



Waikato Biodiversity Forum Newsletter February 2016 Number 49

Kia Ora/Greetings for 2016

An update on the Forum's work over the past three months:

- Planning Health and Safety workshops with Conservation Volunteers and DOC
- Planning Plant and Animal pest management workshop for Central Waikato
- Provided Waikato District Council with report on the financial contribution of community groups to the environmental projects in their district
- Attended Ramsar CEPA meeting
- Provided advice at the Waikato District Council meetings with landowners who have SNAs on their property
- Transfer of community groups to Nature Space website (nearly completed). Nature Space has yet to put all the groups up but they have the data.
- Attended the Mokaihaha Kōkako Recovery Project team planning meeting
- Attended funding meeting with Trust Waikato, Waikato Regional Council and the Waikato Environment Centre
- Planning Plant and Animal pest management workshop for Central Waikato
- Prepared Opinion Piece for the Hamilton Press
- Gave feedback on Ramsar CEPA goals objectives and outcomes
- Attended a mock funding workshop with Trust Waikato for the "Hands On" funding workshops they are running around the Waikato
- Attended a DoC Fieldays discussion meeting in relation to community groups involvement
- Prepared funding material for conservation groups. Trust Waikato will take the material with them to distribute to conservation groups who attend the workshops
- Updating the Forum's "Restoring Waikato's Indigenous Biodiversity: Ecological Priorities and Opportunities" publication
- Organised meeting with members of the Forum to discuss the concept of covenanting restored gullies in Hamilton
- Met with Puniu Rivercare Manager to discuss funding options
- Prepared submission on Marine Reserves Act (1971) review
- Attended Sustainability Council HCC briefing

Waikato RiverCare

It was a big planting season for Waikato RiverCare last year, with 32,034 plants having been put into the ground at seven different RiverCare project sites.



The planting season started in May, where 4,895 native trees and bushes were planted at Coalfields Road, a DoC/Fish and Game partnership site. The planting finished up in October, with volunteer groups from Genesis Energy and Spark spending a day putting 1,800 plants in the ground at Taupiri Ki Waenganui. Taupiri Ki Waenganui has been our biggest planting project last year, with Waterside Planters planting another 11,845 at the site in September/October.

The 2016 planting season is looking to be an even bigger job with 47,870 plants forecasted to be put in the ground at 10 different project sites.

Remember to check out our website for more information and updates on Waikato RiverCare projects:

www.waikatorivercare.co.nz

Forest and Bird (Taupo) Waipahihi Botanical Reserve – a gem in Taupo's crown

Members of Forest & Bird (Taupo) were involved in the founding of the Waipahihi Botanical Reserve (35 hectares) 50 years ago. It is now an impressive young forest of native trees and shrubs with exotic floral gardens, dominated by rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas scattered throughout. The Reserve is managed by a Board of Management and work of planting and maintaining the Reserve is done by volunteers, and contractors when required.



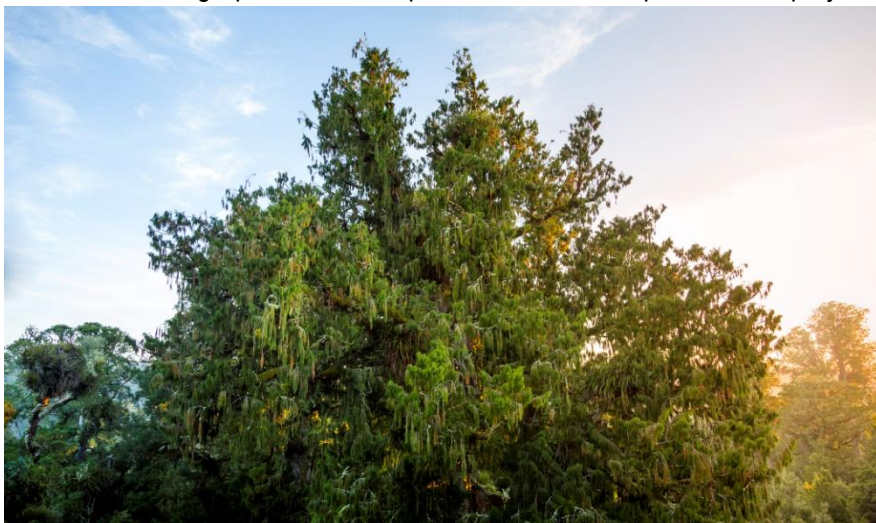
Seven hundred rata, both southern and northern, are planted in the Reserve and have just started to flower in the last few years. Pest control was piecemeal until 2011, when it began in earnest. We started with four possum traps that had seen some service. In 2012 the Department of Conservation supplied 25 DOC 200 predator traps. In 2013 the Taupo branch of Forest & Bird donated three self-setting possum traps and two self-setting rat/stoat traps.

