PAPAROA RANGE - PUNAKAIKI

9.1. LANDFORMS

"The varied scenic, aesthetic and educative potential ... of the Paparoa region are suitable for a wide range of recreational uses. The lowlands and coastline are especially attractive with the historic inland Pack Track between the Punakaiki and Fox Rivers having the potential to rival any existing walk, with its abundant birdlife, including kiwis, kakas, parakeets and robins. Special karst features, potholes, dolines, caves, are accessible from the main track and commanding views of the lowlands and higher peaks are present from the summits of the wave-planed knolls and mesas.

Views available from the crest of the coastal escarpment would, if made accessible, offer the type of inspirational experience which New Zealanders seek in their national parks.

Areas large, remote and rugged enough to be sustainable as true wilderness are also at a premium. By these criteria, the central Paparoa Range has exceptional potential to meet the needs of New Zealanders for remote experience recreation."

"Paparoa National Park", NFAC, 1979, p.95

Viewed from the Victoria or Brunner Ranges the Paparoa Range is aptly described by its Maori name ("long, flat"). The Range is remarkably constant in height (1300 - 1500m) for the 35 km from the Buckland Peaks in the north to the White Knight in the south. However, upon closer approach this central spine of the range is seen to be an amazing chain of flat-topped peaks, sharp crags, gendarmes, cirques and bluffs carved by glacial action from the hard granite and gneiss. Although the range is quite young, these granites and gneiss are some of the oldest rocks in New Zealand; erosion has worn away the softer Tertiary sediments that must have covered the range as it emerged, leaving a landscape of U-shaped valleys very similar to that of Fiordland. The similarities between the crest of the range and Fiordland are striking - geology, accordant summits, glaciation, superhumid oceanic climate - and in toto, the Range probably offers a challenge to the alpine traveller unsurpassed in any other range of equivalent height (including the Tararua Range) outside Fiordland.

To the west, the Paparoa Range drops sharply to a broad trench filled with limestone, sandstones, siltstones, etc. of Tertiary age. At its higher western margin the limestone or "karst" belt has developed into a remarkable landscape. Most of the major rivers (e.g. Fox, Bullock Creek, Pororari, Punakaiki) have cut down forming spectacular canyons through the limestone; the heavily forested region is a jumbled mosaic of dolines (large depressions

or sinkholes), blind valleys, subterranean drainage patterns and rough karst plateaux with no defined ridge system. To date, 16 limestone cave systems have been recognised and, considering that much of the region is yet to be fully explored, the region may contain the largest unmodified cave network in the country.

The limestone trough terminates in coastal cliffs fronted by a rugged, rocky coastline. In places along the coast the limestone has been eroded into spectacular features such as the well-known blowholes and "Pancake Rocks" at Dolomite Point.

The southern crest of the Paparoa Range south of Mt. Anderson is much gentler, the underlying rock being ancient greywackes of the Greenland Group - hence the gold-mining interest in the Moonlight, Blackball and Canoe Creeks.

Overall, the outstanding feature of the Paparoa region is the remarkable diversity of landforms coupled with a minimum of interference from human activity or introduced animals. The coastal scenery and the jagged crest of the range are some of the most spectacular in the West Coast.

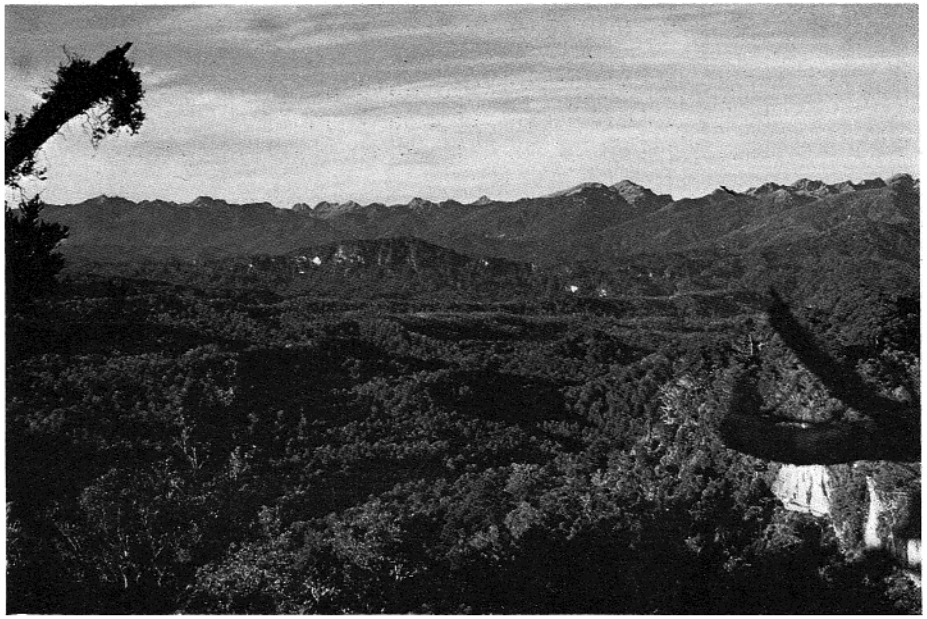
9.2. Vegetation

The vegetation of the Paparoa Range and western coastal regions is of considerable scientific interest because of the interaction of complex geology, sharp altitudinal gradient, and a wide range of climates moving from west to east. The four beech species are found in mixtures throughout the region with silver beech dominant in the south. Much of the coastal vegetation was severely modified in gold-rush days but most of the tall podocarp/broadleaf, and podocarp/broadleaf/beech forest of the inland trough remains. In places such as the Ohikanui and Otututu valleys, cold air drainage has given rise to valley floor forests which are montane in composition. In other parts of the granite/gneiss mountain chain, a dense subalpine scrub extends to as low as 400m altitude, presumably because of the low fertility, acid soils.

