



Waikato Biodiversity Forum Newsletter

September 2018 Number 59

Kia Ora/Greetings

An update on some of the work undertaken over the past three months:

Waikato

- Provided article to Raglan Chronicle to summarise Raglan forum event
- Responded to enquiries from 0800 BIO DIV service
- Chaired biodiversity focus group meetings
- Authored forum event report
- Edited, formatted and gathered articles for Forum September Newsletter
- Authored the Annual Report
- Planning for Waipa Biodiversity forum event
- Planning for Bio-control workshop
- Interviewed on Free FM to promote the forum

Coromandel

- Providing ongoing assistance to the Predator Free Hauraki Coromandel Community Trust. Project Manager on the ground with the stocktake of community groups' work
- Prepared article for the Mercury Bay Informer on Predator Free 2050 and Backyard trapping
- On interview panel for the DOC B Band community ranger position
- Updated Coromandel community database and checking Nature Space for accuracy
- Responded to three enquiries from Forum members

Trapping at Lake Serpentine/Rotopiko North

Lake Serpentine North is part of the Serpentine complex, situated alongside SH3, 4kms south of Ohaupo. Lake Rotopiko (Serpentine East) is enclosed by a predator proof fence as part of the National Wetland Trust project to build a National Wetland Centre. Volunteers (coordinated by Nardene Berry of Landcare Trust) are trapping the other lakes in the complex in order to reduce the external pressure of predators on the exclusion fence and to provide wider advantages outside the fence.

The newly formed Hunter User Group (HUG) is made up of the dozen regular season hunters (including surrounding landowner/farmer Rob Mourits) who hunt ducks on the North, South and Winter Lakes. They operate a Trapping Roster on a 2 person, 3 weekly basis in co-ordination with Hamilton Fish & Game Assn. Inc. (Ken Parker and Dave Malcolm) with support from Eco-Fx.

There are 40 traps – 19 DoC 200's; 2 DoC 250's; and recently 10 Timms; 2 Goodnature A12's and 7 Goodnature A24's, and a shed that houses paper lists for recording trap-catch data, spare bait and tools etc. The traps have now been in operation for a year for a large tally of rats and hedgehogs with a

few cats, but no mustelids or possums yet. We plan to run a chew card survey soon to see how effective we have been, the results look promising for the coming breeding season.—Hamilton Fish & Game Association Inc. Ken Parker



Dave Malcolm, Chairman Hamilton Fish and Game Association, servicing one of the new Goodnature A12 possum traps.

Ambitious Objectives for Rings Beach Wetland Project

The August newsletter from Waikato Regional Council reporting on progress in the Whangapoua Harbour catchment made particular mention on the NZ Plant Conservation Network award for the conservation activities of the Rings Beach project group.

The group's lofty ambitions for the total restoration of the Matarangi Reserve, administered by DOC, to recreate in the long term a sample of what our landscape looked like before our pioneers exploited it to destruction have reached new heights. In order to clear an initial area of wilding pines the group embarked in 2010 on a limited program to fell all pines within 100 metres of the wetland, an area of about 37Ha.

In 2017 this expanded into an objective of eliminating all pines over the entire 270Ha reserve over 3 to 4 years, with the vital assistance of funding agencies. The wilding pine felling program for the current year commenced 23rd April.

The group has been fortunate enough to secure total grants of \$40,000 in the current year, which has allowed significant progress. A sum of \$30,000 was allocated by the DOC Community Fund, a program with a budget of \$28 million. available over four years, and to be contested by projects focused on eliminating wilding pines. A further \$10,000 was generously provided by Pub Charity, the second time they have supported the group's work.

Walkers traversing the main track along the ridge above Matarangi will be aware of the sweeping vistas recently revealed, overlooking Rings Beach and beyond to the Mercury Islands, no longer obstructed by dense pine growth.

