

TIMARU DISTRICT

SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS SURVEY

CAESAR PROPERTY



**Report prepared for the Timaru District Council by Mike Harding
August 2008**

TIMARU DISTRICT SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS SURVEY

PROPERTY REPORT

PROPERTY DETAILS:

Owner: Helen Caesar
Valuation Reference: 24660/229.05
Address: Ribbonwood Rise, RD 21, Geraldine
Location: On the crest of the Geraldine Downs, between Pye and
Ribbonwood roads, west of Talbot Forest Scenic Reserve
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 at the eastern edge of the Geraldine Ecological District, on low rolling hills 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 of indigenous forest is present on the property. This area is a modified and regenerating remnant of the original forest. It is part of a more extensive area of scattered patches of forest and treeland on the Geraldine Downs. The most important of these is Talbot Forest Scenic Reserve, which lies approximately 600m east of the property.

Collectively the areas of forest and treeland on the Geraldine Downs provide habitat for birds including kereru (threat status: gradual decline) and are likely to provide important (though maybe only occasionally used) roost sites for long-tailed bats (nationally endangered). Bats have been recorded recently at Talbot Forest.

SIGNIFICANT AREAS ON THE PROPERTY:

The property was surveyed as part of the District-wide survey of Significant Natural Areas during July 2008. One area of indigenous vegetation is regarded as a Significant Natural Area (SNA) when assessed against the District Plan criteria.

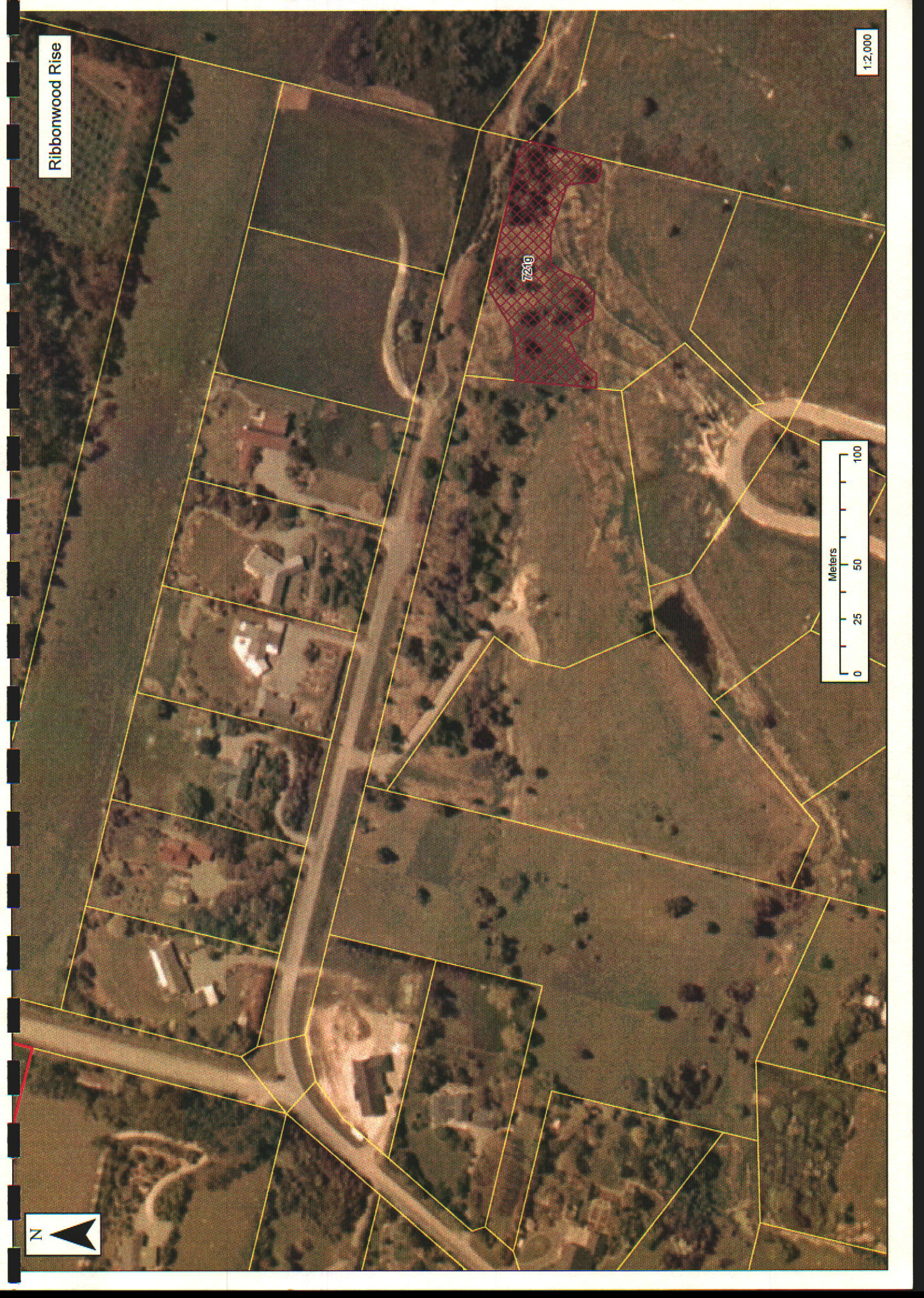
This SNA is illustrated on the attached aerial photograph and described in greater detail in this document. Note that the boundaries of the SNA are indicative, rather than precise. This area meets the ecological criteria in the Timaru District Plan (criteria i-vi, pages B18-B19), but will require some management to maintain its ecological values in the long-term. 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 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. It is expected that 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 INDIGENOUS VEGETATION ON THE PROPERTY:

