Trip Report: Chatham Islands, 4-10 January 2009
A second ABS visit

Maureen Young & Mike Wilcox

Members and friends who were disappointed to miss out on the first ABS trip to the Chatham Islands in 2007 (Young 2007) were catered for on this second visit by our society. Once again we were based at Hotel Chathams and nearby Travellers Rest at Waitangi and were admirably cared for by our host, Val Croon Jnr. and guide, Ben Cooper.

Participants: Hilary Bosher, Warren & Colleen Brewer, Elizabeth Brown, Pat and Pam Dale, Chris Ecroyd, Anne Fraser, Barbara Hammonds, John Hobbs, Pam Hubbard, Joan Kember, Barrie and Gretta McLeay, Rod Miller, Sue Minchin, Caroline Parker, Margaret Peart, Helen Preston-Jones, Rosslyn Prichard, Doug Sheppard, Diana Whimp, John Wilcox, Mike Wilcox, Nancy Wilcox, Pam Wilcox, Maureen Young.

Fig. 1. Bot Soc group, Rangaika, Chatham Id, 5 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

The first weather-induced drama was the postponement of our departure by one day, as the plane couldn't leave the island on Saturday 3 January. With otherwise perfect weather, the two days ear-marked for flights to Pitt Island were both windy. The first party achieved their goal, albeit with a few bumps, but the second day's trip was cancelled.

As the itinerary for this trip was generally similar to that of the first well-recorded visit (Young 2007), only highlights and new sites will be mentioned here. We were successful in seeing all the endemic Chatham Islands species listed by Crisp, Miskelly & Sawyer 2000, as well as many of the threatened plants described by Walls et al. (2003). A recent tally of plant species by Peter de Lange (as reported by Horne 2008) on the Chatham Islands shows that that the vascular plants number 392 indigenous species, subspecies and varieties, and a further 393 naturalised species.

4 January 2009

During the flight from Auckland Rod Miller, a licensed pilot himself, was pleased to be able to sit in the cockpit of the plane, and on our landing he disappeared, having hitched a ride to Pitt Island. The rest of us enjoyed a barbecue dinner in the lovely garden of "Admiral Farm", hosted by Lois and Val Croon Snr., not far along the Port Hutt Road. Some of the cultivated plants here to catch the eye were *Echium pinniana*, *Brugmansia sanguinea*, *Brachyglottis repanda*, *Cupressus macrocarpa*, and *Pinus radiata* (under which grew abundant *Parietaria debilis*). It is a windy spot, with akeake (*Olearia traversiorum*) to the fore as the local favoured windbreak species.

Fig. 2. *Dracophyllum scoparium*, Rangaika Reserve, Chatham Island, 5 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

5 January 2009

The Thomas Hohi Tuuta (Rangaika) Reserve and Owenga were visited on a perfectly calm day. On the way from Waitangi, at the Te Awainanga River where it crosses the Waitangi Wharf-Owenga Road, there is a prominent patch of tutu (*Coriaria arborea*) and Himalayan honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*). Farm trees near the turnoff to the track which leads to Rangaika were Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), muricata pine (*Pinus muricata*), radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*) and macrocarpa (*Cupressus macrocarpa*). Macrocarpa has been the main tree of choice for forestry investment by the Chatham Island Enterprise Trust, with over 100 ha planted to date in small woodlots (Chatham Islands Enterprise Trust 2002).

Fig. 3. Rangatira, Waitangi, Chatham Island, 9 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

The bus made the traditional viewing stop on the cliff tops on the 4WD track to the 407-ha Rangaika Reserve (gifted to DoC in 1977), and on this occasion the millpond-calm sea and the sky could truly be described as azure. Even the names of the islands strung out along the horizon were suggestive of romance - Star Keys, Pitt, Mangere, Little Mangere, Pyramid and Sail Rock. A vertigo-inducing glance over the cliff edge revealed the only plant of the soft Spaniard (*Aciphylla dieffenbachii*), to be seen growing in the wild. There were patches of coastal turf, too, on the cliff tops, with *Ranunculus acaulis*, *Leptinella potentillina*, *Lobelia arenaria*, and *Colobanthus apetalus* prominent.

