

[]-years old. Growth rates vary over time probably depending on changing degrees of competition and long-term rainfall patterns.

The species produces about the same proportion of seed as other Araucariaceae (about 10% of 260 seeds are viable) and these readily germinate after a period of stratification. Cuttings are also relatively easy to grow but can be either lateral growing (plagiotropic) or vertical growing (orthotropic) in form depending on the position of the original cutting on the tree.

A consortium to commercially develop and release the Wollemi pine has been formed with the Queensland Forestry Service and their commercial arm Birkdale Nurseries, The National Parks and Wildlife Service of New South Wales and the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. Plants of *Wollemia* will be released for public sale worldwide in late 2005. Over the next 10 years more than 2 million trees will be grown for release.

In the meantime, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is endeavoring to preserve its habitat and protect it from human-induced extinction in the wild. The site remains a closely kept secret, and

public access is forbidden.

James Woodfood, an environmental journalist from Sydney Morning Herald, has written a book titled *The Wollemi Pine*, and the SMH web site can be searched for past stories on the Wollemi pine (www.smh.com.au). The book can be obtained through Australian. The RBG Sydney website (www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au) presents news and information on the Wollemi pine and a list of publications on the species.

This remarkable discovery has raised public awareness of botanical and conservation issues around the world. Research to date has shown that a vast store of knowledge is associated with the natural environment, and much of this remains untapped for even the commonest species. Further research over the coming decades will increase our knowledge of this charismatic species, but discoveries to date also should sound some warnings and ask some questions. What remains unknown about the common plants around us? What has been lost forever before even being discovered or acknowledged? And probably most importantly, what else is out there?



The afternoon trip to Scandrett Regional Park, on 16 Feb 02

Alistair MacArthur

We drove up the hill for just a few minutes to the top of the ridge leading out to Mullett Point, parking in a place where we could look back down on Martins Bay whence we had just left. Northwards we could look across the bays to the hills leading out to the Takatu Peninsula, and further on to higher country near Cape Rodney. A cattle stop indicated the point where the road passed over the park boundary, which is a straight line across the peninsula just at its base, touching down to the north end of the beach in Martins Bay. We walked down into the forest remnants on the south coast, which has been fenced out for about a year. Holiday baches and caravans are being removed, and some weedy garden areas have been cleared to bare ground already.

Changes are already noticeable, as I was well aware, having moved about on the area among flocks of sheep a year earlier when I was killing some clumps of Kahili ginger and a few woolly nightshade. Large puriri and pohutukawa trees are present in many places, several kahikatea, and significant numbers of other trees such as tawapou and kohekohe. I had seen two kohekohe loaded with a splendid crop of maturing fruit a few days previously on the northern slopes, and we found at least two more similar fruiting trees on the route we took on the south side. Regeneration should be rapid with these trees. Seedlings of some species

are already appearing. Very similar south facing slopes on other Regional Park peninsula areas such as Cudlip Point are rich with thriving saplings of various canopy trees. We made this visit right at the start of the process and it will be good to return in a few years.

The native grasses such as *Microlaena stipoides* var. *stipoides* and *Oplismenus hirtellus* subsp. *imbecillis* are establishing as they usually do in such areas when they are fenced off, but two places down the steep south facing bank proved more interesting as there were colonies of *Microlaena polynoda*. Now that I have seen this species, described as a "scrambling, bambusiform, rhizomatous perennial with stout bare internodes" in the Flora Vol V, I will know what to look out for when I move onto other parts of the coastal escarpment where there is a lot more of the same type of habitat.

I had worked around a substantial part of the northern face of the park a few days before, destroying a few woolly nightshade shrubs and photographing places where pines of various ages are growing in strong competition with pohutukawa. Amongst the main plantation of tall pines a little way inland from Mullett Point I was surprised to find two substantial colonies of *Adiantum aethiopicum*, and I was able to lead our group around to that spot. More recently, as I now get around to writing this in March, I came across another

around from Te Muri Point towards Spaniard Creek opposite Wenderholm. These are all large patches compared to the 30-cm. patch which I found on the south coast of Tawharanui Regional Park. All of these finds of this delicate plant are on land where sheep and cattle would have been grazing some years ago before. The large new enclosure, perhaps better described as an enclosure, on the Scandrett Regional Park gives us a good chance to watch the natural regeneration establish.

