

## President's Report to the 78th Annual General Meeting of the Wellington Botanical Society.

Highlights of the past year include the summer camp to Mangarakau, northwest Nelson, a varied programme of talks throughout the year and an increase in BotSoc membership. It is encouraging to see more young people becoming members and attending our meetings and trips.

On a sadder note, five long-term members of BotSoc passed away this year: Stan Butcher, Jean Luke, Sheena Hudson, Nancy Malcolm and our former President and life member Barbara Mitcalfe. Their presence at BotSoc trips and meetings is sorely missed. Barbara's contribution to botany in the Wellington region was recognised by obituaries in *Trilepidea* (the newsletter of the NZ Plant Conservation Network), the NZ Botanical Society Newsletter and The Dominion Post.

Conservation outcomes for our local plants have been mixed over the past year. The purchase of the Forest of Tāne for addition to the Outer Green Belt demonstrates Wellington City Council's commitment to conservation. In contrast Porirua City Council's approval of the construction of mountain-bike tracks in Porirua Scenic Reserve, which contains some of the best tawa-kohekohe forest in the region is extremely disappointing. Another concern is the recent long-anticipated arrival of myrtle rust in New Zealand, and we are yet to see the effects it will have on our native species.

### **Membership 2016/2017**

Membership over the year has remained stable. Presently we have 113 Ordinary Members, 32 Country Members, 61 Group Members, 31 Life Members, and 5 Student Members. The total membership figure stands at 242, slightly up from 239 last year. We have seen a welcome rise in the number of student members.

### **Trips**

The summer trip to Mangarakau, in northwest Nelson was well-attended. Leader Chris Moore did an excellent job of finding a variety of habitats to visit for the day trips, from coastal turf to wetlands and lowland forest. Highlights included finding a new population of the rare forget-me-not *Myosotis* aff. *brockiei*. Thanks to all those involved in the organisation including Chris Moore and Richard Herbert for leadership, Chris Horne for permits, Julia Stace, Jill Goodwin and Bev Abbott for catering and all those who contributed day-trip reports to the newsletter. Support from DOC staff, who were able to attend some days was greatly appreciated.

There were ten other field trips within the wider Wellington region last year (and one cancelled trip), including a 4WD expedition into the Akatarawa Range organised by Owen Spearpoint, and ably assisted by drivers from the Cross-Country Vehicle Club. It was great to see some of our often over-looked plants (mosses, liverworts, lichens and seaweeds) being the focus of trips. Thank you to those who led trips and to Sunita Singh for organising the programme of trips.

## **Meetings**

Thanks also to Sunita for organising a varied and thought-provoking programme of talks this year, and to all our speakers for producing such engaging presentations. Once again the AGM drew the biggest audience with 60 attendees with Landcare Research's Matt McGlone giving a thought-provoking lecture on the woody flora of New Zealand in memory of Tony Druce.

The team of Rodney Lewington, Carol West and Peter Beveridge was a close second with 55 people attending to learn about mosses, liverworts and lichens.

## **Communications**

Newsletter: Three issues of the newsletter were produced during the last year – September and December 2016, and May 2017. Chris Horne and Jeremy Rolfe do a wonderful job of their preparation, formatting and production.

Website: Thank you to Richard Herbert who manages our web site at [www.wellingtonbotsoc.org.nz](http://www.wellingtonbotsoc.org.nz), and Julia White for dealing with enquiries.

Facebook page: the Wild Plants of Wellington Facebook page now has 237 members. It continues to be a good way to attract new members, advertise our trips and meetings, and as a forum to discuss all things botanical. Thanks to Julia White and Leon Perrie for administering the site.

## **Submissions**

It's been a busy year for submissions. In our response to Wellington City Council's request for submissions on its Draft Open Space Access Plan, and its Draft Master Plan for Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park, we encouraged Council to make ecological and safety factors a higher priority.

We found little connection between BotSoc's educational activities and the draft 10-year strategy for Draft Environmental Education for Sustainability released by DOC and the ministries of education and environment in 2016. The actions in the final strategy talk of enhancing capability and capacity, celebrating success, and fostering networks for collaborative action.

