

Field trip to the track from Conical Peak Road to Govern Wilson Road, north of the Dome Forest, Warkworth, 21 March 2020

Maureen Young

Participants: Yumiko Baba, Paul Bell-Butler, Ewen Cameron, Neil Davies, Frances Duff, Marley Ford, Kseniia Goluban, Leslie Haines, Wendy John, Jetta Laurenson, John Millett, Peter & Jenny Moosberger, Helen Preston Jones, Juliet Richmond, Joshua Salter, John & Karen Staniland, Cheryl Taylor, Alison Wesley, Ian Whitehouse, Maureen Young (leader).

The day's walk was on a track that leads from a forestry road, Conical Peak Road, across to Govern Wilson Road, a minor gravel road that leads to Matakana Valley. It is much used by dirt-track drivers, and there are deep track-ruts and mud-holes in the orange clay (Fig.1), but after an extremely dry summer it made for good walking. Despite this 4WD use, there were very few weeds found, and a number of those that were present were concentrated at the start of the track (Fig. 2), or in the wet mud-holes (Fig. 3).

The meeting place was on the lower reaches of Conical Peak Road, and there we car-pooled and left the remaining vehicles safely parked. We had one stop before we reached the track entrance – this was to view a roadside bank that was covered with *Lycopodium scariosum*. This much-branched, prostrate lycophyte favours this habitat, but quickly succumbs when other plants overwhelm it. The prolonged drought had affected it somewhat, but there was enough to give us a good idea of its features, including the upright stems bearing erect cones (Fig. 4). There were also small patches of *L. volubile* and *Lycopodiella cernua* there, which provided a handy comparison. From here on, the road deteriorated to a pot-holed state that made for a slow, careful journey.

On the track we estimated that the bush would have been cut-over about a hundred years ago, as the resulting kanuka (*Kunzea robusta*) growth was very tall and mature and in the early stage of senescence, but the regrowth of more permanent vegetation was well on its way. One of the excitements of the day came early in the walk when Marley and Paul had a non-botanical find of a small population of the giraffe weevil (*Lasiorrhynchus*

barbicornis) near the base of a mahoe (*Melicytus ramiflorus*). There were maybe half-a-dozen small males, having the extended snout (rostrum) of that gender, with feelers near the tip (Fig.5). The single female had a shorter snout and her feelers were half-way down the snout so she could bore into wood to bury her eggs. Chocolate Fish No. 1.

A common plant was *Cyathea smithii*, and growing in the middle of the track in one place was a nursery of small tree ferns, mostly this species, but with one *Cyathea dealbata* (Fig. 6). It was a useful exercise to sort them out by appearance. The shiny, crepe-like surface of *C. smithii* distinguished it from the duller surface of *C. dealbata*. The two lines of golden scales on the stipes of *C. smithii*, with a clear space between, was another useful feature.

The commonest conifer was rimu, (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) (Fig. 7), with Hall's totara (*Podocarpus laetus*) in second place. Miro (*Pectinopitys ferruginea*) was here and there, mostly as seedlings, as was kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*), but only one kauri (*Agathis australis*) sapling, one totara (*Podocarpus totara*) and one tanekaha (*Phyllocladus trichomanoides*) were seen.

A dead trunk across the track at eye-level, probably of rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*) (Fig. 8), was, at first glance, clothed only in *Hymenophyllum sanguinolentum*, but closer scrutiny revealed two orchids – a clump of *Drymoanthus adversus*, and a mat of *Bulbophyllum pygmaeum* – and two mosses, *Dicnemon* and *Macromitrium* sp. (Jessica Beever from image, pers. comm.) (Fig. 9). Altogether, the track was a good place for filmy ferns (Fig. 10), due, no doubt, to the fact that, even after our dry summer, it was damper than at lower altitudes. Well along the track the kanuka canopy was left behind and the vegetation was older and more permanent. Looking out over a steep valley, the taraire (*Beilschmiedia tarairi*) trees still bore green foliage, whereas taraire are suffering badly lower down. The heads of pukatea (*Laurelia novae-zelandiae*) trees showed up on the valley-sides too.

