

# **CANTERBURY BOTANICAL SOCIETY (NZ) INC.**

## **63<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL REPORT**

**JUNE 2015 – MAY 2016**

### **Officers and Committee**

President: Gillian Giller

Vice-President: Jason Butt

Secretary: Alice Shanks

Treasurer: Jean-Marie Tompkins

Membership coordinator: Alice Shanks

Committee: Fay Farrant, Miles Giller, Melissa Hutchison, Bryony Macmillan, Dean Pendrigh.

### **Monthly meeting programme**

June AGM. Battling weeds and pests in covenants. Speaker: Miles Giller

July Ferns of the Philippines. Speaker: Dr Julie Barcelona

Aug Connecting the dots: a population genetics study of *Pittosporum obcordatum*. Speaker: Sarah Wright

Sept Is the decline of bird populations threatening native plants, and can we fix it? Speaker: Prof. Dave Kelly

Oct Te Piritā drylands. Speakers: Alice Shanks, Jason Butt, Brian Patrick

Nov Bankside Scientific Reserve. Speaker: Mike Bowie

Dec Update of recent research and other activities at the Allan Herbarium. Speaker: Dr Peter Heenan

Feb The herbarium - a hortus siccus. Speaker: Dr Ines Schönberger

Mar Canterbury wetlands. Speaker: Dr Philip Grove

Apr The bugs and plants around us / Joint day with West Melton Enviro Community. Speakers and field trip combined. Speakers: Dr Colin Meurk, Brian Patrick, Peter Johns, Johannes Welsch

May Exploring the flora of Lord Howe Island. Speaker: Anthony Wright

## Monthly field trip and camp programme

- July Christchurch Botanic Gardens, New Zealand section and library. Leader: Dean Pendrigh
- Aug No field trip this month
- Sept Te Pirita grassland and lower terraces, Rakaia River. Leader: Jason Butt
- Oct Arowhenua Bush, Temuka. Leader: Alice Shanks
- Nov Otukaikino stream, wetlands, revegetation programmes. Leader: Jason Butt
- Nov Spring Camp, Waiau, North Canterbury (10 participants). Leader: Alice Shanks
- Dec Ashley Gorge and Lees Valley. Leaders: Miles Giller and Jason Butt
- Feb Summer Camp, Arapawa Island (12 participants). Leader: Gillian Giller
- Mar No field trip this month
- Apr The bugs and plants around us. See April meeting (above) for details
- May Carews Peak. Leader: Alice Shanks

The past year's field trips included visits to some valuable dryland and wetland areas on Christchurch city's boundary and further afield. Frosty conditions encountered in July in the native section of the Botanic Gardens were followed by the warmth of the library visit in the afternoon. The October visit to Arowhenua Bush enabled members to see first-hand an area that Fraser Ross (a Society member) has been involved with for 40 years. December saw members in Lees Valley on their hands and knees admiring the *Brachyscome pinnata* in flower. The month before the Otukaikino wetland area had revealed *Mazus novaezeelandiae* subsp. *impolitus* in the turf. The April meeting was a successful combination of talks and time in the field. West Melton Enviro Community members and Bot Soc members attended, and all were more aware of the flora and fauna in the area by the end of the day. It was great to explore the area at Te Pirita in September. We marvelled at how Jason had spotted the two chewed *Olearia adenocarpa* on an earlier visit. This field trip was followed up by a presentation on the area by Alice Shanks, Jason Butt and Brian Patrick at the October evening meeting. The absence of wind and the presence of sun on Carew's Peak in May made conditions for botanising the montane flora and enjoying lunch, a pleasant experience. November snow made temperatures brisk for the spring camp in Waiau and

prevented access higher up Mt Terako, but plenty of gems were found lower down. The limestone and the beech/podocarp forest at Lottery Bush kept everyone busy on the second day. Rain on the last day did not stop members from walking amongst the large podocarps in Ferniehurst Bush. The water was calm for the trip to Arapawa Island in February. The nearby Blumine Island was explored on one day. Cloud forest with filmy ferns on the higher parts of Arapawa Island contrasted with vegetation found lower down the slopes.

