



Te Puke Branch – February 2011 Newsletter

Indoor evening meetings



Monday 21 February. *Wild Rivers – movie evening*

Focusing on the threats to our wild rivers, including the West Coast's Mokihinui and Matakītiki.

7.30 p.m. at Masonic Lodge, Oxford Street, Te Puke.

Monday 14 March. *Keeping the whitebait running*

Guest speaker Peter Ellery on how whitebait habitat can be improved, and that rare delicacy conserved.

7.30 p.m. in the Aihe Room, Papamoa Library.

Monday 18 April. AGM plus *Rare Frogs*

John Heaphy, DOC biodiversity ranger, on native frogs, including Otawa forest's endangered Hochstetter's frog.

7.30 p.m. at Masonic Lodge, Oxford Street, Te Puke.

Treasurer required

Dorothy Mutton will be standing down as Treasurer at our April AGM. Being a treasurer is not an onerous job. It requires attending our committee meetings once a month, and the ability to draw in a deep breath through pursed lips when the more excitable members of the committee want to spend extravagant sums.

Do you think you or a friend might be up to the job?

Please contact Dorothy to find out more: 573 8152

Environmental film pick

Water Whisperers Tangaroa

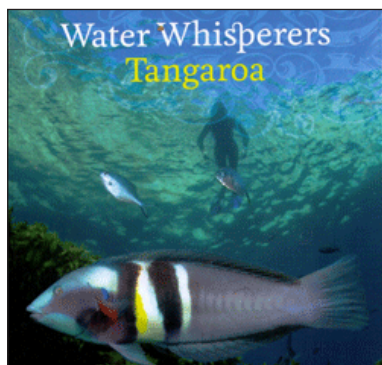
A documentary by Kathleen Gallagher

Playing: Rialto Cinema, 8pm Thursday 24th February

"In this beautifully photographed film ten stories of environmental redemption are told: from the Poor Knights Marine Reserve to the Hurunui and Rakaia Rivers.

I do recommend you see *Water Whisperers* during its brief stay in theatres."

– Dan Slevin



Wild Rivers – A Forest & Bird Campaign

Wild river (defn): a remote and freeflowing river surrounded by indigenous forests, shrub or tussock lands.

If you think hydro development is OK because it's not taking place on your favourite river, think again.

A report prepared for the Ministry of Economic Development identifies 65 hydro development "opportunities" around New Zealand that are likely to proceed in the next 20 years – chances are there's a threatened river near you.

We believe these rivers need to stay wild – raging in flood and murmuring in summer. Their pure waters sustain the rare native blue ducks, wrybills, eels and freshwater fish that live in them.

The banks of wild rivers are home to other wonderful creatures – native bats, weka, kereru, kiwi and powelliphanta snails.

Wild rivers are magnets for people, too – we love kayaking, rafting, fishing and swimming in them and walking alongside them. Overseas tourists spend millions of dollars every year to experience adventure activities on wild rivers.

Most New Zealand rivers have been dramatically altered for irrigation and hydro-electric power. Our remaining wild rivers need urgent protection from destruction by hydro-electric dams and farm irrigation. Even those on public conservation land are under threat. Below are some of the rivers that we are fighting to protect - help us in our fight.

Species threatened by the Mokihinui dam

The Blue Duck (whio) thrives in our fast-flowing rivers such as the Mokihinui. Damming the river will destroy their habitat, with the birds who live in the gorge perishing as a result.



Evolving millions of years ago, our threatened Powelliphanta giant land snails are largely confined to the North West of the South Island. A dam would flood all their lowland habitat.



Longfin eels can live to over 100 years old, and migrate downstream once in their life to reproduce at sea. Eels are on the decline throughout the country due to loss of habitat through dams.



Kaimai Mamaku Campaign

Bird count in Opuiaiki – and a close encounter...

Sunday 10 October.

I finally got into Opuiaiki to do the Kaimai Mamaku Bird Count, and spent 2 1/2 hours listening to the birds in a number of different locations. It is one of New Zealand's special areas. What surprised me most was how QUIET it was! I had just spent the previous 2 weekends up Mt Otawa in Te Puke doing the same thing, and found there were loads of birds there this year!

As I walked into Opuiaiki we saw the characteristic rooting of wild pigs, something we don't see at home.

