

the margin at first dominated by black beech with scattered kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*) and pokaka (*Elaeocarpus hookerianus*). Another pygmy mistletoe *Korthalsella lindsayi* was spotted hosted on *Lophomyrtus obcordata*. As we got away from the exposed edges the lower tiers became richer, with a variety of small-leaved, look-alike shrubs, including *Lophomyrtus obcordata*, *Neomyrtus pedunculata*, *Raukaua anomalus*, *Melicope simplex*, *Myrsine divaricata*, *Coprosma propinqua*, *C. rhamnoides*, *Corokia cotoneaster* and *Helichrysum lanceolatum*. As if that wasn't enough, the top challenge was distinguishing between *Coprosma pedicellata* (Declining) and *Coprosma dumosa*, the former generally being larger (sometimes of tree stature), showing far stronger apical dominance and (on female bushes) having a distinctive curved pedicel holding the unripe fruit.

Occasional miro (*Prumnopitys ferruginea*), matai (*P. taxifolia*) and rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) were found, and late in the day we came across a single lowland totara (*Podocarpus totara*) – making a fairly full quota of podocarps. Sedges were moderately represented, including a possible record of *Carex strictissima* (Nationally Endangered and rarely recorded in the region). Twenty-three fern species were recorded in the terrace forest, though there was clearly scope to find several additions. Orchids were well represented, including *Chiloglottis cornuta*, *Pterostylis areolata*, *P. banksii*, *P. graminea* and *P. montana*.

We left somewhat reluctantly and without having looked closely at the large area of hill-slope forest vegetation, several of us vowing to return to assess the balance of the reserve. A plant species list was compiled (divided into the three main habitats) and forwarded to DoC. We were delighted to learn that several patches of similar forest on nearby private land have recently been added to the reserve, as this bush was yet another little hidden gem that certainly warranted its legal and physical protection.

## **DAY 3 SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2015**

### **FERNIEHURST BUSH**

**Miles Giller**

After two days of dry weather we rose to a gathering southerly wind, with light drizzle setting in just before we left camp. Ferniehurst was no different, and parkas were donned on arrival. Landowner Richard Wilding kindly provided us with copies of various records regarding the bush and the farm, and explained where we might best wander. An old driveway across the bush gave us our first insight, with mature kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*)

dominating over extensive mahoe (*Melicytus ramiflorus*) and other hardwoods. Near the house we found a few garden escapee species. Further away the forest generally assumed a less modified composition, though European ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) occurred extensively along margins, with occasional mature ash trees and saplings throughout. The overall impression, however, was one of relative intactness. Despite seeing a few cut stumps and one old saw-pit, there were still large numbers of healthy mature podocarps emergent and dominating the canopy virtually throughout. As well as the abundant kahikatea we saw numerous matai (*Prumnopitys taxifolia*) (Fig. 5), with occasional miro (*P. ferruginea*), rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) and rare lowland totara (*Podocarpus totara*). Lower tiers were generally dominated by mahoe, although narrow-leaved houhere (*Hoheria angustifolia*), lowland ribbonwood (*Plagianthus regius* ssp. *regius*) and pokaka (*Elaeocarpus hookerianus*)



**Figure 5** Trevor Blogg admiring matai and kahikatea trunks, Ferniehurst Bush (photo Alice Shanks).

occurred throughout. Four tree ferns *Dicksonia squarrosa*, *D. fibrosa*, *Cyathea dealbata* and *C. smithii* were eventually located, often occurring as mixed groups. The pygmy mistletoe *Korthalsella clavata* was seen hosted on rohutu (*Lophomyrtus obcordata*), which along with the ferns *Notogrammitis billardierei* and *Lastreopsis glabella* were our only additions to previous records for the site. The groundcover was dominated by mosses and other ferns, though surprisingly the overall variety of fern species (to date 19 species) was not extensive. The presence of hinau (*Elaeocarpus dentatus*),



kohia (*Passiflora tetrandra*) (Fig. 6) and pigeonwood (*Hedycarya arborea*) indicated that we were still within the fringe of coastal influences. Whilst we did not see them ourselves, previous Nelson Botanical Society recordings of *Coprosma grandifolia* and *Cordyline banksii* reminded us that we were at the base of the Hundalee Hills, where probably the increased rainfall allows these species to reach their east-coast southern distributional limits.



**Figure 6** Kohia (*Passiflora tetrandra*) vines indicating coastal influences, Ferniehurst Bush (photo Alice Shanks).

Being on the north bank of the Conway River, Ferniehurst Bush can technically be regarded as being in Marlborough. However, along with Riccarton Bush it is one of precious few examples of extensive lowland podocarp forest growing on alluvial soils in the eastern South Island, and might be regarded as a benchmark for that vegetation type in North Canterbury. Our thanks go to the Wilding family for allowing us to visit, and for their ongoing protection of the area.