NOTES FROM NELSON

K.J. & N. Haydock.

Time for botanizing hasn't really eventuated as yet but we have a delightful walk from the Power Station to our house. Being 400' up deters some but for us the climb is well rewarded. The bush comes almost to our back door and down one side of us. The track up from the Power Station is full of interest on its own. Many orchids are popping through and seem to increase in number each day - more about them when they flower.

The numerous Coprosmas around us have forced me to find time to attempt to identify them. The well known Coprosma robusta (much more lanceolate than in Auckland), C. lucida and C. australis abound everywhere and hybridize freely. One I first saw on the Mercer Bay track which is numerous here is C. propinqua. After much searching I found a few drupes blotched with purple but otherwise almost white. Leaf size varies greatly from one plant to another. Easy to identify because of its putrid odour was C. foetidissima. More difficult, at least for me, were C. rugosa, C. parviflora and C. banksii. C. parviflora with obovate leaves and the branches densely clad in appressed hairs, C. banksii with ovate leaves and dark crimson drupes and C. rugosa with small linear leaves - a very erect shrub. All these species I found within 10 mins. walk from the house and without leaving the track.

Apart from plant life the bird life is causing us to look up books and so learn our native birds which are numerous here. Bell birds sing almost continuously and come quite close. A less desirable delight is the weka who visits our garden.

N.H.

My wife and I visited the site of the abandoned asbestos mine workings located upstream from the Cobb River Hydro Station on the Takaka River, at an altitude of approximately 2200' above sea level, on the 9th September. The mine has been left in the usual abandoned, untidy state, with heaps of rusty machinery and dilapidated buildings.

The construction of the Cobb Power Station was started in 1937 to supply power to the mines and surrounding area but financial difficulties caused the Government to take over and carry on the construction and they completed the station in 1944. The mine, I believe was finally closed sometime after the second world war. We drove in our car most of the way and then walked the last half mile or so to the mine. We looked over the old open-cast workings, tailings etc. and found that the dominant returning scrub was Leptospermum ericoides, L. sinclairii and Pteridium aquilinum var. esculentum as was to be expected. Fire had apparently been through the area and vegetation to the West of the mine was very stunted and scrubby, with outcrops of rock covered with rust red lichen. The surrounding hills were mainly clad in several species of Nothofagus with some mixed podocarps (totara, miro, matai, kahikatea, rimu and mountain toatoa). Much regenerating beech and podocarp was

found under the Leptospermum cover.

Some of the other species noted in the mine area were:-

Ferns etc. - Paesia scaberula, Thelypteris pennigera, Asplenium flaccidum, Blechnum capense, B. minus, B. fluviatile, B. discolor, Lycopodium volubile, L. deuterodensum and L. scariosum.

Trees and Shrubs - Coprosma foetidissima, C. parviflora, C. robusta, C. propinqua, Pseudopanax crassifolium, Neopanax colensoi, Griselinia littoralis, Metrosideros umbellata (the last two having flower buds on them), Gaultheria antipoda, Phormium tenax, P. colensoi, Cordyline banksii, Aristotelia serrata, Cyathodes fasciculata, Exocarpus bidwillii, Cassinia leptophylla, Myrsine salicina, M. divaricata, Weinmannia racemosa. There were also several species of Pittosporum (including P. divaricatum and P. eugenioides) and Hebe (including H. subalpina). Also noticed were Dianella, Astelia, Dracophyllum and an alpine daisy.

Coming back along the road just after leaving the mine we diverted up a stream bed for a little way - the water temperature was approximately 6 degrees C. and our legs felt as though they had been amputated below the knees. What a variety of plants there were here ! In fact we will have to go back when time permits to make a better survey of the area. There were masses of ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens, Blechnum capense, B. fluviatile and areas of ground covered with B. minus. Several species of filmy ferns, Todea hymenophylloides, Grammitis heterophylla and many more.

Lycopodium billardieri was hanging in great clumps from rocks. Pseudowintera colorata was a mass of bud (the buds having since come out into flower in a vase) with some trees having their star-shaped, greenish white flowers out. Two species of tree daisy and a Hoheria will have to be keyed out when in flower. There were several species of Coprosma, among them C. linariifolia, and two small trees of Libocedrus plumosa. One of the native irises was found in plenty among the rocks and we brought some home to grow and identify.

The part of the road we walked along was notable for three things. Firstly, the dominance of Coprosma foetidissima in large areas of roadside which made the air positively reek with its smell (no need to crush and smell its leaves to identify it !) Secondly, the large numbers of Fuchsia excorticata covered in flowers and buds growing on previously cleared areas of roadside and thirdly, the large numbers of bell birds seen, some of which approached as close to us as ten to fifteen feet, so tame and inquisitive were they.

K.H.

Fungi, Parasites and an Epiphyte

The warm wet weather we've been having has produced a variety of fungi everywhere. One of particular interest is on the track

to our house and we look out for it every time it rains. So far we've found it only under one particular beech tree, although there is a predominance of beech in the area. The fungus is a dark purple and only ever shows the very top of its head above the ground. On digging one up we found a puff-ball shaped object which is extremely slimy.

Another interesting fungus, again a brilliant colour but this time a bright yellow, was found on a dead branch. At first I thought it was a flower but instead discovered a very delicate flower shaped fungus. After several days rain I found that it had increased along the branch forming a bunch of ' flowers.' As soon as the rain stopped my 'flowers' shrivelled but not before we had taken a photo and also interested others in the village so that they also took photos.

Now to hemiparasites. The first we saw whilst tripping about in the Paraparu area was Elytranthe colensoi. We found this mistletoe just getting a hold on a Coprosma spathulata. It was only a few inches high but had its roots well secured around the Coprosma branch. This we hope to be able to view from time to time to record its progress.

On a visit to the Ranger at the Cobb Resevoir we were shown an E. tetrapetala which is living in company with an Aristotelia fruticosa. The two are so intermingled that they appear to be one plant supporting two types of leaf.

An exciting find was an epiphytic fern, Hymenophyllum malingii, which is almost a grey colour above and reddish below. A mountain fern, it is usually found on dead or decaying cedar trees. Miss Crookes has noted it as " growing terrestially in great luxuriance in thick moss in sheltered places in the Nelson district " and this is how we found it on the Cobb Ridge.

N.H.

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WHAT IS A JORDANON ? R. Silvester

Alexis Jordan was a 19th century botanist - native of Lyons (France), a follower of Linnaeus and a strong believer in the fixity of species.

Jordan studied a small annual crucifer, Erophila or Draba verna, common in poor dry pastures, old walls etc., in Europe and Western Asia. This plant, insignificant in appearance (a rosette of leaves and a few colourless inflorescences) is remarkably polymorphic. Practically all the organs show variations. The most striking are those of the leaves in size (small, large), shape (linear, elliptic, rhomboid), colour (light green, glaucous), glabrous or more or less hairy (hair being simple or stellate). Petals generally cordiform can be emarginate, linear, others touch their neighbours. Peduncles are short or long.