

Field trip to Martins Bay and Scandretts Regional Park, Mahurangi Peninsula, 15 February 2020

Maureen Young

Participants: Jenny Andrew, Ewen Cameron, Bev & Geoff Davidson, Frances Duff, John Millett, Peter Moosberger, Joshua Salter, Cheryl Taylor, Liz Walker, Jack Warden, Alison Wesley, Liam Winterton, Maureen Young (leader).

A planned walk in a reserve west of Martins Bay, Mahurangi Peninsula, had to be abandoned due to kauri dieback, so on a blessedly cloudy day, after a month of brilliant sunshine, it was pleasant to walk, first north along the beach (Fig. 1) and then up a 4WD road to Scandretts Regional Park (Fig. 2). (See Appendix 1 (native plants) and Appendix 2 (exotics) for a record of our observations.) The roadside plants were obviously stressed by the dry conditions, especially several large mamaku (*Cyathea medullaris*) (Fig. 3) and taraire trees (*Beilschmiedia tarairi*). One enormous pohutukawa enticed us to an early tea break before we had even reached the top (Fig. 4). Later, in the clifftop forest, we saw several stark, dead taraire trunks, and other dead taraire in the canopy, witness to the dry season of 2013 (Fig. 5). The canopy consisted mainly of large kanuka (*Kunzea robusta*), puriri (*Vitex lucens*) and pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*). Lacebark (*Hoheria populnea*) was common as we started up the road. The dainty coastal fern, *Pteris saxatilis*, was present. In the roadside gravel grew a patch of tawapou (*Planchonella costata*) seedlings, with a few taraire seedlings for good measure, a sign of a kereru feast (Fig. 6). The tawapou leaves were yellowing, but the taraire seedlings were dead, emphasising that species' intolerance of drought.

At the top of the road we headed along the fence line so we could observe the clifftop vegetation (Fig. 7). Stunningly massive, multi-trunked pohutukawa, bearing heavy loads of *Astelia hastata* (Fig. 8), were common, and we decided it would be difficult to age them by counting tree rings. A huge tawapou tree (Fig. 9) with twisted branches was flowering, with solitary, axillary flowers, but these were so minute that a hand lens was required to check the details. Such tiny flowers never-the-less produce the beautiful, large, multi-coloured fruit that, on the northern coast, form a useful addition to the diet of kereru, and here this tree was a common component of the forest. *Coprosma macrocarpa*, another northern coastal species, was common, and we finally spotted *C. robusta* to compare the two. We soon moved into planted vegetation, including manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*), (not seen up to this point), the ubiquitous karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*), (though in this case, so near the cliff edge, it was appropriate), *Coprosma robusta* and

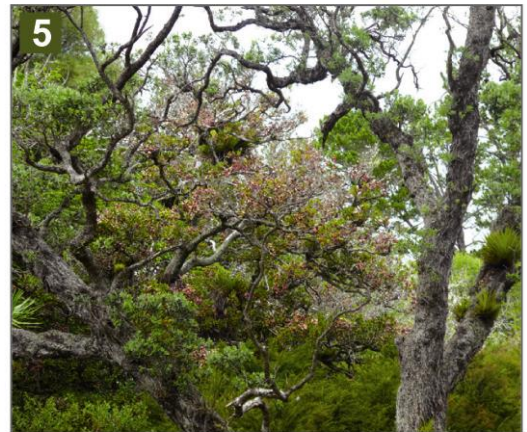
rather too much whau (*Entelea arborescens*). Along the clifftop walk we examined a single turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*) among the huge pohutukawas – a legacy of a pre-revegetation era? (Fig. 10). At our lunch stop we looked down on a parched small tree of rangiora (*Brachyglottis repanda*) (Fig. 11) and the view over the Hauraki Gulf beyond.

After lunch we cut down over paddocks (Fig. 12), and in a gully the local kowhai (*Sophora chathamica*) was plentiful, and unmistakable as to the species. Eric Godley (pers. comm.) said that he considered it to look like an orchard tree, and in its robustness it is so different from the dainty, weeping *S. microphylla* that we saw on our recent visit to Fiordland. Also in this gully Ewen was interested in two well-formed trees in the Cupressaceae, which turned out to be Mediterranean cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*).