The scientific importance of the landforms and vegetation of the Paparoa region is clearly set out in the recent publication "Paparoa National Park" (NFAC, 1979) and was recognised by the initial selection of five ecological reserves (West Coast Forest Policy, 1978) by the Scientific Co-ordinating Committee for Beech Forests (SCC). Four of these reserves (Blackwater - Fletchers Creek and Tiropahi - Saxton) form two altitudinal sequences, reserving landforms and vegetation from one side of the range to the other. Subsequently at its meeting of November 1978, the SCC accepted the need for a ecological reserve in the Porarari region to complement the Tiropahi reserve which would now be reduced in size. This new Porarari ecological reserve of 7600 ha covers the Porarari catchment and most of the forested catchment of Bullock Creek; it would therefore, replace Tiropahi as the main "coast to mountaincrest" reserve and saddle directly with the Saxton reserve.

In the north-east, the Blackwater ecological reserve incorporates the Blackwater catchment above the Buller Scenic Reserve and is noteworthy for its mountain beech/pink pine/yellow-silver pine/rata forest; it saddles with the Fletchers Creek ecological reserve in the Inangahua which preserves one of the few remaining examples of unlogged beech forest. The Saxton is typical of the beech vegetation on the colder side of the Paparoa Range. On the western side, with its mild, superhumid climate, rimu achieves a high altitudinal limit and the coastal forests have a luxuriant understorey with a great variety of plants; on the east, however, podocarps are only scattered in the valleys where the widespread forest is red and silver beech. On the spurs, hard and mountain beech is to be found and silver beech also generally forms the bushline.

The sixth ecological reserve, Roaring Meg, at the southeast corner of the Range encompasses the environs of the Croesus Track in Blackball Creek. It reserves an important section of the abrupt beech/non-beech vegetation transition that is so characteristic of the mid-Grey valley (see 7.1).

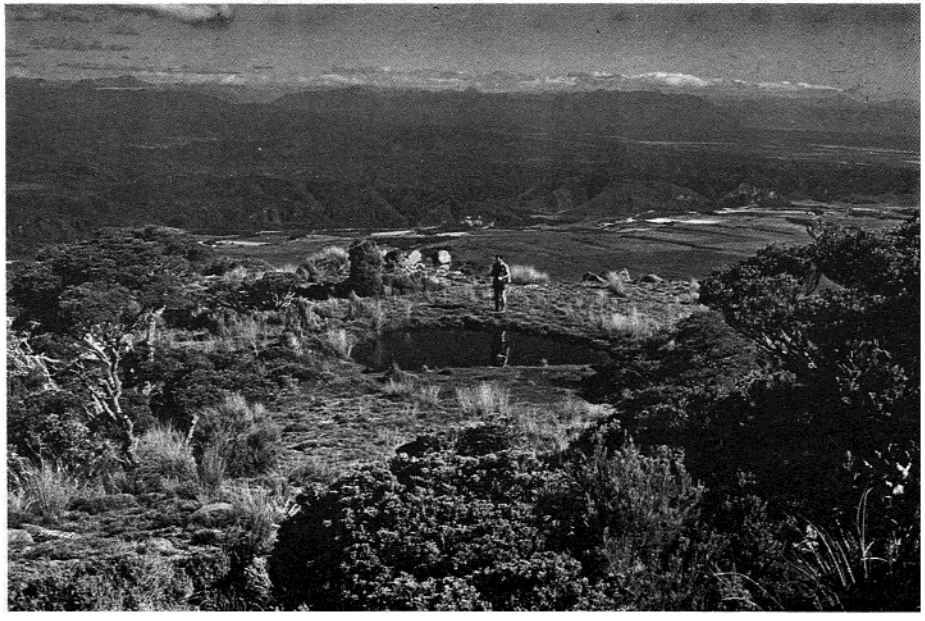


Forests of limestone trough looking north from above Porarari River, western Paparoas.

National Museum

Mt. Uriah and headwaters of Otututu from bushline on Mt. Epping, Paparoa Range.

Les Molloy



Sub-alpine vegetation on eastern slopes of Mt. Raoulia, Paparoa Range looking SW across Mawheraiti to beech forests of Grey Valley.

Les Molloy

Porarari River, western Paparoas.

Guy Salmon

9.3. Exploration History

There are reports (Lands and Survey, 1978) that in pre-European times Maoris "... travelled along the crest of the Paparoa Range". Anyone who has faced the mountaineering difficulties of traversing the length of the range, or even crossing it, would have serious doubts about such reports - particularly when the Buller, Inangahua and Grey valleys are such well-defined routes.

Charles Heaphy and Thomas Brunner found isolated Maori settlements near the mouth of the Fox and at Tauranga Bay. Until the establishment of Westport in 1861 the main European influence was from sealers along the Coast and a few pastoralists interested in the grassy pakihis around Cape Foulwind and Addisons Flat.

The goldrush also came to the Paparoa coast during the 1860's - Addisons Flat, Charleston, Brighton (a town of several thousand people at the mouth of the Fox River - now completely gone without trace), Canoe Creek and Barrytown. In the main, the gold was in cemented blacksand. People and supplies were shipped in, at some hazard, to Tauranga Bay, Constant Bay (Charleston) and Woodpecker Bay (Brighton).

