



Forest & Bird

GIVING NATURE A VOICE

AGM

Thursday 5th May @ 7.30pm

Bureta Church Hall

Speaker TBA

All Welcome

Tauranga Branch Newsletter

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If you are interested, or want to nominate someone (or be nominated) for the local branch committee phone

Pam on 07 571 4222 or

David on 07 571 0974

Or email at

tauranga.branch@forestandbird.org.nz

North Island Branches' Conference (12/14th November)

Seven members from the Tauranga Branch attended the conference held at Whakapapa Village (National Park) in November and three of us travelled with Al Fleming in the very smooth and comfortable Honda hybrid vehicle that Honda have so generously supplied to Forest & Bird. Most of us were housed in the splendid new Ruapehu Lodge, double glazed and electrically heated (no more stoking the old wood burner as formerly).

It's also equipped with a **very loud** fire alarm system which we discovered at 7 am on the Saturday morning. "*LEAVE THIS BUILDING IMMEDIATELY!*" – in spite of our state of sleepiness! State of dress! Or being caught under the shower! Ten minutes standing out in the cold (Whakapapa not Tauranga!) and then the "all clear" sounded. Someone had **burnt the toast!** (We won't say who!).

Other excitements of the weekend included hearing kiwi in the evenings in the surrounding

forest; sighting a family of blue ducks (Whio) in the stream near the lodge; seeing riflemen and a sleeping morepork (broad daylight) on one of our walks and Ann Graeme's finding of intriguing "vegetable caterpillars" (forest ghost moth caterpillar) that have been attacked (parasitised) by fungi.

The nostalgic Chateau Tongariro was the venue for some meals (ground floor restaurant) with the vista of Ngaruahoe filling the landscape windows. Informative seminars, lectures, and workshops on current F & B interest topics made for a most valuable and enjoyable weekend among the 60 plus North Island members, National F & B executive and staff members.

A summer visit to Tawharanui Regional Park: Auckland Super City



While on holiday this summer I chanced upon the Tawharanui Regional Park which is just north of Auckland, 15 minutes from Matakana, at the end of a gravel road. This park has an interesting history that reflects how the masses from Auckland and the conservation estate can be combined for the benefit of all. Situated at the furthestmost point of the Tawharanui Peninsula, this 588 hectare park was the first integrated open sanctuary in the country. In essence a mainland island where farming, public recreation, and conservation of native species come together. The peninsula was chosen for the sanctuary because of its shape, the narrow finger of land meant that only a single pest control fence was required, with the ocean providing the other barrier to invaders.

The formation of the sanctuary arose mainly through the efforts of the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society (TOSSI) and Auckland Regional Council (ARC) who initially assisted with pest control issues.

TOSSI was created to help the open sanctuary become a reality through fundraising and volunteer work. Two major campaigns were organised to raise funds. One; 'Art in the Woolshed' exhibited paintings, sculptures, and ceramics by local artists and the other encouraged people to buy a meter of the fence.

Once sufficient funds had been raised, construction began on the 2.5 km fence which was completed in 2004. Each end of the fence is protected by the ocean plus a special spiral design which draws in predators moving along outside the fence. Before the sanctuary could improve its numbers of native species, a predator force of; feral cats, possums, rats, mustelids, and hedgehogs had to be eradicated. The Auckland Regional Council (ARC) planned an aerial bombardment of the peninsula with brodifacoum. This plan was met with strong opposition from various groups but eventually the bait drops proceeded and were deemed very successful. The ARC calculated without the bait drops they would have required 57,000 trap stations. Ongoing ground based techniques have continued. Despite the best efforts some rabbits, hedgehogs, and mice remain

Today the sanctuary is predominately grazed pasture with manuka scattered throughout. There are patches of coastal forest in isolated gullies with regenerating coastal forest on the cliff edges. Long term plans envisage 2/3 of the park will be re-established through natural regeneration and re-vegetation. Since it has been pest

free, Tawharanui has witnessed, the return to breed, or re-introduction of 10 species, including, kiwi, pateke, robins, kaka and whiteheads. In all 16 species of native land birds and 15 species of native coastal birds are recorded in the park and its surroundings. As the sun comes up the area is alive with bird song.

