

**NOTES ON THE FLORA OF THE FOREST RESEARCH
“CENTRAL” EXPERIMENTAL BLOCK, MAMAKU PLATEAU**

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As Sunday 9 April dawned a windy day the scheduled boat trip on Lake Tarawera was cancelled. Instead the three hardy souls which turned out decided to visit the “Central” experimental block, located 3 kilometres to the west of Mamaku township along Cecil Road. This 278 ha. block is the central one of three areas of indigenous forest on the Mamaku Plateau owned by Forest Research. It includes 232 hectares of indigenous cover, 40 ha. in grass and 6 ha in exotic plantings. Most of the large podocarps and *Beilschmiedia tawa* were removed by logging between 1910 and 1950, but the forest retains a reasonably intact canopy. Experimental work was undertaken in this area between 1960 and 1984, including indigenous podocarp underplanting trials, growth trials and regeneration studies. Some exotic site preparation trials, provenance studies and underplanting trials were also carried out (Moberly 1984).

We entered the forest from Cecil Road and traversed the block in a southerly direction. Once away from the scrubby disturbed road edge you enter mature *Beilschmiedia tawa* forest. As there are no goats in this area and few deer, regeneration is abundant. Plants noted in abundance included *Alseuosmia macrophylla* and saplings of *Prumnopitys ferruginea*. There is some *Acacia melanoxylon* planted along the western boundary, adjoining recently felled pine forest, but many of these trees are now either dead or moribund. Under the wattle there is a well developed native understorey with *Coprosma grandifolia* and *Asplenium bulbiferum* especially common, and *Nestegis lanceolata*, *Raukawa anomalus* and *R. edgerleyi* noted.

We came across a deep and very straight cutting through the reserve and the remains of sleepers confirmed that it was the site of a bush tramway. *Coprosma grandifolia* and *Asplenium bulbiferum* were abundant on the cutting. Podocarp regeneration and a large

patch of *Corybas trilobus* were also noted. We continued through mature *Beilschmiedia tawa* forest with patches of mixed *Weinmannia racemosa* and *Ixerba brexioides* until we reached the line of power pylons and associated road which dissect the block. On the forest edge there are some small ecotone areas where the *Beilschmiedia tawa* forest intergrades through secondary shrubland into mainly exotic grassland. The species composition was typical of other similar areas on the Mamaku plateau such as that at Pukerimu Ecological Area and included *Pseudopanax crassifolius*, *Pittosporum tenuifolium*, *Cortaderia fulvida* and several regenerating podocarp species. *Coprosma 'tayloriae'* was abundant around the margin. A quick search was made for *Dactylanthus taylorii*, which often occurs in this type of habitat, but no plants were found.

After a brief walk down the pylon road we re-entered the forest and proceeded north back through the eastern side of the reserve. *Weinmannia racemosa* and *Ixerba brexioides* were also common throughout this area and pole size podocarps including *Dacrydium cupressinum*, *Prumnopitys ferruginea* and *Podocarpus hallii* were particularly noticeable in many places. Scattered plants of *Pseudowintera colorata* and *P. axillaris* were noted throughout and a small stand of *Eleaocarpus hookerianus* with several juveniles was observed in one place.

After spending several hours in this reserve we concluded that the area was in good condition and representative of the logged forest on the Mamaku Plateau. The absence of browsing ungulates was noticeable from the level of regeneration and it was pleasing to see the vigorous podocarp regeneration. The ecotone areas, although small, are certainly worthy of further botanical exploration.

REFERENCES

Moberly, B. 1984: Interplanting of reverted indigenous cutover with exotic species in State Forest 3, Mamaku. New Zealand Forest Service, Forest Research Institute Project Record.