



**Fig. 11. *Pittosporum turneri*, Kuratau River. Photo: Margaret Peart, 2 Feb 2010.**

**Kuratau River and Waituhi Lookout, SH 47 towards Taumarunui, Tuesday 2 February 2010  
Mike Wilcox**

At this stage we were homeward bound and our group had shrunk to a dozen, but there was still more to see. We stopped at a frosty-looking clearing near the Upper Kuratau River bridge and inspected some fine specimens of *Pittosporum turneri* bearing good crops of fruit (Fig. 11). Also here were *Olearia virgata*, plentiful mountain toatoa, miro, Hall's totara, *Corokia*

*cotoneaster*, *Aristotelia serrata*, *Coprosma tayloriae*, *Hebe parviflora*, *Dracophyllum subulatum*, *Pittosporum colensoi* and *Griselinia littoralis*.



**Fig 12. *Olearia ilicifolia*, Waituhi Lookout. Photo: Mike Wilcox, 2 Feb 2010.**

Our last botanical stop was at the spectacular lookout at the top of the Waituhi Saddle on the southern end of the Hauhungaroa Range, where we saw extensive thickets of mountain holly (*Olearia ilicifolia*) (Fig. 12), and had wonderful views out over the high country we had been visiting during the long weekend.

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## A visit to the Whangamarino Wetland

**Mike Wilcox**

On 20 February 2010 we headed south over the Bombay Hills down into the northern Waikato near Meremere to explore the famous Whangamarino Wetland – New Zealand's equivalent to Florida's Everglades (without the alligators) and Brazil's Matto Grosso (without the anacondas).

Those in attendance were: *Waikato group*: Monica Peters & Keith Thompson (leaders), Yanbin Deng, Janet Planet, John & Stella Rowe *Auckland group*: Jan Butcher, Ewen Cameron, Xin Cheng, Hamish Dublon, Michelle Dublon, Eunice Hall, Kristy Hall, Stewart Hall, Marcel Horvath, Peter Hutton, Helen Lyons, Barrie McLeay, Christine Major, Mike Wilcox Maureen Young.

We were very fortunate to have wetland experts Keith Thompson and Monica Peters (Fig. 1) from Hamilton on hand to lead the way and explain the history and

ecology of the wetland – one of New Zealand's biggest (Clarkson 2002, Reeves & Askew 2003). Janet Hunt (2007) describes it as a superlative wetland of c. 6000 ha, representing 20% of Waikato's remaining wetlands, "its unassuming, somewhat willow-infested appearance belies its significance: its interconnected system of peat bogs, peat swamps, ponds, lakes, streams and rivers, and their associated specialised plant and animal life, represents huge value to the nation and the world".

We visited three sites.

**Island Block Road, south of old school overlook**

Here we entered a restiad bog covering c. 2000 ha, the dominant peat-forming plant being wire rush (*Empodisma minus*) (Clarkson & Clarkson 2006; Clarkson et al 2004). Unlike the Kopouatai peat dome





**Fig. 1. Keith Thompson and Monica Peters explaining the ecology of the Whangamarino Wetland, Island Block Road. All photos: Mike Wilcox, 20 Feb 2010.**



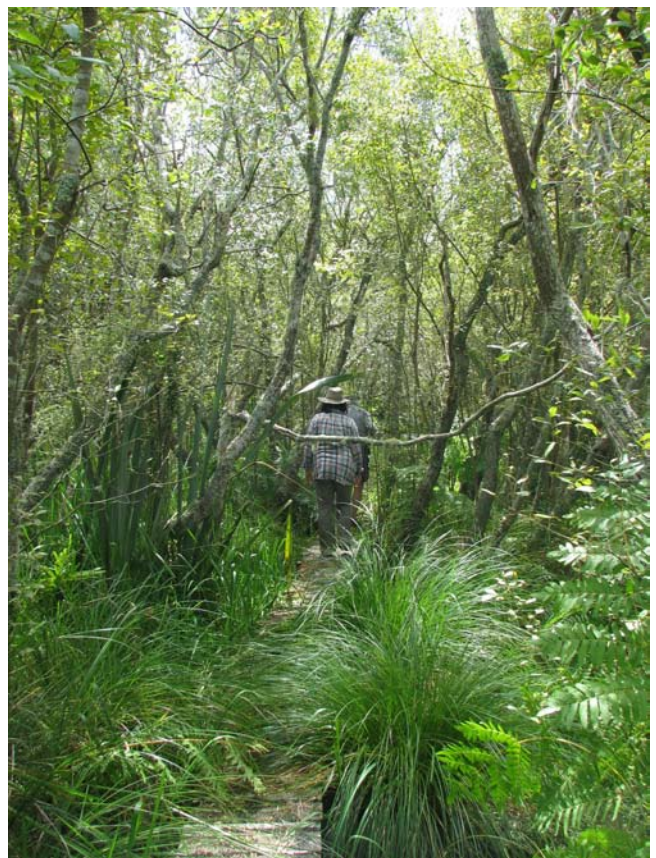
**Fig. 2. *Sparganium subglobosum*, Whangamarino Wetland, Island Block Road.**

