

Chaetanthera villosa

viranatura
tours 

**CHILE HIGH ALPINES
TRIP REPORT 2022**

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Day 1 4 Jan Arrival in Chile

The long journey to Chile from Europe (and Turkey) was embellished with the various hoops we had to jump through to get PCR tests, affidavits, mobility passes and the like. It was with some relief we finally arrived in our very pleasant small hosteria in Guayacan, surrounded by mountain views and slopes studded with columnar cacti.

Day 2 5 Jan Lagunillas

All of our PCR tests came back negative and we were free to roam. A delightfully cool dawn saw the sun rise on the deep Maipo river valley, the hills clad in puya and cacti. A flowery first day began with big stands of *Malesherbia linearifolia* along the roadside and then the first of many lovely *Alstroemeria pallida*, which were to prove near constant companions on the higher slopes. Shrubby *Solanum ligustrinum/ crispum* and the last flowers of *Calceolaria thyrsofolia* were also seen before we reached the very low-key ski centre. From here we wandered up through a paddock full of horse and as soon as we reached the rocky slopes beyond there were many wonderful flowers, beginning with *Loasa tricolor*, *Schizanthus hookeri* and then a slope dominated by the wide spreading masses of orange *Argylia adscendens*. There was a variety of colours forms on offer from rust to maroon and among these was the white daisy *Perezia carthamoides* and bushes of *Chuquiraga oppositifolia* with little sunburst flowers. Moving higher we found the first gorgeous *Rhodophiala rhodolirion* (now known by some as *Rhodolirion montanum*) and scrambling *Mutisia sinuata* became increasing common and in a variety of shades from straw-yellow to orange-red.

Reaching the ridge new flowers appeared among the even more abundant alstroemeria and rhodophiala with fleshy-leaved *Cistanthe picta* and pretty tufts of *Montiopsis sericea*. A rocky patch a bit further up had a few *Cruckshanksia hymenodon* and reddish-flowered *Pachylaenia atriplicifolia* too. All around the ground was studded with many *Chaetanthera glabrata* and its tinier cousin *C. lycopodioides* was seen too near the trailing stems of *Tropaeolum sessilifolium*. *Montiopsis andicola* was seen as we cut across the hills through big swathes of *Calycera eryngioides* as at least eight immense Andean condors soared very close overhead, joined by mountain caracara, a stunning sight.



