

FERNGLEN NATIVE PLANT GARDENS NEWSLETTER

Summer 2020



Table of Contents

Recent photographs taken at Fernglen by curator Steve Cook.....	2
News from Fernglen.....	4
Annual assessment of pohutukawa flowering in Auckland.....	6
The interesting concept of epizoochory.....	7
The controversial proposal of the removal of mature trees on Owairaka/Mt Albert.....	8
Book Review: <i>The 50 best bird watching sites in New Zealand</i> by Liz Light with Oscar Thomas photography.....	9
Book Review: <i>Hauturu, the history, the flora and fauna of Te Hauturu-O-Toi/Little Barrier</i> , edited by Lyn Wadd and Dick Veitch.....	10
A look at one of our most unusual plants: <i>Freycinettia banksii</i> , Kiekie.....	12
What's happening at Fernglen?.....	13

Recent photographs taken at Fernglen by curator Steve Cook



Pachystegia insignis, Marborough rock daisy



Kereru eating *Coprosma macrocarpa* fruit



New sprinkler at Ben's Ridge to assist watering



Euphorbia glauca

News from Fernglen

by Kelly Hayward

On a stunning South Island summer's day, I met Robyn Abernethy and Kate Caldwell at their work, the location of New Zealand's first botanic garden, the Dunedin Botanic Garden. Kate is curator of the native plant collection while Robyn is the rock, water & alpine collection curator. Back in the late 1980's, Robyn (then known as Robyn Freeth) worked for the Birkenhead Council, it then become incorporated into the North Shore City Council. She managed a group of gardeners who maintained the council gardens in Birkenhead and Beach Haven thereby Fernglen came under her care. She soon became acquainted with Muriel and they became firm friends. Muriel, Robyn says, sparked her enthusiasm of native plants and she had a huge influence her, 'both in native plants, and her attitude to life'.

Robyn is the author and photographer of a very comprehensive booklet on Fernglen, which is still referred to today. With her kind permission, we are going to update the booklet.

Dunedin Botanic Garden is stunning and it was lovely to see native plants like the Chatham Island forget-me-not thriving in more comfortable conditions than Auckland's humidity. I appreciated a behind the scenes tour of their very large, sophisticated propagation unit. Computer controlled, the temperature, mist and humidity are set in each room creating ideal growing conditions for the wide range of native and exotic plants. Thanks Robyn, Kate and Dunedin Botanic Garden for generously supplying Fernglen with some seeds from the seed exchange programme.

We look forward to showing you the seeds' progress in the future.

www.dunedinbotanicgarden.co.nz

As part of Ecofest North, on Saturday the 21st of March 2020 between 10am – 3pm is the 'Fernglen Open Day' . As always we appreciate your support.

Garden tours will be running on a first-come-first-serve basis throughout the day and there will be some 'harder to find' native plants for sale.

Please call by and see some of the great work done by the committee, other dedicated volunteers and curator Steve Cook. Refreshments will be available.

When paying Fernglen a visit, keep an eye out for these plants currently in flower:

- *Elingamita johnsonii*
- *Geranium traversii*
- *Hibiscus trionum*
- *Jovellana sinclairii*
- *Machaerina sinclairii*
- *Metrosideros excelsa*
- *Muehlenbeckia astonii*
- *Muehlenbeckia axillaris*
- *Mycoprum laetum*
- *Parahebe catarractae*
- *Weinmannia racemose*

Annual assessment of pohutukawa flowering in Auckland

by Neville Arbury

Possibly the patchiest season I have ever observed and recorded. As you drove around Tamaki Drive in December the displays of blooms were incredibly haphazard. Some trees showing absolutely no signs of any red blooms while the very best trees were what can be classified as lightly flowering.

However, there is always a twist in the pohutukawa saga: Specimens of *Metrosideros* 'Mistral', a naturally occurring hybrid pohutukawa/northern rata, planted by councils as street trees in various parts of Auckland were in many instances completely covered with very dark red flowers which are typical of this plant. They are easily recognised by the smaller, pointed leaves, rather than the more rounded leaves of the pohutukawa. The 'Mistrals' also flowered earlier than usual in late November to early December rather than their normal habit of flowering after pohutukawas have finished flowering.

It should also be recorded that some pohutukawas commenced flowering in mid to late November this year - exceptionally early. And these were not the Kermadec Island pohutukawas that will flower at various times of the year and can be easily identified by their smaller and rounded leaves. The exact factors that ignite tree flowering in pohutukawas remains a mystery. After almost 20 years of closely monitoring the flowering of our 'Christmas tree' in Auckland I am no closer to understanding the mechanisms of climatic variables that contribute to the blooming process.

The interesting concept of epizoochory

by Neville Arbury

This refers to the way seeds latch onto animals or birds with hooks and barbs as a means of dispersing seeds. In many countries seeds with hooks and barbs attach themselves to the fur of mammals. However here in New Zealand, a land almost completely bereft of mammals, a considerable number of plant species use epizoochory to disperse their seeds. These plants take advantage of New Zealand's flightless birds including Kiwi and Weka where the hooked seeds easily attach to their loose plumage.

