

# Canterbury Botanical Society (NZ) Inc.

## Sixty-eighth Annual Report

June 2020 – May 2021

### Officers and Committee

President:	Paula Greer
Vice-President:	Jason Butt
Secretary:	Fay Farrant
Treasurer:	Sue Stevens
Membership co-ordinator:	Gillian Giller

Committee: Melissa Hutchison (website manager), Bryony Macmillan (until August 2020; journal proof reading & newsletter posting), Dean Pendrigh (newsletters), Alice Shanks (programme co-ordinator), Miles Giller, Tom Ferguson and Paula Godfrey.

### Monthly meeting programme

The 2020/21 year saw some changes to the Monday meeting programme, with Covid-19 restrictions preventing two meetings, being compensated for with a combined Zoom and in-person meeting. Meetings were well attended, many reaching near room limits, and one (due to Covid-19 restrictions) where we were turning latecomers away – a good reminder to get there early for that catch-up.

- June – No meeting owing to recovery from Covid-19 lockdown.
- July – **Melanie Lapointe**, Canadian ecologist, on the wetlands of Quebec and Canada. We were lucky to get Melanie to take us on a tour of the wetlands of Canada before she headed home, describing their extent and differences, and their effect on the seasonal cycle of plants.
- August – **AGM - Leon Perry**, Te Papa taxonomist. Leon gave an update on the changing of fern names, and the reasons why he and Pat Brownsey have gone against international convention with some of these changes, and accepted others.
- September – **Zoe Lunniss**, Master of Science student at the University of Otago and 2019 Student Grant recipient. During Zoe's study of *Tupeia antarctica* (a mistletoe) growing in Dunedin's green belt and reserves further afield, she found that by excluding predators (possums) *T. antarctica* was able to grow beyond a couple of leaves and without abnormal growth forms that result from heavy predation. This meeting was held via Zoom and other New Zealand botanical societies were invited, giving Zoe an audience of over 100.
- October – No meeting. Instead we had two field trips both of relatively easy walks.
- November – Two trips, one being the Spring Camp (see below), were held instead of a meeting.
- December – **John Hunt**, Manaaki Whenua / Landcare Research. Land use and Ecosystems.
- February – **Open Mic** evening. An evening enjoyed by those who attended for the variety of talks from different presenters. Many members have asked for a repeat of this, which we will consider for the start of the year.
- March – **Melissa Hutchison** on the remarkable flora of Banks Island. Melissa gave an interesting talk that broke up Banks "Island" into a variety of geographic features and ecological zones, reminding us how easy it can be to go from salt flats to subalpine vegetation so close to home.
- April – **Ellery Mayence**, (Dept. of Conservation) on California's botanical diversity: a case study of Tejon Ranch. This talk was a great introduction to the flora of southern California with some geology to show the reasons for species changes. Tejon Ranch would be a fascinating place to visit where you would need days to be able to take it all in.
- May – **Melissa Hutchison** (ecology consultant) and **David Glenny** (taxonomist at the Allan Herbarium). Melissa and David gave an interesting and helpful presentation on cryptogams (lichens, liverworts and

mosses). Melissa introduced us to lichens with an overview that helped many understand the major features, and David followed with a broader view of liverworts and a brief view of mosses.

## Monthly field trips

Regardless of Covid-19 restrictions we had more trips than usual, many to new places and some revisits.

- June – no trip owing to recovery from the Covid-19 lockdown.
- July – **Mears Bush** beech forest, **Matawai Park**, and **Silverstream Reserve** revegetation projects. This series of sites highlighted the changes in the Canterbury landscape over a short distance. Mears Bush is a remnant that has been protected privately and is open to the public. Matawai Park is in Rangiora and was created following the dumping of ‘waste’ soil during the construction of roads in the immediate vicinity. Silverstream is part revegetation project and part the conservation of a unique biodiversity remnant.
- August – **Te Tihi o Kahukura / Castle Rock**. This trip gave members a reminder of the geology of the area, the changes resulting from the 2010/11 earthquakes, and the abilities of native plants to hold on. The variety of lichens discovered was a surprise to some.
- September – **Awa Rātā Reserve** and **Lowes Cutting**. The impacts of rainfall and evaporative demand were to the forefront during visits to the kōwhai savannah at Lowes Cutting and to the shady, moist beech forest in Awa Rātā Reserve, only 21 km to the west at the base of Mt Hutt. At Awa, kahikatea, pōkākā, ferns, and mosses enjoy on average 1000 mm/year of precipitation while the Lowes Cutting kānuka, kōwhai, korokio, matagouri and mikimiki survive on less than 800 mm/year with high evapotranspiration during dry spells with NW winds. The grove of ancient kōwhai at Lowes Cutting were just past the peak of flowering. Hopefully, the kōwhai will not fade away or be undercut by the Rakaia River as evidenced along the river bank.
- October, Field Trip 1 – **Weedy walks with William Reinders**, around Victoria Park, the Sign of the Kiwi and the Summit Road, and then by the Southern Motorway behind Linden Grove (previously part of Hillmorton Hospital): interesting walks full of discoveries and questionable maintenance practices.
- October, Field Trip 2 – **Dryland kānuka remnants, Culverden**. A trip that reminded those able to go that dryland in Canterbury inevitably involves swathes of moss, orchids and kānuka, if not matagouri or at least one *Muehlenbeckia* species. The differences between the Culverden Scientific Reserve and the QE II Covenant, although only 5 minutes’ drive apart, were enough to support a case for multiple reserves in a small area to support species represented locally.
- November – **Day trip to Cranky Tom Reserve**. The trip goes were part of a select group of New Zealanders who have visited this site. Cranky Tom is a stream that cuts through a small gorge that has species, mainly ferns, unseen anywhere else in North Canterbury. A cool day was spent in water showing how a change in landform can drastically change the species composition from the wider surrounding area.
- November – **Spring Camp to the Timaru Basalt and Limestone Landscapes**. The Spring Camp was very successful with several non-members joining us for the whole or part of the weekend. We gained an appreciation for the native plants that are holding on to marginal habitats against the invasion of exotic weeds and grasses. Some spectacular country was seen and knowledge gained about members’ past lives as cultivators and planters of weed species.
- December – The return to **Waipara Gorge**. This trip was a good follow-up to Cranky Tom. After several false starts we worked out how to get to the reserve by using the “follow that stream” technique. This place needs multiple visits to begin to get to grips with the range of species present: surprises in species, landforms and geology were more than expected.
- January – No summer camp was held this year.
- February – **Rotopapa Wildlife Management Reserve**. This trip gave us the chance to see the changes in the eastern foreshore of Waihora / Lake Ellesmere in the 115 ha reserve: from low-growing native species at the lake shore to freshwater springs that have been invaded by willows and exotic *Rubus* and tall grass species.
- March – Grey River picnic area in the **Mount Grey / Maukatere Conservation Area**. Mt Grey is an area that is full of variety with many tracks and a variety of species. *Astelia fragrans* or *A. grandis* the debate continues owing to the variety of forms in the area.