Fig. 4. Hotel Chathams, 5 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

Plants to catch the eye on our walk across the open coastal farm and peatland were *Blechnum penna-marina*, the large thallose liverwort *Marchantia berteroana*, *Gentianella chathamica*, *Isolepis habra*, *Myriophyllum pedunculatum* subsp. *novae-zelandiae* (a low, creeping mat species), and a good population of adder's tongue fern, *Ophioglossum coriaceum,* which we hadnot seen on our previous trip. A determination that we would this time see the endemic small-leaved member of the Myrsinaceae, *Myrsine coxii*, led to a successful outcome by dint of a little scrub-bashing through thickets of *Dracophyllum scoparium* where the electric fence ended. A dry season meant that the peat bog was firmer than previously, and this allowed us to compare the flowers of the two stripy-flowered *Thelymitra* species, *T. pulchella* and *T. cyanea*. *Drosera binata*, *Baumea rubiginosa*, *Carex chathamica* and *Gentianella chathamica* were prominent. *Olearia chathamica* was in flower, but had passed its best.

Fig. 5. Waitangi, Point Weeding and Nairn River, Chatham Island, 7 Jan 200., Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

After paying homage to the Tommy Solomon Memorial, and a brief stop at Owenga wharf where a roadside bank had a goodly patch of *Euphorbia glauca*, we headed back to Waitangi, well satisfied with our first big day.

We were joined for dinner that night by Jim Clarkson, (DoC Programme Manager, fauna) who gave an illustrated talk on conservation work being done on the islands. There are only 6520 ha (8%) of DoC reserves out of a total land area of 97 000 ha, but some 40 private covenants make a very valuable and significant contribution to nature conservation on the Chathams.

6 January 2009

A very full day began with a successful shark's tooth hunt for those so inclined at Blind Jims on the edge of Te Whanga Lagoon, where we also conveniently viewed marginal forest remnants of *Coprosma chathamica*, *Sophora chathamica*, *Myrsine chathamica*, *Corynocarpus laevigatus*, *Olearia traversiorum* and *Corokia macrocarpa*. The lagoon edge itself featured *Chenopodium ambiguum*, *Limosella lineata*, and *Schoenoplectus pungens.*

The DoC 830-ha Ocean Mail Scenic Reserve was our next stop, a place full of botanical treasure, especially *Aciphylla traversii*. In the remnant dune forest at Ocean Mail beach *Myrsine chathamica* and *Coprosma chathamica* were the dominant trees, with *Parietaria debilis* and *Tetragonia implexicoma* abundant on the forest floor.

Fig. 6. Bot Soc group, Point Munning, Chatham Id, 6 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

There was also much *Melicytus chathamicus*, *Macropiper excelsum*, *Solanum chenopodioides*, *Muehlenbeckia australis* and*Senecio elegans*.

Fig. 7. Fur seal, Point Munning, Chatham Id, 6 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

At the 29-ha J.M. Barker (Hapupu) National Historic Reserve, our attention was attracted by the purple flowers of the plentiful *Solanum laciniatum*, as well as by the dendroglyphs only just visible on the trunks of the kopi (karaka) trees.

It was hard to drag the "boys" away from the remains of a crashed Sunderland flying boat at Jim and Sally Nielsen's Kawati Station on a stop on the road to Point Munning. A small cemetery was the next stop, and then the ruins of an old Moravian mission station at Te Whakaru gave an opportunity for some to pose in a rusty whaling trypot. There were many picturesque remnant akeake (*Olearia traversiorum*) here, and *Ranunculus acaulis* and *Leptinella potentillina* grew along the shoreline.

Fig. 8. *Olearia traversiorum*, Point Munning area, Chatham Id, 6 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

At the odoriferous Point Munning there were many seals basking and swimming among the rocks. The walk to the point took us through flax and akeake (*Olearia traversiorum*), and on the rocks were *Carpobrotus chilensis, Einadia trigonos*, *Disphyma papillatum*, *Carex ventosa, Crassula moschata, Ranunculus acaulis*, *Selliera radicans*, *Apium prostratum* subsp. *denticulatum, Chenopodium ambiguum*, *Blechnum durum* and *Asplenium chathamica*.

In the late afternoon we finally arrived at that botanists' delight, Kaingaroa Point. It was surprising to find that although we were there at exactly the same time of year as on the last visit, flowering had been earlier this year. Instead of lemon and mauve flowers showing on the huge sow thistle, *Embergeria grandifolia*, there were large, white, spherical seed heads instead. A first aid patch-up when John Wilcox came into contact with the schist rocks caused a distraction for many, and unfortunately not everyone experienced the wonder of standing on the large rocks at the end of the point, surrounded by endemic plants, many of them in flower. Pam Dale was sorry to have missed searching for the special psyllid that lives only on *Leptinella featherstonii*. This time we did not have dinner at the local social club, but made a late dash back to the hotel to dine.

