



# Waikato Biodiversity Forum

Ngā Kaihāpai Rerenga Rauropi o Waikato

## Autumn Newsletter 2021 Number 69

**Kia ora tātou,**

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

- Edited, published and gathered articles for Spring edition of the Forum Newsletter
- Chaired and took minutes for Forum Focus group meetings
- Sent bio-forum emails, and updated website and facebook page
- Responded to 26 enquiries from email and 0800 bio div service
- Organisation of Biodiversity and Wellbeing Event

### **The Story of Karioi - Restoration of a seabird mountain.**

Karioi has unique native rainforest from sea level to montane flora, classified as an Outstanding Natural Feature and Landscape and an Ecosystem of National Importance. Numerous native bird species, tui, bellbird, kereru, grey warblers, tomtits, shining cuckoo, fantail, grey faced petrel, ruru, falcon, long tailed bats and bellbirds inhabit the mountain. But not without intervention and dedication from a community that has been battling possums, stoats, rats and ferrets that have impacted the flora and fauna heavily.

Te Whakaoranga O Karioi (The Karioi project), a partnership between A Rocha Aotearoa NZ, Te Whakaoranga O Karioi, DoC, members of the local hapu and the Whāingaroa community have been working with the Raglan community for over 10 years, restoring biodiversity on Karioi.

Te Whakaoranga O Karioi has a vision to restore Karioi to a Seabird Mountain, where both seabirds and forest birds thrive. New Zealand is the seabird capital of the world with 92 species of seabirds, many of which breed on predator-free islands. Yet, 90% of seabirds are at risk of extinction, making them the most threatened

birds in the world. Historically, numerous seabirds filled every habitat and niche on Karioi, from world-class surf beaches to the mountaintop, with the seabird's nutrient filled guano and burrowing behaviour fundamental to the diversity and function of this coastal forest ecosystem.

Now, less than 50 breeding pairs of grey faced petrel / ōi, classified as "declining", remain on the mainland site. Without ongoing multi-species predator control, this last species of seabird, a local taonga, could be lost from Karioi.

The Karioi Project is a model of a successful educational and ecological restoration project. In a decade, over 300 volunteers have provided more than 40,000 volunteer hours carrying out pest control in 2,500 ha of native coastal forest, checking and setting more than 2,000 traps and removing over 15,000 invasive predators.

Extensive predator control and seabird monitoring has resulted in the return of breeding ōi to the mountain, and also little blue penguin are now breeding in Raglan again. Ongoing predator control also protects vulnerable resident native forest species and allows for the

potential re-introduction of previously existing native wildlife like Kaka.

Environmental education plays a significant role in the project. 75 senior students from Raglan Area school have taken part in outside the classroom learning via the Manaaki Ao (Earthcare) programme, and four graduates from the programme are employed by the Karioi Project to undertake conservation and restoration on Karioi. Providing much needed employment to young adults and school leavers, in conservation and ecological restoration, has been one of the main inspirational drivers for the Karioi Project.

The Karioi project also runs the Backyard Hub programme which started due to demand from the community to control predators in their own backyards. The programme educates local residents on the impact of predators, shares the project's vision, and supplies people with education, advice, traps and training so they can contribute to the project - even if it is just by having a trap in their own backyard. To date,

265 local households are carrying out predator control on their own property – with an aim (that aligns with the NZ Government) for Raglan be predator free.

The project recently created a short film 'Karioi' presented by Patagonia, who have supported the Karioi Project as part of their 1% For the Planet environmental grants programme. Kristel van Houte – project manager says "We're excited to be sharing our story with the rest of the world as a way to highlight the urgent need for local community action to protect biodiversity. A third of the world's seabirds call New Zealand home, but their nesting habitats are under threat from introduced predators, overfishing and climate change. We hope our short film will encourage and inspire more people to do the same in their communities – giving nature a voice."

The film is currently screening on the Aotearoa Surf film tour and private screenings – and will be available online later this year. <https://www.karioiproject.co.nz/>



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## Piako Catchment Forum - The Seed Collectors Diary

February to April is an exciting and busy time for native eco-sourced seed collectors. It is a veritable smorgasbord out there. My small but merry band of seed collectors is focussed on the species that were once common in our local lowland forests but are now uncommon or rare.

The reason for this is so that local nurseries can have the opportunity to grow these species to plant back into restoration projects. Thus helping make our projects to be as representative as possible of the majestic lowland forests that once clothed this fertile valley.

Species that we collected in February were mataī, pokaka, aruhe (*Coprosma areolata*) hukihuki (Swamp coprosma or *Coprosma tenuicaulis*) and poataniwha (*Melicope simplex*). An interesting fruit that you can see on the forest floor at Te Miro Waterworks Rd Reserve at the moment is the kōhia or NZ native passionfruit. Sadly this is not tasty like the cultivated passionfruit. Kōhia is a climber and produces stunning tarzan like vines hanging from the canopy.

