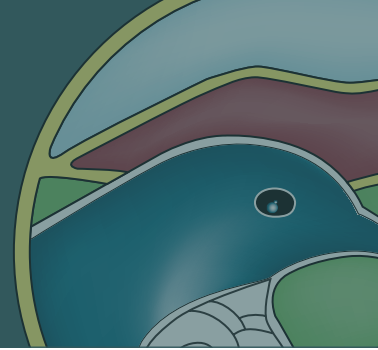


Annual Report from the Waikato Biodiversity Forum 2013/2014



Introduction

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum has been operating for eleven years and the membership has now reached 474. The Forum's membership is comprised of research and management agencies, iwi groups, private landowners, community groups and individuals who work towards improving indigenous biodiversity in the Waikato region. The Forum believes that the combined synergies of people working together provide a valuable contribution to improving biodiversity across the region. The Forum speaks on behalf of biodiversity. However it does not necessarily reflect the views of all Forum members on every biodiversity issue.

The Forum operates independently of its constituent organisations. It is run by a part-time coordinator who receives support and guidance from a Focus Group. The Forum work includes:

- encouraging agencies and groups to network, share ideas and work together to protect and enhance biodiversity
- advocating for the development of sound policy to enhance biodiversity protection at national, regional and local levels
- organising forums to discuss biodiversity issues and offer support and recommendations in relation to local projects
- organising workshops for community groups on a variety of topics such as pest management
- raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity through the media, the Forum's website and Facebook and presentations to groups
- acting as a referral agency for biodiversity information



Future of Conservation in Taupo discussion group

Acknowledgements

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum would like to acknowledge and thank the following organisations for their financial support: Waikato Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Thames Coromandel District Council, Waikato District Council, Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council and South Waikato District Council.

The Forum would also like to thank the staff from Forum member organisations and community groups for their contribution and expertise during Forum events, workshops and the on-going exchange of information with the public and other Forum members. This collective expertise makes the operation of the Forum a success and is valued by Forum members and the public.

Waikato Biodiversity Forum events

Two Forum events were held over the past 12 months. The first event was held in Taupo to network and share ideas with others who undertake conservation across the region and workshop where conservation around Taupo and South Waikato wants to be in ~~10 years~~ time. The first part of the day focused on hearing about each other's projects and gathering some ideas around where to from here for Taupo. The community group members and agencies present were invited to give five minute presentations on a success story and the key element of the success. Success stories included the use of an animal detection camera to understand the efficacy of bait stations and traps, involvement of Hilltop School in planting days near Lake Taupo, monitoring and trapping for who protection at Owhango micro-organisms really count, inmates from Rangipo Prison ~~trap~~ designing new traps, Didymo Dave working with youth to trap and help young people to learn new things and the range of projects and training opportunities that Project Tongariro manages with volunteers. Forest and Bird (Taupo) is active with advocacy work on plans and policies, pest control in the Taupo area and ~~talks~~ on conservation topics. Agencies also had a chance to talk about their work with landowners on ~~all aspects of~~ weed pest management, species management ~~with Wairakei Golf Sanctuary and Bike Taupo~~ and wetland and geothermal work on private and public land in the catchment, ~~protection~~ of Significant Natural Areas through provisions in the Taupo District Plan and native plantings on TDC reserves.

Finally the concept of Greening Taupo was explained which aims to replicate the intensive conservation work occurring within the Wairakei Golf and Sanctuary into the surrounding community. The objective of Greening Taupo is to improve the Taupo 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. The afternoon was spent in discussion groups to share ideas about what needs to happen over the next five years to grow community conservation/biodiversity restoration in the South Waikato and Taupo area.

In mid March the Forum held its first Youth Biodiversity Day. Pukemokemoke Bush Reserve became an Outdoor Classroom for the day. The event was organised by a talented group of young environmentalists for students from high schools, home schooling and the University of Waikato. The students moved around a circuit of six presenters and took part in a range of interesting and inspiring activities. These included the use of telemetry kiwi location finding equipment and learning about the work of kiwi conservation at Rainbow Springs in Rotorua. The use of palm oil in foods and products such as cosmetics was “unmasked” which raised awareness of the destruction of rain forest and resulting loss of habitat for species such as orangutuns for the growing of the palm oil trees. Students were introduced to invertebrate research by viewing bumble bee trackers and transmitters and undertaking an activity to highlight the importance of insects in the food chain. Controlling the threats from rats, stoats and possums was informative with a suite of traps on show for students to examine. Two arborists showed how their skills can combine with native plant research on epiphytes. The students got to view Frodo the morepork who lives at Wingspan in Rotorua. In fact he was pretty much the star of the day. Finally students got to have a hands on experience of using the medieval method of repairing the broken feathers of birds of prey, such as the New Zealand Falcon. The day was a great success and stimulated interest in conservation which spilled over into some students exploring volunteering opportunities.



Taupo workshop -weeds, animal pest and riparian restoration

Media and Publicity

Biodiversity related articles were submitted for publication in Hamilton Press. These articles included Ship rats, cats danger to city birds, Toxic wetlands threaten mudfish and Lots to learn outdoors. An article on ~~patake~~ was prepared for the Thames Coromandel District Council and featured in the Councils November 2013 Summertime magazine. A further two articles have been written on a Forest and Bird (Thames) project and a school planting project. The articles are earmarked for the 2014 Summertime magazine which is sent to all households across the Coromandel Peninsula. The Forum's website was updated earlier this year with the addition of three sections on the Home page to feature a community group, a threatened species and a restoration tip. The Forum continues to publicise its work and biodiversity related information through the website and Facebook page.

