

## TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK — 1986

Jim Beaver et al.

The following group of A.B.S. members met at the Ruapehu Club Chalet on 20th January.

J. Rattenbury (leader)	Joan Beaver
Ross Beaver	Jack Mackinder
Jessica Beaver	Christine Mackinder
Rosemary Beaver	John Maindonald
Graham Beaver	Winifred Maindonald
Jim Beaver	Graham Quin

Following an afternoon arrival some of us drove to the Top of the Bruce to renew acquaintance with the small alpine plants that manage to overcome the severe climate there. The following were sighted:

<i>Celmisia spectabilis</i>	<i>Pentachondra pumila</i>
<i>Dracophyllum recurvum</i>	<i>Poa colensoi</i>
<i>Euphrasia cuneata</i>	<i>Prasophyllum colensoi</i>
<i>Forstera bidwillii</i>	<i>Pratia angulata</i>
<i>Gaultheria colensoi</i>	<i>Rytidosperma setifolium</i>
<i>Helichrysum bellidioides</i>	<i>Senecio bidwillii</i>
<i>Luzula colensoi</i>	<i>Wahlenbergia pygmaea</i>
<i>Parahebe hookeriana</i> var. <i>hookeriana</i>	
the moss <i>Racomitrium lanuginosum</i>	

In the evening plans were discussed for the morrow and Jack Rattenbury gave us a summary of much of the Park flora by means of a comprehensive slide showing.

### TUESDAY 21 JAN.

The main group went to Ohakune and up the Mountain Road to the Turoa ski field village. We stopped briefly at low altitude in a stand of red beech to inspect a sighting of mistletoe. Brilliant red to orange flowers were visible high up in two trees. Attempts to identify the species by binoculars were not successful but it was later confirmed to be *Peraxilla colensoi* by the finding of large, almost orbicular petiolate leaves under the trees. The cars made heavy weather of the last couple of kilometres. Unlike the Bruce side there are almost no ski huts up the mountain. All was deserted but for one other car. Near the village buildings a small area has been fenced off with a low fence to discourage visitors taking short cuts across an area of high altitude moist herbfield.

The highlight was to see the large buttercup, *Ranunculus insignis*, although we were too late to see its golden flowers - note Dorothy White (A.B.S. Newsletter 39, 32) wonders whether this species was planted here - does anyone know? The buttercup looked a little weary as the older leaves were quite heavily infected with its own special rust *Aecidium ranunculi-insignis*.

After a circuit around a dry rocky slope dominated by *Dracophyllum recurvum* we returned to the cars and drove to the Mangawhero Falls for lunch at a conveniently placed picnic table. Refreshed, we drove to the Waitonga parking area where Jack Mackinder sighted a stem of the sprophytic orchid *Gastrodia cunninghamii* almost before the engines were turned off. He consolidated this sighting with another later on to show

that it was no fluke. In both instances they were near to mountain beech. Jack Rattenbury considers the Waitonga Falls track to be one of the best in the park, a judgement we would now agree with. Most of the track passes through mountain beech and kaikawaka forest. Early on a flash of bright red indicated another mistletoe - this time at head height allowing it to be readily identified as Peraxilla tetrapetala. Unfortunately mistletoes are apparently decreasing in number probably through possum browsing. Has the time come for selected trees, somewhat removed from tracks, to be metal banded like telegraph poles to ensure the long term future of the species in the Park?

We had been warned to watch for pterostylids and succeeded in finding Pterostylis humilis (in fruit) and Pterostylis sp. (resembling P. graminea but with somewhat broader leaves than those in the north and with the twisted labellum of P. montana.) About halfway to the falls the track crosses a montane bog dominated by sedges including the tufted Carpha alpina. In the pools we found Utricularia monanthos, with small white snapdragon-like flowers, Myriophyllum pedunculatum advertising its presence with bright red stamens, and Liparophyllum gunnii with small symmetrical white flowers in some cases actually submerged below the water surface.

After the bog the track descends through forest to the falls, the track margin enhanced by the arching heads of holy grass Hierochloa redolens and the more familiar bush rice grass Mircolaela avenacea, more Pterostylis humilis along with Lycopodium australianum and the white flowered 'violet' Viola filicaulis. The falls themselves form a spectacular cascade. Nearby we were able to photograph the appropriately named Parahebe catarractae.

