

## SUNDAY 5 FEBRUARY – OTIRA VALLEY

### Bryony Macmillan

Once again we were blessed with a lightly overcast sun and soft breeze for climbing. Starting out from the car park we were taken by a generous population of *Waireia stenopetala* (formerly *Lyperanthus antarcticus*), in which the arched dorsal sepal was bright with yellow-brown markings. *Waireia* means wet or peaty ground and *stenopetala* describes the narrow petals. Here also began the discussion needed to distinguish *Coprosma pseudocuneata* and *C. fowerakeri*.

Red arils on *Podocarpus nivalis* and red berries of *Cyathodes* with brown seeds of pygmy pine (*Lepidothamnus laxifolius*) were striking. So was the extent of growth of a shrub of intermediate height with soft green foliage until I was overtaken by Aaron Wilton and his family. Aaron explained it was the hybrid of yellow silver pine (*Lepidothamnus intermedius*) with pygmy pine, very vigorous.

The most commonly flowering plants were *Celmisia discolor* agg., *Brachyglottis bellidioides* and bright yellow eyebright (*Euphrasia cockayneana*), a yellowing background supplied by the ubiquitous *Lycopodium fastigiatum*. Occasionally a large green *Aciphylla* (*A. horrida*) stood along the track, reminding me that we were on the west of the Divide. Further east would be *A. scott-thomsonii*.

*Craspedia robusta* with thick bright green leaves, hispid on the upper surface, was only occasionally in flower, with dark scapes and white heads about 20 mm across. An occasional branch of *Archeria traversia* stood out among the prevailing *Brachyglottis eleagnifolia*, *Coprosma rugosa* and *Ozothamnus* shrubs. The most fetching grass was a slender holygrass (*Hierochloa*) with sparse panicles and few brown spikelets, curving gracefully out from the surrounding shrubs.

On leaving the shrubland we came into a swarm of *Acaena*, upland *A. anserinifolia* hybridized with *A. inermis* and *A. fissistipula* mingled along the edges of streamlets. Here *Ourisia macrophylla* ssp. *lactea* was the common herbaceous species. Here also was the first appearance of the robust *Anisotome pilifera* among the rocks.

Alastair and Trevor explored the rockfalls and screes above the bridge and reported on *Hebe macrocalyx*, *Ranunculus sericophyllus*, *Gingidium decipiens*, *Haastia sinclairii*, *Parahebe cheesemanii* and *Montia calycina*. Alastair saw seven of the 10 hebes that had been seen in Temple Basin the previous day. At the bridge we met an English visitor who had photographed a pair of rock wren on the scree.