

We are glad members found Pomaderris rugosa still growing on the Island. This little tree is a native of the Thames Botanical District, consequently we do not encounter it on the Waitakeres. For a long time it was thought to be a form of P. edgerley which inhabits the far north of the North Island. P. rugosa is taller than P. edgerley being from 4 - 8 feet while its branching is characteristic, being after the manner of the Lombardy poplar. Though it shares with P. edgerley the rusty hairs on the lower surface of the leaves, the upper leaf surface in P. rugosa is quite smooth, not covered with short stiff bristles as is P. edgerley.

Ed.]

While we are on the subject of islands, it might be remembered that some of our members formed part of the expedition organised by the Auckland University College Field Club for a visit to Mayor Island last year.

The only drawback to the trip was that only a short time could be spent on the Island. But the best use was made of all opportunities as will be seen on reading the following most informative article which has been kindly forwarded by Mrs. Hynes.

MAYOR ISLAND

In November it was my privilege to spend a week at Mayor Island. Except for the Caretakers of the Fishing Club there is no one living on the Island although in the past it must have carried a very large Maori population for Pa sites can still be detected on every hill.

The island is of volcanic origin and very rugged, the greater part of it being an old crater 5 miles in circumference and surrounded by a high wall which reaches to a height of over 1,000 ft. Gold-Smith writing in 1884 (Trans. N.Z. Inst. Vol. 17) mentioned the broken surface and poor locomotion but thought that a botanist would find treasures there. This statement would apply today in 1955, nearly 70 years afterwards. The huge crater and many spurs and valleys are practically unexplored.

The Pohutukawa is the dominant tree, while Suttonia australis, Mapou, is an abundant undershrub and near the lakes there is a good stand of youthful Pittosporum umbellatum. One thing noticeable is the lack of epiphytic plants. Asplenium flaccidum grows only on the ground and Blechnum filiforme changes its behaviour. The small creeping ground form was not seen, instead there is an intermediate form which covers the ground and rocks and becomes fertile in that state.

Perhaps the greatest surprise was to find Schizaea dichotoma growing under Pohutukawa trees along the track to Northwest Bay and far more abundant than ever seen in our northern kauri forests. This plant, often called 'Kauri fern' is also plentiful under the tea-tree scrub

bordering the lakes thus dispelling the fallacy that it is found only under kauri trees.

It was a delight to see many species familiar in name but hitherto not seen growing in their natural habitat. Hibiscus trionum is growing among the grass on the Panui flats, Blechnum banksii is rare and should be left untouched. It was easy to recognise Euphorbia glauca, our native milkweed, with its palest of green leaves and bracts and wee purple flowers which set it apart from any of the introduced species. Senecio banksii attracted the attention, always growing near the sea, its wide purple backed leaves hug the stem and make a happy contrast to the golden blooms. Our only member of the Linum family, Linum monogynum which has a large white flower also prefers the sandy banks. It is now seldom seen around Auckland. For long years, far and wide, I have searched cliff faces for our native cucumber, Sicyos angulata to meet it at last adorning a noxious blackberry bush on an untidy track away from the sea breezes.

Blechnum norfolkianum is plentiful but I did not see either B. lanceolatum or B. membranaceum. Pteris comans, one of our most handsome ferns reaches a great size compared with its kin on the mainland. Arthropteris tenella is plentiful in the crater.

The swamps at the end of the island should be a happy hunting ground but I was much too concerned with my welfare when wading through about two feet of water to exploit the lush growth we were pushing through. Cyclosorus gongylodes was found in the swamp. My only acquaintance with this fern has been at Wairakei and the Waimaunga Valley where it was quite happy to keep its feet in hot water. However, members of the University College Field Club carrying out scientific investigations around that area inform me that the water in the swamp is quite warm so there may be a similarity of environmental conditions.

I had the glorious experience of hearing the early morning Bellbird chorus and even through the day, undeterred by prowling humans, or the raucous screech of the kaka, they would join with the Tui to give us a welcome especially so in the crater.

Unfortunately there are serpents in this Garden of Eden. The ravages of the pigs are the worst I have ever encountered and I fear to contemplate what will be the outcome if strong measures are not taken to reduce the population.