Fig. 9. Bot Soc group, Kaingaroa, Chatham Id, 6 Jan 2009. M.D. Wilcox.

7 January 2009

Ten people flew off to Pitt Island for the day. The lucky ones were John Wilcox, Mike Wilcox, Nancy Wilcox, Pam Wilcox, Hilary Bosher, Diana Whimp, Helen Preston Jones, Pam and Pat Dale, and also Giovanna Riccardi (a visitor from Italy). Our guide was local resident Bernie King. At Glory Bay Mike made a brief inspection of the low-tide seaweed flora on the basalt reefs and recorded *Hormosira banksii*, *Durvillaea antarctica*, *Lessonia tholiformis*, *Xiphophora gladiata*, *Carpophyllum plumosum*, *Carpophyllum maschalocarpum*, *Catenellopsis oligarthra*, *Splachnidium rugosum*, *Bryopsis vestita*, *Ulva* sp., *Haliptilon roseum*, *Lophurella caespitosa*, *Champia novae-zelandiae* and *Ceramium chathamense*.

Fig. 10. Kahuitara Point, Pitt Island, 7 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

We are happy to report that the visit was timed to perfection to see rautini (*Brachyglottis huntii*) in flower. It was plentiful adjoining the Flower Pot-Glory Bay Road and on forest margins, and a sight to behold. After viewing the Pitt Island wild sheep at Waihere, Bernie's new tourist accommodation under construction on the old Hunt site at Flower Pot, and Our Lady of the Antipodes church, we had a wonderful lunch put on by Delwyn (paua fritters, moki fillets, assorted salads and quiches). A fine specimen of Chatham Is groundsel (*Senecio radiolatus*) was spotted near the Flower Pot wharf.

The visit to Pitt Island concluded with a comprehensive inspection of the 53-ha Ellen Elizabeth Preece Conservation Covenant (Caravan Bush). It has a good tally of Chathams native trees: *Plagianthus betulinus* subsp *chathamica*, *Melicytus chathamicus*, *Pseudopanax chathamica*, *Coprosma chathamica*, *Sophora chathamica*, *Myrsine chathamica, Myoporum laetum*, *Corynocarpus laevigatus* and *Olearia traversiorum*, as well as abundant ferns, especially the spectacular *Dicksonia fibrosa*.

Fig. 11. Ohira Basalt, Chatham Id, 8 Jan 2009. M.D. Wilcox.

The rest of the party visited Te Matarae, home of Mayor Pat Smith. Unfortunately Pat, suffering from a stomach upset, was unable to escort us around his property, but with Ben's guidance we enjoyed the bush and shoreline. After lunch we were off to explore the 17-ha Henga Scenic Reserve of bush and sand dunes, and on the drive back to Waitangi the bus stopped on the roadside for a "surprise". After walking through a gorse-dotted paddock, we found that the surprise was a series of sinuous Moriori petroglyphs carved into a limestone overhang at Motuhou Point on the edge of Te Whanga Lagoon. A narrow roof had been built to protect the rock from the worst of the weather, and above this grew *Sophora chathamica* and *Hebe dieffenbachii*. In a swampy area grew a large sedge on a trunk-like base looking just like *Carex secta,* until one noted that the inflorescences were robust panicles: this was *C. sectoides*. Plentiful *Limosella lineata* and *Chenopodium ambiguum* were flowering along the strand area of the lagoon edge.

8 January 2009

The basalt columns at Ohira on the road to Port Hutt were enjoyed in fine weather on this visit. That little member of the carrot family, *Oreomyrrhis colensoi*, was seen growing commonly among the short vegetation above the rocks. The species list kindly supplied by Peter de Lange at first inspection failed to list this plant, but close scrutiny of the list by Barbara

Hammonds revealed that it is now called *Chaerophyllum colensoi*. Beside a beautiful rock pool Mike Wilcox gave us a lesson on the seaweeds that grew there in abundance, some prominent ones being

Fig. 12. *Durvillaea chathamensis*, Waitangi, Chatham Id, 8 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

Durvillaea antarctica, *Durvillaea chathamensis*, *Lessonia tholiformis*, *Cystophora scalaris*, *Adenocystis utricularis*, *Apophlaea lyallii*, *Splachnidium rugosum*, *Zonaria turneriana*, *Glossophora kunthii*, *Leathesia difformis*, *Catenellopsis oligarthra*, *Bryopsis vestita*, *Ulva* sp., *Codium dimorphum*, *Champia chathamensis*, *Haliptilon roseum*, *Mesophyllum erubescens*, *Polysiphonia muelleriana* , *Polysiphonia aterrima* and *Porphyra coleana*.