WEDNESDAY 22 JAN.

A shorter drive today brought us to Erua where we crossed the railway line and entered a mixed forest of kamahi (Weimannia racemosa) and smaller trees, including Neomyrtus pedunculatus in flower. Soon we began again the battle of the divaricating shrubs which Jack Rattenbury continued to tease us with. Here was added the juvenile pokaka (Elaeocarpus hookerianus) with its bewildering display of differing leaf shapes and sizes. We also met a very fine display of our largest moss Dawsonia superba looking at first glance like seedlings of Pinus radiata, about 30 cm tall. And on the subject of superb plants here was Leptoteris superba, the Prince of Wales feathers fern, growing well throughout.

An unusual find was Thismia rodwayi, recognised by Ross while searching in leaf litter for truffles. Only one pale lantern-like flower was found. This is the second sighting of this rare plant by our society in just over two years. (See Newsletter Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 14. Hakarimata Walkway for fuller notes). In the Tongariro area there are records of Thismia from Taurewa and Ketetahi.

About midday we left Hauhungatahi and crossing the railway drove a few kilometres west to a bridge over a stream which emerged from a swamp. Here Jack Rattenbury led us to a remnant stand of Pittosporum turneri of which few plants are now to be found in the wild. Most of the dozen or so plants of P. turneri were in the divaricating juvenile stage resembling closely other divaricating shrubs also found here; Coprosma propinqua, C. rhamnoides, Corokia cotoneaster, Hymenanchera angustifolia, Myrsine divaricata, Neomyrtus pedunculata, Neopanax anomalum, Olearia

solandri all making our progress rather difficult.

After our return to the ski chalet a sub group went out with Jack Rattenbury in search of the North Island edelweiss Leucogenes leontopodium. We followed the Whakapapa track and eventually found our quarry as the mist descended. The plant seen was quite healthy but seemed not to have flowered this season.

THURSDAY 23 JAN.

Jessica and John drove round towards Rotoaira and then took the track to Ketetahi Springs on the northern slopes of Mt Tongariro. Passing first through podocarp forest dominated by Hall's totara, and then into a tussock-shrubland which gave way to a more or less pure tussockland at higher altitude, they were able to add some 25 moss records to the list Jessica was preparing (see separate article). The roaring steam vents and boiling mud half hidden in swirling steam proved ample reward for the effort of the climb, not to mention a soak (of the feet in Jessica's case, to the neck in John's) in the thermal waters.

A second pair, Ross and Jim went back up the Ohakune-Turoa road mainly to seek truffles under the Nothofagus fusca and the N. menziesii leaf litter which occurs part way up the road. Truffles and their allies were elusive in the morning, but later they found the bright red truffle Paurocotylis pila, in the rimu forest later along with another bright red patch supplied by Tropaeolum speciosum. They also confirmed the identification of mistletoes seen on Tuesday. They spent a while on the lower track to Blythe Hut where a feature was the common occurrence of Astelia grandis with its strong upright leaves and sometimes nearby A. fragrans whose narrower leaves tend to droop in the upper half.

Another group, loyal to the leader to the last, followed Jack Rattenbury along the Mangatepopo Track to the Silica Springs. Their loyalty was rewarded by a number of finds: Gentiana bellidifolia, the first seen with fully expanded flowers, Myrsine nummularia covered with fruit as if to prove a point made earlier by Jack R., that purple berries implies Myrsine, and several other plants worth photographing (the photos were shown to a curiously small audience at the Bot.Soc. meeting 7 May) Parahebe hookeriana, Raoulia hookeri var. albo-sericea, Muehlenbeckia axillaris, Cyathodes fraseri, Montia fontana, Neopaxia (Claytonia) australasica.

#### Woodcocks Reserve — R. Afford

In reply to Maureen Young's conjecture about the planting of ferns in Woodcocks Reserve, (ABS NL 41: 4) † Rich Afford reports:

On 20 Sept 1970, Mr Warren led a Natural History Club field trip to Woodcocks Reserve. Mr Woodcock, who was very elderly, took them through the Reserve and told them he had planted the ferns.