Two species that provide excellent examples are the grass species *Carex* and *Piripiri*, *Acaena* spp. *Piripiri* in particular is well known to trampers and farmers as their seed heads are covered in hooked barbs that easily attach to legs, socks and trousers. For sheep, the seed heads of *Piripiri* can be a nightmare with wool often covered with seeds where sheep have been grazing around *Piripiri* plants. The hooked seeds eventually fall to the ground often some distance from where the parent plant was growing, in this way ensuring that new plants will be produced and the species continues to thrive.

The controversial proposal of the removal of mature trees on Owairaka/Mt Albert

by Neville Arbury

As a strident advocate of native plants at the time of the height of controversy over the proposed culling of over 300 non-native trees on Owairaka/Mt Albert, I was often asked for my opinion.

My answer was quite straightforward: Yes long term I believe that the volcanic cone would be enhanced by the planting of native species, however to lessen the effect on bird life on the area and the visual impact of the removal of such a large number of trees in such a short space of time, I felt that a more considered approach would be a preferable plan. This could involve the immediate removal of poor specimens and then over a 20-30 year period the gradual removal of the remaining exotic species to be replaced by specific native trees that would thrive given the specific conditions found on a volcanic cone, i.e. very free-draining volcanic soils and exposure to strong prevailing winds. Below are listed native trees that I consider appropriate for planting on Owairaka/Mt Albert.

- *Corynocarpus laevigatus* - Karaka
- *Dysoxylon spectabilis* - Kohekohe
- *Elaeocarpus dentatus* - Hinau
- *Grisilinia lucida*
- *Metrosideros bartletti* - Bartlett's rata
- *Metrosideros excelsa* - Pohutukawa
- *Metrosideros robusta* - Northern rata
- *Nestegis apetala* - Coastal maire
- *Pouteria costata* - Tawapou
- *Pittosporum crassifolium* - Karo
- *Pittosporum umbellatum* - Haekaro
- *Podocarpus totara* - Totora
- *Pseudopanax lessonii* - Haupara
- *Sophora fulvida* - Kowhai
- *Streblus banksii* - Milk tree
- *Vitex lucens* - Puriri

Book Review: *The 50 best bird watching sites in New Zealand* by Liz Light with Oscar Thomas photography

by Neville Arbury

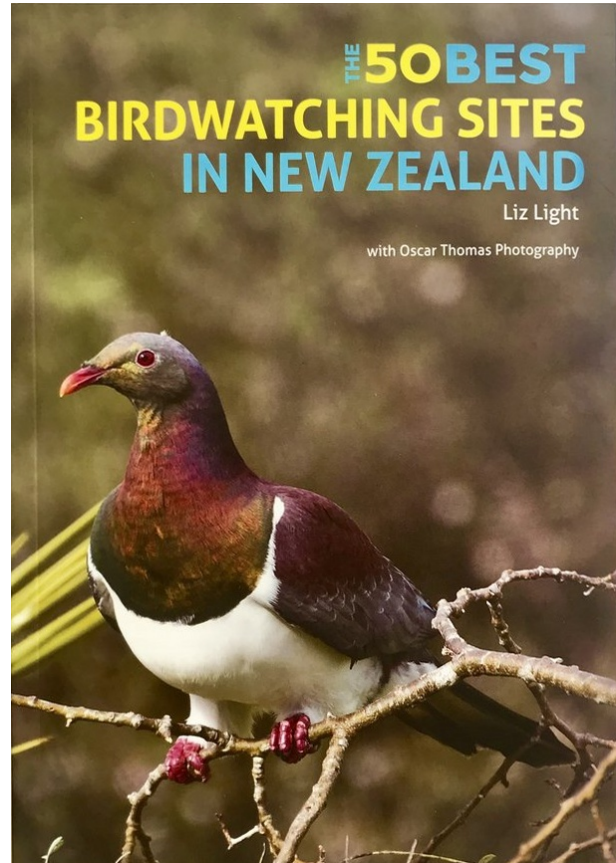
This publication is far more than what the title suggests - a comprehensive look at many of our native birds accompanied by some superb photography. The detailed introduction reminds us that because of the 80 million years of separation from Australia of the 91 species of terrestrial birds 85% are endemic to New Zealand. However, sadly, we are also reminded that by the time of the early European arrivals 39 land species were extinct and since then a further 19 species have become extinct. This is the result of the introduction of rats, cats, stoats, weasels and possums, and of course, the enormous habitat destruction brought about by forest felling, farming, fire, wetland clearance, irrigation and river diversion.

The author then looks at the major groupings to be found in New Zealand, what she terms the sea bird capital of the world, sea birds and terrestrial birds. A very useful glossary of Maori and English bird names is provided along with the scientific names.

The remainder of the book then takes you on a journey through the North and South Islands and important offshore islands for bird watching. This is a book to keep in the car as you travel around New Zealand, to guide you to many of the places to view our native birds.

