

Auckland Botanical Society Field Trip to Tapora, September 1995

Fran Hintz

Friday night; rain pouring down. I ring Maureen. Yes, we meet at Tapora school at 10 am, and yes, there is a favourable weather forecast.

Saturday morning; grey and unpromising. I set off for Tapora via the West Coast Road and am glad to meet Anthony, Ewen, and Jamie in Helensville. Mist over the harbour for the entire trip north.

At Tapora, we assemble, eleven of us, and take the cars to the end of the access road. By now the sun is out. The walk through the pine plantations to the coast is made botanically interesting by a comparison of species, male and female cones, this year's and last year's. We cross to the island through ankle deep water, looking at the salt marsh plants. It was low tide; the water was fresh because of the heavy rain, and the glasswort looked unwell in this unusual habitat.

The island (DOC estate) is a hidden treasure. Golden sand dunes, a vista of the harbour, particularly North and South Heads and the bar, pingao, little fresh water lakes in the hollows, patches of kanuka scrub, an honest salt wind and waves on the sandy beach. The mixture of indigenous and exotic species (*Lilium formosum*, buffalo grass, pampas, marram) was interesting. The incidence of dead and dying pingao was a concern and no one could offer an explanation.

We return to the mainland by a different route to visit a narrow coastal strip which is DOC land. We are looking for some special plants and we find some: *Coprosma parviflora* and *Mazus*, but not (as promised) *Gastrodia*. A single specimen of *Metrosideros excelsa* x *M. robusta* ("back-crossed to *excelsa*" is Ewen Cameron's comment) intrigues some of us. Lots of kowhai. Also *Muehlenbeckia* and buffalo grass hiding a wire fence.

Back to cars, a longish walk over the paddocks. By now the sun has brought out the purple flowers of the *Romulea*.

A really special day. Glad I didn't miss it. Thank you Maureen and Frank.

Flora of Kauritutahi Island, Awhitu

E.K. Cameron

In the Manukau Harbour some 300 m off the point between Kauritutahi and Brooks Beaches of Awhitu Regional Park lies the small (<0.1ha) Kauritutahi Island (map reference: NZMS 260 R12 578553). The narrow island is flat-topped, c. 5 m asl and is some 20 m long by 3 m wide (long axis ENE-WSW). A storm platform exists around the island except on the south side which is vertical and eroding. This island is comprised of indurated Pleistocene Sandstone (B.W. Hayward *pers. comm.*) and is slightly taller than the adjacent mainland point of similar composition.

During a Balmoral Cub Camp weekend based at the Awhitu Environmental Camp, I visited the island for 30 minutes at low tide on 18 November 1995. Apart from a small outcrop of intertidal sandstone blocks 50 m to the west of the island, Kauritutahi Island stands out as the only