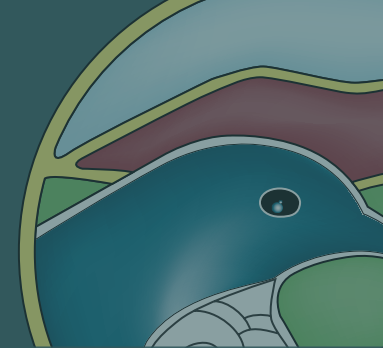


Report from the **Waikato Biodiversity Forum** held on Monday 23 November 2013 at Taupo



Purpose

The purpose of the day was to:

- Work together to maximise outcomes for conservation in the Taupo area
- Network and share ideas with others who undertake conservation across the region
- Find out what we are all doing and where in the South Waikato/Taupo area
- Workshop where we want to be in 10 years time.

Introduction

The Forum was held to get together Taupo community groups and agencies to hear about each other's projects and gather some ideas around where to from here for Taupo. The day attracted fifty people. The day kicked off with a welcome from the Forum coordinator. She explained the Forum's work and then detailed the process for the day. The community group members and agencies were then invited to give a 5 minute presentations on a success story and the key element of its success.

Benoir Murray blessed the day together a spoke about the work being carried out by people he's in connect with around Taupo. He stressed the importance of having conversations with each other and the importance of "the little things we do live on forever for the next generation".

Presentations

Thinking Smarter - Barry from the Pukekawa

Wildlife Management Group

The group sought to get a better handle on the impacts of their predator trapping programme because "...we sort of wonder what we're doing... we hear all of these birds" led them to wonder whether that was a result of their own work. Using an animal movement detection camera opened a new world of understanding – in the future this technology may be used for monitoring birds – "at least it's something you can put a number on". Given challenges around resourcing, the group is "... looking at new ways of managing the reserve... thinking smarter".

Feeling Good - Didymo Dave from the Hinemaiaia River Management Committee

Dave got the project started "...because a rat ate my lunch while I was fishing...twice!". "Ours is a very unscientific project, we don't use tracking tunnels... or do bird counts... but we've now got over 800 traps." Is it working? The highlight is constant sightings on the river of whio (Blue Duck)... and lots of North Island Robins in the forest. As for vigorously tackling the extensive buddleia population "...we hardly made an indentation but it felt good!"

Kid Power - Collette from Hilltop School

"We just wanted to get rid of the weeds... we weren't sure where we were headed with the project, we were a little naïve when we started. Kid power is wonderful... that's how you get a lot done in a short time!" Hilltop have made some great gains with 650 native trees planted on a formerly weed infested block "... there's still no clear vision as to where we're going but with all of the help [from parents and the community], we'll just keep going!"

Growing Noise! – Sally from Owhango Alive

The group only started in January after being asked to check the local school's predator traps over the holidays. "A few of us started monitoring the traps ...got interested and it just grew from there". The main goal is to look after whio, kiwi and forest birds. The group was sought expert advice and were challenged with the question of, "...how are you going to measure whether you've achieved anything?" This led to 5-minute bird counts and enlisting the help of many others in the local community as well as agencies because "...we couldn't do it by ourselves". The group's vision includes monitoring outcomes, but in the meantime, lots of birds means, "... the bush is noisy, it's great... and we're proud to have 14 whio on the river..."

Macro/micro – Nick from the Lakes and Waterways Action Group

Nick felt that we all focus too much on macro-organisms, whereas when it comes to understanding water quality, it's the micro-organisms that really count. He also highlighted a TED talk and asked us to imagine this technology being used to determine possum browse damage to the forest canopy http://www.ted.com/talks/lian_pin_koh_a_drone_s_eye_view_of_conservation.html

Innovative Inmates - Dave from the Department of Corrections

"To date we've built around 3000 traps; we've done a few innovations on the design over the years – as you can imagine, some of our guys are talented in more ways than one!" Floating nest boxes and traps to catch pet cats live have also been constructed, "you think if it, we'll design it!" The work along with practical on-the-ground restoration has had a positive impact on the inmates, "... there are now guys putting their hands up to do some work in the community".



