

McELWAIN LOOKOUT, QUARRY, MAUNGAROA RIDGE AND NIKAU GROVE TRACKS, PIHA:Notes on February 1981 field tripSandra Jones

In February wildflowers, both native and adventive, are still very much in evidence. The pink Centaurium and the blue Lobelia anceps were particularly abundant along the McElwain and Quarry Tracks. The pretty blue-flowered Wahlenbergia gracilis (harebell) and Linum marginale were both growing in the clearing at McKenzie Junction. W. gracilis is native to both Australia and N.Z., but L. marginale is an immigrant from Australia. It is easy enough to confuse these two unless you see them growing together, but the 'tips' of the Linum petals are much broader and the petals themselves are very delicate, almost translucent. A species of Linum (L. usitatissimum - try pronouncing it: its a lovely word!) is the 'true' European flax. Origin unknown, it was widely cultivated in Europe for its fibre from which linen is made and it has been cultivated for this purpose since early Egyptian times, but it is now largely superseded by cotton and the new man-made fibres. Lined oil is obtained from the seeds and the crushed residues form oil-cake which is an important food for cattle. Very impressive for a plant not much bigger than L. marginale! The white-flowered native species, L. monogynum is found (rarely now) on coastal cliffs in the Waitakeres.

The blue berries of the Dianella nigra (blueberry) became quite common along the way, but it is always a pleasure to come upon the slender erect fern Lindsaea linearis which is never very prolific and easily overlooked. Mr Hatch was with us and our attention was drawn to the two 'forms' of the orchid Orthoceras strictum - the 'normal' form with chocolate-coloured flowers and the controversial form which Mr Hatch described as O. strictum forma viride. This has a pale green flower with a yellow labellum. We speculated as to whether this was a true variety, or simply a colour form of the species caused by some external factor, e.g. soil type. In his book 'N.Z. Flowers and Plants in Colour', J.T. Salmon illustrates with photographs four colour variations of O. strictum.

Along the Maungaroa Ridge Track, we came upon several species of tree not particularly common in the Waitakeres. Where were the parent trees of the seedling matai and kawaka (Libocodrus plumosa)? In my short experience I can't recall having seen a totara in the Waitakeres which didn't oblige by growing in close proximity to a tanekaha, and so it was on this track. Another shrub, about 8 ft tall and leaning over the track so that we simply couldn't miss it, confounded a small group of us. We were inclined to take the easy (and familiar) way out, and classify it as 'adventive, species unknown', when a more experienced member, without hesitation, identified it as Pimelea longifolia, the native tree daphne.

This track is particularly noted for the large number and variety of Pseudopanax hybrids. We also studied a Pittosporum hybrid at McKenzie Junction which we concluded must be a hybrid between P. ellipticum with its dense tomentum and P. tenuifolium, both of which were growing in the area. Nestegis lanceolata (white maire) was in fruit as was Toronia (Perseonia) toru. The epiphytic orchid Earina autumnalis was in bud, and the red rata vine Metrosideros fulgens was just coming into flower. On the Nikau Grove Track, we observed a pretty maidenhair fern that caused considerable argument: was it the native Adiantum aethiopicum or the introduced A. capillus-veneris? We racked our brains for Miss Crookes' formula - in A. aethiopicum the sorus is found on the notch between the lobes of the pinnule, while in A. capillus-veneris, it is on the edge of

the pinnule lobe. 'E for edge for 'England'; N for notch for 'New Zealand'. We applied this formula and found that the species was A. aethiopicum. On the Lookout side-track off Nikau Grove Track, we found a Paratrophis microphylla with its distinguishing fiddle-shaped juvenile leaves; Sophora microphylla var fulvida - the Waitakeres own special variety of kowhai, identifiable by its dense tomentum; and Clematis forsteri growing all over low shrubs at the lookout.

A pleasant walk through the beautiful nikau grove for which the track is named concluded a most rewarding excursion.

MOSSES RECORDED AT UNIVERSITY RESERVE, KELLY'S ROAD

Jessica E. Beaver

The following mosses were recorded on the Botanical Society Trip to the University Reserve, Kelly's Road, Waitakere Ranges on 19 September, 1981.

Bryum billardieri	Hypnodendron sp.
Calomnion laetum	Hypnum cupressiforme
Campochaete arbuscula	Hypopterygium rotulatum
Campylopus torquatus	Leucobryum candidum
Cyatophorum bulbosum	Lopidium concinnum
Dicnemon calycinum	Macromitrium sp.
Dicranoloma billardieri	Ptychomnion aciculare
D. menziesii	Racopilum strumiferum
Fissidens pallidus	Rhizogonium novae-hollandiae
F. tenellus	Sematophyllum amoenum
Hypnodendron colensoi	Thuidium furfurosum
H. menziesii	Wijkia extenuata
Pterygophyllum quadrifarium	(reported by Blanche Wormald)

OUT-OF-PLACE ORCHID

A.E. Wright

Imagine my surprise while walking up Wellesley Street East in early December at seeing several flowering spikes of what appeared to be an orchid poking out of a Gazania patch in one of the Auckland City Council's tubbed street trees! Sure enough, it was Microtis unifolia in full flower, and looking twice as healthy as the numerous plants I've seen growing in its normal habitats (open bank, grassy areas, low scrub) over the past few weeks. Perhaps a forgotten trick of a Council gardener, but it just goes to show that there's Botany to be done twenty seconds from Queen Street!