

Saturday, November 4, was a showery morning both in Wellington and at Levin but the sun was shining at Paekakariki when five Wellington members met four from the Levin Flora Club. All walked along the road across a meadow which was gravelled and occupied by the Army for a time and now abandoned to the thistles. We went into a narrow gully clad with a remnant of much damaged coastal forest. The trees were mainly kohekohe, Dysoxylum spectabile, with karaka, nikau, ngalo, mahoe, wharangi, and karamu. Titoki was not conspicuous. The forest floor on the sides of this gully was simply a scree slope but in spite of this a few ferns survived. Near the stream the dainty Pteris tremula nodded its fronds and up the stone chutes Asplenium and Blechnum sheltered in the tree roots. Common along the bottom of the gully were the scarlet stars of the stinkhorn, Aseroe rubra.

A heavy shower cooled the air and damped the party as they toiled up the steep side of the ridge but soon the sun was shining brightly again. In the close cropped turf among the rocks we saw Oxalis corniculata, Vittadinia australis, and Geranium sessiliflorum all in flower. Mats of Raoulia glabra were wet and bright green. We followed the open ridge to a Saddle where we met the bush which covers the upper part of Mt. Wainui. It was open to stock and much damaged, but there was a variety of shrubby trees to be seen. Heketara in bloom, lemonwood, mahoe, makomako, rewarewa, rangiora, lancewood, Cordyline indivisa, kaikomako, lacebark, ramarama, and Drimys axillaris were all common. Kamahi though present in this shrubbery was not dominant as it is in many similar places. Along the track there were a number of tall five-finger shrubs from the top branches of which the leaves had been stripped and carpeted the ground. The leaves were mostly broken off clean at the base of the petiole, of some the petioles were broken across but otherwise they were not damaged. These leaves showed no sign of having been eaten though some people have said that opossums damage these trees. In this case it appeared that they had been blown off by the severe gale of the previous weekend. All these shrubby trees especially on the ridges are very exposed to the wind because there is no upper canopy of big trees left to break the force of the gale.

Kiokio was common: also climatis seedlings along the track and several masses of bloom were seen hanging in the tree tops. Other lianes were supplejack showing many thick, brown, succulent shoots and bush lawyer, fortunately not so common. We followed the muddy track up the ridge towards the top. The recent showers left the kidney fern and all the Hymenophyllums with their fronds gracefully spread. The crope fern was common in places. We passed one or two big rimu and miro still standing. Nearer the top we saw Shawia paniculata, Coprosma foetidissima, Podocarpus Hallii, Suttonia salicina and some tawa. We found the small Alsosmosia with pale greenish flowers heavily fragrant.

We stopped for lunch below the summit over which mist was gathered. We decided to return directly without going on to the top. It appeared that an extraordinary multiplicity of tracks had developed behind our backs while we had been eating. We wasted our time exploring several and at one stage were silly enough to investigate the head of a gully which was as rough as those places usually are, with a thicket of rangiora laced with supplejack and lawyer. We got back to the ridge with relief and found our track made so easy for us by all the pigs and deer. In spite of those time-wasting wanderings, the party, though scratched and muddy, were all in good spirits. The afternoon was beautifully warm and sunny. We came out again on to the turf ridge and turned down in to the gully nearer to Paekakariki than the one we had come up. We boiled our billy by a spring using chips from giant logs whose charred remains speak of the tall podocarp forest which between fifty and a hundred years ago covered Mt. Wainui.

We returned down an easy grassy ride which followed a line of pylons. Undoubtedly this would be the easiest route to go up Mt. Wainui another time. The stream in this valley was bordered with a strip of secondary growth, kohekohe, makomako, mahoe and karaka mainly, and surprisingly, in the middle of all this a large whau, in full bloom. We suppose that it may have been seeded from cultivated specimens in Paekakariki gardens. We reached the station in comfortable time for the Wellington train; we bade farewell to our good friends from Levin and left them awaiting the Northbound train.