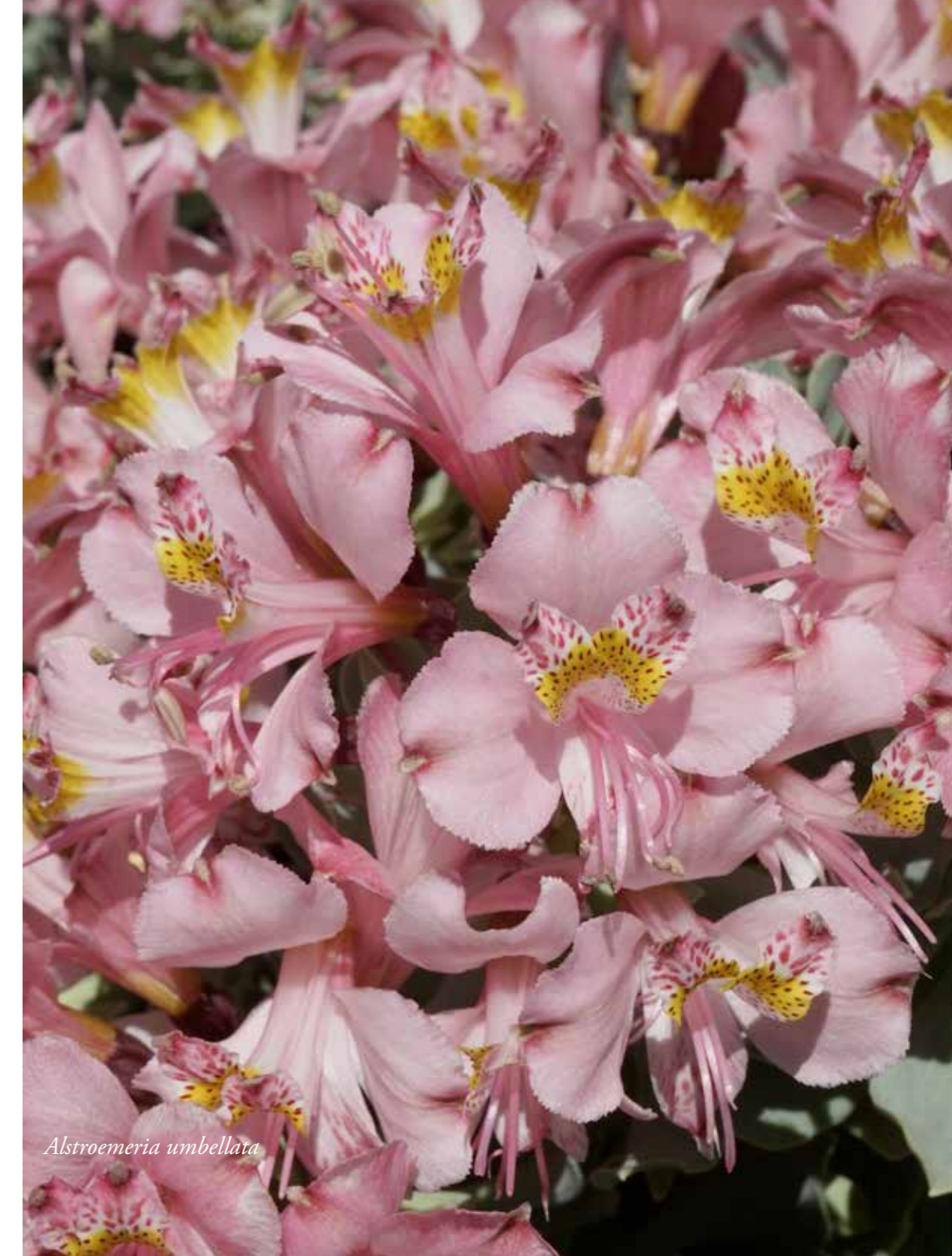
Argylia adscendens &
Alstroemeria pallida

We found little else that was new but nonetheless walking down passed many more fine stands and patches of the same flowers. After a quick very late lunch we returned to hotel in times for a swim and relax before dinner.

Day 3 6 Jan El Morado

The Maipo valley continued towards the east the mountains rising ever higher with colourful banded and tilted strata in a confusing arrangement, one could scarcely imagine how it was all put together. We set off uphill, climbing towards the smaller glaciers we could see. With a bit of height bright mats of golden *Chaetanthera chilensis* started to appear and these coloured the ground as we progressed. There were also wonderful patches of scrambling *Mutisia sinuata* in various shades from straw-yellow to deep cherry as well as its spectacular cousin *M. subulata* with big scarlet flowers. Bird life was varied with cordilleran canastero, mourning sierra-finch and grey-hooded sierra finches. There were a few *Rhodophiala rhodolirion* and we started to see some alstroemerias too. Closer examination of these revealed them to be *Alstroemeria exserens*, with distinctly broader later tepals and more uniform colouring than *A. pallida*. Damp grassland and seeps has tiny *Gentiana prostrata* and plentiful stands of *Baccharis sagittalis* with distinctive winged stems.

