

## Coalbrookdale, Denniston Plateau

Carolyn Davies

We all set off down the low-grade Coalbrookdale early in the day. We found a *Powelliphanta* shell, and used the hardness of its shell to argue over the snail's age. Paul found an excellent example of pink pine (*Halocarpus biformis*) showing how the plant's juvenile form changes as it matures. Team Leader Melissa photographed the invasive exotic species *Juncus squarrosus*, orange day lily (*Hemerocallis fulva*) and *Escallonia rubra* to pop onto the Denniston Project on Nature Watch

(<http://naturewatch.org.nz/observations/project/denniston-plateau-west-coast>).

The track led us to the mouths of the mines, with the colours of the mosses and lichens demonstrating the interesting effects that the discharge of nutrients and chemicals can have on the immediate plants. During our lunch break, a moss moth (*Scoparia diphteralis*) took a liking to my backpack.

The groups split up after lunch and the younger ones elected to climb Mt Williams and went up Myra's Track (4 hours return) through a beech forest. We saw brown creepers and a rifleman in the forest on the return journey. The summit had a tarn, and a great view of the Paparoa Ranges, as well as the plateau. There were a few stocky kanuka, and a multitude of alpine plants that I could not possibly list.

A side note about the other groups' afternoon excursion, Paul and Trevor investigated the small patches of plateau on the side of the road, which turned out to be thriving biodiversity hubs. Paul found a form of the threatened eyebright *Euphrasia wettsteiniana* (Fig. 2) that is restricted to Stockton and Denniston, Westport lowlands and the northern end of the Paparoa Range.

Paul Maurice adds that among some other interesting plants found on this day, the best was the tiny *Liparophyllum gunnii* in shallow, peaty depressions. He also enjoyed seeing abundant *Dracophyllum palustre* in flower, along with *D. pronum*, *D. oliveri*, and *D. rosmarinifolium*, *Epacris alpina*, *Forstera mackayi*, and *Hebe mooreae*.

## Day 3 Sunday 16 February

Makirikiri Stream

Miles & Gillian Giller

Six members ventured first into the Makirikiri Stream catchment; again this was karst landscape. We were first bemused by streams that disappeared into clefts, only to emerge a short distance downhill. The stream bottom was sculpted into photogenic mill-pools, competing with the botany for our attention. Taking special care to not slip into any clefts ourselves, we followed the stream and toe-slopes, finding a wealth of ferns, mosses and liverworts as seen the previous day. *Anaphalioides trinervis*, with its distinctive three veins, was common on streamside rocks, while the bright red fruit of *Nertera*

*depressa* glistened on the forest floor. *Leptopteris superba* and *Blechnum colensoi* were found near the stream, and *Tmesipteris tannensis* was recorded on tree fern trunks. Following this we drove a short distance further inland to explore a large sink-hole. A steep benched track led us down towards fluted limestone walls and overhangs. *Blechnum chambersii* was locally common, and we were soon rewarded with a cluster of *Blechnum nigrum* on a shady damp bank, the dark green colour and large terminal and basal pinnae making identification easy. Alice pointed out a cluster of spleenworts, arguably looking different from the usual suspects. Some were later tentatively identified as the cave spleenwort *Asplenium cimmericum* (Naturally Uncommon), these plants bearing spores of a much smaller size than the superficially similar *Asplenium bulbiferum*. On our climb back up we came across patches of *Lindsaea trichomanoides* growing alongside sprawling patches of kiekie (*Freycinetia banksii*).

Our thanks go to Alice Shanks for organising such a diverse and interesting field trip.

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## **A dialogue 1906 from the Correspondence of Sir David Prain**

**Jan Prain Chaffey**

Much could be written about Sir David Prain, a Scottish botanist and physician. Born 1859 in Fettercairn, Kincardineshire, a graduate of the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh, he became curator of the Calcutta Herbarium, 1887-1898, then superintendent of the Royal Botanic Garden Calcutta 1898. In 1888 he became a member of the Linnean Society.

He had a wonderful career in India with many publications to his name before he followed Sir William Thiselton-Dyer to become Director of the Royal Botanic Garden, at Kew in England in 1898. At the end of 1904, Prain brought all the Sikkim-Tibet frontier collections of the Calcutta Herbarium to Kew. From 1916-1919 he was made President of the Linnean Society. He received many honours, and in 1912 was awarded the CMG (The Order of St Michael and St George) and Knight Bachelor (Burkill 1943-1944).