



Waikato Biodiversity Forum Newsletter May 2012 Number 35

Kia Ora/Greetings to all Forum Members

Forum work over the past three months has included:

- Attended NZ Landcare Trust conference
- Held Trapping, Baiting and Monitoring workshop at Baldhill (near Pukekohe) in partnership with Whakaupoko Landcare Group
- Ran Family Fun Day at Kaniwhaniwha Stream
- Wrote LTP submissions and presented orally to the Waikato Regional Council and Territorial Local Authorities in the region
- Set up Forum display and assisted community groups set up displays at the Waikato Show
- Attended the Waikato Show talking biodiversity, community groups projects and conservation at the Waikato Show
- Assisted groups with Small Scale Community Initiatives Fund applications
- Attended Te Mata Landcare Group meeting. Gave advice on forming and sustaining the group
- Liaised with MEG coordinator to hold community group hui over two days on the Coromandel and obtained funding through the Environment Centre for this event
- Attended discussion with DOC, WRC and reps from MEG and Whenuakite Kiwi Care on the Biodiversity Funds and Coromandel groups –filling the gaps, sustaining the groups and work outcome monitoring
- Presentation to Environmental Planning students at Waikato University

Funding Advice

The Forum's website has a comprehensive list of funders. Moira is available for funding advice.

Green Ribbon Award Nominees and Winner

A big congratulations to Moehau Environment Group (Coromandel) for winning a Green Ribbon Award for Protecting our Biodiversity. WELL DONE and just reward for the great work the group does.

The following groups were nominated as finalists for Green Ribbon Awards:

Protecting our Biodiversity

Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park (Hamilton)

Communication and Education

Kauri 2000 (Coromandel)

Caring for our water

Mangakotukutuku Stream Care Group (Hamilton)

A BIG congratulations to you all for reaching the finals.

William Hall Memorial Reserve Thames

One of the ongoing projects of Thames Forest and Bird is the restoration of the historic William Hall Reserve, an arboretum planted in 1873. A pohutukawa in the Reserve has become a hazard. It has grown laterally and may damage other mature trees. A recent grant from Lion Foundation has permitted the removal of the hazardous branches. In other parts of the Reserve a small team of

volunteers has been occupied in spraying the wild asparagus which had been stifling natural regeneration of native trees. Funding is being sought to set up a predator control line to protect the native birds which have grown in numbers over recent years.
Ken Clark Forest and Bird (Thames)

Friends of Waiwhakareke Potting Group



Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park (WHNP) is a 60ha park located on the north-west outskirts of Hamilton, bounded by Baverstock, Rotokauri and Brymer Roads. The vision for the Park is to create a self-sustaining habitat sanctuary that represents the original ecosystem diversity of the Hamilton Basin. This involves a reconstruction from farmland of native lowland and wetland ecosystems once widespread, but now rare in the Waikato Region. The 20 year planting programme consists of two parts: the pioneer plants and the enrichment plants. Under the umbrella of Tui 2000 Inc, Friends of Waiwhakareke Potting Group spend a Friday morning each month potting up the enrichment plants such as tawa, astelias, grasses, swamp mairi, putaputaweta, miro etc. So If you have an interest in potting on enrichment species and learning more about the project contact Catherine Smith at 07 8558296 or email her at 2smiths@wave.co.nz

Community Group Hui on the Coromandel

Community groups on the Coromandel are invited to a weekend get together hosted by Moehau Environment Group. The event will be held over June 23-24th at Te Moata Retreat Centre, Tairua. MEG are please to be able to offer this event at no charge to attendees. The main purpose of this event is to provide an opportunity for groups involved in conservation on the Peninsular to get together, establish stronger relationships, and find common ground to explore ways we can work more effectively with one another. While the previous Hui in 2009 had an agenda specific to Kiwi, this year MEG are broadening their focus in an effort to make it more relevant to all groups and landowners involved in conservation on the Peninsula. Registrations are due by 1 June.

To register please contact:

Natalie Collicott

Coordinator

Moehau Environment Group

07 868 3054

027 3585281

natalie@meg.org.nz

Lower Mangapiko Streamcare Group



Congratulations to the Lower Managapiko Streamcare Group who were awarded 2nd in Heritage and Environment Category Trustpower Awards - Waipa 2012. The groups aim is to restore, enhance and protect the Lower Mangapiko Stream near Te Awamutu, get the community involved and encourage sustainable land management along the way. Around 300 volunteers have helped work towards this mission through organised weed control sessions and planting days that plug up the stream's banks to prevent further erosion and flooding. Close to 7,000 plants were planted last year and to date 27.3 km of the stream's bank has been cleared. The group involves the community in project decisions and they encourage neighbouring landowners to keep stock out of the waterways, improving the water

quality. School children learn about native plants, riparian plantings and their benefits and local businesses support the project and provide staff to help out at the planting days. Water quality is improving along with the increased stream life. The final part of the project is to have a walkway along the stream's bank for the public to enjoy.

Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society

In April, 29 precious Pītoitoi or North Island Robins were released onto Mt Pirongia, thus completing the first translocation of native species by the Restoration Society back to the maunga. The robins were



sourced from Mangatutu southeast of Otorohanga and released near the start of the Mahaukura Walking Track close to Grey Rd, Te Pahu. Since then volunteers have been checking on the birds and feeding those still game enough to come close. Robins have been seen and heard close to the release site. More monitoring is planned for the summer when it is hoped to find pairs and chicks and record their presence along the network of bait station traps. Please contact Clare St Pierre on (07) 8719133 or clare.stpierre@gmail.com if you would like to be involved with this or the bait station filling which takes place, weather permitting, on the last Saturday in August and first Saturday in September. If members of the public sight any of the robins, it would be appreciated if they could mark the spot in the bush by clearing a line of leaf litter and report to Clare the location and the legband colours of the bird, e.g. red over white. Another extension to the bait station grid on Mt Pirongia is in progress, thanks to funding from Pub Charity and this will take the total area of control to over

1,000ha. This has triggered remarks about bringing Kokako back to the maunga and that is certainly one of the society's aspirations.

Monitoring of native bats has begun with Automatic Bat Monitoring devices being placed on the perimeter of the Forest Park, with assistance from Gerry Kessels from Kessels and Associates. Data from the boxes will help us appreciate the densities and preferred habitat of these amazing creatures, and inform our pest control strategies for the future.

After many years of trying to secure a permanent site in Pirongia Village for the establishment of an envirocentre, the old Pirongia School library block was shifted onto Rangimarie Reserve in Crozier St in early May. The Lion Foundation provided a grant of \$20,000 for the shift, and now we are working towards sprucing up the building and completing alterations so that we will have a fantastic resource centre for our work. Volunteers interested in helping with the envirocentre or developing suitable programmes for it are welcome to contact Clare St Pierre as detailed above.

For photos see: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Pirongia-Te-Aroaro-o-Kahu-Restoration-Society/145527248817282?sk=photos>

Opito Bay Environment Group Coromandel Peninsula

Apart from his sterling efforts on dotteral protection in the Bay Brian Thompson is always very busy on pest control. Opito Bay backs onto the Kuaotunu kiwi sanctuary. It is important to keep pests to a minimum if this iconic bird is going to survive on the Coromandel. Brian's trapping has achieved over March and April a total of 113 pests being trapped and he now has 180 Doc 200 traps set which he checks regularly. Special thanks also to DOC for supplying the eggs as bait. We have also recently added an attractant to the stoat baits called Erayz#8 and Mustattract available from Connovation (www.connovation.co.nz). This has been very successful in keeping our kill numbers up.
Hedgehogs 33 Stoats 31 Rats 43 Feral Cat 2 Possum 4

Brian had laid the traps along the fence line between the farmers property and the bush (pine and native forest) that backs onto the kiwi sanctuary (approx. 2Km). This raises the question of pests active in the sanctuary and what other efforts are required to keep their numbers down.



In addition to the trapping above we have secured with the assistance of the Opito Bay Ratepayers Assoc. a grant to purchase 12 Timms Traps. These will be used to control possums around Te Paki Point (between Otama and Opito Bay). Possum browsing over the last few years has decimated the once spectacular pohutukawa that grew

around the coastline (refer image of browsed and dead pohutukawa). Hopefully we will be able to restore these magnificent trees with regular trapping.

