

TRIP TO CLEVEDON AND HUNUA BUSH REMNANTS

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On the morning of the 21st May, some seventeen members and friends met at the gate of the Clevedon Polo ground, in cool, overcast conditions, and under the leadership of David Slaven went in to inspect a small, remnant patch of bush by the gate, on the roadside. At first glance rather insignificant, with a heavy ground cover of wandering Jew (Tradescantia fluminensis), this area proved to be a most interesting association of trees, having many specimens of Coprosma areolata, along with Streblus heterophyllus (small-leaved milk tree), Pennantia corymbosa (kaikomako), and Plagianthus regius (lowland ribbonwood), dominated by kahikatea (Dacrycarpus dacrydioides) and one Podocarpus hallii, unusual in lowland bush, with two very large kowhai, one about 20 m high with the trunk about one metre in diameter.

After about an hour here, the convoy of cars left for the Ness valley and into the pine forests of the upper Hunua range where we stopped off, (after a minor hitch in front of a locked gate that was found after a while not to be, and where the cars were left behind), in a felled and burnt off area of Japanese cedar (Chamaecyperus), where a remnant patch of swamp bush remained in a wet gully. This consisted mainly of Fuchsia excorticata, with a number of Syzygium maire (swamp maire) in the lower swamp area, still in flower. Also in this small area, about 150 m long, were five species of tree fern including Dicksonia fibrosa, rare this far north, and some large plants of Blechnum minus (swamp blechnum). After making a species list of this area we carried on in the 4WD vehicles to side track in the pines which led to the upper area of unmilled native bush. About ten minutes into the bush, after crossing a gully in fairly heavy supplejack, we stopped for lunch on a ridge top dominated by podocarp bush with an undergrowth of largely Pseudowintera axillaris and Alseuosmia x quercifolia. From here we carried on to botanise a nearby gully with many large rimu, kahikatea, northern rata and pukatea with very large, buttressed roots. Blechnum nigrum and Trichomanes elongatum were very common here and members spent about half an hour hunting the bush until light rain started to fall. We then left the bush and drove back to where the cars had been left.

After this we carried on down the coast to Miranda, where we stooped to look at some plants of the mistletoe, Ileostylis micranthus growing on Coprosma propinqua and Plagianthus divaricatus by the roadside. It is a species becoming rare in many places as it is eaten out by possums, but here, as yet untouched and the largest plant was thickly covered in berries. It was now late afternoon so the convoy of cars returned to Auckland, stopping to see Pomaderris hamiltonii on the roadside near Kaiaua and in time to miss the rain which set in in the evening.

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