

Respecting and appreciating your wetlands

Very few wetlands are left in New Zealand, less than 10% of the original area of wetlands that existed in New Zealand before people arrived. They are fragile ecosystems that have complex foodwebs and hydrology. We should respect and enjoy the wetlands we have left and stop further loss or damage. Take the time to celebrate the diversity of wetlands and their wildlife by taking a walk around some of the wetlands in your district.

If you want to find out more about wetlands, look up these recommended resources:

New Zealand Wetlands: www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/wetlands/index.asp

RAMSAR convention of wetlands: www.ramsar.org

Bodies of bogs: www.archaeology.org/online/features/bog/index.html

Wetland Plants in New Zealand, Peter N. Johnson and Pat A. Brooke. 1989.

DSIR publishing, Wellington.

Reports

The BSO/Botany BBQ

- Allison Knight

Brainchild of David Orlovich, the BBQ to welcome Botany students and new BSO members went off with a bang. Balloons popping in trees, flowers (optional) in the salad, sausages skilfully sizzled by Paul Guy, new Head of the Botany Department, and generous lashings of sauces and sunshine all combined to make it a serendipitously successful occasion. Wonderful to see botanists young and old chatting together so enthusiastically and harmoniously. Well done, David and Paul!

Field Trip Report

Botanizing up and over Mt Watkin/ Hikororoa, Mar. 15. - Monica Peters

Mt Watkin/ Hikororoa (616m) lies inland, marked by an unassuming road sign just before Cherry Farm some 40 km north of the city. It is described by Neville Peat (Wild Dunedin, 1995) as "... an oddity – a volcanic hill standing alone amidst a schist landscape..."

Led by Robyn Bridges and Allison Knight we (Frances Anderson, Mignon Pickwell, Rosalind Andrews, Pascale Michel, Chuck Landis, Scott Dunavan, Ian & Eve Radford, Nola Walker, John McBurney, Judy Russell and Monica Peters) set off at a pace that can only be described as leisurely - as is befitting of a group of people for whom the minute vegetative details of the landscape are of prime importance. Mt. Watkin provides a brief but valuable glimpse into the past, feeling much like a remnant part of a landscape substantially modified through farming.

Several species of *Aciphylla*, *A. subflabellata*, *A. glaucescens* and *A. aurea*, - some with last year's weather-bleached inflorescences, are scattered throughout the reserve. Waist high tussock, *Chionochoa rigida*, and *Poa cita* (previously *P. laevis*) are similarly distributed. In the grazed paddock that surrounds the reserve, a small handful of

Broadleaf seedlings, *Griselinia littoralis*, were discovered beneath a generous clump of gorse, well out of reach to browsing stock. A few others grow in patches amongst the rocks along with Kohulu, *Pittosporum tenuifolium*.

Although the fence that surrounds the reserve is, well, porous the broad swathes of basalt rock, by virtue of their near impassibility to stock at least, serve as protection for some notable species. Beginning a slow ascent, “combing” for details we were able to locate a few healthy plants of *Gingidia montana*, a variety of native aniseed. These unstable screes are coated with ancient communities of lichens, including the brown foliose *Pseudocyphellaria crocata*, the white crustose *Lecanora farinacea* with pinkish fruiting bodies, and, higher up, the related *L. rupicola* with greyish fruit. Both these lichens have a pruinose covering over their fruit – a fine crystalline layer which may offer some protection against browsing by invertebrates.

We found *Fuschia perscandens* scrambling across the loosely piled stones, leathery Hound’s tongue ferns, *Microsorium pustulatum* (*Phymatosorus diversifolius*) and glossy *Huperzia australiana* (*Lycopodium australianum*), ripe with yellow spore cases, as well as parched mosses. Of note were huge prone trunks of ancient Totara. Flax (*Phormium* spp.), is ubiquitous and 2 species of weedy *Hieracium* (*H. pilosella* and *H. lepidulum*) have begun to make in-roads. We paused for a while around a *Coprosma rugosa* with a rich horde of tiny globular fruit sitting just inside a dense network of branches. Through a powerful hand lens, the almost transparent fruit surface is speckled with minute grains of blue. A taste test reached the general consensus that they are really quite palatable. The summit of Mt. Watkin (which we eventually reached) is marked by a diminutive trig point from where the Waikouaiti and Karitane estuaries can be seen. The weather was benign to us – sunny with a light, warm wind. This combined with such a diverse group of (botanically-minded) people, made for a highly enjoyable and informative day.



Lichen covered rocks encircle Scott Dunavan as he examines the *Hieracium* spp gaining hold between the tussock and the *Aciphylla*. – Photo by Robyn Bridges