

Southward range extensions of *Siphanta acuta* (Hemiptera: Homoptera: Flatidae) and *Icerya purchasi* (Hemiptera: Homoptera: Margarodidae) to Dunedin and Mosgiel

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Until recently, both the green plant hopper *Siphanta acuta* (Walker) (Homoptera: Flatidae) and the cottony cushion scale insect, *Icerya purchasi* Maskell (Homoptera, Margarodidae) were thought to have had their southern limits within New Zealand at about the latitude of Christchurch (43°22'S). On 2 December 2005 Miss R. Bremner of Wingatui, Mosgiel, brought to me specimens of *S. acuta* that had appeared on various plants in her garden for the first time that year. Following a newspaper report in the "Otago Daily Times" on 19 December 2005, 11 people wrote to report the presence of green plant hoppers in their sections over a wide area of North Dunedin, South Dunedin, Tainui, Andersons Bay, Musselburgh, Caversham, Otago Peninsula and Mosgiel. Mr L. Cromar stated that *S. acuta* had existed for the past five years in large numbers on decorative ivy at Somerville St., Andersons Bay. Mr R. Brown reported that *S. acuta* had been present on a Virginia creeper at Glenfalloch Gardens, Otago Peninsula, for two years, having suddenly appeared there in 2003. Mrs I. Lawrence said it first appeared in her garden in Wardlaw St., Musselburgh, in 2001. Mrs N. Wilson stated that it appeared on raspberry plants in Mosgiel in 2003. Mrs I. Bruce stated that it appeared at 8 Morangi St., Portobello, for the first time on 7 December 2005. Mrs I. Koch saw it for the first time in her garden in Surry St., Caversham, in November 2005. Mrs C. Sharp reported large numbers on ivy plants at Arawa St., Tainui, these having appeared there for the first time in November 2005. Subsequently, *S. acuta* appeared in North Dunedin and Opoho, including in my own property in Maybank St. and those of neighbours, for the first time in late November 2005. Between 19 – 24 December 2005, many people from throughout Dunedin telephoned the Otago Museum to report *S. acuta* in their properties, most stating that this was the first year they had seen it. This suggests that *S. acuta* first appeared in Dunedin around 2002-2003 and has spread dramatically throughout the Dunedin area in the last two seasons.

The first record of *Icerya purchasi* in the Dunedin area was that of Mrs J. Little of Fairfield, Dunedin, who in April 2001 reported hundreds of females with egg sacs on a *Hardenbergia* vine growing on the walls of her house. Inspection revealed many hundreds of individuals on neighbouring properties. This insect had not been seen in

the area until 2001, and garden shops were not familiar with it. *Icerya purchasi* now occurs sporadically, although in very localised areas, throughout Greater Dunedin, including parts of Fairfield, Caversham, the Otago Peninsula, and Mosgiel.

It would seem that the unusually warm winters during the past decade have enabled both of these species to extend their ranges southward from Christchurch to Dunedin, and that the very warm 2005 winter, one of the hottest on record, has enabled *S. acuta* to spread explosively throughout Dunedin.