

joined forces to oppose the gondola, believing that it would adversely affect the Heathcote Valley as well as the scenic reserve.

Forest and Bird, along with the Canterbury Botanical Society, are opposing the gondola on the grounds that it will create a precedent for similar future development in other scenic reserves and protected natural areas. The Reserves Act (1977) clearly states that developments are permissible in reserves **to the extent compatible with the principal or primary purposes of the retention and preservation of the natural and scenic values** of the reserve and where these are necessary to enable the public to obtain benefit from the reserve.

To our minds the gondola is not necessary to allow the public to benefit and enjoy the reserve as access is easily obtained by stepping out of a car and walking on to the reserve. On a recent Canterbury Botanical Society field trip, 70 and 80-year-olds were easily able to reach the top and enjoy the fine views in all directions. The Christchurch City Council's management plan for the reserve reiterates this point, and also states that one of the criteria on which development projects should be assessed is the **availability and suitability of privately owned land**. The developers in fact have an alternative site adjacent to the reserve and therefore do not need to locate their terminal and restaurant in the reserve.

Should the gondola be built, it will undoubtedly affect the reserve's special botanical features. Only 7.5 hectares in size and located at the head of the Heathcote Valley, the reserve was established in 1911.

Since 1947 it has been administered by the Christchurch City Council, but remains in Crown ownership.

Rising up to 455 metres above sea level,



the reserve has steep, rocky north and west-facing bluffs. Some of the best examples of lava flows and pyroclastic debris sequences on the Port Hills can be seen on the west side.

Grassland, shrubland and rock outcrop vegetation occur in the reserve with over 50 herbaceous species present; a rich herbaceous flora for the Port Hills. Mt Cavendish was given the highest scientific rating of all the Port Hills scenic reserves during Geoff Kelly's survey of Canterbury scenic reserves. Because of its small size, the reserve is very vulnerable to disturbance. The silver tussock (*Poa cita*) grassland on the highest parts of the reserve is one of the best stands remaining on the Port Hills. Fescue tussock (*Festuca novaezelandiae*) is also present. However, it is on the rock bluffs that some of the botanically most interesting plants occur. The warm and dry north facing rocks of the reserve are the habitat of two rare ferns; *Pleurosorus rutifolius* and an undescribed species of *Pellaea*. Other "hot rock" ferns present include *Cheilanthes distans* and *C sieberi*. Other interesting plants present in the reserve include the Banks Peninsula endemics *Cotula minor*, *Hebe lavaudiana* and *Senecio saxifragoides*, together with *Acaena anserinifolia*, *Aciphylla subfabellata*, *Calystegia tuguriorum*, *Chenopodium allanii*, *Clematis afoliata*, *Convolvulus verecundus*, *Dichelachne crinita*\*, *Dichondra repens*, *Echinopogon ovata*, *Geranium microphyllum*, *Gingidia enysii*, *Rhagodia triandra*, *Rubus squarrosus*, *Scandia geniculata*, *Sophora prostrata* and *Thelymitra* sp. + (\*, grass. + orchid).

The effect of this development, if it is allowed to proceed, is twofold. Firstly, it will result in a loss of many of the important biological values of Mt Cavendish Scenic Reserve. Secondly, it will create a precedent for similar developments in other scenic reserves and protected natural areas which could be very difficult to control in the future. We therefore believe that it should not be allowed to take place.

David Norton and Colin Burrows are plant ecologists at the University of Canterbury.

*Pleurosorus rutifolius* is a rare fern which chooses the driest, sunniest and most inhospitable outcrops for its home. It is found on the Mt Cavendish Reserve. Photo: Dave Norton

## Case 2. Eastern Petone Foreshore Reserve

by Maureen Burgess, Lower Hutt branch chairperson

**T**he frustrating saga of the Eastern Petone Foreshore Reserve has dragged on for 10 years. After such a long period of constant effort, the Lower Hutt branch feels it has achieved nothing, thanks to inaction and neglect by the Petone Borough Council.

Two businesses which have been on the reserve and were meant to have vacated it on April 1, 1985, continue to operate on it in spite of our efforts to draw attention to the management plan. This states that the sites, once vacated, should be progressively developed for passive recreation.

In the latest defeat for the area, the Council has granted Town Planning approval for a helicopter landing site adjacent to the reserve, with the only approved flight path over the mudflat — the only remaining one in Wellington Harbour and one which our members have studied in order to document its value to birdlife.

It appears to us that our sole remaining hope to get the Management Plan implemented lies in asking the Department of Conservation to investigate the Petone Borough Council's management of the reserve. The land was vested in the Council but is a reserve subject to the Reserves Act 1977. We feel that the situation is such that DoC should remove control of the land and associated \$600,000 budget from the Council. ✈