

HAKARIMATA WALKWAY - 19 November 1983J.A. Rattenbury

Despite the atrocious weather of the previous day, ten members and friends showed up at the rendezvous for a prompt start, in glorious weather, at the southern end of the walkway on the Waignaro Springs road. The party included three "country members" from Hamilton whose familiarity with the track and its vegetation proved most helpful.

The vegetation of the Hakarimata Range is fairly typical of northern North Island forests, and an article mentioning some of its aspects with a fairly complete species list (we found ten additional species in flower or fruit) has been published by the late M.C. Gudex in *Trans. Roy. Soc. N.Z. (Botany)* 10 (1): 121-5 1962. The dominant canopy species on the lower slopes (at least the southern end) is Beilschmiedia tawa while at higher altitudes this gives way rather abruptly to Dysoxylum spectabile (kohekohe). There are a number of kauri trees, several quite large, in the range and substantial regeneration is occurring on the ridges above Ngaruawahia. The trip was notable for orchid species found, 13 in number (Gudex lists three more) most of them in flower. In addition to those cited in the flowering and/or fruiting list in the Feb/Mar 84 News-sheet, specimens in leaf only were identified as Pterostylis trullifolia, Corybas trilobus, Bulbophyllum pygmaeum and Earina autumnalis.

The most exciting find, a once-in-a-lifetime experience for most of us, was a magnificent clump of the saprophytic orchid-relative, Thismia (syn. Bagnisia) rodwayi. The smallish, orange flowers arising from pale rhizomes are almost completely subterranean and we were lucky that a sharp-eyed Hamilton member spotted the tiniest glimpse of colour among the leaf-litter beside the track. To our collective chagrin there wasn't a single camera amongst us. However, on the following Tuesday, a party from the Botany Department returned to the site and, armed with an arsenal of photographic equipment, captured the elusive creature!

Thismia, symbiotic with an endophytic fungus which is thought to supply nutrients from the soil (and perhaps, in turn, from the roots of nearby trees which the fungus also infects) belongs to a largely tropical family Burmanniaceae, many of whose members are saprophytic. This family and the related Orchidaceae constitute the order Orchidales. It differs from the orchids in being predominantly actinomorphic (radially-symmetrical flowers) with (usually) six epitepalous stamens rather than the one or two sessile orchidaceous stamens which are mounted on the central stigmatic column.

A smaller specimen was located nearby and the following day a third clump was spotted several metres distant beneath a log by someone hunting insects. Thismia has been found previously in the Hakarimatas and, in fact, was recorded two or three weeks earlier in a remote and fairly inaccessible region some distance away. It would seem to be in little danger of disappearing despite the rarity of sightings. The species is also found in Tasmania and Victoria.