Other members have also been busy spraying pampas, cutting and dabbing, ginger, tobacco weed, arum lily and cotoneaster in the area we manage. This is an ongoing exercise. Planting season is now upon us and we plan to get another 300+ native trees including kauri, puriri, taraire and pittosporums by August. Chris Severne

Waiaro Sanctuary

Waiaro Sanctuary has finally found a route that all parties agree on to create a working buffer on the upper Coromandel. This buffer will be better than a fence as it will catch and still allow unrestricted access for Kiwi etc, rather than an impenetrable barrier which could spell disaster for a Kiwi in escape mode or needing to travel. It will also enhance awareness of the bush and wildlife movement, the main benefit however will be the prevention of reinfestation of predators into the Moehau Ecological block, something that has been overlooked for some reason by the powers that be, and it shows. It will be run similar to the highly successful one set up by the Colville Possum Action Group in the 90s, Waiaro Sanctuary would like to thank Environment Waikato for recognizing the merit of this project and



donating enough money to buy all the traps when no one else seemed to care, It will run from Waiaro in the west to Sandy Bay in the east. Blue Possum Master kill traps will mostly be used as they are the most people friendly and can be adapted to catch other predators, face plates can also be fitted to prevent catching pet cats. Kingfishers (Kotare) had a prolific breeding this year and Kakariki (green parrot) now reside in the valley and a wild one was recently sighted by Red Admiral Ecology. Let's hope they return as

this is one safe place for birds as it is constantly monitored and trapped, the latest rat index yielded 6% in the main forest block which joins with the State Forest. This is an excellent result as trapping has been minimal until April for rats (due to heavy possum reinfestation) and it shows the worth of our unique traps as in four years we have not had to replace any, this is value for your \$\$\$. Kelvin Moritsen

Shrub Epiphyte Reintroduction Trial Underway in Hamilton City.

As a follow up to our masters research at the University of Waikato, we have reintroduced shrub epiphytes into urban Hamilton forest patches. Shrub epiphytes are non-parasitic plants that perch on trees. There are 4 native species of shrub epiphyte in New Zealand and we have used 2 of them for this project: akapuka (*Griselinia lucida*) and tawhirikaro (*Pittosporum cornifolium*). The aim of epiphyte reintroductions is to bring a seed source back to the city; the plants we attach to the trees may not live as long as they do in a natural setting but when they flower and fruit their seeds will be available to establish a natural population within the city.



With the support of the University and Hamilton City Council, we have reintroduced 36 individuals into Hammond Park and Claudelands Bush. The plants are mainly placed in chicken wire baskets with sphagnum moss and are nailed host trees. Where possible, we have also introduced epiphytes amongst existing nest epiphytes or in trunk forks without any chicken wire. The reintroduced epiphytes are planted on a range of host trees at heights between 2 and 15 metres. We climbed the trees using arborists' techniques and enjoyed plenty of questions from people passing by.

After discovering that 60% of the epiphyte species that occur in the Waikato region are missing from Hamilton City, we developed this reintroduction trial to establish best practice techniques for reintroducing some of our missing species. We intend for the findings of this trial to motivate and guide epiphyte reintroductions by restoration groups in Hamilton, throughout New Zealand, and overseas. In October last year we travelled with colleagues from the University's Environmental Research Institute to Singapore where Dr. Tim Yam from the Singapore Botanic Gardens kindly showed us the reintroduction work that he is doing with native epiphytic orchids. We picked up a lot of useful tips from Dr. Yam but also realised that we were going to be facing a very different story in Hamilton because of the significantly lower humidity than in Singapore.

To establish what works best, our trial is set up with different substrates, different basket designs, different volumes of sphagnum and different tree heights and aspects for attachment. The epiphytes will be regularly monitored for survival and growth and we hope that our findings will lead to more epiphyte reintroductions throughout Hamilton City and the Waikato region. Catherine Bryan & Fiona Clarkson, University of Waikato.

Whangapoua Reserves Group, Pungapunga River Reserve Planting

The Pungapunga River reserve near to the north end of Whangapoua Beach has had a considerable amount of planting in recent years with the northern dune end being planted in a wide variety of coastal



natives over the last 6 years, being added to bit by bit. These trees are now well established and looking good. Together with the huge ancient pohutukawa leaning over the riverbank they provide an attractive start to the river walk.

Further upstream the reserve encompasses some of the river's floodplain. Planting started here 3 years ago with the intention of recreating a walkway through a slice of coastal floodplain forest that

links to the small remnants of puriri and totara remaining on the riverbank further upstream. A small bridge was built for access over a side watercourse and the planting area was fenced. However the

neighbouring cattle got into the first planting area and ate and trampled it. For the first 2 years it all seemed to have disappeared into the long grass then we started to see healthy emerging growth.

Now there is a mown walkway as far as the site of the second bridge. Cabbage trees, kanuka, manuka and kahikatea are providing a backdrop for the sedges, grasses, toetoe and flaxes that are mass planted away from the river and are quite spectacular when they are in flower. On the riverbank there are kowhai and pohutukawa as well as a puriri that is flourishing despite the early treatment by the cattle. Plans are afoot to continue planting the second stage and build a second footbridge so that it is possible to walk all the way to the remnant trees in the distance.