Since May 2015 the Waikato Regional Council has made two grants to the Society from their small-scale community initiatives fund. This money was used to purchase further DoC 200 traps. In 2015 these traps

accounted for 223 rats, 30 mice, 25 hedgehogs, six feral cats, six possums, one weasel and one stoat. In addition we have dealt with 4 wasp nests. In early spring, we lay poison in bait stations to further assist birds during the nesting season. We can say for sure that we now frequently see four kereru in the Reserve. On Sunday 13 March the Society will celebrate its 50th anniversary with music dotted around the Reserve. We hope people will come to help celebrate the work done by countless volunteers over the last 50 years by walking the many paths, and sitting with their picnics to listen to local musicians. All welcome. No charge. Jane Battersby, Forest & Bird representative on the Board of Management Waipahihi Botanical Society

The NZ Tree Project

The NZ Tree Project is a non-profit effort to share the "wow" of native trees with people in a wide audience. Inspired by the National Geographic Redwood portraits, the centre-piece of this project is a huge portrait of a rimu tree.



But how is a rimu portrait special?

Well this portrait presents a view of the entire tree from Pureora Forest in a way that is impossible to experience in real life. When you're in the forest, there is always understorey in the way or distortion of the canopy because of the incredible heights. This project has used cutting-edge technology to blend 65 images taken by cameras suspended in the canopy over 4 weeks, to create an undistorted and even perspective of the rimu.

The resulting image is clear, crisp and breath-taking. But that's not all, the project has also produced a 30-minute documentary, a timeline of New Zealand natural history and 12 stunning prints that all combine to provide an exceptional and one-of-a-kind exhibition. Visit www.nztreeproject.com for more information on exhibition schedules and venues or to buy your own copy of the portrait. Let's share the wow!

Tawarata Road Wetland Restoration Project



An MFC Global Investment Management Company

There is a degraded wetland sequence (6.5ha) in the middle of Kinleith Forest, known as the Tawarata wetlands. Originally the whole pond network was constructed for the purpose of supplying water to Te Whetu native sawmill in the 1920's. The location is downstream of an airstrip that was used for aerial application of spray for dothistroma control. The ponds have now reverted to both grey and crack willow and blackberry with a sparse understory of manuka and associated sphagnum.

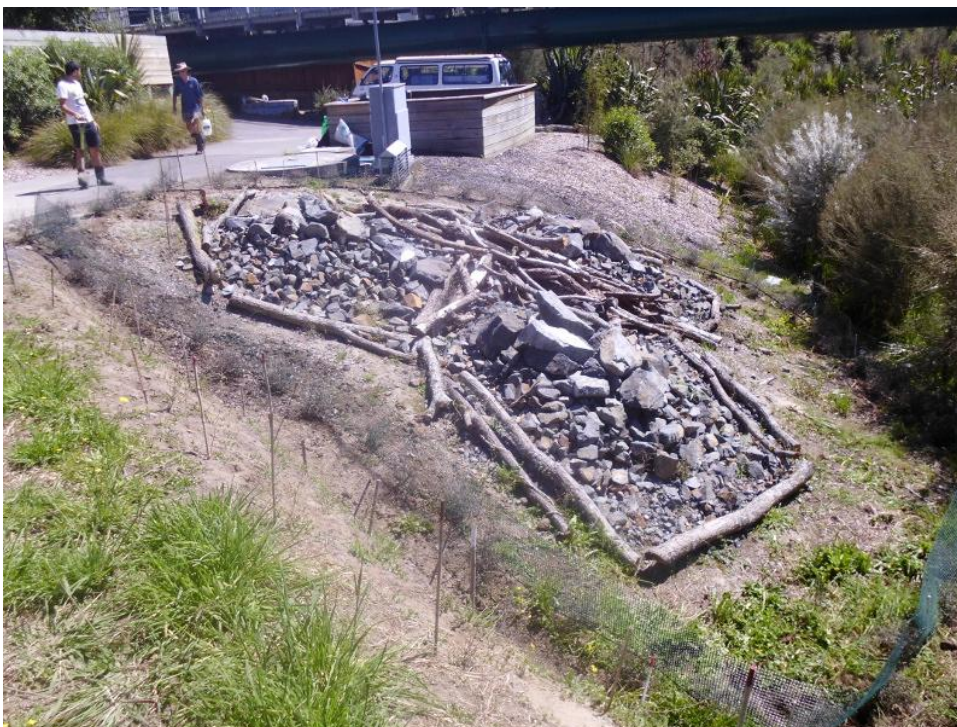


The western wetland area has higher biodiversity values and has been mapped as an SNA by South Waikato District Council. The upstream ponds in contrast have low biodiversity values because the dense willows are suppressing the sparse native understory. There is sufficient water to maintain several small areas of open water. This allows several pair of mallard ducks to survive. The upper pond upstream had a pair of dabchick present in January in 2014.

