

## Range extensions of rare species

By Kelvin Lloyd

### *Epilobium purpuratum*

Earlier this year I discovered a single plant of the willowherb *Epilobium purpuratum* at Takahe Valley in the Murchison Mountains. The plant was growing on fine debris on a wet limestone ledge just below treeline, at about 1000 m elevation. Raven & Raven (1976) recorded *E. purpuratum* from only 5 sites: Barron Saddle (Mt Cook), Hector's Col (West Matukituki), Mt Earnslaw, Pisa Range and Rock & Pillar Range. They described it as "extremely local and rare", occurring on loose, fairly stable, fine-grained stony debris, from 1300-1850 m elevation. However a relatively large number of more recent collections in the OTA herbarium show it is locally common at several sites in the West Matukituki and the upper Dart valleys, and is also present in the Eyre and Livingstone Mountains. de Lange *et al.* (1999) list *E. purpuratum* as a "naturally uncommon, range restricted" species in their threatened plant lists. The Takahe Valley site extends its known southern range to the west. To my knowledge it is the first record of the species from a site below treeline, however the habitat is very similar to that described from other sites. *E. purpuratum* can be distinguished from other *Epilobium* species by its dark purple to black stems and dull green, very weakly toothed leaves that are bright purplish on the undersides. Interestingly, at Takahe Valley *E. purpuratum* grows at the same site as two other rare species, the snow tussock *Chionochoa spiralis* and the soon to be described *Hebe* "takahe".

### *Coprosma wallii*

A small population of this species was recently discovered in the Fleming River valley at the Forest & Bird-owned Lenz Reserve in the Catlins. *C. wallii* has a reasonably wide distribution, being found locally in both the North and South Islands, but is listed as

*declining* in the most recent revision of the NZ threatened plant lists (de Lange *et al.* 1999). *C. wallii* is typically found on fertile river terraces, such as in the Lenz Reserve, but on Banks Peninsula favours open ridge crests on fertile volcanic soil (Wilson & Galloway, 1993). I am uncertain where the closest populations of *C. wallii* are to the Lenz site, as there are no local specimens of *C. wallii* in the OTA herbarium. However the species can be found on streambanks in the Dunsdale Scenic Reserve near Gore. *C. wallii* is characterised by almost spherical fruit (the fruit of most *Coprosma* species are markedly flattened on one side) and bright orange inner bark. The leaves are often densely-clustered, hiding the young stems.

### References:

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- de Lange, P.J.; Heenan, P.B.; Given, D.R.; Norton, D.A.; Ogle, C.C.; Johnson, P.J. & Cameron, E.K. (1999). Threatened and uncommon plants of New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 37: 603-628.
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