

ROYDON DOWNS SCENIC RESERVE FIELD TRIP

Paul Cashmore

On Sunday 1 May seven members of the Botanical Society set out to explore the little-visited DOC-administered Roydon Downs Scenic Reserve. This 129 ha reserve is situated in the foothills between Pongakawa and Lake Rotoiti at the end of Ridge Rd. As far as I am aware it is one of the few DOC reserves in the Bay of Plenty that hasn't been visited by the RBS before, hence a good opportunity for exploration.

The group initially headed along Ridge Rd, which runs through the entire reserve as a rough track/4WD road with walking access only, continues on through the pine block at the southern end and eventually becomes Lichenstein Rd. A quick stop by a seat enabled a good view over the northern part of the reserve, which consisted mainly of two ridges with a large gully in between. Initially the vegetation along Ridge Rd was dominated by young secondary vegetation such as manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) and rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*), some areas of bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*), gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and rank exotic grassland. Also present were occasional more serious weed species such as aluminium vine (*Galeobdolon luteum*), grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) saplings and cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster glaucophyllus*) near the start of the track.

We then continued along Ridge Rd following it down to where it crosses the main gully, which is quite open with areas of exotic grassland, probably as a result of past logging activity and perhaps grazing. Also noted were large patches of *Diplazium australe*. In shady areas on the track the native grasses *Oplismenus hirtellus* ssp. *imbecillis* and *Microlaena stipoides* were abundant.

We then decided to follow a track off the main road heading up the gully into another clearing. Here we unfortunately found wandering willie (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) scattered quite extensively around the edge of the clearing in the bush. We entered the forest proper with large titoki (*Alectryon excelsus*), tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa*), kohekohe (*Dysoxylum*

spectabile), pukatea (*Laurelia novae-zelandiae*) and some small specimens of small-leaved milk tree (*Streblus heterophyllus*) present. It was noted how open the forest was with few understorey plants other than occasional ponga (*Cyathea dealbata*), kawakawa (*Macropiper excelsum*), hen and chicken fern (*Asplenium bulbiferum*) and a few other species. It was concluded this was possibly due to deer and wallaby browsing although very little evidence of presence of either species was seen throughout the day. It was probably also partly due to the nature of this type of forest (tawa-dominated) which can be often relatively open in the understorey and subcanopy. This gully ended in a small 'amphitheatre' with daylight above on the horizon. Three of us climbed up to a ridge expecting to find the farm boundary, but instead found it was covered in mainly bracken fernland but with native species starting to regenerate through it. This narrow ridge then dropped away to another gully with similar tawa-dominated vegetation. This was also part of the 'L'-shaped reserve. We returned to the main clearing for some lunch in the sun.

After lunch the party continued along Ridge Rd until the pines on the southern boundary were reached. We ventured off track and followed the shallow gullies and then a small ridge while heading north near the western boundary of the reserve. As the forest was reasonably open the walking was fairly easy going. Several adult nikau (*Rhopalostylis sapida*) were noted here, whereas previously we had only encountered numerous small, sometimes browsed seedlings present in the understorey. The subcanopy in this area was dominated by kohekohe with many large trees noted, mostly in fairly good condition. We followed the ridge through several small clearings until we found ourselves back at our lunch spot, having completed a loop.

From here we decided to follow the main gully down through the reserve, a pleasant walk weaving through, clearings of exotic grassland interspersed with areas of forest. Several windfalls were inspected at close range for interesting plant species with eyes peeled for the elusive *Peperomia tetraphylla* which is known in this general vicinity. Unfortunately only the more common *P. urvilleana* was found after much looking. The

damp, shady conditions allowed an abundance of epiphytes on the mahoe (*Melicytus ramiflorus*), pukatea and tawa trees. Species noted included *Blechnum filiforme*, *Collospermum hastatum*, *Collospermum microspermum*, *Hymenophyllum rarum*, *Hymenophyllum sanguinolentum*, *Microsorium pustulatum*, *Pyrrosia eleagnifolia*, *Trichomanes venosum*. It was also a good place to compare several *Uncinia* species. After meandering down the main gully which remained dry with no permanent water course, we eventually reached the pine block at the northern end neighbouring the reserve. We followed the reserve fence-line up the hill, coming out to the vehicles.

