QUARTERLY NEWS LETTER

AUCKLAND BOTANICAL SOCIETY

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The year 1961 has been a happy and successful one for the Society. As it draws to a close, the Editor takes this opportunity of thanking members for the co-operation she has enjoyed both in regard to the News Letter and other activities of the Society. It remains only to wish all members a very happy holiday and rewarding botanizing in their chosen holiday areas, and trust that they will later bring records of interest that may be shared with fellow members via the News Letter.

Some years ago it was decided that the Auckland Botanical Society and the Auckland University Field Club should assist in the collecting and recording of material which would help to provide the basis for a Flora of Auckland. The area to be considered was defined as "the area bounded by a line from the Waikato Heads to Miranda and from Helensville to Warkworth." Different people undetook to collect and list specimens within certain specified districts in this area. Specimens were to be numbered and include both native and naturalised plants. For various reasons this scheme never reached completion. Valuable permanent collections were made by Mrs. Hynes, Katie Wood and Edwin Hatch. These three members duly pressed, labelled and numbered their specimens and deposited them in the Auckland War Memorial Museum. A collection was also made by one of our country members, Mr. Bartlett of Albany, but being some distance from the Museum his collection has been kept beside him for reference.

The other members dealt with the following three areas: The Huia area, this included the land between Destruction Gully and Spragg Park. This large and important slice of the Waitakeres, with its many different types of vegetation would have daunted most people. But Katie Wood set herself steadily to work and a considerable number of her week-ends for the next two years were devoted to making a truly impressive collection.

Since then further specimens have been added as something else caught her watchful eye. Her collection now includes close on five hundred different species and varieties including a number of new records for the area.

Continuing down the northern shore of the Manukau Harbour towards Onehunga we come to the Laingholm district, and the enthusiasm of Edwin Hatch has provided us with a very full and thorough collection from this part.

Coming still further east we strike the Waikowhai Reserve. This Park has been in the capable hands of that assiduous collector, Mrs. Hynes, and it is fortunate that this last little remnant of native bush in the locality should have been worked over with such extreme care. It will be seen then that collections have been made right along the northern shores of the Manukau Harbour. These three collections are now housed and cared for in the Auckland Museum where they are available for reference by botanical workers. Since they were deposited about twelve years ago they have been carefully looked after by Dr. R. Cooper. Dr. Cooper goes through these collections and poisons them twice a year and sees that they are kept separate from the main collection. We would like to take this opportunity of thanking Dr. Cooper on behalf of the Society for the trouble he has taken with these members' specimens.

Recently some of our members, hearing of the "Flora of Auckland" scheme, wondered whether it might not be possible to revive it. As a result of a meeting held at "The Chimes" on Wednesday, July 5th a somewhat simpler and less ambitious scheme was thought more practicable. This new scheme was first suggested by Miss Joan Dingley who has always been a most successful collector and keen field worker.

It was decided that instead of one or perhaps two members undertaking to deal with a whole large area single handed, the Society should choose some suitable place, not unduly large, and that it should be dealt with by as many members as possible working in co-operation. Study should continue throughout the year, members making not less than three excursions to the selected area. It was agreed that small teams of a few members each should undertake the study and collection of certain groups of plants. These could be studied as under; trees, shrubs and small trees, mosses, ferns, herbs, introduced weeds, grasses, sedges, orchids and monocotyledons not otherwise specified. The epiphytes and climbers could, we thought, be dealt with by our junior members. Members skilled in photography could also play their part while we rely on Mr. Mead secretary of the Centennial Park Board to provide us with any needed maps. When our year's work is complete we hope to publish the results in a small bulletin.

After considerable discussion the members decided that they would first confine their attention to the Waitakeres.

On the suggestion of Mr. Mead it was decided we should first seek out a small area of virgin Kauri forest - that is, one as near virgin as possible, for now unfortunately there cannot be found any kauri forest on the ranges of which it can be said that it is truly virgin. Later it was thought we could find some suitable piece of secondary growth forest and thus be able to compare and contrast the two areas.

To implement these suggestions a small sub-committee was elected consisting of Miss Crookes (convener), Mrs. Hynes, Mr. Kitchen and Mr. Mead. The committee met and considered at length the areas of relatively untouched bush that Mr. Mead's remarkable knowledge of the Waitakeres enabled him to suggest. After three preliminary visits the committee members at last marked out a small but eminently satisfying area. This is easy of access, bounded by two creeks and a track, so there should be no possibility of anyone getting lost. The easiest entrance is from the Scenic Drive taking the Fairy Falls track, which runs down the eastern side of the range not far from Cutty Grass Track. Some little distance down one turns left along the Diamond Track and then left again along Goodfellow's track. Details of section are provided in the accompanying map kindly prepared by Mr. Mead. Names on the map were also supplied by Mr. Mead. Although our programme for the year was complete, owing to the enthusiasm of members, it was decided to put on an extra excursion, so that everyone could become familiar with the place and do some collecting and observation while it was still spring. Accordingly members set forth on Nov. 24th and all found the area a rich and satisfying one. It is intended to have at least another two trips there next year so that we can follow vegetation changes from one season to another. Some members will also no doubt like to visit the spot between whiles as they may wish to make additional observations.

Collecting

Mr. Mead, Secretary of the Centennial Park Board has kindly given us permission to collect with the object of providing material useful for a future flora of the Waitakeres, under the following conditions:

"Herbarium specimens should be collected with care not to disfigure trees and plants.

In the case of rare plants only the group leader will be permitted to take a specimen.

Seedlings must not be removed."

Signed,
A.D. Mead.
21/11/61.

Project Area

