

August : POKENO Ross Mitchell's Farm and Bush.

Met by Mr. Mitchell at the house, we saw some of the natives he had planted there, the lowest layers of which had been eaten out one night when a neighbour's sheep got in. Metrosideros kermadecensis was compared with pohutukawa, which has longer leaves.

In marshy ground above we entered remnant forest with taraire, pukatea, and a few maire tawakes (Eugenia maire). Several small-leaved Coprosma bushes examined on the edge were all different, indicating hybrid swarms so common now. On one bush an array of climbers straggled, including Olematis, Parsonsia and Muehlenbeckia.

Crossing the marshy ground and going up through another paddock we entered thicker forest, and in the gully was the main attraction of the locality, namely the King fern (Marattia salicina) - aptly named "The Valley of a Thousand King Ferns" - and wrongly attributed by me in the last issue to the Waitakares in my discreteness! Numerous other ferns were present on the moist banks including crepe fern and bristle fern. Pterostylis trullifolia var. gracilis, and later var. rubella with smooth leaves were in flower by the track, while Acianthus reniformis var. oblongus was in bud. Sundews were many inches high, the stems almost leafless to over a foot in height.

The variability of the Olearia species in the Auckland area never ceases to surprise. This time it was heketara in numerous forms, some of which may be simply environmental, but included small-leaved forms with thick tomentum more like O. albida of the coast. The canopy destruction by the opossum was very evident under some trees, particularly the podocarps.

Of special interest to me was the remnant Kauri - Hard beech forest association on the far ridge, which we got to through some thick gorse now invading the margins unfortunately. All stages of kauri are present, short of maturity, the big ones no doubt being logged earlier. Hard beech was common on the other easterly aspect, though little sign of younger growth. Tanekaha seedlings were abundant, and miro and rimu fairly common. Kauri associates such as Quintinia, Cyathodes, Gahnia and abundant Lindsaea trichomanoides in both its forms were present. The abundance of Coprosma spatulata gave members a good chance to see the difference from forms of C. arborea. Alseuosmia was a common sapling, and possibly a hybrid swarm. This genus badly needs further study, preferably with culture.

The party had to return by the same route, and in doing so were able to look down onto some of the Waikato bogs on the flats to the south, and see something of the colour variation resulting from the different communities inhabiting these areas. This led me to a discussion of their flora with visiting Hamilton members, who were to introduce me to these unique communities later. It was good to see them, and we hope they will join us more often on our trips south of Auckland, and perhaps lead outings to new areas.

Our thanks go to Mr. Mitchell for allowing us to visit once more this most interesting forest remnant.