

## 17 JANUARY – OHAU SKI-FIELD DAY

Trevor Blogg

The camp members drove to the car park at about 1550 metres altitude, where we stepped out into low cloud, but moderate temperatures. The car park is modest in size compared with (say) Mount Hutt, but the remainder of the ski field has been extensively modified with sad results for the vegetation. The main ski runs are about 15 m wide and mostly devoid of vegetation. In small areas near the lodge which had escaped continuous winter sports activity, we found remnant species such as *Ranunculus foliosus* (a rare addition to our species list for the location), *Acaena inermis*, *A. saccaticupula*, *Stellaria gracilentia* and *Cardamine debilis* - the latter two were in flower, making them easier to identify.

The relatively undisturbed hillside above a major ski-run had retained a moderate amount of vegetation at this lower elevation – a short way from the lodge we found *Montia calycina* in flower (it took a while to figure this one out – it lacked any pink tinges). Also in flower were - *Lobelia* (formerly *Pratia* – probably *L. angulata*), *Wahlenbergia albomarginata*, *Celmisia gracilentia* & *C. haastii* plus *Anaphaloides bellidioides*.

We also identified *Carex berggrenii*, a distinctive *Luzula*, perhaps *L. pumila*; the sun-dew *Drosera arcturi*, and a *Bulbinella* which looked a lot like *B. gibbsii* var. *balanifera*, but I'll defer to the area species list which only indicates *B. angustifolia*. A mat-forming *Coprosma* was probably *C. perpusilla*, and we also found the small comb-sedge *Oreobolus pectinatus*.

A patch of *Hydrocotyle novae-zeelandiae* var. *montana* caused some debate. A relatively abundant (and flowering) species was *Kelleria* (*Drapetes*) *dieffenbachii*. One patch of *Psychrophila* sp. (*Caltha*) was seen. Among the cushion plants were *Colobanthus affinis*, *Euchiton* (*Gnaphalium*) *traversii* and *Dracophyllum muscoides*.

The soft (seasonal) fern *Polystichum cystostegia*, was seen in several locations, with *Blechnum penna-marina* being "sparsely common". The dominant tussock grass was *Chionochloa rigida* and the rushes *Juncus novae-zeelandiae* and (possibly) *J. antarcticus* were present.

We resisted the temptation to stay immediately above the car park area, and made a push up the 'road' to about 1600m, where we arrived around noon. The road was otherwise almost "abiotic", though an occasional *Epilobium komarovianum* was seen. Close to our lunch stop, we found *Celmisia angustifolia* and *C. laricifolia*, and a flowering *Craspedia*, which is (looking at my photograph) tall, purple stemmed and yellow-flowered, but whose habit

is quite unlike *C. incana* – Graeme Jane’s species list mentions “*C. uniflora* var *uniflora* many entities – status unknown”. Around here we also found *Leptinella pectinata*, *Raoulia grandiflora* (Fig. 1, page 8), and a *Phyllachne* cushion, plus *Huperzia australiana*. (= *Lycopodium australianum*)

Climbing still higher, someone noticed a very large orange/brown-coloured grasshopper, which I photographed. We were eventually rewarded with the sight of several *Aciphylla dobsonii* (Fig. 2), a little nibbled, (perhaps by thar?) but none in flower. A coarsely hairy *Myosotis* (species undecided; Fig. 3) was prettily in flower. Here the landscape was more seriously modified by the ski-field development and little was growing apart from the occasional *Aciphylla* (all *dobsonii*). Descending over ‘un-developed’ land brought more variety, including a single *Dolichoglottis scorzoneroideis* growing on a cliff face.

A notable *Raoulia* was *R. youngii*, spotted by Miles Giller. There was lots of *Bulbinella* – now convincingly *B. angustifolia*, i.e. with distinctly narrow leaves.

Overall, after a somewhat discouraging start, we had a very good day of botanising.

## 18 JANUARY – FREEHOLD STREAM

Miles and Gillian Giller

Lingering cloud saw us head for the nearby walk up Freehold Stream, on the ranges behind our camp. The first part meandered across former glacial lateral moraines and terraces clad predominantly in secondary manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) shrubland. The orchids *Prasophyllum colensoi*, *Microtis unifolia* and *M. oligantha* were seen among hard tussock (*Festuca novae-zelandiae*). The white leaves of *Brachyglottis haastii* stood out among the predominantly tan groundcover. Occasional shrubs of matagouri (*Discaria toumatou*), porcupine bush (*Melicytus aff. alpinus*), and *Coprosma propinqua* provided potential habitat for jewelled gecko (though the first gecko spotted was ensconced in the wood-pile behind the hut).

After reaching the point where Freehold Creek exited its valley, the track passed under beech forest (*Nothofagus solandri* var. *cliffortioides*), where we again saw abundant red mistletoe (*Peraxilla tetrapetala*), unfortunately just past flowering. Apart from a few ferns (including *Asplenium richardii*,