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DONALD MCLEAN TRACK - NOTES 30 JUNE 1989

Sandra Jones

The upgrading of the track, carried out over the last few years by Justice Department periodic detainees, appears to be finished at last. The half-dozen metal mounds which one came upon at regular intervals on high points of the track, where small circular clearings had been made to allow dumping of the metal from the sky, have been dispersed. A quite elaborate system of drains has been dug and the legendary quagmires are no more.

One of the two terrestrial Pittosporum kirkii that I know of on this track is dead, or very nearly so - lots of bare branches pointing skywards with only two miserable whorls of leaves still clinging on. The plant doesn't appear to have been disturbed by track maintenance activity nor has it been affected by drainage work so its sad demise can't be blamed on that. The other plant, quite a distance away, still looks healthy.

Harry Beacham gave me directions to a group of horopito (Pseudowintera axillaris) a few yards off the track. He had found one adult and four juveniles. I could only locate the adult (in bud at 30 June 1989) and one juvenile, though I probably didn't look hard enough. [Alan Esler also records horopito in the species list for a tea tree sampling site at Karamatura Forks, on a broad level ridge top.¹]

Nearby is a tall silver pine, Lagarostrobos (Dacrydium) colensoi, a mate to the one most of us know on the Bob Gordon Track (often misrecorded as Lepidothamnus (Dacrydium) intermedius, but I'm assured by the experts that it is Lagarostrobos colensoi).

I've had less luck with the Pseudopanax edgerleyi that somebody told me about and which, according to her, has hooks and spines on its leaves. This phenomenon has been reported from the Hunuas² but not from the Waitakeres as far as I'm aware. Of the three plants I've found in the vicinity so far, two were well out of reach and there was no sign of hooks or spines on the one (trifoliate) leaf that I could reach on the the third specimen.

1 "Tea Tree (Leptospermum) Communities of the Waitakere Range, Auckland, New Zealand" N.Z. Jnl. Bot. 12: 485-501, 1974.

2 ABS Newsletter July 1972.