

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.

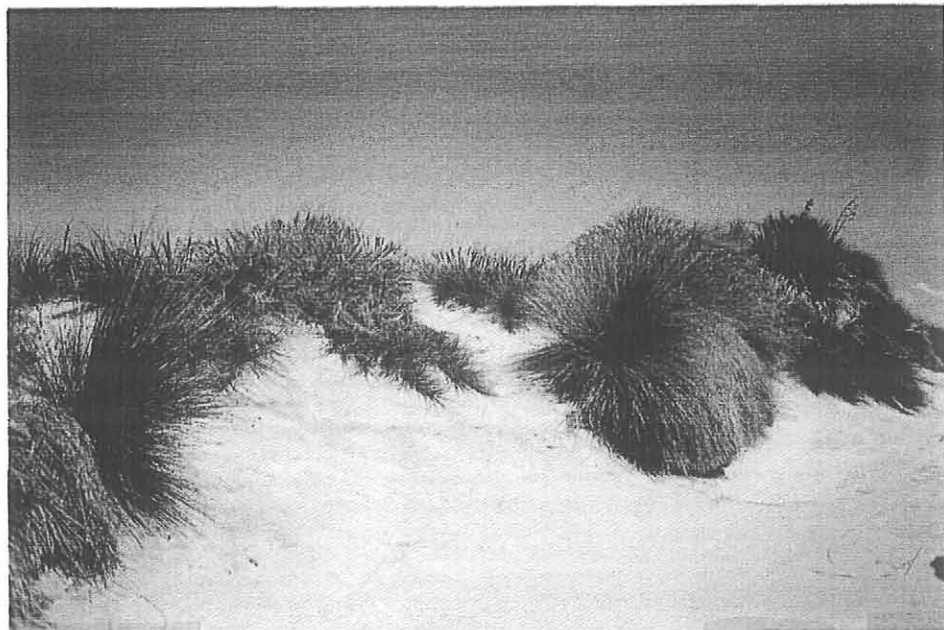
We could hear fern birds and eventually were delighted to see one darting in and out of a tall *Coprosma* bush. I was surprised at the chestnut brown colour of the plumage. Shrubs in the wetland included *Plagianthus divaricatus*, *Coprosma propinqua* and *Coprosma decurva* with upward curving branchlets,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

C. secta, and *C. appressa*. Small patches of turf plants included *Lepidium* sp., *Centella uniflora* and *Apium prostratum*. There was some excitement over a single plant thought possibly to be *Limosella curdeana*, but further investigation showed it to be *Selliera radicans* with unusually long leaves.

Janice's delightful crib just behind the beach at Toko Mouth was a great spot for lunch - the shade was most welcome, as were the cups of tea. After lunch we put on sunscreen and hats and headed out into the sand dunes. We were surprised to see several patches of pingao *Desmoschoenus spiralis* flourishing on the steep, windblown dunes, and not being invaded by marram. It was pleasing to learn that pingao occurs naturally at Toko Mouth and extends about three quarters of the way to Measley Beach - a distance of approximately 3 km.

Soon we reached a high point, from where we looked onto the flat, dune slack- green with turf plants and clumps of rushes. On hands and knees we could appreciate the variety of tiny turf plants, such as *Pratia* sp. with flowers and pink berry fruits, *Ophioglossum*, (adder's tongue fern), *Centella uniflora*, *Lagenifera*, *Hydrocotyle*, and two species of *Epilobium*.

On such a warm afternoon, a few of us couldn't resist a refreshing dip in the surf - which made a lovely finish to the day. Many thanks to Janice for leading the trip and sharing her knowledge of this interesting area.



Pingao, *Desmoschoenus spiralis*, flourishing between rushes (*Juncus* sp.) on the dunes at Toko Mouth
- photo Jean Bretherton