

OTAWA TRIG

Roger Crabtree

A group of 8 botanically inclined people turned up to look at this area immediately inland of Te Puke, on a Saturday promising deteriorating weather. An old water supply construction and a Guide camp have ensured that the lower part of the valley has plenty of weed species present. As we climbed the weeds thinned out, leaving only honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), present in significant amounts.

On the ridge the forest is quite thin, with a lack of understorey, which may be partly due to the presence of deer. Coastal forest species were present, with puriri (*Vitex lucens*), at lower levels and kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*), at higher altitudes. Kawakawa (*Macropiper excelsum*), was present throughout indicating a relatively mild climate, as were nikau palms (*Rhopalostylis sapida*). There was much evidence of a thriving population of possums, particular indicators being chewed kohekohe and tree ferns. The lower part of the area appears to have been logged as large trees were very scarce. At higher levels some large rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), were seen. Several large patches of *Corybas trilobus* excited the interest of the orchid fans, as did a few flowering specimens of *Chiloglottis cornuta*. Several *Pterostylis banksii* were also noted. A plant of *Pomaderris* sp. was found alongside the track.

The trig had proved to be further than anticipated by lunchtime, and some of the party decided that enough was enough in the steadily increasing drizzle, returning to the cars. The remaining group made an assault on the summit after a steep climb and half hour further on. The view was somewhat spoiled by regrowth and atmospheric moisture, so we started down. This part of the trip was notable for the rain increasing to a point where we finally decided to put parkas over already wet clothes, and botanically for the discovery of two significant species. The bad news was a patch of wild ginger (*Hedychium gardnerianum*), from which the seed heads were removed after suitable damage had been

inflicted on the plants, and the good news the possible discovery of *Rorippa divaricata* in the same area – to be confirmed. Five very small plants were noted growing near the track in the very open understorey which appeared to be the result of dieback of a patch of mamaku (*Cyathea medullaris*), possibly the result of possum browsing. Both these issues will be addressed by DoC later this summer. Also growing in abundance in this clearing were plants of a species later identified as *Sigesbeckia orientalis* - a species probably introduced to New Zealand by the Maori (C. Ecroyd pers. comm.).

A number of expected regulars were absent, perhaps because of the Saturday timing rather than the weather forecast. A circuit is possible, with a relatively short car shuttle, and this might make an interesting future trip.