

McLaren's Falls, Tauranga - a site for a Scenic Reserve?

About eight miles from Tauranga, just off the main Tauranga-Hamilton highway, is a popular picnic spot beside McLaren's Falls on the Wairoa River. The steep walls of the gorge support native bush invaded by pines, gums and wattles, but the river margins and gorge floor contain several acres of scrub and forest relatively free from exotic plants. The chief interests of the area botanically are in the nature and diversity of the vegetation, as this is probably the most accessible kauri association near the southern limit for kauris.

A flat area of alluvial soils at the junction of two streams supports a forest, mainly of young trees of a wide range of species. These include in the canopy the softwoods kauri, matai, miro, Hall's totara, rimu and tanekaha. Hardwood trees include kamahi (Weinmannia racemosa), rewarewa (Knightia), white maire (Nestegis lanceolata), toru (Peroecia toru), tawa and tawari (Ixerba). The understorey contains a number of plants of interest, including some which form part of kauri forests further north; viz. Mida salicifolia, Blechnum fraseri, Pterostylis trullifolia, Bulbophyllum pygmaeum, and Phebalium nudum (would this be the most southern record for mairehau?) A list of over 90 vascular plants has been made for this small area, and in addition to those mentioned above for the forest, some are confined to the rocky stream margins. These include the herbs Oxalis lactea and Celmisia gracilentia, and two very local shrubs, Clearia cheesemanii (flowering during the first 3 weeks of November), and Hebe corriganii (flowering mid-July). This last mentioned plant is worthy of special mention here, as McLaren's Falls is the type locality for this.

However, it is not merely a description of the area which has prompted this article. On the writer's last visit (26.11.66), there were many signs of animal browsing in the forest understorey, particularly on ferns, five-finger, mapou, Coprosma species and Alseuosmia macrophylla. Two goats were seen on rocks at the forest margin. Surely this area is worth protecting from noxious animals and weeds, and the formation of a Scenic Reserve would ensure the future of McLaren's Falls for tourists and botanists.

C.C.Ogle

Some plant records C.C.Ogle

Corybas aconitiflorus : Alley's Quarry, Te Puke. In flower 3.7.66. How widespread is this plant? I have seen a photo of one from the Levin dunes.

Peperomia tetraphylla : Not uncommon as an epiphyte on the eastern side of the Papamoa Hills. (C.f. Allan: states "E.Cape west to Lake Rotehu")

Adiantum hispidulum : near Alley's Quarry, Te Puke.

Phymatodes novae-zelandiae : in kamahi forest near summit of Mt. Otanewainuku (c.1900'), Te Puke.

Geoff Cutfield (Te Puke) records:

Corokia buddleoides ssp. linearis : on Pukemotiti Island in Lake Rotoiti. Previously known from Thames, Mangarewa Gorge, Tarawera and Rainbow Mtn.