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Canterbury Botanical Society (NZ) Inc.

Sixty-Sixth Annual Report

June 2018 – May 2019

Officers and Committee

President:	Paula Greer
Vice-President:	Jason Butt
Secretary:	Fay Farrant
Treasurer:	Gillian Giller
Membership co-ordinator:	Judy Bugo
Committee:	Melissa Hutchison (website manager), Bryony Macmillan (journal proof reading & newsletter posting), Dean Pendrigh (newsletters), Alice Shanks (programme co-ordinator) Miles Giller, Geoff Henderson, Sarah Wright and Paul Maurice (who resigned due to ongoing work commitments in August).

Monthly meeting programme

- June – AGM. Paula Greer presented her Masters’ thesis on **using earth dams/water storage ponds as restoration sites** for native plants.
- July – Zane Lasare (MSc Ecology, University of Canterbury). **How plant trait diversity influences the success of invasions, and whether community trait composition can predict changes in abundance.** To quote from Alice’s review of the meeting “In the end, if you are a plant then it is great to fit in with your environment, but if you are too weird then you may not persist. If the environment changes then a bit of difference can get you ahead.” An evening that stretched some brain cells.
- August – Jeremy Rolfe (Department of Conservation). **Changes in the threat status of NZ vascular plants.** The best-attended meeting I have been present at. With many members and a few extras making the effort to hear from Jeremy why the updates to the threatened status of many species has been changed.
- September – Yuriy Malakhov (PhD candidate and BOTSOC student grant recipient). **Benthic microalgae of the Estuary.** A fascinating talk about the differences of benthic microalgae that Yuri found in the Ihutai Estuary, their amazing silica forms that are used for identification, and how his research has developed into a nation-wide programme “Sustainable Seas” involving personel from four other universities, NIWA and Cawthron Institute.
- October – Herman Frank. **The fauna of South Canterbury limestone and the plants they eat.** Herman took us on a trip to his favourite areas of South Canterbury. He gave us a short review of the twenty-odd years he has been working here looking for lizards and watching the landscape changes due to farming practices and new landowners.

- November – Dr Jamie Wood (Manaaki Whenua, researcher Ecosystems and Global Change). **New Zealand birds and the fungi they eat.** Through the use of coprolite (ancient bird droppings) DNA research, Jamie and his team have found a link between the ability of some of our fungi (with closed heads) to spread their spores by digestion. Jamie also told us about how ancient DNA is being researched in New Zealand, and the role of ectomycorrhizal fungi in facilitating exotic plant invasions.
- December – Rowan Hindmarsh-Wall, (Department of Conservation) **Unique habitats and plants of Ata Whenua - Fiordland National Park.** Rowan provided us with an interesting talk about the effects of limited management, increasing pest browsing, and the rarely seen species of Fiordland plants. The photos were incredible and to think this is what he does outside his work as a Tier 1 monitor.
- February – Dr David Glenny (Manaaki Whenua researcher – systematics). **The willow flora of New Zealand: an introduction to the *Salix* key.** This evening provided us with not only a chance to use the new *Salix* key, but to learn about the number of *Salix* in NZ, and the interesting background to *Salix* around the world and its many uses. This key has now gone live.
- March – Dr Pieter Pelter (University of Canterbury). **New research on the herbaceous *Brachyglottis* leads to one species.** Pieter with the support of Rob Smissen (co-author & geneticist) and Timothy Millar (master’s graduate, lead author and topic researcher) provided an evening that was filled with discussion and debate about the merits of grouping and splitting species based on resulting genetic differences, or lack thereof.
- April – Colin Meurk. **Native plants are vital to nationhood, not just “nice to have optional extras”, and how do we do that?** Colin reminded us that the limited use of natives in the city whether in gardens, private and municipal, or as part of the streetscape, is helping reduce people’s recognition and knowledge of our native heritage. To turn this around we all must play a part by increasing the recognition and use of OUR plants.
- May – Lily Brailsford (MSc graduate, UC), **Evidence for Genetic decline within Afromontane forest fragments on the Mambilla Plateau, Nigeria.** Lily provided us with the evidence that the use of common species in fragmented forests can provide the genetic information for decline or ongoing diversity within the biodiversity of the area.

Monthly field trips

- July – Allan Herbarium, Manaaki Whenua, Lincoln. A Friday afternoon was spent enjoying the interesting and amazing collection that makes up the Herbarium. A lesson that it is well worth the effort to collect plants and review what has already been collected, where and when, to remind us of the changes in our country.