Because the coastal route - with obstacles such as the Te Miko Cliffs (Perpendicular Point) and the Razorback - was so difficult for the diggers to travel, an inland pack-track between the Punakaiki River and Brighton was constructed. The "road" traversed the Porarari, Bullock Creek and Fossil Creek valleys in the heavily-forested limestone trough about 5 km back from the coast behind the coastal hills and cliffs.

It is precisely this difficult coastal terrain which preserved so much of this luxuriant podocarp/hardwood forest; the land was not suitable for permanent settlement and the coastal road was not completed until the 1940's. While most of the valley and terrace forest around Addisons Flat and Charleston was destroyed in the 1860's, milling only began in the more accessible forests of the western Paparoas 40 years ago. Sadly, most of the forest north of the Tiropahi has been severely logged but the bulk of the forest in the limestone trough between the Tiropahi and the Fox, and the Porarari and Punakaiki is still in a virgin condition.

9.4. Recreational Attractions

The many recreational attractions of the Paparoa Region are not immediately obvious to the casual road traveller, save for the spectacular coastline between the Punakaiki and Fox Rivers. Yet the diversity of landform and vegetation throughout the area provides a wide range of recreational opportunity. Most of this recreational potential has yet to be achieved for the Paparoa Range has long been *"terra incognita"* for most metropolitan outdoor recreation clubs. To date, most of the tramping and hunting activity has been by the local population, for the Paparoas are remote from Wellington, Nelson and Christchurch.

Furthermore, the region is almost entirely without a network of huts and tracks, again reflecting the historic isolation of the West Paparoa region.

The recreational attractions can be summarised in five categories:

(a) Scenic drives - the West Paparoa coast, coupled with the Lower Buller Gorge, is one of the most attractive scenic drives on the West Coast;

(b) West Paparoa forests - the luxurious podocarp forests of the limestone trough between the Tiropahi and Punakaiki Rivers; traversed by the old Punakaiki-Brighton pack-track and the Porarari River track;

(c) Cave systems - at least 16 cave systems identified to date; probably the largest, unmodified cave network in N.Z. The largest is the Nile River ("Metro") cave system which has 7½ km of continous passages and is second only to Waitomo;

(d) Mountain crest/montane valleys - the interior of the Range is very rugged and remote, offering outstanding opportunities for wilderness experience;

(e) Historical features - the West Paparoa gold diggings (particularly Charleston) plus Blackball and the Croesus and Moonlight tracks in the south are important historical attractions.

9.5. ZONING

9.5.1. WILDERNESS

Paparoa Wilderness

A "Paparoa wilderness" of approx. 30,000 ha is shown in map 7. It includes the rocky spine of the Range between Mt. Kelvin in the north and White Knight in the south. The major valley systems are the Otututu, the Ohikanui above Gamma Creek, the upper Blackwater and Kynnersley Creek. At its extreme northeast end the wilderness almost reaches the landmark of Berlins Bluff above the Buller Gorge; on its western margin the boundary is not well defined topographically, but is approximately the 600m contour north of Mt. Bovis.

There are no tracks or huts within the wilderness area and the level of introduced animals is low; there is a small herd of fallow deer in the Otututu and goats are present in the headwaters of the western valleys. The wilderness is truly the mountainous core of the Range, buffered by forests and broken country on all sides. Access from the western lowlands is slow because of the difficulty of travel through the karst country or the river canyons. The two obvious routes into the wilderness area are the glacial valleys of the Ohikanui and Otututu; both provide good travel in the heavily forested valley floor and the interior zone can be reached in a day via either river. In the east a subsidiary parallel range, extending from Mt. McHardy to Mt. Stevenson, provides a buffer and travel onto this Range, or Mt. Raoulia or the divide between the Blackwater and Inangahua, is slow unless a limited number of blazed routes are followed.

The main spine of the Paparoas is an impressive sight from either the Otututu or Ohikanui - seemingly an endless and chaotic series of pinnacles and flat-topped peaks with sheer cliffs on either side. It is generally not easy to reach the crest of the Range from these valleys; the ridges and spurs contain many granite bluffs and the subalpine scrub is ubiquitous. From most points Mt. Uriah, on a side spur, dominates the view.