Three isolated native trees are present on the southern part of the property: turepo, weeping mapou and narrow-leaved lacebark. These trees are not significant when assessed against the District Plan criteria. This does not mean that they are unimportant or unworthy of protection; it only means that they do not presently meet the significance criteria in the District Plan.



TIMARU DISTRICT SNA SURVEY

AREA 721g

Area Name: Caesar Forest Remnant

Location (central map reference): J38: 683-791

Ecological District: Geraldine

Surveyors: Mike Harding

Property: Helen Caesar

Nearest Locality: Geraldine

Area Size (ha): 0.34

Survey Time: 1 hour

Altitude (m): 180-200

Survey Date: 22-07-08

General Description:

This SNA comprises indigenous forest on a moderately-steep south-facing slope near the head of a small gully on the rolling hill country of the Geraldine Downs. A formed public walking track runs through the property.

Plant Communities:

The main plant communities present are remnant and regenerating podocarp-hardwood forest with some recent indigenous planting. These plant communities are described below. Naturalized (exotic) species are indicated with an asterisk*. Planted species are indicated with a hatch#.

Prominent canopy or emergent species present are totara, matai, kahikatea, narrow-leaved lacebark, cabbage tree, pokaka, lancewood, five-finger, mahoe, lemonwood, kaikomako, rohutu, mapou, weeping mapou and an unidentified exotic* tree. A very large kowhai tree (with a trunk diameter at breast height of 85 cm) is present on the south side of the small stream. One large narrow-leaved lacebark tree next to the track has a trunk diameter of 76 cm.

Other canopy species are pohuehue, native jasmine, bush lawyer, lawyer, *Calystegia tuguriorum*, *Clematis foetida* and mistletoe. Mistletoe is present on a number of species, including *Melicope simplex*, *Coprosma crassifolia*, narrow-leaved lacebark and lemonwood.

Shrub and small tree species present are *Coprosma crassifolia*, *Coprosma propinqua*, *Coprosma rotundifolia*, *Coprosma tayloriae*, *Melicope simplex*, fuchsia, mahoe and Darwin's barberry*.

Understorey or ground-cover species present within the clumps of trees are mahoe, shrubby mahoe, five-finger, lemonwood, horopito, weeping mapou, matipo, *Coprosma propinqua*, *Coprosma crassifolia*, black nightshade*, male fern*, poroporo, hairy pennywort, *Pellaea rotundifolia*, necklace fern, *Asplenium hookerianum* and seedlings of mahoe, Darwin's barberry* and *Coprosma* species.

A clump of the threatened scrambling daisy (*Brachyglottis sciadophila*) is present on the forest margin near the stream.

Open grassed areas between the main clumps of trees support *Coprosma propinqua*, broom*, gorse*, pohuehue, *Coprosma robusta*#, lowland ribbonwood#, lemonwood#, matipo#, *Olearia lineata*#, wineberry#, elderberry*, blackberry*, male fern* and *Hypolepis ambigua*.

Birds/Fauna Observed:

Native birds observed during this brief inspection were grey warbler and bellbird. The area is likely to be utilised by a number of other native birds including kereru/NZ pigeon.

Notable Flora, Fauna and Habitats:

Notable features of this area are the presence of podocarps (totara, matai and kahikatea), the size of the kowhai and narrow-leaved lacebark trees, the presence of a threatened species (*Brachyglottis sciadophila*), the diversity of indigenous species present and the contribution the remnant makes towards the network of fauna habitat on the Geraldine Downs (including habitat suitable for kereru and long-tailed bat).

