

LABOUR WEEKEND 24th - 27th OCTOBERB. WORMALD

On the Friday evening we travelled to Ngaruawahia where we stopped for a picnic tea on the bank of the Waikato River, then on through Hamilton and Te Awamutu. At Kihikihi we turned off the main highway and followed the road to Whakamaru, arriving at Maraetai Lodge about 9.30 p.m.

Saturday We drove to Taupo where we met our leaders Mr Young and Mrs Cummings. There was a slight drizzle as we left the bus to climb Mt. Tauhara, but we had not gone far up the track before it eased off and the sun came out. We were delighted with the lovely view of Lake Taupo and the snow covered peaks of the mountains, Ruapehu, Ngaruahoe and Tongariro. The track was fairly easy but as it was such a long pull, only a few of the party climbed to the summit. Those who did were rewarded with a magnificent view of the surrounding country. The lower slopes of the mountain did not have a great variety of trees but we found quite a few Griselinia littoralis, the holly-leaved Olearia ilicifolia and Pseudopanax colensoi. It was interesting to note the great number of variations in the Pseudopanax. No two plants seemed to be alike. Blechnum vulcanicum grew on the banks in the shade and a Carmichaelia species and Rubus schmidelioides var. subpauperatus were fairly common. More species of ferns were found near the top of the mountain.

Sunday We again went to Taupo, then up to the Opepe forest which was so full of interest that we were loth to leave when the time came. There were many young Elaeocarpus hookerianus (pokaka) and Pennantia corymbosa (kaikomako) showing both juvenile and adult foliage, Pseudowintera colorata (horopito) Melicope simplex, matai, kamahi, Weinmannia racemosa and Gaultheria. The area was ideal for ferns, mosses and liverworts. There were several species of Blechnum and Hymenophyllum. Blechnum discolor, B. minus, B. vulcanicum, B. penna-marina and B. fluviatile; Hymenophyllum dilatatum, H. pulcherrimum, H. flabellatum, H. mutifidum and H. bivalve; also Polystichum sylvaticum, Todea superba and T. hymenophylloides.

Monday In the morning we returned to Taupo and visited the Waipahihi Botanical Gardens. The gardens cover about 85 acres and are kept in order by a small group of enthusiastic voluntary workers. The situation is ideal, not far from the town and with lovely views of the lake. Rhododendrons and Azaleas greeted us with a blaze of colour as we entered the gates. After admiring the exotics we turned our attention to the alpine garden where we saw a large collection of our natives: Celmisias, Violas, Raoulias, Ranunculus, Aciphyllas and Hebes. Hebe hulkeana caught our eyes with its lovely head of flowers. A bed of teatrees showed a large variety, from dwarf to tall species, double and single and every shade from white to deepest red. Further on we came to three species of beech, Schefflera digitata, Weinmannia silvicola and Clematis forsteri with a few cream-coloured flowers. We walked up through the fern track to an open area planted with young trees and shrubs and after wandering around we boarded our bus which was waiting to take us back to a large shed fitted out with tables and chairs. Here we had our lunch with a few members of the Waipahihi Botanical Society who kindly looked after us.

From Taupo we drove to Claudelands bush at Hamilton. From the roadside there appeared little to see except wandering jew under the kahikatea, but inside we found Athyrium australe, Lastreopsis glabella with beautiful long fronds and Arthropteris tenella, together with Paratrophis and pukatea with its buttresses at the base of its trunk.

At Ngaruawahia we turned across the bridge to Glen Massey and on to Waingaro. As we climbed over the hills we had extensive views over the country. We passed through Tuakau and Pukekohe before we reached the main highway at Drury, thereby missing most of the heavy traffic and arrived back at Auckland in good time.

THE HOME AND MARGUERITE TRACKS 15th NOVEMBER 1975

J. BEEVER

Who better to lead us on this trip than Miss Crookes. The tracks cut across an interesting part of the upper Piha valley and provide an excellent introduction to the Waitakere bush at its best for those who are studying it for the first time. The day was made most delightful by the spring season, for there were flowers everywhere, not in overpowering masses, but they were here, there and everywhere if you took the trouble to look. Many trees added to the show as they still carried berries from last year's crop.

On the forest floor numerous Pterostylis banksii (greenhood orchids) greeted us as we entered and later a few Thelymitra longifolia in bud, Microtis unifolia in flower and the epiphyte Barina mucronata also in bud above us added to the list of orchids. Hanging from trees in many parts were vines of supplejack, Ripogonum scandens, with berries and many with flowers as well.

Perhaps the most striking flowers were those of the kiekie, Freycinetia banksii. Male and female flowers are large and separate with white or pinkish bracts, 6 inches or more across, enclosing the tiny flowers assembled as in an arum lily on a finger-like axis. These were common along the track and did not seem to have suffered much damage from humans and other animals. Pigeonwood had just finished flowering but many had bunches of the red berries that give it its name. The tawa and taraire had insignificant flowers for large trees but they compensate for this by their large purple berries later. We were too late for Clematis flowers but the seed heads of C. paniculata were quite noticeably showy. Melicytus macrophyllus, the coarsely toothed mahoe, had berries while the ordinary mahoe, M. ramiflorus, still had flowers. The ramarama too was in flower with rather isolated white blooms standing out against the embossed leaves.

The most splendid show came from the twins of the Escallonia family, Quintinia serrata and Ixerba brexioides. In the Auckland province one is rarely found without the other and this year the Quintinia with its pale lilac racemes had a very good flowering year. Even from the bus it was eye-catching and intrigued most of us until we could get a closer look at it. The Ixerba or tawari has flowers