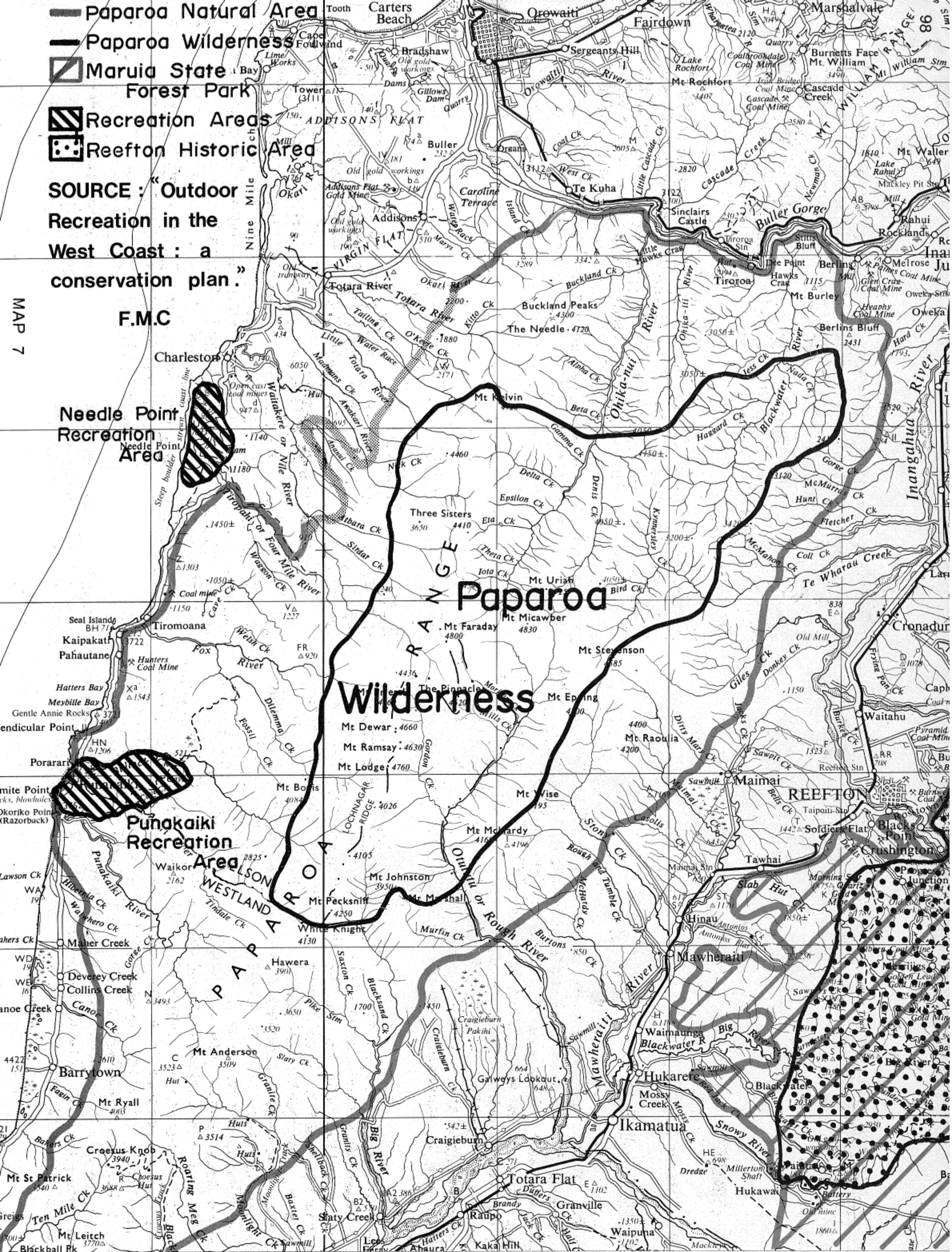
Although travel in the wilderness is difficult and only for the experienced, the challenge is worth the effort to see some of the most impressive subalpine scenery outside of Fiordland. Management of the wilderness area should not be difficult. It is a de facto wilderness now and all that is required is the maintenance of the status quo and the regulation of aircraft and overzealous trail-blazers.

9.5.2. NATURAL AREA

Paparoa Natural Area

The "Paparoa Natural Area" (map 7) encompasses virtually the entire unmodified portion of the Paparoa Range. It includes part of the Buller Scenic Reserve but deliberately excludes the logged forests around Charleston and the beech and beech/podocarp production forests of the western floor of the Inangahua, Mawheraiti and Grey valleys. The "Paparoa Natural Area" surrounds the Paparoa wilderness like a sheath; whereas the wilderness area is montane and alpine in nature the natural area is predominantly lowland.

The recreational attractions of the Paparoa Natural Area are basically those summarised in 9.4. viz scenic coastal and Buller River drive, forests of the limestone trough and coast, cave systems of the limestone belt and the historical features of the Punakaiki-Brighton region (track etc.) and the Croesus and Moonlight Tracks.


Paparoa Natural Area
Paparoa Wilderness
Maruia State Forest Park
Recreation Areas
Reefton Historic Area
SOURCE : "Outdoor Recreation in the West Coast : a conservation plan."
F.M.C
Paparoa Wilderness
PAPAROA RANGE
Needle Point Recreation Area
Punakaiki Recreation Area
REEFTON
Charleston
Westport
Orowaiti
Carters Beach
Buller Gorge
Inangahua River
Mt Kelvin
Three Sisters
Mt Uriah
Mt Micawber
Mt Faraday
Mt Stevenson
Mt Epping
Mt Dewar
Mt Ramsay
Mt Lodge
Mt Bovis
Mt Wise
Mt McHardy
Mt Johnston
Mt Pecksniff
White Knight
Barrytown
Punakaiki River
Ikamatua
Totara Flat
Mawheraiti
Hukarere
Blackball

MAP 7

Management Problems

(i) Forestry:

Most of the State forest in the Paparoa Natural Area is protection forest. However, the West Coast Forest Policy (1978) envisages the selection logging of the limestone trough forests between the Fox and Punakaiki Rivers. The difficulty of logging this karst topography was clearly demonstrated during an NZFS logging trial in 1976 which had to be abandoned when only 20% of the trial area was logged. The logging team estimated that the area could not be roaded satisfactorily and would be very expensive, in the order of $35,000 per km. To date the N.Z. Forest Service have considered these forests critical to the supply problem faced by the Buller sub-region of the indigenous forest industry.

The SCC have recommended the establishment of the Tiropahi and Porarari ecological reserves to preserve a representative portion of this landscape and forest.

During 1978 a study of the national park potential of the area, including the lowland forest between the Fox and 12 Mile Creek, was carried out on behalf of the NPA (Lands & Survey, 1978).