One sunny summer afternoon following the recommendation of friends we drove to Tawharanui in search of a great swimming beach and a chance to see the bird life. After negotiating a rather narrow gravel road with glorious views of secluded bays and Kawau Island we arrived at the borders of Tawharanui Regional Park. A rather impressive automatic gate with a predator-proof design regulated the entry of cars into the park. Signs suggested you bring no animals with you. Hopefully everyone heeded these warnings. We assumed that we were going to an isolated beach in the middle of a regional park, so expected there would be few people around. The first indication that the beach, and hence park may be more populated than we thought, were the extensive, and very full car parks complete with parking wardens.

A rather long walk to the beach, past parked cars, revealed where all the occupants had gone. Numerous family groups picnicked under trees while the beach seemed very crowded, like the Mount at the weekend. Below is a picture I took of the main part of the beach. All and sundry are enjoying a day at the beach in a

conservation estate. For those who want to stay longer there is a very popular camping ground tucked behind the dunes.



Hot day at Tawharanui

It was great to experience the environs of the park but unfortunately the numerous bird life was not apparent in the afternoon heat. This park is unique as it demonstrates that farming, conservation and recreation can co exist. It is reported that about 160,000 visitors come to the park each year. In the long term it is envisaged the area will be nearly all covered in native forest and well populated by our rather unique native birds. Hopefully through effective management people will continue to be able to come to this area and experience this special conservation estate.

By Pam Foster, Tauranga Forest & Bird

Observing our rarest terns



Forest & Bird is looking for volunteers to work as field assistants to help study the fairy tern this summer, with the aim of gathering information to help secure the future of our most endangered bird. Forest & Bird's Karen Baird is coordinating research over the summer into the feeding habits of birds during the breeding season and to track the non-breeding birds. Out of the 43 known birds, there are eight to 10 breeding pairs. The four known breeding sites are all north of Auckland at Mangawhai, Waipu, Pakiri and at Papakanui on the Kaipara Harbour.

The study into the feeding habits of the birds will be done at Mangawhai, where about a quarter of the birds are known to breed. The study will try to find what the breeding birds are feeding on and where they go to forage. The other part of the study will look at the non-breeding birds, some of which are suspected to be in the Kaipara area. "We want to know what the other birds are doing during the breeding season and where they go," Karen said.

The information will be used to try to determine what is needed in the birds' habitat and how to enhance potential breeding sites. The decline of the fairy tern is due to the usual culprits of introduced predators and habitat loss, with human

interference also playing a role in their decline.

Fairy terns used to be reasonably widespread but they are very sensitive to human disturbance and the effects of uncontrolled dogs, and vehicles on beaches, which can destroy nests, chicks and eggs.

Karen says coastal development, and other changes such as proposals to clear mangroves from Mangawhai, continue to threaten the seabirds with extinction.

"What we are hoping, is that we can identify a number of sites which are in the current range of the fairy tern that they can move to. If we can identify new recovery sites, we can make them safer for fairy terns to move to."

Photo: Department of Conservation

Don Merton receives Old Blue



Conservation hero Don Merton has been honoured with an extraordinary Old Blue, the prestigious Forest & Bird award named after the black robin at the centre of a programme led by Don to save the species.

Don was presented with the special award at a function last month organised by the South Waikato branch to honour some of the region's longest serving members. Don has been a pioneer in the management of New Zealand's endangered birds. He led the black robin programme for over a decade, played a key role in saving the saddle back, and was a member of the Kakapo Recovery Group.

"While Don's conservation work is well recognised, what is also appreciated is the huge personal contribution he has made in supporting and promoting conservation around the country," the award citation said. "He has always been willing to give his time to support conservation organisations, education groups and their projects and to promote the importance of protecting New Zealand's indigenous flora and fauna."

By 1980 only five black robins remained, making it the world's rarest bird. Only one – Old Blue – was a fertile female.

The New Zealand Wildlife Service had transferred the birds to Mangere Island, which had been purchased by the government with the help of Forest & Bird, from nearby Little Mangere Island in the Chatham Islands. Since the black robin is a slow breeder, attention was focused on a cross fostering programme devised by Don using Chatham Island warblers and tits. Manipulation of eggs and chicks encouraged the robins to produce more than one clutch each season.

By the end of the 1984/85 breeding season the number of robins had increased to 38 and an additional population had been established on South East Island. Today there are around 200 birds.

Old Blue produced the entire first generation of robins to be born on Mangere Island. Although Old Blue is now dead, her offspring are prospering. She was the mother of six offspring and grandmother to 11. By 1984 there were about 70 black robins and today there are around 200 birds.

