SOME NOTES ON THE TAWARI - - - M. Crookes

The flower so accurately shown in Katie Wood's charming sketch is doubtless familiar to many members, for the tawari (Ixerba brexioides) is one of the loveliest of our flowering trees. It belongs to the Escallonia family which gives us also the familiar putaputaweta (Carpodetus serratus), and our three species of Quintinia. It grows from Ahipara to the northern parts of Hawke's Bay and is found in forests in hilly country. It lives in the Waitakeres and I had always believed that it was confined to the higher altitudes, not being found below eight to nine hundred feet. I was then greatly surprised when I found a flourishing young tree growing on the banks of the Opanuku stream not far from the Mountain Road bridge - thus approximately at only 300 feet. Discussing this find with my friend Katie Wood however, she told me that she had found specimens in a small area of very lush forest bounded partly by the Huia stream, and at an altitude of not more than 200 feet. She had never seen Ixerba at a low altitude anywhere else in the Huia region. It would be interesting to know if any other members have noticed low altitude specimens. In any case it will be worth while watching out for them.

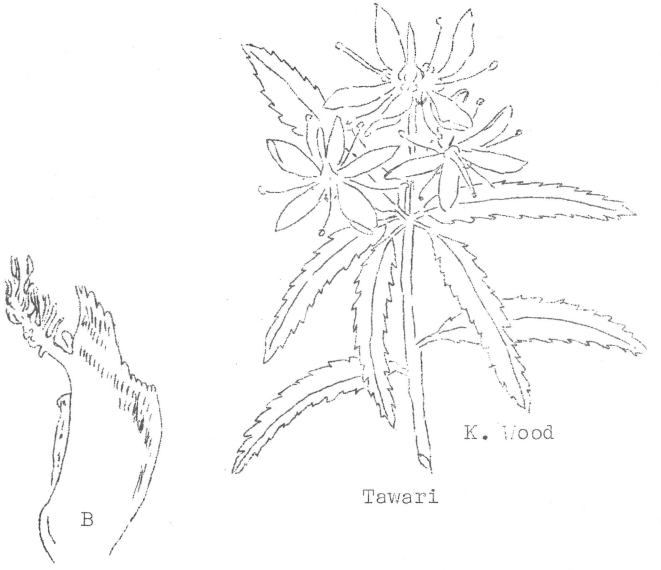
The flowering time of Ixerba is not without its puzzles. Cheeseman gives it as November-December. Allan refuses to commit himself. I once found it flowering in the Piha valley in the middle of winter, yet the same year I noticed it on the ridge above Huia (about 1400 feet) blooming freely a few days before Christmas. Here again one would be glad of observations from members. The beautiful flowers of tawari were greatly valued by the Maori. Indeed Cheeseman tells us they honoured them with a special name, calling them whakou. Not surprisingly they used them for necklaces and garlands on special occasions. But these large, slightly greenish white flowers are useful as well as beautiful. A beekeeping friend tells me that tawari honey is held in high regard by bee-farmers. It is of good quality though somewhat watery. It is dull white in colour and owing to its high water content is always used blended with other honeys. Incidentally my friend finds that the honey-flow of tawari takes place for a fortnight during November.

THE WEST COAST PROJECT - - - M. Crookes

The project of investigating cliff vegetation along the West Coast from Erengi Bay to the mouth of the Pararaha seems to be going very well. Mr. Butler, the member of our team concerned with orchids has good news to report. A plant he discovered in company with Mr. Warren has turned out to be an apparently new form of Thelymitra, corresponding with plants found previously in other parts of the ranges by Mr. Hatch. We await the published description with interest. Mr. Butler makes a point of growing his orchids, which not only enables him to study them at all stages, but also prevents any possibility of missing a flowering season. The next flowering of the new

species should be of particular interest. Ten species of orchids have been so far recorded, and Mr. Butler will doubtless add to this number. The writer, who is studying the ferns, finds them both intriguing and sometimes perplexing. But alas how greatly has the fern wealth been diminished by marauding cattle. Miss Barr is finding much of interest in the West Coast Kowhais and we hope to have reports from other members of the team later.

(I first found the Anawhata Thelymitra on the ridge overlooking the Lower Nihotupu Dam in 1946, and subsequently on the top of Ruatewhenua (1957) and on Donald McLean (1962). Mr. Butler's discovery of it on the cliffs at White's Beach last summer extends it range over the whole of the Waitakeres, but so far only in high exposed places. I was not, in 1946, so well acquainted with our Thelymitras as I have since become, and erroneously included this actually quite distinct plant in Th. pulchella. It flowers in December more or less, and has a noticeably stiff erect leaf with much purple in it. (Has this something to do with exposure to salt winds ?) The flowers are a bright blue-purple, the perianth segments rather narrow with rolled margins. The secondary lobes of the column-wings bear sparse yellow fimbriae. Mr. Lediard has two slides of the flowers of this plant. E.D.H.) (see A - back and B - side below)



Tawari

(Thelymitra sketches after J. Bruce Irwin)