

# Whakamarama Big Swamp, Combined Waikato and Rotorua BOTSOC Trip

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11 March, 2018

In 2017, we visited the area, botanising the upper reaches of the Ngamuwahine River, from the end of Whakamarama Rd on the Ngamarama Loop Track. This time we went downstream on the Leyland O'Brien Tramway, and branched off to travel up a tributary of the Ngamuwahine River. There was a No Botanising rule in force until we reached the target clearing - an open, boggy area in which there were signs of an old logging camp. The clearing is now covered in *Glechenia dicarpa* but it appears to have also been burnt, with large, old burnt logs scattered around. The rush, *Machaerina teretifolia*, emerged from the fern in the boggy areas, and there were large clumps of *Ghania xanthocarpa* to be avoided. The forest around the clearing was dominated by *Phyllocladus trichonomoides*, with scattered large *Nestegis montanum* on the higher ground and some remnant large rimu. Many of the trees were draped with *Metrosideros fulgens*, in full flower. Although there appeared many animal tracks through the clearing, there were *Griselinia littoralis* seedlings under many of the trees. The small *Podocarpus laeteus* scattered through the clearing were stunted through heavy browsing.

A notable find was *Botrychium australe*; it looked odd with two very large sterile fronds (up to 25 cm) on each plant, instead of the usual one sterile and one fertile frond. A result of the very wet summer? Less welcome was a single plant of Royal Fern, *Osmunda regalis*, which was quickly despatched. Crossing one of the streams on the way back there was a lovely fresh growth of *Hymenophyllum atrovirens*, complete with sori - this fern is usually very tattered as it only grows within the flood-line of streams. We also admired lovely growths of the bristle fern, *Trichomanes*

One of the interesting things about this area along the Leyland O'Brien Tramway is the mixture of higher altitude plants with lowland species - plants like tawari, *Quintina serata*, *Libertia micrantha* were all common among the more lowland species. There was much speculation about the role of cold air drainage as the tramway follows the lowest part of the valley for much of the way. Along the banks cut to form the tramway there were many bristle ferns - *Trichomanes elongatum*, completed with the bristles elongating out of the sori.

Again it was a big thanks to the local care group for their work in pest control and track maintenance, making it an enjoyable day.