



Department of Botany
Te Tari Huaota o Otago

The evolution of truffle-like fungi

Associate Professor David Orlovich
Department of Botany University of Otago



Hundreds of species of fungi, from at least three fungal phyla, have independently evolved to mimic the ecological habit of truffles, and are hence called truffle-like fungi. They share the feature of not releasing their spores for wind dispersal. Rather they rely on animals to search out and eat the fruit bodies, and then disperse the spores via their dung. The evolutionary drivers for the success of the truffle-like fungi are thought to be either selection for dispersal by animals, or through the increased drought resistance that the truffle-like habit confers. New Zealand has a special place in the world of truffle-like fungi, being home to many brightly coloured species that might be attractive to birds and other animals. In my lecture I will showcase the tremendous diversity of truffle-like fungi in New Zealand, outline our ongoing work to understand the biology of the truffle-like habit, and explore the roles of truffle-like fungi in New Zealand's forest and grassland ecosystems.

Wednesday 7 October 2020 | 6pm | Archway 1 Lecture Theatre

