

Aongatete Forest Field Trip

Ann Graeme

On the 7th of September 2019, our group of eight met at the top of Wrights Road, on the edge of the Kaimai Forest Park. It was finger-numbing cold but fine. Our path took us into the 500 hectares of the forest where volunteers of the Aongatete Forest Project have been controlling rats, cats, stoats and possums for 13 years.

Aongatete forest is a popular destination for walkers, trampers and hunters. From the car park a new entry track has been constructed around the Outdoor Education lodge to a junction, giving access to the long and short loop tracks, the nature walk, the swimming hole track and, branching off it, a link to the north-south route along the Kaimai. Our group followed the swimming hole track.

The lowland forest is dominated by tawa, puriri, kohekohe and pukatea. We passed a pukatea embraced by one of the few surviving Northern rata trees. There were scattered podocarps – rimu, kahikatea and miro. The ferns were diverse, including a pretty patch of *Asplenium lamprophyllum* and on the tree ferns we found all four species of Tmesipteris. As we approached the Aongatete river the vegetation changed, perhaps as a result of early burning. Here, kamahi, tanekaha and kanuka became prominent with some very tall hard beech trees. Instead of the dense leaf litter and dim light of the forest, the habitat was drier, more open and sunnier. The understorey was more sparse, with three species of lycopods, *Alseuosmia macrophylla* in flower, mingimingi, small saplings of Northern rata (growing from the ground instead of as epiphytes) and a huge spread of giant moss, *Dawsonia superba*, some patches male, some female with sporangia.

After so much rain the river was too high to cross but Graeme Jane scrambled along the slippery bank to point out the tufts of the rare fern, *Lindsaea viridis* growing on the rocks. We had seen its relation, *L. linearis* further up the track.

Above the river we sat down for lunch and were rewarded by the surprising sight of trees crowned with pink flowers on the further bank of the river. Taiwan cherry? No! It was the hard beech in dense flower!

After lunch we returned via the old road from the lodge to the river. This track had been closed because it was steep and often quite slippery. Initially it was open and somewhat overgrown but provided several additions to the list. A highlight was a

lovely patch of kumeraho in full flower. Towards the lodge the track was overhung by tall kanuka and mamaku and with few plants beneath.

By mid-afternoon we were nearing the car park. Some of the group elected to divert to the special king fern enclosure. This is a steep bank, so steep and obstructed with fallen trees that deer and pigs had failed to eat all the abundant king ferns, *Ptisana salicina*. Now fenced by volunteers from the Aongatete Forest Project and the Deer Stalkers Association, the king ferns and other palatable plants are flourishing.

This was a most enjoyable trip with a great diversity of plants and was enjoyed by both the experienced and the fledgling botanists.

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## Aongatete – Swimming hole track loop species list

Graeme Jane

\* = naturalized species

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|                                                   |                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Acianthus sinclairii</i>                       | heart-leaf orchid               |
| <i>Alectryon excelsus</i> ssp. <i>excelsus</i>    | titoki                          |
| <i>Alseuosmia macrophylla</i>                     | toropapa; shrubby honeysuckle   |
| <i>Asplenium flaccidum</i>                        | hanging spleenwort; makawe      |
| <i>Asplenium polyodon</i>                         | sickle spleenwort; petako       |
| <i>Astelia hastata</i>                            | kahakaha                        |
| <i>Astelia solandri</i>                           | kowharawhara                    |
| <i>Astelia trinervia</i>                          |                                 |
| <i>Beilschmiedia tawa</i>                         | tawa                            |
| <i>Blechnum discolor</i>                          | crown fern; piupiu; petipeti    |
| <i>Blechnum filiforme</i>                         | Climbing hard fern; thread fern |
| <i>Blechnum fraseri</i>                           |                                 |
| <i>Blechnum novae-zelandiae</i>                   | kiokio                          |
| <i>Blechnum parrisiae</i>                         | pukupuku; rasp fern             |
| <i>Brachyglottis kirkii</i> var. <i>kirkii</i>    | Kirks daisy                     |
| <i>Bulbophyllum pygmaeum</i>                      |                                 |
| <i>Carex uncinata</i>                             | watu                            |
| <i>Centella uniflora</i>                          |                                 |
| <i>Clematis paniculata</i>                        | clematis; puawhananga           |
| <i>Coprosma arborea</i>                           | mamangi; tree coprosma          |
| <i>Coprosma lucida</i>                            | karamu; shining karamu          |
| <i>Coprosma robusta</i>                           | karamu                          |
| <i>Coprosma spathulata</i> ssp. <i>spathulata</i> |                                 |
| <i>Cordyline australis</i>                        | cabbage tree; ti-kouka          |