Considering the remarkable natural history of the karst country of the western Paparoas the national interest is far more likely to be served by keeping all selection logging north of the Tiropahi River and west of the boundary of the zoned Paparoa Natural Area (taking particular care to exclude logging from the catchments (e.g. Ananui) of the Nile River cave system).

Excluding indigenous forest logging from the limestone trough, however, does not mean the end of the timber industry in the Buller sub-region. There are a number of other options which should ensure the survival of the industry until it can be sustained, in part, by exotics. They are:

(a) between 8000 - 10,000 ha of merchantable indigenous forest still exists in the Charleston region outside the natural area.

(b) the SCC have accepted part of the Orikaka catchment (north side of Buller Gorge) as an adequate substitute for the forest communities of the proposed large Ngakawau ecological reserve. This will make, at least 60,000 m^3 of indigenous timber available to the Buller industry.

(c) re-negotiation of the existing long-term sale in Karamea to the Charleston region at a lower annual rate of cut (West Coast Forest Policy, 1978, item 13).

(d) the likely availability of both beech and podocarp sawlogs as utilisation takes effect in the lower Inangahua valley; transportation to Westport would not be difficult.

(ii) Mining:

The geological complexity of the Paparoa region indicates the likelihoodof a number of minerals with industrial uses. Nothing of any economic significance has been mined in recent times, although the inferred coal deposits (particularly the Pike coalfield) could be significant for New Zealand's future energy strategy. The three main minerals are uranium, coal and limestone.

Uranium was first prospected in the Hawks Crag breccia of the Buller Gorge in the 1950's but despite many intensive surveys in this area, and the other lenses at the head of the Porarari valley, no grades worthy of exploitation have been discovered. The social benefits of industrial uses of uranium continue to be debated and it is questionable whether New Zealanders would ever accept the mining of uranium.

The Pike Stream coalfield (SE Paparoas, tributary of Big River) is included in the natural area since there are no current proposals to mine the deposit. The minor Punakaiki

and Charleston coalfields lie partly within the natural area but the major Buller, Inangahua and Greymouth (plus the Mt. Davy deposit) are all outside it. The importance of the Pike Stream coal needs to be clarified by further study of the West Coast's vast coal resources and, until this is done, the field should be retained in a natural state.

There is sufficient of the limestone of the Western Paparoas outside the natural area zone to satisfy projected agricultural and cement manufacture uses. These deposits are primarily between the Little Totara and Nile Rivers.

Historic Tracks

A major feature of the Paparoa Natural Area is a number of historic tracks which have considerable potential for widespread recreational use.

(i) Croesus Track:

The Croesus Track, behind Blackball in the southeast portion of the Paparoa Natural Area, has recently been upgraded by the N.Z. Forest Service. Blackball itself is an interesting living relic of the coal-mining heyday of the Paparoa ("Roa") mine which finally closed in 1971. Dredge tailings below Blackball indicate the earlier goldmining interest in the valley, with the historic Croesus Track built to service the Croesus, Minerva and Taffy gold mines high on the slopes of the Range. The track traverses an interesting variety of forest types - lowland podocarp/hardwood with large, prominent rimu, then increasing content of beech with altitude until below Croesus Knob the subalpine scrub belt gives way to open tussock tops.

The two old huts en route date from the mining days and the old "pubs" shown on maps were established in 1868 and in the 1880's respectively to serve the teams using the track. At "Garden Gully" below Lake Margaret a short turn-off leads to the well preserved Margaret Battery.

Most parties would be advised to retrace their steps down valley to give an interesting day trip; however, for the more experienced parties it is possible to travel north along the tops to Mt. Ryall and thence down a bush spur to Barrytown or the coast. Another variant is to continue along the tops beyond Mt. Ryall to Trig C (3623') and thence down into Moonlight Creek and the Moonlight Gully track. From Trig C there is a breathtaking view of the sheer cliffs above the headwaters of the Punakaiki River.

(ii) Moonlight Gully Track:

The Moonlight Track is parallel, but upriver, to the Croesus Track. This goldfield was discovered by George Fairweather Moonlight (see 8.2.) in 1865, probably his most remarkable discovery. It yielded nuggets as large as the 87½ oz "Victory" as recently as 1917. Anderson's Flat, the site of an old mining village, offers plenty of scope for fossicking. An old, graded and benched track is being cleared by NZFS and en route there is plenty of evidence of the painstaking work by Chinese diggers. Experienced parties can follow the track to where it reaches the alpine tops below peak 3623'.

(iii) Fox - Punakaiki Pack Track:

The old "inland road" has already been discussed and has the potential of being a recreational/historical focal point for the Western Paparoa part of the natural area. It has been suggested (NFAC, 1979) that the development of the track north through the "Amphitheatre Doline" system (on the northern side of the Fox River Canyon) eventually to cross the karst plateau to the Four Mile (Tiropahi) River, would greatly enhance the recreational attraction of the area to the public. Although the risks of straying from the track in such country are acknowledged, the possibility of such an extension to the pack track is an exciting one worthy of detailed investigation.

Some investigators (Bartle, 1977; Lands and Survey 1978) have claimed that the Brighton-Punakaiki track (built between 1866 and 1874) actually extended up the Punakaiki and

across the Range near Mt. Ryall and down to Blackball via what is now known as the Croesus Track. Although the survey records of that period show such a track it was no longer shown on maps by the 1880's by which time a coastal road had been built to Barrytown. No one has been able to find any trace of this section of such a road and, in the absence of any firmer historical evidence of its existence, the most likely explanation is that it was never formed and was just a vague route.

