

POKOPOKO SCENIC RESERVE FIELD TRIP

Paul Cashmore

On Anzac Day April 25th 2012 eight members of the Rotorua Botanical Society headed out along SH 33 and met up at the rest area on the eastern side of the highway to visit Pokopoko Scenic Reserve. This DOC administered reserve and the adjoining Pokopoko Government Purpose Afforestation Reserve runs from SH 33 in the west to the Pokopoko Stream in the east with the rest area being the southern boundary. This area is seldom visited by the public having no tracks or facilities and being relatively inaccessible due to the steep to undulating country throughout, hence it has never been visited by any botanical society and little is known about the vegetation.

We headed into the forest down the bank behind the rest area through the inevitable dumpings of rubbish and wandering willie (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) and plectranthus (*Plectranthus ciliatus*). Within minutes we had disturbed a wasp nest leading to several members getting stung. Regrouping and after applying antihistamines we continued down a relatively broad gully through rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*) dominated forest with mahoe (*Melicytus ramiflorus* subsp. *ramiflorus*) common in the subcanopy. The understory was relatively open throughout with pig sign present. Nikau (*Rhopalostylis sapida*) and kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*) saplings were occasional throughout. Following the gully down in an easterly direction we soon came to a side stream of the Pokopoko Stream which although small was relatively steep and incised making crossing slow and relatively difficult. On the true left was a small patch of tawareware forest, probably a small remnant of the original forest, which we crossed through. Pate (*Schefflera digitata*) and kanono (*Coprosma grandifolia*) were common in the gully bottom.

Once across the gully we made our way up the hill before hitting the pine plantation on the southern boundary. We pushed through the corner of the plantation before re-entering the native forest and onto a small knob where we stopped for smoko. Forest on the ridge was secondary rewarewa-kanuka-kamahi forest throughout. The understorey contained abundant palatable species including kanono, mapou (*Myrsine australis*), hangehange (*Geniostoma ligustrifolium*), mahoe, shining karamu (*Coprosma lucida*), and rewarewa. Puakarimu (*Lycopodium deuterodensum*) was common throughout with occasional toropapa (*Alseuosmia macrophylla*) also present on the dry ridges. A debate was had over the identification of *Cordyline pumilio* and *Libertia grandiflora* both present in and around the knob. *Cordyline pumilio* turned out to be locally common along the ridge with some specimens up to one metre in height.

We followed an old fenceline along the ridge in a general northerly direction. Nikau seedlings and saplings were scattered throughout. Rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), Hall's totara (*Podocarpus hallii*) and tanekaha (*Phyllocladus trichomanoides*) saplings were occasionally present in the understorey. The orchid *Corybas cheesemanii* was noted in one location on the ridge. The fenceline ended abruptly but we continued following the ridge through much younger pole kanuka-rewarewa forest which appeared to have developed much later than the surrounding forest, possibly in an area that had an old farm track present. Scattered old mangeao (*Litsea calicaris*) trees, which were probably remnants of the original forest, were present just off the ridge. This was also the only place we noted large old tutu (*Coriaria arborea*) in the canopy. We followed the ridge north for some distance. There was abundant sign that goats had been browsing along the ridge with a range of species showing browse sign and goat pellets seen.

We stopped on the ridge for lunch near a small patch of young pampas (*Cortaderia jubata*) that was amongst native toetoe (*Cortaderia fulvida*). Himalayan fairy grass (*Miscanthus nepalensis*) was present in several places along the ridge. We also had a debate about a specimen of *Cyathea* as to whether or not it was *C. cunninghamii* or *C.*

smithii. The party was initially equally divided on the issue but eventually the consensus seemed to be that it was *C. cunninghamii*, which was also noted elsewhere off the ridge along with *Cyathea medullaris*.

