

MT TARAWERA FIELD TRIP

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On 3 October 1998 a small group of 7 gathered at the Civic Theatre and proceeded to the carpark at the bottom of the access road up Mt Tarawera where we transferred to one 4WD vehicle for the trip to the airstrip. We then walked up to the southern side of Ruawahia and botanised in this area before lunch. Monoao (*Dracophyllum subulatum*) and kama (*Gaultheria oppositifolia*) are common, with woolly moss (*Racomitrium lanuginosum*) common as a groundcover.

Small 'fissures' in the surface provide shelter for species such as *Olearia arborescens*, *Blechnum novae-zelandiae*, and *B. vulcanicum*. *Raoulia albo-sericea* and *Celmisia gracilentia* are present on the sides of these 'fissures', along with a *Grammitis* species (*G. magellanica?*), *Epilobium pubens* (rare), *Raoulia glabra*, *Hymenophyllum sanguinolentum*, and hanging spleenwort (*Asplenium flaccidum* subsp. *flaccidum*).

Three *Gaultheria* species were present (*G. antipoda*, *G. oppositifolia*, and *G. paniculata*), and various hybrids of these. One *Thelymitra* species was 'up' but not yet in flower. Local examples were seen of *Lycopodium australianum* and catsear (*Hypochoeris radicata*).

Sign of hares, deer, and possums was present.

The small ridge on the southern side of Ruawahia with the repeater mast was visited. The crest of this ridge has monoao and manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) above *Lycopodium scariosum*, *Morelotia affinis*, *Gaultheria* spp., and local *Blechnum vulcanicum*. Mingimingi (*Leucopogon fasciculatus*), kiokio, and broadleaf (*Griselinia littoralis*) were also present. Woolly moss was abundant as a groundcover. The flanks of this small ridge have a shrubland cover, dominated by broadleaf, toetoe (*Cortaderia fulvida*), and tutu (*Coriaria arborea*), with *Gaultheria* spp. and monoao also present.

Some of the party continued to the summit trig and then back to the vehicle via the crater scree slope. There were also six other 4WD vehicles and several helicopters visiting the mountain. On the way down the road we discussed the views of Te Urewera, the western extent of the Raukumara Ranges, Pohokura, and the Ahimanawa Ranges.

We also stopped to visit the secondary kamahi (*Weinmannia racemosa* var. *racemosa*) forest on the lower slopes. The canopy is 10-12 metres high and includes local *Olearia furfuracea*, broadleaf, karamu (*Coprosma lucida*), rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*) and tutu (*Coriaria arborea*), above a shrub tier that includes rangiora (*Brachyglottis repanda* var. *repanda*), fivefinger (*Pseudopanax arboreus*), *Coprosma tenuifolia*, wheki (*Dicksonia squarrosa*), and ponga (*Cyathea dealbata*). Kiokio forms local thickets and the groundcover also includes *Phymatosorus pustulatus*, mapou (*Myrsine australis*), rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), *Uncinia scabra*, and heruheru (*Leptopteris hymenophylloides*). Epiphytes on the kamahi include *Lycopodium varium*, *Ctenopteris heterophylla*, *Hymenophyllum dilatatum*, *H. sanguinolentum* (wilted due to the dry conditions), *H. scabrum*, and *Pyrrosia eleagnifolia*.

Popokatea (whitehead), toutouwai (North Island robin) and riroriro (grey warbler) were present and we had excellent views of popokatea in particular, which were very vocal.