Eagle Hunting – Didymo Dave from Te Awa Waitenui Project

“Look for eagles not chickens”. Eagles are kids who are willing to challenge themselves, learn new things – in short, “you don’t have to motivate eagles”. Dave’s eagle-hunting is a grass-roots approach to helping hapu (tribal/sub-tribal groups) and overcoming inter-generational distrust of “anyone in uniform”. Keeping kids motivated and engaged means honesty “speaking the truth” and provide rewards when the goals set by the kids are achieved – trapping 25 vermin = a trip to the movies and McD’s. When outsiders start feeding negativity in, Dave’s advice is to “go deaf” and when the kids get naughty, “be prepared to stand strong and set rules”.

Staying Power - Kiri Te Wano from Project Tongariro

Project Tongariro has been going for 30 years. Kiri, the project’s coordinator shared some of the ingredients underpinning the group’s success – not surprisingly there’s a strong focus on volunteers as they’re the bedrock of most community groups. A starting point is not to overcommit volunteers and provide training opportunities along with varied experiences to suit volunteers’ skills, interests and age groups. Project Tongariro has purchase benefits with partners such as Taupo Native Plants for volunteers and regular volunteers are well rewarded – being a marshal for the annual Tussock Traverse Run looks like a lot more fun than actually competing! Volunteers’ input is acknowledged by, “telling their stories and getting their photos out there”. There’s also a strong focus on regular communication through a variety of media including bi-monthly newsletters, Facebook and webpage updates. Project coordinators need to ensure volunteers are well equipped to do the job as well as provide, “strong leadership” so that volunteers know what’s expected. And finally, have a paid coordinator!

Text supplied by Monica Peters the blog for her research - www.monicalogues.com

Advocacy and working bees-Laura Dawson from Forest and Bird

Forest and Bird (Taupo) aim to make “something happen” every month e.g. talk on identifying bird calls to water quality with Mike Joy, Walks at locations such as Hinemaia and working bees to undertake weeding and planting. The group have a commitment to pest control in the Taupo area and are involved in an animal pest control project at the Waipahihi Gardens using Good Nature traps. The group also act as advocates for local and national policies such as RMA changes and Taupo District Council tree and vegetation policy.

Kevin Loe Contractor Waikato Regional Council

Kevin spoke about the need for a website that contained easy to access practical tips on weed management and animal pest management. People could offer tips for the site that they have picked up over the years. The site could also have links to other organisation such as Weedbusters and Regional Councils who have good information on their websites.

Anna McKnight – Partnership Ranger – DOC – King Country Taupo

In the recent DOC restructure, DOC has divided NZ up into 5 major regions (previously 11 conservancies), with Taupo coming under the ‘King Country Taupo’ District in the Central North Island region. DOC has split into two divisions – Services – which includes biodiversity, threats, huts and tracks and Partnerships – working with the community and businesses. A major success story for DOC was telling of the Wairakei Golf Sanctuary having privately funded a predator proof fence, which is allowing DOC to use the sanctuary as a crèche for the chicks to reach the safe weight of 1.1 kg where they can defend themselves against stoats. Another success of the sanctuary is a pair of NZ falcon nesting just outside the perimeter of the fence, which is already showing the overflow benefits of predator fences to wildlife where Greening Taupo is encouraging the continuation of wildlife corridors. These falcon are being further protected with traps by Bike Taupo, Project Tongariro and DOC.

Nicki Hughes and Laurie Donald Waikato Regional Council (WRC) Catchment Management Officers Taupo and Whakamaru Catchments

WRC priorities for Taupo and Whakamaru Catchments are wetlands and geothermal areas. The new work that the Council is involved in includes restoration of Te Kawakawa wetlands with funding from WCEET and WRC, restoration of two wetlands northern one 23ha and southern approx 10ha and Waihukahuka stream. Approximately 900ha on Tongariro and Rangipo prison farm is being formally protected– including Waiotaka, Tongariro Rivers and many tributaries and wetlands, on the farmland and forestry areas. New work has begun at Moerangi Station-50ha of wetlands and waterways, Oraukura Station on a 11ha wetland with a mixture of native species, 10ha of ephemeral gullies at Whakaipo bay and a 1.5ha wetland at Otaipuh. Just over a 1005ha wetlands and riparian margins protected has been achieved in 4.5 years in the Taupo catchment.

