

A Bird In The Hand... flora (and avifauna) of the Kohukohunui Track - Hunua Ranges

Steve McCraith

On 20 October 2001 the Auckland Botanical Society field trip was in to the central Hunua Ranges via the Kohukohunui Track. While it was hoped that the high point of Kohukohunui (688 m asl) would be achieved, conditions and lack of time would later dictate that this would not be possible. Access to the area was via the Ness Valley and through an exotic plantation within the parkland that is currently being logged. Although the Kohukohunui Track actually starts at the locked gate at the top of Moumoukai Hill Road the group was able (with the kind assistance of the Auckland Regional Council) to access the car park on Mine Road and meet up with the track further on. Leaving the cars at 10.30am the group of eighteen began their ramble along the newly upgraded track and disappeared into the lush forest...

Common species to be seen along the track initially included putaputaweta, kohekohe, pigeonwood, quintinia, ramarama (with its freakish, blistered leaves), pukatea (particularly in wetter sections of the track) and kiekie, along with plenty of ferns. Carex was also particularly common although no one was overly keen on making an identification in the absence of flowers or fruit (it is likely that *C. dissita* is the more common species here although there are certainly other species present). It soon became apparent that *Corybas acuminatus* was extremely common and it appeared for sometime that this maybe the only spider orchid on the track. (Later a small population of *C. trilobus* was located). It should be noted that the diversity of ground orchids for this time of year was rather low (possibly a result of the recent track work) and even the usually common *Pterostylis banksii* were relatively few and far between. *Raukawa*, although assumed to be uncommon, was spotted early on and once people got their eye in the plant was noted regularly along the track. A small population of the fern *Blechnum nigrum* was located growing prostrate on the clay banks trackside, the plants unusually shaped fronds surrendering their identity. One highlight of the day was the discovery of several small *Grammitis* plants that could not be positively named found growing on a tree trunk. The species was later identified as being a new fern record for the Hunua Ranges (see Cameron 2001). Several mangleo plants of various sizes were spotted near the turn around point and a small leaved species of coprosma caused some debate as to its true identity before the name *C. arborea* was democratically assigned. A similar situation developed with *Griselinia* as we entered a transition area from puka (*G. lucida*) to broadleaf (*G.*

littoralis).

While the day was (predictably) raining on and off (in keeping with the Society's track record of recent times in this area) the weather pattern resulted in not unpleasant conditions with the presence of low cloud providing an eerie scene in the forest proper. As a result bird life was rather diverse and there was an uncertain period when the Auckland Botanical Society outing threatened to turn into an ornithological jaunt. The much hoped for kokako was initially heard then later seen (all be it only briefly) as were tomtit, shining cuckoo, native pigeon and tui. Perhaps the most remarkable species to be seen though was the recently released North Island robin, quite some distance from the release site on the other side of the main range. Ten toutouwai (robins) from Pureora Forest were released into the Ranges in early June 2001 as the first of thirty individuals to be introduced into the 600 ha kokako recovery area (West, 2001). While only a single individual was seen he was typically inquisitive and held the group captivated for several minutes with his antics. The improved bird life of recent times must surely be attributed to the predator control work that has been operating for some time now. Evidence of this work is still obvious with stoat traps and other bait stations common along the track. An observation of the plant regeneration is also testament to this work. The proliferation of species such as kohekohe and tree fuchsia at trackside indicate the recent goat eradication programme has had a positive impact and that possum numbers must indeed be low. No significant weed species were noted in the forest proper, the dense undergrowth providing few opportunities for establishment.

Although the high point (Kohukohunui) was not achieved it is known to be home to several species, such as *Pseudowintera axillaris*, *P. colorata*, *Hebe macrocarpa*, *Dracophyllum latifolium*, *Ascarina lucida* and *Metrosideros robusta*, not recorded on this trip (Dakin & Gardner, 1989). Mountain cabbage tree (*Cordyline indivisa*) has, in past times, been recorded on this track and is possible with the current goat control programme in place that a seed bank may in time mature (Carlaw and McCraith, 2001). In addition, and due in part to the damp condition of the forest, lower plants (mosses and liverworts) in particular are quite common. Accordingly it should be noted that the following is by no means a complete list of (even) the higher plants. The list of vascular plants of the Kohukohunui Track was compiled with much help from Ewen Cameron, Sandra Jones and Maureen Young.

