

MANGATANGI DAM.17th. April.Miss E.M. Davis.

I doubt whether any of those who, in pouring rain, made their way to the bus bound for Hunua and Mangatangi on this wet Saturday morning had the remotest idea that the weather would prove so much better later on. However the optimists soon filled the bus and the further we went from the city, the less heavy and less frequent the showers became. As we drove into the Hunua area, fine mist drifted over the hill tops at times and the occasional light shower fell, but for the greater part of the day we were able to make various excursions into the edge of the bush at points of interest on the roadside and to identify a number of species of plants.

At the turn-off to the Hunua Dam we were shown over the plant nurseries there. The gardens and glasshouses contained a multitude of seedlings of native plants, together with a few exotics. They were all thriving in various stages of growth under excellent conditions. Some of the seedlings we noted were kahikatea, miro, totara, tanekaha, kauri, Dodonaea, ramarama, pukatea, Griselinia, Corokia and Hebe, Coprosma and Pittosporum species, these last three groups being particularly suitable for planting in the area near the Mangatangi Dam. One particularly decorative box was that of juvenile lanax in the very early stage of growth, a pattern of colour to delight the eye of any designer.

We are most grateful to have had the opportunity of seeing such a very fine plant nursery and we realise how much planning and forethought is given to the problem of reafforestation and replanting in the area.

Continuing on our way to the Mangatangi Dam we soon came to the one and only area of "casual water" flooding on to the road from a nearby stream. However Mr. Warren cheerfully made a solo crossing on foot to demonstrate the absence of potholes and washouts and the bus took us across without incident. Two or three clumps of Yuccas were flowering in a nearby farm - unusually far away from their usual habitat nearer the sea.

The hills soon became steeper and the valleys more thickly clad in bush. In places where sheep and cattle had previously grazed, natural regeneration of the forest is taking place. There are areas where light secondary growth has established itself and others where the young growth in its shelter of tea-tree scrub is just emerging, the Podocarps taking over. Clearings occur and there, occasionally, a few sheep help to keep down the long grass and thus allow the growth of seedlings which otherwise would be smothered. Stands of rowarewa and tree ferns are numerous.

We had lunch at the Dam. The water in it was not at full height. In summer, we were told, this helps to dry out and restrict the growth of the water weed Ottelia ovalifolia, which tends to flourish unless controlled. We spent some time identifying plants and noticed the rich growth of Coprosmas, Hebes and Pittosporums and realised the value of these in holding the soil on the steep banks and providing shelter for other smaller plants. The revegetation in this area is noticeable and proceeding apace. It is a pleasant thought that in this region, part of the A.R.A. watershed, regeneration of the forest is being protected and encouraged.

Specimens identified in various places where we stopped included:

Podocarpus dacrydioides , kahikatea, on the flat areas near a

stream. The trees were resplendent in fruit, the black seeds in their swollen red receptacles being quite spectacular - surely one of the best seasons for fruiting. Podocarpus totara, Dacrydium cupressinum (rimu), Phyllocladus trichomanoides (tanekaha), Libocedrus plunosa (kawaka), Melicope simplex, Knightia excelsa (rewarewa), Pittosporum tenuifolium (kohuhu), Lophomyrtus bullata (ramarama), Alcetryon excelsus (titoki), Doconaea viscosa (akeake), Pseudopanax crassifolium (horoeaka, lancewood), Griselinia lucida, G. littoralis, Coprosma australis, C. lucida, C. robusta. The Coprosmas were fruiting very heavily. A fine specimen of Nestegis cunninghamii (black maire), Podocarpus spicatus (matai), Podocarpus ferrugineus (miro), Neopanax anomalum, Meliccytus micranthus and Dicksonia fibrosa (several specimens).

There were many others both large and small but our time at this stage was limited. A feature of the valley through which the road passes is the profusion of tree ferns which appear almost like a cascade of green down the slopes, this green contrasting with the darker foliage of the rewarewas and Podocarps and the vivid scarlet of kahikatea and Coprosma fruits.

We arrived back in good time after a most enjoyable day for which we thank our leader, Mr. Braggins, who had given so much time and thought in planning it.

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FUKAPUKA.

15th. May, 1971.

A.D. Mead.

This trip took us to a Rodney County scenic reserve of 360 acres in the Pukapuka area south of the Mahurangi Harbour, reached by Cowans Bay Road, which branches off the main north highway towards the coast some miles south of Warkworth. The reserve, milled for kauri many years ago, is fenced to exclude cattle and has regenerated well and offers a good typical example of the lower North Auckland bush. A mishap to the bus, which got trapped by a deceptively thin road crust over soft bottom and required the assistance of a tow wagon, combine with an afternoon thunderstorm, limited the time available for exploration of the reserve, but under the leadership of Mr. F. Warren we were able to enjoy the rich assortment of native growth on one of the higher ridges adjoining the road.

This would be described as mainly a kauri regeneration area, carrying plentiful pole kauri with larger trees up to six feet in girth. Interspersed were rimu, totara, puriri, tawa, rewarewa, kowhai, tanekaha, towai (by no means a complete list) and among the understory nikau and twiggy Coprosmas, mingimingi, lancewood, Nestegis lanceolata, Myrsine australis, Carmichaelia aligera and Olearia furfuracea. Two ground orchids in flower, Pterostylis brumalis and Acianthus fornicatus were observed. Ferns were rather scanty in the small area we traversed; if time had permitted visiting the gully on the block they would no doubt have been plentiful enough, but perhaps the dainty ground fern Lindsaea trichomanoides, somewhat rare and, as in the Waitakeras, associated with this rather open regenerating kauri on dry spurs, is worth recording.

Of special interest were two small stands of beech, Nothofagus truncata; these were not pure stands but each consisted of a few trees only, in close neighbourhood among the other trees. The mode of occurrence of these occasional beech remnants in North Auckland would merit a special study. As