

bush, to the first of our objectives, an unspoilt stand of mature kauri trees on a knoll, among a dense growth of Astelia and Gahnia. The latter plants, and especially the big cutty-grass, Gahnia xanthocarpa, were carrying ripe seed heads and Miss Crookes described the method of identification from the seeds. Among the kauris were a few plants of the fan fern, Schizaea dichotoma. In a swampy patch alongside the track were some pukatea trees with their characteristic buttresses. The senior ranger, Mr W. Beweridge, accompanied us on the morning round and described how he had collected rimu seed by laying out scrim under the trees, and compared the very much more rapid germination of the seed in prepared soil in the nursery with its rate naturally.

We returned to the bus for lunch and a plant demonstration from our leader, after which we moved a quarter of a mile further along the Drive and entered a barely defined trail (not a formed track but planned to be linked up eventually) on a spur with numerous kauris, not in a grove but spread along the ridge, varying from small to medium in size. One oddity on this trail was what appeared to be a hybrid Asplenium lucidum with lugs on the pinnae. Returning and moving the bus a little further on, we visited another stand of kauri on a knoll reached by a well graded track from the Drive, through good mixed bush. This group of kauri is suffering from too easy access, the ground round them being tramped bare. Alongside the track is a small tree of Pseudopanax edgerleyi, showing intermediate as well as adult leaves. The bristle fern, Selenodasium elongatum, also occurs by this track.

AUGUST, 1972.

PIHA : WINSTONE AND HOME TRACKS.

E.M.D.

Saturday, 19th. August, defied all weather prophets and, instead of the promised downpour with wind to match, we enjoyed the sunshine and mild temperature of an early spring day. The tracks were in excellent condition despite previous wet weather.

A full bus load left Auckland for Piha. The main party left the bus at the entrance to Winstone Track and followed this to its junction with Home Track. After crossing the Kitekite Stream we had lunch in the sun overlooking a wealth of forest in the valleys beyond and then continued on our way to the Glen Esk Road, where later in the afternoon we rejoined those of our party who had elected to remain in the bus until it reached Piha.

The vegetation on both tracks is very typical of the region encompassing the western slopes of the Waitakere Ranges down to the Piha coastline. Variations in plant population and growth are largely due to the height above sea level, exposure of the ridges to wind, the relatively warmer conditions nearer sea level and to the sandy nature of the soil near the beach and sand dunes. Looking over the valleys one sees large forest trees, particularly in areas where milling has not been extensive in earlier days. Secondary growth is proceeding apace, and the increase

of seedlings and young plants amongst the undergrowth on the forest floor and along the sides of the tracks is pleasing to note and augers well for the future.

Very few flowers were seen, but many trees and shrubs were in bud, a sign of blossom to come within the next few weeks. Amongst those already in flower were kormiko (Hebe stricta), mingimingi (Cyathodes fasciculata) and at ground level, particularly on the clay banks, sundews (Drosera auriculata) and the small hooded orchid Pterostylis alobula. Along the edges of the track there were groups of akeake (Dodonaea viscosa) and Corokia buddleioides, both these occurring in all stages of growth. Pigeonwood (Hedycarya arborea) was plentiful, some specimens showing an unusual variation in the arrangement of leaves where, instead of the normal paired leaves at the nodes, three leaves occurred in groups along certain branches. (This variation was first noted by Mr Mead in the March, 1968 issue of the Newsletter. He mentioned in that article that a similar variation was known to occur occasionally in other genera which normally have opposite leaves such as Lonicera, Leycesteria and Coprosma and I have also found that it occurs fairly frequently in exotic Fuchsia species. - Ed.) Some very large tall tea trees (Leptospermum ericoides) still remain and, towards the seaward end of the track, there are a few exceptionally large specimens of Olearia alba.

Other obvious and plentiful members of the plant association of the area include : kauri, Agathis australis; totara, Podocarpus totara and P. hallii; tanekaha, Phyllocladus trichomanoides; hinau, Elaeocarpus dentatus; rewarewa, Knightia excelsa; several species of Coprosma including C. australis, C. lucida and C. rhamnoides; putaputaweta, Carpodetus serratus; mangeao, Litsea calicaris; hangehange, Geniostoma ligustrifolium; Senecio kirkii; houhere, Hoheria populnea and Carmichaelia aligera. On the slope nearer the coast pohutukawa, Metrosideros excelsa becomes a dominant species. Amongst the climbers we found Parsonsia heterophylla, Tetrapathaea tetrandra and the usual bush lawyer, Rubus australis and supplejack, Rhipogonum scandens.

Ferns grow in profusion. Amongst those seen were Schizaea bifida and some particularly fine examples of Gleichenia cunninghamii in the early stages of spring growth. Several patches of kidney fern, Cardiomanes reniforme, flourished in damp places. Hypolepis distans was also identified.

Before we left, homeward bound, Mr Lediard thanked Mr Mead who had arranged the outing with his usual careful planning. He referred to Mr Meads impending departure for Wellington and, in so doing, paid a tribute to the interest and enthusiasm which has always characterised his work for the Society. He has led us on many excursions, particularly to the Waitakeres where his knowledge of tracks both old and new is unsurpassed. We remember too our interesting visits to Hunua under his guidance. His wide knowledge of native plants and his generous help in finding and identifying them, has been very much appreciated. On behalf of the Society, Mr Lediard extended to Mr Mead our grateful thanks and our best wishes for the future.