Higher still the wet flushes held fabulous stands of *Mimulus luteus*, each flower spotted with maroon. The blocky scree there about has some good clumps of pretty pink *Alstroemeria umbellata* and we also found a few beautiful *Tropaeolum polyphyllum* in good flower. Big cushions of *Happlopappus diplopappus* were common and there were tufts of *Nassauvia aculeata* too as we neared the lake, which was occupied by a solitary crested duck. Very tame grey-hooded sierra finches joined our lunch break as we sat near the lake at the base of soaring cliffs that rose to over 5000 metres with moody glaciers clinging their flanks. We walked back down



Alstroemeria umbellata

photographing *Montiopsis gayana* and stands of tall *Senecio glaber* that lined the path in places. The it was back to base for a swim before dinner at a pleasant local restaurant.

Day 4 7 Jan To Vilches

A frustrating day! First of all the vehicle began to misbehave (again) and then the road to El Yseo to search *Caiophora coronata* was best with roadworks. The car hire company were hard to reach and we gave up and drove south (the vehicle was now working again) and tried to find a garage to fix it. No luck, so we carried onto our very pleasant hosteria set within wooded grounds. Luckily the owner's brother was an experience mechanic and he diagnosed the problem and we arranged an appointment next day for the fix.

Day 5 8 Jan Laguna del Maule

A sensational flower day. The vehicle was repaired (hopefully) and we sped on up to Laguna del Maule. The plan had been to walk (since on a previous visit in December driving around the lake was not allowed), but to our surprise vehicles were now permitted so we jumped back in the minibus and drove onto a big lake view. There beside the magnificent vista were equally magnificent mounds of dazzling *Mimulus cupreus* (in yellow, orange and scarlet). Small streams nearby were also brimming with these and the dainty bright yellow pouches of *Calceolaria filicaulis* and pretty tufts of pink *Epilobium glauca*. As is the way it got better and better as was drove on, stopping for another stunning display of mimulus and then finding a whole lot more besides. In the drier ground flanking the streams were taller pinkish *Leucheria gilliesii* and lovely blue *Perezia capito*. Damp turf had stemless *Hypochaeris acaulis* and its' taller cousin *H. tenuifolius* was sprinkled on the stonier slopes. Making our way upstream we reached a rocky area with both *Nassauvia sprengeloides* and *N. glomerata*. The views back down across the lake were always impressive. Crossing over to the next valley, the immediate slopes had some fine *Oxalis adenophylla* and slender *Loasa filicifolia*. However, it was the quite different relative of the latter that stole the show, with superb groups of *Loasa lateritia* growing among the rocks with their stunning scarlet flowers. *Euphrasia subexserta* grew in the damp ground around the stream too.



After a sandwich we drove on to the next amazing display, this time not only mimulus but below the road tumbling masses of *Tropaeolum incisum* in golden or soft yellow colour forms. Stands of broad-leaved *Senecio fistulosus* grew in wet flushes and below a waterfall *Ourisia ruellioides* was still in flower. Better still were the vivid tufts of *Euphrasia andicola* bursting from the base of rocks. Heading up the valley a few *Viola glacialis* were still in flower and the stream displays got better and better, culminating in what I can only describe as botanical lava, flowing down the stream with more colour than could possibly be put in one place as *Mimulus cupreus* and *Calceolaria filicaulis* vied for attention. The subtler tones of *Rhodophiala montana* were found as we tore ourselves away and walked across the drier slopes.

There were various short stops for more mimulus displays, and of course the remarkable landscapes around Laguna del Maule, with a whole array of volcanic features from erodes hoodoos to basalt columns. A cliff held some superb (somewhat out of reach) *Ourisia microphylla* too. From here we drove back past the emerald seeps filled with *Gunnera tinctoria* to the broad valley beyond and then up again to the cool environs of Vilches.