On reaching the old Scandrett house (Fig. 13) the garden was of interest, with our attention drawn immediately to a large, handsome deciduous tree with developing green fruit, that proved to be pecan (*Carya illinoensis*). Several small plants were growing nearby, and much interest was focussed on whether they were seedlings or shoots. The rock-hard ground made it impossible to check this, but the general consensus was that they would be shoots growing from roots that had been damaged when a shallow drain had been recently dug near the tree. Other old trees there were quince (*Cydonia oblonga*) and pomegranate (*Punica granatum*).

In 2010 Auckland Council biodiversity officer, Brenda Osborne, collected a specimen of a tree of *Citrus ?xaurantiifolia* that she lodged in the Auckland Museum herbarium (AK). Her notes explained that it was an old, borer-ridden tree that might not survive, but new plants had been propagated from it by the ARC. It had originally been reported as being a lime tree given to the Scandrett family by Governor George Grey in the nineteenth century. Other plants on the farm from the same source are the old Norfolk Island pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*) growing along the waterfront, and the succulent *Furcraea selloa* found under pines (*Pinus radiata* and *P. pinaster*) on the steep sandstone cliffs. There are a number of trees growing around the coast of Kawau Bay, and elsewhere in the district, that are credited with being gifts from the Governor when he lived at Mansion House on Kawau Island.

From there on we completed the circuit by walking uphill to the junction with the 4WD road (Fig. 14) and then it was back down to Martins Bay, where the water babies enjoyed a swim.



Figs. 1–7: **1.** Group examining the plants along Martins Bay. Photo: JS. (All photos were taken on the day, by Ewen Cameron (EC), Joshua Salter (JS) and Cheryl Taylor (CT). **2.** Broad 4WD road to Scandretts Regional Park. Photo: CT. **3.** Group discussing the species on roadside – mamaku holding on in the drought. Photo: CT. **4.** Unscheduled tea-break under a huge pohutukawa. Photo: JS. **5.** A dead or dying taraire stands out in the green canopy. Photo: EC. **6.** Tawapou seedlings under what must be a favourite pigeon perch. Photo: JS. **7.** Fenceline discussion – Geoff showed us specimens that he gathered from over the fence. Photo: CT.



Figs. 8–14: **8.** Pohutukawa usually had an *Astelia hastata* load – some more than their fair share. Photo: EC. **9.** Geoff examining the largest tawapou on the cliff edge. Photo: JS. **10.** Large pohutukawas and a solitary planted Turkey oak (arrow) along the clifftop walk. Photo: JS. **11.** Rangiora in need of a drink – islands in the distance (from left): Motuketekete, Moturekareka, Motutara. Photo: JS. **12.** Descending the paddock past a large pohutukawa with lower branches kept bare by diligent grazing animals. Photo: JS. **13.** The old house seen from near Scandrett Bay – note the large pecan tree (asterisk) in the back garden. Photo: JS. **14.** We departed via the farm road up the hill behind the house. Photo: JS.

Appendix 1: Indigenous vascular plants seen during the field trip to Scandretts Regional Park, 15 February 2020, with additions from AK herbarium records

