

# Pitt Is - Alison Davis Survey (?)

CANISTER SHEEP RESERVE Surveyed 1-11-87

## Vegetation (see map)

Forested areas within the reserve are a mosaic of burnt and unburnt, and grazed and ungrazed areas. The main canopy species is C.chathamica, with O.traversii and D.arboreum as subdominants. P.chathamicus and M.chathamicus are the commonest subcanopy species. C.propinqua var. martinii is common along the stream sides and in wet sites. Other species found within the forest areas but were mostly uncommon are B.huntii, C.macrocarpa, C.laevigatus, Cythodes robusta, H.barkeri, M.excelsum, M.chathamica and P.regius var. chathamicus

Most of the west side of the sheep reserve stream is covered in a dense tangle of Pteridium esculentum, D.squarrosa and blackberry.

## Bird List

chaffinch - common  
blackbird - common  
harrier - occasional  
Chatham Id tui - common  
Chatham Id warbler - common  
Chatham Id tomtit - occasional  
Chatham Id fantail - two seen

## Impact of the Wild Sheep on the Forest Areas

In many places the dense tangle of P.esculentum, D.squarrosa and blackberry prevents access for sheep into the forested areas. The sheep are only penetrating the central area where the forest canopy is fairly open. They are grazing on grass in the ground cover. Regeneration does not appear to be occurring in these grazed areas, although regeneration within other forested areas is occurring with abundant C.chathamica seedlings (mostly ephemerals). The sheep are creating tracks through the forest, particularly from one gully to the next but these tracks are not extensive. Pigs are probably doing more damage with making tracks and rooting the ground, although no sign was particularly fresh.

## Comment

Sheep are probably having a minimal impact on the forest vegetation, but this needs quantitative assessment by remeasuring/photographing the vegetation plots/photo points. Pigs may have a more detrimental effect on forest regeneration/replacement than sheep, as the latter are mostly confined to grassland (towards the sea). Small stands of forest, mostly O.traversii treeland, will not be replaced unless fenced from the sheep. It may be important to retain these remnants to provide protection for the sheep from the weather (see M.Rudge and T.Whittakers unpublished reports). The grazed central area of

Regeneration is not occurring in the area where there are sheep, it would probably be slow even when the sheep are removed because of the exposed weather conditions. A return to forest vegetation will probably be extremely slow, so revegetation may have to be considered.

The clearings supporting B.huntii shrubland, and the peat dome/swampy area supporting M.coxii and O.semidentata within the reserve are very important. This is the most extensive area of the B.huntii in the Chathams, and the only area of the M.coxii and O.semidentata on Pitt Island. These are all classified as threatened species.

forest also may need to be fenced. The south facing slope of regenerating scrub (P.esculentum, D.squarrosa, blackberry) is denser in vegetated cover than three years ago when I walked through it.