

plants were encountered. These included *Coprosma virescens*, *Plagianthus regius* and *Olearia fragrantissima*. Several stops were made to explain the history of the area and theories on the history of the vegetation.

At the main valley stand we were suddenly in dense shrubland dominated by *Olearia fragrantissima*, kowhai, broadleaf and *Coprosma virescens* with emergents of *Plagianthus regius*, matai and huge lemonwood (stems nearly 2 m in diameter). Near the lunch spot there was evidence of past logging of small totara. It seems that the area was once rich podocarp forest, lacking in beech which had been disturbed 150 or so years ago (giving rise to the small totara and then logged perhaps 50-80 years ago).

From here the party began to fragment with some returning to the vehicle and the remainder climbing to about 750 m to see *Hebe annulata* in the formerly grazed shrublands. Enroute a wide variety of alpine herbs were noted, the most frequent being the strongly smelling *Gingidia decipiens* and the spiny *Aciphylla aurea*. Others of interest included *Schizeilema nitens*, the bronze *Celmisia traversii* and *Anisotome haastii*. After a break on the saddle the party split again with some returning by an easier? route and the majority climbing for a long ridge route home. New plants recorded here included *Hebe hectori*, *Kelleria dieffenbachii*, *Pimelea pseudolyallii*, *Myrsine nummularia* and hybrids of *Coriaria sarmentosa* and *C. angustissima*.

Dean Forest and Giant Totara (5 Jan) – Robyn Bridges

A much smaller group visited Dean Forest/Dean Burn and Motu Bush on Jan 5th, because a brilliant blue sky that morning, something we had not seen all week, drew a break-away group up to the alpine pastures of Mt Eldrig.

Down country a bit, turning right past the limestone of Clifden towards Lake Hauroko and then right again, the rest of us found ourselves heading back towards Lake Monowai. I later learned that in earlier days this was the old coach road to Lake Monowai. Today the road ends at the giant totara reserve. Why the old coach road ceased to be is a puzzle as it appears to run roughly parallel to the present road to Lake Monowai. The expanse of Dean Bush luxuriously covers the surrounding low-lying hills. The area of interest for us was the bush margin and the wetland that lay therein.

Of the bush margin, most noticeable were several large mature specimens of Weeping Matipo, *Myrsine divaricata*. This for me was the plant of the week and I have not before seen such large mature trees. Interesting *Coprosmas* included *C. 'tayloriae'* *C. wallii*, *C. obconica* and some stunning *C. rubra*.

I now view these divaricating shrubs somewhat differently since I heard a visiting Botanical Society of Otago speaker expound (and demonstrate – his mimicry of a browsing moa was impressive) his theory that the divaricating habit of these species is a survival mechanism against ravaging ratites! Of the grasses, *Hierochloe redolens* was most memorable, with its sunlight golden glumes

Of the wetlands Brian Rance kindly sent the following summary: “The *Carex* sedgeland was generally dominated by *Carex sinclairii*, with some *C. geminata*, *C. secta*, *C. maorica*, *C. tenuiculmis* (status: vulnerable), spike rush (*Eleocharis acuta*), *Coprosma* sp. aff. *intertexta* and occasional herbs including *Epilobium pallidiflorum*, *Bulbinella angustifolia*, *Potentilla anserinifolia*, *Celmisia graminifolia* and others. The grass *Deschampsia caespitosa* (status: vulnerable) has also been recorded though we didn't see it there! Other parts of the wetland were dominated by red tussock or flax.”



The day ended with the giant totaras, *Podocarpus hallii*. They were truly awesome and the largest ones I have seen. It took seven of us linking hands to surround the girth of one. There are just three (I think) left of these forests giants. How and why they were left makes for interesting speculation. The area was boardwalked which protected the tracks. It is a pity that the giant totaras weren't so favoured. It was sad to see where the outer layers of bark had been stripped off their lower trunks. Memorable too was the blood red trunk of a nearby Matai, *Prumnopitys taxifolia*. Audrey Eagle took a stunning slide of this, which she showed at the March BSO meeting, along with other visual treats from the summer trip.

The giant totara encircled by 7 people. From left to right Jill Goodwin, Robyn Bridges and Tony Aldridge. Photo by John Knight.



Misty farewell view from Borland Lodge on the last day. Photo by Robyn Bridges.