Day 6 9 Jan Altos de Lircay

Early mist cleared quickly and we enjoyed another fine day of clear weather for our long (in fact longer than expected) walk up to the highlands of Altos de Lircay. On arrival at the car park there was the first of countless *Alstroemeria presliana* poking out from between fences. Walking up to the park entrance these were joined by the first red *Rhodophiala splendens*. Alas, the route I had had intended to take was close and now we had to take a longer one to reach the areas above the tree line. Fortunately there was plenty to see on the way, everything from magnificent *Nothofagus dombeyi* trees to graceful *Fuchsia magellanica* flowers that dangled over streams. Some stream valleys had pretty patches of *Adiantum chilense* and during the walk we also saw the purple flowers of *Corynabutilon ceratocarpum*, *Calceolaria dentata*, *Eryngium pandanifolium* and the pretty pink flowers of *Calceolaria cana* too, always with *Alstroemeria presliana* somewhere in the background. There were simply vast quantities of this delightful flowers colouring the woodlands.



Mimulus cupreus & Calceolaria filicaulis

The trail turned off and began to climb, but almost immediately the knocking of woodpeckers could be heard and we quickly located three magellanic woodpeckers, a male intently bashing away at a branch and a female and well grown chick on another tree, the youngster noisily begging for food. The route continued steeply up for a while passing fresher alstroemerias before reaching the tree line, where *Alstroemeria exserens* appeared with altogether larger flowers. The two species continued into the alpine communities, both become stouter with the increased exposure. The sunny slopes were coloured by abundant *Quinchimalium chilense*, laced with the stunning red flowers of *Mutisia subulata*, creating a vibrant display. Clumps of white *Leucheria lithospermifolia* broke up the fiery mix. A little higher up and we found good clumps of *Rhodophiala montana* in various colours from pale yellow to brick red and the first *Mutisia linearifolia*, but the latter formed more extensive patches higher still. Big mounds of *Oxalis subacaulis* clung to the rocky slopes with magenta *Montiopsis umbellata* (?) and higher still there was a few *Rhodophiala rhodolirion*, but the show was well and truly stolen by the stunning, golden spikes of *Chloraea alpina*, quite superb against the mountain background.

Shortly before we reached the ridge we could see the looming bulk of Volcan Descabezado. Around about were superb cushions of *Azorella monantha* in full flower and fine-leaved *Adesmia corymbosa*. We dropped down a little to find a sheltered place for lunch surrounded by *Escallonia virgata*. John and I pushed on a little further and found big clumps of purplish *Calceolaria arachnoidea*, whilst below the lunch spot were the yellow shells of *C. undulata*. The walk back gave us the chance to take more pictures of wonderful flowers and the big landscape and at the bottom of the steepest section of descent was a stunning orange *Mutisia decurrens*. The walk out was long but still pleasant through the rich forests.

We were all surprised to find out we had walked 26.5 kilometres (16 miles)!! Time for a beer.

Day 7 10 Jan To Antuco via Laguna Amarga

Essentially a transfer day between locations, moving on from the pleasant, green surrounds of Vilches southwards, stopping to shop in Linares on the way. I wanted to try and find the rare *Calceolaria lanigera* and we rumbled along a dirt road to Laguna Amarga. Alas, the only possibility for the plant was high cliffs involving a steep ascent through scrub and woods, with no certainty it was the right cliff. Instead we walked a few sections of road to look at the fine population of *Nothofagus glaucus* there, with beautiful flaking bark. The woodlands were rich in woody plants and there were many cinnamon-barked *Luma*



Chloraea alpina

apiculata, the odd *Podocarpus salignus*, many *Lomatia hirsuta* and two species of *Escallonia*. Brick-red *Salpiglossis sinuata* shone on a bank and much further on we stopped for the deep blue tubular flowers of *Puya caerulea*, with several plants in good flower. A stand of striking *Lobelia tupa* was nearby too.

There was still some ground to cover so we drove on eating lunch in the car. Turning off the main Ruta 5 we drove on good straight roads towards the ever growing hills ahead, the triangular cone of Volcan Antuco growing larger and the glacier clad mountains to the south looking more inviting. John alerted us to a side road that climbed to 1200 metres so we took this and entered some good mixed forest with lots of *Podocarpus salignus*, *Drimys winteri* and roadsides with orange-pink form of *Alstroemeria presliana* subsp. *australis*.

