

## PAENGAROA

Paengaroa is a special place for plants. It has a remarkable concentration of rare species and the greatest concentration of divaricating plants for any similar sized area in New Zealand making it a botanical treasure trove.



*Meliclytus flexuosus*

Photo: Rae Nicholls

## DIVARICATING PLANTS

These are the ugly ducklings of the plant world. They start out tangly, twiggy plants with small leaves. But once they get taller (about 3 metres high) some undergo a transformation so as to be barely recognisable from their earlier form.

One theory is that this was a defence against moa: while they were within easy reach of the moa, they were unattractive to eat, with not much food on offer. When tall enough to evade the moa they broke out developing lush green leaves.

Another theory is that climate played a part in the development of these fascinating plants.

## RARE SPECIES

Some of the plants in Paengaroa are nationally rare or have disjunct distributions. These include

- *Coprosma obconica* - known only at one other North Island site and a few South Island sites;

- *Pittosporum obcordatum* - heart leaved kohuhu;
- *Kortbalsella clavata* and *K lindsayii* - two species of dwarf mistletoe;
- *Tupeia antarctica* - a larger mistletoe, lives on maire and lemonwood;
- *Olearia gardneri* - the largest population of New Zealand's third rarest tree is found here and in nearby remnants, making Taihape its home.



*Coprosma obconica*



*Pittosporum obcordatum*



*Kortbalsella clavata*



*Kortbalsella lindsayii*



*Tupeia antarctica*



*Olearia gardneri*

## HOW HAS PAENGAROA BECOME SUCH A SPECIAL PLACE FOR PLANTS?

The unique collection of plants at Paengaroa is a result of the climate and geology. The area floods and is often waterlogged, yet also suffers droughts and can have frosts any day of the year.

Some of the plants in the reserve need good light and light gaps are created by ribbonwood, kowhai and narrow leaved lacebark which lose their leaves in winter.

## WHAT IS DOC DOING?

Possum control began in earnest in 1992 with aerial treatment using 1080-laced cereal baits. With the reduction in possums, mistletoe flourished and plants soon reached over 1m across. In 1996 Paengaroa was recognised for its

rare plants and became a mainland island. Today, weed and pest control are main priorities for management of this special reserve.

## HOW IS THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED?

The Mataroa community is invaluable for its local knowledge of the area. Many have contributed by removing invasive weeds from their properties as well as choosing not to grow exotic plants with bird-dispersed seeds. The community has a role to play in the control of cats in the area, and are the first to know if a fence needs fixing, if sheep or cattle are in the reserve, or rubbish is becoming a problem.

Massey University, Forest & Bird and other conservation groups continue helping with projects such as ivy control and robin monitoring. Local and district schools use the reserve and assist with any tree plantings.



Light gap within the reserve

Photo: Don Ravine

## PAENGAROA - A MAINLAND ISLAND

Paengaroa is one of six mainland islands managed by the Department of Conservation. These are areas of forest in rural New Zealand that are intensively managed in an attempt to create the equivalent of offshore islands on the mainland.

Paengaroa is 107ha and incorporates another 13ha of Railcorp land of similar vegetation on the banks of the Hautapu River, near the picturesque village of Mataroa. Turn west off State Highway 1, 3km north of Taihape.

Paengaroa was first protected in 1913 under the Scenery Preservation Act. Over the years botanists have recognized its uniqueness despite its weed infestation: ivy, elderberry, Chilean flame creeper, willow and cotoneaster are just some of the problem weeds found here. It wasn't until 1990 that weed management started and DOC staff and volunteers spent weeks removing around 14ha of ivy.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP.

- When visiting please respect this unique refuge and its precious inhabitants
- Be careful not to take plants or seeds into the reserve
- Remove rubbish
- Be a responsible cat owner
- Think carefully about what you plant in your garden

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information contact:

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Turangi

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**SafetyWatch**  
**0800 999 005**  
Report any safety hazards

*Cover photo: Swingbridge over the Hautapu River, Paengaroa Scenic Reserve.*  
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# Paengaroa Scenic Reserve

## A Treasure Island

WANGANUI CONSERVANCY



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*