

☞ 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

abundant. It is a small rather flattened shrub but one bonsai-looking plant had a gnarled and twisted 'trunk' 20 cm high.

☞ Western Shore – Lake Tekapo, 1 Jan - Gael Donaghy

This unpromising-looking area of soft sediment lakeshore, that is sometimes covered with water, proved to have some interesting plants. There are mats of the little *Leptinella maniototo*, a tiny *Crassula*, *C. sinclairii* that was in flower, the "tape measure plant" *Lilaeopsis ruthiana* and carpets of *Neopaxia lineariifolia*, with its pretty white flowers, with a pink stamen lying along each petal. A search was mounted for *Glossostigma elatinooides* flowers to show people how to trigger the irritable stigma, but there were very few out. A small plant with a disproportionately large blue flower turned out to be *Parahebe canescens*.

Rain interrupted our botanising, but after a compulsory lunch break in the vehicles, a quick sortie to a wind-scoured area about 100 m from the lake was proposed. Here there were several treasures including the unusual, dark green *Raoulia monroii*, with its fan-shaped arrangement of leaves. Another treasure was the *Convolvulus verecundus* subsp *verecundus* which has rosettes of grey/brown rabbit-dropping-shaped leaves that arise from a deeply buried runner! The plants had flowered earlier, and there were many capsules blowing around in the wind. Two other rewards for the plodding about in the rain were the tight cushions of the very hairy *Pimelea pulvinaris*, and the small broom, *Carmichaelia nana*.

Of interest here too were the bright yellow vagrant lichens, *Chondropsis semiviridis* – when the weather is dry they curl up and blow around. When it rains, they flatten out against the ground and photosynthesize, until it again becomes too dry.

Fine example of *Botsocia camerae* overcrowding *B prostrata*. Chris E, Rodney L and others paying homage to tiny plants on the shore of Lake Tekapo
– Rosemary Collier

