

Moraine with large rocks provided shelter and protection for shrubs and other plants. Here the shrubs are dominated by *Discaria toumatou*, *Aristotelia fruticosa*, and *Coprosma propinqua* with some *C. intertexta*. In the shelter of the rocks were interesting plants like the small renga renga lily (*Arthropodium candidum*), two *Asplenium* – tiny *A. flabellifolium* and the beautiful carrot fern (*Asplenium richardii*), the white-leaved herbaceous yellow daisy *Brachyglottis haastii*, and the spider orchid *Corybas trilobus*. Perched in its usual habitat, the “hot rock fern” *Cheilanthes humilis* should not have been a surprise!

Those who took the long way back to the vehicles were rewarded with flowering plants of *Hebe cupressoides* while those who took the more direct route had time to spend exploring the red tussock fringed wetlands.

❁ Wet Grassland on Pukaki Downs Station, 28 Dec - Robyn Bridges

Plan A had been to botanise the Big Rock stream catchment in the afternoon. But as is the way with well laid plans, we ended up driving and walking across Pukaki Downs Station to botanise an area of low lying grassland, with a bit of bog surrounding a small alder lined lake (the source of the Station's water supply).

As we descended the last slope we had a close encounter with a magnificent solitary *Aciphylla aurea*, whose stems were heavily covered in seed. On the same contour and similarly isolated, grew a specimen of *Olearia virgata* with a fragrance reminiscent of almonds. With the benefit of hindsight, and Geoff Roger's stunning talk, this may have been one of the few remaining shrub species purported to have originally covered this area.

The lower boggy flat, which had been grazed, was dominated by *Juncus* species and introduced grasses. Interspersed were *Oreobolus pectinatus*, *Drosera arturi*, *Celmisia gracilentia*, *Epilobium* 'one of the 40', *Anistome imbricata*, *Gonocarpus* sp, *Gnaphalium traversii* and *Muehlenbeckia axillaris*.

A foray to the lake edge found *Carex secta*, *Phormium tenax* and *Chionochloa rubra*. On slightly less boggy ground we saw *Ranunculus glabrifolius* and *Wahlenbergia*. On drier and much softer areas, especially in patches of full sun, a few wilting *Botsocia sitzii* and *Botsocia prostrata* were in evidence.

Well, it was the afternoon of the first day!

Our thanks to the Managers of Pukaki Downs Station for permission to botanise their land.

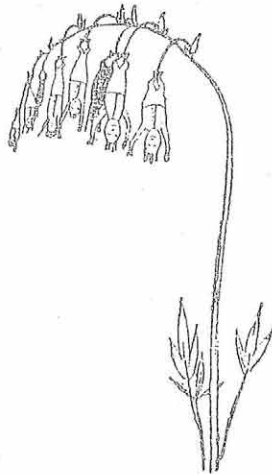


Fig. *Manypeepia upsidownia*
From Edward Lear's *Nonsense Botany*.

☞ Mt Sebastopol and Governor's Bush, 29 Dec - Beth Andrews

After a look in the information centre at Mt Cook Village, where we saw that the weather report was not very hopeful, we decided to botanise the 'one hour' track through Governor's Bush. It took us longer than the hour, as there was something for everyone.

We saw mosses, liverworts, ferns, *Lagenifera*, orchids, varieties of *Dracophyllum* and *Gaultheria*, cascading parahebe (*Parahebe catarractae*), and the ever-present *Pratia*. An ascending track led us to an open area with views and then a winding track down again. Distorted and over-large plants were seen at the edge of the track, where we surmised that DOC's weed spraying had produced these aberrations, such as a triple headed *Thelymitra*.

The weather cleared enough for a walk up Mt Sebastopol. A swing bridge over the river led to a steep track, with many deep steps that I found difficult, my hips complaining so much that I didn't go far. Others went to a saddle or a rewarding climb to see the top tarns. A Japanese student from Palmerston North, keen to learn a little of our botany, accompanied us.

I had always admired the huge mountain *Celmisias*, so here was my chance to get a good photo. *Brachyglottis haastii* (formerly *Senecio*), caught my eye, with its rosettes of white leaves, fur covered - but sometimes the fur had worn off the upper surface, showing a shining green surface.

An unusual lichen, *Omphalina alpina*, collected by Allison, was interesting because it is a basidiomycete, with a toad-stool-like fruiting body, unlike most other lichens that are ascomycetes.

☞ Kea Point and Tasman Glacier Moraine, 31 Dec - Audrey Eagle

Three kea calling overhead greeted the group of eight on the Kea Point Walk. On this undemanding walk there was plenty of time to study the vegetation and the following were a few observations:

At the altitude of The Hermitage *Podocarpus nivalis*, snow totara, was massed with red fruit, whereas a few days earlier, high up on the Mt Sebastopol Track, it was still in full flower. Spotted hiding in the undergrowth were the attractive bluish green, serrated leaves of *Gingidia montana*. Some of the plants seen in flower were *Parahebe decora*, (with leaves as small as 1.5-3 mm), *Geranium sessiliflorum*, *Wahlenbergia* sp. *Gaultheria crassa*, *Stellaria gracilentia* and *Leucopogon fraseri*.

In the afternoon the Tasman Glacier was visited. On the lateral moraine the *Aciphylla aurea*, spaniard or speargrass, were spectacular, they were in full flower and in every direction one looked were seen the raised, golden-stemmed spikes. Plants of note on the terminal moraine were the green compressed mats of *Raoulia australis* sprinkled with their tiny yellow daisy flowers. Even more curious were the numerous dead-looking twiggly branchlets of *Helichrysum depressum*; in this specialised stony habitat it was