A final hour saw us in the spacious grounds of Antucalhue and we were soon enjoying trout and pisco sours.

Day 8 11 Jan Laguna de Laja

Another glorious day of blue skies and calm air. We began with a luxuriant cliff swathed in emerald *Gunnera tinctoria*, *Blechnum chilense* and floriferous bushes of *Fuchsia magellanica* as water chutes gushed out into the road. Lush leaved *Francoa appendiculata* also grew in among them a few with tall spikes of pinkish flowers. From here the landscape became drier and decidedly wilder. Climbing onto the slopes of the imposing Volcan Antuco we could see the large river below and valley sides clothed in nothofagus and *Austrocedrus chilensis* forests. A golden patch drew our attention and this turned out to be the fiery *Alstroemeria aurea* in a variety of colour forms from golden-yellow to flaming orange. Then the impressive Laguna del Laja hove into view with green forested slopes of one side and the austere volcanic landscape of black lava flows and ash slopes on the other. However the latter was what had the best plants. We started to see a few pink daisy flowers and then a lot more and then masses of lovely *Mutisia oligodon*, growing in large sprawling hummocks across the ash slopes, which we actually quite green in places. It was a stunning sight with the spectacular Lakeland landscape beyond. Exploring the slope we also found a *Rhodophiala araucana* and lots of *Viola volcanica* peppering the loose slopes. The *Mutisia* were stunning and their display continued for a while in places augmented by



Mutisia oligodon

abundant *Quinchimalium chilense* in a dazzling clash of pink and orange. The vegetation ceased further on and we entered a desolate volcanic landscape with the sheer walls of the caldera rising in the distant, some clad in forests.

The road forded a couple of rivers and then continued into an area of dry steppe, the hills with contorted folds and ice clad mountains clearly visible. A verdant patch nurtured by a waterfall caught our eye and we walked over to this idyllic spot for lunch in the shade, a few alstroemeria popping out of the greenery and the cliffs beneath the pretty falls plastered with *Ourisia ruellioides* (which had sadly finished flowering). Delicious nectarines were washed in the cool water and later on so were our feet – wonderful! Walking back we photographed the various *Rhodophiala araucana* colour forms and started to drive back. One stop produced many *Alstroemeria presliana* in various colour forms as well as *Mutisia decurrens*. There was a short delay while the construction crew finished installing a pipe, and then releasing the water so the river level dropped enough for us to cross.

A lone *Araucaria araucana* stood out in the river plain, and indeed this area has the northernmost population of this wonderful trees. The streams around about with choked with *Mimulus glabratus* and the heath encrusted with *Azorella trifurcata*. We drove on through the dramatic moonscape, stopping for the natural gardens of mutisia once again and then onto an area of basalt outcrops with plentiful *Ourisia microphylla* wedged into the crevices. A final stop was for drifts of pretty white *Nierembergia repens* that coated the damp turf beside a stream.

Day 9 12 Jan Nahuelbuta

The nature of research trips typically involves some hectic days when more ground needs to be covered than you would normally in one day. Today was one of those days, but nonetheless it still proved to be very enjoyable. Breakfast was early and we were away by 7.30 passing through various towns and negotiating the rush hour traffic smoothly enough. Back into the countryside we stopped for a bank with *Alstroemeria revoluta* on, a very different species to the ones we had seen. *A. presliana* was abundant throughout the day too, along with a fair smattering of orange *A. aurea*. Another plant that was very common and showy was *Rhodophiala splendens*, with indeed some splendid specimens seen in various



places among the nothofagus and *Araucaria araucana* woodlands. It was the forests of the latter we had really come see with spectacular stands of these architectural, primaeval trees.

