

Matarangi Bluff Scenic Reserve

Kerry Jones

All photos by Kerry Jones

For day two of our Coromandel Peninsula trip, on Sunday 1st November 2020, we visited Matarangi Bluff Scenic Reserve. The reserve is 253 hectares in size. The Matarangi Bluff track was built by a keen group of locals 10 years ago. The track is advertised on the DOC web site as a 3-hour loop walk but being botanists we knew that we wouldn't be completing the loop on the day.

Fourteen botanists turned up at the track entrance at 9:30 am and proceeded slowly up the track.

We didn't get far before the group slowed to a complete halt to discuss the gahnia which turned out to be *Gahnia lacera* growing on the bank, and then we passed through a grove of silver fern.



Checking the *Gahnia lacera*



The silver fern grove beside the track

The vegetation along the first part of the ridge was karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*), manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*), mapau (*Myrsine australis*) and pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*).



The manuka was flowering well and there had been some impressive wilding pine control done.



Lindsaea linearis was seen on the side of the track. We turned right at the track junction and headed south along the ridge.

A bit further along Liz Miller spotted long-hair plume grass (*Dichelachne crinita*) growing very tall – about as tall as Ron.



I saw a moth (*below*) on a mapau (*Myrsine australis*) leaf and posted my first observation to iNaturalist when I got home. I was surprised how quickly I got people identifying this for me. It is quite common, but I had never heard of it and am not sure why is it called the Native Cranberry Moth.



Left: Native Cranberry Moth (*Poecilasthena pulchraria*)



Right: *Gonocarpus aggregatus*



We stopped to have a look at the track edge covering of Mercury Bay Weed (*Dichondra repens*) which on closer inspection was in flower.



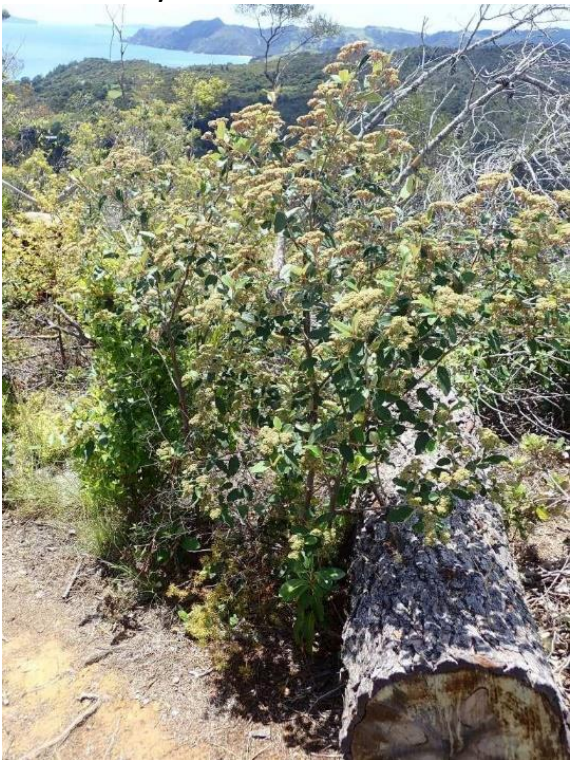
Liz Miller also spotted *Pelargonium inodorum*. This looked like a weed to me but turned out to be a native with lovely pink flowers.

The stragglers then caught up with the main group who were waiting at a seat that had a great view west of Matarangi and Whangapoua harbour. A bit further along we came to a second high point that had another seat. Here we found *Hebe* / *Veronica macrocarpa* with its large fruits.



The other vegetation around this high point was manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*), felled pines (*Pinus radiata*), mapau (*Myrsine australis*) and five finger (*Pseudopanax arboreus*).

It was downhill from here through flowering kumeraho (*Pomaderris kumeraho*) and towai (*Weinmannia sylvicola*) – note the spelling change of the species – it was formerly *W. silvicola*.



kumeraho



towai

A small patch of the fern *Loxosoma cunninghamii* was seen beside track and we were starting to see toro (*Toronia toru*).

We stopped at a *Coprosma* and had a long discussion, and finally agreed that it was probably *Coprosma dodonaeifolia* (At Risk – Naturally Uncommon - Qualifiers: RR). Range: Great and Little Barrier Islands, Coromandel Peninsula south to at least Mt Te Aroha.



Leaf upper side with strongly raised mid vein



Leaf underside vein network and domatia



fruit



stipule showing fine hairs

We were getting hungry, so we were on the look-out for a suitable lunch spot. *Pimelea tomentosa* was seen flowering, which was a great find as this wasn't on Graeme Jane's species list (Status: Threatened : Nationally vulnerable).



Flowering *Pimelea tomentosa* (left)

At the lunch stop we saw *Thelymitra longifolia* and *Schizaea bifida*.



Thelymitra longifolia



Schizaea bifida (forked comb fern)

After lunch Dell and Ron were feeling energetic and didn't have as far to drive back as we did so they went on to finish the loop track. The rest of us headed back up the hill in the heat and back to the cars. Not far from the cars our eagle-eyed accountant spotted another *Pimelea tomentosa* which we had all walked past on the way in.

A few of us stopped at Kuaotunu for a well-deserved ice cream before heading over the hill to Whitianga.

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