



Forest & Bird

GIVING NATURE A VOICE

Upper Hutt Branch Newsletter

October/November/December 2011

PO Box 40 875 Upper Hutt

Meetings held at Hapai Club 869-881 Fergusson Drive, 7.30pm



Photos courtesy of Alan Sheppard



Flynn Cosslett at Moehau in rubbish mode.

October Meeting - TUESDAY!!

Date: Tuesday 25th October 2011

Speakers: Political Candidates including those from Greens, Labour, National (others if we/they can).

December

Date: Holiday Break!

November Meeting

Date: Wednesday 24th November 2011

A Forum: The year in review and Christmas cheer.

Diaries/Calendars: Contact G Bellamy for diaries and calendars. Tel: 526 3053

January 2012

Date: Committee Meeting only

From The Chair
During a campaign the air is full
of speeches and vice versa
(Anon)

Are we struggling with the seasons or are the seasons struggling with us? After spending four glorious days exhausting the body gardening in windless, sunny, warm summer-like days, I'm now confronted with the foulest weather imaginable and the harbour's spewing titanic-like waves. At least our volunteers have had a marvellous season of planting!

Parliament rises on 6 Oct. While many of us are glued to the rugby, the matters that bring you to these pages are still upon us; the threats of mining on the biodiversity of the Denniston Plateau, river and lake degradation and water quality loss, damming of the Mohikinui, habitat loss in the Mackenzie basin. And, of course, a general election looming up at the end of November. Suddenly Upper Hutt is sprouting election placards reminding us to get our eyes and ears out of the goggle box and divert some attention to what government we want for the next 3 years to make important and strategic decisions on conservation and environmental protection. I know it's hard to not to get concerned about Dan Carter's groin but, let me assure you, the level of priority currently being given to conservation by the current government and the threats being placed on the conservation estate and biodiversity are far more significant.



Therefore, a simple message - please think carefully about conservation and the environment as priority issues for the upcoming election. Consider the effects of DoC cuts, the lack of priority focus of the current government on environmental protection and what issues are important to you in your day-to-day connections with land, water, mountains, bush and sea. Think marching down Queen St protesting over mining the conservation estate. Think what you can do to protect biodiversity for your kids and theirs. Make your vote count.

Barry Wards, Chairperson

(Photo of potential Wellington Region Voters by Kaitoke Weir listening to Alastair McCarthy.)

Friends of the Hutt River
(FOTHR)

A Day on Te Awakairangi

In 1958, Te Awakairangi (the Maori name for the Hutt River, meaning the precious or esteemed river) was described by an ecologist as, among other things, "a laboratory in which dozens of ecological experiments are being conducted, all essentially uncontrolled." In 2011, we could quite probably say the same thing. Over the time of human habitation around the river and its catchments, we have used, abused, diverted, dammed, drained, banked and dredged it. We have stripped it of its original vegetation, populated it with introduced fish species, destroyed its estuaries and wetlands, obliterated its torrents, poisoned it with toxic chemicals and sewerage and reduced its regular level of flow to satisfy the growing water demands of urbanisation and agriculture. Gone are the days when freshwater molluscs were found at Silverstream and the river was tidal as far as Melling, where flounder, mullet, kawawai were harvested.

But what do we know about the river and the catchments that feed it? Do we understand the ecological processes that sustain it or those that it sustains? Do we really understand the impacts that decades of change have had on the valley's life blood and ecosystems? And, if we do, can we arrest it and agree to balance the "take" with more "give" to live more in harmony with our natural environment? These are some of the questions that the Friends of the Hutt River put to a group of supporters last month when they organised a day bus trip from the Kaitoke waterworks down the Hutt River catchment, ending at the mouth of the river at Seaview.

Along the way various stops served to illustrate the features of human impact in order to inform participants of the what and why of river management, the impacts of that management and the issues that it raises. Fortunately, we were joined by representatives from Greater Wellington involved in water take, reservoir management, biodiversity and flood protection, as well as experts on cyanobacteria and algal blooms and representatives from Fish and Game knowledgeable about the trout fishery and fauna biodiversity. Even more fortunately, regional councillors (including Deputy Chair, Peter Glensor, front left by bicycle in photo) and Hutt City and Upper Hutt City councillors took the time to join the day outing to learn, listen and understand some of the communities concerns about the state of the river, its ecology and the impacts of management on it and its catchments.

