

Jessica Eleanor Beever (1946 –)

Jessica Beever, née Spragg, has Pākehā (English and Scots) and Māori (Ngāti Toa, Te Ati Awa and Ngāti Mutunga) ancestry. She was born in Hamilton on 26 June 1946, the daughter of Robert and Eleanor Spragg and younger sister of Christopher, and educated in Hamilton, New Plymouth and Auckland. Her great-grandfather Wesley Spragg, from Shropshire, England, pioneered the Auckland dairy industry; his first wife Henrietta (Hetty) was prominent in the women's suffrage movement. Wesley had a deep love of the native bush, and as well as his home in Mt Albert, had a holiday home, Whare-ō-te-Rangi, in the upper Henderson Valley. In 1919 he donated a property of over 700 acres at Kaitarakihi on the north Manukau shore to the City of Auckland as a memorial to his only son, Wesley Neal Spragg, killed in an Air Force training exercise in Egypt in 1918. In 1924 he gifted most of the intact bush at Whare-ō-te-Rangi to the citizens of Auckland as a reserve – Spragg Bush. It was added to in 2001 through the efforts of Jessica Beever and the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society.

Jessica's strong interest in botany and the natural environment was fostered at the family bach in the Waitakere Ranges, and led to a BSc and MSc in botany at the University of Auckland. She had known Ross Beever at Remuera Intermediate School. They met again at university – both studied botany and were keen members of the Field Club. They married in 1969 and travelled together to the University of Leeds in England, where each did a PhD, Jessica in plant science (1972). They have two children, Rosemary and Graham. Their first mokopuna, Isabella, was born in 2009, and the second, Emily, in 2012.

Jessica has undertaken research on New Zealand's mosses for the last 35 years, producing some 30 scientific papers and a similar number of reports and submissions relating to mosses. Her extensive revision of the popular book *The Mosses of New Zealand* was published in 1992. That year also, bryologist Allan Fife at Landcare Research, Lincoln, described a new endemic moss genus, naming it *Beeveria* in her honour.

As a frequent participant in the John Child Bryophyte and Lichen Workshops from their inception in 1983, a member of the Department of Conservation's expert panel on threatened bryophytes, and a member of the Offshore Islands Research Group, she has specialised in the documentation of mosses and stimulated the resurgence of interest in these small plants. She co-authored with William (Bill) Malcolm the chapter on mosses in the Auckland Botanical Society's 2007 *Natural History of Rangitoto Island*, and contributed the section on mosses to the society's checklist of the plants of Hauturu (Little Barrier Island), published in 2012. The volume is dedicated to the memory of Ross, who died in 2010. To the Waitakere Ranges Protection

Society's multi-authored tome, *Waitakere Ranges – Nature, History, Culture* (2006), Jessica contributed two sections: "Nature in Miniature: the Mosses", and "Wesley Spragg".

In November 2012 Landcare Research opened its Beever Plant Pathogen Containment Facility at Tamaki. The first of its kind in New Zealand, it is named in honour of the contribution made by Dr Ross Beever to plant pathology and the conservation of New Zealand flora, and the ongoing contribution of his wife Dr Jessica Beever in documenting and conserving New Zealand's bryophytes.

Currently (2013) Jessica is funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment as a research associate of the Crown Research Institute, Landcare Research, working on the forthcoming *Flora of New Zealand: Mosses*.



Jessica Beever, Ruapehu, 2013

Beeveria distichophylloides

Beeveria is one of two genera in New Zealand belonging to the Pilotrichaceae, formerly in Hookeriaceae (a family now divided into Hookeriaceae, Daltoniaceae and Pilotrichaceae). *Beeveria distichophylloides* is a moss usually found on rock or soil in humid sites, and specimens collected in the Buller region in 1992 suggest a preference for limestone areas.