

Schizaea fistulosa
Tmesipteris elongata
Trichomanes reniforme

Gymnosperms

Agathis australis
Dacrycarpus dacrydioides
Dacrydium cupressinum
Phyllocladus trichomanoides
Podocarpus totara
Prumnopitys ferruginea

Dicots

Acaena novae-zelandiae
Alseuosmia quercifolia
Bellschmeidia tarairi
Bellschmeidia tawa

Bellschmeidia tawaroa
Brachyglottis kirkii
Callitriche muelleri
Carpodetus serratus
Centella uniflora
Clematis paniculata
Coprosma arborea
Coprosma lucida
Coprosma rhamnoides
Corynocarpus laevigatus
Eleocharis dentata
Galium propinquum
Geniostoma rupestre var.
lingustrifolium
Gnaphallum involucreatum
Gonocarpus incanus
Haloragis erecta

Hebe macrocarpa
Hedycarya arborea
Hydrocotyle dissecta
Hypericum japonicum
Knightia excelsa
Kunzea ericoides
Lagenifera pumila
Leptocophylla juniperina
Leucopogon fasciculatus
Lobelia anceps
Meliclytus ramiflorus
Metrosideros fulgens
Metrosideros perforata
Metrosideros robusta
Mysine australis
Nertera depressa
Nertera dichondrifolia

Nestegis lanceolata
Nothofagus truncata
Olearia fufuracea
Olearia rani
Parsonia sp.
Pittosporum tenuifolium
Pseudopanax crassifolium
Ranunculus reflexus
Raukawa anomalous
Rubus cissoides
Schefflera digitata
Senecio minimus
Vitex lucens
Wahlenbergia violacea
Weinmannia silvicola



Creeping oxalis carpets on Motuihe Island

Mike Wilcox

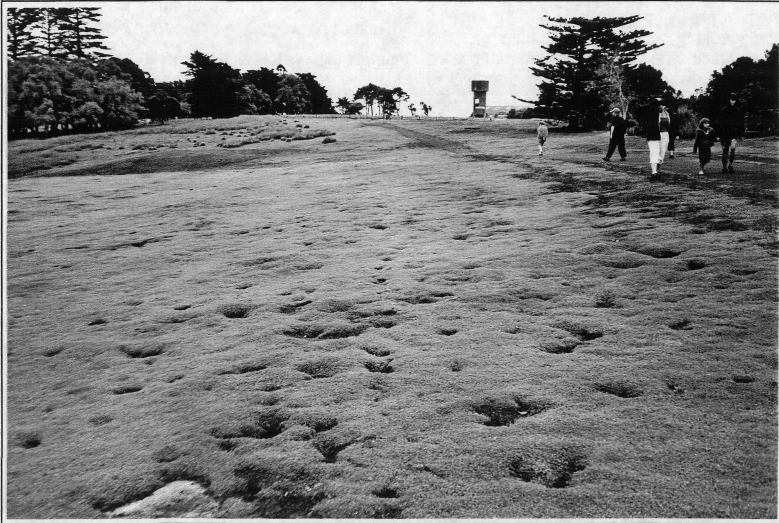


Fig.1. Creeping oxalis, 18 March 2001.

At the northern end of Motuihe Island in the inner Hauraki Gulf, Auckland, on the site of the former Navy barracks and parade grounds, occurs spectacularly extensive carpets of creeping oxalis (*Oxalis exilis*). Tussocks of ratstail grass (*Sporobolus africanus*), and very little else, grow on the margins of the carpets. So how did this peculiar vegetation develop? The answer appears to be rabbits.

Motuihe Island is over-run with rabbits, and they hungrily eat tree seedlings, grasses, and herbaceous plants – except, apparently oxalis and mature ratstail. By eliminating plant competitors, the rabbits have allowed the oxalis to flourish to the extent that

a dense turf has been induced, several hectares in extent. Because of the rabbits, all the native bush remnants are bare underneath, and the coastal strand vegetation on the eastern side of the island (Ohinerau Beach) is also highly depleted.

Creeping oxalis is a native species, also found in Australia. It does commonly occur in suburban lawns, but not usually pure over such large areas. Perhaps this monotypic oxalis turf on Motuihe Island is unique, owing its existence to its unpalatability (and toxicity) to rabbits through the oxalic acid in the leaves.

