

vexation of photographers. We saw acres of Californian poppies beautiful larkspurs, penstemons, a delightful patch of zinnias with graceful white flowers, both less flamboyant and less stiff than those of our Auckland gardens. There was the gracious Globe Mallow with its pale red flowers, a lovely white buttercup, the big purple-headed clover, the pale gold brittle bush (Encelia), a very lovely species of evening primrose, some delicate bluebells, a white scrambling convolvulus, the desert aster and other 'daisies' large and ornamental. We saw too the sand verbena (Abronia - a genus of the marvel-of-Peru family Nyctaginaceae, so it is not a true verbena), the graceful Calochortum kennedyi and other beautiful species of desert lilies and many other enchanting relatives of familiar garden flowers.

In some cases we were shown not only a mass of blooms but also enlargements of the individual flowers.

Finally we saw great collections of tumbleweeds massed in the shelter of tall rocks on the arid shores of Pyramid Lake. I was immediately reminded of collections of seed-heads of Spinifex hirsutus pausing in the shelter of rocks on our own West Coast - though with the tumbleweeds it is the whole plant not just the seed head that wanders on its wind-blown way.

In conclusion, our lecturer showed some striking slides of desert landscapes taken in morning and evening light. An interesting discussion followed and we all felt we had travelled far and fast amidst a very remarkable vegetation.

The meeting concluded with a very hearty vote of thanks to the speaker.

On The Pukeamaru Range

by R.D. Cresswell

Travellers along the East Coast Highway on the Te Araroa-Cape Runaway section will have noticed a bush-clad range with one or two waterfalls visible from the road. This is the Pukeamaru Range whose highest point is Trig J 3,232 feet.

On October 28th 1958, Messrs. R.A. and R.D. Cresswell and G.M. Powell left the road at the Karakatuwhero road sign. After motoring up the River Valley of that name for about five miles, we struck a ford which marks the end of the all-weather road. The car parked, we collected rucksacks and waded through the river. A short walk over undulating sheep country landed us at a stream just below a fine waterfall. Here Peperomia urvilleana grows pendant with

Polypodium etc. from the shady side of large boulders. The foot of Pukeamaru meant steep climbing through Paesia, bracken, lawyer and manuka mixed with occasional grassy clearings. This reverted sheep country extended to about 1,800 feet. Broken rock, wind-eroded, crowned a steep knob. The plant covering is Leptospermum, stunted Kamahi (Weinmannia racemosa), Cordyline banksii, Olearia rani, Aristolotelia serrata and Quintinia serrata.

Lycopodium fastigiatum, L. scarosium and L. volubile cover the open ground. A rare plant found was Peperomia tetraphylla. Its habit was prostrate and it had round whorled leaves, half an inch to three quarters in diameter with terminal spikes one and a half to two inches long.

A short descent through bracken brought us to the fringe of regenerating forest, with stands of sapling Nothofagus truncata, about fifty years old. After about a quarter of a mile of climbing the ridge broadened out and a small stream was passed. Here the virgin forest commences and we meet Rimu, Miro, Kamahi, Toa Toa (Phyllocladus glaucus), Toru (Suttonia salicina), Nothofagus fusca, and Nothofagus truncata.

Very old axe marks, a surveyor's blaze, were followed until the trail led over a rocky outcrop at about 2,700 feet. In this dry situation and rooted in crevices are specimens of Dacrydium intermedium, in general appearance like a stunted rimu. The trees seldom grow singly but are rooted in groups of from two to seven or eight. Never exceeding fifty feet in height they have a very dense canopy of branchlets covered with densely imbricating leaves when adult. The seedlings have a softer appearance than rimu and the roots of a group are thickly interwoven making transplanting difficult. The adult bark is similar to that of matai in appearance. One tree had minute greenish female flowers terminating the branchlets in solitary arrangement.

Interesting plants on this outcrop were Phyllocladus alpinus, native daphne (Pimelea longifolia), Archeria racemosa, mingi mingi (Leucopogon fasciculatus), Dracophyllum pyramidale and one Dacrydium bifforme twenty feet high with both juvenile and adult foliage.

Continuing up from this outcrop the trail enters heavy rain forest with its wealth of filmy ferns, including large patches of Kidney Fern on rotten logs and a few plants of Pittosporum kirki. Dominant trees in this area are Nothofagus menziesii, Pahautea (Librocedrus bidwillii), and Podocarpus hallii.

Traversing a steep dry ridge at an altitude of about 3,000 feet we met more Dacrydium intermedium while a dense undergrowth of Coprosma foetidissima and Astelia solandri (A. cunninghamii of Cheeseman) added interest to the climb. After crossing a small gully the true summit was reached - Trig J at 3,232 feet. Here the Nothofagus menziesii had been hacked off years ago, and a dense growth of

Nothopanax simplex, Archeria racemosa, Phyllocladus alpinus and Dacrophyllum adamsii prevents a comprehensive view from the actual trig position. However to the north, the steep reverting sheep country between Lottin Point and Hick's Bay leads the eye eastwards to Te Araroa with steep hills towards East Cape about 20 miles away.

On the descent is a grand view of the three river valleys; in the foreground Karakatuwhero, in the middle distance Kopoapounamu and furthest south the Taurangakautuku could be traced heading northwards to join the Awatera.

The sheep country at the head of these rivers is extensively eroding as also are the ridges leading up to the Raukumara Range at 4,404 feet and about ten miles south west of Pukeamaru.

On April 25th last Mr. Colin Peach of Tokomaru Bay and the writer revisited Pukeamaru. The crimson drupe of Alseuosmia, the wine-coloured drupe of Coprosma colensoi, the orange drupes of Coprosma foetidissima, C. robusta and C. lucida added colour to the forest. One tree of Dacrydium intermedium had steel blue 'nuts' encased in red arils. These arils are fleshy in character forming a wide cup-like structure a quarter of an inch in diameter and adding colour to the interesting yellow-silver pine. The seed requires damp humus to germinate and good drainage, together with shade and protection from strong winds - indeed such a situation as rock crevices provide.

(Our thanks to Mr. Cresswell for an informative account of a very interesting trip. I am sure that any of our members who happen to be holidaying in that direction during the summer will take care, if they can possibly manage it, to pause for some happy hunting on Pukeamaru. Ed.

Congratulations to that indefatigable collector Mrs. Wood on a very interesting find. Mrs. Wood has already made quite a number of records of plants not previously noted in certain localities. But the present discovery concerns not only a district but the whole country. It must be admitted that the plant is not the most aesthetic of our fungi. But at least it is harmless, living peacefully as a saprophyte, that is to say deriving its nourishment from the leaf mould of the forest floor. The fungus consists of a tangled network of fungal threads or 'hyphae' as botanists call them, which live below the ground. The 'horn' that rises above ground is simply the fructification of the plant emerging, as does the mushroom, to produce and scatter its spores. Unlike the mushroom however, it is not palatable - at least I have never heard of it being served as a side dish - its odour for one thing is not encouraging. It appears first in the form of an