After lunch we continued along the ridge onto several high points with views down off the ridge towards the pine plantations to the north and gully ahead. Eventually we had to start descending down a spur that abruptly changed from tall rewarewa-kanuka-kamahi-mangeao forest to short stature kanuka-manuka scrub. Shining karamu and mingimingi (*Leucopogon fasciculatus*) were also scattered throughout the canopy. The understorey was open with abundant puakarimu and a few Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*), willow-leaved hakea (*Hakea salicifolia*), bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*), and Montpellier broom (*Teline monspessulana*) present. We followed an animal track down the spur through a steep section where debate intensified as to whether we would be able to get down to the stream below as small bluffs closed in on either side of us. Thankfully the ridge flattened slightly and we made our way into the stream bed down a slip face, meeting the stream several hundred metres upstream of the confluence with the main Pokopoko Stream. On the slip face and stream bed some time was spent examining the range of native and exotic sedges, rushes, grasses and herbs present including *Cortaderia fulvida*, *Carex geminata*, *Carex maorica*, *Prunella vulgaris*, *Juncus planifolius*, *Persicaria hydropiper* and *Holcus lanatus*. Abundant evidence of browsing, probably from goats, was present in and around the stream bed.

We had to bash our way upstream for a section walking in the stream and pushing through *Carex geminata* with scattered blackberry. Sick of doing that, we headed up a spur on the true left through tight manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) scrub following a pig track with abundant rooting present. With the sun shining we were able to stop and look back at the vegetation on the true right of the stream that we had traversed earlier. Noting several bluff sections we saw that we had been lucky to find a relatively easy route to the stream. A few wilding radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*) of various ages were noted on spurs in and around the stream. Heading further up the spur we

noted all three local *Gaultheria* species present (*G. antipoda*, *G. oppositifolia* and *G. paniculata*), which led to some healthy debate on the finer points of differentiating the latter two. We headed into the pine plantation and made easy walking through the SW corner of the mature pine block.

Peering through binoculars we looked back across another side stream noting more secondary vegetation on the face and ridge. However a small stand of mature pukatea (*Laurelia novaezealandiae*) caught our eye, with another species which looked like a northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*) from a distance. We decided this was worth investigating further so headed to the corner of the pine block and down through kiokio (*Blechnum novae-zealandiae*) and blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) to cross the sidestream. We weren't far down the slope when the third member of the party hit yet another wasp nest sending the party scrambling in all directions. Thankfully no one got stung but the party became separated with Graeme and myself across the stream and the remainder of the party trying to find an alternative route through the blackberry-filled stream. Eventually the party was reunited, after some delay. Heading up on to the ridge the forest type was mainly willow-leaved hakea-manuka-fivefinger forest and scrub with an understorey of puakarimu, türutu (*Dianella nigra*), fivefinger and mäpou.

Heading up the ridge we by chance managed to locate the pukatea forest seen earlier, at GPS reference NZMG 2806616 6356584. After some debate as to the identity of the other species present, Graeme and I clambered down the bank to confirm our identification of northern rata. We had in fact found a stand of swamp maire (*Syzygium maire*). This small area of mature pukatea-swamp maire forest appeared to be on a small slumped terrace near a gully head with a seep present producing a wetland forest type in a location you wouldn't normally expect it, especially near the top of a ridge surrounded by young secondary forest. The understorey was dominated by kiekie (*Freycinetia banksii*) with swamp maire seedlings abundant in places. At least five mature adult swamp maire were counted, all appearing to be in



View across regenerating hillslopes in Pokopoko Scenic Reserve.



Swamp maire (*Syzygium maire*), Pokopoko, April 2012. NZFRI 28764
Photo: Wendy Hurren.

good condition with no possum browsing noted, which was equally surprising given the absence of possum control in the area and the proximity to good possum habitat on the adjoining ridge.

