

## Otatara (5 Jan) – Joyce Wilson

The day, I was told, was a typical Southland day, calm and hot 26 -30° C. Our destination was Otatara, Invercargill, with three sites of Botanic interest to explore.

### Bushy Point Boardwalk

Bushy Point Educational Boardwalk was a delight. Ian and Jenny Gamble have protected their forest with a QEII National Trust Covenant and have created a boardwalk through tall forest, manuka shrubland, wetland and estuary rushland. This area was previously grazed, and since this was stopped ten years ago, and eight hundred possums and 80 wild cats were eradicated, regeneration has been considerable. The boardwalk was constructed because very high tides come in to the area, occasionally almost to the home.

Forest plants seen included *Pseudopanax colensoi*, *P. crassifolium*, *Elaeocarpus hookerianus* (pokaka) *Coprosma grandifolia*, *C. rotundifolia*, *C. foetidissima*, *Melicycus lanceolata*, *Astelia fragrans*, *Podocarpus totara*, *P. hallii* and various hybrids of the two totaras, *Fuchsia excorticata*, *F. perscandens* and *Fuchsia* hybrids, *Aristotelia serrata*, *Dacrydium cupressinum* (rimu) and *Prumnopitys taxifolia* (matai). The ground cover was largely *Microsorum* (= *Phymatosorus*) fern species, *Astelia fragrans* and numerous seedlings of *Parsonsia capsularis*, the native jasmine.

Closer to the sea, the scrubland consisted largely of *Leptospermum scoparium* (manuka) on which was found the tiny dwarf mistletoe, *Korthalsella salicorniooides*. Also present were *Coprosma propinqua* with the green mistletoe *Ileostylus micranthus*, and *Plagianthus divaricatus* (saltmarsh ribbonwood).

Towards high tide mark were grasses, the rare spiky hair-grass, *Deschampsia caespitosa*, and the introduced tall oat grass *Festuca arundinacea*, both in flower. *Leptocarpus similis*, the jointed wire rush, was very abundant. Saltmarsh herbs found included the coastal turf plants *Selliera radicans* and *Samolus repens*, as well as the native celery or shore parsley, *Apium prostratum*.

Bushy Point illustrates very well the lowland coastal zonation from forest to manuka scrub to salt marsh. A highlight was a very close encounter with a very curious fernbird.

### Threatened Plant Garden

The next visit, to Brian and Chris Rance's Southland Threatened Plant Garden, was just up the road. Brian is a Botanist and Chris a horticulturalist and both have a passion for NZ flora. This garden is their 'hobby'. It was a rare privilege to see, without the effort of strenuous field work, all these rare and beautiful plants. They included *Clanthus puniceus* from East Cape, *Pittosporum dallii* from Nelson, the native brooms *Carmichaelia* (= *Chordospartium*) *stevensonii* and *C. muritai* from the top of the South Island, *Acaena rorida* from the Kaimanawa Ranges and *Hebe speciosa* from Nelson and Northland.

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