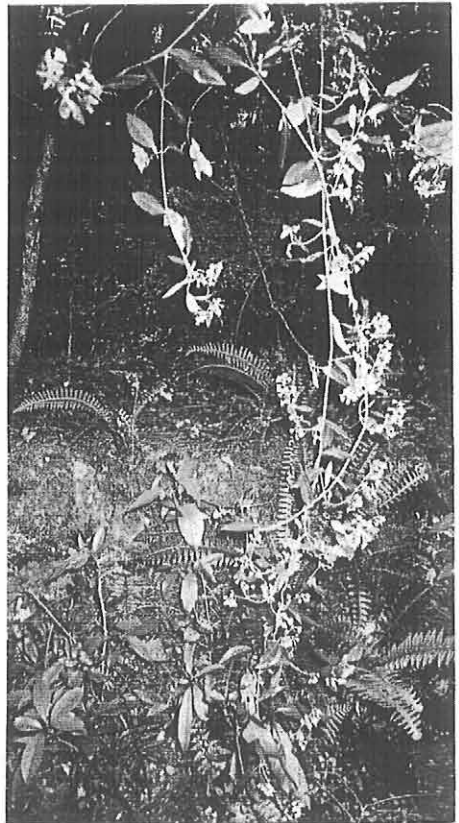
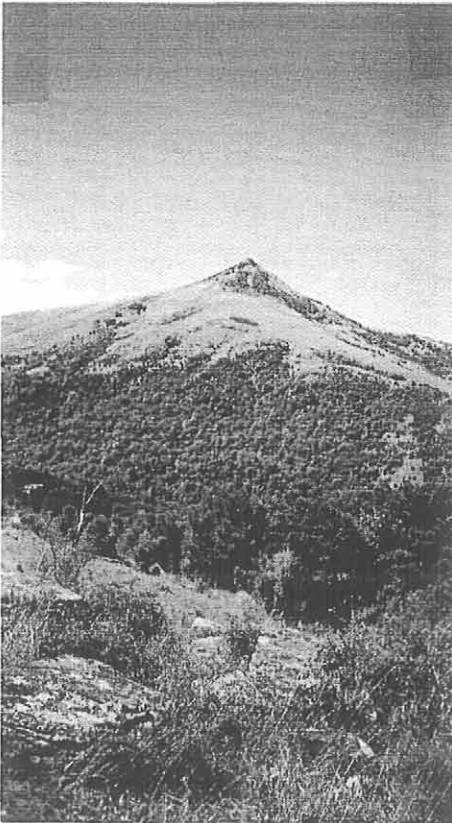


Trip reports

Mt Watkin podocarp forest 6 Dec. 2003

Allison Knight

Fourteen and a half – including spunky little Eve - was a good turnout in doubtful weather with a competing Forest and Bird trip. (We must try to avoid such clashes in future). A metal road round the upper slopes of Mt Watkin followed by a walking track through farmland took us to the upper edge of the forested branch of the upper Waikouaiti River. We stopped in the sun by an old farm cottage, where Ralf gave us the background to his doctoral research, plus species lists from his two quadrats of 20 sq m for us to add to. Then we agreed to rendezvous back there at 3 pm before heading down into the untracked forest, though some headed back to collect forgotten lunches, and disappeared from sight for the day.



Left to right, Mt Watkin from the forest edge,

flowering *Parsonsia*

Photographs *Jean Bretherton*

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,