A species we were hoping to collect around now is the mighty rimu. Rimu are very hard to find seed on in the forest because the foliage where the fruit hides is very high and out of reach so the birds eat it all. We have found that 'paddock stranded' Rimu can be a great source of seed because their foliage is dense right down to grazing height. But the big challenge with collecting Rimu seed is that Rimu are a species that tend to fruit very heavily every few years with little fruit in the intervening years. This is called masting. Things were looking very promising a few weeks ago with lots of the tiny cones developing. However a recent progress check showed virtually none left. We don't know exactly what caused the cones to drop off prematurely. Fingers crossed for next year!

On a much brighter note, we made a surprising discovery beside the Waitoa River of a fruiting specimen of Rohutu (*Neomyrtus pedunculata*). This once common shrub is now rarely spotted in the Waikato. It is a member of the Myrtle family along with iconic indigenous plants like pōhutukawa, rātā, swamp maire, manuka, kanuka but also exotics like the eucalypts and the feijoa. With the arrival of the very damaging

myrtle rust all our native myrtles are now considered to be threatened.

We were lucky enough to find two other smaller specimens of Rohutu nearby and gathered fruit on three occasions over a couple of weeks as they ripened. The seeds have been sown and we must now wait to see if they germinate. If we are lucky enough to grow some plants we will prioritise establishing a small colony in our gully restoration so that we can more easily gather seed in future to be shared with local nurseries. This should greatly improve the chances of this species surviving in our region. - Our Seed Collector - Jude Tisdall

DoC resources are available at: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/run-a-project/restoration-advice/native-plant-restoration/>

Neomyrtus pedunculata photos care of [nzcpn.org.nz](http://nzcpn.org.nz)



*Kōhia fruit.*

## The Friends of Waiwhakareke - Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park Update

As volunteers we have been working at the Park since the first plantings back in 2004. So it was incredibly exciting to find near the lake, a

kahikatea covered in its multi-covered fruit and cabbage trees and swamp mairi beginning to flower. This is evidence that the Park and Nature



are taking over the regeneration process for us. Looking across to the earthworks shows a very different picture

We will continue to release plants so they do not suffocate under the summer grasses until the planting season starts with Arbor Day in early June.



So please join us:- Saturday 24th April and 29th May, 2021, 9am to noon. Meet Brymer Road opposite the Hamilton Zoo. Bring sturdy footwear, hat, raincoat and morning tea.

For more information: FriendsOfWaiwhakareke@gmail.com or [our Facebook](#). Catherine Smith for Tui 2000 Inc

## Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society Update

Only two decades ago, kōkako were at the very brink of extinction. The introduction of mammalian pest species to Aotearoa New Zealand saw numbers dwindle down to about 300 breeding pairs in the late 90's. Many other native species perished, and we got very close to saying goodbye to this beautiful taonga species forever.

Thankfully, a concerted effort across DoC, iwi, scientists, environmentalists and community groups rewrote the prognosis for kōkako. There are now around 2,000 breeding pairs nationally - a milestone celebrated in a special ceremony at Pureora Forest last March.

Pirongia Te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society has been part of this incredible mahi, looking after kōkako at two sites: Mt Pirongia and Okahukura Valley in Northern Pureora. And we couldn't be prouder of the efforts of all our amazing volunteers who have helped make this

happen. This season on Mt Pirongia alone we have had 20 chicks successfully fledge so far (all our fingers and toes are crossed for more!). This just goes to show that with dedication and hard work, anything can happen.



*Ecologists Dave Bryden and Amanda Rogers banding a kokako chick whose parents were also hatched on Mt Pirongia. Photo credit: Tom Davies*

We will be involved in an upcoming a titipounamu/rifleman translocation to Maungatautari, and a census of the Okahukura kōkako population. Our educational programme is also gaining momentum, with interest from a number of local schools. Most recently, our

volunteers Brian and Joanne hosted Berkley Normal Middle School from Hamilton on an excursion up on the maunga where the work of the Society was demonstrated. New volunteers are always welcome – please complete the form at <https://www.mtpirongia.org.nz/join-us>.

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## Owhango Alive – Predator Free 2050 Trap Giveaway

Owhango Alive are stoked to have been successful in their application to Predator Free 2050 for 15 AT220 traps, plus 10 more DOC 200 traps. These will be added to the 263 traps already operating in and around the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, many of which have been provided by DOC Tongariro. The DOC 200 is the type used in the boxes set up along the trails to catch stoats and rats. These traps are checked and emptied weekly by volunteers. “The beauty of the AT220’s, for us, is the fact that they don’t need to be checked so frequently, as each time the mechanism is triggered, it resets itself. These traps only need their bait refilled and their batteries checked a few times a year. We are very lucky to have them.” Explained Sally Lashmar, one of Owhango Alive’s hard working volunteer organisers.