References:

- Cameron, E.K. 2001: Hunua ferns: one addition, one subtraction, *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 56 (2): 65
Carlaw, G.B. & McCraith, S.G. 2001: Mountain Cabbage Tree (*Cordyline indivisa*) in the Hunua Ranges - an observation, *Auckland Botanical Society Newsletter* 56 (1): pp.20-21
Gardner, R. O. & Dakin A. J. 1989: Native Vascular Flora of the Hunua Ranges, Auckland, *Auckland Botanical Society Bulletin* No.18, July 1989
West C. 2001: First Robins Released at Hunua, Franklin County News 12 June 2001: p.13

Species list For Kohukohunui

Ferns and Fern Allies	<i>Hymenophyllum</i>	<i>Podocarpus totara</i>	<i>Uncinia banksii</i>	<i>Knightia excelsa</i>
<i>Anarthropteris lanceolata</i>	<i>sanguinolentum</i>	seedling only	<i>Uncinia uncinata</i>	<i>Laurelia novae-zelandiae</i>
<i>Asplenium bulbiferum</i>	<i>Hymenophyllum scabrum</i>	<i>Prumnopitys ferruginea</i>	<i>Winika cunninghamii</i>	<i>Litsea calicularis</i>
<i>Asplenium flaccidum</i>	<i>Hypolepis rufobarbata</i>			<i>Lophomyrtus bullata</i>
<i>Asplenium lamprophyllum</i>	<i>Lastreopsis hispida</i>	Monocots	Dicots	<i>Macropiper excelsa</i>
<i>Asplenium oblongifolium</i>	<i>Leptopteris</i>	<i>Asteliaalandri</i>	<i>Alseuosmia macrophylla</i>	<i>Meliclytus ramiflorus</i>
<i>Asplenium polyodon</i>	<i>hymenophylloides</i>	<i>Carex</i> spp.	<i>Aristotelia serrata</i>	<i>Metrosideros diffusa</i>
<i>Blechnum chambersii</i>	<i>Lycopodium volubile</i>	<i>Collospermum hastatum</i>	<i>Beilschmeidia tarairi</i>	<i>Metrosideros fulgens</i>
<i>Blechnum discolor</i>	<i>Lygodium articulatum</i>	<i>Collospermum</i>	<i>Beilschmeidia tawa</i>	<i>Metrosideros perforata</i>
<i>Blechnum filiforme</i>	<i>Microsorium pustulatum</i>	<i>microspermum</i>	<i>Brachyglottis kirkii</i> var. <i>kirkii</i>	<i>Mida salicifolia</i>
<i>Blechnum fluviatile</i>	<i>Microsorium scandens</i>	<i>Cordyline australis</i>	<i>Brachyglottis repanda</i>	<i>Muehlenbeckia australis</i>
<i>Blechnum fraseri</i>	<i>Paesia scaberula</i>	<i>Cordyline banksii</i>	<i>Callitriche muelleri</i>	<i>Myrsine salicina</i>
<i>Blechnum membranaceum</i>	<i>Pneumatopteris pennigera</i>	<i>Corybas acuminatus</i>	<i>Carpodetus serratus</i>	<i>Nertera depressa</i>
<i>Blechnum nigrum</i>	<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>	<i>Corybas trilobus</i>	<i>Centella uniflora</i>	<i>Nertera dichondrifolia</i>
<i>Cyathea dealbata</i>	<i>Pteris macilentia</i>	<i>Dianella nigra</i>	<i>Clematis paniculata</i>	<i>Nestegis lanceolata</i>
<i>Cyathea medullaris</i>	<i>Pteris tremula</i>	<i>Earina autumnalis</i>	<i>Coprosma arborea</i>	<i>Olearia rani</i>
<i>Cyathea smithii</i>	<i>Pyrrosia eleagnifolia</i>	<i>Earina mucronata</i>	<i>Coprosma grandifolia</i>	<i>Parsonsia</i> sp.
<i>Dicksonia squarrosa</i>	<i>Rumohra adiantiformis</i>	<i>Freycinetia banksii</i>	<i>Coprosma lucida</i>	<i>Pittosporum cornifolium</i>
<i>Grammitis pseudociliata</i>	<i>Tmesipteris elongata</i>	<i>Gahnia pauciflora</i>	<i>Dysoxylum spectabile</i>	<i>Pseudopanax arboreus</i>
<i>Histiopteris incisa</i>	<i>Tmesipteris tannensis</i>	<i>Gahnia setifolia</i>	<i>Eleocarpus dentatus</i>	<i>Pseudopanax crassifolius</i>
<i>Huperzia varia</i>	<i>Trichomanes reniforme</i>	<i>Isolepis reticularis</i>	<i>Euchiton gymnocephalus</i>	<i>Quintinia serrata</i>
<i>Hymenophyllum demissum</i>	<i>Trichomanes venosum</i>	<i>Juncus planifolius</i>	<i>Fuchsia excorticata</i>	<i>Ranunculus reflexus</i>
<i>Hymenophyllum dilatatum</i>		<i>Libertia micrantha</i>	<i>Geniostoma rupestre</i> var.	<i>Raukawa edgerleyi</i>
<i>Hymenophyllum</i>	Gymnosperms	(<i>L. pulchella</i>)	<i>ligustrifolium</i>	<i>Rubus australis</i>
<i>ferrugineum</i>	<i>Dacrycarpus dacrydioides</i>	<i>Microlaena avenacea</i>	<i>Griselinia littoralis</i>	<i>Rubus cissoides</i>
<i>Hymenophyllum flabellatum</i>	seedling only	<i>Pterostylis banksii</i>	<i>Griselinia lucida</i>	<i>Schefflera digitata</i>
<i>Hymenophyllum rarum</i>	<i>Dacrydium cupressinum</i>	<i>Rhopalostylis sapida</i>	<i>Hedycarya arborea</i>	<i>Weinmannia silvicola</i>
<i>Hymenophyllum revolutum</i>	<i>Podocarpus hallii</i>	<i>Ripogonum scandens</i>	<i>Hydrocotyle?</i> <i>dissecta</i>	

