



# Forest & Bird

## GIVING NATURE A VOICE

### Horowhenua Branch November 2011 Newsletter



**President: Debbie Waldin Phone 06 368 3337**

**Secretary: Belinda McLean Phone 06 364 5573**

#### **WALLY HANSEN**

##### **One of our most senior members.**

Wally was born in Hull, UK in 1916 and left school at 14, during the depression. Until the war, he worked and learnt his trade as a painter and decorator, eventually teaching sign writing at night school.

He explored the English countryside far and wide on his bike, by far the most popular mode of transport in those days.

Although it took seven years of his life, Wally says he had a good war. "I went to lots of places and did everything from being a policeman to a pilot, flying Wellington bombers in the coastal command."

Not wanting to go back to his old job, he came to NZ in 1949 and met his wife Linda here. He decided to train as a teacher and joined the one year condensed course at Wellington Training College. His first job was at a two-teacher country school near Pahiatua, where he loved the country life so stayed for 11 years. At this time he joined Forest and Bird as he had a keen interest in nature and in particular wanted the magazine for his classes.

Wally became more involved in F&B when he moved to Levin. He was President for a short time, secretary and committee member. He remembers in the past meetings were in Mill Rd church hall in Otaki and at the Vintage Car Club rooms at Ohau.

Wally says monthly meetings were well attended, but far more people went on trips, often with young families, and car-pooled, just as we do today. The trips, with Linda and their three boys, were often further afield--to Whitecliffs, the F&B lodge at Ruapehu, and to a gathering at Wairoa, where they stayed at the racecourse.



Judith Hunt remembers the Whitecliffs trip well. They walked around the coast, misjudged the tide and were drenched by a high wave. One of the party twisted her ankle and had to be helped along the way. Wally, as always, was at the forefront with patience, help and encouragement.

Many of us remember a more recent trip to Mana Island when we all walked up the long slope to plant trees (and found a giant weta in the grass). Wally, in his 90<sup>th</sup> year, made a big impression and was featured in the local paper.

At the age of 95, Wally still attends our monthly branch meetings, takes a keen interest in the items discussed and continues to help out. He also walks daily, attends weekly art lessons, keeps a small vegetable garden and sometimes even brings his surplus produce along for our sale table. *Margarette*

## RUAPEHU TRIP 5/6/7<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER

Sixteen F&Bers met in Levin, travelled to Taihape, had morning tea there then travelled along the Desert Road to Kaimanawa Rd to view the Pillars of Hercules. We explored, found a sunny spot beside the swing bridge for lunch and after much searching eventually found the pillars. It was then onto the trout hatchery



White mistletoe flowers  
Photo: Geoff Monk

to see the huge trout from the viewing platform and Dorothy, the boss trout, keeping them all in order. Then back to Highway 46, past Lake Rotoaira, along to Bruce Rd and up the mountain to our new magnificent lodge. After settling in we had a shared meal and retired for the night.

The next day we awoke to SNOW around the lodge, covering the cars, the decks and all the vegetation. What an exciting sight and our photographers had a great time. As it was raining we decided to go down to Lake Rotopounamu and follow the well graded easy track right around the lake.

It was still raining there at times but it didn't deter us as we were really enjoying listening to the bird life, and spotting native trees and shrubs along the track, especially the many giant Rimu. The party returned to the cosy lodge for lunch and spent most of the afternoon identifying the many plant specimens using the newly published native tree book. Dinner that night was at the Chateau just down the road.



The Group at Lake Rotopounamu  
Photo: Mavis Hirini



Overlander going over the new Hapuawhenua viaduct  
Photo: Roy Simons



Checking the plants collected at Lake Rotopounamu  
Photo: Roy Simons

On Monday we awoke to a beautiful, sunny morning, so after cleaning up we went up the now open Bruce Rd to view the many lodges, ski facilities and to look at those fascinating tiny alpine plants covering the jagged rocks.

Our party then continued on to Ohakune, stocked up on food and went to the beginning of the Hapuawhenua viaduct track. It follows an old coach road through open fields to an old tunnel, then through a bush section before going under the new viaduct and further onto the old disused one. Our party walked across this one, had lunch at the big table and much to our delight 3 trains went across the new viaduct.

