

Our survey covered from Boulder Bay west to beyond McKenzie Bay, including the small 'offshore' islands around the lighthouse. The coastline from Boulder Bay was interesting in terms of both the lower numbers of weeds species, and also lower diversity of native coastal species. The most abundant coastal species on this part of the coastline (outside pohutukawa forest) were needle grass (*Stipa stipoides*), *Lobelia anceps*, glasswort (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*), ngaio (*Myoporum laetum*), and *Isolepis nodosa*. There were occasional patches or individuals of *Peperomia urvilleana*, *Calystegia soldanella*, iceplant (perhaps *Disphyma x Carpobrotus* hybrid), *Apium prostratum*, scarlet pimpernel (*Anagalis arvensis* var. *arvensis*), and ivy-leaved toadflax (*Cymbalaria muralis*). The Urticaceae annual *Parietaria debilis* was fairly common on the shady scoria overhangs. Several populations of ngaio (*Myoporum laetum*) were heavily in fruit with their attractive reddish purple drupes. Only two individuals of beach spinach (*Tetragonia trigyna*) were seen, and it wasn't until well beyond McKenzie Bay (towards Flax Point) that we saw any *Selliera radicans*.

Beyond McKenzie Bay there was a marked change in the coastal vegetation with the above species and also mangroves, ferns (*Asplenium polyodon*, *A. flaccidum*), *Juncus maritimus* var. *australiensis*, *Psilotum nudum*, *Dichondra repens* and mingimingi as common coastal species. *Bulbophyllum pygmaeum* was found to be growing on scoria close to the high water mark and neighbouring mangroves, an unlikely habitat for this mat spreading orchid. It was at this point that garden escapes appeared including *Crassula multicava*, *Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Is. date palm), *Aloe saponaria* and *Polygala myrtifolia* (sweet pea-like shrub) which is a new record for the island. We also saw plenty of boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*) and evergreen buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus*) in this part of the coastline.

L. flexicaule is extinct in the North Island (Norton et al. 1997) and now grows only in Nelson/Marlborough and the West Coast of the South Island. The extinction of *L. flexicaule* on Rangitoto may be due to a number or combination of factors including possum and wallaby browse and the decrease in nesting seabirds (commonly associated with *L. flexicaule*). These factors probably exacerbated a typically locally distributed species.

The Department of Conservation is currently writing a Recovery Plan for the coastal cresses (including *L. flexicaule*), which will recommend further steps for the conservation of this species as part of a nationally coordinated program.

Field trip based at Te Paki Farm Park 13-18 November 1997

Maureen Young

This field trip was planned to coincide with the estimated time of flowering of the white-flowered tree rata found only in the far north, *Metrosideros bartlettii*. With some people coming and going, between twelve to fourteen were accommodated in the very comfortable shearers' quarters near the Te Paki DoC headquarters.

In a unanimous decision it was resolved that the first day's outing should be to find the main object of our visit, the Bartlett's rata. Accordingly we parked our vehicles just past the Te Hapua turnoff on the Spirits Bay Road, and headed first up a clay track, and then into the scrub. The first gully we came to yielded *Adiantum diaphanum*, *Ranunculus urvilleanus*, and whau, but alas, no rata. The second gully was threatening to be equally barren, when we spied a white snowball at the head of the valley. With quickened footsteps we sidled along the edge of a raupo swamp, past some swamp maire, then stood gazing in wonder at the sight of a mature *Metrosideros bartlettii* at the peak of flowering. The combination of the bright green of the new shoots, the mounds of white flowers and the humming of countless bees was best appreciated from the other side of the swamp, and muddy boots were a small price to pay for the view. Lunch was eaten while sitting in front of clumps of *Lepidosperma filiforme* on the Earth Wall Track, then the afternoon was spent at Spirits Bay. While the young and fit climbed the steep hill behind Hoopers Point the rest walked to the little island that is accessible at low tide, passing the grass *Austrofestuca littoralis*, and *Pimelea arenaria* on the dunes, and finding *Asplenium northlandicum* on the island. Back at the cars some lay on the grass and gazed at Venus, and others crossed the lilaepsis lawn at the stream's edge, and found a very healthy population of *Mimulus repens* with pretty mauve and yellow flowers.