The site is damper than we initially realized so the original plans were modified. Much of the subsequent plantings of manuka, kanuka kowhai and mahoe have been locally sourced from the rejuvenating hills overlooking Whangapoua harbour. Written by Simon Rowley and Meg Graeme, Whangapoua reserves group.

Photo above shows the view of the first stage plantings looking upriver towards the remnant forest in the distance. Jenny Villiger Whangapoua reserves group.

Matamata Piako District Council

Matamata Piako District Council has a 'Significant Natural Features Fund' where landowners who have a significant site such as a wetland and/or native bush area can apply for rates remission and/or funding towards fencing the site and project costs. Applications for funding for the 2012/13 funding round opened on 18 April and close on 30 June. Information on the Policy and the Assessment Criteria and Application Form can be found on the Councils website

www.mpdc.govt.nz/our-community/significant-natural-features-funding.html

If you have queries about Significant Natural Features Fund contact the Council on 0800 746 467.

Nature Space Ecological Restoration in Aotearoa Web Portal

Nature Space is a new web portal for groups, individuals and landowners undertaking ecological restoration in New Zealand. The website offers information and resources, such as setting up a new group and promoting your group. There is also information about some of the community restoration groups and individuals working throughout New Zealand. It has been designed to allow restoration groups and individuals to store information about their projects and to promote themselves and their work and to learn more about



how to undertake restoration work most effectively. It will also allow people to connect with and learn from each other. The website has been developed by the Department of Conservation in conjunction with local councils with assistance from QEII National Trust and WWF NZ.

If you would like to be part of this online restoration website:

- 1) Visit the site at www.naturespace.org.nz.
- 2) Click on Add My Group.
- 3) Fill in the form, and submit your details.

There are only a few mandatory fields, so you can add as much or as little information as you like. You can add photographs and other documents, as well as contact details and information about the scope and history of your group.

Once you have submitted your details, Nature Space will create your own page and send you a username, password and user manual. From there on in it is up to you to add to and edit your own page. Please contact email info@naturespace.org.nz if you have any queries.

Biodiversity Inventory and Monitoring Toolbox

The Department of Conservation Inventory and Monitoring Toolbox is now available online for community groups to access. It describes standard methods for sampling populations and communities



of plants and animals. Standardising data DOC collects is fundamental to establishing consistent and compatible methods to underpin monitoring from local to national levels. It is the authoritative source for the methods used in DOC and contains the information you need to be confident you are doing things right. The Toolbox is divided into modules on different taxa. Each module has tools to help you choose appropriate inventory or monitoring methods suitable for your population study.

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/publications/science-and-technical/doc-procedures-and-sops/biodiversity-inventory-and-monitoring/>

The Toolbox is continually being improved and DOC welcomes your feedback on any part of it. For comments, questions and suggestions please email biodiversitymonitoring@doc.govt.nz.

Tools to Farm Within Limits Conference Midday to midday: 11 to 12 June 2012

This Conference is hosted by The New Zealand Association of Resource Management and Fertiliser Manufacturers' Research Association (Fert Research) and will be held at The Don Rowlands Centre, Mighty River Domain, Lake Karapiro, 601 Maungatautari Rd, RD2, Cambridge

Conference Programme Highlights Include:

- an update on the work of the Land and Water Forum
- a selection of successful case studies
- making targets and benchmarks work for you
- an overview of the newly upgraded OVERSEER® Nutrient Budgets Model
- a showcase of the wide range of tools available in support of good farming practice.

To see further details and register go to www.groundworkassociates.co.nz/tools2farm/index.html

Moehau Environment Group

We are busy undertaking possum control in the Waikawau Bay catchment area from April through till early June. This is a repeat of a successful operation undertaken in 2010 which dramatically reduced possum numbers in the area.



Over May and June our volunteers will be out at night doing our annual kiwi listening surveys to get a picture of how kiwi populations are faring. We now have 8 sites, 5 in our Kiwi Sanctuary (north of Colville), and three new sites in the Coromandel Area School Kiwi Project. The surveys are an important way for us to monitor how effective our predator control and responsible dog ownership campaigns are.

As part of BNZ's 'Closed for Good' Day, four staff from the BNZ Coromandel Branch came up to Waikawau Bay to volunteer for the day. The team helped shoot and edit a short film clip about the work we are doing to protect biodiversity in the Northern Coromandel which we'll use for promotion and advocacy.