A really enjoyable few days spent with like minded people and we won't forget Sebastian. Many thanks to Lena for her detailed planning. We missed you on the trip.

*Margarette*

## NEW LAKE PAPAITONGA PROJECT

The Department of Conservation has recently purchased a block of land on the northwest side of Lake Papaitonga (Waiwiri) and is looking for community assistance to re-vegetate the area. I recently attended a meeting of organisations interested in taking part in this and registered Forest & Bird's interest. DOC's principal reason for purchasing this land is to raise the level of Lake Papaitonga as in the last 10 years it has reduced in size by almost one half.

The project will involve several local iwi, residents by the lake, Forest & Bird and possibly the Historic

Places Trust. Monitoring, seed collection, growing plants from the seed collected, planting and weeding, etc, will be the sort of activity we would be asked to do. This is a great project for Levin Forest & Birders to be part of, and we will be looking for volunteers to be part of the action.

It fits alongside our monitoring of the birds at Te Hakari Wetland and the coastal planning Lake Papaitonga is one of 'jewels in the crown' of Horowhenua, a really lovely wetland almost surrounded with mature native forest. It is a great place to take visitors to the district for a short walk in the bush.

If you are interesting in being part of this exciting project, please contact Joan Leckie on 368 1277.

## INSPIRED BY THE COAST

Last month some of us were lucky enough to hear ideas for a fresh and exciting vision for the Kapiti/Horowhenua coastal area stretching from the Waitohu Stream north towards Levin.

The presentation, by 4<sup>th</sup> year landscape architectural students from Victoria University, was at Tukurohe Marae, Ohau. The organizer, Huhana Smith, invited us along because of our monthly bird monitoring at Te Hakari Wetland and Kuku Beach. We are doing this to help the iwi gauge the success of their efforts to restore the wetland.

We were surprised and delighted by the creativity and vision of the students' work, which they clarified with excellent photographs, plans, charts and illustrations. There's no room here to do justice to the nine different concepts, but to give you a sample:

- Bradley wants to reconnect the Ohau River Loop and create a place where people can use and understand the river.
- Another project looked at the lower Ohau and proposed biodegradable seed bags with a mix of soil and appropriate seeds for different areas.

- Mavis is looking at restoring the Te Hakari Wetland and surrounding area as an eel habitat.
- David's vision was for a restored Lake Wairongomai, with an emphasis on harakeke (flax) planting and harakeke products used in the restoration.
- James introduced us to "birdscaping", designing urban environments (eg the fringes of Otaki and Levin) so as to attract more native birds.
- Sam proposed a new concept of rural development through wetland restoration at Waikawa Beach, which would be a model for others throughout NZ.
- Ben wants to improve access to the local beaches through boardwalks, signs and totems which change the way we interact with the beach environment.
- Ellen suggested a community garden and farmers' market at the corner of Waikawa Beach Road. Mandy plans to link up the three Otaki cemeteries and create a public space network around them, making them a focus for education and recreation.

*Belinda*

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.  
The next best time is now.

*Chinese proverb*

## DID YOU KNOW?

Southern Bell Frog *Litoria raniformis*

This frog is one of 3 frogs introduced to NZ in the late 1800's and can now be found throughout NZ.

Unlike our mainly silent native species the male frog produces a characteristic loud growling noise. They are the largest to be found in NZ with the females reaching over 100mm. When they are inactive they breathe almost exclusively through their skin.

The fingers lack webbing while the toes are almost completely webbed. The species is associated with swamps, ponds and lakes especially ones with reeds.



*Photo by Geoff Monk*

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*Photo by Geoff Monk*

We would like to thank the Eastern & Central Community Trust for their grant which is enabling us to produce our newsletter in colour.



## Calendar and Diary sales

We have plenty of these to sell with **NO** increase in price AND we're offering free delivery. What more could you want!

Joan had them on display at our last meeting and some people present have already placed their orders.



The calendar costs \$15 and the diary \$22. The calendar comes, as usual, with an envelope ready for convenient local and overseas postage.

Any surplus money will go towards a special project.

I particularly like the photo of the falcon on the diary so I'm treating myself to one of these this year. Ring Joan Leckie on 368 1277 or Barbara Littlejohns on 364 5063 to place your order.

