WAIKAREITI-MANUOHA WAITANGI WEEKEND TRIP 2006.

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(with some additional botanical notes by Paul Cashmore and Chris Ecroyd)

It was our first trip out with the Rotorua Botanical Society. We drove down from Hamilton and stayed at Paul's place on the Friday night. It was about a 3 hour drive to Waikaremoana on the Saturday morning and the seven of us got to the start of the track about 11:30am. It's a good track up to Lake Waikareiti. Paul pointed out the abundant *Dicksonia lanata* growing alongside the track (common in the Ureweras). We stopped at a small beach a bit past the day shelter and had lunch. Someone noticed a flowering mistletoe *Peraxilla tetrapetala* on a red beech above us and Jenny pointed out a *Winika cunninghamii* just above where we were sitting.

The track continued around the side of the lake but we didn't actually see much of the lake except at one or two spots. We dumped our packs at the Sandy Bay track junction and went down to fill our water bottles as this was possibly the last filling point before the Manuoha Hut which we wouldn't get to until Sunday night. The Sandy Bay hut is situated at an idyllic spot. If there was more time and it was a bit warmer a swim could have been contemplated, but it was 5 o'clock and we had to press on.

At 5:30pm some of us took a side track down to a small boggy lake, one of the series of tarns throughout this area. We could have done with more time to have a look around but time was getting on. Also of note along this section of track were large trees of kaikawaka (*Libocedrus bidwillii*) which were widely scattered through the silver beech (*Nothofagus menziesii*) forest. Chris reckoned there was a clearing up at Kaipo lagoon. It was about this time that it started to drizzle and the raincoats came out and we trudged on through the silver beech forest. Just after 7pm we found the clearing, just big enough for 3 tents and a cooking shelter that we rigged up. We didn't need much encouragement to climb into bed.

There had been some rain over night and we collected some to fill our water bottles as this day's track had no water near it. After we had packed everything we went and checked out the huge wetland areas of Kaipo Lagoon. Paul and Chris were pointing out all sorts of interesting plants. On the margins were areas of shrublands with silver pine (*Lagarostrobos colensoi*) and bog pine (*Halocarpus bidwillii*) and what we later realised was another related gymnosperm pink pine (*Halocarpus biformis*). In the wetland itself we noted the abundant sedge *Lepidosperma australe,* plus *Ranunculus* aff. *foliosus*, *Carex dissita* , tangle fern (*Gleichenia dicarpa*) and the striped sun orchid (*Thelymitra venosa*) which had just finished flowering. We spent over an hour botanising here and had a good look around and could have done with more time but we had a 6 hour walk to do that day as well.

Figure 1: Botanising Kaipo Lagoon

The day was mostly ridge travel through relatively open silver beech forest with an occasional glimpse of the lagoon that we had botanised that morning. Again, *Dicksonia*

lanata dominated the understorey. At one stage where we stopped for a snack we spotted a bright yellow flat-worm more than 30 cm long. We met 2 other parties coming towards us. We had contemplated doing the walk that way too but luckily we didn't otherwise it would have been a bit of a squash in the hut. As we climbed higher onto the relatively narrow defined ridges the silver beech forest became more stunted with denser mosses, lichens and filmy ferns – otherwise known as 'goblin forest.' The forest understorey was also very open on these main ridges with few species other than the abundant bush rice grass (*Microlaena avenacea*) present.

Towards the end of the day the weather started to close in as we got up in elevation and into the goblin forest. The trig just up from the hut is at 1392 metres, the highest point in the Ureweras.

The hardy souls put up their tent for the night while the others opted for the hut. Luckily we were the only party there that night. After tea we went up for a quick look around the nearby summit and encountered *Olearia quinquevulnera* (previously known as *Olearia capillaris*) which was flowering and abundant in the scrub on the summit and in nearby silver beech forest. Other species commonly present included leatherwood (*Olearia colensoi*), and *Hebe odora*. Unfortunately there was no view. We hoped that the morning would be better.

There was a bit of rain during the night and by the time we came to leave the next morning it was raincoats on again. The view from the top was the same as the previous evening – one of thick cloud and little else.

We made our way down as quickly as we could as there wasn't much point in mucking around in the rain. The track followed a main ridge the whole way through more silver beech forest for several hours. Chris pointed out *Cyathea colensoi* which we had earlier overlooked amongst the very abundant katote (*Cyathea smithii*) which was common in the understorey in places. At another point on the way down Chris spotted *Peraxilla colensoi* flowers on the track and after a bit of looking around we spotted the rest of the

large plant high up in a silver beech tree. Jenny and Richard seemed to have more energy than us so strode off down to the road to see if they could hitch hike back to Aniwaniwa and get the cars.

Figure 2: Paul Cashmore dwarfed by the goblin forest.

The remainder of the party continued down the ridge noting red beech (*Nothofagus fusca*) becoming more common as we descended. The final section of track was a rather steep

and a rapid descent in the continuing rain. Tawari (*Ixerba brexioides*), tawheowheo (*Quintinia serrata*) and kamahi (*Weinmannia racemosa*) became the dominant species in the subcanopy indicating our rapid loss of altitude. Our van ride turned up about 10 minutes after we got down to the road. Jenny and Richard had managed to get picked up and we met up with them halfway back to Aniwaniwa.

Lynne and I really enjoyed the trip. Thanks Chris for organising it. I learned 3 new plants - *Dicksonia lanata, Cyathea colensoi* and *Olearia quinquevulnera.*