



Waikato Biodiversity Forum

Ngā Kaihāpai Rerenga Rauropi o Waikato

Annual Report from the Waikato Biodiversity Forum 2020/21

Introduction

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum has been operating for 16 years and has a current membership of approximately 450. The Forum's membership is comprised of research and management agencies, iwi groups, private landowners, community groups and individuals who work towards improving indigenous biodiversity in the Waikato region. The Forum believes that the combined synergies of people working together provide a valuable contribution to improving biodiversity across the region. The Forum speaks on behalf of biodiversity. However, it does not necessarily reflect the views of all Forum members on every biodiversity issue.

The Forum operates independently of its constituent organisations. It is run by a part-time coordinator who receives support and guidance from a Focus Group. The Forum's work includes:

- Engaging with agencies groups and individuals to network, share ideas and work together to protect and enhance biodiversity
- Acting as a referral agency for Waikato biodiversity information and contacts
- Organising forums to discuss biodiversity issues and focus on local projects
- Organising workshops for community and agencies on a variety of biodiversity topics and activities
- Disseminating relevant local and national biodiversity information and notices through the Forum's website, facebook, email and local media sources
- Providing support to community initiatives which protect and enhance biodiversity.
- Advocating for the development of sound policy to enhance biodiversity protection at national, regional and local levels

Acknowledgements

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum would like to acknowledge and thank the following organisations for their financial support: Waikato Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Waikato District Council, Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council and South Waikato District Council.

The Forum would also like to thank the Focus Group members for their support and contribution to the work of the coordinator's roles. Their advice and guidance provides a valuable contribution to the success of the Forum.

Finally, the Forum would like to thank the staff from Forum member organisations and community groups for their contribution and expertise during Forum events, workshops, and the on-going exchange of information with the public and other Forum members. This collective expertise makes the operation of the Forum a success and is valued by Forum members and the public.

Waikato Biodiversity Forum Events

Despite COVID19 lockdowns and restrictions, the 20/21 year was able to host two Forum events. The first of which took place on the 18th of November 2020, at Te Pahu Hall, Pirongia. The event was a collaboration between the Landcare Network Trust and the Biodiversity Forum. The first speaker was Sam Mcelwee, the Waikato Biodiversity Forum discussing the important role of flagship species play in ultimately leads to greater impact in the over-all restoration project.

Second to speak was dry-stock farmer Mark Brough who gave an overview of Predator Free programme and pest monitoring and management by rural communities in Aria, Maniopototo.

Next up was Clare St Pierre along with Te

Pahu School students who are leading the way with the next generation, with their programme with Pirongia and Te Pahu Schools to involve children in pest management on Pirongia Maunga.

After a break and networking session with Nardene Berry, Clare St Pierre revealed the inspiring plans for the Ecological Corridor across the Waipā District between Pirongia and Maungatautari Mountains. The plan is to extend on the ongoing restoration of the Mangapiko stream so there is a continuous predator free habitat corridor between the two mountains.

Finally Grant Blakie spoke about the details and potential of the 1billion trees campaign for rural communities. After lunch the attendees split of into groups and involved themselves in various restoration activities on Pirongia Mountain. The highlight of this for many was viewing of a Kokako nest, with the coming and going with food for the chicks. Quite a rare sight, which we all want to see more of.

The second event took on the 18th of June 2021 in Kirikirōa, Hamilton. The theme of the day was titled Biodiversity and Well-being. First to speak was Keri Thompson, Ngati Haua Mahi Trust. Her korero was titled Restoring Nature, Mana and Mauri. She detailed the trajectory of her people from the arrival to Aotearoa and all the way onto the arrival of Europeans and the implications colonialism had on Ngati Haua land and people. The mahi and kaupapa of Ngati Haua Mahi Trust today is very much a continuation of the strength and resilience shown by Haua Rangatira and ancestors to rise above immense challenges they faced. The Trust is working to restore the Mauri of land and thier people through being involved from the ground up in growing a number of restoration projects throughout the region. One of which – the Manga O Gully a few hundred meters form the venue for this event.

Next up was Keri Wallace of the University of Waikato. She discussed her innovative research on Ecological Restoration and Human Health. This is a fairly new area of research, but is intuitively obvious for many of us that being in Nature is healthy – and not having enough exposure to it will cause us to suffer. The research looked at more

social research as well as micro biology – which shows that being in healthy ecosystems helps improve gut biome, which is crucial for human well-being. Not only does walking in biodiverse areas give us visual beauty and our minds a break from modern inconveniences, it also boosts our immune systems and energy levels. This research has huge implications for potential funding for biodiversity, as it is beginning to scientifically connect ecosystem health and human health. The former being one of the biggest industries in the world at 665 billion dollars!