Notable Plant and Animal Pests:

The most important plant pest present is Darwin's barberry. This species has attractive fruits which are readily dispersed by birds, thereby threatening other areas of indigenous forest in the area. Darwin's barberry is also shade tolerant and can successfully invade intact indigenous forest. The native climbing pohuehue (*Muehlenbeckia australis*) also poses a threat, smothering large trees especially those on the forest margin. Other introduced species present do not pose a significant threat to the existing vegetation. Animal pests were not surveyed.

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

This area occupies a damper south-facing slope and is therefore buffered from drought (and fire). It is fenced along the road boundary and apparently protected by subdivision consent conditions. It adjoins other scattered remnants of indigenous forest along slopes to the east and west. Together these remnants form a corridor of indigenous vegetation, linking this remnant with others in the area, including the regionally-important Talbot Forest Scenic Reserve.

Condition and Management Issues:

The existing indigenous vegetation is in relatively good condition. The area would benefit from the removal of Darwin's barberry and perhaps the judicious control of pohuehue. Open grassed spaces between the trees have been planted with indigenous species, though some (such as *Olearia lineata*) are probably not typical of the original vegetation of the area.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST DISTRICT PLAN CRITERIA:

Primary Criteria	Rank	Notes
Representativeness	M	An example of indigenous forest typical of the ecological district and containing a good number of species that are representative of the original forest.
Rarity	M/H	The larger trees provide habitat for threatened bird species (kereru) and possibly long-tailed bat. One chronically threatened plant species is present <i>Brachyglottis sciadophila</i> (threat status: gradual decline).
Diversity and pattern	M	A relatively diverse remnant for its size, though species diversity is reduced from that originally present.
Distinctiveness/special features	M	The presence of podocarps (totara, matai and kahikatea) and large kowhai and narrow-leaved lacebark trees are special features.
Other Criteria		
Size/shape	M	A small area, but with a good shape and well buffered.
Connectivity	M/H	Part of a corridor of indigenous vegetation and a network of fauna habitat on the Geraldine Downs.
Long-term Sustainability	M	Some management (mostly weed control) will be required to maintain the ecological values of the area in the long term.

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

This area of indigenous vegetation has been informally protected by this and previous owners and apparently by a restrictive covenant. Some restoration plantings have been undertaken. The area has limited potential for development, due to its position on a moderately steep south-facing slope. There is sufficient (and more suitable) space elsewhere on this rural-residential property to site a dwelling.

Discussion:

This area meets the District Plan criteria for a Significant Natural Area. Important features of the area are the presence of podocarps (totara, matai and kahikatea), the presence of a threatened species (*Brachyglottis sciadophila*), the diversity of indigenous species present and the contribution the remnant makes towards the network of fauna habitat on the Geraldine Downs.

Scientific names of species cited by common name in this report

(Note: this is not a complete species list: it is a list only of species cited by common name in this report)

Common Name	Scientific name
(* -- naturalised species)	
blackberry*.....	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
black nightshade*.....	<i>Solanum nigrum</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>
Darwin's harberry*.....	<i>Berberis darwini</i>
elderberry*.....	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
five-finger.....	<i>Pseudopanax arboreus</i>
fuchsia.....	<i>Fuchsia excorticata</i>
gorse*.....	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
hairy pennywort.....	<i>Hydrocotyle moschata</i>
horopito/pepperwood.....	<i>Pseudowintera colorata</i>
kahikatea/white pine.....	<i>Dacrydium dauciforme</i>
kaikomako.....	<i>Pennantia corymbosa</i>
kowhai.....	<i>Sophora microphylla</i>
lancewood.....	<i>Pseudopanax crassifolius</i>
lawyer.....	<i>Rubus schmidelioides</i>
lemonwood.....	<i>Pittosporum eugenioides</i>
lowland ribbonwood.....	<i>Plagianthus regius</i>
mahoe/whiteywood.....	<i>Melicactus ramiflorus</i>
male fern*.....	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>
mapou.....	<i>Myrsine australis</i>
matai/black pine.....	<i>Prumnopitys taxifolia</i>
matipo/kohuhu.....	<i>Pittosporum tenuifolium</i>
mistletoe.....	<i>Illeostylis micranthus</i>
narrow-leaved lacebark.....	<i>Hoheria angustifolia</i>
native jasmine.....	<i>Parsonia</i> sp.
necklace fern.....	<i>Asplenium flabellifolium</i>
pohuehue.....	<i>Muehlenbeckia australis</i>
pokaka.....	<i>Elaeocarpus hookerianus</i>
poroporo.....	<i>Solanum laciniatum</i>
rohutu.....	<i>Lophomyrtus obcordata</i>
shrubby mahoe.....	<i>Melicactus micranthus</i>
totara.....	<i>Podocarpus totara</i>
weeping mapou.....	<i>Myrsine divaricata</i>
wineberry.....	<i>Aristotelia serrata</i>

