

# TRUE COLOURS

SEPTEMBER 2002

## INSECTS EXONERATED IN WHIRINAKI RATA PROJECT

A change in direction on an important project provides a handy reminder: identify the problem before applying the remedy!

In recent years Project Crimson has contributed funding to restore rata health in the central North Island's Whirinaki forest. Forest health consultant and Project Crimson Trustee, Gordon Hosking, has been involved in the project since its inception.

"Everyone I have talked to believes it to be the most significant rata-dominated forest in the North Island," he says.

During the 1990s, however, the rata forest was in serious trouble. Massive trees were dying, with insect damage considered a likely cause. However, Gordon and some others suspected possum damage. Further investigation - including

hanging out of a helicopter to collect crown foliage - proved possums were clearly the culprit.

A Masters student undertook a two-year study to analyse damage evident in leaf litter. However, so few possum-damaged leaves were collected that the study returned inconclusive results.

"Surprisingly this lack of possum damage in the shed leaves supported the view that possums were the cause," says Gordon. Possums eat new foliage growing at the ends of twigs by nipping off whole leaf groups. Since they eat the entire leaf, any uneaten leaves falling to the ground are likely to be undamaged.

So, back to the research drawing board!

A new, less labour-intensive study is analysing leaf litter quantity rather than quality. Gordon says the study proposes that the amount of litter falling to the forest floor reflects the amount of foliage in the tree's canopy. As possums are controlled

and tree canopies recover, then leaf litter should increase.

There is already evidence to support the new hypothesis. A recent aerial survey shows significant forest recovery that stops abruptly where there is no possum control.

And the moral of this story? A wild predator chase can be avoided by ensuring that the cause of a problem is correctly identified before deciding response options. The time and effort spent to develop sensitive and robust monitoring tools will no doubt prove to be a valuable tool in protecting rata and pohutukawa in other parts of the country.



Whirinaki forest



## PROTECTING POHUTUKAWA & RATA

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**PROJECT CRIMSON**  
  
CarterHoltHarvey  
with the Department of Conservation



# GOOD THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES

Whirinaki is one of New Zealand's most magnificent mixed podocarp forests, yet it is also one of the smallest forest parks administered by the Department of Conservation. At 55,000 hectares it is similar in size to Lake Taupo or the island of Singapore.

The nearby central volcanic plateau has had a considerable influence on the local landforms. About 1,800 years ago the Taupo eruption ejected a massive amount of pumice, some of



Brown Kiwi

which cloaked the greywacke ridges in the east of the forest park.

Besides rata, other podocarps found in the forest include kahikatea, totara, matai, miro and rimu. It hosts a number of endangered species, including the karearea (New Zealand falcon) and whio (blue duck). Other birds include the kaka (North Island parrot), the red and yellow crowned kakariki, the kereru (native

wood pigeon) and the brown kiwi. New Zealand's only native mammals, the long and short tailed bats, live on the forest fringes.

Maori have been associated with the forest over the past millennium and the remains of many pa, settlements and old gardening sites serve as a silent testimony to the area's long history of occupation. Today the tribe Ngati Whare regards itself as the guardian of Whirinaki forest and maintains a keen interest in the park's management. The first pakeha to visit the area was the Reverend William Colenso, who came to Te Whaiti in 1842.



Whirinaki forest

## HOLDEN RENEWS PARTNERSHIP WITH PROJECT CRIMSON

Holden New Zealand has provided two brand new Holden Rodeos to replace the 'old fleet'. These were handed over in Auckland and Wellington in July.

Debbie Teale, Project Crimson's executive director, says that the two Rodeos, previously 'gifted' by Holden have been of huge value to the Trust and have performed brilliantly in some very rugged parts of the country.



