

CHRIS ECROYD/NZERI



Scent rather than colour is the main attractant for *Dactylanthus* pollinators and brightly coloured flower clusters occur very rarely. These red and yellow male inflorescences are produced each year at Mamaku by the same plants.



rapid reinvasion of the site will be a problem.

Eradicating kiore from Little Barrier Island would help ensure the survival of that *Dactylanthus* population. The evidence suggests that ship-rats, on the other hand, do not destroy the flowers and may even help in pollination – female flowers, for example, visited by these rats have set abundant seed. Therefore introducing *Dactylanthus* to another island free of kiore

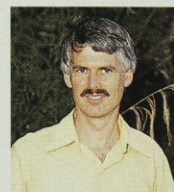
and possums but with ship-rats present is now a possibility due to a recent breakthrough in cultivation.

*Dactylanthus* seed requires chemical stimulation from a host root to germinate and if the seedling is unable to attach itself after growing only a millimetre or two towards a host root, it will exhaust its food reserves and die. Now for the first time seeds have been germinated by sowing them adjacent to the roots of known

host plants and it is thus possible to transfer the *Dactylanthus* to possum-free sites. Unfortunately, moving short-tailed bats to a new location is not currently a practical option.

*Dactylanthus* is a most unusual plant and is worthy of extra effort to ensure its survival. New Zealand's short-tailed bat has features which make it distinctive among the 1,000 or so bat species in the world and it is placed in a family of its own. It is one of our two surviving native land mammals and in recent years has been seen in very few locations. The survival of these two closely entwined but increasingly rare species presents a challenge to us all and will ultimately depend on maintaining suitable habitats free from the effects of introduced mammals such as possums and rats.

Members of Forest and Bird can assist by reporting any sightings of the bats and of *Dactylanthus* to DoC and reporting anyone digging up these plants from reserves. ♦



Chris Ecroyd is a scientist with a special interest in rare and endangered plants and is curator of the New Zealand Forest Research Institute herbarium. He is on the Bay

of Plenty Conservation Board and a past-president of the Rotorua branch of Forest and Bird.

ERIC ANDERSON, CHRIS ECROYD/NZERI



A short-tailed bat visiting *Dactylanthus* flowers at Pureora to feed on the nectar. This bat visited these flowers 40 times in one evening staying on average over a minute each time.