MEG recently launched our newly improved website www.meg.org.nz. Our new site contains way more photos, and updated info. Check it out, and tell us what you think.

Pukawa Wildlife Management Trust update.

The PWMT has been working in the bush areas surrounding the Pukawa settlement on the shores of Lake Taupo for the last 10 years. The main effort of this work has involved the setting out and regularly checking a network of over 400 box traps and bait stations targeting rats and stoats in order to give the forest birds in the area a fighting chance of rearing offspring.

The trust is always looking at ways to better carry out this work, and over the past year has successfully used the new self re-setting Henry traps to target possums as well as using both video and still surveillance cameras to record what animals approach the traps.

The images have confirmed what we are up against in dealing with vermin, with some great shots of rats, mice, cats, ferrets and possums. These images have also shown us that a lot more animals approach the traps than get caught in them. Kevin Loe



Possum in Henry trap



Rat at poison bait station

Mangaiti Gully Restoration Trust

We treat pest control very seriously. Without controlling rats, possums and mustelids native fauna will not thrive no matter how much native flora is planted. We have weta, skinks and native snails in our gully. In Hamilton city are nesting Tui, bat colonies and geckos all of which are vulnerable to predation by exotic pest species.

The programme we have just completed rolling out is aimed at controlling the pests and has been part funded by Waikato Regional Council. We have installed 13 rat bait stations (see photo) in 2 hectares. These have been placed in trees. We have found in trials that bait stations placed in trees, even quite low down, are frequented more than those on the ground. This is not surprising when considering that

rats are tree dwellers in a bush environment. We are using Ditrac which does not have a secondary kill. domestic cats or dogs. A small smear of peanut butter is placed around the bait station to entice the rats. The bait blocks are threaded on a wire so the rat cannot take them away. We are servicing the bait stations every 7 days topping them up to a maximum of 3 pellets. Typically we would be using 17 to 33 pellets each week. We are hoping that the number of pellets we're using will drop off as time goes on. We were supplied with two cage possum traps. Because the gully is on public land other traps were not considered safe. We have modified the traps so we can place apple in them as a lure and lock the door



open when it is not convenient to check the traps the next morning. When we find that the apple is going the trap can then be set and the possum picked up the next morning. The whole cage is placed into a large garden plastic bag and tied shut with a pill placed inside that vaporises (used to kill rabbits in their holes I believe) and gases the possum. Humane and tidy. We have caught 19 possums since December. We have been supplied with three DOC 250 traps for mustelids. Only one is in place and nothing has been caught. Monitoring the success of pest control is important. The objective is not to record the number of pest killed or poison baits eaten but to record the fauna population that is being protected. If the fauna does not

increase then the pest control is a failure no matter how many are being killed. The way we have decided to record the pest control effectiveness is to monitor the number of fantails. Fantails will breed and survive even with rats and possums however if the pests are removed the fantail population should expand considerably. This would indicate a successful pest control programme was in place and harder to monitor native species should be benefiting. Rex Bushell

Bat Event at Pukemokemoke Bush Reserve

More than 120 people turned up for an evening picnic and to learn more about New Zealand's only native land mammals. In perfect weather, they heard from Gerry Kessels and others about how bats, which are in decline in most parts of the country, have been found in many locations around the Waikato including Hamilton (the only NZ city known to have a population of bats) and, recently,



Pukemokemoke. Several "bat detectors" (devices which convert ultrasonic bat calls to frequencies that humans can hear) were distributed among the crowd as the sun set, and everyone watched the sky and waited. Other than one quick fly-over by a single individual around 7.45pm everything was very quiet, apart from the moreporks. Some folk went up the track into the bush to see the glowworms, others admired the moon through a telescope, then people started to drift away, until only about 15 remained. Suddenly at 8.20pm, the bat detectors burst into life. There must have been several bats at once, whizzing low overhead, although with the Milky Way showing in the sky it was too dark to see them.

But their various calls, through the bat detectors, were loud and clear – a "chip-chip-chip" that they made as they flew straight, a buzz as they homed in on an insect, and a chirp, made by the males. Just as soon, they were gone again. Then after a few minutes they returned, serenading the assembled humans in ones and twos for the next half an hour. A magical night at Pukemokemoke. Alan Leadley

If you want to contact people whose details are not in the newsletter you can go through the Contact Us page on the Forum website and send an email to me. I'll put you in touch with them.

The newsletters are all placed on www.waikatobiodiversity.org.nz for easy access. Cheers Moira