

By A. E. Baker

White's Bush, Cumberfield Rd. Foxton

White's bush is an 8 acre relic of the pockets of forest which dotted the Manawatu sand country. Early maps show it extending further south to cover about 25 acres. Like Round Bush and Himatangi Bush, it has developed on sand considered by Cowie (N.Z. Jl Geol. Geophys. 6, 668-80, 1963) to have been stable for 2,000 - 4,000 years. The nature of the vegetation lends support to this estimate of age derived mainly from geological evidence. It seems that at least 1,000 years passed before forest developed on stable sand plains. Add to this the life span of the kahikatea (probably approaching 1,000 years) which were felled this century and a minimum figure of 2,000 years is obtained. If more than one generation of kahikatea grew there an age of 4,000 could be reached or exceeded.

The large totara trees on the dunes are a special feature of White's Bush. In many parts of the west coast of the Wellington province the abundant logs of this species are evidence of its importance in some previous vegetation which was submerged in water or sand. Remarkably little living totara was found in the Manawatu at the time of pakeha settlement inspite of the fact that totara was more than other native conifers to grow on the dunes. None occur on the dunes in Himatangi Bush and only 1 or 2 young specimens in Round Bush.

There is little doubt that White's bush was a semi-swamp forest dominated by kahikatea and pukatea before the felling of kahikatea, drainage and the ravages of cattle. Today young kahikatea, tawa and rather unhealthy pukatea make up most of the very broken canopy. Kohoe, cabbage trees, titoki, ngaio and supplejack fill some of the gaps but a large proportion is grassy. Coprosma propinqua (known locally as niki) a characteristic wetland species of the stable sand country is well represented on the edge of the forest and in the clearings.

The dune, occupying only a small proportion of the area, has relatively few species of plants as a result of gross soil disturbance by cattle more than any other factor.

It is only on the flat in the protection of vines and roots that most of the ferns and other smaller plants find refuge.

A flora of about 70 species is quite large for such a disturbed forest remnant but nearly half are represented by only one or a few specimens. While many species have probably been lost enough remains to form the nucleus of a forest ultimately bearing a resemblance to the forest that grew there in the past. However, this can occur only if given some protection.

NATIVE PLANT SPECIES RECORDED IN WHITE'S BUSH 10.9.69

Trees and Shrubs

Alectryon excelsus - titoki
Beilschmiedia tawa - tawa
Carpodetus serratus - putaputaweta (marbleleaf)
Coprosma areolata -
Coprosma propinqua
Coprosma propinqua x robusta
Coprosma rigida ?
Cordyline australis - cabbage tree
Geniostoma ligustrifolium - hangehange (N.Z. privet)
Hedycarya arborea - pegeonwood
Laurelia novae-zelandiae - pukatea
Melicope simplex
Melicytus ramiflorus - mahoe (whitey-wood)
~~Mida salicifolia~~
Nyoporum laetum - ngaio
Myrsine australis - mapou (red matipo)
Paratrophis microphylla - milk tree (violin tree)
Pittosporum tenuifolium - rahotu (black matipo)
Pseudopanax crassifolium - lancewood
Podocarpus dacrydioides - kahikatea
Podocarpus spicatus - matai
Podocarpus totara - totara

Ferns

Asplenium bulbiferum - hen and chicken fern
Asplenium bulbiferum x colensoi
Asplenium falcatum
Asplenium flaccidum - drooping spleenwort
Asplenium lucidum - shining spleenwort
Blechnum filiforme - climbing fern
Blechnum capense
Dicksonia squarrosa - tree fern
Hypolepis tenuifolia
~~Pollakia radiatifolia~~
Phymatodes diversifolium - hound's tongue
Phymatodes scandens
Pteridium aquilinum var. esculentum - bracken
Pteris macilenta
Pteris tremula
Pyrrosia serpens - leather-leaf fern
Rumohra hispida - rough shield fern
Thelypteris pennigera

Other native plants

- Acaena anserifolia - bidi-bidi
- Callitriche stagnalis - a prostrate mud plant
- Cardamine debilis - a cress
- Carex coriacea - a sedge
- Carex virgata - a sedge
- Collosperrum hastatum - a large perching plant
- Erina mucronata - a perching orchid
- Epilobium sp. - a willowherb
- Erechtites minima - fireweed
- Hydrocotyle moschata - a creeping herb (hairy)
- Hydrocotyle novae-zelandiae - a creeping herb (hairless)
- Juncus lamprocarpus - a rush
- Mariscus ustulatus - a coarse sedge
- Parietaria debilis - a soft annual herb
- Ranunculus rivularis - a native buttercup (v. poisonous)
- Solanum nodiflorum - a nightshade
- Uncinia uncinata - hooked sedge

Vines

- Clematis paniculata - clematis (seedlings only seen)
- Griselinia lucida - shining broadleaf
- Metrosideros colensoi - a climbing rata
- Metrosideros diffusa - a climbing rata
- Metrosideros perforata - a climbing rata
- Muehlenbeckia australis
- Muehlenbeckia complexa
- Parsonsia heterophylla - Kaori jasmine
- Rhipogonum scandens - supplejack
- Rubus schnidelioides - lawyer
- Tetrapathaea tetrandra - N.Z. passion vine

(A.E. Esler)

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