

## FIELD TRIP - 18 MARCH 1989

Maureen Young

Seven hardy botanical enthusiasts met with John Smith Dodsworth at the Coromandel Motor Camp at 7.30 am. On the winding drive over the hill to Kennedy Bay, a stop was made to check out a patch of the fern Loxoma cunninghamii. Low tide at the bay meant that the estuary could be crossed with a minimum of wading to reach the northern shore. Here the Rubus fruticosus received more than its share of attention, but hardly for botanical reasons. There was evidence of early European settlement in the form of old buildings and trees, including a row of venerable Norfolk pines, with seedlings becoming well established around them. Frank Hudson, with the aid of a two-way metric/Imperial tape, ascertained that the dbh of the largest pine was 7 metres 34 inches.

Some interesting ferns grew amongst the shoreline plants - Adiantum aethiopicum, Asplenium flaccidum ssp. haurakiense, Blechnum vulcanicum, Lastreopsis velutina and Pteris saxatilis. The creeping Cotula dioica was quite widespread amongst the grasses, but search as we might, we could find no flowers for Anthony Wright. Anthony, collecting for the Auckland Museum herbarium, showed admirable sexual impartiality by carrying as a press, not the "Boys' Own Annual" of previous trips, but a "Monster Book for Girls".

The aim of the morning's walk was to explore the Umbrella Rocks, or Tokangawha, and their vegetation. In this area huge blocks of breccia have fallen from the cliff above and lie in heaps, with some interesting and uncommon plants growing in the sheltered spaces between. On clambering up the bank and entering a rocky canyon filled with large-fronded nikau, kawakawa, and glossy clumps of Asplenium lamprophyllum, one member of the party commented that it reminded her of an off-shore island. The owner of the land must have thought likewise, as he has planted several rare coastal or off-shore island plants amongst the rocks. Some of the more interesting plants growing naturally in the area are Arthropteris tenella, Corokia cotoneaster, Scandia rosifolia and Metrosideros carminea. The highlight of the day, however, was the Fuchsia procumbens - the most southerly population in the country. Several ripe berries were found.

On the return walk we were rather nonplussed to find that we were passing through the trajectory of bullets fired by local lads at a target in a pohutukawa tree. Back at the road it was discovered that the keys to the van had been locked inside. The alacrity with which the door was opened makes it seem hardly worthwhile to bother locking vehicles!

After lunch and a short drive up the Mangatu Valley, the party climbed a steep ridge of kauri regeneration in search of Pittosporum virgatum. Several small plants with the curiously shaped juvenile leaves were found, and a couple of adult trees, one with green capsules. Some specimens of Schizaea excited comment. Were both S. bifida and S. fistulosa present, or were all the fronds undivided forms of S. bifida?

Finally, the members were entertained at the farmhouse by cups of tea and a lilting Fifehire accent, before setting off on the long journey home. John's local knowledge was greatly appreciated by all those present.