

Most of the remaining bush on the flanks of Moehau is now included in a Crown reserve of nearly 9000 acres controlled by the State Forest Service. The vegetation is being sadly mauled by stray cattle and goats, which range right up to the summit and there is much evidence of opossum damage on the approach spurs. It is to be hoped that the Service will take prompt and vigorous action to eliminate these various pests.

Starting with a morning's bird watching at Kaiaua, our main base was a cabin at Waitete Bay, 8 miles north of the Coromandel township. Among side trips were a run to Port Jackson which took us through splendid groves of pohutukawas with huge twisted and gnarled trunks; on the return home a visit to Hot Water Beach, where we scraped pools in the sand in which to soak; and the run over the new Hikuai-Kopu Road which gave us the impression that main-force engineering to obtain long straights, easy curves and uniform grades in steep country was overdone, even from the standpoint of transport economics, let alone the resulting excessive destruction of bush leaving ugly scars.

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THE COBB VALLEY. (Continued from the last issue) -- Mrs. G. Bedford

Round Bush-Line Hut.

The hut, situated at 4500 ft., is sheltered in the upper fringe of the beech forest near Lake Sylvester. Having experienced there a night of raging wind, when the roof lifted at each onslaught of the gusts and collapsed back after their passing, I appreciate the need for shelter. The beech is all Nothofagus Cliffortioides, many of the large trees having been felled when the area was used as a camp during the construction of the Cobb Dam below, hence the fact that there is any road at all.

Hebe Vernicosa, which is only found in beech forest, was very beautiful in flower particularly in shaded and damp places. Senecio adamsii the prostrate, shrubby Senecio with sticky leaves, was present; Myrsine nummularia was trailing everywhere amongst the stones; Coprosma pseudocuneata, Coprosma ciliata and Elaeocarpus fruticosus created the undergrowth and in places where the water seeped down great masses of Curis macrophylla flourished. Pride of place, however, must go to the magnificent Celmisia traversii with its bright tawny-fringed leaves, hairy stalks and many flowers 20 inches high, growing in such profusion that one could not help walking on them.

The birds were a delight. The bell-birds sang each time they saw me, the tom-tits came when I fetched water and there were plenty of grey warblers, chaffinches and blackbirds. The wekas came and inspected everything, nothing surprised them. The kea was a nightly visitor, who cleaned out the meat tins efficiently and squawked at the candle through the window,

providing much amusement until we inadvisedly left the window open when out all day and returned to tins on the floor, our precious tomatoes mangled and general chaos! He would spy us from the very high crags on our return and circle squawking.

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MR. G. UHE'S UNIVERSITY EXTENSION CLASS ON 'PLANTS AND MANKIND'

In the first term of 1968, several Botanical Society members attended Mr. Uhe's lectures, finding them richly rewarding. We soon realised that man's dependence on plants was nearly as great today as 2000 years ago and much stimulating material was presented in the form of lectures, films and practical work. In one session Mr. Uhe showed us fine papier mache sludge at the start and elegant deckle-edged squares at the finish.

Another practical demonstration stimulated our taste buds, as well as our minds - a wine and cheese evening, each sample being most ably introduced by Professor Millener.

A wide range of topics was covered, including industrial plants and plant products, medicinal plants, narcotics and stimulants, food, beverages and spices. We discovered some of the intriguing historical backgrounds to the plants we use so readily nowadays.

A comprehensive field trip took place one Saturday, commencing at the Building Centre, where we heard from a forestry expert and an engineer about wood products. We then went to a brewery where we were most courteously and thoroughly taken through every process of brewing the many types of beer. Lunch was taken at the Domain after which we went out to a Henderson vineyard. Every aspect of viticulture was covered, from a publicity film in a theaterette, to seeing a new grape crusher, yet to be used. We tried some of the products and quite a few samples were purchased and taken home for less informed families and friends.

An informative evening trip was to see the making of vinegar and yeast.

Little snippets of information I treasure: from one lecture that Vanilla is the only orchid used commercially (other than for its beauty) in the world: from another the fascinating name of Ylang Ylang, an essential oil and perfume of the South Seas and that Dr. Colpepper really had something in his raspberry leaf extract for painless childbirth.

The lectures took place in the pleasant new Thomas Building at the University and culminated in an exotic foods evening, painstakingly organised and prepared by Mr. and Mrs. Uhe, at which an unusually well-fed, fascinating time was had by all.