

REPORT ON F&B JULY 2016 TRIP TO PAENGAROA SCENIC RESERVE

A dozen of us set off for Paengaroa Scenic Reserve, despite the weather forecast of showers and 6 degrees. Paengaroa is a 107ha forest remnant lying nestled in the Mataroa Valley, 8km NW of Taihape. It is one of the first Mainland Islands established by Department of Conservation, primarily for rare plant conservation. It is known for having the highest concentration of divaricating plants for its size as well as home to several nationally threatened plant species.



The group

We met up with our host and a guardian of the reserve, Michael Hutchins who imparted his passion for the place and hopeful future plans for reintroduction of robins.

Having heard from me about the moa browsing hypothesis influencing evolution of divaricating plants Chris Lusk from Hamilton put forward the case for the climate hypothesis.



Experiencing the climate hypothesis at Paengaroa

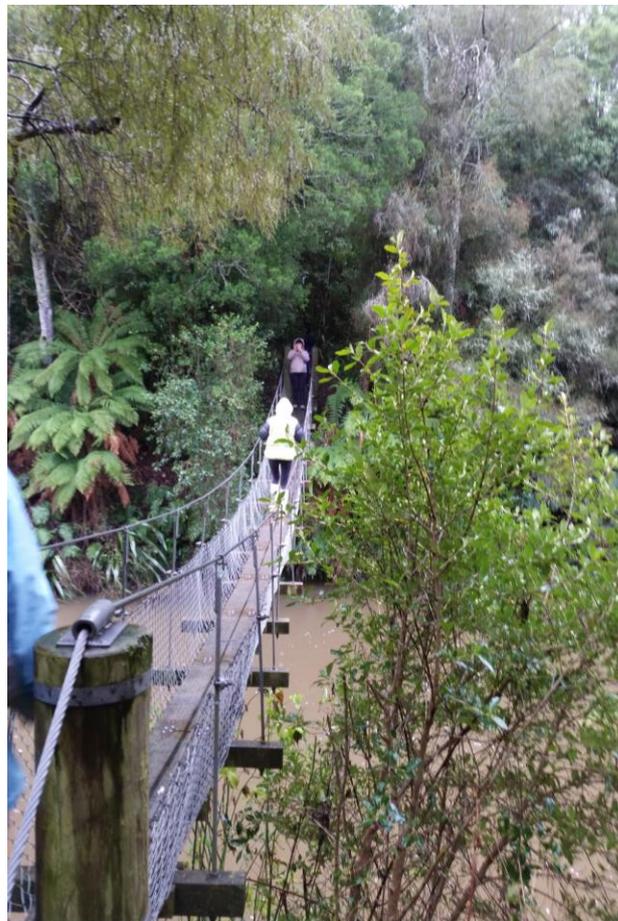
We then wandered into the bush across a swing bridge spanning the Hautapu River and got up close to the wonders of Paengaroa.

While we only ventured part way along the track there is a very worthwhile loop walk that climbs to the top of the reserve (passing Tupeia mistletoe on the way) with great views over the surrounding landscape, and circling its way back around to the entrance. Another time.

We had lunch at Michael and Adele's intriguing rammed earth walls house baking in winter sunshine. Conversations ranged from the Greek Classics to biodynamic farming.

A quick walk up the hill behind the house to a little hut with spectacular views towards Ruapehu (in the clouds) ended our stay and we headed home in the sunshine.

But not without a quick stop for a look down into the Hautapu River again, this time as a steep ravine just off SH1 on Gorge Rd, south of Taihape. Worth a look!



Crossing the Hautapu River



Looking over the Mataroa Valley to Paengaroa

Thank you to everyone who came - we all contributed to making this a great day out, with stories shared and new friends made. And we didn't even get to throw a gumboot...next time!

Vivienne McGlynn