

TIMARU DISTRICT
SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS
SURVEY

CRAIG PROPERTY

DRAFT

Report prepared for the Timaru District Council by Mike Harding
August 2007

TIMARU DISTRICT SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS SURVEY

PROPERTY REPORT

PROPERTY DETAILS:

Owner:Gavin and Mary Craig
Valuation Reference:24660/268.01
Address:285 Greenvale Road, Geraldine
Location:.....On a steep scarp on the southwest side of the Geraldine Downs, adjacent to Pleasant Valley Road.
Ecological District:Geraldine Ecological District
TDC Land Type:.....Soft Rock Hills and Downs
Land Environment:N3 (downlands of South Canterbury and coastal Otago)

ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT:

The property lies on the eastern edge of the Geraldine Ecological District, on the western scarp of the Geraldine Downs. The original vegetation of this area would have been predominantly podocarp-hardwood forest, dominated by totara, matai and kahikatea emergent over a hardwood canopy. Important canopy hardwood species would probably have been narrow-leaved lacebark, pokaka, kowhai, lemonwood, five-finger, broadleaf and mahoe. The indigenous fauna would have been significantly more numerous and diverse, with a greater range of birds, lizards and invertebrates than is presently found in the area.

One area comprising patches of regenerating hardwood forest within exotic scrub is present on the property. This relatively large area makes a useful contribution to the collection of scattered patches of indigenous vegetation on the Geraldine Downs and has considerable potential value.

SIGNIFICANT AREAS ON THE PROPERTY:

The property was surveyed as part of the District-wide survey of Significant Natural Areas during August 2007. One area of regenerating forest and associated scrub on the property is regarded as a Significant Natural Area (SNA) when assessed against the District Plan criteria.

Area No.	Area Name	Central grid reference	Aprox. size (ha)	Vegetation/habitat type
154a	Gale Cutting Regenerating Forest	J38: 667-780	?	Regenerating hardwood forest

This SNA is illustrated on the attached aerial photograph and described in greater detail in this document. Note that the boundaries of the SNA are indicative, rather than precise. This SNA meets the ecological criteria in the Timaru District Plan (criteria i-vi, pages B18-B19) and is considered to be sustainable in the long term (criterion vii, page B19). SNAs are subject to confirmation by Council after regarding the matters listed under Final Considerations (pages B19-B20).

The implication of an area being listed as an SNA is that consent is required from Council for clearance of indigenous vegetation by any means (including burning and spraying with herbicides) or over-planting. This does not normally prevent clearance to prevent shading of

buildings, the maintenance of tracks and fences, or grazing. To assist with the protection and management of any SNA, landowners can apply to Council for financial assistance. SNAs will eventually be listed in the District Plan. Any questions regarding the protection, management and use of SNAs should be directed to the District Planner.

OTHER AREAS INSPECTED ON THE PROPERTY:

Another area of indigenous vegetation on the property was inspected but is not regarded as significant when assessed against the criteria on pages B18-B20 of the Timaru District Plan. This is the area of exotic scrub with small patches of regenerating hardwood species along the scarp south of Area 154a. This area is dominated by exotics has a low diversity of species and provides only limited fauna habitat. This area has considerable potential value and, if left undisturbed, may eventually become significant.

Failure of this area to meet the significance criteria does not mean that it is not important for nature conservation or the protection of indigenous biodiversity; it simply means that the area (as assessed at this time) does not meet the criteria in the Timaru District Plan.

Scientific names of species cited by common name

Common Name	Scientific name
(* = naturalised species)	
blackberry*	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
bracken.....	<i>Pteridium esculentum</i>
broadleaf	<i>Griselinia littoralis</i>
broom*	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
bush lawyer.....	<i>Rubus cissoides</i>
cabbage tree/ti rakau	<i>Cordyline australis</i>
elderberry*.....	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
five-finger	<i>Pseudopanax arboreus</i>
foxglove*	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
gorse*.....	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
hen and chickens fern.....	<i>Asplenium bulbiferum</i>
Himalayan honeysuckle*.....	<i>Leycesteria formosa</i>
jointed rush*.....	<i>Juncus articulatus</i>
kahikatea/white pine	<i>Dacrycarpus dacrydioides</i>
kowhai.....	<i>Sophora microphylla</i>
lemonwood.....	<i>Pittosporum eugenioides</i>
mahoe/whiteywood	<i>Melicytus ramiflorus</i>
male fern*	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>
matai/black pine	<i>Prumnopitys taxifolia</i>
matipo/kohuhu	<i>Pittosporum tenuifolium</i>
narrow-leaved lacebark	<i>Hoheria angustifolia</i>
native jasmine	<i>Parsonsia</i> sp.
necklace fern	<i>Asplenium flabellifolium</i>
old man's beard*.....	<i>Clematis vitalba</i>
pohuehue.....	<i>Muehlenbeckia australis</i>
pokaka.....	<i>Elaeocarpus hookerianus</i>
poroporo.....	<i>Solanum laciniatum</i>
prickly shield fern	<i>Polystichum vestitum</i>
sycamore*	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
toatoa.....	<i>Haloragis erecta</i>
totara	<i>Podocarpus totara</i>