We walked the loop track from the Whio track and when we met the road again coming out, just above the waterfall, I left the others to go back and fetch the car by myself. Lo and behold, I saw some large piggy sized prints, and then just off to my left I hear this crashing... Coming in a bee-line through the bush is this fat little black piggy: reckon he was at least 80 kilos, and on a charge. Holy cow! I made a bit of a loud noise myself, then piggy let out this enormous scream and my soul went straight to heaven I think. Next thing, friend piggy had done this 180 turn just 2 metres away from me, and was tearing away, just as fast as he was coming before.

Quite invigorating, but I must say I have actually never seen a pig in a forest in all my years before. And I was fairly gutted to think it was THERE. It burst my bubble a bit about my Opuiaiki illusion.

Cathy Reid

Recent Rambles

In Sky and Stream – Ottawa night life

Friday 26 November.

A lovely evening with a small turnout saw us head for the hills at Ottawa Lodge. We had a short lesson from Peter, of Tauranga Forest and Bird, who had borrowed four 'batboxes' to use to try and locate any bats in the vicinity. The batboxes are a small hand-held ultrasonic detector with an adjustable frequency knob.

Apparently our 2 species of native bat have a different sonar frequency for use in flying and hunting in the dark. These bat calls are all above the limits of human hearing.

A decision was made to trek to the old town water reservoir because bats are known to hunt flying insects over water. Unfortunately no bats were located but several eels were spotted in the dam waters.

On the way back we stopped at 4 water crossings (the Raparapahoe stream) and here we struck gold. There were plenty of sightings of our native fish species, which were common bully, redfinned bully, inunga, banded kokopu, fresh water shrimp, koura and eel.

We were lucky to get up close and examine banded kokopu and one in particular was very obliging. We were able to examine the sparkling gold highlights on its skin from which early scientists gave it's family name, Galaxis, as the unique



Short-tailed bat drinking flax flower nectar

colour highlights reminded them of the stars in the galaxy.

It was a rewarding experience for all who attended and I myself was pleased to see the biggest banded kokopu I have ever seen .

Red Charles

More about bats...

Habitat

Both species of New Zealand bat are found in native forests from sea level to the treeline. Their natural habitat is mature forest with many large hollow trees. These trees are used as roosting sites by the bats, either singly or in colonies of up to 100 individuals. Long-tailed bats also roost in caves at times, and some colonies have become established in mature pine (*Pinus radiata*) forests.

Human impact

Lesser short-tailed bats and long-tailed bats were once numerous and widespread in forested regions. The most conservative estimate for the pre-human population of lesser short-tailed bats in the central North Island is 12.5 million.

Human settlement had a drastic effect on the number of bats. Causes for their decline include:

- loss of habitats through logging of lowland forests
- introduction of new predators
- competition for roost sites from introduced mammals, birds and wasps

Rats, stoats and cats are key predators, particularly during winter when roosting bats are immobilised by torpor for long periods. The short-tailed bat's ground-feeding habit also makes it an easy target.

Distribution

By 2005, short-tailed bats (shown in red on map) were restricted to 13 populations:

- two large ones on Little Barrier Island and Codfish Island
- seven in the central North Island, with about 40,000 bats
- four small, isolated populations (two in the North Island, two in the South Island).

Long-tailed bats (shown in black on map) are found in scattered populations, from the north of the North Island through to the western South Island and south to Halfmoon Bay on Stewart Island. They are also found on Great Barrier, Little Barrier and Kapiti islands. They survived in some cities until the 1920s and 1930s.

Conservation status

Although both species are under threat, the lesser short-tailed bat is ecologically more precious as it is the only remaining species within its family.



Local bat populations

Very little is known about the status of bats in the Bay of Plenty, as no comprehensive surveys have been taken. Are there bats in Otawa and Otanewainuku? We just don't know.

Te Puke Forest & Bird would like to survey our local forests, but we will need to purchase ultrasonic bat detectors to do so. Would you or friends be willing to help fund their purchase?

An example of a detector we might use is the *Batbox Baton Bat Detector*, and would cost \$155 to import from England. This model of Batbox is suitable for a remote monitoring system, with the bat detector located in the forest for a week at a time to record any bats flying by.