HFM has started a willow clearance programme using a combination of aerial spraying the dense willow with a glyphosate/meturon mixture and using X tree basal on the scattered trees in the SNA. This will be followed up with native planting where the regeneration is insufficient and manual willow control will continue for some years. Robin Black

Mangaiti Gully Restoration Trust – Hamilton City

We noticed we had a very low population of Copper Skinks (*Oligosoma aeneum*) in our restoration area so designed



and built a safe breeding habitat for them. This consisted of buying two truckloads of rock and arranging them into three piles, then stacking old logs in between. Among all this small berried native plants have been planted as additional cover and another food source.

We ring fenced it with a plastic mesh and planted *Corokia cotoneaster* at 500mm intervals on either side of the mesh. This will form a highly divaricated unclipped hedge that creates a tangled thicket that cats should not be able to penetrate. The mesh will block any holes that might open up in the base.

We are now in the process of arranging the translocation of 50

skinks to ensure a viable breeding stock. Rex Bushell

Restoring nature, connecting communities

A pilot project being managed by Waikato Regional Council in the Waihou catchment will provide a “how to guide” for indigenous biodiversity restoration across the Waikato region. A grassroots approach is being taken in the Source to the Sea | Te Puna o Waihou ki Tīkapa te Moana project, working alongside mana whenua, landowners and land managers. To ensure the project’s outcomes become ‘business as usual’, Waikato Regional Council is also working with local councils, iwi, landowners and other key stakeholders.

Ultimately this project will provide a “how to guide” for territorial authorities to successfully work with their local

communities to develop and undertake actions which help to protect and reinstate indigenous biodiversity, while also providing a catalyst to diversify local economic and social opportunities.

Improved coordination of the many people and organisations who have a role in biodiversity management is an important part of the pilot. The pilot project is due to end in June 2016 and will be used to inform a three year programme of local indigenous biodiversity strategies across the region.

Visit

www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/source2sea for more information.



Native fingers from Kaimais: This photo shows fingers of forest extending from the Kaimai range. Through this project, and the work of our region’s communities, we want to extend these fingers so they reconnect with other existing patches of native forest and along waterways.

Waikato Weedbusters Squad

The November project for Waikato Weedbusters was a Tuesday morning session at Te Puna a Kiwitahi. Weedbusters is a volunteer squad who hold monthly weeding sessions at worthy but weedy sites within an hour of Hamilton.

Te Puna a Kiwitahi is a QEII covenant site on a farm just north of the Kiwitahi hall on the Morrinsville-Walton Road. It is a deep, blind gully which contains a large spring-fed pond. The spring made it an important rest and refuge site for travellers in pre-European times. Now, because it is mostly out of the sight of people using the road, it appears to be just a patch of bush on the hillside.



Since the surrounding land was cleared and farmed, a variety of exotic and native trees have grown there. Some of the less desirable exotics have now been removed and close to a thousand young natives were planted this winter. These young trees were struggling in the grip of a variety of vigorous weeds. By late October the regular care group needed reinforcements. Enter the Weedbusters.

Fortunately almost all of the young plants had been marked with a red topped bamboo stake.

It is very satisfying burrowing down into rampant weeds, finding a smothered plant, tearing out the weeds so they can be placed as mulch and giving the young plant a fighting chance. Especially in a gully with rich soil, moisture and natural frost protection. Jobs like that are fun, even when they are energetic. Naturally the Weedbusters took time off for their customary tea break and naturally the conversation carried on as we headed back to work. The morning concluded with a short tour of points of special meaning within the gully. Weedbusters is an ideal activity for people who enjoy the

outdoors and the exercise, who like to work with an agreeable group of conservationists and who value the satisfaction of fighting the weed war. If you think that is you, contact Jan Simmons jsimmons@doc.govt.nz

Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society



Our Society has been busy on a number of fronts. Following this season's baiting on Mt Pirongia we achieved a zero rat index which was extremely pleasing. In late January a group went up to the summit with two DoC staff to monitor *Dactylanthus taylorii* flowering. There was only time to assess two areas where plants are known but plenty of flowers were found. However these were predominantly male. It was exciting to find a new clump near the Cone which suggests the populations up there are doing more than survive. Volunteers have also been working in the new bait station grid at Okahukura near Pureora to provide protection for the kokako population there. Volunteer support has been tremendous but new helpers are always welcome. For more info please contact: clare.stpierre@gmail.com.

Chris Annandale (DOC) and Tom Davies inspecting a caged *Dactylanthus taylorii* plant. Photo credit: Jacqui Bond (DOC).

Friends of Pukemokemoke- Conquering Convolvulus (Morning Glory)

Another scorcher for Pukemokemoke's working bee Saturday 30th of January. Foregoing any cooler options four intrepid "friends" dealt to convolvulus that was choking young kanuka and manuka trees. It is proving to be one of the worst plant pest weeds in the Reserve. Planted last winter at the far north-eastern end, once established this stand of kanuka and manuka will provide a nursery for future plantings of more tender native trees. Thanks Fred, Paul, Doug and Warwick who laboured over 2+ hours. The photos below show before and after shots of Doug releasing a kanuka. Julane Sutton.



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