ERRATA

Kindly corrected by Dr. A. Dobson -

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For: Rumex acetosa read
Rumex acetosella

IMPRESSIONS OF BUSH AREAS IN THE WANGANUI AREA

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This is an amateur botanist's account of some areas of bush remnants within about thirty miles of Wanganui.

Such a writer feels diffident in the company of the scientific contributors to this Journal. He can hardly contribute to their knowledge; and he seems to be attempting something they can do better. But outings with a botanical society elsewhere showed that many members were not experts; and they may appreciate an article which speaks with their voice.

For we are in it for the pleasure it gives us. For some of us it is our chief hobby. We go to bush to enjoy it, to take delight in what it has to offer: its subtle or strong variations on a green theme.

Some stop there; and it would be mere snobbishness to depreciate enjoyment of the wild garden of our land at this level. As they drive past or through it, camp or picnic near it, walk through it, they see it as a community of plants, a unit - which it is.

But while nameless groups (or crowds) may please us, we are aware that it is much more rewarding to come to know the people of

whom they are composed; and so with the bush community. We begin with names - to identify. As one who learnt the hard way (without the company of an expert) I know that the effort this requires brings an unexpected reward. You begin really to look at the plants (a word that covers the greatest and the tiniest). You observe the habit of growth, the foliage, flower and fruit (or spore case). You see much more, find more to admire, and, (as the writer has found) you begin to have favourites.

When you have added this dimension to your perception, wonder and delight, you can still admire the bush, large or small, with the wider view, from within or without. But as you approach the tiny colony or remnant, the town, the vast city or region of a plant community, you wonder: Who are the inhabitants? What old friends, acquaintances, what nameless strangers am I to meet there? And so you begin, as I did when I moved to Wanganui, a series of exciting explorations.

The chief areas investigated were Bushy Park Reserve (Forest and Bird Society); Gordon Park (Wanganui City, though outside its boundary); bush areas on private land (beyond Bush Park and higher) and roadside remnants higher still; reserves beside the Wanganui River road (especially Atene 30 miles from Wanganui).

These in general are remains of near-coastal bush of that latitude and climate; less luxuriant than on the foothills of the Tararuas, but in strong contrast to most East Coast bush at the same elevation.

The Wanganui climate would not have prepared me to find such luxuriant growth or such a range of plants as were found in parts. The hill country still has higher rainfall and occasional misty weather. But dry summers and drying winds, the destruction of all but these remnants and their open margins - and grazing by farm animals, deer and goats, as well as defoliation by opossums - these mean that the state and the composition of the bush are changing. One sensitive type - the filmy fern - illustrates the past and the present. In one sheltered bush area the high count of 13 species was recorded. But only a few were numerous and in good heart, while a solitary specimen represented one species (Hymenophyllum pulcherrimum).

In the hill country regeneration of podocarps (except Matai) has till recent times been good in parts. Two striking instances come to mind. One, surprisingly, is on the ridge of a hill wooded on both sides - and lying across the line of the prevailing wind - where the podocarps and Rimu are crowded at up to 30 feet. There

is evidence from stumps and survivals of what was the Manuka nurse crop. The other is along the top fringe of a large bush remnant covering the steep sides of a series of concentric valleys. Here podocarps, Rimus and other trees stand in full foliage - having made growth before being exposed and gone on to flourish like park specimens. Within that bush moderate regeneration occurs - especially in clearings made by Rimu felling; and, on ridges especially, Miro regeneration is prolific. In a more open sheltered valley-bottom nearby one could stand and identify close at hand up to ten tree species (established before grazing began) while podocarps and Rimu continue to regenerate.

As this is a personal account, one recalls what was of special interest. The Northern Rata tree was abundant in two areas - in maturity and old age mostly, as few mature podocarps are available as hosts. A few developing ones were seen and seedlings occur on fallen logs in the open; larger ones had probably been browsed. The handsome-leaved Puketea is common, sometimes with impressive girth. Mida salicifolia (remembered from Hutt Valley, Khandallah, Morere Springs) was an old friend, but rare. Black and white Maire regenerate freely. Only one recording was made of Eugenia maire, which favours wet situations - at Gordon Park. Two Olearias were seen for the first time: O. virgata (a narrow-leaved variety) as a tree, and O. thomsonii - special to the area. At Atene, Paratrophis banksii occurs - and I believe hybrids (P. micro is present). In Bushy Park the Nikau palm is regenerating prodigiously. Alseuosmia occurs in two species - apparently quercifolia and pusilla. The rarity of small-leaved Coprosmas is striking - except for rhamoides, polymorpha - and rubra in parts.

