

ROTORUA TRIP - LABOUR DAY WEEKEND.

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A party of 31 set off for Rotorua a little after 5.30 p.m. on Friday, 20th October in mild, fine weather. A short stop was made at Ngauawahia and, after a good journey, we arrived at our destination at 10.30 p.m. approximately. It is pleasing to report that the holiday traffic was well behaved.

Saturday was a beautiful day, perhaps a bit hot for climbing mountains, but excellent for getting the glorious views obtainable from the summit of Rainbow Mountain, whither we were bound. A forestry officer informed us that the road had been upgraded, but unfortunately for us the upgrading consisted of widening and the spreading of heavy metal which, on the ascent and descent, insisted on rolling under our feet at nearly every step. On arriving at the top, we found much to our surprise that a new fire-watcher had been appointed. He proved to be a very friendly young man, who was delighted to have so much company. From his lookout we enjoyed the sight of mountains, two snow capped, lakes, forests of varying hues of green, farms, and roads winding away into the distance.

The beauty of the day and the superb views distracted us to some extent from serious botanising, but we did note Dracophyllum strictum, Gaultheria antipoda and G. oppositifolia, Leptospermum ericoides var. microflorum, which has been recorded with certainty from this area only, Phyllocladus glaucus near the summit (a surprise), Persoonia toru in flower and Thelymitras (possibly all longifolia).

After lunch on the summit under the cloudless sky, we went with the permission of the Forestry officers to Kerosene Creek, where most of the party bathed their hot, tired feet in the warm water. The area was closed to the public on account of the fire risk in the forest, and we therefore felt somewhat privileged to be allowed to enter.

On the return journey a call was made at Whakarewarewa where, from a "Scotsmans Grandstand", we were able to get an uninterrupted view of a very fine display by Pohutu, the best of our geysers.

Sunday was another perfect day, hotter than the previous one, and we were soon off to Lake Okataina. The drive to this lake, after leaving the main road, takes one through bush until the shores of the lake are reached. It had been intended to enter the bush from the road but the bush was so much the same in appearance that the point of entry was not found. On arriving at the lake we took a not very well defined track along the eastern shore to some Maori burial caves. These are very interesting, but unfortunately their condition has deteriorated in the last four years, probably due to visitors climbing in and out of them.

The track passes through bush for its whole length, but botanising is difficult to some extent as one's attention is riveted to the track and one's feet. However short stops for breath or rest enabled us to see that Litsea calicularis was very plentiful, as also was Pteris macilenta. Near the caves we had the pleasant sight of a large clump of

Erina mucronata in full flower and nearby a very fine specimen of Leptospermum ericoides with a girth of approximately 7ft. 6 ins.

After lunch a few of the party had a spin round the lake in a speedboat. We then again attempted without success to find the spot to enter the bush from the road. Continuing the return journey to Rotorua, we passed on to the Kuirau Reserve, where the colour of the flowers was such that it brought forth many exclamations of surprise. Further amusement was obtained from the antics of the ducks in the lake and the bathing of feet in the pool provided for the purpose.

After dinner about half of the party attended church, being taken there in our bus.

Monday was again fine, but somewhat cloudy. This was for the best, in view of the amount of travelling we had to do. Our first call was at Lake Okareka to see the bird population. On production of some of our lunch as bait, we soon had the company of black swan with young and ducks with many small ducklings. Two pukeko arrived later but were not very friendly. Dabchicks kept their distance. Te Wairoa was our next port of call and, on the drive there from Okareka, we were treated to the wonderful sight of masses of Clematis paniculata scrambling over trees, shrubs and ferns. The shop at Te Wairoa, which contains a wonderful collection of souvenirs as well as relics of the Tarawera eruption, proved a great attraction to our members and it was difficult to get them all back on the bus when it was time to depart.

Our next stop was at the lookout between the Green and Blue Lakes. On a previous visit by the writer there was quite a bit of Gaultheria oppositifolia at this spot, but it has been removed in the march of "progress" to make more parking space for cars. A short walk along a road bordering the Blue Lake yielded Solanum aviculare and an Epilobium or two, but little else of interest.

A short drive took us to the shores of the Blue Lake, where grows a Pittosporum tenuifolium, the branches of which are heavily laden with the mistletoe Loranthus micranthus. This parasite has spread to other trees in the vicinity. In a matter of a few minutes it was found on an introduced tree, other Pittosporums, Pseudopanax arboreum and Coprosma robusta. To the rear of the tearooms was a 40 acre block of good bush which we did not have time to explore.

Leaving Blue Lake about 1 p.m. for Auckland, we had a good trip home, except for a slight traffic jam on the Bombay Hills, which did not delay us unduly.