

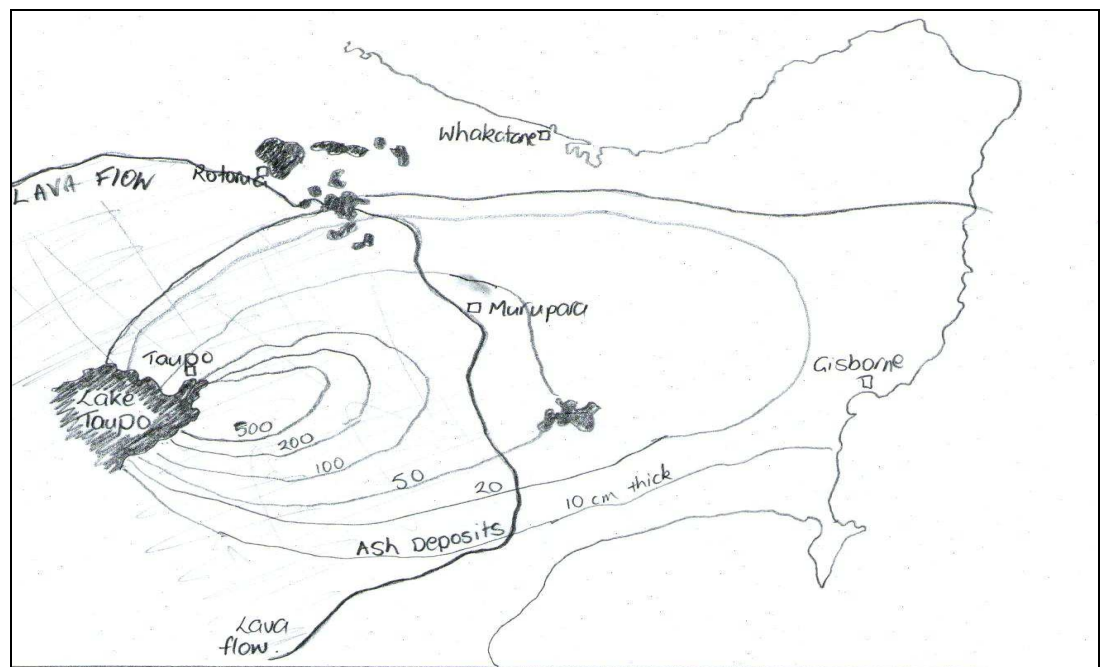
## 5. WELCOME TO THE DINOSAUR FOREST

This is dinosaur country. This forest is a remnant of our Gondawana land past. Podocarps evolved more than 200 million years ago along with dinosaurs while New Zealand was part of Gondawana land. Although New Zealand podocarps have their origin in Gondawana land they have evolved in their present form since New Zealand broke away from that continent.

Podocarp forests used to be much more extensive in New Zealand, but years of human habitation have changed all of that. Burning of forest by early inhabitants and the later land clearance for farming and exotic forestry has resulted in few such forests remaining. You are in one of the last precious remnants of this once vast forest. Whirinaki is one of the best remaining examples of lowland podocarp forest in New Zealand

### 5.1 THE REMAINS OF AN ERUPTION!

Approximately two thousand years ago Lake Taupo erupted spreading ash across a large area of the North Island flattening forests as it fell. Whirinaki is one of the last remaining remnants of the large podocarp forests that grew out of the devastation of this eruption.



The Taupo eruption covered large areas of the Bay of Plenty and the East Coast. The ash was up to 50cm thick at Whirinaki.