To pursue the group's objective of completely eliminating wilding pines in the block within the next two years, a further grant from Waikato Regional Council has been approved for a total of \$90,500, which includes \$10,500 for further Goodnature self-setting traps.



Matarangi ridge during track upgrade metalling 2015



Same scene August 2018 after expenditure of \$30,000. Further \$10,00 to completion of current year's program

Helping NZ get rid of predators

CPS (NZ) LTD is proud to be supporting the government's bold ambition for a predator-free New Zealand by 2050. So far, we've donated \$20,000 over five years to help fund an important ecology project on the Coromandel. This money will go towards more trapping and pest control equipment – such as DOC 200 stoat traps, Goodnature A12 traps and the new NZ Autotraps – as well as removing invasive weeds like wild ginger, elaeagnus and barberry in the [Opoutere](#) area.

This project is guided by the Opoutere Residents and Rate Payers Association, which looks after about 200 hectares in Opoutere and Ohui – a small settlement halfway between Pauanui and Whangamata.

Tasked with removing stoats, possums, rats, wild cats and hedgehogs from the area, the project has been running for around three years with great success. At least 52 stoats, 111 rats, 53 possums and 75 hedgehogs have already been removed from the area.

Opoutere is a very special place that contains an estuary and wetland of national and international significance. Since 1967, the wetland has been a Gazetted Wildlife Refuge under the Wildlife Act 1953 – the only one in the Coromandel. It has outstanding bird numbers and is a significant habitat for indigenous fauna. Of the 43 native bird species found at Opoutere, 21 (49%) are threatened or at risk. For example, it is the single most important site in the Waikato Region for the threatened New Zealand dotterel.

The area has recently been identified as both an 'Outstanding Natural Feature and Landscape' and an area of ecological significance in the Waikato Regional Policy Statement and the Proposed Thames Coromandel District Plan. Due to the area's importance for New Zealand's native wildlife, CPS (NZ) LTD has come on board to support the project – helping to achieve a predator-free New Zealand. We're excited to be playing a part in this vital work. Learn more at predatorfreenz.org



Riverlea Environment Society Welcomes New Coordinator

To help Hammond Park flourish, we need to eradicate the exotic plants, manage pest animals and plant native vegetation on private properties adjoining the park. Adrienne Grant pioneered this role for two years, but leaves us due to her other work commitments. She worked with about 26 landowners to develop planting plans for their sections, and helped establish Pest-free-Riverlea.

In June we welcomed Paula Smith, who looks forward to maintaining Adrienne's momentum by working with more residents. She has 20 years of landscaping and horticultural experience, a diploma in Arboriculture, is studying environmental planning at Waikato University, and is restoring her own Mangakotukutuku gully property.

"There are many fantastic people contributing to the achievement at Hammond Park. It will be rewarding to see this continue. I feel privileged to have a role working with those who are enriching our natural environment," says Paula.



Adrienne Grant (left) with new Coordinator Paula Smith



Pirongia lineage kōkako moments from being released

Pirongia Kōkako Return Home

At a special ceremony in July, 14 Pirongia lineage kōkako were translocated from Tiritiri Matangi Island to their ancestral home, bringing our kōkako population on Mt Pirongia to 44. Five of them were spotted when the national Kōkako Specialist Group meeting was hosted at Pirongia in August and extensive monitoring of them will start in October.

Our usual pest control using Pindone in bait stations began on August 25 with more planned over spring and new volunteers are welcome. Please email our volunteer co-ordinator Dianne June on djune@xtra.co.nz if interested. We also have baiting weekends at Okahukura in Northern Pureora Forest starting from September 15 for which we'd appreciate more helpers, and we have been thrilled that kōkako and whio there are noticeably more abundant.

Lastly, huge thanks to the Len Reynolds Trust and RNZ's Critter of the Week for their recent grants. Our facebook page has other news updates.

