



# Annual Report from the Waikato Biodiversity Forum 2015/2016

## Introduction

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum has been operating for thirteen years and has a steady membership of approximately 450. 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's 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
- providing support to community initiatives which protect and enhance biodiversity.

## Acknowledgements

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

The Forum would like to thank the Focus Group members for their support and contribution to the work of the coordinator's role. Their advice provides a valuable contribution to the success of the Forum.

Finally the Forum would 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.



Gathering to begin field trip into Mokaihaha Ecological Area

## Waikato Biodiversity Forum events

The first Forum of the year was held at Papa o Te Aroha Marae in Tokoroa. Dame Malvina Major (Patron of the National Kokako Recovery Programme) attended along with sixty five people. The Forum hui was supported by South Waikato Forest and Bird, Oji Fibre Solutions, Waikato Regional Council, South Waikato District Council and Hancock Forest Management. The focus of the day was to brief people about the Mokaihaha Kokako Recovery Project, to work together to maximise outcomes for the ecosystem of the Mokaihaha Ecological Area, and learn about opportunities to be involved in the project. The Forum participants visited the Mokaihaha Ecological Area as well as hearing from a variety of speakers. Erin Patterson from the Department of Conservation reported on the logistics and results of a census of kōkako carried out in the 2,100-hectare block in May 2015 in which 104 birds were located. John Innes from Landcare Research spoke about the importance of eliminating possums and rats from the area, and gave an outline of the history and current research that is happening in the 24 populations of kōkako in New Zealand. For kōkako recovery to be successful there needs to be residual indices of one possum per 100 trap-nights and a 1% ship rat tracking rate on 1 November each year for several years at a site.

Tertia Thurley from the Department of Conservation outlined kōkako recovery work around the North Island. She detailed how genetic diversity ensures the best chance of long term persistence of a species. For kōkako, long term genetic viability involves the number and genetic diversity of founders (>40), a high growth rate and the carrying capacity (>500 individuals). The methods to enhance long term genetic viability include annual pest control, increasing area of pest control as kokako population expands to >200oha, creating habitat corridors, increasing habitat quality, translocations of kokako into site and minimising translocations out from site. Ideally populations need to be around 500 before birds are harvested from them



Weed pest management workshop

The participants were taken on a fieldtrip to the Mokaihaha Ecological Reserve and followed a rough track put in to access the bait station lines which will be used to monitor and control animal pests in the future. Finally, opportunities for future involvement were discussed.

The second Forum event was held at Graham and Diane McBride's property in Te Kowhai in liaison with the Waikato District Council. The day was run as an information/workshop for landowners with Significant Natural Areas (SNAs). It began with a presentation by Graham on the restoration work he and Diane have undertaken on their property. Giles Boundy from the Waikato District Council presented on the Significant Natural Areas work that the Council has been undertaking with the Waikato Regional Council. He highlighted the incentives that the Council is putting into place to help landowners who are keen to improve their SNAs.

The participants attended three workshops. The plant pest workshop was facilitated by Hamish Hodgson from the Regional Council. His presentation consisted of sharing information about common pest plants in significant natural areas in the Waikato Region, for example wandering jew, moth plant, privet and woolly nightshade. He covered control methods including cutting and pasting, broadcast spraying and hand pulling and the useful products available and when best to use them.

Wayne Bennett from Forest Flora covered restoration planting starting with an introduction to the important principles to be aware of then moving on to details of how to achieve



Graham McBride talking with participants on trip around his property

those principles based on an understanding of how each plant contributes to a community of plants. Wayne focused on the principles such as achieving resilience, sustainability and durability, natural patterns and processes - achieving authenticity and protecting biodiversity, cutting corners - a cautionary tale about Ngaroto and others, and best practice for recreating a plant community using reference ecosystems and planting guides.

Dave Byers from the Waikato Regional Council covered off animal pest management including different traps for a range of situations and where and when to place them. He had a variety of different traps for participants to view including the Good Nature A24 and A12 traps and the DOC 200s. He discussed the importance of looking at the overall restoration of an area and what the goals are for the whole site not just animal pest control. He highlighted the importance of a monitoring programme to measure achievements of the project and talked about monitoring methods such as tracking tunnels and chew cards. Finally, Dave covered compliance with the Animal Welfare Act and funding opportunities.