We hiked up to a viewpoint crowned in araucarias, seeing *Mutisia araucana* and bushes of *Gaultheria poeppigii* laden with reddish berries. Lizards scuttled about the granite boulder landscape as we ate lunch enjoying the views and the breeze. At another location we stopped for the remarkable green orchid *Chloraea grandiflora*. We were lucky as this year there seemed to be just one in flower despite us searching the area thoroughly. More superb rhodophialas followed and then we drove to a second viewpoint.

Here there were commanding views across the landscape and into the canopy of the araucarias with all manner of shapes and sizes of these wonderful trees. The forest understorey had lots of *Desfontainea fulgens* just coming into flower and there were bushes of *Drimys andina* with starry white flowers too. Heading out of the park we stopped for a superb specimen of golden *Loasa acanthifolia* with large orange-yellow flowers and dissect foliage and then for a second species; orangey-yellow *L. acerifolia* a little way out of the park. Sat-nav took us on a rather uncomfortable back road at first before we reached smooth tarmac and we made it across to Curacautin speedily enough.

Then just as we had arrived at our cabanas, the shadow the condor passed over and all power to the car was lost! The car was eventually towed away at 11pm.

Day 10 13 Jan Tolhuaca

Organising a replacement car took some time so we left late. The landscape around us was noticeably greener and driving into Tolhuaca the roadside banks were swathed in countless *Alstroemeria aurea*, creating big patches of golden yellow. Here and there was the lovely white orchid *Chloraea longipetala* and a superb cluster of *Mutisia decurrens* hung from the banks. *Rhodophiala araucana* and second orchid *Chloraea barbata* sprung from among the turf as we approached the park.

We took a walk up towards a viewpoint passing through fine forest filled with stout *Blechnum magellanicum*, bamboo and the vivid tubular orange flowers of *Mitraria coccinea*. The woody plant flora was rich with *Eucryphia glutinosa*, *Laureliopsis philippiana*, *Wiedermannia trichosperma*, Nothofagus alpina and other shrubs. Eventually the path opened up and the sunny edges were lined with alstroemeria, among which grew quite a



few *Mutisia araucana*. My intention had been to continue higher to the araucarias and search for *Ourisia alpina* but there was not enough time so after a late lunch above Lago Malleco, we then wandered back down finding the stunning scarlet necklaces of *Tropaeolum speciosum* strung about the trackside plants, sometimes in garish combination with *Alstroemeria aurea*.

There was still time to visit the impressive waterfall that tumbles out of the edge of Lago Malleco, a long cascade whose mists nurtured hanging gardens of *Gunnera tinctoria* and *Mitraria coccinea*. Very tame vivid green and turquoise thin tree lizards posed for photos and we had excellent views of a male magellanic woodpecker too.

Day 11 14 Jan Las Nalcas

Chile's stunning volcanic landscapes came to the fore today. We drove up into an area of superb araucaria forests and took a walk among the giant trees. There we last few spikes of *Chloraea magellanica* in flower, blue *Perezia pedicularidifolia* and plenty of *Calceolaria valdiviensis* too. The monkey puzzles were rich and varied in size and shape, some broader than tall, but all very architectural and prehistoric. We reached a towering thousand-year-old male tree with the rust stained slopes of Volcan Lonquimay beyond, beneath which were the last *Rhodophiala andicola* was in flower and it was clear just how many had been here a month ago. The pretty rosettes of *Pozoa vulcanica* were common in bare ground.

We drove higher onto the seemingly barren ash slopes, but these were actually speckled with many pretty *Loasa nana*, whilst other slopes had plenty of *Oxalis adenophylla*. Better was to come. The landscape became increasingly dramatic with austere ash cones and steep slopes contrasting with the tracts of green forest and snow streaked (older) Volcan Tolhuaca beyond. Fuzzy balls of leaves caught the eye and glancing downslope we saw the first of many simply gorgeous *Chaetanthera villosa*, each stout rosette topped by a golden daisy flower. An exquisite alpine.