Hunua ferns: one addition, one subtraction

E. K. Cameron

During the Auckland Botanical Society (ABS) field trip on 20 October 2001 along the Kohukohunui Track from Mine Road in the Hunua Ranges (see McCraith 2001) we found a few plants of a *Grammitis* on a tree trunk c.1 m up from the ground. I suspected it was *G. pseudociliata* and removed half a fertile frond for checking (AK 255028). Barbara Parris, a world authority on this group of ferns and author of *G. pseudociliata*, later confirmed the suspected identification. This adds a new fern to the Hunua Ranges species list of Gardner & Dakin (1989).

During the same trip I was keen to rediscover an earlier record of mine, *Cyathea colensoi*, which I had collected along this same part of the track when I was last there in August 1986 (AKU 19643-44). This is the sole record for this prostrate tree fern in the Hunua Ranges. Although parts of the track had been rerouted during a recent track upgrade I felt sure we passed through the same section of tawa forest where I had originally collected the voucher specimen. The dominant tree fern was *Cyathea smithii*, with

occasional plants of *C. dealbata* and *Dicksonia squarrosa*. *Cyathea medullaris* was scarce by this section of the track. Several *C. smithii* tree ferns were lying on their sides, probably the result of storm damage along this high ridge. Although searching for *C. colensoi* we failed to see any. This made me doubtful about my earlier collection.

I later asked John Braggins if he would bring over my Hunua *Cyathea colensoi* specimen from the University herbarium (AKU) for re-examining. Fortunately the specimen was fertile and on examination with John the remains of indusia were seen and there were no hairs among the sporangia. Resulting in the specimen being redetermined as *Cyathea smithii*. When comparing the overall frond shape with a genuine *C. colensoi* specimen, John pointed out that the *C. smithii* pinnules decreased towards the base, whereas on the *C. colensoi* specimen the pinnules stopped abruptly (similar to *Dicksonia squarrosa* fronds) - perhaps a good field character to separate these two species?

References

- Gardner, R. O. & Dakin, A. J. 1989: Native vascular flora of the Hunua Ranges Auckland. *Auckland Botanical Society Bulletin* 18.
 McCraith, S. 2001: A Bird In The Hand.... flora (and avifauna) of the Kohukohunui Track - Hunua Ranges. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 56(2): 64-65.