T42 Multi Sport Event - Owhango Alive

Saturday May 5th saw the annual T42 sporting event held again, with the finish line for all events at the Owhango Domain. This is a great community fundraiser and Owhango Alive volunteers run a "stall", in conjunction with DOC. It's a great opportunity to chat to lots of folk about the plight of our unique flora and fauna, especially in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, which all competitors walk/run/bike through. Each year DOC provides us with their special trailer, which is a pretty clever affair. It looks like a back country hut, and opens up to reveal a few of our specials – kiwi and whio, but also some of the nasties – ferrets and 'possums.

This year more than 600 competitors took part in the T42 event, along with their supporters. This gives us a great opportunity to promote Owhango Alive and the wider conservation cause to folk from all over the North Island. We take along various "props" including a DOC 200 trap, which is set off using a mock rat (think a piece of hose with a canvas rat on the end). Triggering the trap is always a crowd pleaser, as it makes such a satisfying "THWACK" when it goes off! One of the vollies, who will remain nameless, is a dreadful um, screamer, in these situations, much to the embarrassment of herself and her colleagues. Over the 5 years

that OA has been attending this event, we have noticed that more and more people are coming up to us and saying “We do the same in our neck of the woods” and “Great – we love what these groups are protecting” and “What can we do to help?” which is all very heartening to our whole national movement. Mana ki te whenua – power to the land!

World Rivers Day – Sunday, 30 September. Owhango Alive will be celebrating World Rivers Day again. This year we are planting native trees and placing a bench seat in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, downriver from the Whakapapa Bridge. This event is open to everyone.

Email: owhangoalive@yahoo.com



Mark demonstrating the “THWACK” to an interested youngster.

Larger projects proposed in river clean-up

The Waikato River Authority’s eighth funding round has closed with a number of larger projects proposed for river clean-up. More than

\$8 million has been applied for from 45 project applications. Two applications are over \$1 million and two others for more than \$500,000. Waikato River Authority Chief Executive, Bob Penter, says the proportion of larger projects seeking funding support appears to be on the increase, combined with an overall more strategic focus from applicants.

“From first reading of the applications it seems as though we are getting far greater alignment with strategic priorities which have been identified through the Restoration Strategy for the river and catchment. It is also encouraging to see the increasing level of groups and organisations working together,” says Mr Penter.

The value of projects being proposed in the granting round is in excess of \$17 million with the funding sought from the Authority less than half this amount. “We have always emphasized the need for our funding dollar to go as far as possible by having co-funding from funding recipients. After eight years it is pleasing to see the wider community match or better the Authority’s contribution to these important projects.

The Authority has this year allocated up to \$6 million for clean-up projects.

Among the areas the Authority has signaled it will be giving increased priority to this year include:

- Restoration Strategy: Projects that have been identified as important in the Restoration Strategy will be given funding priority.
- Partnerships: A greater level of support for applications that involve strong partnerships and that have the ability to deliver significant outcomes from larger projects.
- Iwi Engagement: There will be an increased focus on bigger projects that incorporate iwi in the project delivery.

The projects seeking funding will now undergo a technical evaluation process from an advisory

panel, with the final funding decisions made by the Authority and announced in November. In the past seven years of funding, the Waikato River Authority has allocated \$38 million to 250 projects.



Mangaotama Wetland, in the Waipa catchment is a major wetland restoration project funded by the Waikato River Authority

Te Pahu Landcare Group Weed Control Workshop Sunday 12th August, Kaniwhaniwha Reserve.

Ben Elliott, Biosecurity Officer - Pest Plants (who contracts to Waikato Regional Council), talked us through some of the chemical herbicides he would use during his work. He always uses selective herbicides, and avoids using glyphosate (Round Up) as it kills everything. Grazon has a three month residual, but will break down in soil. It's good for spraying blackberry as it doesn't kill the grass underneath. Metsulfuron (Escort) also has a withholding period, especially for grazing animals, which you need to adhere to. Xtree basal is a chemical ring bark and will also kill everything you spray, so care is needed. Vigilant gel is a good chemical, but does translocate to other species, so be very careful under the drip zone of trees (the theory being the roots of the trees go out to a similar distance as the drip line of the branches, so

you can inadvertently kill the plants you are trying to protect from the weeds). This has happened before in another restoration group when Tordon brushkiller was used to spray *Tradescantia fluminensis* (wandering willy) and killed some mature kahikatea.

