A theme common to the montane-to-alpine sections of our week's camp was deciding which 'porcupine- like' plant we were seeing. Was it the (Canterbury) familiar Melicytus alpinus or Pittosporum anomalum? – remarkably similar, at a glance. Morning tea break found a group of us in such a debate, and we had decided against Melicytus, when a Wellington member announced that it "didn't taste like Pittosporum". After a few minutes' deliberation and noting the opposite branching, I decided that the only option was Aristotelia fruticosa (fortunately present on our species list).

After our break, I had the 'crack-growing' Coprosma rimicola (a newlynamed species) pointed out to me, somewhat off the track. Returning to the track a soft herbaceous plant (not in flower) was identified as the (MB) gentian, Gentianella stellata. An uncommon plant then appeared in full flower, Notothlaspi australe (Fig. 1, p. 46), which I had previously seen almost in line-of-sight across Lake Rotoiti (on Robert's Ridge). While I did not personally see the (MB) N. "Red Hills", other mineral-belt species (in flower) that I did see and photographed were the Colobanthus "Red Hills" (Fig. 2, p. 46) and Montia racemosa (a Marlborough Red Hills endemic) (Fig. 3, p. 46).

As I left the tracked area and entered the (MB) tussocks of Chionochloa defracta, I could not fail to notice a small intrusion of a different rock type, marked by a few southern-beech (Fuscospora cliffortioides).

Alastair Macdonald and a friend had gone on through the difficult terrain of the tussocks to the tarns, where Alastair located numerous cryptic examples of Hebe odora, and also noted Drosera arcturi.

In all, a remarkably satisfying day. Thanks again to Mick Parsons and Shannel Courtney.

DAY 2 SUNDAY 11 JANUARY 2015 BROOKFIELDS COVENANT

Miles Giller

Thanks to local contacts, we were able to visit a 31 ha QEII covenant on Brookfields Farm, in the Stanley Brook Valley. This remnant of lowland valley-floor podocarp-beech forest had been protected since 2000. After a short briefing from the owners we set off, only to be escorted across the paddocks by a support team of very curious (and thankfully quite harmless) young cows. At first we were confronted by a wall of blackberry and old man's beard just inside the gate (unfortunately all too common in the Nelson Region). However, after some quick reconnoitring a route was found providing access to relatively intact native forest where the weed density fell right away and we could begin compiling a plant species list. Margins of tall kanuka (Kunzea ericoides) gave way to a forest of black beech (Fuscospora solandri) and silver beech (Lophozonia menziesii), with matai (Prumnopitys taxifolia) and totara (Podocarpus totara) locally abundant, and kahikatea (Dacrycarpus dacrydioides), miro (Prumnopitys ferruginea) and rimu (Dacrydium cupressinum) occurring as scattered individuals. The range of look-alike small-leaved shrubs provided some challenges, including Raukaua anomalus, Corokia Helichrysum lanceolatum, Pittosporum cotoneaster, divaricatum. Neomyrtus pedunculata and at least ten species of Coprosma.

We were fortunate to have the grid reference for the covenant's most special plant, a patch of New Zealand shovel mint or skullcap Scutellaria novae-zelandiae (Nationally Critical) (Fig. 4, p. 47), which had previously been found by Nelson Botanical Society. This was relocated and closely scrutinised and photographed, especially a few flowering and seeding heads. We were unable to tell whether we were looking at a single sprawling plant or a cluster of individuals. The sharp eyes of Margaret Ridgen then spotted a lone but healthy flowering specimen of gossamer grass Anemanthele lessoniana (Nationally Vulnerable) only a few meters away. In the hope / expectation of finding more gossamer grass we checked the general locality, but rather than gossamer grass we were surprised to locate a further four patches of shovel mint (Fig. 5, p. 47). Small seedlings of narrow-leaved hoheria (Hoheria angustifolia - itself rare in the ecological district) often looked superficially like shovel mint, but the white shovel mint flowers were a clear giveaway. Mats of Oxalis magellanica (some in flower) and Australina pusilla were found on the forest floor, which was otherwise dominated by scattered ferns and abundant mosses. The cryptic parsley fern (Botrychium biforme) was a surprisingly frequent find, certainly more common than encountered in Canterbury. Patches of bright red petals on the forest floor alerted us to clumps of scarlet mistletoe (Peraxilla colensoi) (Declining) flowering spectacularly on the beech trunks above. Our appreciation goes to landowners Judith and Kim Rowe, and to local QEII representative Tom Stein for making this day possible.