

**Day 2 Saturday 15 February**  
**Waitakere River and Ananui Cave**  
**Miles & Gillian Giller**

A contingent of 10 headed up the Waitakere (Nile) River on a clearing morning, to botanise the walking track and be introduced by Alice to the processes, terminology and beauty of karst formations. The filmy ferns *Hymenophyllum frankliniae*, *H. flexuosum*, and *Polyphlebium venosum* (*Trichomanes venosum*) were particularly abundant on *Dicksonia squarrosa* trunks, with *H. revolutum*, *H. flabellatum*, *H. scabrum*, *H. dilatatum*, and *H. rarum* also occurring on other host trunks. Several small patches of lance fern *Loxogramme dictyopteris* (formerly *Anarthropteris lanceolata*) were seen on rocks, trunks and branches, whilst *Pteris macilenta* and loose mats of *Mazus novaezeelandiae* ssp. *novaezeelandiae* (Declining) were recorded along track margins. On an open riparian terrace *Coprosma propinqua* occasionally occurred as small multi-branched trees, larger than customarily encountered in Canterbury. *Cordyline banksii* occurred along bush margins, its graceful long leaves often hanging down to the ground (Fig. 1). Curtains of the climbing rata *Metrosideros colensoi* were much admired. Several specimens of the orchids *Earina autumnalis* and *Winika cunninghamii* were seen (the perfume of the former also appreciated) in flower.

After lunch we crossed the river. We were given a guided tour through the Ananui (Metro) Cave labyrinth, and shown the spectacular stalactites, stalagmites and other limestone formations. *Pseudopanax macintyreii* (Naturally Uncommon) was seen hanging from a cleft in the limestone buttress above the first cave entrance, whilst *Jovellana sinclairii* (Declining) with its purple-spotted flowers was found at the far exit.

*Postscript from Sally Tripp*

I found a really interesting fern on the Saturday Nile River trip. Everyone else was busy identifying other plants so I picked a piece and kept it to identify later. The fern was a *Hymenophyllum*. It was 49 × 7 cm (very long for a *Hymenophyllum*) with just a few hairs on the rachis, winged stipes and numerous sori. The margins were smooth, and the indusium flaps somewhat toothed. Even using the key in *New Zealand Ferns and Allied Plants* by Brownsey and Smith-Dodsworth, I could not come to any conclusive identification so I wrote to Leon Perrie, attaching a photo of the dried fern. He consulted with Patrick Brownsey and they concluded it was a balding version of *Hymenophyllum scabrum*! He explained that *H. scabrum* often loses its stipe hairs as it matures, making it tricky to identify. The stipe of *H. scabrum* is normally very hairy. So now I know some ferns can become bald and elongated when they mature.



**Figure 1** Our contingent headed up the Waitakere (Nile) River, with the graceful *Cordyline banksii* on bush margins.



**Figure 2** The colourful Denniston eyebright (*Euphrasia wettsteiniana*) (photo Paul Maurice).