Nevertheless, the possibility of such a formed track is an intriguing one and the matter is worthy of more historical research and field investigation, although the mountainous country between Blackball and Brighton is an arduous and rather unlikely route.

9.5.3. RECREATION AREAS

(1) Punakaiki Recreation Area

The Punakaiki Recreation Area incorporates part of the existing Punakaiki Scenic Reserve and adjacent State Forest between the Punakaiki and Bullock Creek. The most important feature is the "Pancake Rocks" at Dolomite Point. Other major points of interest in the Recreation Area are:

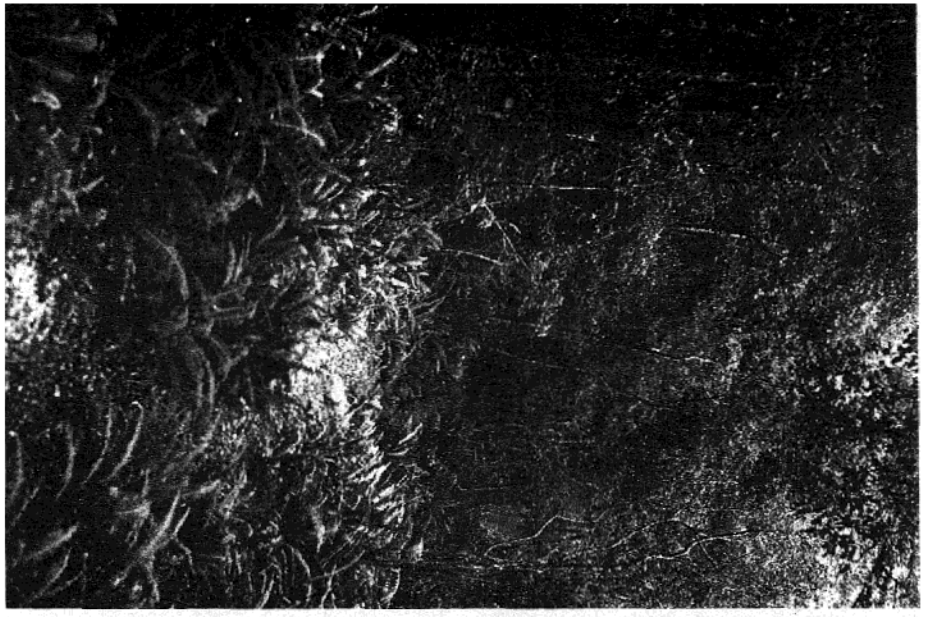
- historic track between Punakaiki and Bullock Creek;
- the Xanadu cave system whereby the waters of Bullock Creek are captured to emerge from a cave as the 'unfloodable' Cave Creek, a tributary of the Porarari;
- the limestone canyons of the Porarari and Bullock Creek;
- Trumans Track from S.H.6 to the cliffed coastline just north of Bullock Creek.

At present most of these features are only known to the local population and the specialist; the tracks are mainly unposted and need upgrading in many places before being acceptable for widespread public use. Development needs to be sensitive to the existing natural values currently protected by scenic reserve status. Where this preservation objective is not at stake, sensitive development could bring many of these remarkable features - particularly the tall vegetation, and the dolines, alcoves, cliffs and canyons of the karst landscape - within walking distance of the general public.

It needs emphasising that a major tourist development of the cave system is not envisaged. However, a level of commercial guiding in such a complex topography could well be appropriate. In addition, this section of the old pack track could meet New Zealand Walkway standards. Hutting would not be necessary or approriate since, with suitable track upgrading, travel between the Punakaiki and the private road into the Bullock Creek farm would take only one day. The suggestion that the Crown acquire the farm as a farm park with associated motel/motor camp/visitor centre complex (NFAC, 1979) is an excellent one - a splendid complement to the attractions of the proposed Recreation Area.

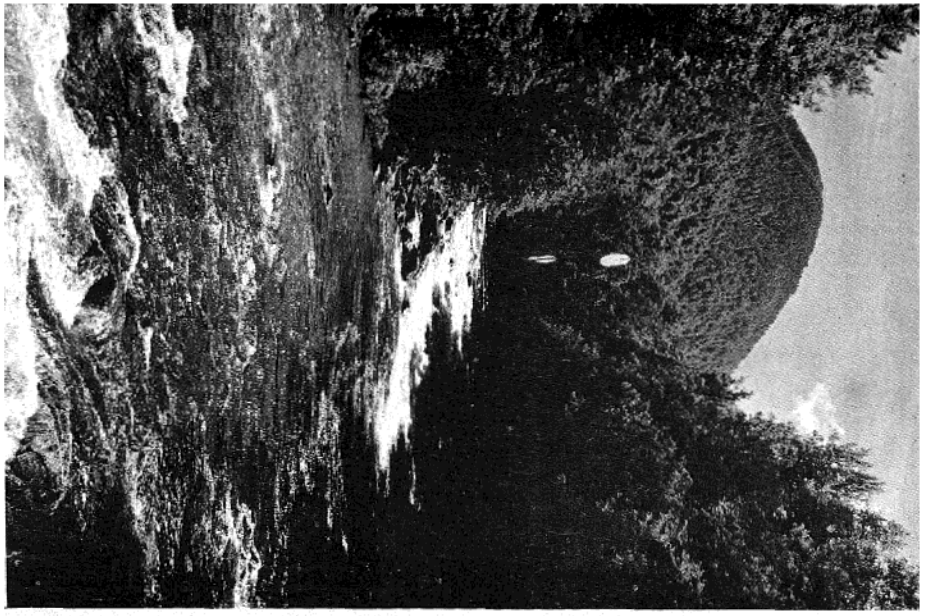
(2) Needle Point Recreation Area

The proposed Needle Point Recreation Area lies outside the Paparoa Natural Area on its northwest margin near the mouth of the Tiropahi River; a large part of the area has been modified by past gold and coalmining activity and much of it lies within the Four Mile Scenic Reserve. It has a spectacular, bouldery coastline, some overgrown tracks and many relics of the Charleston goldrush (including a number of dams in the Deep Creek catchment). The proposal needs more investigation but the potential for recreational development is considerable.



