

ECOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION OF KAIWHARAWHARA-NGAURANGA ESCARPMENT VEGETATION.

TENURE: Private

ASPECT: Southeast

SLOPE: Steep

PHYSIOGRAPHY: Fault scarp dissected by steep gullies; greywacke talus/colluvium.

We visited the site on 21-10-96, descending via a steep gully from Homebush Rd just below its intersection with Onslow Rd, to the Hutt Rd. We then walked northeast parallel to and just above the Hutt Road to approximately 100m northeast of the steep gully which descends from Homebush Park. We then climbed the escarpment to the Park. Next we went to the southern end of Jarden Mile and continued our survey in the bush, both southwest of the road end and also above Jarden Mile towards the Ngauranga Gorge Road. From the top of Winchester St, we walked up the Bridle Track and descended a steep track to Kaiwharawhara Football Ground, then sidled southwest, finally climbing to the Bridle Track again.

HISTORY/CULTURAL ASPECTS : We found two very old stone walls, one of them drystone, in bush above the Hutt Road roughly opposite where the railway goes under the motorway, the other cemented, in the bush, immediately southwest of Kaiwharawhara Park Football Ground. We believe these walls are remains of structures associated with the original Hutt Road. We came across a few ancient fence posts on the slopes. Domestic rubbish was scattered in some sites. We saw two possible pot plots.

VEGETATION, GENERAL: Canopy height ranged from 3 - 10 metres. On the terrace immediately above the Hutt Road, karaka was the dominant canopy species and we noted numerous seedlings, saplings and poles. The terrace also supports emergent pohutukawa, which does not appear to be regenerating, mahoe and emergent ngaio. Leaf litter ranged from abundant to sparse. Near the top of the escarpment there were several substantial fivefingers.

BIOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIVENESS : A relatively weedfree second-growth, coastal forest of approximately 50 years, with substantial, planted and subsequently self-sown pohutukawa and karo.

RARITY : There are a few, significant remnants of original vegetation such as kiekie and fuchsia, some of them large.

DIVERSITY : Moderately diverse - we listed 32 tree and/or shrub species, 6 lianes, 16 ferns, and 8 monocot and dicot herbs.

DISTINCTIVENESS : The escarpment provides a scenic approach to the city, a band of largely-indigenous vegetation creating a restful, green contrast to a largely-industrial ambiance, and forming a natural extension of the Ngauranga/Korokoro escarpment.

CONTINUITY/LINKAGES : The site is ecologically continuous with the regenerating indigenous vegetation on the Ngauranga-Korokoro escarpment to the northeast, and with Trelissick Park. It is listed as Site Nos. 2 and 3 in "Natural Wellington" published by Wellington Branch, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society.

SUSTAINABILITY : Given the protection of pest control, this forest will continue to regenerate successfully. In time, later successional species will come in from Trelissick Park and other sites in the Kaiwharawhara catchment.

THREATS : We saw what appeared to be pig-rooting and pig droppings below the Bridle Track, southwest of Kaiwharawhara Park Football Ground. There were possum scratches on many tree trunks, especially mahoe, throughout.

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION : Animal and plant pest control will help increase the biological diversity of the forest.

RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL : The existing track from the Bridle Track down to the Kaiwharawhara Park Football Ground is worth upgrading: the cemented stone wall immediately southwest of the Park is accessible along an old road alignment. There is also potential for a track to be constructed from Kaiwharawhara Park, above the Hutt Road, northeastwards to the drystone wall, thence to the Jarden Mile.