



Report from the **Waikato Biodiversity Forum**

Held at Wintec & Waiwhakareke, Hamilton, Friday the 24th May

The “Hamilton Restoration Workshop”, which took place on the on the 24th of May 2019 was a strongly collaborative effort between the People, Cities and Nature (PCAN) project of the University of Waikato and the Waikato Biodiversity Forum. The venue chosen to host the capacity of 90 attendees was Wintec’s Longroom, located at their city campus. The event would showcase the research into urban restoration completed by PCAN since its inception in 2016. After which the event would then move to Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park for a series of afternoon workshops covering different aspects of restoration.

Bruce Clarkson opened proceedings as PCAN’s program leader. Bruce focused on collaborative research in urban restoration. He began by showing how cities in Aotearoa, and particularly Hamilton, had very low percentages of indigenous vegetative cover. Bruce went on to explain that the majority of the population occupies these same urban areas and that the benefits of urban restoration are clear (e.g. social cohesion, carbon sequestration to counteract greenhouse gases, health and recreation benefits), then having a greater emphasis on restoring biodiversities in cities like Hamilton is an imperative and PCAN is helping to give greater direction in this.

Eva Collins followed Bruce with a talk on cross-sector partnerships between business and biodiversity. She presented a range of partnership examples, on being “Zoolandia” in Wellington, who have partnered with Meridian. She then went on to explain how this has been successful in satisfying the objectives of both parties, and gave examples of other

partnerships that have been less successful in meeting mutual objectives. The bottom line was that partnerships are not easy but with the right match and good communications mutual objectives can be satisfied for biodiversity and business.

Sarah Busbridge then took stage to present her research on “building forest in the city”. Her first main finding from her research which monitored a large number of urban restoration plantings over 8 years was that plantings must be designed to achieve rapid canopy closure and promote regeneration. This meant planting with smaller spacings and growing a combination of suitable species, which may also need to be supplemented with enrichment planting of climax and shade tolerant species after. Her research also looked at what motivated people to be involved in restoration activities. She found that the perspectives of volunteers and practitioners of restoration activities were different. Practitioners tended to have an ecosystem perspective whereas volunteers often were motivated by the creation of a local amenity. She concluded that greater collaboration needed to take place between the two groups as knowledge building is a two-way street.

The next presentation came from Erana Walker, focusing on the subject of Kaitiakitanga, and how Maori practiced kaitiakitanga in an urban setting. This was the first time research on this subject had taken place. Her interviews and questioners led to a number of findings. Firstly that kaitiakitanga is taking place and this is often happening at people’s homes and Marae rather than in public

spaces. Also that Kaitiakitanga often involves use of natural resources, such as kai and natural medicines (rongoa). Furthermore that there is a range of ways people learn kaitiakitanga (watched others, learnt through practice, knowledge handed down, read in book), as well as a range of ways Maori contribute to kaitiakitanga (funding, tree planting, labour, cultural guidance, species protection).

John Innes then presented on urban predator control research. The research took place in 5 New Zealand cities in a range of open spaces using a range of methods including trail cams, tracking tunnels and chew cards. The research showed the abundance of key mammalian predators. Chew cards effectively detected possums and rats, while tracking tunnels effectively detected hedgehogs, rats. The trail cams detected everything including cats and mustelids. While some cities had varied results in terms of the density of some predators, Hamilton was fairly even across the board. The study also compared the success of bird nesting sites between urban and non-urban settings, which revealed surprisingly that urban nests were in-fact more popular.

The last presentation was from Leigh Cornes who outlined the history of Waiwhakareke and spoke about the new facilities being developed at the park as well as further plans for the future. Leigh showed how the park had gone from having not a single native plant in 2004 to now, where 33 hectares have now been planted in indigenous vegetation. The new facilities being installed include a loop track around the lake, toilet facilities as well as a viewing platform over the lake. Please follow this link to learn more.

After lunch over 60 of the attendees headed to Waiwhakareke to enjoy the beautiful surroundings created by well over a decade of



Leigh Cornes seeking about the history and future plans for Waiwhakareke

community effort and to participate in a selection of the following workshops; Planting strategies, tips and hints; Ecological restoration research - how it's done; Future Waiwhakareke plans; The unique challenges and opportunities of urban predator control - Kemble Pudney & others; Detection dogs for freshwater management; Insects & microbes in restoration; Urban weed management.



Workshop attendees being briefed before entering Waiwhakareke for the afternoon workshops.