

## John Alan Elix (1941 – )

John ("Jack") Alan Elix was born at Mount Pleasant, South Australia, on 2 September 1941, the eldest son of Louis Howard Elix and his wife Dorella, née Loechell. The great-grandparents of both families had emigrated from Germany to South Australia in the 1850s. Jack was raised in the small rural village of Springton, where his father was employed in the dairy industry as a cream grader and tester. He attended Springton Primary School (1947–1953), Birdwood High School (1954–1957) and Adelaide Boys' High School (1958) before undertaking formal training in organic chemistry at the University of Adelaide, attaining his BSc with first-class honours in 1962 and PhD in 1965.

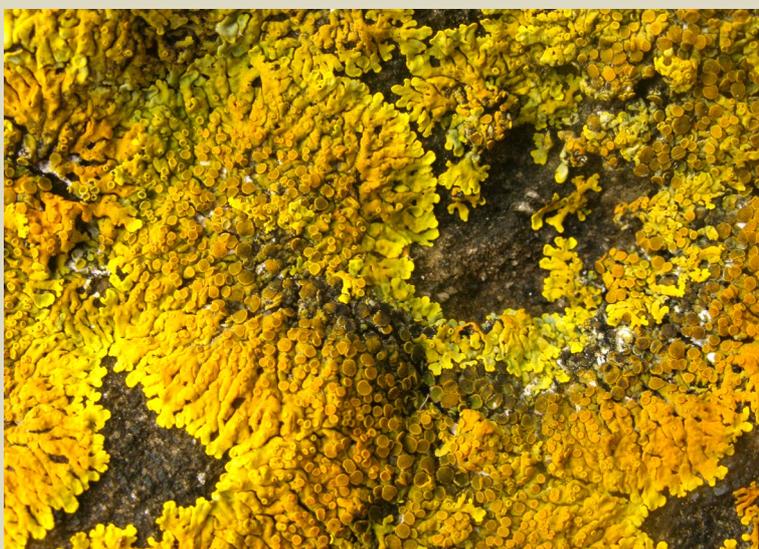
After two years (1965–1967) as a post-doctoral research fellow at Cambridge University in England, he began his professional career as a lecturer in chemistry at Australian National University and subsequently became a full professor in that department until his retirement in 2002. At Cambridge his interest in lichens was triggered by the work of a colleague and friend Mel Sargent investigating the structures of various lichen compounds. In 1970 he attended a lichenology course given by Norwegian botanist Eilif Dahl, a visiting professor at the ANU. He accompanied Dahl on several field excursions and was hooked.

The first lichen he collected was *Pseudocyphellaria crocata* from Molonglo Gorge Reserve in the Australian Capital Territory in January 1971; his ensuing substantial collections from many parts of Australia and beyond are now in the Australian National Herbarium. Particularly interested in secondary lichen metabolites, his chemical background and access to sophisticated techniques

enabled him, his students and his colleagues to extend knowledge of these considerably, and also develop the first computer-based programme for analysing TLC (thin layer chromatography) plates. He has published numerous papers on both lichen taxonomy and the chemical compounds produced by lichens, and his expertise is constantly sought.

In a 2001 publication to commemorate Jack Elix's 60th birthday the editors wrote, "Today his name is synonymous with taxonomy of the highest quality, based on an enormous body of experience in collecting and documenting lichens coupled with an unparalleled grasp of the structure, metabolic pathways and taxonomic significance of the lichen compounds." In 2004 he was the first Southern Hemisphere recipient of the Acharius Medal, presented by the International Association for Lichenology, and in 2010 he was granted honorary life membership of the British Lichen Society. Recent study of the family Teloschistaceae led to changes in the names of some species and the erection of several new genera, including *Jackelixia*, which was named in his honour. An Australasian species *Jackelixia ligulata*, previously *Xanthora ligulata*, is a deep yellow to orange foliose lichen, common on coastal rocks in New Zealand.

Jack Elix and Joan Ann Fowless married in January 1965; their daughter Sharon Anne was born in 1970 and son Michael John in 1972. Currently (December 2013) Jack Elix is an emeritus professor (ANU) and research associate (CANB herbarium) and an associate of several scientific organisations. He also enjoys his other interests of bush walking, gardening, sport (cricket and football – four codes!) and spending time with his grandchildren.



### *Jackelixia ligulata*

*Jackelixia ligulata* is a foliose, spreading, closely attached lichen, rosette forming or more or less irregular, with a coriaceous, deep yellow to orange upper surface. The lower surface is white at the margins and pale pinkish buff or brownish centrally. It is conspicuous on coastal rock above high tide level where it forms a yellow zone above a white lichen zone, and on schist rock in Central Otago. It also colonises concrete, roof tiles, fibrolite, brick and mortar. An Australasian species, it is common and widespread throughout its New Zealand range from the Kermadec and Three Kings island groups south to the Auckland Islands.