

MONDAY 6 FEBRUARY – DOBSON NATURE WALK

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This was our last botanising walk for Waitangi Weekend 2012 and we estimated about 2 hours would be sufficient to walk 2 km. We started on the new track DoC has put in linking the Bealey Valley Track to the Dobson Nature Walk. This put us in the last of the forested area before the track opens out onto the tussocks and smaller plants.

The first gem was the orchid, *Pterostylis oliveri*, past its best for flowering, near to the footbridge over Twin Creek. Now I needed to find the orchid *Waireia stenopetala* (formerly *Lyperanthus antarcticus*), which I had incorrectly identified as a *Pterostylis* species! On a more rocky mound in a sunny spot was a lovely patch of pristine flowering *Waireia stenopetala*. How could I make that mistake? Very easily. Here were all the little gems that we had seen earlier up the Otira Valley. The little snow gentian (*Gentianella bellidifolia*) and the multi-headed snow gentian (*G. corymbifera*) were growing close by. I need similar plants to grow in close proximity so that I can study them closely. Digital cameras are handy for this as well.

The ramble through the bog areas, up along the hillside to the summit and the end of the Dobson Walk had all the same plants as in the previous days. Seats and information boards, for improving the mind, were provided. A decision was made to carry on to the Otira car park where our driver was parked awaiting our arrival. The next part of the track, through the tall red tussock (*Chionochloa rubra*) was overgrown and had unseen potholes beside the track for stepping into! Track markers were sparse. Time was marching on while our driver watched us flounder through this area from a safe spot on the rocky mound by Lake Misery. The plants growing in the lee of the mound protected from the Nor'wester were more lush than those on the summit, such as mountain neinei (*Dracophyllum traversii*) and leatherwood (*Olearia colensoi*). This part proved very interesting. On the sunny side of the mound an old stunted *Fuchsia excorticata* without any flowers or berries was seen.

The Dobson Nature Walk and the extensions that we did were truly worthwhile. It is easier than the Otira Valley and Temple Basin tracks with only minor uphill sections. DoC has a booklet *The Dobson Nature Walk* at \$2 featuring the plants, animals and landforms, which is a useful guide to the area and available at the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre.

I saw four different orchids during the weekend: *Prasophyllum colensoi* on the bulldozed track to Temple Basin, one plant of *Stegostyla lyallii* (*Caladenia lyallii*) in Temple Basin, numerous patches of *Waireia stenopetala* on the Arthur's Pass summit, and *Pterostylis oliveri* by Twin Creek.