

Leslie Road Conservation Area

Sunday September 9th

Combined Waikato/Rotorua Botanical Society Trip

Led by Paul Cashmore

On a wonderful, sunny ,September Sunday, fifteen Waikato & Rotorua Botanical Society members met at the Te Waihou (Blue Springs)carpark on Leslie Rd. off S.H.28.

We headed further up Leslie Rd to explore the 'never before' botanised, D.O.C administered, Leslie Rd. Conservation Area.

At 226 ha the large block bordered both sides of Leslie Rd. and offered access to a variety of habitats near the roadside. The reserve was bordered by farmland and exotic plantations, and indigenous forest in the Kinleith forest on the edge of the Mamaku plateau.

The area has been seldom visited by botanists so a species list was soon underway.



Getting ready to start on the uphill climb into the bush. You might recognise our very special participant.

And uphill it was. The canopy was dominated with large specimens of tree ferns especially *Cyathea medullaris*, (mamaku), or black tree fern. As the area had been extensively milled only a few large trees were present.

Beilschmiedia tawa, (tawa), *Litsea calicaris*, (mangeao) and *Knightia excelsa* ,(rewarewa) were seen and evidence of regeneration of these were noticed, especially *Knightia excelsa*. (see below)



It was rather hard going due to the frustrating tangle of vines of *Rhipogonum scandens*, supplejack. (see below)



There were, however, many wonderful mosses, liverworts and ferns which the experts took delight in identifying.



By the time the morning tea stop was announced we were more than ready to replenish ourselves.

We were so lucky to have a wide range of enthusiasts on the day, those just starting on their botanical knowledge and those experienced, skilled botanists ready to share their knowledge.



Catherine Beard explaining how to make a bird whistle from the base of a *Dianella nigra* leaf.

After morning tea the going was a little easier and soon we reached the ridge where a track had been cleared to service power lines.

Large fronds of *Blechnum novae-zealandiae* (kiokio) spilt on to the rough path and we were able to spot a solitary *Podocarpus halii* (Hall's totora) , a large mature tree of *Litsea calicaris* (Mangeo); *Cordyline indivisa* (mountain cabbage tree); *Pomaderris amoena* and some great examples of *Drosera auriculata* (sundew)

We could look down on the forest we had walked up and it was easier to spot the large specimens of trees that had survived.



Regenerating shrubland along clearing

The clearing made a great lunch spot and we felt the heat of the sun after such a cold start in the bush.

Paul Cashmore, our leader for the day, was constantly looking for the very best way down the steep incline to the road below.

Down we went with a few slippery moments. The rimu-tawa-pukeatea forest surrounded us. A large deciduous 8-10 m high *Fuschia excorticata* (Kotukutuku) was present.

At last we reached the flat land on a dried up stream bed where, perhaps, the best was to come.

Magnificent old *Dicksonia fibrosa* ferns stood gracefully along the way interlaced with *Sclerophora digitata*. A black robin accompanied us.



Litsea calicaris in background

Back on to the road and we wended our way back to the cars.

A great day for all, made even better with the sunshine and good company.

Thanks to Paul for an excellent botanical outing.



Drosera auriculata, Sundew, glistening in the sun



Magnificent twin trunks of *Dicksonia fibrosa*



A grove of *Sclerophora digitata* in the dry river bed