WRC have also been working on Otumuheke Stream with TDC and Iwi over the last few years and for the first time this year with Greening Taupo, to restore the riparian margin of this geothermal stream. This project has been funded through a donation from Transpower, TDC and the WRC geothermal fund. Work is also being carried out near Poihipi road/SH32 Whakamaru with five land owners to protect wetlands and riparian margins on these properties to create more linkages. There have been 77ha wetlands and riparian margins protected in Whakamaru catchment. The Council is also working with NZFM to control willow and working with the Oraukura Trust and Farm manager to obtain funding to do the same. NZFM is controlling willow in Rotoaira Forest which will create a very large buffer for the forestry and farms. Willow trial basal spraying on large trees has occurred at Whareroa Station. It is working slowly and will probably take two years for trees to die. Kuratau school are looking at adopting a Soil Conservation area on Waituhi Kuratau Station. The school is looking at weed control, planting, making a small pond and an access track which can be used for biking/walking and getting to the weeds. Finally willow control is taking place at Waimarino with DOC and NZFM are also working on sections of the Waimarino.

Taupo District Council Kara Scott

The Natural Values chapter of the Taupo District Plan is now operative as of June 2013 – all appeals resolved. The Significant Natural Areas are now all mapped and protected through provisions in the district plan – around 40% of the district. However most areas are already well looked after by landowners, and/or already protected through national, forest park status, scenic reserve, covenants etc. The provisions in the district plan allow consideration of the other protection methods, and includes development incentives to protect SNAs. The Taupo District Council is working with Waikato Regional Council (WRC) regarding wording of the proposed regional policy statement. WRC will be looking to district councils to prepare a district biodiversity strategy with WRC assistance.

Taupo District Council Alison Rawley

The Council is re introducing native plants into the CBD – Heuheu Street, Riverside Park, outside of the Amphitheatre, water treatment plant roof park, Turangi. There is also ongoing replacement of large areas of wilding pines in Owen Delany Park and Spa Thermal Park with native vegetation and selected exotics to encourage birds. The Council is working with Greening Taupo and Bike Taupo to assist with the replanting. The Council has also been part of the Otumaheke Stream restoration project with Waikato Regional Council and other partners to restore and protect the biodiversity of this significant geothermal area. Around 2 hectares of geothermally induced prostrate kanuka on the edge of the East Taupo Arterial became reserve in 2012, and the Council has recently accepted an offer of a further 2 hectares of this significant geothermal area to add to the reserve. Continued clearance of plant pests in urban gullies and replanting of native vegetation is taking place and ongoing rabbit control projects with DOC and WRC. Rabbits are particularly bad in lakeside areas with sandy soils and a low proportion of permanent residents. Rat control is carried out in the Otumaheke Stream area and finally control of plant pests and replanting of native vegetation on the edge of Lake Maraetai in Mangakino is taking place.

Community groups and their restoration projects

Monica Peter's PhD research

Despite the number of active community groups around NZ, there hasn't yet been a comprehensive, national level overview of their project activities. To remedy this, she's sent out a questionnaire to c.540 community groups over August/September this year and received a very generous 295 responses. Just over half of the groups have been in operation for more than 11 years - that's a lot of work! Weeding, planting and pest control are the top 3 activities with education and advocacy next. Few people probably realise the vital role groups play in raising community awareness not only of the value of their work, but of the ecosystems they are restoring. She also explored what type of support groups received and from whom as well as what type of support groups feel they still need to achieve their objectives.

The latter half of the questionnaire covered how groups measure the success of their restoration works. She'll be posting regular 'Research Snapshots' on her blog - www.monicalogues.com - which are potted versions of her findings in plain speak. Monica Peters monica.a.peters@gmail.com

Greening Taupo Nina Manning

The concept for Greening Taupō arose as a result of the vision of and discussions between Project Tongariro, the Department of Conservation and Wairakei Golf and Sanctuary who believed that a collaborative organisation could take conservation to the next level in the Taupō community. The goal is to replicate the intensive conservation work occurring within the Wairakei Golf and Sanctuary into the surrounding community. The Sanctuary has plans to reintroduce suitable species and is already being used as a kiwi crèche. The objective of Greening Taupō is to improve the Taupō environment for people and native wildlife. This involves undertaking restoration planting and pest control to create ecological corridors to allow the number of native birds to flourish. Particular attention will be focused on access routes in and out of Taupō that will help create a sense of arrival for visitors to Taupō. Joined by key partners Taupō District Council, Contact Energy, Wairakei Resort Taupō, Waikato Regional Council, Taupō Native Plant Nursery, Forest and Bird, Bike Taupō and Huka Honey Hive, Greening Taupo has moved from concept to reality and they are calling for the entire Taupō community to get behind the initiative.

