

REPORT ON ABS FIELD TRIP, JANUARY 1990

Helen Cogle

By the appointed time of 7 pm on Friday 12th, 13 members of Auckland and Waikato Botanical Societies, and 2 independent anglers had assembled at the locked gate by the ford in the Waipoua Forest. We then travelled in convoy to the "Pub with no Beer" on the coast at Kawerua. We had been warned it offered basic shelter only, and that was true enough. The multitude of second-hand signs adorning the walls, ceilings and outhouses caused outbursts of hilarity.

On Saturday morning we drove the northern end of the Maunganui Bluff section of the N.Z. Walkway system - the gradient is easier heading south. Our first introduction was to Coprosma parviflora, a distinctive shrub which occurs only in the Far North. Not being bold enough to actually venture on to the cliffs, we lay flat on our stomachs and peered over the edge at the vegetation. Scleranthus biflorus and Hebe speciosa were in flower, and the discovery of a special lichen caused much excitement. Additions were made to the species list and some specimens taken. On the downhill track, we saw large patches of Fuchsia procumbens, with lots of tempting fruit, and just off the track, Cotula rotundata. Our dessert that evening provided ammunition for the annual prunestone spitting battle.

Just before dawn we were awakened by the raucous braying of Eudiptula minor which fortunately didn't last long, and we dozed on till a respectable hour. The programme for the day was to drive to the site of the former fire look-out, to see the naturalized rhododendron trees, mentioned in Volume IV of the Flora, then crash down to the valley floor, follow the Wairoa river to the sea, then back to base along forestry roads parallel to the coast, making species lists on the way. Easier said than done; the less said, the better. Suffice to say - it was accomplished without loss of life or limb.

An easy day was requested by most on Monday, so in brilliant sunshine (leaving the tame, resident caretaker - she's no longer a student - to make the traditional cheesecake) we set off to Te Moho Rock (N18/002151) Waimamaku, South Hokianga, a private reserve on a farm on SH 12. Though only a tiny area, it is very steep, and we spent much of the time on all fours, finding a lot of interesting plants to be added to the species list, before heading for Opononi, where we had a swim in the harbour, then a drink at the pub. We called at the Hokianga South Head Reserve, near Omapere, more for the view than the botany, but several special species were discovered and discussed. On the way back, we stopped at the ford to shampoo the salt from our hair in cool, clear water. Late in the afternoon, most of the team set off in the DoC ute to collect pine-cones for fuel for the old-fashioned woodburning stove. The fishermen had presented me with 2 good-sized Chrysophrys auratus so I stayed behind to prepare them for the frying pan. There was enough meat on them for us all to have a portion at breakfast, with second helpings for those with bigger appetites.

It was raining when we woke on Tuesday morning. It was still raining after we had had breakfast and made our lunches. As we sorted through the jumble of assorted cutlery to claim our own, much discussion took place as to whether we should, as planned, tackle Mt Misery, the highest peak in Northland. Our leader said we could choose our own pace - it wasn't necessary for we slower ones to keep up with the younger, longer-legged members, so we all decided to give it a go. We followed a possum trappers track, now neglected and overgrown since pelt prices

fell, along a ridge. We saw Olearia waima in flower, and a mistletoe Loranthus micranthus, high up in a totara. On reaching the summit, we shared a whole homemade fruit cake as a reward. We were somewhat disappointed to miss the views from the top - the rain and mist enveloped us - but we were all thrilled we had made the effort. Anthony showed us a seedling Coprosma waima and explained the features which make it different from the others in the genus. It was lovely to see so many flowers on Dendrobium cunninghamii, and a rare delight was a flowering Gastrodia cunninghamii. There was talk throughout our time away, of Gastrodia and gastropoda, and while this was the only specimen of Gastrodia seen, many gastropods, mainly Paryphanta busbyi were inspected, measured and sometimes collected.

Wednesday morning dawned clear, but very windy. The sea was very rough, and the wind was blowing the tops off the breakers. The scene, from the "fountain" was quite spectacular. The proposed long walk to the lake was deemed not worth the effort (a degree of kaweruaitis was evident) but the suggestion to drive 95% of the way was greeted enthusiastically. A group of seven Spiranthes sinensis with pale pink flowers, was found in the same spot as last year, on a floating mat of rotting vegetation. Our resident pooch was the only one to venture into the inky water - he hadn't heard the gory Maori history, nor about the leeches. We then returned to base along metalled roads lined with masses of pretty blue Aristea flowers. The parasitic Cassytha pubescens, an adventive from Australia, formed tangled masses over the low roadside scrub. The horizontal Pomaderris prunifolia var. edgerleyi, with its distinctive reddish-brown tinge, drooped on clay banks. Some late-flowering Metrosideros excelsa still showed crimson blossoms. With some regret, we packed our bags and stowed the gear into our vehicles, ready to return to civilization. Botanizing didn't stop there, however, as two members were spotted in the main street of Dargaville, clutching yet more specimens - were they Typha orientalis?

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HUKATERE SCENIC RESERVE, 17 FEBRUARY 1990

Anthony Wright & Ross Beaver

The story of the milling of New Zealand's finest timber tree and of the gumdigging industry based on the fossil resin of that tree, is eloquently told at 'The Otamatea Kauri & Pioneer Museum' in Matakoho. The museum was the assembly point for our visit to Hukatere Scenic Reserve, those arriving early spending an hour or so amongst the highly polished slabs of swamp kauri and nuggets of fossil gum. By departure time at 10.30 our ranks had swelled to 21, and an unseasonal rain shower had passed over. Dr Nigel Clunie (DSIR) had chosen the reserve for the trip as it is one of the few remaining forest remnants in the northern Kaipara region. Unfortunately he was unable to lead the trip, but armed with his account and map (from the forthcoming Rodney-Otamatea Scenic and Scientific Reserve Survey) we were well prepared. The reserve is just under 30 hectares in area and slopes away southwards from its boundary along the Tinopai Rd south of Matakoho.