

# Mt. Taratihi, East Cape District

R. D. Creswell, Tokomaru Bay

SITUATED between the Mata river system on the east and the Mottu river system on the west, Taratihi, 4600 feet, is the highest point of a range which extends northwards from the Waitahaia River to within three miles of the old Kapua trig, ten miles south-west of Hikurangi. This Taratihi range is flanked on the west side by steep spurs ending in the Ruatahunga Stream, and on the east side by the Mangaokura Gorge.

The rainfall is high and the lower slopes are clothed with heavy podocarp-broadleaved forest. Red beech (*Nothofagus fusca*) grows on the crest of the ridges where there is pumice and the soil is drier. Many of the gullies have very little soil coverage over the sandstone base. Most of the steeper slopes are covered with rock debris. Under these conditions quick-growing broadleaved trees predominate; larger trees survive where the hill sides are not so steep and the soil coverage is better.

From 2500 feet up to 3500 feet red beech, tawari (*Ixerba brexioides*), thin-bark totara (*Podocarpus hallii*), kamahi (*Weinmannia racemosa*) and mountain cedar (*Libocedrus bidwillii*) form a mixed forest. Higher up silver beech (*Nothofagus menziesii*) predominates, with *Dracophyllum latifolium* and *Coprosma foetidissima* plentiful. Broadleaved species such as fuschia and wineberry (*Aristotelia serrata*) become stunted as the altitude increases. At 3500 feet the less densely covered ridges have patches of the forest tussock *Danthonia cunninghamii* here and there. Further up, as the silver beech decreases in height, the leatherwood species, *Olearia colensoi* and *Senecio elaeagnifolius*, grow in large clumps with many dead silver beech evident. Indications are that silver beech is receding from the higher more exposed ridges, as very few seedlings and young trees can be found. At 4000 feet subalpine scrub dominates; this is composed of the two leatherwood species mentioned above, together with *Coprosma pseudocuneata*, *Dracophyllum adamsii*, *Gaultheria paniculata*, and *Gahnia procera*. *Pittosporum rigidum* and *Dacrydium biforme* are also present. Above 4400 feet this scrub becomes dwarfed and at the summit, 4600 feet approximately, the rocky ground supports *Gaultheria depressa*, *Pimelea buxifolia*, *Pentachondra pumila*, *Dacrydium laxifolium* and *Gahnia procera*. Among these grow *Aporostylis bifolia*, *Oxalis lactea*, *Euphrasia cuneata*, and *Gentiana bellidifolia*. Other species occurring on the summit are *Danthonia flavescens*, *Lycopodium australianum*, and *Luzula campestris* var. *floribunda*.

A cliff east of the summit is composed of sandstone bands protruding beyond softer rock. The rock ledges have collected fine

scree material and are covered with moss. In this moss grow *Myosotis forsteri*, *Helichrysum bellidiodes*, *Epilobium glabellum*, *E.* sp. (unnamed—illustrated in Bulletin No. 26), and *Viola cunninghamii*. Steep fine scree at the base of this cliff supports a mass of *Coriaria pottsiana*, with *Dracophyllum adamsii* and *Coprosma parviflora* growing through it. *Olearia ilicifolia* is also present.

The forests below the scree are mostly beech, with a little rimu and matai flanking the Mangaokura Gorge. Cedar appears to be absent from this side of the mountain; further south, however, it occurs on the crests of ridges. The Mangaokura Stream is difficult to negotiate: many bluffs overhanging deep pools or rapids have to be climbed round or by-passed. A few trees of *Pittosporum ellipticum* were seen in the gorge, and *Cotula squalida* and *Gnaphalium keriense* thrive on the moist rocky banks. The lower mixed forest flanking the Ruatahunga Stream is eaten out by cattle, but no damage is evident above 2500 feet. Pig rooting is seen where the soil is dry and pumacious, especially on spurs where rooting may extend to 4000 feet. Regeneration is good: unlike a lot of the neighbouring ranges cedar is holding its own, and many seedlings are present. Toatoa (*Phyllocladus glaucus*) is uncommon and likely to die out: only a few seedlings and two mature trees were seen. Opossum damage is mostly near the Ruatahunga Stream; no traces of opossum were seen above 3500 feet. Deer are, as yet, absent from this area.

## Plant Distribution Records (3)

A. P. Druce, Wellington

As in previous lists (Bulletins 26 and 27), the records have been placed in alphabetical order for each Botanical District. An asterisk indicates that the species is recorded from the North Island for the first time.

### WELLINGTON BOTANICAL DISTRICT

- Arthropodium cirrhatum* (Forst. f.) R. Br. Wellington Coast: small gully between mouth of the Orongorongo R. and mouth of the Wainuiomata R., A. D. Beddie, L. B. Moore, A.P.D.  
*Asplenium anomodum* Col. Eastern Wairarapa Hills: Kourarau V., limestone cliff, 1500 feet, A.P.D.  
*Carex cirrhosa* Berggr. Western shore of Lake Wairarapa, A.P.D.

### VOLCANIC PLATEAU BOTANICAL DISTRICT

- Hebe parviflora* (Vahl.) Ckn. et Allan. N.W. base of Mt. Tongariro, forest margins, 3000 feet, A.P.D.