branches, 1 mm wide at base and abruptly attenuated at apices; a smooth, glabrous, occasionally indistinctly papillate cortex; rather few secondary branches; an absence of isidia, soredia, spinules or tubercles; and fumarprotocetraric and protocetraric acids in the medulla.

DISTRIBUTION

North Island: Taranaki (Mt Taranaki), Wellington (Tararua Ranges). **South**

Island: Nelson (Mole Tops, St Arnaud Range), Canterbury (Cass, Craigieburn Range, Porter's Pass), Otago (Mt Brewster, Matukituki Valley, Pisa Range, The Remarkables, Central Otago Mountains, Poolburn Reservoir, Maungatua), Southland (Longwood Range, Borland Saddle).

Stewart Island: (Tin Range). **Campbell Island:** (Mt Azimuth).

Known also from South East Australia and Tasmania.

HABITAT

In alpine to high-alpine grasslands and fellfield, straggling over low vegetation (*Dracophyllum longifolium*, *D. pronum* tussocks), exposed soil and rocks, often with *Gowardia nigricans*. Sometimes forming extensive swards and then highly visible at long distances as a pale yellow-white zone.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Thallus decumbent, straggling, rarely fruticose or subpendulous, 10-15 cm long, soft, flaccid when moist, yellowish-green or yellowish-white, smooth and shining, matt, repeatedly dichotomously branching, terricolous. Branches divergent, irregularly curved, 1 mm wide, abruptly attenuate at apices, irregularly jointed, primary branches \pm inflated or articulate at branch points, terete, slightly faveolate-impressed in basal parts, smooth, glabrous, occasionally indistinctly papillate, secondary branches rather few, without tubercles, isidia, soredia or spinules.

Apothecia not seen.

Chemistry: Thallus K⁺ brownish; containing fumarprotocetraric, protocetraric, and usnic acids.



On subalpine scrub, Kaimanawa's.

Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 29/12/2022, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Close up, Kaimanawa's. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 29/12/2019, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

Stevens (1999, 2004) synonymises *U. contexta* with *U. articulata* (see Swinscow & Krog 1976), but until a more detailed study is made of the New Zealand material in relation to other populations of *U. articulata*, the taxa are kept separate here.

SUBSTRATE

Corticolous, terricolous

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by Marley Ford (1 January 2022). Brief description, Distribution, Habitat, Features and Similar taxa sections copied from Galloway (1985) & Galloway (2007).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Galloway D.J. 1985: *Flora of New Zealand: Lichens*. Wellington: PD Hasselberg, Government Printer. 662 pp.
- Galloway D.J. 2007: *Flora of New Zealand: Lichens, including lichen-forming and lichenicolous fungi*. 2nd edition. Lincoln, Manaaki Whenua Press. 2261 pp.
- Stevens G.N. 1999: A revision of the lichen family Usneaceae in Australia. *Bibliotheca Lichenologica* 72: 1–128.
- Stevens G.N. 2004: *Usnea*. *Flora of Australia* 56A: 80–115.
- Swinscow T.D.V. and Krog H. 1976: The *Usnea articulata* aggregate in East Africa. *Norwegian Journal of Botany* 23: 261–268.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/usnea-contexta/>