Keri Thompson, Ngati Haua Mahi Trust, Kiri Wallace, University of Waikato, Zeke Fiske, Hamilton City Council. The core aim of the strategy is to reach a 10% threshold indigenous biodiversity in Kirikirōa. The first stage of the project is to map out the areas which will be suitable to protect and restore. The primary zone will of course be Hamilton's gully system, which currently has a number of community lead projects operating. HCC will support these and fill in the gaps by further developing their nursery capacity and teams to undertake on the ground restoration. Parallel to this they will be developing a community engagement strategy to get community buy-in and encourage private landowners – especially those on gullies to restore nature on their own land.

After lunch, Greg Townsend of GT Fitness spoke about the value of operating his personal training in the bush. Greg does not only work on physical fitness but also the general well-being of his clients, which he says is hugely influenced by exposure to nature. He described the great difference in his clients when comparing to workouts in the outdoor environment, particularly in native bush as to that of a gym or urban setting. Greg has even combined fitness training with trap checking. He finished off by taking the audience through some breath exercises which where perfect to prepare us for the field trip to Manga o Gully.

George Lusty lead us on our guided tour through Manga O Gully. George started by discussing his methodology and approach to restoration following the "Bradley Method". Creating a hard edge to the restoration site and generally working with nature are a few key components. George also spoke about all the contributors to the

project including Ngati Haua Mahi trust and HCC who have done the path building and a lot of the heavy pest plant eradication, as well as planting. As we walked into the gully George pointed out particular areas of interest and finished up at the end of the walk way, which opened up to an expansive view of the gully, revealing the large area that is planned to be restored, as part of the Nature in the City project. The gully was stunning and this was a fantastic way to end the day and really reinforced to us the value of being in nature for our well-being.



Field Trip to Manga O Gully

Advice, Referral and Networking

The Forum network continues to provide a link for community group members and management agencies through dissemination of information and communication, with individual members to answer queries or refer them to other sources of information. A resource person register is maintained so that Forum members can be put in touch with the right person for advice and assistance. The Forum coordinator has a list of Forum members who can act as “Biodiversity Champions” on particular issues.

The Forum coordinator operated the 0800 BIODIV line and email service who meets the needs of inquiries or refers them to an appropriate person. 85 inquiries were responded to over 2020/21, mainly from Forum members, through the 0800 line and email. The inquiries continue to range from funding, weed and animal pest management,

details of community group projects, volunteering on projects and planting information.

The Forum coordinator organized, chaired, and took minutes for 6 Biodiversity Forum Focus Group meetings, and 2 Project Echo Meetings.

Community Group Database

The Forum's database and map of community group projects was maintained which continues to highlight the contribution that these groups make to biodiversity protection and enhancement across the region.

Support for Community/Agency initiatives and events

Including the many webinars attended, the Forum Coordinator also attended in person and supported the Bruce Clarkson Gully Restoration Workshop (27/10/20), Kirikiriroa Restoration Network (29/10/20), Landcare Networking Field Day (18/10/20), predator free workshop, Mystery Creek (11/02/21), Tohaehaehae Gully Restoration workshop (16/03/21), Bioheritage in-depth survey (14/04/21), Kirikiriroa Restoration Network (24/05/21.)

Media

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum connect to public primarily via direct email contact through Mailchimp to more than 450 subscribers. Also via the Forum [Facebook](#) page and website.

The Forum members received four newsletters (Summer, Spring, Winter and Autumn editions) containing updates, findings, and stories from biodiversity projects across the Waikato Rohe. [Click here to see all editions of the newsletters.](#)

17 Mailchimp emails were sent out over the 20/21 year to approximately 450 Waikato Biodiversity Forum Members to inform them of relevant biodiversity events, dates, notices and information. 27/11/20 & 04/16/21 Raglan Radio interview to discuss and promote Waikato biodiversity issues and events.

Summary

The Forum has continued to involve itself in advocacy, networking and advice to organisations and groups across the region. It has worked with other organisations and groups to support biodiversity work and provide opportunities to add value to the work of member organisations, groups and individuals. Sam, on behalf of the Forum, would like to acknowledge and commend the work that agencies, community groups and individuals carry out to improve biodiversity. They would also like to thank the Focus Group members for their support and contribution to the Forum's work.

Sam Mcelwee, Forum Coordinator

