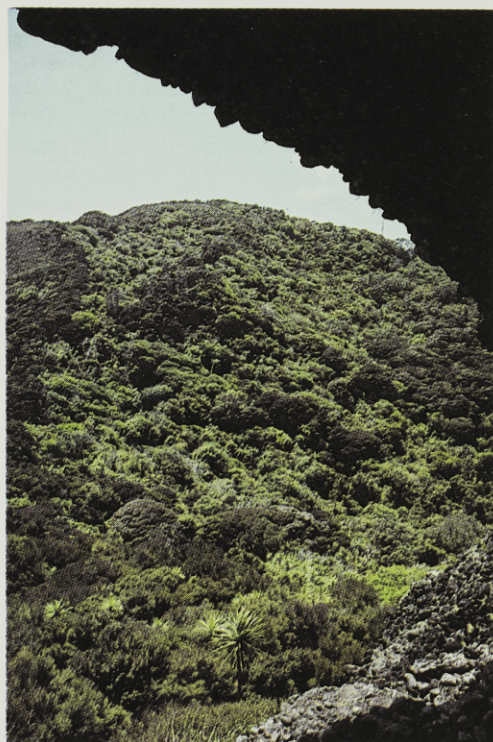


The land at Kapowairua (Taylor's Grant) is now the site of a Lands and Survey camping ground, the activities at which have further incensed some of the Ngati Kuri. Toilets have been placed on former kumara gardens, in direct conflict with Maori cultural concepts of soil and water pollution. A large dune and pre-historic midden next to the camping ground was planted in marram, contrary to recommendations by the DSIR Entomology Division and the local people that it should be planted in the native pingao.

Since 1967, all land in New Zealand has been rated on its potential for production, putting a severe financial strain on the Maori community which has large **Luxuriant undergrowth characterises Unuwhao, largely because of the absence of possums, deer and goats. Waitori Stream.**

Photo: M. Bellingham



Puriri-kohekohe forest predominates on Maunga Unuwhao, at the very northern tip of the North Island.

Photo: M. Bellingham

proud and strong ancestors of the Ngati Kuri.

But the strength of their tangata whenua, their land, has been inexorably whittled away: "In 1793 our land was 100% Maori owned; in 1896 it was 70% Maori-owned; by 1978 it was 65% Crown-owned," says Saana Murray, kuia (elder) of the Ngati Kuri.

When the missionary Rev Richard Taylor arrived in the 1840s, tribal land disputes racked the people of Te Pahi. Taylor decided to settle these by buying 50,000 acres in contention for £681 — the sale was and still is in dispute, but the land has passed out of Maori ownership. With this went the most fertile land, at Kapowairua, where "Waitanoni the waterfall sustained the kumara garden, taro and other cultivations, and villages of raupo and nikau where weather many a storm."



The flax snail, pupuharakeke, a species endemic to the Te Pahi region.

Photo: Andrew Penniket

areas of land suitable only for soil and water protection and reserves.

This rate burden was a major factor in Northern Pulp Ltd being granted a 46-year lease for exotic afforestation over a large portion of the remaining Ngati Kuri land. While the exotic forests were being established, Lands and Survey offered the Te Hapua 42 Incorporation, which controls the land, a cross lease — more land for exotic planting, in exchange for Crown control of Unuwhao.

But the seeds of mistrust had been sown long ago, and the offer was soundly rejected. The Incorporation set aside the Unuwhao bush and coastal area from afforestation and have accepted a proposal from Matiu Rata to reserve this for the "national interest."

Unfortunately the proposal for a special reserve has so far been met with a thumbs down. While the Wildlife Service and the Entomology Division of the DSIR have supported the idea, other Government departments have proved uncooperative and intransigent. Furthermore, the development-oriented Mangonui County Council has been extremely reluctant to waive rates, even on such a nationally important piece of coastline.

The reserve proposal — drafted by DSIR's Entomology Division — encompasses protection for cultural, historic and scientific values, with the control and management being held by the Maori owners for the nation. Such a simple concept is not properly catered for in existing reserves legislation. Unless the initiative made by the Ngati Kuri is taken up, the will of Maoris throughout New Zealand to formally protect their land could be lost forever.