From here we continued south up the ridge until we by chance reached an old vehicle track. We were able to follow this in a south-westerly direction through mainly rewarewa-kanuka-fivefinger forest. Wilding radiata pines appeared to be relatively common, having established along the previously open track margins and now emergent through the native canopy. Covering good ground we came across two dump sites within reach of the highway, with the usual range of household rubbish and some exotic weed dumpings including montbretia (*Crococsmia ×crocosmiiflora*) and agapanthus (*Agapanthus praecox*) present. We followed the track out to SH 33 reaching the highway just north of the rest area. Walking down the highway we picked up some further roadside weed species before regrouping at the rest area.

We had essentially completed a large loop around the southern portion of the reserve, which proved to be very challenging in places and required good navigation. The unexpected finding of a new swamp maire site in the Afforestation Reserve was definitely the highlight of the trip with the party pleased to be back at the vehicles after a relatively strenuous day.

POKOPOKO SCENIC RESERVE (SOUTHERN END)

G Jane & G Donaghy 25 April 2012

- | | |
|--|---|
| <i>Adiantum cunninghamii</i> | <i>Corybas cheesemanii</i> |
| <i>Alectryon excelsus</i> subsp. <i>excelsus</i> | * <i>Crepis capillaris</i> |
| <i>Alseuosmia macrophylla</i> | * <i>Cryptomeria japonica</i> |
| * <i>Anagallis arvensis</i> var. <i>arvensis</i> | <i>Cyathea cunninghamii</i> |
| * <i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i> | <i>Cyathea dealbata</i> |
| <i>Aristotelia serrata</i> | <i>Cyathea medullaris</i> |
| <i>Asplenium bulbiferum</i> | <i>Dacrydium cupressinum</i> |
| <i>Asplenium flaccidum</i> | <i>Deparia petersenii</i> subsp. <i>congrua</i> |
| <i>Asplenium oblongifolium</i> | <i>Dianella nigra</i> |
| <i>Asplenium polyodon</i> | <i>Dicksonia fibrosa</i> |
| <i>Astelia solandri</i> | <i>Dicksonia squarrosa</i> |
| <i>Astelia trinervia</i> | * <i>Digitalis purpurea</i> |
| <i>Austroderia fulvida</i> | <i>Diplazium australe</i> |
| <i>Beilschmiedia tawa</i> | <i>Doodia australis</i> |
| <i>Blechnum chambersii</i> | <i>Dracophyllum strictum</i> |
| <i>Blechnum discolor</i> | <i>Drymoanthus adversus</i> |
| <i>Blechnum filiforme</i> | <i>Dysoxylum spectabile</i> |
| <i>Blechnum novae-zelandiae</i> | <i>Earina autumnalis</i> |
| <i>Blechnum vulcanicum</i> | <i>Earina mucronata</i> |
| <i>Brachyglottis repanda</i> | <i>Elaeocarpus dentatus</i> |
| * <i>Buddleja davidii</i> | <i>Eleocharis acuta</i> |
| <i>Calystegia tuguriorum</i> | <i>Epilobium cinereum</i> |
| <i>Carex geminata</i> agg. | <i>Epilobium rotundifolium</i> |
| <i>Carex maorica</i> | * <i>Erica lusitanica</i> |
| <i>Carex secta</i> | <i>Euchiton involucratus</i> |
| <i>Carpodetus serratus</i> | <i>Freycinetia banksii</i> |
| * <i>Centaurium erythraea</i> | <i>Fuchsia excorticata</i> |
| * <i>Cirsium arvense</i> | * <i>Gamochaeta coarctata</i> |
| * <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> | <i>Gaultheria antipoda</i> |
| <i>Clematis paniculata</i> | <i>Gaultheria antipoda</i> x <i>G. oppositifolia</i> |
| <i>Collospermum microspermum</i> | <i>Gaultheria oppositifolia</i> |
| * <i>Coryza sumatrensis</i> | <i>Gaultheria paniculata</i> |
| <i>Coprosma</i> x <i>cunninghamii</i> | <i>Geniostoma ligustrifolium</i> var. <i>ligustrifolium</i> |
| <i>Coprosma grandifolia</i> | * <i>Genista monspessulana</i> |
| <i>Coprosma lucida</i> | * <i>Geranium dissectum</i> |
| <i>Coprosma robusta</i> | * <i>Geranium molle</i> |
| <i>Cordyline australis</i> | <i>Gleichenia microphylla</i> |
| <i>Cordyline banksii</i> | <i>Gonocarpus incanus</i> |
| <i>Cordyline pumilio</i> | <i>Grammitis billardierei</i> |
| <i>Coriaria arborea</i> var. <i>arborea</i> | <i>Griselinia lucida</i> |
| * <i>Cortaderia jubata</i> | <i>Haloragis erecta</i> subsp. <i>erecta</i> |

