Ross Ewen Beever (1946 – 2010)

Ross Beever was born at Te Kuiti on 3 January 1946. His father James (Jim) Beever taught in country schools at Pio Pio and Maungaturoto before moving to Auckland; he was a knowledgeable amateur botanist and compiled *A Dictionary of Maori Plant Names.* His mother's family, the Brunskills, had a farm at Glorit near the Kaipara Harbour, adjoining the native forest of Mt Auckland (Atunui), which Ross would often visit. He had an affinity with the bush, and at the age of 16, found an undescribed and poorly known cryptic orchid that was subsequently named *Danhatchia australis.*

After his education at Maungaturoto District High, Remuera Intermediate and Auckland Grammar schools, and the award in 1963 of two esteemed scholarships, he continued to excel at Auckland University and in 1966 was a senior scholar in botany and chemistry. He then completed an MSc (first-class honours) with his thesis topic, "Growth of fungi on potato extract". In 1968 he was appointed to the staff of Plant Diseases, DSIR (now Landcare Research) at Mt Albert, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Awarded a Sir Walter Mulholland Fellowship in 1969, he undertook a PhD at Leeds University in England. His wife Jessica (née Spragg) went with him, and did a PhD in plant science. Their intermediate school acquaintance had blossomed at university and DSIR; they married in 1969 and were to have two children, Rosemary and Graham. Jessica became a bryologist, working on New Zealand's moss flora with Landcare Research at Tamaki, Auckland, while Ross was primarily a plant pathologist and mycologist, but also did innovative work on fungal physiology.

The better known of his many achievements include his research on the *Botrytis* disease of grapes, and identifying the causes of cabbage tree decline and kauri dieback. He painstakingly rescued *Pennantia baylisiana* from the brink of extinction by coaxing viable seed from a female plant that was a cutting from the sole surviving tree on Manawa Tahi/Great Island in the Three Kings group. His research on native fungi led to descriptions of ten new species, and the hypothesis that in New Zealand the truffle-like fungi have evolved to mimic the fruit of some native species and be dispersed by ground-feeding birds. In 2012 a new genus of these fungi was named *Rossbeevera* in his honour. *Rossbeevera pachyderma* grows in southern beech forest, but as it looks like a stone, is easily missed.

During his career Ross received many awards recognising the excellence of his research, and was a speaker at numerous conferences in New Zealand and overseas. He was elected a fellow of three prestigious scientific societies, and like his father before him, an honorary member of the Auckland Botanical Society. In 2009 Ross and Jessica celebrated 40 years of marriage and the birth of their first mokopuna. On 3 June 2010 Ross Beever died prematurely after a short illness, aged 64. He was awarded posthumously the New Zealand Botanical Society's Allan Mere for 2010, which Jessica received on his behalf. Two years later Landcare Research, at its Tamaki site, opened the Beever Plant Pathogen Containment Facility, named in honour of Dr Ross Beever and his wife Dr Jessica Beever, in recognition of their significant contribution to the knowledge and conservation of New Zealand plants and fungi. In 2012 also, their second mokopuna was born.

Rossbeevera pachyderma

Rossbeevera pachyderma in the Boletaceae family is a truffle-like fungus of Australasia and Japan. The fruit-body is 20–50 mm in diameter, tuber-like and recognised by its mottled blue-green colouring, slightly creviced surface and "elephant-skin" texture. A white to off-white rind encloses honeycomb-like, chocolate-brown gill tissue, and in cross-section a few radiating bands of white tissue of a remnant stem. The fruiting season of this potato fungus is mainly autumn.

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