We also saw a more unusual example of introduced plants settling very well into the natural habitat and competing very strongly with the native plants - *Furcraea foetida*. (There are quite a number of the common ones like agapanthus and arum lilies.) Well known on nearby Kawau Island where Sir George Grey planted it, *Furcraea foetida* is spreading away from the

old historic Scandrett homestead on the north coast. Perhaps it was an early example what can happen when gardeners give away plants! If it dispersed without human aid from Kawau that is a greater concern, but I am inclined think a few plants would have been given away. Related to *Agave*, some of the leaves were about two metres high and flower spikes were visible rising very much higher. These plants have been described as capable of yielding "a fine fibre" and can grow "without cultivation on the worst clay hills."

The afternoon visit gave us insight into an interesting new conservation enclosure which already complements the area of native forest at Martins Bay. I understand that further enclosures are planned and the areas should become richer for botanists and the general public alike.

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Impressions of the UK visitor Pouto 26-29 January 2001

Daphne Fielding

I want to write this to thank the members of the Bot. Soc. for including me in their field trip to Kaipara. I was thrilled when Graeme Hambly invited me to come, but reluctant to leave my husband Tim, and one-time governess Peggy, behind at Red Beach where we were staying.

Then panic set in: I would know no one - untrue.
I would know no plants - nearly true.
I wouldn't be able to eat the food - I have a wheat allergy - need not be true.
I did not have the necessary clothes and equipment: beg, borrow, but not steal.
I was eventually persuaded to join; Peggy said "Go."
I was offered a lift on Friday and Tim would collect me on Sunday evening.

I was most interested in the Maori welcome on arrival; Graeme, the field trip info, and my guide book had explained the significance and protocol. I was all ready to press noses and was slightly disconcerted to be kissed on the cheek in French style.

Sleeping in the Meeting House was a bit like sleeping in the dorm. at school - but that was girls only. Showers and dining also in the same pattern. Our division into groups was like school houses. Being '*splendens*' made one stand up straight and try hard.

Throughout I found people kind and helpful, welcoming at all times and generous in sharing knowledge on outings and in the evenings. I really appreciated it. Thank you.

The first evening walk gave me the next opportunity to 'compare and contrast' as in school essays. So similar, yet so different. The absence of colourful flowering plants (except the aliens) is my overwhelming impression of the New Zealand flora; yet it is full of interest.

The rushes and sedges are a large group. I had started off thinking: *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontana* - know that, have it growing in the River Arun at home, But *S. lacustris* is our common native one. Our bulrush *Typha latifolia* is not quite as tall and the seedhead is a darker brown than *T. orientalis* New Zealanders seem as confused as we are. It was all Leigh Hunt's fault: The Pre-raphaelite painted a picture of Moses in the bulrushes; he painted *Typha*. In the UK bulrush was *Schoenoplectus*, literally used for weaving rush baskets and mats. Confusion has reigned ever since. Moses would actually have been found amongst the papyrus, *Cyperus* - just to add to the fun! *Typha* was re-named reedmace, but the name has not stuck. Recently botanists have given up the unequal struggle and call it bulrush; *Schoenoplectus* has become clubrush.

Your native cyperus, *C. ustulatus* is a superb plant. It would look good in a bog garden, though I have never seen it thus. We have other species: we have many juncus, including *J. acutus* and *maritimus*, but not *pallidus*; *J. effusus* is our commonest rush. We do not have to worry about *Isolepis* or *Uncinia* which pair I found a constant cause of confusion. The restiad, *Apodasmia*, I quickly learnt. We can get some of the South African species as garden plants - and again I thought them very garden-worthy.

Saturday am. The arrival of Bigfoot. Whow! What a machine! This was real expedition stuff. I had never seen anything like it before. Off we go to the beach, then the dunes. Whow! What dunes! I am sure we don't have anything like them in the UK, and the best I