

Report on Moturoa Island Field Trip - August 1990

Maureen Young

Moturoa Island, near the entrance to the Kerikeri Inlet, is the second largest island in the Bay of Islands. Of the 148 ha of the island, 83 ha are farmed, and the rest is fenced off to allow the vegetation to regenerate to provide habitat for wildlife. The natural regeneration has been assisted by the planting of over 12,000 plants by the syndicate of owners.

It was on this oasis of botanical delights that 18 members of the Auckland and Waikato Botanical Societies were fortunate enough to spend 6 days. The weather was not perfect, but dressed in parkas and gumboots, we managed to ignore the mud and the rain. The shelter provided by two well-equipped beach cottages was greatly appreciated.

No outings were organised, but people set off individually or in small groups, to explore and botanise as the fancy took them. Pittosporum umbellatum is common on the island, and was very prettily in flower. The small Australian tree, P. undulatum, at this time of year bearing creamy-white buds, was found in several areas. It is unclear whether this shrub should be regarded as part of the indigenous or the naturalised flora. The steep South Faces bear perhaps the least modified bush on the island, and on these slopes grows P. pimeleoides (only 1 shrub was seen) and the semi-parasitic Cassytha paniculata (well south of its usual range). Two south facing gullies, Ponga Hollow and Trout Valley, contain Alseuosmia x quercifolia (in flower), Beilschmiedia tawaroa, Pteris comans, and the rare Calystegia marginata. The few buds on the C. marginata showed the frilly margins on the pedicels which give this liane its specific name. On the eastern end of the island are two large concrete gun emplacements, relics of WW II. On the nearby coastline are such treasures as Nestegis apetala (with green and ripe fruit), Planchonella costata, Entelea arborescens, Linum monogynum, and Blechnum norfolkianum.

Advantage was taken of the one clear, calm day, for Anthony to play the ferryman, delivering people three or four at a time, to the South West Crater Rim Rock. From the top of this small basalt islet we could view the islands and peninsulas of the bay reflected in the blue, glassy-smooth sea. In places the humus has built up enough to allow a miniature forest to grow. In other places hardy plants grow in isolation where they have managed to find a toe-hold in the cracks and crevices of the black rock. Some of the more notable plants seen here were Streblus banksii, Melicytus novae-zealandiae, Linum monogynum, Asplenium obtusatum subsp. northlandicum, and A. flaccidum subsp. haurakiense.

On another day, the intrepid attacked Alcatraz, an aptly named island which can be reached on foot from Moturoa at low tide. With the help of a rope, the steep sides were scaled and a quick foray was undertaken before the tide returned. The bryologist was pleased to find two rare mosses on Alcatraz - Tortella mooreae and Archidium elatum. The latter had only previously been found on North West Crater Rim Rock and at the type locality at Ahipara.

Several species of birds have been released on Moturoa, with varying degrees of success. The three pair of brown kiwis seem to have survived. The ornithologists counted 37 species of birds, including four pair of New Zealand dotterels in breeding plumage - one pair with an early nest, containing 3 eggs, not far from the cottage. The "wild" life included an aggressive male brown teal, which was apt to savage any

gumboots passing his pond, and a couple of half-grown Beavers, seen swimming near the wharf.

On the traditional prunes and custard night the company was treated to the sight of their normally dignified secretary, growing flustered as she vainly attempted to quell her ebullient spouse, with his puerile prune puns.

Just to round off the botanical discoveries, Jessica and Anthony dead-heated by both finding Colensoa physaloides in separate areas, on the last day before home-coming. Not seen on Moturoa since 1987, it had been feared that this herb, with its intensely blue berries, had vanished from the island.

We are grateful to Paul and Edith Asquith for inviting us to visit Moturoa, and for their hospitality and assistance.

***Austrofestuca* - an extinct addition to the Waitakere flora**

E.K. Cameron

I recently came across a specimen of *Austrofestuca littoralis* (also known as *Festuca littoralis* or *Poa triodioides*) in the AKU herbarium from damp, sandy flats, Waitakere River Mouth, Te Henga (AKU 6867). This Australasian grass forms dense tussocks and is widespread in New Zealand where it is frequently associated with spinifex and pingao on coastal dunes. The Waitakere specimen was collected by Prof. A. P. W. Thomas in about 1902. There are no other records in the AK and AKU herbaria of this native grass on Auckland's West Coast. Therefore it should join other suspected local extinctions of the Waitakere Ranges which would include: *Dactylanthus taylorii*, *Peraxilla tetrapetala*, *Tupeia antarctica*, *Lepidium flexicaule*, *L. obtusatum*, *L. oleraceum* and *Ranunculus urvilleanus*.

Flora and vegetation of Pudding Island - Mahurangi

E.K. Cameron & G.A. Taylor

Pudding Island (map ref. 260 R10 655194) is a small (< 0.1 ha), steep stack about 10 m in height and 8 m wide, joined to the southern end of Otarawao Bay, Mahurangi by an extensive rocky, tidal platform (Fig. 1). It can be reached from the mainland by wading across a shallow channel (< knee depth), up to two hours either side of low tide. The adjacent mainland (250m away) is part of Mahurangi Regional Reserve, but the stack is Crown Land administered by the Department of Survey and Land Information (DOSLI). Te Haupa (Saddle) and Motuora Islands due east of Pudding, are in the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park.

The eroding stack is composed of Waitemata Sediments dipping to the north. It can be climbed only from the northern end, up a steep, grassy ridge. Fishing is popular from the outer margins of the tidal platform. Pudding Island contains examples of what can grow on a small, inshore, rather exposed stack on North Auckland's east coast. Brief visits to the stack on which this article is based were made by GAT and Alan