

grounds. The vegetation was fired for agricultural purposes; and so most of the island is now covered in second growth.

Sunday morning, with the first light of dawn, the party was awakened by a tumultuous burst of song from the bellbirds. One or two started the chorus by singing several notes; then immediately the valley was filled with a bell-like sound. The chorus lasted for half an hour, then ceased as abruptly as it had begun. In the year 1790 on the first visit of Captain Cook to New Zealand he anchored in Queen Charlotte Sound, and Sir Joseph Banks who accompanied him described the bellbird chorus in the following words: "I was awakened by the singing of the birds ashore, from whence we are not a quarter of a mile. Their numbers were certainly very great. They seemed to strain their throats with emulation, and made perhaps the most melodious wild music I have ever heard, almost imitating small bells but with the most tunable silver sound imaginable, to which, may be, the distance was no small addition." The party was fortunate indeed to have heard similar music to that which those aboard the *Endeavour* heard on that morning in January 192 years ago.

Some of the ninety members decided to climb to the trig station, others went down into the crater, and the remainder spent the day exploring in the vicinity of the bay. The track was an easy one to follow and was through bush mainly consisting of rewarewa, mapou, rangiora, kawakawa, and pohutukawa trees, the last being the largest and most numerous trees on the outer rim of the crater. The mapou was plentiful and very dainty, growing after the style of beech trees and giving a light and airy appearance to the bush.

One of the most impressive features of the island was the large size of the leaves on many of the plants and trees. Rangiora and kawakawa in particular astounded everyone by being anything up to three times larger than the specimens seen in the Waikato.

The views from the trig station, which is 1,200 feet above the sea, were enjoyed by all, Waihi beach and Matakana Island being visible in the distance. In the crater two lakes could be seen, Aroarotamahine, the larger lake, appearing green. Mr. Densem had said that the colour varies at different times of the

day because of the rise and fall of a unicellular alga, one of the lowest forms of plant life. The smaller lake, Paritu, looked black, probably due to decaying vegetation. When members were nearer, ducks could be seen on the lake. Walking along the crater rim the party was interested to find numerous plants of a rare and primitive fern named *Schizaea*. Two of the three varieties of this fern found in New Zealand were here seen to be growing together. A rock face had to be negotiated with the aid of a rope and after various scramblings the floor of the crater was reached. On the sun-baked rocks in the merest dirt-retaining crevices *Cheilanthes sieberi* was found. This small fern grows in the blazing sun in these most unfernlike situations. It was new to most of the members. The orchid *Thelymitra longifolia* was found from sea level to the summit, all the plants being larger than those seen in the Waikato, and bearing many white flowers. Only one plant of another orchid was found, *Sarcochilus adversus*, this tenacious small plant being seen growing on a burnt and dead manuka tree exposed to sun and wind.

On Tuhua numerous bellbirds were seen as well as heard; tuis, pigeons, kakas, and grey warblers were also seen, but these birds were not so obviously plentiful. Sunday evening a church service was held in the lounge. The perfect weather and the privilege of being in such an interesting place caused everyone present to have so much to be grateful for that the service was one of sincere thanksgiving. Monday morning members were awake early ready for the bellbird chorus, but the birds appeared to sing in a quieter and less enveloping manner, possibly because the day was overcast. The most was made of the last few hours on the island, a walk along the beach revealing twenty or so white-fronted terns, then a final walk in the bush, where the largest pohutukawa on the island was seen. This massive tree measured 34 feet round at a height of four feet. Several more ferns were added to the list. *Pteris comans*, a handsome big fern, was plentiful, but is rare and local on the mainland. The return trip was rough and no dolphins were seen but sooty shearwaters were apparently unconcernedly skimming the sea up and down the troughs of the waves.

During the weekend the number of plants identified was 107, and of birds 14.