## Networking and o800 BIODIV

The Forum members received four newsletters to inform them of biodiversity related information. The Forum network continues to provide a link for community group members and management agencies through dissemination of information and communication, with individual members to answer queries or refer them to others sources of information. A resource person register is being maintained so that Forum members can be put in touch with the right person for advice and assistance. The Forum coordinator has also identified Forum members who can act as "Biodiversity Champions" on particular topics.

The Forum coordinator operates the o800 BIODIV line and responds or refers enquiries to an appropriate person. The coordinator responded to 76 enquiries, mainly from Forum members, through the o800 line and the website. The enquiries continue to range from funding information, weed and animal pest management, details of community group projects, volunteering on projects and planting information.

## Advocacy

The Forum provided written submissions on the Government's "Next Steps for Freshwater" consultation paper and the consultation paper for the Reform of the Marine Reserves Act 1971. 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. The Forum coordinator has been an active member of the Environmental Stakeholders Group for the Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Plan change process and supported the sector's two representatives. The coordinator was invited to be part of the stakeholders group for the Waikato Plan and has had input into strengthening the biodiversity aspects of the Plan. Waikato District Council have started their District Plan review and the Forum has been involved in the first stakeholder feedback meeting.

## Community Group 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. Nature Space now contains all the groups on the Forum's database. 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.

## Workshops

The Forum coordinator organised five workshops over the past year. Four of these workshops were run by Conservation Volunteers NZ to provide information on Health and Safety from the "In Safe Hands" toolkit. The workshops were run over the region, including two in Hamilton and one each in Taupo and Coromandel. Overall 42 people attended the workshops representing 2 agencies, 3 landowners, four marae/iwi groups and 36 community groups. The fifth workshop was held on a property near Lake Karapiro and focused on plant pest control of the most common weed species in the Waikato, plant pest management plans, animal pest control for possum, rats and mustelids, animal pest management plans and monitoring for successful animal pest control.



A suite of traps on display at Pest Management workshop

## Events

In September the Hamilton Zoo hosted a conservation week event at Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park. The coordinator with the assistance of other Forum members ran an invertebrate activity for 125 primary school children who attended the event. It is a fun event and the students really enjoy hunting and identifying invertebrates in the park. In June the Forum coordinator assisted the NZ Landcare Trust with an aquatic activity for the Waipa Earth Champions day attended by 40 students from Waipa schools. The Forum coordinator also gave a presentation to JUNATs on Biodiversity and Bhutan as an opportunity to provide youth with biodiversity learning. The Forum didn't have a display site at the Waikato Expo this year and instead helped biodiversity groups set up their display sites and assisted groups to resource their sites.

## Support for Community/Agency initiatives

The Forum coordinator continues to be a member of the Mokaihaha Kōkako Recovery Project which is based near Tokoroa. This working group will be raising community awareness of the kōkako and the project, and gaining support from interested people and groups in the Tokoroa and wider area. The coordinator is a member of the Hamilton Gully Protection Project which is exploring recommendations for the protection of restored gullies in Hamilton. This project is a sub-group of the Forum's Focus Group. Support in the way of funding advice was also been given to the Waikato Regional Council's Local Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy work in the Upper Waihou Catchment.

The Waikato District Council provided meetings for landowners with Significant Natural Areas identified on their property and the coordinator was invited to provide advice to those landowners who attended the meetings and were keen to undertake restoration work in and around bush, wetlands and streams.



Hunting for invertebrates at Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park

## Summary

In summary the Forum has continued to involve itself in advocacy, networking and advice to organisations and groups across the region. It has worked with other organisations and groups to support biodiversity work and provide opportunities to add value to the work of member organisations and groups. The Forum acknowledges and commends the work that agencies, community groups and individuals carry out to improve biodiversity. The Forum would also like to thank the Focus Group members for their support and contribution to the work of the coordinator.

Moira Cursey, Coordinator,  
Waikato Biodiversity Forum