Salt is another alternative to chemicals and it works, but can also kill everything, so care is needed if using.

Ben is available to come and talk to landowners within the Waipa/Central Waikato region about weed control. You can contact him at: ben.elliott@pestplants.co.nz PH: 0274 404 052 / 07 827 4063



X Tree Basal and an \$8- sprayer from The Warehouse – this chemical is harsh on rubber seals. Photo: Nardene Berry.

Port Waikato Beachcare come away with restoration award.

The 'Best Coastal Restoration project award' recognises the 'on the ground' achievements of a coastal restoration project, and the substantial efforts of individuals and community groups. Karen Opie said the award is a wonderful acknowledgement. "There are lots of fantastic groups and projects around the country, so to

win and be acknowledged by our peers was awesome,” she said. “Our small committee is proud of what we have achieved and are feeling pretty pleased with ourselves!”

The group have a number of projects that they do, including dune restoration by planting native trees, shrubs and grasses and protecting NZ dotterel and banded dotterel breeding sites. They look after six sites along the coast, from Port Waikato to Waikorea Beach, where they trap predators, fence nesting sites and monitor the breeding success and population changes.

They are able to work on their projects thanks to help from a number of organisations, like Waikato Regional Council and the Department of Conservation. The group received an Environment Initiatives fund from WRC in 2013 which funds most of their projects. The dune restoration planting is funded through WRC’s Beachcare programme. “DOC staff support us with technical advice and support on the ground at many of our events, as well as funding a dotterel ranger over summer,” Karen added. The District Council also sponsor a skip bin for their annual clean up.



Moniqua Nelson Tunley from WRC, Mike Foster, Fiona Gower, Karen Opie, Jo Bonner from Coastlands Nursery (and Coastal Restoration Trust Trustee) and in front Marguerite Smith & Stella (the dog)

The committee are small but mighty, with seven members, but more than 100 volunteers. Karen said she enjoys Port Waikato. “We have a great community and whether it is a stunning day or

a wild storm, Port Waikato is always spectacular,” she said. To get involved or find out more, find them on Facebook: Port Waikato Beachcare

Predator Free Driving Creek - Latest project

We here at Driving Creek Railway are on our way to becoming Predator Free. We are closely working in partnership with Moehau Environment Group in implementing the trapping programme. The team have assisted in providing GPS points for the Monitoring Lines and given their time to help with the track development. We have completed the track developing of the 4 tracks throughout the property and will commence placement of chew cards and wax tags this week. The monitoring phase will take place over the next few fine days and following that we will tactically place the traps and regularly monitor and maintain these with hope to increase native bird life and restore the native and growing plant and tree life. Chelsea Kokshoorn, Driving Creek Railway Conservation Park Team Leader



The Driving Creek conservation crew on-track

Mangaiti Planting Program Looks To Bring Back Kereru To Kirikiriroa

The Mangaiti group is planning a very long term programme of planting canopy trees that attract our native wood pigeon, kereru, back into

Hamilton Gullies. Some say there is food that they eat already in Hamilton but this is only bread and butter for them. They want to offer them ice cream and jelly. Their ice cream and jelly is the fruit of nikau, tawa, miro and pigeon wood. They will be targeting the whole 30 hectare Mangaiti gully system. Size matters when planning something like this.

These three species do have some challenges. Nikau is easy to grow from seed but is very slow growing. Tawa and pigeon wood are easy to grow from seed but frost tender when young. Miro is very hard to grow from seed but is frost hard and grows at a reasonable rate for a canopy tree. They have 11 miro already planted and another 32 of varying sizes growing on in their shade house.



