

An enormous *Coprosma linariifolia* with a great thick trunk was soon dwarfed by the majestic podocarps stretching skywards – totora, matai, rimu and kahikatea. Their flaking bark carried lichens characteristic of old-growth, sheltered forests, such as the tiny white volcanos of *Thelotrema lepadinum* and the filamentous *Coenogonium implexum*. Both these lichen incorporate *Trentepohlia* sp. as their green algal photobiont, co-existing with the bright orange filaments of free-living *Trentepohlia* sp.. On the forest floor we were delighted to see orchids in flower, a *Microtis* sp. and several *Pterostylis* species. There was debate about a possible *Polystichum silvaticum* fern by the stream, and admiration for the feathery fronds of luxuriant groves of *Leptopteris hymenophylloides*. Lower down the valley wild lettuce, *Mycelis muralis*, made a surprise appearance, while in the frost hollows the dangling mossy zig-zags of *Weymouthia* sp indicated the coldness and dampness of those sites, where the ancient hanging fern-ally, *Tmesipteris tannensis* added to the primeval ambience.

In sunnier spots sweet smells and busy bees heralded the flowers of the native jasmine, *Parsonsia heterophylla*. Peter Bannister's expert eye detected 3 species of the grey fruticose lichen, *Ramalina*, for Jennifer – *R. celastri* and *R. glaucescens* fruiting on the bush edge, and the sorediate *R. erumpens* in a dry stream bed unexpectedly deep in the forest. Peter also spotted on the bush edge, perching on *Coprosma propinqua*, the native mistletoe *Ileostylus micranthus* – a fitting finale for a fine December foray.

Thank you, Ralf, for sharing the results of your research – and for the fine afternoon tea. Thanks also to Liz Brensell, for letting us cross her farm to explore another botanically special section of the proposed Mt Watkin Reserve.

West Coast with the Wellington Botanical Society 30 Dec – 10 Jan

Allison Knight

Four sizzling, sun-drenched days marked the start of another splendid summer trip with the Wellington Botanical Society. Five BSO members, Allison Knight, Moira Parker, Judy Russell, Monica Peters and Nola Walker drove over to the West Coast to join them. Four of us took an extra day to admire the alpine plants on the Dobson Nature Walk at the top of Arthurs Pass and then get acquainted with some West Coast plants around Lake Brunner. We stopped the car to see a bush cabbage tree, *Cordyline banksii*, in full flower and walked up the ferny track to Carew Falls before driving on past Moana to set up tents at Koriri Lodge and meet the other 2 dozen enthusiasts, including 2 from the US.

First fine day we drove to the top of Sewell Peak to investigate the tops of the Paparoas. The fittest walked right to Mt Davy and all the way back down the road, the lagging lichenologist got engrossed by the *Placopsis* spp. and other crustose lichens and only made it as far as Paparoa Peak.

The next fine day the walking started on the shores of L Brunner, where the new Mt Te Kinga track cut a transect up through mixed Kamahi/Rata forest (no *Nothofagus* here) to groves of *Libocedrus* giving way to *Dracophyllym/Olearia* scrub and finally tussock grassland to the scorching summit. Graeme Jane commented that the mountain cedar,

Libocedrus bidwillii, has a life-cycle of around 300 y and can live up to 1000 ! Their dead spars stand unchanged for 20 y and last another 100 - 200 years, while the stumps, with their coating of specialized filmy fern, the glaucous *Hymenophyllum malingii*, even longer.

A third and fourth fine day had us heading towards sea and shade. Nikau palms abounded on the coastal Port Elizabeth Walkway, just north of Greymouth. Beech trees, *Nothofagus* spp., were again evident as we drove to the Croesus Track, in the historic mining area behind Blackball.



Allison and Judy under the flowering bush cabbage tree, *Cordyline banksii*, L. Brunner



Flowering Nikau palm, *Rhopalostylis sapida*, Punakaiki.

Photos by *Moira Parker*

The lichens on the rocks in Smoke-ho Creek kept me back from the ferny Blackball Creek that others investigated. On the 5th morning the neighbouring landowners invited us to visit their forest and wetland. They were keen to know how to encourage the growth of lichens on the old encrusted fence posts and rocks that they sell for landscaping. In the afternoon a splinter group investigated the limestone outcrops in the power line cutting behind Omoto, others went further afield.

The drought broke when we broke up camp and moved north east. First wet stop was at the Pancake Rocks near Punakaiki, where the native shore spurge, *Euphorbia glauca* was flourishing on the coastal limestone, and the Nikau palms, *Rhopalostylis sapida*, were resplendent in purple flower. On through the Buller Gorge to Murchison to restock, then inland along the Matakītiki Valley to Matakī Lodge, another ideal outdoor education centre, with walking tracks radiating out all around. There were noticeably more lichens here than in the higher rainfall areas of the West Coast. The beech forest was thickly coated with them on Jameson Ridge. Clusters of very orange *Omphalina alpina*, with toadstool fruit rising from green algae-filled mycelium, brightened the edges of bogs and tarns above bushline. The rocks on the Mole Tops were rich in alpine lichens, and the on scree slopes spidery *Neofuscelia* sp. decorated the rocks below the flowering scree plants *Notothlaspi australe*, which is only found in Nelson and Marlborough. Next morning Oxnam's Bog was visited between the showers, and a purple-flowered bladderwort, *Utricularia* sp., brought back for a closer look at the insect-trapping bladders. A walk along the valley had us puzzling over the differences between the serrated leaves of red beech and hard beech (which the local farmer called brown beech). A big windfall the next day contained so many irresistible specimens of the usually inaccessible canopy lichens that I nearly didn't get to the family wedding I was leaving early for. It was a marvellous trip. My heartfelt thanks go to everyone who worked hard to make it such a shining success, and to Austro Simulium (sic), for keeping a low profile.

Toko Wetlands and Toko Mouth dune slack. 24 Jan.

Moira Parker

A party of six (Jean Bretherton, Allison Knight, Jennifer Bannister, Judy Russell, Moira Parker and trip leader Dr Janice Lord) set off for Milton, where we left the main highway and headed towards the coast.

Our first stop was the Toko Wetland, adjacent to the Tokomairiro River and 3k upstream from the river mouth. The wetland is protected by a QEII open space covenant and managed by Fish and Game for duck shooting. Twenty hectares of the wetland belongs to City Forests Ltd and 5 ha are owned by Otago Fish and Game. The gravel road goes through the middle of the wetland so access is easy, though there is no formed track.

We could hear fern birds and eventually were delighted to see one darting in and out of a tall *Coprosma* bush. I was surprised at the chestnut brown colour of the plumage. Shrubs in the wetland included *Plagianthus divaricatus*, *Coprosma propinqua* and *Coprosma decurva* with upward curving branchlets, (previously known as *Coprosma* sp. "little red fruit") though the fruits were still green. There were several species of *Carex* including