Craig Property
24660/268.01

GALE CUTTING ROAD

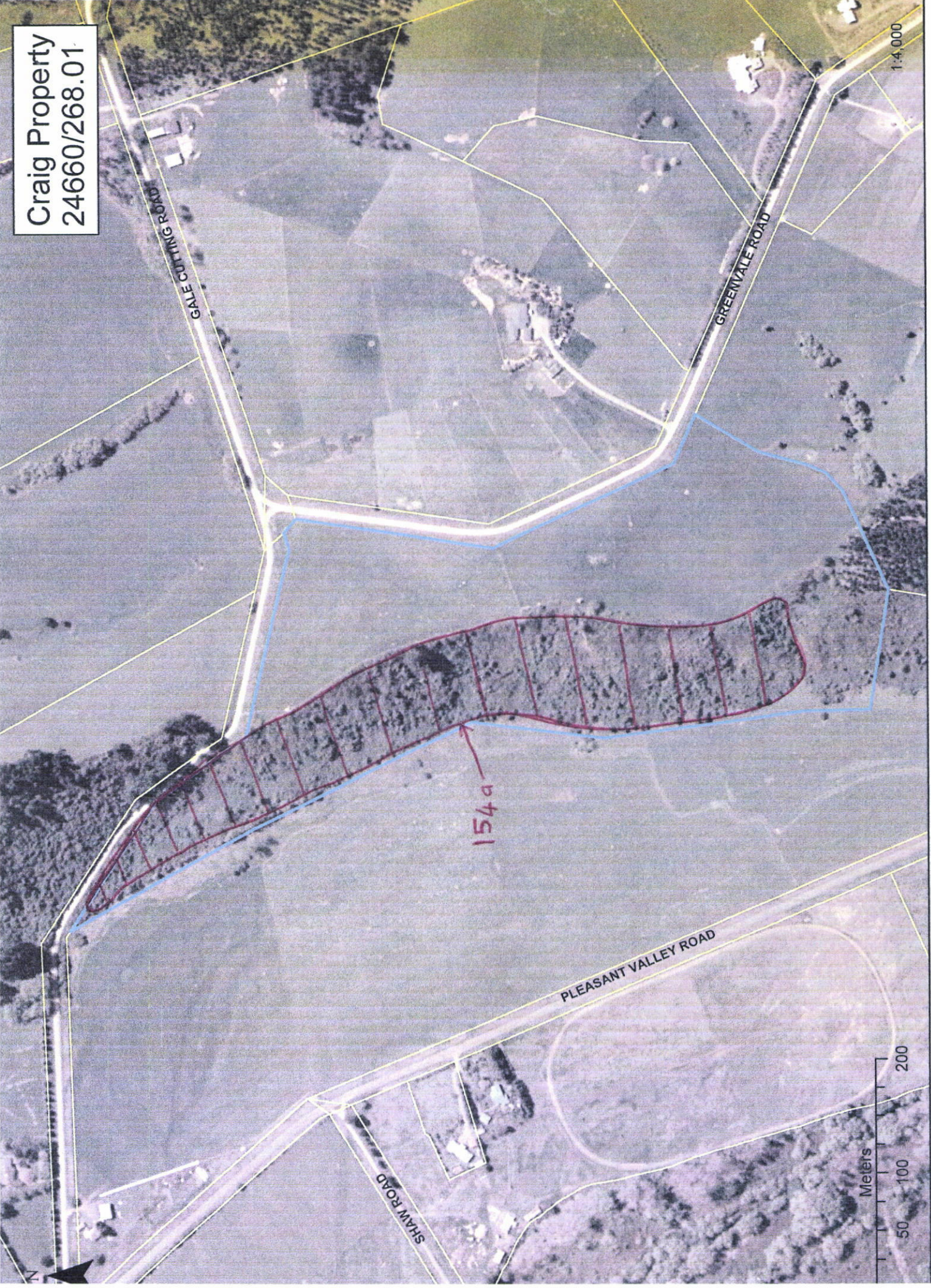
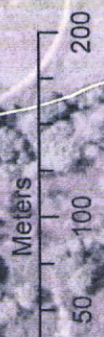
GREENVALE ROAD

1:4,000

154a

PLEASANT VALLEY ROAD

SHAW ROAD



TIMARU DISTRICT SNA SURVEY

AREA 154a

Area Name: Gale Cutting Regenerating Forest
Location (central map reference): J38: 667-780
Ecological District: Geraldine
Surveyors: Mike Harding

Property: Craig
Nearest Locality: Geraldine
Area Size (ha): ? **Altitude (m):** 140-200
Survey Time: 1½ hours **Survey Date:** 09-08-07

General Description:

The Area covers part of the steep scarp on the southwest side of the Geraldine Downs, south of Gale Cutting Road.