If you would like to get involved with a local bat monitoring project please contact:

Neale Blaymires 5734157 neale@orcon.net.nz

Otanewainuku

Kokako nesting in Otanewainuku forest

The ten kokako released into Otanewainuku have settled down well, and already two pairs have nested. One pair nested in the top of a tree fern and the second pair made their nest in a tawa tree under thick cover.



'Sound anchoring' was used to keep the kokako within close range of their release sites, as they are a social species and need to hear other kokako singing their familiar dialect to settle in a new site. Kokako song recorded in their original home forest was then played on loudspeakers to make them feel at home in Otanewainuku. It worked extremely well and there have only been a few excursions out of zone.

Each bird was fitted with a transmitter on release, making it easy to follow them and find their nests in remote corners of the forest. Ten kokako were released and all but one are still being tracked, with one or two moving along the forested ridge towards Otawa forest.

Visitors to the forest have reported hearing the haunting call of the kokako. Hopefully this month will see the first kokako chick hatch in Otanewainuku since early 1980s.

Many thanks to the 54 volunteers, including those from Te Puke Forest & Bird, who have helped with the capture and release of these precious birds.

Female kokako build strong nests. They form a base structure of twigs, then weave a deep cup using long fibrous material and vine stems. The cup is then lined with soft material such as moss or rotten wood. The North Island kokako female lays two or three pale pink eggs with dark mauve blotches. She incubates them while the male brings her food.



A typical kokako nest



Here are the latest walks and activities for KCC kids. Due to the popularity of these walks you must book beforehand, and KCC members will be given preference over non-members. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Sunday 20th February

Nature Detective Hunt in Maungatautari

Come with Trust Educator Gemma Green on a detective hunt for signs of ecological recovery in Waikato's predator-free sanctuary. We'll look for rare birds, insects and some inspiring plants, and climb up a tower through the forest layers to see the lush canopy close-up.

Meet: 10am at the Gates of the sanctuary. Take Arapuni Road to Pukeatua and then Tari Road to the Gates. Allow 1 ½ hour travel from Tauranga.

Bring: Notebook, lunch, warm outdoor clothing, raincoat and a change of shoes. Camera! Important: Toilets are limited so go before you leave.

Cost: \$5 per person to be paid in cash at the gate.

Contact: Brigit Manning 576 3173 numbers limited

Sunday 6th March

Seaweek Wildlife Study at Kaituna Cut

Join entomologist Peter Maddison during Seaweek and share in his broad knowledge in all fields of biology. We will study wildlife in the sand-dunes on the spit leading from the Kaituna Cut entrance.

Meet: 10am. Take the first left after the Big Kiwi Friut at Kiwi 360, drive over the railway line and park on the side of the road next to the railway line to go in convoy.

Bring: Snacks, water, sun hats and rain coats, optional: binoculars and magnifying glasses.

Contact: Cathy Reid 573 9566

Saturday 2nd April

Adventures at Roydon Downs Farm

If your children enjoy exploring the native forest beside crystal clear streams, through farmland where highland cows roam, swinging on huge ropes under magnificent trees, playing on confidence courses, shooting down water slides, feeding the chickens, ducks and pigs – then this is a great event for your family! There is also the option to camp the night in your own tent, and cook on the open fire beneath the stars while the kids toast their marshmallows before glow-worm hunting!

Meet: 2pm at Redwood Log Cabin at Roydon Downs Farm on 814 Allport Road off SH33, 7km from Paengaroa. Allow 45 minutes drive from Tauranga city.

Bring: Good walking shoes, snacks and water, sun hat. Overnight gear if staying the night.

Cost: Free, but there may be a small charge if you wish to camp overnight. Booking by 31 March is essential.

Contact: Kate Ackers 573 6322 or kate@sacredcho.com

Saturday 7th May

Mauao at Night

Study Petrels at night with local expert, Paul Cumings. Trip lasts about 2 hours.

Meet: 6pm promptly outside the Mount Maunganui Surf Club.

Contact: Sharyn Heans 542 1789



Monthly Walks

You don't have to be a Forest & Bird member to join in on our walks – or super-fit either. We walk at *botanical speed*, so there's plenty of time to take in the sights and to puzzle over the correct botanical name for that fascinating fern...

Unless otherwise advised, meet 8.45am at Boucher Avenue car park near Countdown to share transport. Please book with the contact person – who will notify if the trip is cancelled.

Car fees are the suggested payment per passenger to the driver (if you are car pooling).