“The support from Predator Free 2050 and DOC Tongariro has made such a difference to our endeavours to protect the flora and fauna of our area, with growing populations of forest birds in the bush and whio on our stretch of the Whakapapa River.” she said.

These new traps will be used to fill any gaps in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve and surrounding area, hopefully continuing to keep predator numbers as low as possible. For Owhango Alive, the goal is to keep the forest and its dwellers safe and vibrantly alive and the support from Predator Free 2050 and DOC greatly assists their programme.



A few of our volunteers with our new traps. From left to right: Lesley Aitken, Carol O'Donnell, Doreen Leahy, Heather Morrell, Sally Lashmar, David Johnston, Brenda Martin, Annemie Peeters, Rob Peeters, Merv Aitken.  
Photo by Marion Johnston

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## Landcare Trust – Volunteers Helping Volunteers

Nardene Berry, Waikato Regional Coordinator for the NZ Landcare Trust, put a request out recently via the Te Awamutu Courier for more help to clear the tracks around North and South lakes, Rotopiko, so the volunteer trappers who

check the traps there could keep going. Over spring and summer the weed growth was so vigorous, some of the traps got overgrown and couldn't be found, and the trappers could not get access to the traps as it was too hazardous.



Directly after the article in the paper (25th February 2021), Alice Downs from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints got in touch to offer a team of volunteers to assist in this work, which was gratefully accepted.

On Saturday 17th April, eight volunteers from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints came and assisted Nardene and Brian Gordon – one of the original volunteer trappers – who bought his scrub cutter to clear the long grass around South lake, and four other volunteers from Hamilton Fish and Game, who worked around North lake. Great progress was made on clearing the tracks, which will now enable the volunteer trappers to get back to finding, and then checking, clearing and rebaiting the traps again.

Nardene was extremely grateful to the volunteers for giving up their Saturday morning to help assist the great work that is already happening around South and North lake to protect the native birds from pest animals. If any other groups or businesses would like to undertake some community service for their local community, do get in touch and we can

make it happen. Nardene Berry, NZ Landcare Trust: [nardene.berry@landcare.org.nz](mailto:nardene.berry@landcare.org.nz)

More about the trapping work around Rotopiko lakes complex here:

<https://www.landcare.org.nz/current-project-item/rotopiko-community-pest-control-project>



*Volunteers from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Nardene after a good morning's weeding work. Photo credit: Susan Emmitt.*

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## Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Sanctuary - Godwit Project Update

March sees us back in that exciting time of year when our Arctic migrant birds take off on their journey North. We may have been thwarted (yet again) in catching Pacific Golden Plovers last week by a combination of Covid, earthquakes and tsunami warnings, but Phil Battley did succeed in getting satellite transmitters on two Red Knots.

On Monday 8th March we were delighted to see the first groups of godwits set off. We had gathered at the bird hides in the afternoon and waited patiently as the flock slept for an hour in the bay. Suddenly at about 4.30pm, fifty or so godwits started chattering and very quickly they were underway, heading north up the Firth of

Thames. They were buffeted by strong SW winds (as shown in map at left) but we watched them climb higher and higher until they were lost from sight.

The rest of the birds slept on, allowing us to read a few more flags until at around 5.30pm the whole lot were disturbed by something and took to the air. This was the cue for a further fifty birds to leave and head north, once again climbing as they headed up the Firth. And with that Northward Migration 2021 for Pūkorokoro Miranda was underway. On Tuesday evening there were three further departures, and one on Wednesday evening. All up nearly 400 godwits have been seen departing. There are, however,

still plenty of birds here and with weather looking favourable for the next few days we can expect more departures in the afternoons, so why not visit PM and watch godwits setting off on a nonstop flight that will last at least 7 days and take them to China, Korea or Japan.

Fly well godwits - with these winds they should, at least for the first 2,000km. I'll also be keeping you updated via our Facebook page as we follow our satellite tagged birds on their journey.

The first, 4RYRY is heading north and is well north of New Caledonia (see map at right). 4RYRY departed from Blueskin Bay near Dunedin on 6 March and by that evening was off the coast of Timaru. By 7am on 7 March it was off Cape Egmont. The track shows it crossing the South Island but the line just links two signals and it may have flown up the east coast and through Cook Strait.

4RYRY then continued north and flew off the east coast of New Caledonia. By 8pm on 9 March it was heading through the Solomon Islands, having flown at least 4,700km in 3.5 days. Adrian Riegen

