

QUARTERLY NEWS LETTER

AUCKLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 16 No. 2

March, 1959.

Hon. Editor : Marguerite Crookes
"Brockis Holt",
Mountain Road,
Henderson

Hon. Secretary: Mrs. A. Coyle,
Goodall St.,
Auckland, S.E. 5. Tel. 556-963.

BOTANISING ON MT. MAUHUNGATAHI

Mt. Maungatahi, the 499' ft. peak on the N.W. side of Mt. Ruapehu has long attracted us and on the 3rd. January my husband and I set forth from Erua station to make the ascent.

Prickly "Spaniards" (Aciphylla squarrosa) made their presence felt as we ascended the grassy slopes above the railway line and the quaint insect-catching plant Drosera binata grew plentifully there.

We soon plunged into the comparative gloom of the mixed forest where Kamahi, (Weinmannia racemosa) was predominant and made our way slowly up the steep track to the music of bellbirds, tuis, and the harsher call of the Kaka. Many conifers are to be found here including Dacrydium biforme, D. intermedium, D. bidwillii, the mountain cedar, Likocedrus bidwillii and the alpine Totara, Podocarpus nivalis. Underfoot were numerous lovely ferns, most striking of all being the Prince of Wales fern, Leptopteris superba which was particularly abundant. Among the filmy ferns were fine specimens of Mecodium pulcherrimum, Meringium multifidum and M. bivalve, the greyish Apteropteris malingii, and lastly Mecodium rufescens with its silky-haired triangular-shaped fronds, which I had not previously found in the North Island.

Tall trees gave way to a sub-alpine scrub including Coprosma spp. and Suttonia divaricata, and there on the ground among the Blechnum minor I spied an insignificant plant with tiny green flowers, which has several times been collected in the National Park area and which appears to be as yet an unnamed species of Gentian. At the edge of the bush some interesting shrubs include Pittosporum divaricata, P. anacalum, Olearia nummularifolia, O. virgata, Cassinia vauvilliersii, Senecio bidwillii, Aristotelia fruticosa, Myrtus pedunculata and the Hebes, H. buxifolia and H. laevis were in flower.

The open steppes are dominated by the sedge, Sahnia pauciflora. Ascending higher into the tussock, one is struck by the great abundance of the silvery-leafed Celmisia, C. incana which is a most striking feature of this mountain. In spite of the great quantities of these plants only two flowers were seen. Celmisia spectabilis was more generous however, and also Euphrasia cuneata which showed its attractive white flowers everywhere.

A strange cut-leaved buttercup aroused our curiosity. It was about 1 ft. tall and many seed heads were seen. After diligent searching, three bright yellow flowers were found and these measured about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch across and had numerous petals. Reference to "Cheeseman" revealed this to be Ranunculus geraniifolius, a species I had not previously encountered. I was also thrilled to find my first specimen of Nth. Island Edelweiss, Leucogenes leontopodium, which with its flannel-like flowers and silver leaves, is extremely handsome. Boggy patches yielded specimens of the starry-flowered Liparophyllum gunnii, Drosera arcturi, tiny red rosettes of Drosera spathulata and another minute silvery plant, Gnaphalium paludosum.

After a three-hour climb the rocky summit was reached and peeping from beneath the cairn was a strange plant which vaguely resembled a Drapetes, but it was far more lax in growth. This proved to be Drapetes dieffenbachii var. laxa, which in Cheeseman's opinion, requires further study and may be proved to be distinct. Certainly I noticed the usual form of Drapetes dieffenbachii growing nearby and the difference was striking.

A magnificent view was obtained from the summit and some realisation was gained of the immense expanse of tussock and scrub country separating us from the hut village which could be seen far in the distance on Ruapehu's slopes. Far below us were several tarns, and patches of bush in the mountain valleys looked tempting for further botanical exploration if only one had the time and energy to spare.

K. Wood.

WAYSIDE COLOUR

On a recent trip to the South Island I could not help but notice the beautiful colours of the wayside flowers, or perhaps I should call them weeds. Weeds or otherwise, they certainly made a riot of colour that could compete with any park.

Through the McKenzie country, ochre grass was brightened with the yellow of the Hawk-weed (Crepis capillaris). Californian thistles were topped with mauve and rich borders of Vipers bugloss (Echium vulgare) completed the picture. In some places blooms of pink and white yarrow (Achillea millefolium) predominated.