

This was eight years ago and we have since watched nests and family groups in at least six other localities on the farm.

Neopanax laetum, Olearia albida, Coprosma cunninghamii, Coprosma tenuifolia and an erect moss which looks like a young pine tree about nine inches high, are among the pleasant surprises that pop up occasionally. I must admit to being a bit confused with the Coprosmas. C. robusta and C. rotundifolia are everywhere and C. rhamnoides and C. areolata are very common also. Less common is C. australis (because the goats seem to prefer it to any other tree). Fairly common, but variable is what I suppose to be C. cunninghamii, and C. tenuifolia so far seems to be limited to one plant growing in a swamp.

This article is, of course, an admission of failure. A good farmer does not have swamps for rare birds or useless wasteland for little gems of ferns, but there are times when I feel like going berserk and giving the farm away and all that keeps my sense of proportion are those same little patches of wild nature, the sounds, the smells and the feel of something unmanmade.

MOSSES IN MY GARDEN

E.D.H.

The family gave me a copy of Allison & Childs Mosses of N.Z. for my birthday! I read it through a couple of times, studied the drawings and photographs, and took it for a walk round the garden. I have long been aware that the Laingholm Hill was wet, but I had no idea that I lived in such a bog.

Under every tree and in the shadow of the hedges Thuidiopsis furfurosum abounds and wanders out into the lawn. Among the stones around the fish pond and along the road frontage this is mixed with Hypnum cupressiforme. A couple of areas of short manuka scrub which lie in a hollow, sport much Cratoneuropsis relaxa, while Cyatophorum bulbosum thrives on the edge of a ditch. A species of Fissidens grows literally in water under the drip from a shed roof and around the outflow from a downpipe. Campylopus clavatus, together with a fairly robust species of Bryum occurs over the whole area, while Tortula muralis grows on the tops of concrete fence posts and on scoria boulders in the rockery. There must be at least six other species I haven't identified, some on the ground and some on the trees round about, and of course I could be wrong about some that I think I've identified. But most interesting.

THE LAKE LAWN AT WESTERN SPRINGS

E.D.H.

From the bus window, the lake at Western Springs looked like a well kept lawn. In fact it was difficult to decide where the grass

slope ended and the water began. What was this weed that packed the lake so tight? I pondered several mornings and at last could stand the suspense no longer - I took the car. To my surprise I found that the bulk of the weed was the floating fern Salvinia.

This plant is one of nature's more picturesque liars. It doesn't look anything like a fern. The roundish entire fronds are produced on a floating stem in whorls of 3 - 2 floating, 1 submerged. The upper surfaces of the floating fronds are covered with unwettable hairs which presumably help to keep the plant on the surface. It has no roots, but in order (once again presumably) to maintain balance and keep the green fronds uppermost, the submerged frond in each whorl has been much divided into a root-like organ not unlike the rooting system of the water hyacinth Eichornia.

Tiny water snails abounded and scattered through the mass of fern were the white flowers of Egeria and odd islands of Myriophyllum. The minute Lemna minor was everywhere and Polygonum hugged the shoreline. Among the Lemna and looking much like a larger version of it was Spirodela oligorrhiza. These two plants are easily identified. Apart from the size, which only matters when they occur together, the Lemna is green below with a single descending root, while the Spirodela is purple below and has several descending roots.

No doubt there were many other plants of interest but I was on my way to work. I did stand however for a fascinated moment to watch the Pukekos walking about on the 'surface' of the water - how solid was my lake!!

JULY, 1972.

TRACKS OFF SCENIC DRIVE.

A.D. MEAD.

Alongside the Scenic Drive about midway between Titirangi and Waatarua, the Auckland Regional Authority is developing an area to serve as a headquarters for the Centennial Park administration and as an information centre. On arrival of the bus, Mr P. Jew, Director of Parks for the Regional Authority, gave us a short talk describing the purpose and the proposed lay-out of the centre, illustrated by a plan. There will be a building in which will be displayed maps, photographs and descriptive literature; with alongside car parking and a bus lay-by, grassed picnic area and plots of typical Waitakere trees and shrubs, labelled. Youth parties will be provided for in a separate building enclosed in the bush. Tracks, some already formed, will lead in different directions in the surrounding bush. This block of Centennial Park land, between the Scenic Drive and Oratia, contains a considerable number of mature timber trees, kauri, rimu, kahilatea, totara and miro, which surprisingly and fortunately escaped the miller, as well as a rich assortment of native trees and plants generally.

After the talk we proceeded, under the leadership of Miss Marguerite Crookes, through regenerating scrub grading into original