

Stephan Ladislaus Endlicher (1804 – 1849)

Stephan Ladislaus Endlicher, also known as István László Endlicher, was born in Pressburg (now Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia) on 24 June 1804. The son of a physician, he studied philosophy and theology at Budapest and from 1823–1826 at Vienna, but did not become a priest. Returning to Pressburg in 1826 he pursued his interest in East Asian languages, especially Chinese, and urged by his father, he also studied botany. From 1828 to 1836, when in charge of the manuscript collection of the Austrian National Library, he devoted all his spare time to his studies, and in 1830 presented his first botanical treatise, on the flora of Pressburg.



Polyphlebium endlicherianum

The genus *Polyphlebium* ('many veins') as redefined in 2006, comprises about 15 species of mainly Southern Hemisphere filmy ferns. *Polyphlebium endlicherianum* is a small filmy fern with creeping rhizomes. Its dark green, narrowly elliptic fronds are up to 2 cm long; the frond segments are widely spaced and untoothed, each with a single unbranched vein and a flap (wing) of tissue along its length. Sori at the bases of the frond segments and the surrounding flaps form a tubular indusium from which the sporangia are borne on an extended central stalk. This species is quite common in northern regions of New Zealand, usually near streams in dark forest, but because of its small size is easily overlooked.

In 1835 Endlicher founded the first Austrian journal for the natural sciences, and he was later instrumental in establishing the Imperial Academy of Science (*Akademie der Wissenschaften*). He was made curator of the botanical department of the Royal Natural History Museum in 1836, and in 1840 was appointed professor of botany at the University of Vienna and director of the botanical garden. Reorganising the various herbaria into one entity, to which he added his own herbarium of some 30,000 species, he developed a new botanical classification system, which he described in his *Genera Plantarum* (1836–1850).

Although he made valuable contributions to literature, history, linguistics and numismatics, the majority and most important of his works were on botany. He also collaborated with other botanists, including Eduard Poeppig in a work on the plants of Chile, Peru and the Amazon region, Carl von Martius with the editing of his *Flora Brasiliensis*, the American Asa Gray and in England, George Bentham and Robert Brown. His *Prodromus Florae Norfolkicae* (1833), the first flora of Norfolk Island, was based on the work of Ferdinand Bauer, who painted and collected with Robert Brown on Matthew Flinders' Australian expedition, and was on Norfolk Island from August 1804 until February 1805. Other early work on the flora of Western Australia used collections made by Carl von Hügel between November 1833 and October 1834.

Endlicher's work embraced fungi, algae, fossils, bryophytes and ferns, and he described many new genera, from the lofty *Sequoia* to the intertidal Neptune's necklace *Hormosira*. *Endlicheria*, a mainly South American genus in the family Lauraceae was named after him. He is also honoured in the names of many species, a number of them in Australia and at least two with New Zealand connections. The single tree of *Pennantia baylisiana* found on the Three Kings off northern New Zealand is closely related to the Norfolk Island endemic *Pennantia endlicheri*, and the moisture-loving filmy fern *Trichomanes endlicherianum* (now *Polyphlebium endlicherianum*) that covers trees and rocks in many parts of New Zealand, is also found in Norfolk Island (the type locality) and islands of the Pacific.

Stephan Endlicher became involved in politics in 1848 and served briefly in both the German and Austrian parliaments. He died in Vienna on 28 March 1849, in his 45th year.