Hebe salicifolia
Hebe stricta var. *stricta*
Hedycarya arborea
Histiopteris incisa
* *Holcus lanatus*
Hyperzgia varia
Hydrocotyle microphylla
Hymenophyllum demissum
Hymenophyllum flabellatum
Hymenophyllum frankliniae
Hymenophyllum sanguinolentum
Hymenophyllum scabrum
* *Hypochaeris radicata*
Ichthyostomum pygmaeum
Isolepis habra
* *Jacobaea vulgaris*
* *Juncus articulatus*
* *Juncus bufonius* var. *bufonius*
* *Juncus effusus* var. *effusus*
Juncus planifolius
Knightia excelsa
Kunzea ericoides var. *ericoides*
Lastreopsis hispida
Laurelia novae-zealandiae
Leptopteris hymenophylloides
Leptospermum scoparium var. *scoparium*
Leucopogon fasciculatus
Leucopogon fraseri
* *Leycesteria formosa*
Libertia grandiflora
Litsea calicaris
* *Lotus pedunculatus*
Loxogramme dictyopteris
Lycopodium deuterodensum
Lycopodium volubile
Macropiper excelsum subsp. *excelsum*
Melicytus ramiflorus
Metrosideros diffusa
Metrosideros perforata
Microlaena avenacea
Microlaena stipoides
Microseris scapigera
Microsorium pustulatum subsp. *pustulatum*
* *Miscanthus nepalensis*

Morelotia affinis
Muehlenbeckia australis
* *Mycelis muralis*
* *Myosotis scorpioides*
Myrsine australis
Nertera depressa
Oplismenus hirtellus subsp. *imbecillis*
Paesia scaberula
Parsonsia heterophylla
Pelargonium inodorum
* *Persicaria hydropiper*
Phyllocladus trichomanoides
* *Phytolacca octandra*
* *Pinus radiata*
Pittosporum colensoi
* *Plantago australis*
* *Plectranthus ciliatus*
Pneumatopteris pennigera
Podocarpus totara var. *totara*
Polystichum neozelandicum subsp. *zerophyllum*
Polystichum wawranum
Pomaderris amoena
* *Prunella vulgaris*
Pseudognaphalium luteoalbum
Pseudopanax arboreus
Pseudopanax crassifolius
Pteridium esculentum
Pteris macilenta
Pteris tremula
Pyrrosia eleagnifolia
Ranunculus reflexus
* *Ranunculus repens*
Rhopalostylis sapida
Ripogonum scandens
* *Rosa rubiginosa*
Rubus cissoides
* *Rubus fruticosus*
* *Rumex obtusifolius*
Rumohra adiantiformis
Rytidosperma clavatum
Rytidosperma gracile
* *Rytidosperma racemosum*
Schefflera digitata
Schoenus maschalinus

Schoenus tendo
* *Senecio bipinnatisectus*
* *Solanum chenopodioides*
Solanum nodiflorum
* *Sonchus arvensis*
* *Sonchus oleraceus*
Syzygium maire
Tmesipteris elongata
* *Tradescantia fluminensis*

Trichomanes venosum
* *Ulex europaeus*
Uncinia gracilentia
Uncinia scabra
Uncinia uncinata
* *Verbena bonariensis*
Wahlenbergia violacea
Weinmannia racemosa
Winika cunninghamii

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