(Wilcox 2004) bamboo rush (*Sporadanthus ferrugineus*) is not present in the Whangamarino restiad bog.

At first there was swampy scrubland with manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*), grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) swamp coprosma (*Coprosma tenuicaulis*), flax (*Phormium tenax*), royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), and several plants of smaller stature such as swamp willowherb (*Epilobium pallidiflorum*), spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Australian willow weed (*Persicaria strigosa*),



**Fig. 3. *Epacris pauciflora*, Whangamarino Wetland, Island Block Road.**



**Fig. 4. *Salix cinerea* forest, Peter Buckley's boardwalk, Whangamarino Wetland, Falls Road.**

burred reed (*Sparganium subglobosum* – Fig. 2), swamp millet (*Isachne globosa*), *Eleocharis acuta*, *Juncus*



*fockeii*, *Ludwigia palustris*, *Hydrocotyle pterocarpa*, creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and tangle fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*). Comparative rarities were *Dianella haemata* and *Astelia grandis*.

Out in the more open, acidic part of the bog, which had been burned in 1989 (National Wetland Trust 2006), the vegetation was much shorter, the main woody species being manuka and *Epacris pauciflora* (Fig. 3), with wire rush, tangle fern, *Schoenus brevifolius*, *Baumea teretifolia* and *B. rubiginosa* being the main ground cover. Nestled underneath wire rush were patches of sphagnum moss (*Sphagnum cristatum*), a thallose liverwort (*Riccardia crassa*), and the tiny insectivorous bladderwort, *Utricularia delicatula*. This was one of the sites intently studied by Clarkson (1997). Somewhere near here has been recorded the swamp helmet orchid (*Anzybas carsei*) (Brandon et al. 2004). This very rare orchid responds favourably to fire (Norton & de Lange 2003, de Lange et al. 2010).

### **Peter Buckley's Ziggert wetland landscaping project, Falls Road**

Environment Waikato Chairman Peter Buckley is a farmer and keen conservationist. At his property adjoining Falls Road we examined ponds he has

created. These supported vigorous growth of reed sweet grass (*Glyceria maxima*), *Ludwigia palustris*, primrose willow (*Ludwigia peploides* subsp. *montividentis*), duckweed (*Lemna minor*), parrots feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), and on the drier bunds, weeds such as beggar's ticks (*Bidens frondosa*), gypsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), umbrella sedge (*Cyperus eragrostis*), fleabane (*Conyza sumatrensis*), *C. minima*, American fireweed (*Erechtites hieraciifolia*), stinkweed (*Dittrichia graveolens*) and *Juncus effusus*. Eventually there is planned to be lookout points from the higher ground being built up using spoil from a nearby quarry.

### **Peter Buckley's boardwalk**

This is through 7-9 m tall forest of grey willow (Fig. 4), with abundant royal fern beneath it, and a sprinkling of flax, swamp coprosma, hybrid coprosma (*Coprosma ×cunninghamii*), crack willow (*Salix fragilis*), karamu (*Coprosma robusta*), mapou (*Myrsine australis*), swamp kiokio (*Blechnum novae-zelandiae*), *Hypolepis distans*, *Carex virgata*, *C. secta*, *C. lessoniana*, *C. fascicularis*, *Isolepis prolifer*, *Cordyline australis* and *Dicksonia squarrosa*. It is representative of large areas of the Whangamarino Wetland, given over to grey willow swamp forest.

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