*Holden's sales manager, Terry McEwan (left) presents the North Island Rodeo to Debbie Teale and Chris Liddell, chief executive of Carter Holt Harvey and Project Crimson's chairman.*



*Holden's media relations manager, Aalbert van Ham (right) hands the keys to the new South Island Rodeo to Philip Simpson (left), watched by Joris de Bres, then external relations manager for the Department of Conservation and one of Project Crimson's trustees.*

## THE LENGTHS THAT PHILIP WILL GO TO TO SOURCE INFORMATION FOR HIS NEW BOOK

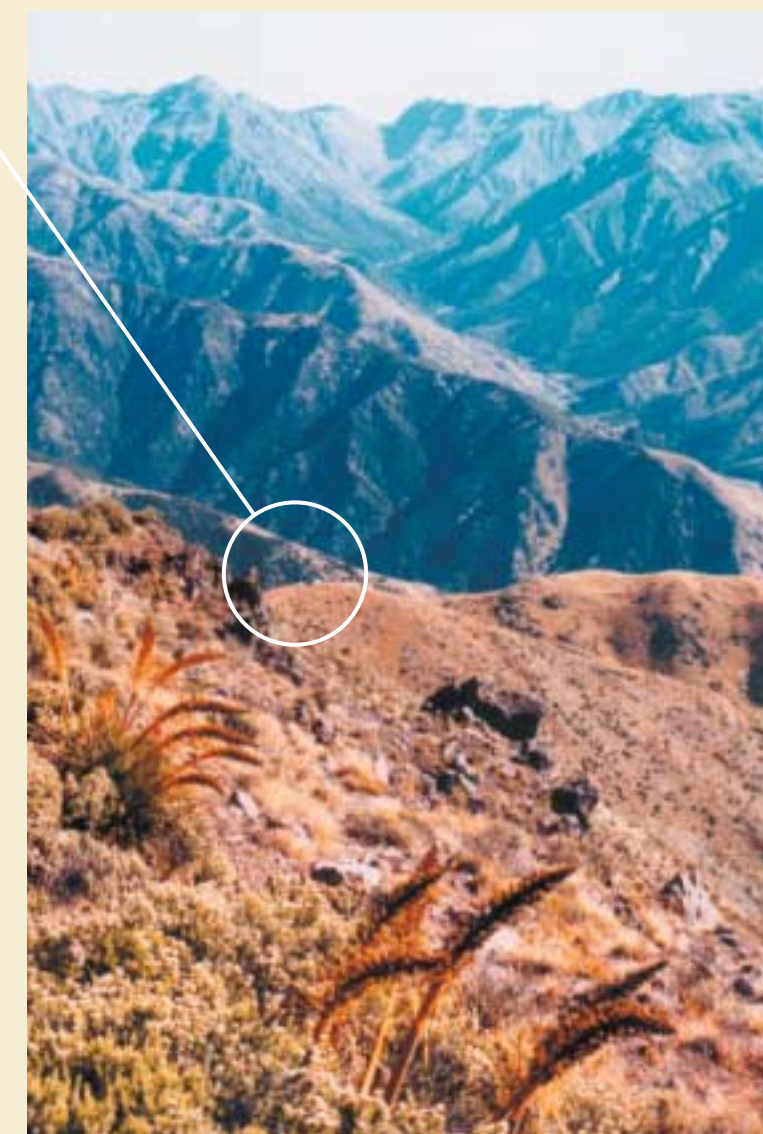
Philip in his vehicle looking for Rata

Project Crimson's South Island advisor Philip Simpson is researching for a new book, *"The Iron Hearted Trees: Pohutukawa and Rata"*.

Philip's new book will be published by Te Papa Press, in association with Project Crimson, with funding from Carter Holt Harvey.

Philip intends to provide a detailed account of the natural history of both trees, as well as their practical, cultural and spiritual importance to both Maori and Pakeha. It will include stories and memories of New Zealanders to enhance our understanding about how these trees have enriched our lives. If you have stories which are significant to your family, community or district – accounts, memories, records, poems, paintings and plantings – which you would like to offer for possible inclusion in his new book, please contact Philip directly at [philip@goldenbay.net.nz](mailto:philip@goldenbay.net.nz) Faulkner Road, Pohara, RDI, Takaka, 03 525 6223.