Liz Light obviously spent many years researching this publication and the result is a credit to her patience and research skills. I highly recommend this publication. I'm sure that many like myself especially when visiting coastal areas are often unsure of the identification of some of our more unusual seabirds. Thanks to Oscar Thomas's skill as a photographer, identification is that much easier.

Committee member Kelly Hayward (nee Lynch) has also contributed to the photographs in this book.



Book Review: *Hauturu, the history, the flora and fauna of Te Hauturu-O-Toi/Little Barrier*, edited by Lyn Wadd and Dick Veitch

by Neville Arbury

This publication is an incredibly comprehensive account of Hauturu/Little Barrier Island, described as “The gold standard for a predator-free New Zealand and New Zealand's jewel in the crown for conservation”. The island is New Zealand's largest native reserves excluding the sub-Antarctic islands, with an area of more than 4000 hectares rising to an altitude of 722 metres above sea level.

Hauturu has often been referred to as having the most intact native ecosystem in the country. There are more than 1700 species of plants, mosses, liverworts, lichen and fungi, 40 breeding specimens of birds and a diverse invertebrate fauna.

The book outlines the early Maori settlement on the island and the attempts by the Auckland Museum to gazette Hauturu as a native reserve as early as 1895. While this was successful, it sadly led to the eviction of the Mana Whenua.

Various chapters written by experts in their fields provide an abundance of information about this fascinating island. These chapters include amphibians and reptiles, birds, bats, vegetation and vascular flora, mosses, lichens, fungi, seaweeds and the future of the island. The chapter concerning vegetation and vascular plants is accompanied by excellent photographs of the plant of the island, very useful for identifying lesser-known species. There is also an excellent species list that covers all that is living on or around Hauturu.

The final chapter entitled “The Future” raises a number of intriguing questions, to quote

“A complex interplay now exists between recovering native species, reset ecosystems such as those driven by sea birds, constant attempts by exotics to establish and a rapidly changing climate. How the island ecosystems evolve will thus be of great interest to conservation biologists and the public of New Zealand for generations to come”.



A superbly produced publication, illustrated with hundreds of photographs, all the authors are to be congratulated on contributing to such a magnificent book. This would easily be the finest publication I have reviewed for many years!

You can join the Little Barrier/Hauturu supporter's trust by contacting the secretary Sandy Jones on 021 0277 3067. They publish an excellent newsletter twice a year.

A look at one of our most unusual plants:

Freycinettia banksii, Kiekie

by Neville Arbury

This intriguing native, Kiekie, is classified as a climber. However, in the absence of any suitable tree to climb on, the species becomes a spreading terrestrial plant with a quite unique, tangled habit. The genus *Freycinettia* is named in recognition of the 19th-century French explorer Louis de Freycinet while the species *banksii* is named after Captain Cook's botanist on his first voyage to New Zealand, Joseph Banks. Kiekie is the only member of the family *Pandanacea* growing in New Zealand, which are prolific throughout the Pacific.

Kiekie are located in coastal low lying areas of the North Island and parts of the upper South Island. The plant has a distinctive green and sometimes yellow flecked leaves, fleshy white flower bracts, and pineapple-like fruit. Kiekie was an important fruit for Maori, the flower petals were eaten raw or made into juice. With the fruit that resembles a cross between sweet corn and pineapple, the rough skin was removed to allow access to the sweet pulp of berries inside.



Kiekie, Waitakere Ranges, (c) jacqui-nz, [\[CC BY-NC\]](#)

Kiekie was also a significant weaving material, leaves were collected, boiled in water and dried, making them easier to work with. They could then be dyed and woven to make clothing, kites, mats, belts, hats and tukutuku panels. The roots of the plants were also utilised to lash canoes together and for building traps for fish and eels. Specimens of Kiekie at various stages of their growth can be viewed at Fernglen on the walk to Bens' Ridge. Although hard to obtain from nurseries and garden centres, when planted in home gardens they are quite hardy and once established will continue to multiply until they find a sturdy tree to climb.

What's happening at Fernglen?

Working bees

Regardless of the weather, working bees occur at Fernglen **on the second Saturday of every month from 9am onwards, until about 12 noon.**

The working bee is a great way to meet others, learn more about native plants, weeds and pest control. There is always a job to be done in the garden or in the education room.

No gardening experience is necessary and all ages and abilities are welcome. Gloves and gardening tools can be supplied.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

Educational tours

Are you involved with a school or an education group and would like to learn about New Zealand native plants? A unique collection of plants from all over New Zealand grows at Fernglen. To see what is on offer please contact us

on email: fernglen.nz@gmail.com

or phone: 021 236 5800

Pest Free Kaipatiki

Did you know Pest Free Kaipatiki Restoration Society are located in the Fernglen education room office? Check out news about pest plants, kauri dieback prevention, pest animals and events at www.pestfreekaipatiki.org.nz

Room hire

The Fernglen Education Room is available for hire at very competitive rates. Please contact us

on email: fernglen.nz@gmail.com

or phone: 021 236 5800



Botanical Art at Fernglen

Interested?

contact
Lesley Alexander
021 161 7070 or
email lesley.alexander.smith@gmail.com