Ferns	Dicotyledons	
<i>Adiantum hispidulum</i>	<i>Beilschmiedia tarairi</i>	<i>Senecio esleri</i>
<i>Asplenium oblongifolium</i>	<i>Brachyglottis repanda</i>	<i>Sophora chathamica</i>
<i>Blechnum chambersii</i>	<i>Carpodetus serratus</i>	<i>Vitex lucens</i>
<i>Blechnum filiforme</i>	<i>Coprosma areolata</i>	
<i>Blechnum novae-zelandiae</i>	<i>Coprosma macrocarpa</i>	Monocotyledons
<i>Cyathea dealbata</i>	<i>Coprosma rhamnoides</i>	<i>Arthropodium cirratum</i>
<i>Cyathea medullaris</i>	<i>Coprosma robusta</i>	<i>Astelia banksii</i>
<i>Dicksonia squarrosa</i>	<i>Corynocarpus laevigatus</i>	<i>Astelia hastata</i>
<i>Doodia australis</i> #	<i>Dysoxylum spectabile</i>	<i>Astelia solandri</i>
<i>Lastreopsis microsora</i>	<i>Geniostoma ligustrifolium</i>	<i>Carex flagellifera</i>
<i>Lastreopsis velutina</i> (BS Parris 1966)	<i>Geranium homeanum</i>	<i>Carex solandri</i>
<i>Microsorium pustulatum</i>	<i>Hoheria populnea</i>	<i>Carex uncinata</i>
<i>Microsorium scandens</i>	<i>Knightia excelsa</i>	<i>Carex virgata</i>
<i>Pneumatopteris pennigera</i>	<i>Kunzea robusta</i>	<i>Cordyline australis</i>
<i>Polystichum neozelandicum</i>	<i>Melicytus ramiflorus</i>	<i>Gahnia lacera</i>
<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>	<i>Metrosideros excelsa</i>	<i>Juncus edgariae</i>
<i>Pteris saxatilis</i>	<i>Myrsine australis</i>	<i>Juncus sarophorus</i>
<i>Pteris tremula</i>	<i>Nestegis lanceolata</i>	<i>Juncus usitatus</i>
<i>Pyrrosia elaeagnifolia</i>	<i>Parsonsia</i> sp.	<i>Microlaena polynoda</i> (J Boow 2005)
	<i>Piper excelsum</i>	<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>
	<i>Pittosporum crassifolium</i>	<i>Oplismenus hirtellus</i>
Gymnosperms	<i>Planchonella costata</i>	<i>Poa anceps</i>
<i>Dacrycarpus dacrydioides</i>	<i>Pseudopanax lessonii</i>	<i>Phormium tenax</i>
<i>Podocarpus totara</i>	<i>Senecio bipinnatisectus</i>	<i>Rhopalostylis sapida</i>

Specimens of *Doodia* cf. *aspera* and *Doodia* ?*aspera* × *D. australis* were collected in 1966 by Barbara Parris from the south end of Martins Bay and were deposited in AK, but are now considered to be a form of *Doodia australis*.

Appendix 2: Exotic plants from Scandretts Regional Park deposited in AK herbarium.

Dicotyledons	
<i>Carya illinoensis</i>	cultiv. (EK Cameron, 27 Dec 2007, AK 301425; EK Cameron, 15 Feb 2020, AK 379565)
<i>Citrus</i> ? × <i>aurantiifolia</i>	cultiv. (B Osborne, AK 310437)
<i>Epilobium tetragonum</i>	wild (EK Cameron, 15 Feb 2020, AK 379564)
<i>Homalanthus populifolius</i>	Wild, all removed (J Boow, 10 Jan 2010, AK 290262)
<i>Kennedia rubicunda</i>	garden remnant, spreading (DJ Galloway, Aug 2002, AK 283520; J Boow, 7 Jan 2005, AK 290260)
<i>Leucanthemum maximum</i>	garden remnant (J Boow, 10 Jan 2005, AK 290265)
<i>Quercus cerris</i>	cultiv. (EK Cameron, 15 Feb 2020 AK 379568)
Monocotyledons	
<i>Allium vineale</i>	wild (EK Cameron, 27 Dec 2007, AK 301423)
<i>Freesia laxa</i>	garden remnant, spreading (J Boow, 10 Jan 2005, AK 290264; ME Young, 3 Dec 2007, AK 306449)
<i>Fucrea selloa</i>	garden remnant? Spreading vegetatively (EK Cameron, 27 Dec 2007, AK 301426)
<i>Juncus imbricatus</i> var. <i>chamissonis</i>	wild (EK Cameron, 27 Dec 2007, AK 301424)
<i>Microlaena polynoda</i>	wild (J Boow, 10 Jan 2020, AK 290261)
<i>Polypogon fugax</i>	wild (EK Cameron, 15 Feb 2020, AK 379566)