Philip hopes that this proposed large-format, full-colour book will enjoy the same success as his recently published *"Dancing Leaves: the story of New Zealand's cabbage tree, ti kouka"*.





# GOLDEN BAY RATA TRAIL THE FIRST OF MANY

Project Crimson's newest attraction - the Rata Trail Golden Bay - is proving popular with visitors to the Northwest Nelson region.

The trail was the brainchild of a group comprising Project Crimson and local residents interested in native trees. Chris Rowse from Takaka says the group pooled their knowledge to identify the best sites to feature on the trail.

The trail begins at the Takaka Information Centre and is an easy day trip by car - two hours' driving, plus walking times. While some of the trees are handy to the road, others are along easy walking tracks.

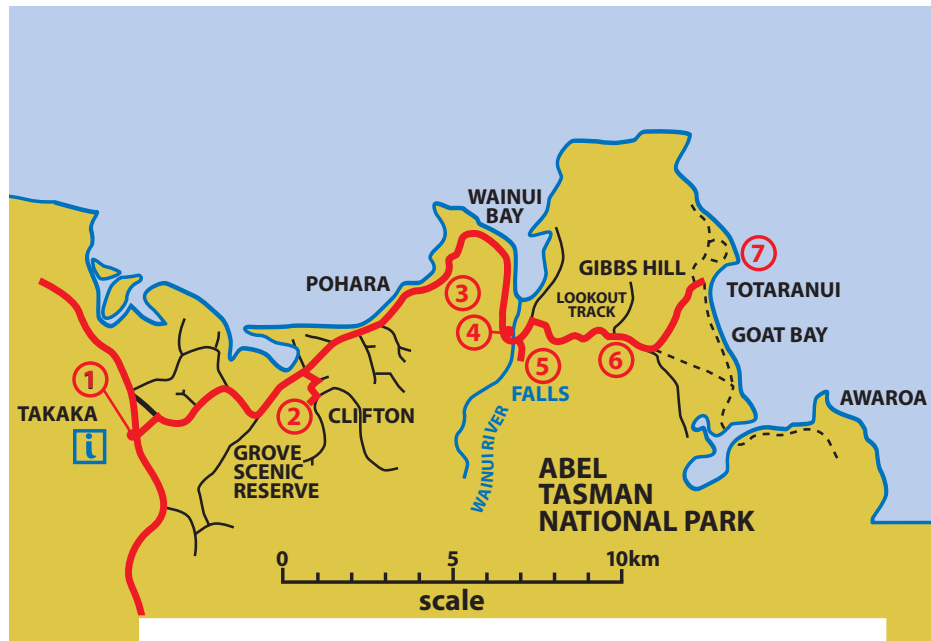
"People visiting the rata trail will get to see hundreds of magnificent trees against a backdrop of some of the South Island's best scenery. It's a great day out," says Chris.

The trail features seven sites, with most sites comprising large stands of trees rather than individual specimens.

**The brochure for the trail also identifies other rata sites of interest in the region.**

This brochure can be printed from Project Crimson's web site [http://www.projectcrimson.org.nz/rata\\_trail\\_nelson.pdf](http://www.projectcrimson.org.nz/rata_trail_nelson.pdf). Copies can also be obtained from the Department of Conservation's Golden Bay Area Office, PO Box 166, Takaka.

Phone 03 525 8026 / Fax 03 525 8444.



TEMPTED TO TRY THE TRAIL?  
THEN HERE'S A SAMPLE OF WHAT  
YOU COULD SEE...

Site 2: The Grove Scenic Reserve is characterised by massive northern rata growing on curiously shaped limestone outcrops. There is an easy 20-minute walk passing some impressive roots over large limestone blocks. Look for the rata starting to encircle the host tree's trunk, on your left 10m after the start of the return trail.

## QUESTION CORNER

Sometimes we are asked: is it okay to pick pohutukawa or rata blooms for use at events?

Yes, provided they are taken from a tree on your own property. If you want to pick blooms from a tree on someone else's property, or public property, then seek permission from the appropriate person (i.e. landowner, council, DoC). You never know - some of the councils we asked said yes!