

# King Fern

In response to my article on King fern in the last issue, Mr. Ross McKenzie wrote of its occurrence in the Clevedon bush, where it was apparently known for a very long time, though he is not sure whether it is still there. The Maoris living at Kawa Kawa Bay many years ago, when money was scarce, used to take it from the bush, and hawk it in Auckland.

Also received was a note from Miss N.R. Bamford, who points out that it is not an endemic fern of course, but occurs on the Islands, where she has seen magnificent specimens with long shiny fronds in the valleys of Rarotonga. Psilotum occurs there too.

King fern is also listed by Allan for Samoa, Tahiti and Norfolk Island, where some of our members may have seen it. Does it differ at all on the Islands I wonder.

Any further sightings will be welcome, so please drop me a line if you know of more in the Province.

J.H.

## REVIEWS

### Botanical Periodicals.

N.Z. Journal of Botany. December, 1965

#### "Five-fingers and Lancewoods"

The correct generic designation of these woody plants has led to some confusion in the past. Writing in this issue, J.R. Philipson now concludes after examination of a number of characters that Neopanax be included in Pseudopanax, thus eliminating any doubt as to which prefix should be used. Neopanax was raised by Allan in 1961 to accommodate the species earlier referred to Nothopanax in Cheeseman. The character used to separate the genera, that of locale number, in fact shows continuous variation (from two to five), and so no clear sub-division can be made on this basis. The close similarities of species formerly placed in the different genera and their tendency to form hybrids readily supports the present union.

There are several other articles, but I intend to limit my comments to those of interest to field botanists, in reviews such as these, to bring to the notice of members articles which they should know of, but may not have the chance of seeing regularly.

N.Z. Journal of Botany. June, 1966

This issue contains much-needed revisions of two genera, which have been so puzzling in the past due to lack of study. A key to the Australasian Astelinds by Lucy Moore, together with useful distribution maps of the N.Z. species, should enable us to recognise them and perhaps add to their known distribution. Three maps showing the distribution of three species of Astelia appear on page 238 for the Auckland area, namely A. solandri, A. trinervia and A. banksii.

Also keyed are the N.Z. species of the genus Luzula, sometimes known commonly as the "wood-rushes". Some 11 indigenous species are recognized, along with 3 of the most common introduced species from Europe, which one must be wary of. Most species are however South Island plants, and include cushion alpine plants - a form not known elsewhere in this widely distributed genus. The only natives in the Auckland area is L. picta with var. picta to the North, and var. pallida to the South.

Our "sister" Society in Wellington, of which some here are members, issues a printed Bulletin periodically under the editorship of Tony Druce. The feasibility of our Society producing a printed Newsletter is worthy of another look I feel, as duplicating has its limitations. To improve this a quick drying ink is used now. I should say that membership and subscriptions of the Wellington Society are comparable to ours, and they have found it possible to go into print.

To this issue Tony Druce contributes a number of articles: a Note on Snow Damage in the Tararua's; Totara Forest at Ohau and Secondary Totara-titoki-matai Forest on the Otaki Plain. A good effort - possibly reflecting a similar lack of contributors? When the Editor not only edits, but has to contribute most of the copy the task is quite considerable, particularly when the drafts have to be laboriously transferred to stencils. I may be digressing a little, but the services of a good typist are required before another issue appears - so please speak up now!

Norman Elder reports on matagouri (*Discaria toumatou*) in the North Island, where it is nowhere a prominent species as it is in the South Island (eastern parts of), but does occur widely in small pockets. He knows of three small colonies on rocky sites near Wellington. On the West coast it occurs intermittently as far north as Waikato Heads, and there is a specimen in the Auckland Museum collected last century by Kirk on the dunes at Waiuku. I have asked a local resident to keep a look-out for it, and our local members may know of it? Any other records in the Auckland Province?

Astelids in the Wellington district are described and photographed by J.M. Morice, so this little known group should now be much clearer. It is of course included in our long-awaited booklet.

#### BOOKS

The publication this year of "Botanical Latin" by William Stearn of the Natural History Museum fills a longfelt need among those taxonomists who did not pursue a classical education. When science courses now demand almost full-time study, there is little room for Latin in so many schools. As so much descriptive taxonomy is of necessity in Latin, for all workers to understand a common language, biologists should have some knowledge of it. This book covers history, grammar, syntax, terminology and vocabulary, and being written by an eminent botanist with a special interest in the history of the subject, it makes a most valuable reference work, which a Latin scholar alone could not do justice to. Published by Nelson. Price here 131/-

Should members have botanical books in their possession which have been particularly useful to them, and which they feel would help many of our members, then please let me have a few notes, and I will add them to those I have for a future issue.