Inland pack track, Porarari River, western Paparoas.

National Museum

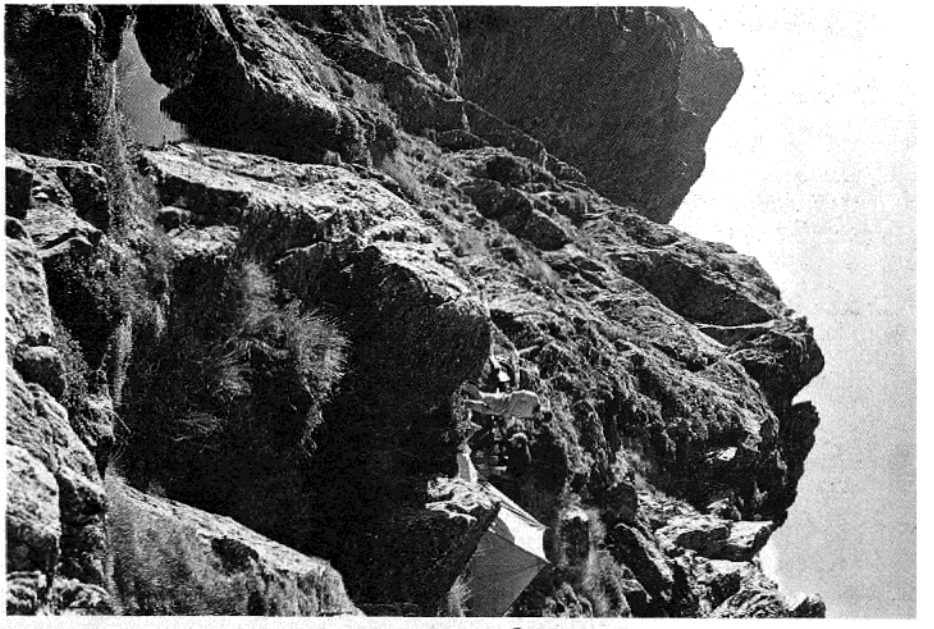


Otututu River, Paparoa Range.

Les Molloy

Summit of Paparoa Range from sub-alpine forest, Otututu Valley.

Les Molloy



Camp below Pinnacle, Paparoa Range.

Les Molloy

9.6. Does the Paparoa/Punakaiki Region warrant National Park status?

The Paparoa/Punakaiki region has achieved national prominence during 1978/79 because of proposals by the Native Forests Action Council (NFAC, 1977, 1979) to give the region national park status. The NPA commissioned an investigation (Lands and Survey, 1978) of the national park potential of the area and the West Coast Forest Policy promised that the "appropriate status" of the State forests of the Paparoa Range would be determined.

Unfortunately the "Punakaiki - Paparoa Study" (L. & S. 1978) was not up to the standard of the earlier studies for the NPA and was mainly drawn from the unpublished material of Bartle (1977). As a planning study on which to base a decision as important as a change to national park status it was clearly deficient and, in fact, was totally eclipsed by the subsequent NFAC document "Paparoa National Park" (NFAC, 1979) - an impressive, well-reasoned and researched case for a Paparoa National Park.

It appears that the Planning and Classification Committee of the NPA in March 1979 made a hasty judgement in stating that they were not convinced (on the basis of information made available to them) that the area warranted national park status. Subsequently, the full NPA made a public statement that it was in no position to make a judgement until it had "... commissioned further enquiries into the proposal ..." The NPA made its decision on the basis of further "... additional information ..." that "... had become available since the Authority's Planning and Classification Committee had completed its investigation." The NPA also stated that it wished to study the report of the Officials Committee on West Coast Reserve Proposals and fully appraise what alternatives to national park status were available to protect the area.

In terms of the NPA's criteria for national park extension the NFAC case clearly demonstrates that the proposed "Paparoa National Park" fulfills virtually all requirements, viz:

(i) size - it is over 120,000 ha and fulfills the "relatively large" requirement;

(ii) outstanding scenery - rugged coastline, jagged mountain crest, pancake rocks, limestone canyons, Buller Gorge, tall podocarp forest, etc.;

(iii) distinctive natural features - diverse geology and landforms, unspoilt lowland karst landscape, distinctive vegetation communities, southern limit of many plants, Westland black petrel, marine terraces, etc.;

(iv) complete ecological systems - demonstrated inter-relationships between wildlife and forest types; importance of lowland forest for "wintering-over";

(v) naturalness - overwhelmingly virgin country with very low introduced animal impact;

(vi) people's needs - biota conservation, recreational opportunities, economic benefits from visitors to park.

