

3. Podocarps and beech trees



The mighty kahikatea is our tallest native tree and can grow to 60 metres tall—that's the height of 30 doorways.

Photos: Jeremy Rolfe.



Kahikatea



Miro



Black beech



Rimu



Totara



Hard beech

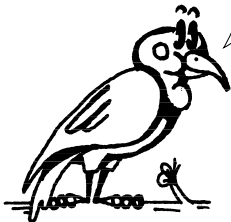
3. Podocarps and beech trees

Along the Catchpool Loop Track, in the bush clearing by the stream, you can see some podocarps. They are slow growing trees that eventually grow through the forest canopy and become the mighty giants of the forest.

- See if you can identify any of the forest giants by their trunks (the leaves are probably too high for you to see)—the kahikatea, miro, rimu, totara, matai.

Black beech often has sooty black mould growing on trunk and tiny threads with honeydew drops on the ends.

- Carefully take some bark rubbings, label them and make notes about any other special features of these trees that tell you about their role in the forest. (e.g. They may provide a home/habitat for other plants to grow. Creepers may use them to reach up to the light. They may provide food for birds or insects).



On the Five-Mile Loop Track you can read a panel about ‘Beech Forests.’

- There are four species of beech trees in the park. Black beech and hard beech are common in the southern and central parts of the park. Red beech is found mainly in the Pakuratahi River catchment to the north while silver beech is in the ranges and ridge tops above about 600 metres.

The beech trees allow light to filter though the forest. Look for ways this affects the plants that grow beneath them.

- Compare a small area in the podocarp forest to a small area in the beech forest. With a partner, find three differences in these areas. Think about the ground cover, the feel, the smell, the sounds, the presence of perching plants (epiphytes), the colours, etc.