

Trip reports

Otago Peninsula: Portobello Peninsula and Varley's Hill.

The last Sunday in April a small group explored three reserves on the Otago Peninsula. In the morning Kath Dickinson led us round two bush remnants near the tip of the Portobello Peninsula. Closest to the marine aquarium, and facing north-west, is the University owned Lister Reserve, named in memory of Ron Lister, a previous professor of Geography. Here we were momentarily stumped by the odd appearance of a small-leaved milk tree, *Streblus heterophyllus* and a prostrate native celery, *Apium prostratum*. This reserve has been fenced since Peter Johnson's comprehensive survey of pockets of native vegetation on the Otago Peninsula, and it was interesting to note the return of a few ferns such as *Blechnum fluviatile* and others (see plant list) since the original survey. Sadly, the fence is not stock-proof, or there may well have been more. The Library Reserve, on the south-western slope, is still grazed by sheep and mainly larger shrubs and trees survive there.

The resurgence of ferns after complete exclusion of stock was very evident at Varley's Hill, by Hoopers Inlet, which we visited in the afternoon. Moira Parker has been monitoring their reappearance in their Q.E.II covenanted area of regenerating bush. Moira has noted 7 additional fern species since 1993, bringing the total of ferns recorded there to 23. The Varley's Hill covenant also contained some small-leaved milk trees, another puzzling small-leaved scrambling herb of the celery family, *Scandia geniculata*, and several species of *Acaena*, some of which were keyed out on Moira and John's kitchen table, using Kelvin's useful *Acaena* key.

Waipori Gorge fungal foray

On a sunny Saturday in early May three carloads of would-be mycologists set off to Waipori Gorge on a fungal foray ably led by David Orlovich. The Government Track beckoned with fruiting bodies of all shapes, sizes and colours, from the tiny, delicate parasols of *Mycena* species on the forest floor to a clump of large *Armillaria* protruding from a live tree trunk beside the track. There were several opportunities to compare the confusingly similar red stalked fungus, *Weraroa erythrocephala* with the identically coloured red pouch fungus, *Paurocotylis pila*, and to wonder how this parallel evolution came about, when *Weraroa* is from the phylum Basidiomycota while *Paurocotylis* is an ascomycete. A red tentacled stinkhorn, *Aseröe rubra* was another find by the track, but the sought-after *Nothofagus* beech forest, with its associated mycorrhizal communities, kept receding in to the distance. Digital cameras were kept busy recording the varied collections, which were taken back to the OU Botany Department laboratory after lunch for further identification and drying for the OTA herbarium collection.

There is so much still to see and learn that we look forward to a visit to the elusive beech forest next fruiting season, especially if the rich variety seen on the relatively ungrazed floor of Birch Island a week later are anything to go by.