

A Tour of New Zealand's weird and wonderful Diptera and their Scientists

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¹ Te Papa

If people hear "New Zealand" and "flies", 90% would think "Bugger, this summer the sand flies were really bad!" (Some would even go "I need to go fly fishing with ma mates again.") Though very interesting, Simuliidae (and handcrafted midge hooks) are definitely not all New Zealand has to offer when it comes to Diptera. Often disfavoured, many fly species are indeed a nuisance, as their larvae feed on crops or plant roots, others feed on blood or poo and may transmit nasty diseases. On the other hand it is often ignored that Diptera are very important pollinators and a healthy ecosystem cannot be imagined without them. Besides, flies have the most amazing life histories and shapes, especially in New Zealand, and many species are ideal candidates for biocontrol. Diptera have their place in Maori mythology and entomologists have collected, described and studied them since the Endeavour's arrival in New Zealand. Their extraordinary work shall be acknowledged in this presentation. Nevertheless, there are so many gaps in our knowledge about endemic species, so our increasing workload in the fields of biosecurity and conservation is sometimes overwhelming. In other words there is heaps to do and wonderful research projects are waiting. Let's roll up the sleeves!

