



Waikato Biodiversity Forum

Kia Ora/Greetings Everyone

Thank you to all of you who provided articles for the newsletter to make it such an interesting read.

Forum Coordinators report

Here is a selection of activities I've been undertaking on behalf of the Forum during March/April/May 2015:

- Contacted community groups to update data and gain permission for developing a page for their group on Nature Space
- Co-organised and co-facilitated the Trapping, Baiting and Monitoring for Success workshop on the Coromandel
- Prepared submissions and presented at hearings on Waikato Regional Council, Waipa District Council, South Waikato District Council, Hamilton City Council and Waikato District Councils draft LTPs 2015-2025
- Part of the team organising the Maniapoto Youth Biodiversity Forum with Maniapoto Maori Trust Board Environmental Project Manager
- Attended Landcare Day at Lake Cameron
- Organising funding workshop with Maniapoto Maori Trust Board Environmental Project Manager
- Member of the Mokaihaha Kokako Recovery Project meeting tasked with leading a plan for community engagement
- Attended the launch of Raukawa Trust Board 's Environmental Plan
- Attended a meeting with WRC and contractors to explore funding options for landowners in a Local Indigenous Biodiversity Strategy pilot
- Discussed Health and Safety pilot workshop with Michelle Frank which will take place in the Waikato in partnership with WWF and the Forum.
- Attended the Ramsar Symposium.
- Checked Community Conservation Partnership Fund EOI for community groups
- Member of panel to allocate funds from SSCIF applications
- Attended the Healthy River stakeholder and environmental stakeholders consultation days
- Attended the Waikato District Council stakeholders meeting for their District Plan review
- Attended the Maniapoto Youth Biodiversity Forum and assisted with organisation on the day
- Organised an invertebrate activity for the Maniapoto Youth Biodiversity Forum
- Attended the Ed Hilary Hope Reserve opening

Howick Tramping Club- Celebrating 20 Years of Protecting Kokako!!



In 1995, a remnant kokako population of 7 pair and 14 single birds was holding on in the Mangatutu Ecological Area saved by 1080. Laurence Gordon made it his mission to protect these kokako and ground-based predator control began. With increasing help from volunteers, principally the Howick Tramping Club supported by the Pukekohe TC and Toi Toi Trekkers, kokako numbers steadily increased to reach an impressive 109 pair in the 2012 census. With robust numbers of kokako and good genetic diversity, the Mangatutu has now been identified as a key site to source birds for translocating to other projects and plans to catch 40 kokako are underway.

Together with our 2011 bait station extension into the nearby Tunawaea, and joined by the Auckland TC, we hope to replicate this success over the next 20 years! Photo Liz Ware

Useful Publications

There is a very useful set of publications on the NZ Landcare Trust website including NZ Lizard Conservation Toolkit and a Guide to Freshwater Invertebrates in NZ. Check them out at www.landcare.org.nz/publications/online-Resources

Kararehe Kino

This publication contains the latest on vertebrate pest research from Landcare Research. Contact thomsonc@landcareresearch.co.nz to go on the list for notification of Kararehe Kino's publication. The March publication can be downloaded online <http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/publications/newsletters/kararehe-kino>

Waikato Biodiversity Forum Facebook page HELP

The Forum is looking for any members who would like to liaise with me to post biodiversity related information on the Forum's Facebook page. So if you've got some time up your sleeve and can help with this please let me know. Moira

Weedbusters Website

The Weedbusters website has had a makeover. So check it out for heaps of useful information on weed identification and how to deal to weeds safely. www.weedbuster.org.nz

Predator Free NZ

Predator Free NZ has a goal to protect our endangered native species by eliminating the threat of predators and aims to inform, connect and inspire, while also examining the economic, social and cultural impact of large-scale pest control in New Zealand. Check out their five areas of focus for 2014-17 www.predatorfree.nz.org/the-plan/#inspire

Maniapoto Youth Biodiversity Forum

The last Forum event had a youth focus and was a partnership between the Forum and Maniapoto Maori Trust Board.



Eighty year 10 students from Piopio, Te Kuiti, Otorohanga and Te Wharekura o Maniapoto schools took part in a variety of activities in Ruakuri Reserve near Waitomo. Activity topics included weta, bats, birds, aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, eels, bees, rongoa, pest management, glow worms and stream planting. We experienced a warm welcome from mana whenua and a kereru call after the karanga which set the scene beautifully. It was a fun outdoor classroom day with an awesome bunch of students, kaumatua, organisers and facilitators from Maniapoto Maori Trust Board and the Te Kuiti community.

Support for Project to Raise Awareness for the Protection of New Zealand Dolphins

My name is Alistair St Pierre and I am currently involved in a project which promotes the protection of New Zealand's dolphins, in particular the Hector's and Maui's dolphin. The company driving the project is Game Starter, an organisation formed off the success of a real life, experience driven game. Game Starter wants to share the worlds' stories through games and has the ability to connect with an audience of hundreds of thousands of people. The latest story Game Starter wants to share is of William Trubridge, a record breaking free diver who promotes protecting the world's oceans and preserving what little we have left. Through Trubridge we

are introduced to the Hector's dolphin and the plight of the Maui dolphin, whose population nears extinction. Their only hope of survival lies in the reform of fishing legislation to ban certain types of harmful fishing.