Figs. 1–6: 1. One of the deeper ruts in the track, initially carved into the clay by large forestry vehicles. Photo: JS. All photos taken on 21st Mar 2020, by Joshua Salter (JS) or Ewen Cameron (EC). 2. Colony of *Anemone × hybrida* on Conical Peak Road, near the start of the track, probably from dumped garden waste. Photo: EC. 3. Maureen and Marley discussing the two *Hypericum* species present. Photo: JS. 4. *Lycopodium scariosum* on a roadside bank near the track. JS. 5. Male giraffe weevil (*Lasiorrhynchus barbicornis*), approx. 45 mm long excluding antennae. Photo: JS. 6. Young *Cyathea smithii* (shiny fronds, below and left) and *C. dealbata* (above), in centre of track. Photo: JS.





Figs. 7–12: **7.** Young rimu trees lined the track at the lunch stop. Photo: JS. **8.** Helen and Alison discussing the epiphytes on a partially fallen rewarewa. Photo: JS. **9.** *Bulbophyllum pygmaeum* with minutely hairy leaves to 13.5 mm long, competing with a vigorous colony of *Dicnemon* and *Macromitrium* moss species, on the fallen rewarewa trunk. Photo: JS. **10.** Filmy fern (*H. sanguinolentum*) on a leaning kanuka trunk. Photo: JS. **11.** *Tmesipteris* sp. and *Astelia microsperma*, on a silver fern trunk. Photo: JS. **12.** Marley proved handy with a spanner (Neil employed the jack) while John M. and John S. and the rest of us watched. Photo: JS.

Three species of tmesipteris were seen on tree fern trunks – *Tmesipteris lanceolata*, *T. elongata* and *T. tannensis*, and this gave Yumiko a chance to familiarise herself with them. At one place three species of astelia grew epiphytically and allowed an opportunity to compare *Astelia solandri*, *A. hastata* and *A. microsperma* (Fig. 11). My claim that *A. microsperma* only grows above 1000 feet (I'm a bit metrically dyslexic) in these parts, had me worried. But by consulting a topo map (346 m.) and a Smartphone, it was established that we were at 1135 feet a.s.l. so that was alright! At 2.15 pm most of the group decided it was time to turn and retrace our steps, but the fit young duo had got to the end of the track where it meets Govern Wilson Road. On their return, and with a bit of off-track

botanising, they had found *Hymenophyllum lyallii* – Chocolate Fish No. 2.

Unfortunately, an unseen piece of an iron warratah, the remains of an old gateway, tore a piece out of one of John Millett's tyres on the drive back down. Fortunately one of the fit young fellows (Marley Ford) was in John's vehicle, and Marley and Neil Davies set about changing the wheel for him. The rest of the occupants of both vehicles stood about and offered helpful advice (Fig. 12).

Acknowledgements

I thank Joshua Salter and Ewen Cameron for sorting out the images and captions. Joshua Salter thanks Jessica Beever for identification of *Dicnemon* and *Macromitrium* in Fig. 9.

Appendix. Species list for Conical Peak Road to Govern Wilson Road, north of Dome State Forest Compiled by Ewen Cameron & Maureen Young, 21 March 2020.

* Exotic

Lycophytes 2 (1 native + 1 exotic)

Lycopodium volubile
Selaginella kraussiana * very local

Ferns 33 (33 + 0)

Asplenium flaccidum
Asplenium oblongifolium
Asplenium polyodon
Blechnum discolor
Blechnum filiforme
Blechnum fluviatile
Blechnum fraseri
Blechnum membranaceum
Blechnum novae-zelandiae
Cardiomanes reniforme
Cyathea dealbata
Cyathea medullaris
Cyathea smithii
Dicksonia squarrosa
Hymenophyllum dilatatum
Hymenophyllum flabellatum
Hymenophyllum lyallii
Hymenophyllum rarum
Hymenophyllum revolutum
Hymenophyllum sanguinolentum
Lastreopsis hispida
Leptopteris hymenophylloides
Lygodium articulatum
Microsorium pustulatum

Microsorium scandens
Paesia scaberula
Phlegmariurus billardiarei
Rumohra adiantiformis
Tmesipteris elongata
Tmesipteris lanceolata
Tmesipteris tannensis
Trichomanes elongatum
Trichomanes venosum

Gymnosperms 7 (7 + 0)

Agathis australis
Dacrycarpus dacrydioides
Dacrydium cupressinum
Pectinopitys ferruginea
Phyllocladus trichomanoides
Podocarpus laetus
Podocarpus totara

