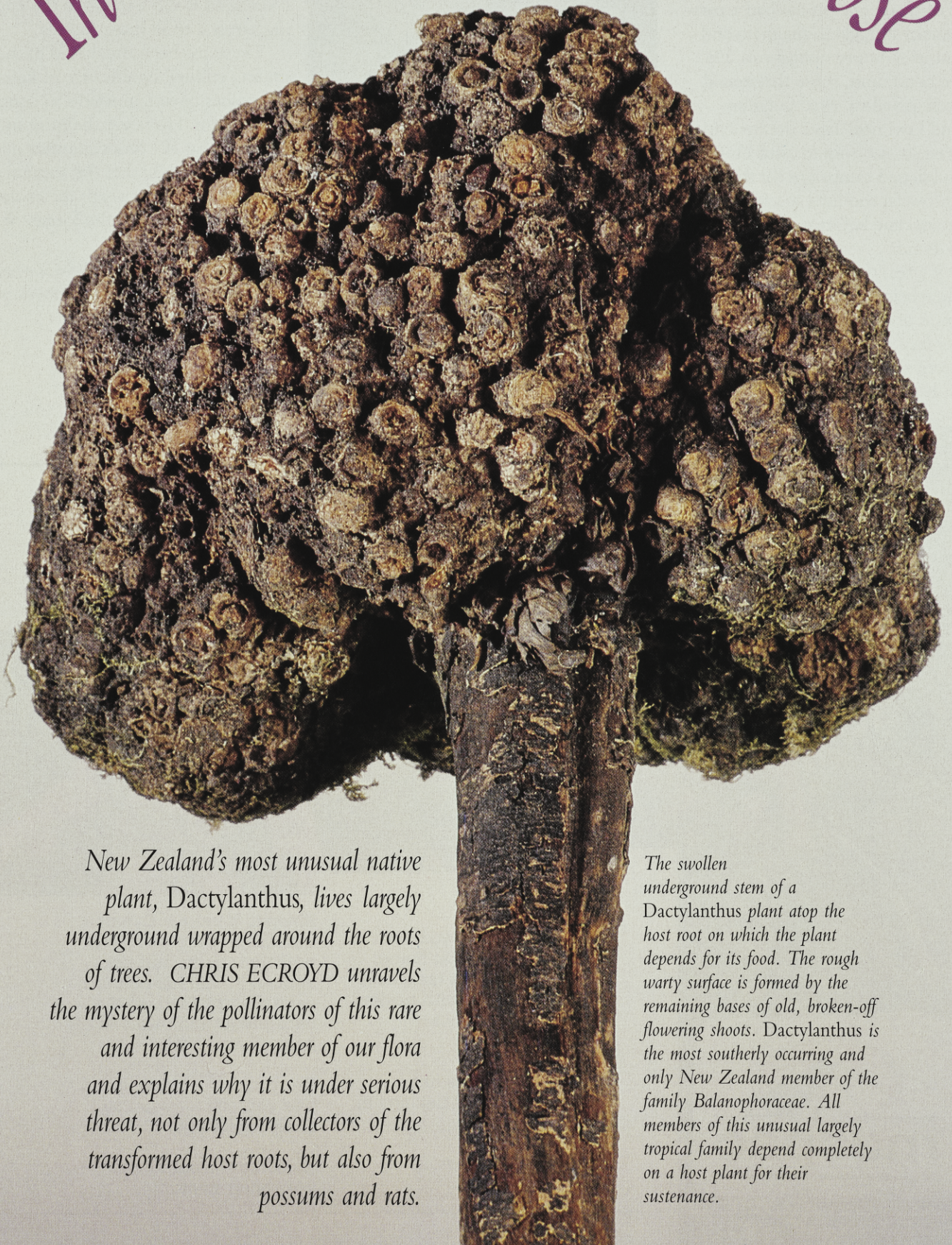


In search of the wood rose



New Zealand's most unusual native plant, *Dactylanthus*, lives largely underground wrapped around the roots of trees. CHRIS ECROYD unravels the mystery of the pollinators of this rare and interesting member of our flora and explains why it is under serious threat, not only from collectors of the transformed host roots, but also from possums and rats.

The swollen underground stem of a *Dactylanthus* plant atop the host root on which the plant depends for its food. The rough warty surface is formed by the remaining bases of old, broken-off flowering shoots. *Dactylanthus* is the most southerly occurring and only New Zealand member of the family Balanophoraceae. All members of this unusual largely tropical family depend completely on a host plant for their sustenance.