We had gained a good overall impression of the vegetation types in the reserve. Apart from the small areas of bracken fernland on the ridge and exotic grassland clearings in the main gully, the forest is largely tawa-rewarewa-mangeao forest with occasional pukatea present. It would once have had podocarps present but judging by the number of clearings and tracks the area has been heavily logged, with only one rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) sapling noted. The subcanopy in the tawa-dominated forest is largely kohekohe, especially on the drier hill-slopes and ridges with scattered mahoe, ponga, pigeonwood (*Hedycarya arborea*) and localised titoki present throughout. The understorey is generally fairly sparse throughout most of the reserve. Kohekohe, ponga, kawakawa, mahoe and pigeonwood are amongst the more common species present. It is a nice piece of forest, albeit still recovering from its logging and possibly grazing days. This forest type is fairly typical of what would be expected in this area and is similar to what is found commonly in the larger nearby Rotoehu Forest Conservation Area, with no major botanical surprises.

The general consensus from the day was that it was a good place to visit, suitable for all groups including families.

ROYDON DOWNS SCENIC RESERVE

VASCULAR PLANT SPECIES LIST

Graeme Jane, John Hobbs

Gymnosperm trees and shrubs

Dacrydium cupressinum
Podocarpus totara

Monocotyledonous trees and shrubs

Cordyline australis
Rhopalostylis sapida

Dicotyledonous trees and shrubs

Alectryon excelsus
 * *Abutilon darwinii* × *pictum*
Aristotelia serrata
Beilschmiedia tawa
 * *Berberis glaucocarpa*
Brachyglottis repanda
 * *Buddleja davidii*
Carpodetus serratus
Coprosma grandifolia
Coprosma lucida
Coprosma robusta
Coriaria arborea
 * *Cotoneaster glaucophyllus*
 * *Dendrobenthamia capitata*
Dodonaea viscosa
Dysoxylum spectabile
Elaeocarpus dentatus
 * *Erica lusitanica*
Fuchsia excorticata
Gaultheria antipoda
Gaultheria antipoda × *G. paniculata*
Gaultheria paniculata
Geniostoma rupestre var. *ligustrifolium*
Griselinia lucida

Hebe stricta
Hedycarya arborea
Hoheria populnea
Knightia excelsa
Kunzea ericoides
Laurelia novae-zelandiae
Leptospermum scoparium
Leucopogon fasciculatus
 * *Leycesteria formosa*
Litsea calicaris
Macropiper excelsum ssp. *excorticata*
Melicytus lanceolatus
Melicytus ramiflorus
Myrsine australis
Pittosporum eugenioides
Pittosporum tenuifolium
Pittosporum tenuifolium ssp. *colensoi*
Pomaderris sp. aff. *phyllicifolia*
 * *Populus yunnanensis*
 * *Prunus* X *domestica*
 * *Prunus persica*
Pseudopanax arboreus
Pseudopanax crassifolius
 * *Rubus phoenicolasius*
 * *Salix cinerea*
Schefflera digitata
Solanum aviculare
Streblus heterophyllus
 * *Ulex europaeus*
Weinmannia racemosa

Monocotyledonous lianes

Freycinetia banksii
Ripogonum scandens

Dicotyledonous lianes and related trailing plants

- * *Rubus fruticosus* agg.
- Calystegia tuguriorum*
- Metrosideros diffusa*
- Metrosideros fulgens*
- Metrosideros perforata*
- Muehlenbeckia australis*
- Parsonsia heterophylla*
- Passiflora tetrandra*
- Rubus cissoides*