|                                                                |                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Cordyline pumilio</i>                                       | ti rauriki; dwarf cabbage tree  |
| <i>Corybas oblongus</i>                                        |                                 |
| <i>Corybas vitreus</i>                                         |                                 |
| <i>Cyathea dealbata</i>                                        | ponga; silver fern              |
| <i>Dacrydium cupressinum</i>                                   | rimu, red pine                  |
| <i>Dianella nigra</i>                                          | blueberry; turutu               |
| <i>Dicksonia squarrosa</i>                                     | wheki; harsh tree fern          |
| <i>Dysoxylum spectabile</i>                                    | kohekohe                        |
| <i>Earina autumnalis</i>                                       | Easter orchid; raupeka          |
| <i>Earina mucronata</i>                                        | spring orchid; peka-a-waka      |
| * <i>Erica caffra</i>                                          | hedge heath                     |
| <i>Freycinetia banksii</i>                                     | kiekie                          |
| <i>Fuscospora truncata</i>                                     | hard beech; tawhairaunui        |
| <i>Gahnia pauciflora</i>                                       |                                 |
| <i>Geniostoma ligustrifolium</i> var.<br><i>ligustrifolium</i> | hangehange                      |
| <i>Gleichenia dicarpa</i>                                      | waewaekaka; tangle fern         |
| <i>Gleichenia microphylla</i>                                  | waewaekaha; tangle fern         |
| * <i>Hakea sericea</i>                                         | needlebrush                     |
| <i>Hedycarya arborea</i>                                       | pigeonwood; porokaiwhiri        |
| <i>Hydrocotyle dissecta</i>                                    |                                 |
| <i>Hydrocotyle moschata</i> var. <i>moschata</i>               |                                 |
| <i>Hymenophyllum demissum</i>                                  | piripiri; irirangi              |
| <i>Hymenophyllum dilatatum</i>                                 | lop-sided filmy fern            |
| <i>Hymenophyllum nephrophyllum</i>                             | kidney fern; raurenga           |
| <i>Hymenophyllum sanguinolentum</i>                            | blood-scented filmy fern        |
| <i>Ixerba brexioides</i>                                       | tawari                          |
| <i>Knightia excelsa</i>                                        | rewarewa; NZ honeysuckle        |
| <i>Kunzea robusta</i>                                          | kanuka                          |
| <i>Lagenophora pumila</i>                                      |                                 |
| <i>Lastreopsis hispida</i>                                     | hairy fern, hairy legs          |
| <i>Laurelia novae-zelandiae</i>                                | pukatea                         |
| <i>Leptecophylla juniperina</i> ssp. <i>juniperina</i>         |                                 |
| <i>Leucopogon fasciculatus</i>                                 | mingimingi; kaikaitau           |
| <i>Lindsaea linearis</i>                                       | mudwort                         |
| <i>Litsea calicaris</i>                                        | mangeo                          |
| <i>Lycopodium deuterodensum</i>                                | puakarimu                       |
| <i>Lycopodium volubile</i>                                     | climbing clubmoss               |
| <i>Lygodium articulatum</i>                                    | mangemange                      |
| <i>Melicytus ramiflorus</i> ssp. <i>ramiflorus</i>             | mahoe                           |
| <i>Metrosideros diffusa</i>                                    | white climbing rata; akatea     |
| <i>Metrosideros fulgens</i>                                    | scarlet rata; winter rata       |
| <i>Metrosideros perforata</i>                                  | aka; small white rata; torotoro |
| <i>Metrosideros robusta</i>                                    | northern rata                   |

