

Report by Marie Taylor

9th Fungal Foray at Tautuku Outdoor Education Centre, South Otago, held from 8 to 12 May, 1995.

The weather omens were not good when participants were arriving on the first evening. Otago and Southland had been experiencing a drought during the autumn previous to our foray, and it was showery with hail for our first expeditions. It became fine later in the week, but temperatures remained very cold, and this may account for the sparse collections from rimu/rata forest. The beech forest was more rewarding, especially for photographers, with large fruitbodies associated with the tree roots.

Places visited.

Tuesday morning Lake Wilkie and the nature trail to Tautuku beach; in the afternoon Waipati Beach and Cathedral Caves.

Wednesday Old Coach Road and loop trail at the mouth of the Tahakopa River, and Purakaunui Falls in the afternoon. Some members spent the day at Table Hill or Catlins State Forest Park in order to collect in *Nothofagus* forest.

Thursday morning William King Memorial Reserve and boggy flats near the mouth of the Fleming river. In the afternoon a group explored the Tautuku beach frontal dunes, in order to see and photograph *Peziza ammophila* growing amongst the marram grass. Another group visited the Catlins river valley after seeing the colourful haul of specimens made from *Nothofagus* and plantation areas of the Forest Park on the previous day.

The highlight was the finding of the sand *Peziza* practically on the beach. It was first seen at the mouth of the Tahakopa river, and then again on Tautuku beach. Young specimens were almost immersed in the sand. They looked like the tip of a small fawn potato and caused a slight mounding and cracking of the sand surface as they emerged. Then an apical hole appeared which split into a jagged star-shape and revealed the brown spore surface lining the hollow inside of the cup. Careful digging and brushing brought to light the irregular fragile stalk of sand grains held together by fungus mycelium underlying each fruiting body. This mycelium must reach down to the food base, the underground stalks of the marram grass.

This *Peziza* is found in Europe on sand dunes amongst marram (*Ammophila*) so it is probably a species introduced to New Zealand with its host plant. The black parasitic ergots which we found on some of the marram seedheads are also a world-wide fungus. Sand seems an inhospitable place to find fungi, but there are some which have made it their special home. On Catlins dunes we saw a few small agarics which appeared to be members of the pink-spored genus *Entoloma*. Collecting dune fungi has its problems as they are fragile and attempts to free them from the sand may destroy them, but it is an area which could be studied in New Zealand.