After a drive out through Wharekauri Station, we lunched at Wharekauri Beach, the sweep of white sand and turquoise waves beautiful in the sunshine. A pair of Chatham Island oystercatchers was nesting on the beach. This area illustrated well the way the invasive marram grass changes the shoreline, making it unsuitable for nesting birds. Where the marram was thick there was an abrupt sandy bank where the waves scoured away sand, whereas spraying the marram and planting native species means the waves break softly and leave suitable habitat for the birds to nest. A study of the planted area showed that a shelter belt of flax and akeake had been planted on the landward side, and on the dunes, Chathams forget-me-not (*Myosotidium hortensia*), sow thistle (*Embergeria grandifolia*), pingao (*Desmoschoenus spiralis*), *Euphorbia glauca, Hebe dieffenbachii, Aciphylla dieffenbachii, Corokia macrocarpa* and *Pimelea arenaria*. The huge size of the *Myosotidium* plants here astounded us, and at this time of the year we were able to observe the seed fall. As the flower heads wither and lie on the sand the large seeds just drop and germinate in little clumps around the parent plant. However, the seeds do have a small wing, and could possibly tumble along in a high wind. Around the rocks were mounds of turf plants – *Crassula moschata, Ranunculus acaulis, Apium prostratum* subsp. *denticulatum, Selliera radicans, Triglochin striata*and *Isolepis cernua*, and on the cliff edge were different turfs, this time of *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* and *Disphyma papillatum*, with *Dichondra brevifolia*. Views down onto the rocks showed swirling fronds of the two species of bull kelp, *Durvillaea antarctica* and *D. chathamensis*. Splatter Reef itself is basalt, with some striking pillow lava flows. A feature of the basalt are the large phenocrysts of hornblende crystals. Mike found several interesting seaweeds here, including the Chatham endemics *Carpococcus linearis* and *Gigartina grandifida*, and also *Ballia hirsuta* and *Hymenocladia sanguinea*.

Fig. 13. Tropical hardwood log on Wharekauri beach, 8 Jan 2009. Photo: C. Ecroyd.

Near Cape Young on the beach Chris and Doug discovered a large log washed ashore. It had a steel spike and tag on it and was obviously a commercial timber log lost off a ship somewhere. The wood was identified at the Scion labs in Rotorua as a *Eucalyptus*, and Mike thought, judging by its very low density (a "floater") and pinkish colour, it may well have been *Eucalyptus deglupta* – a species from New Guinea, but planted and exported from Kolombangara in the Solomon Islands.

On the road to 17-ha Nikau Bush Conservation Area a small pig trotted along in front of the bus, his "Mohawk" hairstyle making him very photogenic. At Nikau Bush the bird-spotters were thrilled to see a tui, as these birds have only just recolonised the main island from their refuge on Pitt Island and South-East Island, and it was not known that they had found their way so far north. Although there has been some planting in the bush, it was fairly obvious, from the size of the trees and the position in which they grew, that *Hebe barkeri* grew naturally there. Once again, the flowering *Earina aestivalis* was a beautiful sight and *Myosotis spathulata* was found. Several enthusiasts finished off the day with another successful sharks tooth foray at the edge of Te Whanga Lagoon.

Fig. 14. Wild pig. Wharekauri Rd, Chatham Id, 8 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

Fig. 15. Te Whanga Lagoon, looking for sharks teeth, Chatham Id, 8 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

9 January 2009

Along with breakfast we had to digest the news that the Pitt Island trip for the day was cancelled, but not to be deterred, the botanical enthusiasts set off on foot to search for the newly described swamp akeake (*Olearia telmatica*). After contacting landowners Mick and Ces Lanauze, we entered an extensive swamp forest from Maipito Road and soon found ourselves in the midst of our quarry. Swamp akeake generally looks similar to akeake, but has this distinct preference for swampy sites (Heenan et al. 2008). It grows here in a dense 8 m-tall forest mixed with *Myrsine chathamica*, *Coprosma chathamica*, *Coprosma propinqua*, *Corokia macrocarpa*, *Corynocarpus laevigatus*, *Melicytus chathamicus*, and, surprisingly, *Fuchsia excorticata* and *Cordyline australis* which, like kopi, are both considered to be introduced. Other prominent plants in this swamp forest were *Carex ternaria*, *Carex divulsa*, *Eleocharis acuta*, *Juncus edgariae*, *Juncus pallidus*, *Dicksonia squarrosa*, *Blechnum novae-zelandiae*, *Hypolepis distans*, *Myosotis laxa*, and everyone's favourite, the epiphytic orchid *Earina aestivalis* in full flower. Gorse grew around the margins.

