Fungi are "beyond our ken" as far as many of our members are concerned, consequently members were much interested in an enlightening lecture by Dr. Barbara Segedin on this enormously varied group of non-flowering plants. A feature of the evening was the showing of some extremely beautiful slides of local species by our President, Mr Lediard.

We did not expect Mr and Mrs. T. Wood to return from their overseas trip empty handed and on Wednesday July 3rd we saw some delightful slides of parks and gardens overseas, taken by Mr Wood and instructively described by Mrs. Wood.

It is not often that any of our members are fortunate enough to make a visit to those fascinating islands the Three Kings. These small islands lie about 53 km. W.N.W. of Cape Maria van Dieman in the 34 6' south latitude. The smallest apart they rise abruptly from the sea and landing is by no means easy. At one time the vegetation was threatened by goats but the Government adopted a policy of complete extermination and the original vegetation has made a good recovery. Would that the complete extermination policy could be adopted as regards all introduced fauna destroying our native plants. Our thanks to Mr. Michie for his informative account.

A Visit To The Three Kings Islands

On Dec. 31st 1962 a party of eight including myself, spent three days on the Great King; the weather was perfect and the birds and plant life were very interesting. The plants peculiar to the Kings group number thirteen; twelve of these are to be found on the Great King and one, Elingamita johnsonii on West King only.

Ten of the plants are small trees, one a climber, one a more or less prostrate Hebe and a Carex. Not having known the state of the vegetation on the Great King during the period of goat infestation and consequent plant destruction, I am not in a position to make comparisons of then and now, however, the gap between aged or mature trees and juveniles tell their own story. Taking Pohutukawas as one example though these are sprinkled

throughout the Great King, in no place did I observe any between approximately six and ten feet high. Growing on an easy slope on the western side of the island near the top of the Tasman valley is a small compact group of very nice mature pohutukawas about a quarter of an acre in extent; this part of the island is the only portion not covered with manuka: for the most part here, it is comparatively open, possibly the result of a fire many years back during Maori occupation: all along this slope are literally dozens of small pohutukawas up to a few feet high and looking quite healthy.

Another striking example of the gap between mature and juvenile is Pittosporum fairchildii; this nice small tree appears to be more restricted to the western portion of the island, which incidentally, is the highest point, almost 1000 ft.; it was only down the steep scree and boulder rocks that I saw mature trees, yet directly above, among sizeable manuka at the top of the Tasman valley, plants up to eight and ten feet high were fairly common, many laden with big, round capsules; all these plants have obviously grown since the destruction of the 393 goats in 1946.

Another interesting feature of the plant life is the abundance of yound Puka (Meryta sinclairii) throughout the island. At the time of the destruction of the goats, I think it is correct to say that not a specimen was known here; the birds have since spread the seed from North East and South West Islands. Of the Titoki (Alectryon excelsum) which is peculiar to the Great King, I saw one only, growing on the northern side of the steep scree slope on the narrow waist as it were of the island, this is the only place where a few trees had been previously discovered. Time did not permit a thorough check for more if they still exist. This Titoki has a leaf not unlike the mainland species, but each leaflet is much larger and has only one pair of leaflets on either side apart from the terminal leaflet, further the leaflet is thicker.

The Rangiora (Brachyglottis arborescens) is fairly well distributed over the island; it, too has a harder leaf than the mainland species, the upper surface of the leaf is darker green and the under surface very white. As the shrub reaches a height of nine or ten feet it tends to get shaggy, with the leaves in groups at the branch and twig terminals; as a young vigorous plant it is quite attractive.

Paratrophis smithii, counterpart to the Turepo or milk tree of the mainland is a very different looking shrub from the mainland species and is well distributed among the manuka and along stream edges, especially in Tasman valley; the shrub has large dark green, entire leaves up to nine inches long and four inches wide and has a somewhat untidy look about it, not having an upright habit and is rather like a quince tree. At each leaf the twig takes a few degrees kink to one side, then at the next

leaf to the other side, giving the twigs a slightly zigzag appearance. The flowers are quite insignificant, like those of its mainland cousin they grow out from the hard, woody parts of the twigs and also from the trunk of the shrub after the manner of the Kohekohe.