Networking and 0800 BIODIV

The Forum members received four newsletters to inform them of biodiversity related information. The network continues to provide a link for community group members and management agencies through dissemination of information and communication with individual members in answer to queries.

The Forum coordinator operates the 0800 BIODIV line and responds or refers enquiries to an appropriate agency. The coordinator responded to 64 enquires from the public and Forum members through the 0800 line and the website. The enquiries continue to range from weed and animal pest management, details of community group projects, volunteering on projects, planting guides and teacher resources. Funding advice is the major theme of enquiry from Forum members.

As a result of the Forum review in 2012 a database of Resource People from within the Forum has been established so that Forum members can be put in touch with the right person for advice and assistance.

The Forum coordinator attended the Conservation Inc Conference in Dunedin in October which provided an opportunity to ~~network with others from around New Zealand~~ and make connections with others undertaking biodiversity coordinating roles.

Advocacy

The Forum provided advocacy through submissions on a range of proposed district plans ~~for~~ South Waikato District Council, Waipa District Council, Thames Coromandel District Council and Hamilton City Council. Oral submissions were presented on the HCC and SWDC proposed District Plans. Finally submissions were written on the proposed National Policy Statement on Freshwater and the proposed Waikato River Fisheries. The coordinator represented the Forum on the Advisory Committee for Regional Environment (ACRE) to provide input on biodiversity protection and enhancement through ACRE's advocacy work.

Community Groups Database

The Forum maintains a database and map of community group projects which highlights the contribution that these groups make to biodiversity protection and enhancement across the region. The database is being updated in relation to being hosted by the Nature Space website. Nature Space is a website designed to help groups and individuals learn more about ecological restoration processes and projects in NZ. It is also a great site to profile community groups. The number of groups working across the Waikato region has decreased over the past year as some groups have completed planting projects or have become inactive. The Forum has 132 groups on its database working on 147 project sites. Ten new groups are yet to be processed onto the database. Information from the database is regularly requested by members of the Forum.

Presentations

The coordinator prepared a presentation for the Madison Ecological Restoration conference. The presentation highlighted “Community efforts to restore the Waikato region the role of the Waikato Biodiversity Forum and other community initiatives”. The presentation was delivered by Professor Bruce Clarkson at the Madison conference and by the Forum coordinator at the University of Waikato to invited guests. Hamilton City Council ran a series of Gully Restoration presentations and the Forum coordinator provided funding information in one of the slots.

The Environment and Conservation Groups of NZ conference was held in Thames later in 2013 and the Forum coordinator was invited to present on the Forum’s work. It was a great opportunity to network with other groups outside of the region.

In May a trip was made to Auckland to present at Green Drinks which was a gathering of community groups and agencies in the greater Auckland area. The theme was “Linking Islands of Biodiversity and People Across the Waikato Landscape”. The Waikato Biodiversity Forum is seen as a successful way of achieving this linking outcome. The presentation covered the Forum’s work, details of community group projects, strengths of the Forum and future directions.

Workshops

Three workshops were organized by the Forum over the past year. A selection of community groups on the Coromandel attended a GIS workshop with the Department of Conservation’s Geospatial Information Analyst. The focus of the workshop was gaining knowledge of different GIS programmes to assist with monitoring and provision of reports. Weed control and surveillance, plant ID and restoration and animal pest management workshops were run on farmland at Coroglen on the Coromandel and at Otumaheke Stream in Taupo.

The Forum coordinator assisted Kauri 2000 Inc with a Kauri Dieback strategy for the Coromandel and also facilitated a meeting in Thames to form a Coromandel Kauri Dieback management group. And on a similar note a meeting was also facilitated to help the National Wetland Trust to set up a group of volunteers at Rotopiko Complex/Lake Serpentine.

The Waikato Regional Council ran a funding workshop to gain feedback on the funding situation for groups. The Forum coordinator assisted with the organizing of this workshop.



Coroglen Workshop - plant and animal pests

Events

The Forum coordinator attended Fieldays and helped out in the childrens corner of the Department of Conservation display area. There were opportunities to interact with the children and their parents of various aspects of conservation ranging from endangered species protection, community group projects and volunteering. In September the Hamilton Zoo hosted a conservation week event at Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park. The coordinator ran an insect activity for primary school children who attended the event.

Summary

In summary the Forum has had another busy year providing a networking and supportive role for biodiversity organizations and groups across the region. The provision of funding information has rated high in the advice role especially in relation to the tighter funding opportunities. Advocacy through submissions for biodiversity protection is an important role that the Forum continues to provide alongside encouraging groups to submit by providing suggestions for submission points. A highlight of the year was the Youth Biodiversity event and the ability and energy of the Youth Committee to organize such an awesome event. It is great to have two younger conservationists working on the Focus Group over the past year and taking up leadership roles through the Forum.

Moira Cursey, Coordinator, Waikato Biodiversity Forum



Playing a Pest knock out game at Fieldays



Lunch break at the Youth Forum in March