Fig. 16. *Olearia telmatica*, swamp forest, Maipito Rd, Waitangi, 9 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

Fig. 17. Awatotara, Chatham Id, 9 Jan 2009. Photo: M.D. Wilcox.

Once back at the hotel we were driven to the 70-ha Awatotara Manuel and Evelyn Tuanui Family Conservation Covenant, where several parea (native pigeon) were seen, but no kakariki this time. The traditional "lunch at Vi's place", Ohenemama brought with it a surprise, as Vi and Bruce Mills have retired to Christchurch, and two young local women, Tessa and Amanda, entertained us instead. The garden is packed with interesting plants, both native and exotic, some to catch our attention being *Crinodendron hookeri* (Chile), *Lagunaria patersonia* (Norfolk Island), *Chamaecyparis obtusa* (Japan), *Clematis armandii* (China) and numerous fine specimens of the fastest growing Chatham Island native tree, *Plagianthus regius* subsp. *chathamica*. For the rest of the afternoon some explored the "Waitangi" and others had a windy cliff top walk, taking in a great view of the "Rangatira" in port, and the spectacular cliffs of Point Webb. Plants of note here were the native dock (*Rumex neglecta*) and very abundant twin cress (*Coronopus didymus*).

At dinner we were joined by Ken Hunt, Area Manager for the Department of Conservation and his wife Jane. Ken spoke to us at the meal's end. Ken emphasised the critical importance of good fencing on the

Chatham Islands for protecting both private covenanted reserves and DoC land against stock. We all saw this to good effect at Rangaika and Awatotara.

10 January 2009

The morning flight to Auckland went ahead as planned, ending a second great visit to the Chatham Islands under the auspices of the Auckland Botanical Society. Although this group had more varied interests than those attending the first trip, all found much to fascinate them and left the island more knowledgeable about the natural history of this wonderful outlier of New Zealand. We highly recommend Miskelly (2008) as a comprehensive reference on the Chatham Islands' geology, flora and fauna.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to Peter de Lange for helping with some plant identifications and for the use of his working list of Chatham Islands plants.

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RUAHINE RANGE
SIXTUS LODGE CAMP, APITI, 15-20 JANUARY 2009

Mike Wilcox (editor)

TEAM RUAHINE

Jessica Beever, Ross Beever, Jan Butcher, Colleen Crampton, Chris Eckford, Leslie Haines, Shelley Heiss-Dunlop, Marcel Horvath, Helen Lyons, Juliet Richmond, John Rowe, Stella Rowe, Alison Wesley, Diana Whimp, Mike Wilcox, Maureen Young

Fig. 1. The group at Sixtus Lodge. Photo: Ross Beever.

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

15 January 2009: The advance party travelled from Auckland to Sixtus Lodge in Manawatu District, via Mangaweka with dinner at Apiti Tavern. Two magnificent white fir (*Abies concolor*) trees adorn the main road into Apiti.

16 January 2009: We visited the Margot Forde Arboretum, local tracks around the Cone River, the fossil cliffs, and glow worm caves along Limestone

Fig. 2. Cone Creek, with Sixtus Lodge. Photo: Ross Beever.

Creek. The Cone River below the lodge has a nice patch of red beech (*Nothofagus fusca*) forest, several old remnant trees of *Olearia virgata* subsp. *centralis*, and plentiful lacebark (*Hoheria sexstylosa*), while the highly distinctive daisy *Anaphalioides subrigida* grows on the papa roadside banks.

Margot Forde was a scientist at the Grasslands Division, DSIR, Palmerston North, until her death on 23 June 1992 at the age of 57. She was much involved in setting up the Sixtus Lodge, and for 10 years she was a member of the Ruahine Forest Park Advisory Board. As M.B. Ashwin she contributed to Flora Vol 1 (1961) with her research on *Pygmea* (later *Chionohebe*, now *Veronica*), *Euphrasia* and