Late lunch was overlooking the lava flows from the Crater Navidad, still bereft of any vegetation. Afterwards we took a drive through another area of impressive araucaria, many with boughs to the ground, quite magnificent trees and the envy of any arboretum. On the way back large tumbles of *Mutisia araucana* stopped us



Loasa nana

before we passed through the Lonquimay tunnel and along the road past vast drifts of the now familiar *Alstroemeria aurea*.

A substantial dinner featured gigantic portions of everything!

Day 12 15 Jan To Curico

We were quite a way south and today was about repositioning much further north. After leisurely breakfast we set off and made our way north again, leaving the overcast skies behind as we reached the Mediterranean region, passing through the extensive agricultural belt of the Central Valley with orchards and vineyards and arriving in good time for dinner and the mountain delights that awaited tomorrow.

Day 13 16 Jan Paso Vergara

A surprisingly overcast start to the day and indeed the weather continued to be decidedly unsummery. Stopping on the way by a small stream, bushes of *Escallonia revoluta* were laden with flowers, enough to attract a giant hummingbird and alongside the stream were still some nice *Mimulus naiandinus*. Further up a pair of torrent ducks posed perfectly on a riverside boulder and moustached turca scuttled across the road. Reaching the customs post we loaded up with picnic supplies and set off to see if we could reach the pass. It wasn't long before the first vivid *Schizanthus grahami* appeared and these stunning annuals continued for the whole walk, getting better and better as we climbed. Drifts of *Mutisia subulata* coloured some banks red and everywhere were the inflated seedpods of *Astragalus pehuenche*. Both the last *Alstroemeria ligtu* subsp. *splendens* and the fresher *A. exserens* became increasingly common, as did *Rhodophiala rhodolirion*, which latter occurred in big numbers in places and combined with alstroemeria and orange *Chuquiraga oppositifolia* to create some fabulous natural gardens. These were nigh on impossible to capture in photographs! The waysides and stony flats were dominated by stands of the tall yellow daisy; *Viguiera revoluta*. Colour was not in short supply.

Two large aggregations of *Viola skottsbergiana* rosettes were seen, one with more than a passing resemblance of tortoise and comprising around forty heads of tightly packed leaves. It was becoming decidedly windy as we progressed, seeing some more good stands of *Schizanthus grahami* and *Calceolaria arachnoidea* before we dived in behind a big rock for a relatively sheltered lunch break. There may well have been good things ahead, previous visits



Rhodophiala rhodolirion

in December had yielded many good plants at the pass, but it was too windy to continue to there so instead we started back down finding *Pachylaenia atriplicifolia* on the way and the wind had eased a lot by the time we reached the car for the ride back to Curico.

Day 14 17 Jan To Farelones & La Parva I

In the morning we drove onto Santiago where we changed cars and continued up to Farellones, the very winding road entering the thick mist that had wrapped up the mountains. A good afternoon of botanising seemed unlikely, but there were glimmers of clearer weather and as we climbed a little higher the clouds dissipated and there were clear slopes and some blue sky. The advantage of the expansive ski resort is it allows easy access to high areas. Reaching the end of the tarmac at 2850 metres, we set off on foot, following the mainly easy gradients of the various tracks that criss-crossed the slopes. Everywhere we large spreading mats of *Laretia acaule*, which very much dominated the steppe-like heath here. Among them and on stony slopes was golden *Loasa sigmoidea* as well as many *Viola philippii*, the little rosettes like miniature savoy cabbages and some still had a few shell-pink flowers too. *Perezia carthamoides* was scattered about as was the diminutive *Chaetanthera pusilla*, increasing numbers of the white form of *Rhodophiala rhodolirion*, fine clumps of pink *Oxalis squamata* and its pretty yellow cousin *O. cinerea/penicillata*.