Psilopsids, Lycopods & Quillworts

- Huperzia varia*
- Tmesipteris elongata*

Ferns

- Adiantum cunninghamii*
- Anarthropteris lanceolata*
- Asplenium bulbiferum*
- Asplenium flaccidum*
- Asplenium oblongifolium*
- Asplenium polyodon*
- Blechnum chambersii*
- Blechnum discolor*
- Blechnum filiforme*
- Blechnum fluviatile*
- Blechnum novae-zeelandiae*
- Cyathea cunninghamii*
- Cyathea dealbata*
- Cyathea medullaris*
- Deparia petersenii*
- Dicksonia fibrosa*
- Dicksonia squarrosa*
- Diplazium australe*
- Doodia australis*
- Histiopteris incisa*
- Hymenophyllum demissum*
- Hymenophyllum rarum*
- Hymenophyllum sanguinolentum*
- Hypolepis ambigua*
- Lastreopsis glabella*

- Lastreopsis hispida*
- Leptopteris hymenophylloides*
- Microsorium pustulatum*
- Microsorium scandens*
- Paesia scaberula*
- Pellaea rotundifolia*
- Pneumatopteris pennigera*
- Polystichum silvaticum*
- Polystichum vestitum*
- Pteridium esculentum*
- Pteris macilenta*
- Pteris tremula*
- Pyrrosia eleagnifolia*
- Trichomanes venosum*

Orchids

- Drymoanthus adversus*
- Earina mucronata*
- Microtis unifolia*

Grasses

- * *Agrostis capillaris*
- * *Anthoxanthum odoratum*
- * *Cortaderia jubata*
- * *Cortaderia selloana*
- * *Dactylis glomerata*
- * *Eleusine indica*
- * *Eragrostis brownii*
- * *Holcus lanatus*
- Microlaena stipoides*
- * *Miscanthus nepalensis*
- Oplismenus hirtellus* ssp. *imbecillis*
- * *Paspalum dilatatum*
- * *Rytidosperma penicillatum*
- * *Setaria pumila*
- * *Sporobolus africanus*

Sedges

- * *Carex divulsa*

Carex inversa
Carex solandri
Uncinia clavata
Uncinia distans
Uncinia silvestris
Uncinia uncinata

Rushes and allied plants

- * *Juncus tenuis*

Remaining

Monocotyledonous herbs

- Astelia solandri*
- Collospermum hastatum*
- Collospermum microspermum*
- * *Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora*
- Phormium tenax*

Daisy-like herbs

- * *Achillea millefolium*
- * *Cirsium arvense*
- * *Cirsium palustre*
- * *Cirsium vulgare*
- * *Conyza albida*
- * *Crepis capillaris*
- Euchiton limosus*
- Gamochaeta spicata*
- * *Hypochoeris radicata*
- * *Leucanthemum vulgare*
- * *Senecio bipinnatisectus*
- * *Senecio jacobaea*
- * *Sonchus oleraceus*

Dicotyledonous herbs other than Composites

- * *Acaena novae-zelandiae*
- * *Anagallis arvensis*
- Cardamine "Long Style"*
- * *Clinopodium vulgare*
- * *Digitalis purpurea*
- * *Daucus carota*
- Epilobium rotundifolium*
- Galium propinquum*
- * *Geranium robertianum*
- Haloragis erecta* ssp. *erecta*
- Hydrocotyle dissecta*
- Hydrocotyle heteromeria*
- Hydrocotyle microphylla*
- * *Lotus pedunculatus*
- * *Ludwigia peploides*
- * *Mentha pulegium*
- * *Myosotis arvensis*
- * *Myosotis sylvatica*
- Oxalis exilis*
- Oxalis rubens*
- * *Parentucellia viscosa*
- Peperomia urvilleana*
- * *Phytolacca octandra*
- * *Plantago lanceolata*
- * *Plantago major*
- * *Polygonum hydropiper*
- Pratia angulata*
- * *Prunella vulgaris*
- Ranunculus reflexus*
- * *Ranunculus repens*
- * *Rumex obtusifolius*
- * *Sagina procumbens*
- Solanum americanum*
- * *Solanum nigrum*
- * *Stellaria media*
- * *Tradescantia fluminensis*
- * *Trifolium pratense*
- * *Trifolium repens*
- Urtica incisa*
- * *Verbena bonariensis*