Dicotyledons 51 (45 + 6)

Alseuosmia macrophylla
Anemone x hybrida *
Beilschmiedia tarairi
Beilschmiedia tawa
Callitriche muelleri
Carpodetus serratus
Centella uniflora
Chamaemelum nobile *
Clematis paniculata
Coprosma autumnalis

Coprosma lucida
Coprosma rhamnoides
Coprosma robusta
Dysoxylum spectabile
Elaeocarpus dentatus
Elatostema rugosum
Euchiton involucratum
Gamochaeta simplicicaulis *
Geniostoma ligustrifolium
Griselinia lucida
Hedycarya arborea
Hoheria populnea
Hypericum humifusum *
Hypericum pusilla
Knightia excelsa
Kunzea robusta
Laurelia novae-zelandiae
Leptospermum scoparium
Leucopogon fasciculatus
Melicytus macrophyllus
Melicytus ramiflorus
Metrosideros diffusa
Metrosideros fulgens
Metrosideros perforata
Myrsine australis
Myrsine salicina
Nertera depressa
Nertera dichondrifolia
Nestegis lanceolata

Olearia rani
Pittosporum tenuifolium
Prunella vulgaris *
Pseudopanax arboreus
Pseudopanax crassifolius
Ranunculus reflexus
Rubus australis
Rubus cissoides
Schefflera digitata
Ulex europaeus *
Vitex lucens
Weinmannia sylvicola

Monocotyledons 31 (23 + 8)

Aristea ecklonii *
Astelia hastata

Astelia microsperma
Astelia solandri
Astelia trinervia
Bulbophyllum pygmaeum
Carex lambertiana
Carex solandri
Carex uncinata
Cordyline australis
Cordyline banksii
Cyperus eragrostis *
Dianella nigra
Drymoanthus adversus
Earina mucronata
Entolasia marginata *
Freycinetia banksii

Gahnia setifolia
Isolepis reticularis
Isolepis sepalcalis *
Juncus articulata *
Juncus effusus *
Juncus planifolius
Juncus prismatocarpus
Juncus tenuis *
Microlaena avenacea
Microlaena stipoides
Paspalum urvillei *
Rhopalostylis sapida
Ripogonum scandens
Rytidosperma gracile

Fauna notes

Giraffe weevils (male and female) on a mahoe.
 Cicadas still singing, but not deafening.
 Birds: fantail, tomtit, kereru were all frequent.

The Waiotemarama Walkway, Waima Forest, South Hokianga, 26 October 2019

Maureen Young

Thiagaraj (or Tiago) Mahalingam, from India, has been working in New Zealand since 2015. As he was keen to spread his wings and see more of the country's botany than that which he encounters through his work around Auckland, we headed north over Labour Weekend 2019 and took in Trounson Park and Waipoua Forest on the way up to the Hokianga Harbour. The next day, as one of us now finds steep tracks troublesome, it was off to an early start for a very leisurely wander up the wondrous Waiotemarama Walkway in Waima Forest.

This track used to consist of a loop that passed through the most beautiful kauri (*Agathis australis*) forest that one could wish to see, and from the top of the loop the track carried on to the Hauturu Trig, at an altitude of 679 m. not far short of the highest point in Northland. Bot Soc explored around this trig during a memorably wet and primitive camp in the Waima Forest over Anniversary Weekend 2003 (Young et al. 2003) but approached it then from the other side. The track has been closed for some time because of kauri dieback but was reopened in July

2019. Sadly, one side of the loop remains closed and the bulk of the kauri forest is out of bounds. The track is now so well constructed that it must vie with the best in the country. Extra-sturdy timbers line the steps and are used on the few boardwalks. A honeycomb of thick plastic has been laid on the track before gravel was placed on top, with the aim of preventing the gravel from scouring out in heavy rain. Even though the materials were dropped in by helicopter, it still must have been a mammoth task to complete. About two thirds of the way to the summit the construction comes to an end with a second boot-cleaning station, and a tramping-standard trail carries on.

From the first boot station at the car park it takes a short distance to get into real forest, but this stretch has its own delights—two or three lush patches of the rare endemic large-leaved herb, *Lobelia physaloides* (formerly described in this genus, then placed in *Colensoa*, followed by *Pratia* and now back to *Lobelia*) (Fig. 1). There was no sign of the long blue flowers or the fat purplish-blue berries that