The Discussion Document released by DOC, MfE and the Prime Minister's Science Adviser presented some challenging ideas as part of a process to identify the priority research required to inform policy decisions over the next 20 years. Botany was not a winner when the final Conservation and Environment Science Research Roadmap was approved by Cabinet in February 2017, but the biosecurity theme is likely to result in more funding for managing plant pests.

Just before Christmas 2016, the Department of Conservation (DOC) released its long overdue draft of the second CMS Wellington. We encouraged DOC to improve the resilience of populations of indigenous species in the CMS area, particularly those already declining or at risk of extinction. We hope the final CMS will respond to our suggestion that it's time for DOC to start preparing for climate change.

As the financial year came to an end, DOC's Draft Threatened Species Strategy focused our attention on DOC's plans for protecting New Zealand's threatened and at-risk species. The plans for protecting plants are not well-developed, but if all goes well, the populations of five

named plant species will be enhanced by 2025, and 34 others will be “managed for protection”.

Thank you to Bev Abbott for the huge amount of time you spend and the excellent job you do preparing and presenting submissions on behalf of the WBS.

### **Awards**

Last year we only had one application for a student grant. It was from Nathanael Walker-Hale who is studying the relationship between Betalain pigments and salt tolerance in *Disphyma australe*. This carries on from research we have helped fund in the past.

The Jubilee Award went to Hannah Buckley at Lincoln, who is studying ecological resilience of sand-dune ecosystems, particularly the population genetics and ecology of pīngao.

### **Committee**

The committee met regularly during the past year, mostly at the Leonard Cockayne Centre at Otari-Wilton’s Bush. The committee has provided a huge amount of guidance to me as I moved into the President’s role and I would like to thank each of you for your support and patience, as well as all the time you have put into your committee roles. Thank you Owen Spearpoint and Eleanor Burton (Vice Presidents), Frances Forsyth (minute taker), Bev Abbott (submissions coordinator), Barbara Clark (secretary), Lea Robertson (treasurer), Richard Herbert and Chris Horne; I have thoroughly enjoyed working with you all.

### **Other thanks and acknowledgements**

In addition to the people acknowledged above, I would also like to thank the following:

- Eleanor Burton for volunteering to be editor of the next Bulletin.
- Barbara and Kevin Clark for hosting the annual committee BBQ at their house.
- Lea Robertson, Hugh Robertson, Sunita Singh, Trudi Bruhlmann and Jill Goodwin for mailing out the newsletter, and Kaaren Mitcalfe for providing a venue for the last mail-out.
- NZ Print for their work printing the three issues of the newsletter.
- VUW for the use of Murphy Lecture Theatre 101 for holding our meetings.

Lara Shepherd, President

## **EVENING MEETINGS**

15.8.17	AGM; Matt McGlone	60
19.9.16	P Beveridge, R Lewington, C West	55
17.10.16	Maren Preuss; Barbara Hampton	31
21.11.16	Philip Simpson	43
20.2.17	Melanie Dixon	49
20.3.17	Frances Forsyth	36
10.4.17	Bev Abbott	34
15.5.17	Members' Evening	34
19.6.17	K van der Walt; Philippa Crisp	40
17.7.17	C Moore; Stephen Hartley	42
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>424</b>
<b>Average</b>		<b>42</b>

## **FIELD TRIPS**

3.9.16	Horoeka St Reserve, Stokes Valley	22
1.10.16	Otari: mosses, lichens, liverworts	21
5.11.16	Nature Walk, Rimutaka Forest Park	20
3.12.16	Manganui Valley, Wairarapa	11
11-18.1.17	Mangarakau, North-west Nelson	26
11.2.17	B. Hadfield Nīkau Reserve, P'umu	17
4.3.17	Seaweeds, South Coast	32
1.4.17	Kaukau & Te Wharangi ridge to south	14
6.5.17	Mt Wainui	21
3.6.17	Silversky Track, Crofton Downs	7
17.6.17	Te Mārua Bush workbee	13
1.7.17	Manawa Karioi: cancelled – rain	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>204</b>
<b>Average</b>		<b>19</b>