- April – **Mt Alford**. After a false start this trip went ahead a week late in brilliant weather while Christchurch stayed damp. The group had a variety of botanical surprises and a glimpse of other possible trips to Mt Alford.
- April/May – **Nature City Challenge** on **iNaturalist**. Two trips were offered to members to assist in the 2021 Challenge. Alice Shanks led a group of 10 members and non-members to the **Magnet Bay Scenic Reserve** where some discoveries and some confirmations were made for the valley. Paula Greer led a group along the **Avon River** starting at Barbadoes Street Cemetery. Four members and one non-member joined the morning walk and managed to add over 200 sightings to the Challenge, mainly of introduced weeds and of trees remaining in people's gardens in the Red Zone.
- May – **Mt Ararat Rātā Reserve Conservation Area**. The first part of this trip was above a pine plantation to look at southern rātā (*Metrosideros umbellata*), and *Drosera binata* (not found) on this amazing sandstone outcrop. Then it was down into **Smothering Gully** (QEII covenant) to view the effects of drought that had severely desiccated the filmy fern population.

### Submissions and correspondence

Three submissions were made this year. Two were to the Christchurch City Council (CCC). One submission was regarding street tree maintenance, on which Alice and I presented in person, endeavouring to get a new policy for tree replacements to be native species. The second was for the CCC Long Term Plan, which we have yet to hear back on.

The third submission was made with the help of Paula Godfrey to Selwyn District Council (SCD) for their Long Term Plan. This is still in process with affected ratepayers and submitters able to comment and elaborate on other submissions.

### Awards

Dr Colin D Meurk was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for his services to ecological restoration in the 2021 New Year's Honours List.

Dr John Clemens was awarded the Senior Bledisloe for his continuing contributions as Scientific Editor of our Journal.

Zoe Lunniss was awarded the Junior Bledisloe for her studies on *Tupeia antarctica*, about which we were able to hear via Zoom.

Due to the ongoing disruptions of Covid-19 the 2019 Westland/Canterbury Science Fair was not held in 2020.

### Membership

At the end of June there were 152 members (individuals and families), with 15 new or returning members, nine life members (partners and singles). Nine did not renew their membership.

One of the members we lost this year was Don Bell. Don became a member of the Canterbury Botanical Society in 2004, joining the Committee in 2005 and holding various positions until 2015. Don's wealth of knowledge was quietly shared, and his interest in others made him a valuable member.

### Social media

Our social media presence on Facebook is increasingly reaching people across the world, with several non-members regularly joining camps or trips when they are in town.

### Canterbury Botanical Society Journal

The 51<sup>st</sup> issue of the Journal was collected from the printer on 28 October 2020 and distributed over the following weeks. Thank you to John Clemens for chasing up article authors and editing their contributions.

## **Committee**

The increase in work for the ecologists on the Committee meant they were busier than ever and often unable to be in town for meetings.

It was with a mixture of sadness and understanding that we accepted Bryony Macmillan's resignation from the Committee at the AGM in August 2020. Thank you, Bryony, for all your years of service, knowledge, wisdom, and support to past and present Botanical Society members, both in Canterbury and throughout New Zealand.

Sue Stevens has also decided that she is unable to continue as Treasurer or as a Committee member. Thank you, Sue, your assistance was appreciated for this year.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 2020-21 year another successful one for the Canterbury Botanical Society. I look forward to a hopefully easier year after stepping down from the Presidency as my three year term is up.

## **Paula Greer**