- August – Coprosma training in the Port Hills with Coprosma Key creator David Glenny. A well-attended trip, with some new faces of those willing to improve their abilities to use stipule shapes, and hair types and positions to improve their identification skills, whether in open sun or shade.
- September – The Jan Chaffey kowhai garden, Peter Joyce's sculpture garden, and the Rocklands forest restoration project, Taitapu. Jan's kowhai put on a great display for those who were able to make the trip. They were rewarded with being able to see a variety of kowhai species from New Zealand, Lord Howe Island and South America, with some cultivars. Peter and Anabelle have created what is known as the "Taitapu Sculpture Garden", which is open to the public with large and small sculptures for sale in spring. The creation of this garden, although with the intention of starting small, ended up large as a result of ordering by the tray (16) instead of pot as intended. Peter has increased his knowledge of natives and bush rehabilitation under the guidance of Jan, with the revegetation of a common area in the subdivision of the "Rocklands Reserve". This provides a walking track through a smallish bush area on the side of the hill.
- October – Tiromoana Bush, Kate Valley. Miles Giller led a trip through Tiromoana Bush with back-up from Jason Butt who has collected seeds there for many years. It was interesting to see how far a new pest had spread since discovery due to inaction, and the range of experiments being carried out there by the University of Canterbury.
- November – Spring camp around the Conway River area. Day trip to join those at Conway River and visit a rare patch of alluvial podocarp forest. Two trips that saw a variety of sites that have been created by river and earth movements. Some rare and naturally uncommon plants were found while enjoying a great weekend.
- December – Coringa Limestone outcrop. A trip that went through pasture to jumbled limestone outcrops with appropriately gnarled trees and kowhai that tried to confuse with a variety of leaf forms on top of the hill, and then down to the river for a preview of a possible later trip.
- January – Summer holiday trip to Murchison. A week that showed there is more to the Murchison area than many thought. The discovery of new areas and a larger variety of species than expected created a trip that was considered well worth the effort by everyone that went.
- February – Ataahua Government Purpose (wildlife management) reserve, on the shores of Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere. A wet and wild day was spent finding the new reserve and comparing it to the surrounding lake shore and previously reserved areas.
- March – Lake Coleridge wetlands. Paula, Margaret and George, Miles, Graeme, Jane, and James (from USA) and Alice had an enjoyable day out testing their identification skills in a series of wetlands in the Lake Coleridge district.

- April – Rakaia Gorge Walking track. A small and enthusiastic group headed up the gorge looking for climbing broom. We found potatoes growing wild, but no broom.
- April again – Nature City. This was an extra trip where Melissa guided us to spots on Banks Peninsula to add some rare species to the Nature City competition on iNaturalist. Several of our members made the top 10 for species found and number of species identified.
- May – To Sue and John Steven’s The Tors Farm. This trip produced some amazing photos of lichen and being cut off by the clouds, with 15 people enjoying the day.

Submissions and Correspondence

In May the Botanical Society made a submission to the Waimakariri District Council in support of employing a Biodiversity Officer for terrestrial systems. Gillian Giller, who also made a submission, has been told that the council is in progress of employing this Officer. There have also been submissions to ECAN, Christchurch City Council and The NZ Biodiversity Strategy.

Awards

Sally Tripp was awarded the Bledisloe Award for her achievements in the conservation of flora in both Governors Bay and on Banks Peninsula.

Both the Senior and Junior Science Fair Awards were given in the 2018 Westland/Canterbury Science Fair. As part of their prizes both students were given membership of the Society for the year. The Senior winner has come to several Monday meetings and is enjoying his first year at UC studying Botany.

Membership

There are currently 193 members, with 19 new members and 19 leaving. Our current average age has decreased this year.

Ron Close one of our Life Members died this year. Several of you will have memories of trips with Ron. His widow has donated several of his books to the Society to pass on to members who are interested.

The Journal

The 49th Journal based around Dr Cockayne, with several of the articles from the *Leonard Cockayne at Large* seminar in 2013, has been successfully received with enquires for copies from non-members. The 50th journal is in progress and is based around the issues of pests and biosecurity. Thank you to John Clemens for editing our Journal issues and chasing up article authors.

Committee

The committee started this term short of a President. I volunteered after a couple of meetings. Paul Maurice stepped down in August due to ongoing work commitments – hopefully we will see you back when you finally get the retirement you deserve, Paul. Geoff Henderson handed his notice in in April after realising the joy in retirement of being able to travel when and where you want due to fewer ties.

We have had a good year with our trips being well attended and some enjoyable meetings. They both stretched our minds, and gave us some amazing pictures to look at.

I am looking forward to the next year participating in this committee.

Paula Greer