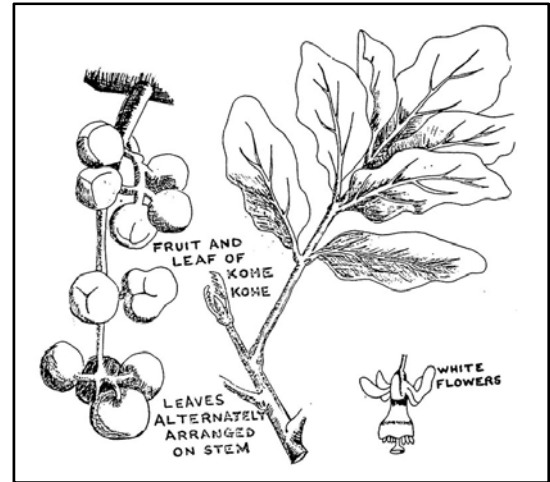


Kohekohe—a spectacular New Zealand tree

David Medway, May 2008

The genus *Dysoxylum* (Family Meliaceae) contains about 150 species of mainly tropical and subtropical trees. The only New Zealand member of the genus, the Kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*), is endemic.

The Kohekohe is one of New Zealand’s most spectacular trees. It used to form extensive tracts of coastal and lowland forest from North Cape south to Nelson, but these have now mostly disappeared in the face of settlement. In some areas, many trees have also been destroyed as a result of browsing by the introduced Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*). Fortunately, remnants of the former Kohekohe forests still survive. One such remnant is in the [native forest area of Brooklands Park](#) where healthy Kohekohe are the most common and conspicuous canopy tree.



Kohekohe. Sketch by the Late Ian McDowell

The Kohekohe has long, drooping panicles of greenish-white, waxy flowers which sprout from the trunk and branches during late autumn - early winter. The three to four-celled fruit capsules open about 15 months later to reveal fleshy, scarlet arils which each contain two seeds. Kohekohe flowers are an important and favoured source of floral nectar for Tui (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) and Bellbirds (*Anthornis melanura*). At Brooklands Park, on 16 May 2002, I watched a North Island Kaka (*Nestor meridionalis septentrionalis*), a rare visitor to New Plymouth, breaking open several green Kohekohe fruit capsules and extracting and eating their arils.

Pukekura Park Kohekohe photos: click on a photo to view a larger image, use Back button to return

Kohekohe flowers and fruit—Photos below by © David Medway



Kohekohe flowers—Photos below by © Derek Hughes