The speakers for the year covered both New Zealand and overseas topics. Miles Giller started the year by talking about the reality of weeds and managing their impact. There are not sufficient resources to control all weeds so the long term effect of each weed is assessed and priorities set. Sarah Wright outlined the results of her study on the population genetics of *Pittosporum obcordatum*. This information will help to ensure the ongoing health of the scattered remnant populations. Dave Kelly packed an incredible amount of information into his presentation. Studies indicate that ensuring a healthy bird population will in turn help the ongoing health of plant populations. Ferns of the Philippines featured in Julie Barcelona's talk. Smartphones have connected experts from around the world to help identify new species there. Anthony Wright spoke of the Lord Howe Island flora. The topography of the island has created a range of habitats including cloud forest. In November, Mike Bowie's talk on Bankside Scientific Reserve showed the changes revealed by repeating entomological studies. It was interesting to hear that the area is a reservoir for native worms. Philip Grove gave a very good overview of Canterbury wetlands and their diversity and the competing demands being placed on them. Peter Heenan spoke about the revision of *Cardamine* species, the electronic flora of New Zealand and further work identifying the 'hotspots' for endemism in New Zealand. At the February meeting, Ines Schönberger shared her enthusiasm for *hortus siccus* at the Allan Herbarium and throughout the world. Some information is being shared electronically now but the specimens have not become redundant.

## **Submissions and Correspondence**

Alice Shanks and Melissa Hutchison wrote a submission to the Christchurch City Council proposed Replacement District Plan. The submission referred to the control of wilding pines on Banks Peninsula. The decision was that landowners will require resource consents to plant areas greater than 1 ha. Species selection will be in accordance with the National Strategy. Unfortunately, time constraints on committee members prevented further submissions on other matters in the Plan, which could have benefitted from an input of Botanical Society knowledge.

The committee felt the biodiversity values of the Te Pirita dryland that the Society visited would be managed more appropriately under DoC rather than the present LINZ management. A letter of support was sought and received from the Selwyn Waihora Zone Committee. A letter of support was also received from DoC. Further support is being sought from other organisations and agencies.

Bryony Macmillan wrote to the Minister of Land and Information outlining the Society's concern regarding the potential adverse effects on indigenous plants resulting from lupin being planted as a fodder crop in the Mackenzie Basin. The reply indicated "sufficient safeguards" were in place.

## **Awards**

There was no student grant awarded by the Society in 2016. Alice Shanks and Fay Farrant judged at the Canterbury Westland Science Fair and awarded a senior prize to Nicky Dachs from Lincoln High School for her study on the microbial properties of five native plants.

### *Awards received from other organisations by Society members*

Fraser Ross was awarded a distinguished life membership award by the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society for his conservation work in New Zealand. Tim Logan was awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the European Union Young Scientist Competition held in Italy. He studied the effect of managed grazing on native grassland species and competing exotic species.

## **Membership**

Membership has dropped slightly to 200 members with resignations outnumbering new memberships by seven. There are nine life memberships. The number of members receiving posted newsletters remains the same as last year. The Society thanks Wai-Ora Forest Landscapes for photocopying the newsletter at no charge to the Society.

John Ward, who was one of our life members, passed away in April. John was a committee member from 1990-94, and after he resigned from the committee he continued to compile the newsletter until 2006 when he had a stroke. John was also involved in the organisation of several summer camps.

## **Committee**

We welcomed Fay Farrant and Miles Giller onto the committee in June 2015. Fay's offer to become minute secretary was accepted gratefully. Jean-Marie Tompkins stood down from her position as treasurer during the year but continued on as a committee member to provide technical assistance. The committee carried out the treasurer's tasks for the balance of the year, as a call for a new treasurer was unsuccessful. The Society has faced a similar situation in the past with officer positions not filled for a period of time. The committee is hopeful that a treasurer will emerge from the Society membership.

I thank the committee for their individual contributions and their good humour when dealing with full agendas. With business complete, committee meetings usually finish with a cuppa and informal chat. Many interesting conversations are had. Thank you to the members outside the committee who contributed as well. Ann McMillan for supper, John Clemens for editing the journal, Joy Talbot for technical editing of the journal, Fiona Lees for printing labels for newsletters and journals and Trevor Blogg for helping proof read journal issue 46.

The past year has seen some interesting places visited. The speakers have covered a wide range of topics. In the upcoming year, I have no doubt that the committee will find different places to visit and topics to talk about.

Gillian Giller

June 2016