A curiosity observed was a ten-foot decaying Rata tree stump - with the three Rata vines of the district clinging to it, and a 10 foot Rata tree at the top. The water-loving Elatostome rugosa is abundant in many parts; and on damp faces Gnaphalium subrigidum and triverve. Black Beech occurs in colonies on some hillsides, much lower than in the East; but on exposed faces hardly holding its own. Perching plants are abundant in most areas: Collospermum hastatum, Astelias, Griselinia (abundant). Occasionally Pittosporum cornifolium, Lycopodium varium, Dendrobium and the Earinas.

A remarkable and exciting discovery was an association of three plants - found on steep faces - first near Atene and later high in the hills beyond Bushy Park, in both cases by the roadside. They are Dracophyllum strictum, accompanied by Gaultheria paniculata and G. oppositifolia. The Dracophyllum was in flower; and I remembered it from Rotorua, where it overhangs the road to Lake Okoraina.

Among the ferns Athyrium australe (abundant on the riverside at Atene) was of special interest as being so restricted. I remembered it covering the bush floor at Onomalutu Reserve, Wairau Valley,

Marlborough. On damp banks Blechnum colensoi grows luxuriantly. Botrychium australe var. millefolium occurs in some bush areas. Pteris macilenta is dominant in some parts, as is Histiopteris incisa. Among the tree ferns Dicksonia fibrosa is rare (but common on inland high country). Cyathodes cunninghamii is common - and appears to cross with C. medullaris. The King Fern was seen for the first time beside Bushy Park drive - regenerating; probably at its southern limit.

Often while tramping or scrambling along the margins or on the hillsides of these bush areas I regretted that so few share the healthy exercise, the refreshing change from town life and the enjoyment I had from these bush outings. It is true that very few of our people have as yet any appreciation of bush rambling as a recreation, and fewer still have more than an elementary acquaintance with native plants.

There are two ways in which they could be helped. Botanical Societies and groups could make the plants better known through displays, exhibitions and illustrated talks offered to the public. The growing literature on the subject could be made known - and the location of suitable reserves within reach. Such groups could also suggest new reserves to the Lands and Survey Department, where they are needed and available.

For some of my most rewarding excursions and my favourite ones I was indebted to the goodwill of the landowner. Then I realised that in a district formerly covered with luxuriant bush growth of great variety and beauty, hardly any provision had been made to preserve suitable areas for recreation, enjoyment and study. I found that the only reserves were in the Wanganui River valley. Of those within distance for a day's outing most are on the side not served by road; while those adjoining the road are on steep faces, and they too are clearly intended as protection against erosion. They are nearly all unmarked, and no access is provided for those who could enter. So the only area in which one could walk in the bush is the private Bushy Park reserve - open to the public for a small fee.

Local and official apathy, here as elsewhere, has meant that no suitable part of the national heritage has been preserved. There may be time yet to secure areas such as I was privileged to visit and enjoy; though cut-over and grazed, they would begin to recover if preserved.

CHECK LIST OF PLANTS

Trees and Shrubs:

Alectryon excelsum, Alseuosmia pusilla, A. quercifolia, Aristotelia serrata, Beilschmiedia tawa, Brachyglottis repanda, Carmichaelia cunninghamii (?), C. flagelliformis, Carpodetus serratus, Coprosma areolate, C. australis, C. ex-cunninghamii, C. lucida, C. parviflora, C. propinqua, C. rhamnoides, C. robusta, C. rotundifolia, C. rubra, Cordyline australis, C. banksii, Corynocarpus laevigata, Cyathodes fasciculatus, Dacrydium cupressinum, Elaeocarpus dentatus, E. hookerianus, Eugenia maire, Euphrasia cuneata, Dracophyllum strictum (?), Fuchsia excorticata, Gaultheria antipode, G. paniculata, G. oppositifolia, Geniostoma ligustrifolium, Gymnolaea cunninghamii, G. lanceolata, Hebe stricta, Hedecyrya arborea, Helichrysum glomeratum, Hoheria sexstylosa, Knightia excelsa, Laurelia novae-zelandiae, Leptospermum ericoides, L. scoparium, Macropiper excelsum, Melicope simplex, Melicytus micranthrus, M. ramiflorus, Metrosideros robusta, Mida salicifolia, Myoporum laetum, Myrsine australis, M. salicifolia, Myrtus bullata, Nothofagus solandri, Olearia rani, O. thomsonii (?), O. virgata, Paratrophis banksii, P. microphylla, Pennantia corymbosa, Pittosporum colensoi. P. eugenioides, P. tenuifolium, Podocarpus dacrydidoides, P. ferrugineus, P. spicata, P. totara, Pseudopanax anomalum, P. arboreum, P. crassifolium, Pseudowintera axillaris, P. colorata, Rhabdothamnus solandri, Rhopalostalis sapida, Schefflera digitata, Solanum laciniatum, Sophora microphylla, S. tetraptera, Weinmannia racemosa.