The FMC position on protection of the values of the Punakaiki - Paparoa region has always been hampered by a lack of knowledge of the area which, to date, has been visited only infrequently by member tramping and mountaineering clubs because of its isolation, rugged nature, wet climate - and the fact that there are many more accessible areas closer to the roads across the main divide and hence the population travelling from Christchurch, Wellington and Nelson. Nevertheless, among a smaller number of people interested in wilderness mountaineering the Paparoa Range has always been spoken of as a fascinating and challenging area.

While FMC have been hampered until recently by lack of detailed knowledge of the full recreational potential of the area, the Federation, nevertheless, has been concerned that no hasty decisions are made which would prejudice these values in the long term:

> *"Recent research and submissions testify to the natural values and ecological diversity of the whole Punakaiki/Paparoa Range Area. The region is a geographical unit which contains strong elements of national park quality, but also areas where these values are less apparent. The region has significant areas suitable for retention as Wilderness. FMC believes that further in depth study is required before future management of the area can be decided.*
>
> *.... we believe that an intensive inter-departmental study of the whole area plus inspections by the NPA will be necessary before the Authority is in any position to decide (on national park criteria) whether the whole area should be considered as a national park, or not. We also suggest that the inter-departmental land use studies would lead to joint Lands and Survey/NZFS management proposals. These should be made available for public discussion before a final management decision is made.*
>
> *It is clear that the area, known loosely as the Punakaiki Basin, has biological and scenic values not presently included in the National Park system. Until a final decision is made on future management of the region as a whole, we recommend a moratorium on logging or other exploitation for the area bounded by the Paparoa Range crest in the east, the coastline in the west, the Tiropahi River in the north and the Punakaiki River in the south. This moratorium should also cover the Ohikanui and Otututu catchments, because of their wilderness value.*
>
> *In conclusion, it is quite obvious to anyone involved in the National Park movement that the Punakaiki/Paparoa Range Area is going to be something of a "test case" for the NPA. Our own "Outdoor Recreation Plan" identified it as one of the most interesting regions in Westland, yet it is virtually unknown to most New Zealanders. Most of the Paparoa Range is still in a natural state and clearly has outstanding scientific/ecological values. The whole area could well warrant national park status - the first of a new style of national parks under the revised criteria of the NPA.*
>
> (Letter from FMC to NPA. 14/3/1979)

It is probably fair comment that FMC's reservations about the national park quality of the Paparoa region have stemmed from two possible difficulties:

(a) the lack of a single unifying scenic feature known to most New Zealanders;

(b) the difficulty for the public to appreciate most of the Range which is wet and currently very inaccessible by most Park standards.

Admittedly, these opinions stem from traditional attitudes towards national parks - usually mountainous, with scenic lakes and glaciers. The Punakaiki/Paparoa area is somewhat different; many of its attractions are more subtle but no less important. Its natural history and diversity of lowland landforms and biota is quite different from New Zealand's other national parks. If the NPA is to test all new national park proposals against its criteria it is unlikely that many other areas - except perhaps Stewart Island, Waikukupa/Okarito, and the Red Mountain ultramafic belt - will be able to display such a splendid range of natural values to further enrich our National Park system.

In summary then, FMC wish to see the Paparoa/Punakaiki region (the Paparoa Natural Area outlined in map 7) preserved, especially from logging south of the Tiropahi River. Whether this should be as a national park, part reserve, (e.g. N.Z. Reserve, Scenic Reserve, etc.) part State forest park, part wilderness, requires more investigation and discussion between interested parties. In the meantime, the area should be placed under a logging, mining and hydro-electricty development moratorium.

9.7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the central core of the Paparoa Range be designated a wilderness area.

The wilderness area could be zoned within a "Paparoa National Park" or a wilderness area within a large reserve (Reserves Act 1977), or a wilderness area within State forest (Forests Act 1949, section 63E).

2. That the Paparoa Natural Area be held under a development moratorium until its appropriate protective status is determined. That regardless of its future status, there be no further selection logging of indigenous forest south of the Tiropahi River.

3. That as an interim measure the N.Z. Forest Service develop a recreational management plan to:

- *protect the cave systems from unwarranted exploitation*
- *re-open the historic tracks*
- *protect the central wilderness from development .*

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

GEOLOGY:

N.Z. Geological Survey, D.S.I.R. 1964: "Geological Map of N.Z." Sheet 15 (Buller), 1:250,000.

LANDFORMS, VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE, ETC:

Native Forests Action Council, 1979: Paparoa National Park . 103 pp.

Bartle, J.A. 1977: Preliminary assessment and identification of national park or reserve qualities in the western Paparoa Range. First report, 31 pp. (unpublished).

Park, G.N.; Bartle, J.A. 1978: An evaluation of the lowland forests of the West Paparoa ecological district with a proposal for a representative reserve in the Porarari. 49 pp. (+ map).

Clarke, C.M.H. 1976: Irruptions, deterioration and decline of the Nelson Red Deer herd. N.Z. Journal of Forestry Science 5(3): 235 - 49.

Clarke, C.M.H., 1976: Fallow deer in the north of the South Island. N.Z. Wildlife 7(52): 1 - 9.

RECREATION/CAVING:

Rodgers, T. 1972: Caves in the Punakaiki Syncline. N.Z. Speleological Bulletin 5 (82): 46 - 63.

Townsend, J.I. 1973: Metro Cave: Threatened by forestry proposals. N.Z. Speleological Bulletin 5 (87): 230 - 3.

LAND USE:

Lands and Survey Department, 1978: The Punakaiki - Paparoa Region. 79 pp.