Participants gained a further understanding of the mechanics and levels of water take, starting at Kaitoke, and water treatment and current and planned storage. We learned about the poor condition of the Mangaroa, the high nitrogen and phosphorous levels, absence of fish spawning and the effects of these and reduced water flow on cyanobacteria and algal levels. Further afield, we visited what remains of the Great Mangaroa Wetlands, probably the most significant wetlands in the Wellington region, and the ecological devastation thrust upon it through drainage and agriculture.

Further south, there were stops at Hulls Creek to discuss the purpose of the diversion pipe across the river and the impacts of this and, lastly, a visit to the mouth and the Waiwhetu Stream and highly informative talk on the Maori cultural history with the river and its environs.



Participants will no doubt have come away from the day, as I did, with a further deeply embedded view that the river and its catchment is a significantly changed ecosystem, mainly due to man's interventions. Today we have a plethora of plans for its management, relating to waste, floods, freshwater etc, but we have major issues, including:

- Wetland and habitat loss and degradation
- Water quality degradation, including high nitrogen and phosphorous levels and sedimentation
- Flow reduction
- Cyanobacterial and algal blooms
- Decrease in fish spawning
- Increase in adventive plant abundance on parts of the upper river
- A disrupted longitudinal continuum, particularly around the river mouth
- Water diversion and river straightening
- River bed degradation
- Loss of torrents
- Reservoir flushing
- Loss of terrestrial and aquatic corridors
- Marine impacts of outlet dredging

It is obvious that there are distinct gaps in our overall knowledge of the river and its catchment, including the awareness of the need to know that knowledge, within and between the various agencies responsible for parts of the river and the wider catchment management.

The Hutt River is an intricate ecosystem and an ecological corridor in itself, one in which the key connectivity elements of structure and function have become, to a large extent, dysfunctional. It is obvious, however, that in addition to these two traditional connection concepts, there is a third element, that of social/cultural connectivity. I define this as the degree to which connectivity is impacted/influenced by societal and cultural considerations, including the human connection with landscape and environment. Connections are on multiple levels, including recreation, utilisation of environmental services, spiritual connections with the land and even aspects of our cultural history.

The cultural and societal history of the river and its environs has had impacts upon corridor management, at both an ecological and a political level. The river is part of our history and our future. We need to have a greater awareness of this in order to understand the variety and complexity of connections that enable a healthy functioning ecological corridor to operate. Connecting with nature, individually and as communities, is an intrinsic part of our lives. To do this, we need to get better at partnering with people, communities and agencies involved with the river, improve the overall enabling of effort in a coordinated direction, develop leverage and influence with those partners, empowering people to make a difference and ensure that training and support mechanisms are in place.

The Friends of the Hutt River is a group formed to make those partnerships, empowerment and enabling happen. The "Day on Te Awakairangi" was a prelude to future initiatives, learning and action. I encourage a greater interest and participation in what they and Forest and Bird are trying to achieve.

Conservation Week 11-18th Sept

St Hilda's Upper Hutt Conservation Week

During the week 11 - 18 September St Hilda's Anglican Church in Upper Hutt held a series of events to celebrate Conservation Week, based around the Dept of Conservation theme of "We Love you New Zealand". This is the fourth year they have held such a series with the purpose community outreach by educating people about conservation.

This year they started with a Conservation service on Sunday 11th September, which was themed "The Season of Creation - Biodiversity". The church was decorated with posters and banners with a large banner across the front of the Sanctuary of a photo of rapids in a stream and entitled "Fresh Water for Life" - this banner was borrowed from Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society



Bryce Johnson of Upper Hutt, CEO of Fish and Game at St Hilda's Church

The service was specifically written for the day and was based around the creation theme. Lynton Baird, from the Wainuiomata Baptist Church and the Wellington branch of A Rocha (an International Christian Conservation group) did a reflection on Matthew Chapter 6 Vs 25 - 33 which tells us that "all Creation is good and to be valued as such, and that our needs will be provided."

On Tuesday 13th, at the Upper Hutt City Library we had a group of 24, including 15 Guides from an Upper Hutt group doing their Conservation badge, gather and listen to Keith Calder, from Porirua City Council, talking about the project to clean up and restore the tributary streams and the Porirua Harbour. He emphasised how important fresh, clean water is to a healthy environment for the harbour and the process that they are using to get the community to support the project. The health and sustainability of Porirua Harbour and its natural environment is a matter of vital importance to all people in the community.

