

7 JANUARY – MCLEAN FALLS, CHASLANDS, AND KOROPUKU FALLS

Miles Giller

With DoC botanist Brian Rance again joining us, we headed south-westwards to the Chaslands. This area had been partially cleared for farming many years ago. However, it had been found to be very cold and much of the land is reverting back to native scrub and forest. Our first stop was at McLean Falls, starting our botanising among the valley-floor shrublands. Here we were presented with a wealth of divaricating shrubs and small trees growing on a fertile alluvial frost-hollow flat (bliss). Occasional *Plagianthus regius* and *Olearia lineata* trees stood out above *Leptospermum scoparium*, *Coprosma propinqua*, *C. rigida*, *C. dumosa*, *C. rubra*, *C. rotundifolia* and (new to many of us) *C. decurva*. Of special interest was the single trackside specimen of *Pittosporum obcordatum*, the same plant first discovered by Canterbury Bot Soc during our 1994 Catlins visit, which apart from its upright habit was very difficult to distinguish from the more rounded *Raukahu anomalus* shrubs growing beneath. Another novelty was *Melicytus flexuosus*, with shaded plants carrying narrow leaves on slim flexible stems, while exposed plants tended to be leafless with thick rigid stems. After dallying through the confusing divaricates, we headed further along the track towards the falls, initially passing through a stand of tall *Dicksonia fibrosa*, then into hill-slope rata-kamahi forest. The diversity of filmy ferns presented rather a challenge (11 species of *Hymenophyllum* and one of *Trichomanes* were listed), several large specimens of *Hymenophyllum pulcherrimum* being the highlight for most. Prince of Wales Feather *Leptopteris superba* was seen, as well as *Leptopteris hymenophylloides* and a likely hybrid with intermediate characteristics. Differentiating *Blechnum chambersii* and *B. membranaceum* provided a novel challenge, with likely hybrids again confusing the issue. As we returned to our cars, several of us fossicked through the frost flat shrublands in the optimistic hope of finding a second *Pittosporum obcordatum*, although a short rain-shower had us retreating for lunch in our cars, without success.

With the rain clearing as quickly as it had arrived, we then drove a short distance westward to a roadside QEII covenant protecting a patch of remnant red tussock (*Chionochloa rubra* ssp. *cuprea*), with *Carex secta*, *Carex coriacea*, *Phormium tenax*, *Leptospermum scoparium*, *Carmichaelia virgata* (listed as *C. petriei* by some), and several emergent *Olearia* bushes and trees. Closer inspection revealed *Olearia lineata* (growing very large in the Catlins relative to Canterbury plants), *O. virgata* (*O. laxiflora*), *O. bullata* and a putative hybrid *O. bullata x laxiflora*. *Coprosma decurva*, with its gracefully arching twigs was common around damp margins. Despite having only been fenced and destocked a few years ago, there was a pleasantly surprising range of small plants volunteering below the larger trees and shrubs. Out on the flat wetland area we also found low mounds of

Sphagnum cristatum, occasionally supporting *Gunnera prorepens*, *Centella uniflora* and *Coprosma elatirioides*.

A short drive further westwards took us to another area of Chaslands frost flat vegetation, which like the McLean Falls flats presented a wonderful range of small-leaved plants. *Raukaua anomalus*, *Aristotelia fruticosa*, *Myrsine divaricata*, *Neomyrtus pedunculata*, *Coprosma propinqua*, *C. dumosa* and *C. rigida* formed thickets below trees of *Coprosma wallii* (Fig. 2, page 29, with its characteristic red inner bark), *Plagianthus regius* and *Olearia lineata*. *Parsonsia capsularis*, *Rubus schmidelioides* var. *schmidelioides* and *Clematis marata* were occasionally encountered, making progress somewhat circuitous. *Ranunculus ternatifolius* (Naturally Uncommon) was found in a moist canopy gap, apparently a very uncommon listing for the Catlins. Several most attractive specimens of the hybrid *Raukaua anomalus* x *simplex* were encountered, as well as both parent species.

Despite being late in the day, several of us ventured a little further westward to the Koropuku Falls walk. This was rather similar to the forested section of the McLean Falls track, again with abundant ferns and bryophytes under a rata-kamahi canopy. *Hymenophyllum frankliniae* (formerly known as *H. ferrugineum*), *H. flabellatum*, *H. dilatatum* and *H. pulcherrimum* were common, though often rather crumpled in the southern summer drought. *Nertera depressa* was particularly eye-catching with its shining red fruit. Bryony noted that the liverworts appeared to dominate over the mosses.

The day certainly showed the value of having a local botanist on hand. Many thanks go to Brian Rance for his overall guidance and for answering so many questions.

8 JANUARY – PAPATOWAI ESTUARY, SHANKS’ BUSH QEII COVENANT, OLD COACH ROAD, AND OLD POSSUMERS’ TRACK

Trevor Blogg

This was our day for a short trip to the northeast over Florence Hill to the Papatowai estuary area, starting from the Papatowai settlement southwest of the estuarine lagoon. We had a low tide to walk along a sandy beach, but most of the botanical interest was at the high-water line where the beach reaches low vegetated banks (Fig. 3, page 30). Here was a rich colour-scape of crimson southern rata in full flower, the shiny leaves of *Coprosma lucida*, the inflorescence spikes of *Hebe salicifolia*, the golden-green of kamahi leaves and the blue-green blades of *Phormium tenax*.

The bank sides themselves revealed occasional *Asplenium obtusatum* ssp. *obtusatum* ferns - common in this area and easily mistaken for the shining spleenwort *A. oblongifolium*, which is absent this far south.