

Nicols Falls and the Glow-worms



Linnaeus says...

The scientific name for glow-worms is *Arachnocampa luminosa*. *Arachnocampa*, meaning spider-like grub, refers to the larvae to catch prey, while *luminosa* refers to this insect's ability to produce light (luminescence). The Māori name for glow-worm is titiwai.



Digging deeper...

The silk threads glow-worms make for catching prey can be 30-40cm long. Glow-worms can only live in places where there is no wind, such as caves, overhangs or sheltered places in forests because wind would cause the silk threads to get tangled up.



Hey guess what?

Dunedin's waterfalls

Greater Dunedin is home to numerous waterfalls including the Craiglowan Falls, Evansdale Falls and the Morrisons Falls. The overflow channel bypassing the Ross Creek Reservoir has also created an eye-catching waterfall that drops into School Creek just before it joins Ross Creek.

Just a short five minute drive from Dunedin's town centre lies one of its best-kept natural secrets. Set amongst dense bush, a creek runs steeply down a hill, surrounded by vertical rock faces. Two great local attractions result – one during the day and one at night.

Nicols Falls, around a 20 minute walk up the hill from Leith Valley Road, was a major Dunedin tourist attraction in the early 1900s. The track to the waterfall climbs steadily through regenerating bush. Around the falls, you could be excused for believing yourself to be in the middle of Fiordland. It is wet, quite dark and very green. Some of the common trees and plants you'll see here include kōtukutuku, our native tree fuchsia, wineberry, kāpuka (broadleaf), and many different ferns.

Downstream of Nicols Falls, parts of the river are surrounded by vertical rock faces around 10m high. A short 10 minute walk from the road, this part of the river makes a great outing after dark. The rock walls are covered in glow-worms, the larvae of a native New Zealand fly.

Glow-worms are voracious predators. They produce special chemicals that make light. This light attracts other insects. The glow-worms also produce silk, covered with droplets of mucus. Insects attracted to the light get caught up in the sticky silk threads and are then eaten by the glow-worm.



Nicols Falls



The vertical rock face, home to many glow-worms

