

Summer switched itself on briefly for our trip to Rangitoto, to give us a pleasantly warm and sunny day. After we had all arrived safely in the two boats, the main party set out from the wharf in the direction of the lighthouse, while some preferred to accept the challenge of the summit.

A brief look at a small rocky hollow near the picnic tables by the wharf, soon revealed Pterostylis trullifolia var alobula and Acianthus fornicatus var sinclairii, two orchids we were to see much of during the day; an Barina mucronata in bud and an unusual mauve-coloured fungus shaped like a small piece of branching coral. The lighthouse party followed the road by the shore, where pohutukawa is the dominant tree, and the first coloniser of the frequent areas of scoria which are still mainly bare. A refreshing contrast to the dull green of the pohutukawa was provided by the shining light green leaves of Griselinia lucida. Here and there specimens of akeake were fighting a losing battle with moss and lichen. The two species of Cyathodes, juniperina and fasciculata were both in flower, and a few bushes of the former had berries as well. Other early flowers were on Hebe stricta and Senecio kirkii. Most beautiful of all, a mass of Clematis paniculata which most of us had somewhat incredibly missed on the outward journey and only just spotted on the way back. In several places along the shore ngaio was quite common - the flower buds were formed and we even saw one or two early flowers. One rocky spot yielded several plants of the fern Cheilanthes distans, with its very hairy young fronds, and in the same area the tiny composite, Cotula australis. In spite of a careful search, we failed to find a good-sized specimen of Psilotum nudum, but did see a number of small plants.

A further split in the party near the lighthouse almost deprived Mr. Warren of his lunch! When Mr. Warren, who was bringing up the rear, reached the pleasantly semi-shaded spot where the majority were having their lunch, he found that Mrs. Warren (plus sandwiches) had gone on ahead with a few others, to the sandy bay beyond the lighthouse, and he had to set off in hot pursuit! Those who went to this bay were rewarded by finding a considerable quantity of Bulbophyllum pygmaeum growing on rocks quite near to high tide mark, and obviously exposed to frequent salt spray. Other orchids noted during the day were Dendrobium cunninghamii in a fairly deep, well clothed rocky gully, and Pterostylis trullifolia var gracilis growing in the damp of the kidney fern glen, which for those who visited it, provided a welcome contrast to the hard dry scoria we had been crunching over all day.

The shore-huggers rejoined the mountaineers at the wharf, where we all waited for the boats to ferry us back to Auckland, tired after a very pleasant day on that unique sanctuary which is Rangitoto.