

AN EX-EDITOR'S WANDERINGS

John Thompson

LATE FLOWERS. one does not expect to see many native shrubs in flower late in the season. On a visit to the Ellesmere Spit on 13th April. 1985 we observed numerous shrubs of Muehlenbeckia complexa in full flower. They were unexpected particularly at the end of a long season of drought. One shrub of Coprosma propinqua attracted attention by reason of the Parsonsia heterophylla which grew in the centre of it bearing 5 cymes of freshly opened flowers protruding from the top of the bush. A week later we saw a few flowers of both species in the Orton Bradley Park.

Pneumatopteris pennigera. The waterfall gully in the above park contains many plants of this fern growing at the edge of the stream. Two huge specimens grow in a shady gully a little below the first fall. It is worth the effort in climbing the gully just to look at these giants. Whilst you are at the second fall don't forget to look at the orchid, Corybas macrantha, which grows on the cliff over the falls. You must expect to have a little water dropping on you from above.

CONTINUATION of Westport Camp 1985 - Snippets

the dispersal of slightly smaller terrestrial northern rats among the sister species. Lower growth consisted of Phormium, Astelia, Gleichenia spp, Lycopodium ramulosum and L. cernuum, terrestrial orchids, Thelymitra sp and Orthoceras (in flower) and abundant Schizaea fistulosa.

To "ring the changes" our lunchtime stop was at Four Mile river bordered by dense podocarp-beech forest with abundant conifer regeneration of rimu, miro, kahikatea, Hall's totara, mountain toatoa, silver pine, pink pine and cedar (Libocedrus) seedlings. Beech trees were red, silver and mountain: undergrowth was varied and dense except in Sphagnum patches. Some of our party braved the river crossing to go up the limestone gorge in good bush, while others travelled by road up the Nile to a viewpoint commanding the broad basin with its extensive pakihi of the Four Mile above the gorge. Rain obscured the Paparoas. On the homeward journey further variety was added by stopping at a dam where Margaret found a rarely seen Utricularia growing as floating threads with Isotoma (flowers like small violet stars) and Myriophyllum. Gumboots should be worn.

GASTRODIAS. On the 26th December, 1984 we found 3 plants of an orchid, Gastrodia, growing near the path in the Hay Reserve at Pigeon Bay. The only other gastrodias seen by us on the Peninsula have been 2 plants on the Port Hills and one found by Bryony Macmillan in the Kaituna Valley. As the plants were in seed I was unable to ascertain their specific name. I was delighted to have pointed out to me by Joe Cartman 42 plants of Gastrodia sp. at the Groynes on the 23rd January, 1985. These were growing under a single willow tree.

Pterostylis alobula. My thanks go to Hugh Wilson for informing me when the plants of the orchids were in flower in the Garden of Thane, Akaroa. With Yvonne and Ross Elder we paid a visit to Akaroa where Mr Erickson acted as guide. These small, delicate, greenhood orchids are rare in Canterbury. It is well worth the trip to Akaroa to see them, more particularly as they flower in the middle of winter. Our excursion was on the 13th June, 1984.

Solenogyne gunnii. This plant, at first glance, looks like a Bellis perennis with out the white ray florets. We found it in the Sugar Loaf Reserve near the Summit Road parking area. Botany Division identified it. S. gunnii is an interesting plant to grow in a pot

PLANT HUNTING. It is the mark of an amateur botanist that he sometimes finds plants by sitting on them. After a strenuous climb in the Sugar Loaf Reserve we gratefully sank down on the turf for a rest and in doing so narrowly missed sitting on three fine specimens of the orchid Pterostylis montana. I had not seen this species on the Port Hills east of Dyers Pass before. On another occasion I sat down in the reserve to see more easily the plants growing in a patch of short grass and was surprised to find that I had alighted on a small plant less than 3cm high bearing two cocci. It was Stackhousia minima. I am not aware of any other finding of this plant on the Port Hills.

I returned to the site on 10th April, 1985 and found that due to the drought most of the grass had dried off. Many plants of S. minima were alive although the plants were very small and turning brown. To find these Stackhousia leave your car at the Sugar Loaf car park below the T/V transmitter tower, walk up to where the road turns to the left, climb the fence and walk down the spur some 12m toward Gilpins track.