26 February to 6 March. SEAWEEK 2011

Featuring *Water Whisperers Tangaroa* at Rialto Cinema, 8pm, Thursday 24th February. Watch your local newspaper for other events or visit www.seaweek.org.nz

Sunday 27 February. Aongatete Falls

Walking a short loop of 2kms, then 20 minutes walk for a swim at the Falls. Time & grade: 3 hours. Easy.

Carole Long 542 0224 / 027 274 7642 Car \$12

Saturday 19 March. Kaituna Wetlands

A walk around the wetland's reconstructed borrow pits which have improved whitebait spawning habitat.

Time & grade: 3 hours. Easy.

Bev Nairn 533 4247 / 027 293 7985 Car \$5

Sunday 17 April. Violet Bonnington Reserve

Gentle climb on the flank of Mt Ngongotaha. Great bush with some large old rata trees. 4 hours. Easy.

Dorothy Mutton 573 8152 Car pool \$12

Saturday 21 May. Mystery Trip

Where to? Can't say...

Bev Nairn 533 4247 / 027 293 7985 Car \$5

Saturday 18 June. Mokoia Island

An excellent day out at this beautiful reserve in the middle of Lake Rotoru – with birdlife galore, including saddlebacks, kokako, ruru. Bring togs for the relaxable hot pool. Boat & landing fee to be advised. 4 hours. Moderate.

Red Charles 573 8151 / 022 071 9129 Car \$12

Saturday 17 July. Karangahake Gorge

Windows walk and historic Pumphouse. A scenic walk amongst gold mining relics by the river. Bring a torch for subterranean adventures. 3 hours. Easy.

Carole Long 542 0224 / 027 274 7642 Car \$15

Saturday 20 August. Wingspan

Visit to Wingspan aviary and raptor rehabilitation centre at Paradise Valley, Rotorua. Group discount entry fee may apply: to be advised. Suitable for all ages. Visitor centre has hot drinks available. 3 hours.

Joyce Bates 542 2989 Car \$12

Sunday 18 September. Te Aroha

Steepish climb up the mountain for panoramic views of the Waikato, Hauraki and Coromandel. Hot swim at the end to recoup for the drive home. 5 hours. Moderate to hard.

Cathy Reid 573 9566 / 027 223 4991 Car \$15

11 to 18 September. CONSERVATION WEEK 2010

Watch your newspapers for events.

Friday to Sunday, 28 to 30 October. Whirinaki Camp

A weekend at the Whirinaki Recreation Camp. Day trips around this majestic forest, and hopefully seeing whio (native Blue duck) in the fast flowing streams.

Hut fee to be advised. Time & grades: various.

Travel arrangements to be advised.

Carole Long 542 0224 / 027 274 7642 Car \$25

Friday 4 November. Street Stall

Annual bonanza sale of trees, seedlings, books, baking & raffles. All day from 8am to 4pm outside the Te Puke Post Office. All contributions for stall are welcome.

Te Puke: Dorothy Mutton 573 8152

Papamoa: Juanita Smith 542 2504

Sunday 20 November. Homunga Bay – Orokawa Bay

Lovely walk along beach and cliff tops, amongst huge pohutukawas beginning to flower. One way walk with car shuttle at end. 3 hours. Easy to moderate.

Bev Nairn 533 4247 / 027 293 7985 Car \$15

Your Forest & Bird Committee

Position	Name	Address	Email	Phone	Mobile
Patron & Treasurer	Dorothy Mutton	3 Strathaven Way, Te Puke 3119	dotmutton@clear.net.nz	07 573 8152	
Chair & KCC Coord.	Cathy Reid	139 Alley Road, RD3, Te Puke 3183	cathyreid@orcon.net.nz	07 573 9566	027 223 4991
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Branch Committee:	Joyce Bates	51.A Topaz Drive, Papamoa 3118		07 542 2989	
	Alasdair Munro	636.b No.1 Road, RD2, Te Puke 3182	damunro@eol.co.nz	07 573 9212	
	John Singleton	110 Jellicoe Street, Te Puke 3119		07 5739 730	027 711 2442
	Carole Long	20 Simpson Road, Papamoa 3118	carolelong@xtra.co.nz	07 542 0224	027 274 7642
	Red Charles	114 No.1 Road, Te Puke 3182	bayroadster@clear.net.nz	07 573 8151	