Our mission is to raise awareness for the Hector's and Maui's dolphin through a game based on William Trubridge's experiences as a free diver. To begin, we must first raise the necessary funds to develop the game, and for this we are turning to PledgeMe, the New Zealand crowdfunding website through this link: <http://bit.ly/1EaEH0n>. The campaign will also be directly promoting William Trubridge's Trublue, a non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting New Zealand's dolphins and the banning of gillnet fishing.

We want to reach as many people as possible to help share and promote the cause and to raise awareness concerning New

Zealand's Hector and Maui dolphin situation. We are asking you to help us by contributing to our project. The more funding we receive and the more people who view or share our campaign the higher the chance that our project will be successful. If you would like to talk further around helping us, please contact myself on 0277266282 or email me at alistair@gamestarter.io. Alistair St Pierre

Stoat Tails Wanted

Didymo Dave is a conservation volunteer who makes fly fishing flies from stoat tails, selling them in Taupo to



fund his own local conservation projects.

If you, or any connections you have, predator trap and are keen to help out, please send stoat tails wrapped in paper to David Cade PO Box 350 Taupo. 027 240 9603. The flies are great for harling, and are good for night fishing at river mouths. Available in Rod n Tackle Taupo and Windsor Lodge, Waitahanui. David has a number of trapping and weedbusting projects on two of the tributaries leading into the Great Lake Taupo.

NZ Reptiles

In all the news I come across re saving NZ wildlife there never seems to be any reference to NZ's reptiles beyond tuatara. As I understand it, before rats arrived NZ was covered in skinks and geckos ! Also they played a vital pollination role, especially for our twiggy shrubs. Our first NZ home 1965 was in Nelson and our garden was alive with skinks. 20 yrs later teaching in Wainuiomata one of my student's Dad had a D.O.C. approved collection of skinks and geckos. Next sighting was 12 yrs later in Palmers Garden Centre, next to Refuse Transfer Station on Avalon Drive, Hamilton. Haven't seen them there lately. Hamilton Zoo collection is not very visible, or impressive. High time there was a walk through enclosure there where we could see good numbers of them and good gecko collection. Where can we see them easily short distance from the city? Taitua Arboretum would be good place to see them? Captive breeding for release? If anyone is interested in talking about this please phone me. Martin Toop, 22 Cranbrook Place, Rotorua North, Hamilton, 3210 Phone 07 8559185

Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park We need your help to plant more trees!

Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park is an internationally recognized ecological restoration project happening on 60 hectares of farmland opposite Hamilton Zoo. Many members of the Hamilton Community are helping to replant the various landforms from peat lake to ridge crest in accordance with the native plants and trees that used to be there. In future the park will provide not only a home for native birds, insects etc but also a stunning

setting for community recreation as both young and old enjoy walking and cycling through native forest . We



have been planting there since 2004 and with such terrific growth rates in the Waikato we are seeing great progress and the return of many birds. BUT....the Winter planting season is here and we need your help to get trees in the ground. Tui 2000, one of the four partners in the project, has formed a planting group called “Friends of Waiwhakareke”. We are looking for new members. We meet at 9am at the Zoo’s Brymer Rd carpark on the last Saturday of each month and would love to see you there to help. Bring gloves, a spade and morning tea. You will be most welcome! We aim to finish at noon. The next plantings are on 27 June, 25 July, 29 August and 26 September. We have an email reminder list so if you would like to be involved (or have a query) please send your name to m.cursey@xtra.co.nz or just turn up! Catherine Smith

Mudfish and milfoils return to the Mangakotukutuku Catchment

The Mangakotukutuku Stream Care Group has been busy boosting biodiversity in a recently restored wetland in



Sandford Park, Hamilton. Thirty three juvenile black mudfish (*Neochanna diversus*) were translocated from the margins of Lake Koromatua late last year. Monitoring suggests they are doing well and it is hoped they will be breed this winter. Group members have also been raising rare robust milfoils (*Myriophyllum robustum*), a rare native aquatic plant, and some of these have begun to be replanted into the wetland. This species was once abundant

and grew like “miniature pine forests” but hasn’t been collected in the Waikato River since 1977. The photo is of a large fat black mudfish, one of the fish released into the wetland in November 2014.

Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society

We managed to get rat populations down to 3.33% from a pre-operational high of 68.3% in our 1,000ha bait station grid on Mt Pirongia, and robin sightings are still being reported, including unbanded ones. This means the ones we translocated in 2012 and 2013 are breeding successfully. Chris Smuts-Kennedy and Kevin Parker are developing our Kokako Translocation Strategy, which may include some genetic analysis on Hauturu (Little Barrier Island) kokako around August to help determine their suitability for translocations. As we still have a while to wait for bird availability, we are proposing to help get ongoing pest control underway for an unprotected kokako population at Okahukura, Northern Pureora Forest. This population could play a pivotal role in linking up the remnant populations currently in this area to create one of the strongest source populations in the country. If you’d like to help with any of these projects, please email clare.stpierre@gmail.com or check the society’s facebook page. Clare St Pierre

Release of Tradescantia beetles by Waikato District Council



Over the past few years Landcare Research Ltd has been working on breeding three species of Brazilian beetles. The beetles are being bred to eat *Tradescantia* to help minimise the problem it causes to native vegetation and gardens. The beetles were first collected in Brazil and have undergone host testing in Brazil and New Zealand. Luckily the closest related New Zealand native plant to *Tradescantia* is Nikau palm (*Rhopalostylis sapida*), making the process easier. Based on the research by Landcare Research the Environmental Protection Authority has approved the beetles for release in New Zealand.

The three species are the leaf beetle (*Neolema ogloblini*), stem beetle (*Lema basicostata*) and tip beetle (*Neolema abbreviate*) and as their names suggest, they attack the plant in different ways. The long term goal is for all species to inhabit the same site and reduce *Tradescantia* density to less than 20g/m² so that native plant regeneration can occur. In the future there is also the potential of rust fungus to help control *Tradescantia* in flood prone areas.



In the Waikato there have already been a number of releases of the leaf, stem and tip beetles. QEII Trust released leaf and stem beetles near Ohewhero and Whatawhata. Waikato Regional Council has released leaf, stem and tip beetles in Hamilton. They have also released leaf beetles on the Coromandel and near Raglan. A recent release of leaf beetles was made by Waikato District Council in cooperation with the Department of Conservation, Waikato University and

the Waikato Biodiversity Forum. As with all biocontrol agents, pronounced results are a number of years away, however initial results appear to be positive with visible damage at sites in Hamilton and on the Coromandel. The goal now is to establish *Tradescantia* beetles around the Waikato with ideas including collection from successful sites or a breeding programme. Core funding for this release was provided by the Regional Council's Environment Initiatives Fund (EIF) and the Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust (WCEET). Photo taken by Benson Lockhart of tradescantia leaf beetle and the impact it's had at a site on the Coromandel



takiri... steps to improve our ecological heritage

Send the diggers in! Waikato RiverCare gets planting preparation underway in style.



Project preparation has started this March at two Waikato RiverCare restoration sites with the removal of mature exotic trees. At the Mangawara Stream project careful operation of a 12 tonne digger has removed patches of Hawthorn, Grey Willow and Crack Willow trees from within the 1.25Ha Totara and Kahikatea stand. The work focused on removing mature exotic trees from the drainage corridor under Council management within the stand and large woody debris likely to damage new fencing

assets in a flood event. The Waikato Regional Council team involved in the day long operation did a fantastic job carefully working around the 100-200 year old trees to avoid long-term damage to the stand. This digger work has fast forwarded Waikato RiverCare's restorations plans for the site by six months with additional weed control planned for later this year following fencing and stock exclusion from the stand. Meanwhile, tree work at the Taupiri Ki Weanganui site got underway with the felling of mature pine trees located along the planned new fence line with Stevenson Properties Ltd and the Waikato District Council. This significant 3.27ha project completes stock exclusion between Taupiri and Huntly and includes a local important backwater wetland. The removal of the pine trees will make fencing a lot easier for Barakat Contractors this month without overhead branches to deal with and extend the life of the fence with significantly less chance of trees falling across the wires. Lessee John Holland sees the removal of the pines as a win, win for both land managers and he will rest easier knowing his stock will be secure on the right side of the new fence. Waikato RiverCare plans to start planting at this project in August this year with a variety of native eco-sourced plants. Both projects are excellent examples of getting tangible results achieved on the ground through collaboration and the sharing of resources. Project funding has been provided by groups such as the Waikato River Authority, WCEET and the Tainui/MRP partnership with significant in-kind support from the Waikato Regional Council, Waikato District Council and landowners.

Working Together for a Pest Free Mountain

It's been an exciting year for the *The Karioi – Maunga ki te Moana* project – as many hours of hard work from dedicated volunteers has resulted in a significant increase in funding enabling the project to expand from 130 to



2000 hectares during 2015. The project, led by A Rocha - a local community conservation charity, is providing an opportunity for the Whāingaroa community to get involved in hands-on conservation through volunteer pest trapping and species monitoring. With significant funding from the NZ Lottery Grants Board, the Karioi project is able to increase predator trapping network across the entire mountain. This is an important step in restoring the mountain's biodiversity for forest birds and a small remnant population of seabirds (Oi/Grey-faced petrel) that attempt to breed along the mountains coastline each year. Since March

2015 the team has cut 21 kilometres of predator control tracks with an estimated 10 kilometres to go. Photo Caroline Thomson

The newsletter is placed on the Waikato Biodiversity Forum website. If you have any queries please contact Moira Cursey m.cursey@xtra.co.nz