Kathy White the new Waikato Regional Councillor

for the Taupo area introduced herself and indicated her interest in getting to know the conservation groups and coming out to meet them to look around their projects.

Tips to share

Put lure in hair -roller in rat traps so mice don't eat the lure
Modified Timms trap How?? No information left
Google group to share tips and practical ideas





If we grow community conservation/biodiversity restoration successfully in five years time we will...

How do we get there?

	Funding	How do we get there?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be self funding More funders for local projects especially for multi-year admin More multi group applications to funders Weedbusters funding options for weed control More local funders for conservation projects Resources/funding sources-different avenues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsorship Funders who fund multi year projects and provide untagged funds for admin
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular part of schools curriculum-Enviroschools and Weedbusters More conservation education in schools -Invite Didymo Dave (ambassador and others) Enviroschools programme Kiwi kids conservation More schools involved in Greening Taupo/weedbusters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School involvement-education Education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More communication -newspaper, social media digital noticeboard Good photos Documented best practice –on the ground action Website Evidence of progress Involve the newspapers Be informed about each other’s efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining profile and show casing successes in the media Documented best practice in pest control Three minute Youtube summary of what biodiversity means to you and your community Digital information noticeboard
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship building with key contacts Have stronger more meaningful “real” partnerships on the ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies supporting not leading community led and owned projects Supportive agency policy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be meeting again –Forum Events etc Age factor fun events nature programme, Ruapehu REAP Sporting events –“adopt an area” Student activity/expo event day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open days for the public Networking SOCIAL EVENTS for community and multiple groups to share information and honour volunteers e.g. DOC awards, Civic awards Networking-like today



Plan and Coordination	Greening Taupo acting as an Environ Centre umbrella for conservation/biodiversity activities	<p>rioritise biodiversity/natural heritage sites</p> <p>A plan to move forward</p> <p>Biodiversity Strategy that has a realistic budget and goals</p> <p>Get involved with Greening Taupo</p> <p>Focusing in ecological corridors</p>
	Community group i.e. Greening Taupo to co-ordinate and promote upcoming community events	
	Working strategically together	
	Decide together what is important	
Participation and Valuing /Community Awareness	Actively manage our biodiversity using a plan	<p>Reward and recognise volunteers</p> <p>Being well organised for volunteer days and offering a variety of activities</p>
	Working together-bringing communities together with wider community participation	
	Linking with what's important –community sporting events	
	Rewarding/recognising volunteers	
	Local hapu/iwi involved from the start –who to contact ways of helping iwi training opportunities to be involved	
	Agencies supporting community groups and Agency collaboration	
	Family/youth involvement in conservation	
	1,000 + people at planting days	
	More local hapu/iwi ownership/involvement	
	Have groups taking ownership/responsibility over their areas	
	Young people/families involved-Twitter and Facebook	
	More people excited about conservation	
	Networking better, better communication structures	
	Spreading/sharing knowledge across different entities	
	Sense of community/closeness growing	
	Linking people to share information and support each other with conservation projects that are sustainable	
	Be supporting current local initiatives	
	Community awareness and bringing communities on board with what trying to achieve and of saving the environment, changing habits	
	Community valuing wetland and geothermal areas	
	Be an engaged, interested and strong conservation community	
Have more people involved and supporting conservation efforts		
Be educated about conservation icons (species and their threats		
Young people out in nature		
Miscellaneous	More eagles ensuring the future	Support your local hapu -finding the eagles in the group
	Find more “Eagles”	
	Rarer bird species more visible-kaka, kakariki, kereru	
	TCDC greenwaste collections	
	Promote local study	
	Link between conservation and play station!!	
Training	Control of cats and predator free NZ	<p>Develop web based information that contains easy to access practical tips</p>
	Media training	
	DOC look at community groups training	
	Have practical information and tips available on weed management and animal pest management. People could offer the tips for the site that they have picked up over the years. The site could also have links to other organisation such as Weedbusters and Regional Councils who have good information on their websites.	

Overall Action: Forum coordinator to follow up with key people in Taupo/Turangi to further the outcomes of the meeting.