Don was presented the award at the F&B "Legends" function at the Putaruru Club on November 24, which also celebrated some of the local senior members and their achievements. More than 70 people attended the event, including F&B President Barry Wards and four Distinguished Life Members in Stewart Gray, Gordon

Stephenson, Philip Hart and Peter Maddison

TAURANGA BRANCH WALKS PROGRAMME

Tauranga Forest & Bird – Saturday Walks - (second Saturday each month)

Unless otherwise specified, all trips meet at 8.15am at the 12th Ave/Cameron Rd corner. Bring stout walking shoes or preferably boots, lunch, drinks, personal medication, warm clothing and wet weather gear. The dollar amount shows the recommended donation to car drivers' transport costs. Phone the leader beforehand for information, changes, or weather cancellations.

Date	Location	Description of Walk	Difficulty/ Car Donation
March 12 th	Karangahake	Places of interest Leader: Eddie 576 1849	Moderate/\$12
April 9 th	Lindermann Rd Pack Track	Kauri Dam remnants; water fall Leader: Fiona 576 7013	Moderate /Hard \$ 8
May 14 th	Cambridge Town Walks	Koutu Lake Park; River side walk Leader: Carole & Ron 576 5698	Easy / \$17
June 11 th	Okataina East	Lake Okataina lake-shore; Maori Pa site. Leader: Eddie 576 1849	Moderate / \$15
July 9 th	Whakatane	Township to Ohope (Kohi walk) – plus hot swim at Awakeri – bring togs Leader: Fiona 576 7013/ Eddie 576 1849	Moderate / \$17 (Swim \$8)

Thursday walks – (First & Third Thursdays each month)

Meet at 9.15am beside the Bethlehem Countdown Building opposite the Bethlehem hall or Countdown Cameron Road as specified (other meeting places via contact with leader). Usually returning by 3 pm. Bring: as for Saturday walks above. Phone leader for changes etc.

Feb 17 th	Te Puna Foreshore	Local harbour foreshore <u>Meet Bethlehem</u> Leader: Rex & Jacqui Ake 552 5692	Easy / Nil
March 3 rd	Tuahu Track	Kauri trees, view to the Waikato <u>Meet Bethlehem</u> Leader: Janet Davis 544 4362	Moderate/ \$6
March 17 th	Thompson's Track	From Matamata side; to Killarney Lakes <u>Meet Cameron Road</u> Leader: Eddie 576 1849	Moderate / \$12
April 7 th	Te Waihou River walk	From White's Road Putaruru (Clear water stream up to "Blue Spring"- see the trout!) Leader: Dorothy 576 2726 <u>Meet Cameron Road</u>	Moderate / \$12
April 21 st	Yatton Park	Explore Tracks to Esk St & Fraser St. <u>Meet Cameron Road</u> Leader: Doug & Eris 579 3620	Easy / Nil
May 5 th	Roydon Downs	Holiday Park - stream-side; bush and field walks. <u>Meet Cameron Road</u> Leader: Cheryl 576 2689	Moderate / \$ 8
May 19 th	Blue Lake / Lake Okareka	Bush fringed lakes; bird life. <u>Meet Cameron Road</u> Leader: Carole & Ron 576 5698	Moderate / \$15
June 2 nd	Omokoroa	From golf course to Gerald Crapp Reserve. <u>Meet Bethlehem</u> Leader: Enid 575 6146	Easy / \$6
June 16 th	Otanewainuku mountain & Rimu Walk	Local area high-point (views to Rororua); mature rimu forest. Leader: Beverley Sinclair 578 2879 <u>Meet Cameron Road</u>	Moderate/ \$6
July 7 th	Kopurererua Walkway South	From Historic (Compass) Village. <u>Meet Cameron Road or at Village</u> Leader: David & Bethley Moorhouse 544 0743	Easy / Nil

Guidelines for safe walking on Forest and Bird Trips:

- We are a conservation focused group rather than trampers. We stop frequently to observe.
 - Walking groups need to keep together. Walkers who cannot keep within sight and sound of the leader need to make special provision for their own safety. Do not drop behind or go ahead by yourself. (Notify leader of essential stops.)
 - Slow walkers need to arrange beforehand to have a companion who is fit, capable and independent and carries a cell phone, whistle and first aid kit.
 - All walkers should have in their pack a whistle and personal medication. Take careful heed of the “difficulty” described in the walks programme.
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We still have a few calendars and diaries available for sale at reduced cost.

Diaries: \$18.00 and Calendars: \$10.00

If you would like to purchase either of these items please contact

Gary on 07 5766 750 or email gware@enternet.co.nz