

New Grass Record for Waitakere Ranges

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On 15 November 2001 in the Waitakere Ranges while monitoring the spread of white smut fungus, the biological control for the weed mistflower, I spotted a sterile grass which I had not seen before. It resembled a *Cortaderia* species although I knew it was not. A sample was taken to the herbarium at the Auckland Museum for identification.

Rhys Gardner suggested *Chionochloa conspicua* subsp. *cunninghamii*. This then caused a bit of a stir because it has never been recorded in the Auckland Region before, and the closest known current sites for this grass are Mt Pirongia and the Coromandel Ranges (Ewen Cameron *pers. comm.*).

The interesting question: is this a recent arrival, or has it just been overlooked in the past?

On 26 November I returned to complete the last mistflower work and while there I checked the grass again. After a long climb up the Karamatura Track I reached the site and took photos and recorded the vegetation.

Only three plants were seen, one by the side of the track (the original one seen), and two more approximately 7 m away in a gap in the canopy. Only one of these, the largest, was flowering and stood some 1.7 m tall (AK 255305). The associated vegetation was not remarkable, except for the mairehau (*Leionema nudum*) which was in full flower, standing out like a large snowball.

Associated Vegetation

Canopy (40-60%)

Knighthia excelsa
Kunzea ericoides
Meliclytus ramiflorus
Pseudopanax crassifolius

Mid-canopy (40-60%)

Astelia trinervia
Blechnum novae-zelandiae
Coprosma robusta
Cordyline banksii
Corokia buddleioides

Cyathodes juniperina

Dacrydium cupressinum
Gahnia setifolia
Geniostoma rupestre
Leionema nudum
Meliclytus ramiflorus
Olearia furfuracea

Phormium tenax

Pseudopanax arboreus

Ground cover (20-40%)

Blechnum fraseri
Coprosma rhamnoides
Corokia buddleioides

Knighthia excelsa

Leucopogon fasciculatus
Lycopodium cernuum
L. deuterodensum
Pteridium esculentum

Full records and descriptions are filed with the Auckland Regional Council heritage unit.

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Fig. 1: Plant by track edge



Fig.2: Flowering plant