

HIGH ALTITUDE EXTENSION

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Alastair Macdonald and I set off at a good pace up the track to Temple Basin, in order to find as many alpine, and especially scree, plants as we could.

Despite the pace it was impossible to miss such gems as *Parahebe lyallii*, which was growing out from under the steps which stabilize the rubble track to the ski installations, and “edelweiss” (*Leucogenes grandiceps*). We also spotted a single *Dolichoglottis lyallii x scorzoneroides*, identified by its un-faded but pale yellow flowers (well, ray florets, to be more correct). Leaving the main ski installation area, and traversing low to the Temple Col area, we were soon rewarded with several hebes in full flower, the large-flowering *H. macrantha*, *H. canterburiensis*, *H. subalpina*, *H. pauciramosa*, and *Leonohebe ciliolata*, being common. Less common but in spectacular flower was *Hebe lycopodioides*. *Hebe treadwellii* was also present. *Leucogenes grandiceps* was much in evidence and almost fully in flower. *Celmisia durietzii* was also flowering up here. On reaching the coarse scree below Temple Col, the vegetation essentially disappeared, and we made for higher bluffs, where some greenery was in evidence. We passed through a few greener areas on the scree and saw *Leptinella pyrethrifolium* among good and common *Schoenus pauciflorus*.

Among the ferns, as well as the ubiquitous *Blechnum penna-marina*, was the soft summer-green *Polystichum cystostegia*, present in good numbers. There were few *Aciphylla* plants in evidence, *A. crenulata* and *A. colensoi* being present, but rather uncommon, as well as small *A. similis*. *Anisotome haastii* and *A. pilifera*, along with fairly abundant *Gingidia montana*, were the other prominent representatives of the carrot family, Apiaceae.

In better parts of the scree, we encountered *Haastia sinclairii*, again in full flower. White euphrasias and epilobiums were locally abundant. Many “garden-size” patches of flowering plants, provided wonderful opportunities for photography. Cushion plants (*Donatia* etc.) were uncommon, but encountered in flower. A fine example of a flowering onion orchid (*Prasophyllum colensoi*) gave a good opportunity for macro-photography.

We took the higher level (skiers’) track to return to the area around the ski installations, where other members had reached in our absence. I spent a lot of time in a futile search for *Geum*, and Zuni Steer finally found a single plant hiding under the leaf of a *Ranunculus lyallii*, by a stream-side.

The descent included a discussion on the difference between the various woody shrub-daisies, eventually leading to the conclusion that in addition to *Olearia arborescens* and *O. colensoi*, we were also seeing *Brachyglottis eleagnifolia* and *B. bidwillii*.