Photo by Kemble Putney, taken at Porritt Stadium, Hamilton

Planting farm drains with a biodiversity focus

Traditionally there are three aspects to biodiversity recognised. These are genetic diversity, species and ecosystem diversity. Superficially this looks like a hierarchy, with genetic diversity on the smallest scale

progressing to the broader scale of ecosystem diversity.

However, if we look at this definition more closely, there are two quite distinct aspects to biodiversity. Genetic diversity; if we value biodiversity, we value the variation between populations within species as well as the range of species, and all higher taxonomic levels as well.

Theoretically we could save and maintain this diversity without maintaining any intact or healthy ecosystems, but saving a species without the ecosystem in which it evolved is a rather hollow achievement. Diversity of ecosystems is also a valued aspect to biodiversity. Both of these aspects of biodiversity are connected to unique locations, areas or regions.

As farm waterways are fenced off to protect downstream water quality, maintenance of those fenced off areas becomes one more issue to deal with. Planting native plants along these areas is popular but the results can be variable. Planting with biodiversity values in mind can make the project so much more successful. Planting using material sourced from local wild stock preserves whatever is unique to the area, and reconstructing the structure of a natural plant community is a small step to restoring an ecosystem, not just creating a native plantation.

For practical considerations, there are several things to be considered.

1. The planting should be long lived, preferably with the potential to self-regenerate.
2. The planting should establish quickly.
3. The project should not affect the maintenance or effectiveness of the farm drains.
4. The species planted should reflect what naturally grows in similar habitats in the same area.
5. The opportunities for weeds to establish in the planted area should be minimised.
6. Species chosen should be either commercially available or able to be specifically produced for the project.

With these considerations in mind I suggest a combination of tree and shrub species selected to achieve these objectives. I have deliberately

kept the range of species as small as possible, while maximising the effectiveness of the project. Understanding the role of each plant is important to those selecting species and placing them in position on the site, so here is a brief explanation of the role of each species.

Establishment of tall canopy trees where possible will significantly contribute to the longevity of the project. Totara (*Podocarpus totara*) is more tolerant of dry and kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*) copes better with wet soil.

Two early establishing species are suggested and others with an expected lifespan of less than twenty years are avoided. Kanuka (*Kunzea robusta*) on drier ground and cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*) in wetter areas.

Planting an understorey of shrubs will speed up establishment, help exclude weeds and, if the right species are chosen, reflect and protect local biodiversity. For this, a selection of four coprosmas; (*Coprosma propinqua*, *C. rigida*, *C. rotundifolia*, and *C. areolata*) are proposed. These understorey species will tolerate shade, so have the ability to regenerate under taller trees, giving resilience to the project. There are many understorey shrubs typical of Waikato riparian margins, but these species alone are all quick to establish, tolerate well, frosts, drought, flooding, wet feet and wind. Source as many of these four species as possible from local remnants.

Many native plants not naturally found in this area are commonly planted along waterways and in forest remnants because they are widely available for landscaping purposes. It is good to use the local species to maintain the special local character (or biodiversity) of the area.

If choosing the right species is essential, arranging them in the most favourable way is also important. Spacing between plants should be between one and two metres. The closer spacing will form a closed canopy more quickly and not need as much maintenance. Wider spacing will require more weed control until the plants grow, and replacement of any losses will be more important, but of course the cost of plants will be much less.

The tall trees should be spaced well apart so that they do not compete for sunlight. Due to their size they should also be placed back from the water, but at least a metre from any fences. Understorey shrubs should be evenly spaced between these trees.

The faster growing colonising species should be planted in between, to fill the gaps until the others reach their ultimate size.

With this combination of trees and shrubs most potential weeds will ultimately be shaded out, but control of species which can become pasture pests may be needed until this happens. Otherwise very little maintenance is needed and we will have protected our local biodiversity.



Hakarimata Road before (2001) and after (2018)