Lianes:

Calystegia tuguriorum, Clematis paniculata, C. parviflora (?), Freycinetia banksii, Metrosideros diffusa, M. perforata, M. fulgens, Muehlenbeckia australis, Parsonsia heterophylla, Rhipogonum scandens, Rubus australis, R. schmidelioides, Tetrapathaea tetranda.

Herbs etc:

Acaena novae zelandiae (?), Cortaderia toetoe, Brachycome sp., Cardamine sp., Drosea linata (?), Elatostcme rugosa, Epilobium rotundifolium, Erechtit's minimus, Gahnia sp., Gnaphalium subrigidum, G. trinerve, Gunnera sp., Haloragis erecta, Hydrocotyle sp., Lagenophora pumila, Lycopodium volubile, Microlaena avenacea, Nertera depressa (?), Ourisia sp., Pratia angulata, P. perpusilla (?), Ranunculus hirtus, Stellaria parviflora, Uncinia uncinata.

Perching Plants:

Astelia nervosa, Astelia solandri, Collospermum hastatum, Griselinia lucida, Lycopodium varium, Pittosporum cornifolium, Tmesipteris tannensis.

Orchids:

Bulbophyllum pygmaeum, Chiloglottis cornuta (?), Corybas sp., Dendrobium cunninghamii, Earina autumnalis, E. mucronata, Microtis sp.,(?), Pterostylis banksii (?).

Ferns:

Adiantum cunninghamii, A. fulvum (?), Asplenium bulbiferum, A. falcatum, A. flaccidum, A. hookerianum, A. lucidum, Anarthropteris lanceolata, Athyrium australe, Blechnum capense, B. colensoi. B. discolor, B. filiforme, B. fluviatile, B. lanceolatum, B. membranaceum, Botrychium australe, V. millefolium, Ctenitis decomposita, C. glabella, Cyathea cunninghamii, C. dealbata, C. medullaris, C. smithii, Dicksonia fibrosa, D. squarrosa, Histiopteris incisa, Hymenophyllum demissum, H. dilatatum, H. flabellatum, H. pulcherrimum, H. ferrugineum, H. flexuosum, H. multifidum, H. rarum, H. revolutum, H. sanguinolentum, H. scabrum,

Ferns (Cont'd):

Hypolepis rugosula, H. tenuifolia, Leptolepia novae zelandiae, Marattia salicina, Paesia scaberula, Pellaea rotundifolia, Phymatodes diversifolium, P. scandens, Polystichum richardii, P. vestitum, Pteridium aquilinum v. esculentum, Pteris macilenta, P. tremula, Pyrrosia serpens, Rumohra adiantiformis, Thelypteris pennigera, Todea hymenophylloides, Trichomanes reniforme, T. venosum.

LONGEVITY

John Thompson

It is interesting to note that many of the early botanists concerned with New Zealand plants lived lives beyond the biblical span of three score years and ten.

Here is a list containing 15 names taken from Flora of New Zealand Book I.

Allen A.H.	1882 - 1957	75 years
Armstrong J.F.	1820 - 1902	82 years
Armstrong J.B.	1850 - 1926	76 years
Banks J.	1743 - 1820	77 years
Brown R.	1773 - 1850	85 years
Buchanan J.	1819 - 1898	79 years
Cheeseman J.F.	1846 - 1923	77 years
Cockayne L.	1855 - 1934	79 years
Colensoi W.	1811 - 1899	88 years
Hooker J.D.	1817 - 1911	94 years
Hooker W.J.	1785 - 1865	80 years
Laing R.M.	1865 - 1941	76 years
Oliver W.R.B.	1883 - 1957	74 years
Petrie D.	1846 - 1925	79 years
Wall A.	1869 - 1966	97 years.

Is there some magical elixir attached to New Zealand plants which encourages a long life?