Coprosma macrocarpa is quite a pleasing looking shrub, being well distributed, having large bright green leaves and the largest fruit I have seen on any Coprosma, this being orange colour when ripe. Cordyline kaspar (the Kings cabbage tree) is well distributed; it has shorter leaves than the mainland species, the leaves not having the fibre that C. australis has. There was a complete absence of grub mutilated leaves so much in evidence on the mainland and the plant is more slender.

Hebe insularis is a very soft, twiggy type of Hebe, usually inclined to be sprawlly. It grows down the cliff ledges, on the scree and on the collar just above the cliffs. It was in full bloom at the time of our visit; the flowers are a pale lilac in terminal clusters not unlike those of H. diosmaefolia. I came on one plant which was an exception to the rule; it was a very handsome, little, compact, round clump about three feet high and the same wide and I took a nice colour slide of it. The creeping Davillia tasmanii which climbs through rock crevices and is also present through the manuka is quite a pleasing little fern.

We come now to one of the two gems of the Great King, Tecomanthe speciosa. This was located with little difficulty, growing on a stream bank in Tasman Valley; all accounts I have read concerning this climber have stated that only one vine existed. This however, is not correct. There is a group of four separate flourishing vines - they may have and probably did come from the larger vine originally.

Plectomirtha baylisiana, the one and only known tree, we failed to locate - it was our only disappointment. We spent a good while looking for it in the vicinity of the locality given, but without results.

A creeping plant not commonly met with in the vicinity of the sea on the northern mainland, is the native cucumber: this is quite common on both the Great King and South West King, in fact too common. Its ripe seed burrs are a real curse, if one happens to push past a vine unnoticed the segments of the burrs immediately cling to your clothes after the fashion of piri-piri (bidi-bid), but the difference is that the cumumber has very thin sharp, brittle irritating thorns. A herb which must have been practically wiped out by the goats but is now abundant is the Oru (Pratia physaloides) which in parts of the Tasman Valley forms masses of soft green.

Very little evidence of Maori occupation remains, with the rapid regeneration over the past sixteen years the ground for the most part is completely covered.

Four of our party, myself being one, landed for about three hours on the South West King. After a scramble through about thirty yards of tight, twiggy Taupata we found ourselves in a beautiful Puka forest, a dense canopy of large leaves above and a covering of fallen leaves under foot; this was something entirely new and very fascinating. A plant which immediately claimed our attention was a large leaved and large fruited Kawakawa. Nothing I have seen on the mainland or the Hen Island anything like approached this plant for leaf and fruit size.

Owing to the dense canopy there was very little growing beneath the puka besides a sprinkling of kawakawa already referred to and a light sprinkling of Paratrophis smithii, some of the latter had slightly larger leaves than the largest on Great King, this can be accounted for by the quality of the soil which is a rich humus.

A tree growing among the puka and approximately the same height (10 to 12 ft) with large, long, tapering, elliptic entire dark green glabrous leaves, fairly fleshy but soft in texture proved to be Parapara (bird catching tree); it is present also on the Hen Island. An occasional puka which had reached its life span or had been blown down, affording a space for other plants to grow, would usually be be occupied with vigorous plants of Poroporo. Nearing the highest point on the island on the western side a rocky precipice is reached; here the puka thins out giving place to stunted Taupata, flax and cucumber. Along the lower parts coming up from the sea on the southern and south eastern approaches, before the puka commences, it is fairly steep and rocky: this portion was invariably covered with a stunted, tangled mixture of Hymenanthera, ngaio and taupata, with cucumber vines thrown in for good measure, the combination making a well nigh impregnable barrier. Time did not permit of other than a quick run over a part of the island therefore this brief account of the flora is very scanty.

Ross Michie

Our thanks to Mr. Kitchen for his account of the finding of Meringium minimum (A.Rich.) Copeland at Golden Bay. I can well understand his surprise at its habitat, as I well remember my own surprise in finding it growing on a branch of tree overhanging