Plant Communities:

The scarp supports large patches of low-stature regenerating indigenous forest within areas of low exotic scrub. These plant communities are described below. Naturalized (exotic) species are indicated with an asterisk*.

The low-stature patches of regenerating indigenous forest are dominated by mahoe, matipo and cabbage tree. Other canopy species are lemonwood, pohuehue, five-finger, bush lawyer, native jasmine and *Clematis* sp (probably *C. foetida*). Trunk diameters (at breast height) of the mahoe trees range from 15 to 25 cm. Trunk diameters of the cabbage trees range from 20 to 35 cm.

Understorey species present in the denser patches are mahoe, matipo, five-finger, *Coprosma crassifolia*, *C. rhamnoides* and elderberry*.

Groundcover species present are *Pellaea rotundifolia*, *Polystichum richardii*, hen and chickens fern, necklace fern, *Asplenium hookerianum*, *Hypolepis ambigua*, male fern*, blackberry*, foxglove* and seedlings of mahoe, native jasmine, poroporo and cabbage tree.

Other species present on the forest margins are *Coprosma propinqua*, toatoa, *Calystegia tuguriorum*, bracken, broom* and at least one patch of old man's beard.

Areas of low vegetation surrounding the patches of regenerating indigenous vegetation are dominated by blackberry*, bracken and pohuehue. Other species commonly present are Himalayan honeysuckle*, native jasmine, bush lawyer, gorse*, broom*, prickly shield fern, male fern*, and occasional emergent elderberry*, sycamore*, cabbage trees and mahoe.

A single large kowhai tree is present at the top of the scarp, above areas of low exotic vegetation and patches of regenerating indigenous vegetation.

Birds/Fauna Observed:

Indigenous birds observed during this brief inspection were fantail, grey warbler, bellbird and harrier. Kereru, rifleman and a single tui were recorded in nearby areas of indigenous vegetation during July and August 2007.

Notable Flora, Fauna and Habitats:

Notable features of the Area are the presence of the large kowhai tree, the presence of the locally-uncommon species toatoa (*Haloragis erecta*), its location adjacent to a larger area of indigenous vegetation (Area 34) and the role it plays as part of a network of fauna habitat on the Geraldine Downs.

Notable Plant and Animal Pests:

Important plant pests observed were old man's beard, sycamore and elderberry. Of these, old man's beard and sycamore pose the greatest threat to the area. Animal pests were not surveyed, though possums are likely to be present.

Boundaries (buffering, fencing, adjoining plant communities and habitats):

The Area adjoins a large area of remnant and regenerating indigenous vegetation and habitat on adjoining properties to the north. Part of that area is formally protected by a QEII Open Space Covenant. The Area is well buffered and protected by its location on steep slopes and is fenced from adjacent paddocks.

Condition and Management Issues:

The patches of regenerating indigenous vegetation are in relatively good condition. The indigenous species regeneration is sufficiently advanced to provide habitat for understorey species. The surrounding areas of lower-stature exotic vegetation have scattered emergent indigenous species and will, over time, regenerate to indigenous vegetation. Control of old man's beard and sycamore are the most urgent management issues. Cattle are affecting vegetation at the lower margin of the Area.

Property Owner Comment:

The owners appreciate the value of the indigenous vegetation and intend to allow continued natural regeneration of indigenous species to occur.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST DISTRICT PLAN CRITERIA:

Primary Criteria	Rank	Notes
Representativeness	M	An area of regenerating indigenous vegetation typical of the ecological district.
Rarity	L/M	May provide some limited habitat for kereru (threat status: gradual decline). Supports one locally-uncommon species (toatoa).
Diversity and pattern	L/M	Species diversity is much reduced from that originally present.
Distinctiveness/special features	M	The Area provides locally-important habitat for forest and shrubland birds.
Other Criteria		
Size/shape	H	A moderate-sized area with a good shape and well buffered.
Connectivity	M	Adjoins indigenous vegetation on one boundary (across Gale Cutting Road) and is part of a network of fauna habitat on the Geraldine Downs.
Long-term Sustainability	M	Some management (weed and pest control) will be required to maintain the ecological values in the long-term.

Final Consideration (of other matters: Section D, page B-19 of Timaru District Plan):

The Area has been informally protected by the landowners. The location and steepness of the site limit its potential for farm development. The Area is clearly visible from Pleasant Valley Road and Gale Cutting Road.

Discussion:

The Area meets the District Plan criteria for a Significant Natural Area. Important attributes are its size, the extent to which it is protected (buffered) from adjoining land uses, the presence of a locally-uncommon species (toatoa), the habitat the area provides for birds, its location adjacent to a larger area of indigenous vegetation and the role it plays as part of a network of fauna habitat on the Geraldine Downs.