

RANGITOTO ----- 16th August 1969 ----- A.D. Palmer

We boarded the Blue Boat at 9.30 on a very unpromising, overcast morning. By the time we landed at Islington Bay, a light rain was falling which continued for an hour or so. After this cleared, however, we were very lucky, the weather remaining dry for the remainder of the trip.

Our route took us from Islington Bay to Rangitoto Wharf, the track following the shore for some way, then turning inland, finally returning to the shore near Rangitoto Wharf. The area we traversed was dominated by pohutukawa, Myrsine australis, Cyathodes juniperina and C. fasciculata a certain amount of tea-tree and Griselinia lucida in fair number. Here and there were odd specimens of Neopanax and at one point along the track we saw a lone specimen of Pseudopanax. In places the attractive flowers of Senecio kirkii provided bright splashes of colour to relieve the otherwise dour greens. Astelia seemed to be everywhere, many of them in flower.

On a rather barren region by the shore at the beginning of the track there were a number of plants of gorse and buddleia as well as some quite large and woody tutus. Close by a landing ramp we saw a single rata, Metrosideros robusta, growing as a tree and it was suggested that it was probably the only one growing on the island. Near here we saw our first Cheilanthes sieberi growing in a tiny chink in the moss covered scoria and nearby the dead fronds of a Schizaea, probably S. fistulosa. Also in mossy hollows the pretty little fern, Asplenium flabellifolium, which throws roots from the tips of the delicate fronds.

Perhaps the outstanding feature of the trip was the superabundance of orchids. Almost everywhere we looked, even in the most inhospitable crevices we were certain to find either Pterostylis trullifolia var. alobula with its delicate green and white striped hooded flowers, or the more minute Acianthus fornicatus var. sinclairii and Acianthus reniformis var. oblongus. Two patches of Corybas, probably C. trilobus, were seen and the leaves of Thelymitra sp. were to be seen everywhere. Orchids which are more usually epiphytic on trees grow here on rocks, we saw Marina autumnalis Emucronata, Bulbophyllum pygmaeum and Dendrobium cunninghamii, one large clump of which we found right alongside the track.

We kept our eye open for Psilotum nudum but only saw two or three rather poor specimens all day. It seems to like to grow tucked in cracks in the large scoria boulders, especially in open sunny spots.

We had lunch perched on some damp scoria ledges, surrounded by a rather luxurious spongy pinkish moss, which looked almost like small pieces of coral.

Filmy ferns were common in the damper places and there were many areas of the beautiful kidney fern, Cardiomanes reniforme, though nowhere as luxuriant as in the kidney fern gully near Rangitoto Wharf, where it carpets the ground over large areas.

In several places we saw the small leaved Metrosideros perforata scrambling over the scoria. Also seen were one or two specimens of Gaultheria antipoda in berry, a single specimen of Pomaderris phyllicifolia var. ericifolia, Knightia excelsa, Dodonaea viscosa, Olearia furfuracea, Drosera auriculata, Peperomia uvulifera, Microsorium diversifolium and Flagianthus divaricatus.

We arrived at Rangitoto Wharf in good time, rather weary after our day's crunching along the ankle-twisting track. Rangitoto really is a remarkable place, always well worth a visit and no less enjoyable on this occasion in spite of the wintry weather.

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RAINFALL AND FLOWERING IN THE WAITAKERES. ----- A.D.Mead.

During the spring and early summer of 1968 a number of species of plants and trees in the Waitakeres exhibited exceptionally profuse flowering, notably:-

<u>Cordyline australis.</u>	<u>Phormium tenax.</u>
<u>Cordyline banksii.</u>	<u>Pterostylis banksii.</u>
<u>Ilex brexioides.</u>	<u>Quintinia serrata.</u>
<u>Knightia excelsa.</u>	<u>Samolus repens.</u>
<u>Mariscus ustulatus.</u>	

There were probably others but I did not note them at the time and only recorded the list later from memory, not realising at first that something unusual was happening. As well as being very prolific, the flowering was in most cases somewhat later, perhaps a month or two, than normal. By way of contrast, pohutukawa and some others scarcely flowered at all.

The weather was somewhat abnormal during 1968, the rainfall being above average and varying considerably from the usual seasonal distribution. Wondering whether any connection could be traced with plant behaviour, I obtained from the Weather Office records of the monthly rainfalls at Albert Park, together with the long period average at the same station. As I understand from fruit bearing studies in England that the influence of the preceding year is more strongly felt than the current year, I also studied records for 1967.

The mean annual rainfall at Albert Park is 48.9 inches. The year 1967 had 49.4 inches and 1968 had 54.7 inches. The latter is 1.12 times mean, which is not a notable excess but the wettest consecutive 12 months in the two years was from September 1967 to August 1968, with 59.8 inches or 1.22 times mean.