

SOME LAKE ELLESMERE WETLAND PLANTS

DENNIS CLARK

During survey work for a vegetation map and plant species list of the wetland areas around the margin of Lake Ellesmere, a number of interesting finds have been made. To date these have mainly been on the less saline north western lake shore. I would like to single out five species for special mention, the first four all belonging to the sedge family (Cyperaceae).

Baumea rubiginosa, previously not recorded from Lake Ellesmere and considered rare in Canterbury, has been found at a number of locations on the north western lakeshore. It is present in Harts Creek Wildlife Reserve where it is growing with Leptocarpus similis and young Salix cineria (pussy willow) and is in danger of being completely shaded out by the latter. B. rubiginosa has also been found in small, boggy areas, close to the lake south of Timber Yard Point where it is easily overlooked because of heavy grazing and a superficial resemblance in its vegetative state to species of Juncus.

Two clumps of Cyperus ustulatus have been found growing on the bank of an open drain beside an access road north east of Timber Yard Point. This sedge has previously been recorded from the other side of the lake (Tai Tapu, Motukarara and Kaituna) and near the mouth of the Rakaia River.

Another plant considered rare in Canterbury is the tall sedge Scirpus lacustris. Small stands are present around the mouth of the LII River and rather tatty remnants are present near the mouth of the Selwyn River and on the lake edge two miles north west of the Taumutu settlement.

The uncommon Lepidosperma australe with its four sided culms is present with Schoenus pauciflorus in damp pasture and boggy places in a few locations north and south of Timber Yard Point. It is invariably heavily grazed where found.

Finally I would like to mention that a statement by Miss Ruth Mason in Vol 4 of this journal to the effect that Urtica linearifolia is not so uncommon in Canterbury as some authors have suggested has been well borne out by my wanderings around the lake edge. I have quite often come across this nettle, usually finding it growing over trunks of the niggerhead, Carex secta (as described by Miss Mason) or sometimes creeping amongst clumps of Leptocarpus similis under willows.

Map references for some localities where rare or uncommon sedges have been found are listed below. Perhaps if members of the society are ever in the areas concerned they would like to keep a watachful eye on these plants.

All map references NZMS 1.

Baumea rubiginosa:

Harts Creek Wildlife Reserve	S93 745 252
Small point south of Timber Yard Point	S93 766 234
Bog south of Timber Yard Point	S93 765 230
Boggy area 2 miles NW of Taumatu	S93 757 196

Cyperus ustulatus:

Road end north of Hanmer Road. Sth Bank of drain beside road - 50 metres from lake edge.	S93 779 295
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Scirpus lacustris:

LII River mouth	S83 840 336
Selwyn Spit	S83 835 315
	and S83 820 317

Lake Edge 2 miles NW of Taumutu S83 760 196

Lepidosperma australe:

Small point south of Timber Yard Point S93 766 234

NW lakeshore- approx. midway between
Timber Yard Point and Selwyn Spit S93 777 293

DROUGHT

JOHN THOMPSON

Plants respond to drought conditions in various ways. This is an account of the behaviour of two species of ferns growing under a large pear tree in my garden.

One is a sizeable patch of Hypolepis tenuifolium which normally sends up its most attractive new shoots in spring, grows up to around 42 cm and stays green until winter frosts cut them down.

Last spring new growth appeared at the usual time and grew well reaching a height exceeding normal by 15 cm; the bed was a delight to look at. However on arriving home after a holiday taken in the dry, hot February it was seen that all the fronds had browned off, probably due to the dry conditions. I cut away the fronds and watered the patch to try to keep the ferns alive until the autumn rains.

New growth appeared towards the end of March. This developed into a thick sward of excellent new growth up to 36 cm high. I wonder what effect the growing of two sets of fronds on one season will have on next springs growth.

The other fern is Blechnum discolor, a plant that I have had for some years. This plant also sent out a set of new fronds late in March. They developed to their usual height of some 60 cm. The edges of the fronds look a bit tatty now. Apparently the new fronds had not hardened sufficiently to withstand the early frosts.