

5. Forest succession

Changes to the forest

As the plants of one group grow they make the environment suitable for the next group.



Age in years:

0

5

20

50

>100

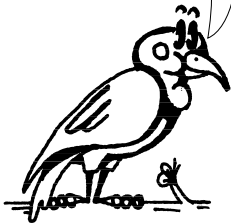
Photos: Jeremy Rolfe.

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150 years ago this valley would have been covered in dense forest. The supplejack vine and kiekie would have made it difficult to walk into the forest. You would have heard the sounds of bellbirds and the now extinct huia, and the kereru would have been heard flying from tree to tree. What has changed in the valley since then?

Read the panel at the beginning of the Nga Taonga Nature Trail to find out more about successional growth of a forest.



- Search for three pieces of evidence that show how people have used the valley since then, e.g. stumps left from timber milling; a 100 year old winch left in Tawa Grove; fencing from farming days; the remains of the pine plantations; tracks, bridges, signs and information panels.
 - Ask one of your group to take on the role of park manager. He/she will be responsible for managing this area for the next 5 years. Ask him/her to explain what he/she thinks are the most important things to protect in the forest. Other group members can take on the role of a trapper, a hunter, a botanist, a mountain biker, or a 4-wheel drive owner and share their views about the impact they would have on the area and how this could be minimised.
- When the forest has been cleared from an area it will eventually grow back again. This is called regeneration. Watch out for signs of a new forest growing as you explore this area today. You can see different stages of a forest's growth. This is called successional growth.
- Look for colonisers (manuka, kanuka, tutu, koromiko, rangiora, pate, and kanono) growing on the bush margins and in the riverbeds. On the western slopes of the valley, a fire burnt the forest about 10 years ago. Now you can see scrub near the top of the ridge that is only 5–10 years old.
 - Below this young scrub and in the gully to the south, is older bush (tawa, mahoe, kohekohe, pigeonwood, karaka, titoki, beech and tree ferns) that is developing the forest canopy after about 20 years growth.
 - The valley below the Harry Leckie Memorial seat, near the beginning of the Orongorongo track, is a maturing forest with many emergent rewarewa and a few podocarps that are about 60–80 years old.