Winding our way slowly uphill we found a rocky bank with some fine *Tropaeolum polyphyllum*. These exhibited the same ability to produce shiny secretion that coated the rocks, and the presence of many ant around some suggested it is a lure for pollination. Reaching the top of the rise big white patches turned out to be the plant of the day, the wonderful and exotic *Cajophora coronata*. Huge clumps were fringed with dozens (hundreds on some) of bizarre inflated white flowers, akin to many open mouths waiting to snap up passing prey. They were fabulous and even better ones lower down looked amazing against a blue sky. There were big hummocks studded with *Pratia longiflora* and *Werneria procumbens* and several fine clumps of white *Rhodophiala rhodolirion*, including one sprouting from amidst a big mat of *Laretia acaule*. The finishing touch as a smattering of pretty gold and



Cajophora coronata

cerise *Schizanthus coccineus* at the bottom of the slope.

A very rewarding few hours.

Day 14 18 Jan Valle Nevado & El Colorado

Yesterday afternoon's flower feast was going to be hard to top. The neighbouring ski resort gave us access to over 3000 metres from the off, but despite this there was very little in flower and the landscape was decidedly barren. We did eventually find a colony of *Alstroemeria umbellata*. There was however a superb flying display by three young condors, one of whom landed on the roof of the ski lodge. Driving back down we stopped here and there to check places out, but no luck. In the end we drove on up to El Colorado, ate lunch and then walked slowly up onto the slopes there. It was a greener landscape and the population of white *Rhodophiala rhodolirion* grew and grew with some fine clumps. There was also a patch of *Oenothera acaulis* with large white flowers opening from pink buds. The walk was easy enough and there were some fine mounds of *Oxalis squamata*, plentiful *O. cinerea/penicillata* and then a colony of mat forming *O. exigua*.

On the way down a little seep had some *Calandrinia affinis* flowering among *Calceolaria filicaulis* and a pair of variable hawks hung in the air toying with a branch.

Day 15 19 Jan La Parva II - high tops

Our last day in the field and it was time to go high. We got a lift up part of the way in a sturdy pick-up, saving us an hour or more of climbing. The road snaked up fairly gently for most of the way and we tried to pick out a good area to explore. At around 3300 metres a rocky rise had many tight rosettes of *Viola atropurpurea* (though they had finished flowering some time ago) and there was burnished-gold *Tropaeolum nubigena* on the finer scree. Dense low mats of *Azorella madreporica* spread across ground a rocks and the white stars of *Oriastrum chilense* were scattered everywhere. Another slope had some good plants of *Loasa caespitosa* adorned with



Rhodophiala rhodolirion & *Laretia acaule*



Nassauvia pinigera

yellow flowers. *Oxalis cinerea/penicillata* and *Phacelia secunda* were ubiquitous along. We traversed an area of blocky scree and boulders reaching 3542 metres where tufts of *Cajophora coronata* grew.

Following the road down there was lots of reddish-leaved *Senecio crithmoides* and then an area of rather bare rocky flats had compact *Adesmia glomerula* and some superb *Nastanthus agglomeratus* in rather outrageous forms, akin to bizarre botanical starfish. Mike spotted some fine clumps of *Leucheria runcinata* with pretty blue anthers and then John aced one of high alpine signature plants we were looking for; *Nototriche compacta*. Searching further afield we found many more especially on a high ridge at 3575 metres, our highest point of the trip. There was small natural tarn below us and fantastic views of the raw cliffs above. Descending from here the route crossed an area of rather different scree and here we found a few of the remarkable *Nassauvia pinigera*, with exquisite overlapping leaves and dense spikes of flowers.

From here we descended all the way to La Parva and a late lunch, watching condors fly across in the effortless search for whatever what not moving below.

Day 16 20 Jan Flights

An early breakfast, fine sunrise over the Andes and we were off down to Santiago, enjoying a smooth journey to the airport an swift check in in on time departure.



Schizanthus grahami

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Chimulus naianthus