The next day armed with Dimp to combat the legendary Radar Bush mosquitoes, it was off again in search of the rata, this time to find the large tree with the strange flaky white bark. As the clay road was dry we were able to drive to the top of the Radar Bush Track, then walk downhill towards the stream. The trackside botany was an interesting array of gumland scrub plants with thickets of kawaka and *Halocarpus kirkii*. At the foot of the track it was turn left at the *Colensoa physaloides*, then proceed upstream. The bearded patriarch was seen scrambling up two waterfalls on his knees, but he was still the first to find the rata. The rapping of his stick on the possum-detering tin collar summoned the rest of the crew to the right spot. The bark didn't seem to be quite as spectacular as promised, and by climbing a hill and using binoculars it could be seen that the tree was heavily in bud with only a few flowers open. As the mosquitoes had failed to materialise, a leisurely cross-country route back to the track was taken, and on the way lunch was eaten while surrounded by the blue flowers of *Thelymitra aemula*, wide open in the sunshine. After lunch the party split up, with the largest group walking the clay track to Pandora, at the western end of Spirits Bay. That evening, after the traditional prunes and custard dessert, we went on a twilight walk in the Shenstone Block to admire the magnificent clumps of *Todea barbara*. *Caladenia chlorostyla* was also seen.

After we had gained permission to enter the Maori-owned Unuwahao Bush on the hills behind Spirits Bay, the next day turned on the windy, mist-laden air which can arise so suddenly at North Cape. While crossing a swampy gully before heading up the hills some delightful plants were found on the creek edges *Adiantum aethiopicum*, *Christella* sp., *Ranunculus urvilleanus* and *Hibiscus diversifolius*. *Pomaderris polifolia* was seen as we pushed through the scratchy tea-tree on the ridge we were following, but by lunchtime the mist was so thick and the route so indeterminate that it was reluctantly decided to abandon the outing. The leader, who wished that she wasn't in the position to have to make such a decision, wished so even more fervently when she suggested that the party explore a bushy gully on the way back, and got everyone truly "bushed". Thanks to Mike's guidance we finally emerged to find that it was raining, and a bedraggled convoy trailed back to the cars.

The last day, with improving weather, was spent on the Te Werahi walk. This walk is over swamps and dunes to Te Werahi Beach, over hills to Cape Maria van Diemen, down the coast to the northern end of Twilight Beach, then over sand, swamp and paddocks back to the start. The sand between Te Werahi and Twilight Beach, as well as concealing countless semi-fossilised flax snail shells, also yielded up to Graeme's astonished gaze the broken remains of a huge moa egg shell. Enid and Paul birdwatched among the banded dotterels while others climbed through the Kikuyu to the lighthouse on Cape Maria. By the time Twilight Beach was reached, the party had split up into several small groups. One group decided to head down the beach to try and locate the beach morning glory, *Ipomoea pes-caprae* subsp. *brasiliensis*, which Lisa Forester had previously found growing there.

They made the mistake of taking a cross-country route and soon found that the combination of jointed rush, Kikuyu and *Muehlenbeckia complexa* is even more interesting to wade through when it is bound together with threads of *Cassytha paniculata*. However, it was while wallowing through this vegetation that an interesting find was made - *Gastrodia sesamoides*. A chocolate fish for Helen, but later on it was the liquorice strap for Enid, with her find of the look-alike broomrape. As promised, the ipomoea was found in a gully in front of a flat-topped dune. Robust runners were spreading out in all directions, but no sign of a flower. Has this tropical strand plant ever been seen in flower in New Zealand? The flat-topped dune had a dark border which demanded attention, and it was found that water seepage kept the seaward edge damp, and a lovely population of the tiny *Ranunculus acaulis* with minute yellow flowers grew there. A few plants of *Limosella lineata* were interspersed among the buttercups. Nine hours after setting out the last of the stragglers returned to the cars, and back at base it took vino and cheesecake and boysenberries to revive them.

Once again we are indebted to Lisa Forester, DoC botanist, for so kindly sharing her knowledge of the botany of the far north.

Note

Ewen Cameron

In answer to Maureen's question whether *Ipomoea pes-caprae* has ever been seen to flower on (mainland) New Zealand, the answer is yes, possibly only once. There is one flowering sheet in the Auckland Museum herbarium (AK 118972) collected 17 January 1967 by R.C. Cooper on Ninety-Mile Beach. Also Cooper (1967) mentions that "the only flower obtained so far was gathered in January 1967." This widespread tropical strand plant is locally common on Raoul Island, and is also present on Curtis Island (both these islands belong to the Kermadec Islands).

Reference

Cooper R.C. 1967: *Ipomoea pes-caprae* (Convolvulaceae) on Ninety-Mile Beach, New Zealand. *Records of Auckland Museum* 6(3): 171-174.