On Thursday 15th, at St Hilda's Bryce Johnson, (photo above), CEO of Fish & Game New Zealand, spoke to a group of 20 about the structure and function of Fish & Game NZ and the need for the streams and rivers in NZ to be clean and sustainable for stream life, recreational use and for the health of our tourist industry. Fish & Game NZ and Forest & Bird both support the current belief that our waterways have degraded over the last 20 years and freshwater management has become the number 1 environmental issue in NZ and we need to get back our "Clean and Green" image that we trade on.



Lynton Baird reflecting on God's Creation

Hort Report - Sue Millar



Hull's Creek

We have just completed our winter planting programme with planting sessions at two Upper Hutt City Council sites: one around the Totara Park bridge on the Totara Park side where another piece of the Hutt River Trail is being constructed, and the second at the car park at the top of Seymour Grove in Kingsley Heights.



Totara Park Bridge

This winter more than 6,000 plants from our nursery have been planted out. This includes 1820 at Hulls Creek, 2353 at Moehau Stream and 100 along the Mawaihakona Stream and in Trentham Memorial Park. Planting has also been done at a number of other smaller sites. Thanks are due to our efficient team and to the enthusiastic WelTech Horticulture and Landscape design students as well as KCC children.



Kingsley Heights

POTTING PROGRAMME:

We have a regular group of dedicated potters who come each Tuesday to the Council Depot in Park Street for a morning of R&R. A big thanks to all these people. Come and join us. ☺
If you have any queries please ring Sue Millar: 5267-440

Forest & Bird Local Branches

F&B Lower Hutt Branch meeting:
Meets 1st Thursday of the month

F&B Wellington Branch Meeting
Meets 3rd Thursday of the month

Kapiti Branch Meeting
Meets 4th Wednesday of the month

Other Groups

Wellington Botanical Society
Meets 3rd Monday of the month 7.30 pm
www.wellingtonbotsoc.wellington.net.nz

Working Bees



Please put these dates in your diary:

October 27, November 24, December 15 (early because of Christmas)

January 26, 2012, February 23, March 29

Next working bee we return to Thursday evenings, 5 to 7 pm with a picnic tea afterwards.

We also have some Working Bees involving other groups on some week days at which we are always grateful for any help from our own members:



Moehau

- October 11th (Mon) Moehau. WellTech Horticulture students. Planting
- October 13th (Wed) Moehau. WellTech Landscape Design students. Planting.
- October 20th Wed) KCC children and parents. Planting. Picnic lunch. (or 27th if wet.)



Moehau Stream

Please contact Sue Miller on ☎ 526-7440 if you would like any further information.

Forest and Bird has a great website with heaps of interesting information. It now includes past copies of our newsletter.

www.forestandbird.org.nz

Also check out:

Kiwi Conservation Club

www.kcc.org.nz

NZ Ecological Restoration Network

www.bush.org.nz

NZ Plant Conservation Network

www.nzpcn.org.nz

National Wetland Trust

<http://www.wetlandtrust.org.nz/latestupdates.html>

The deadline for the next newsletter is:

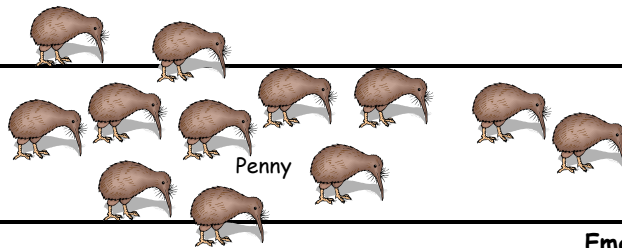
19th January 2011.

Please send any items to Lynne, preferably by email (so we don't have to wear out our fingers typing!) Thanks ☺

Editors' Note

Thanks to our contributors this month, Barry Wards, Alan Sheppard, Graham Bellamy;

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Forest and Bird as a whole. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy. Any errors or omissions are regretted. Correspondence should be addressed to P O Box 40 875 Upper Hutt.



2009 Branch Committee

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Adam Langford	04 973 7302	Committee	
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Calendar of Events

Month	Date	Time	Event	Contact
October	Wed 26 th	7.30 pm	Upper Hutt Branch Meeting - Hapai Club	Barry Wards 04 970 4266
November	Wed 23 rd	7.30 pm	Upper Hutt Branch Meeting - Hapai Club	Barry Wards 04 970 4266
December	Holiday Break	7.30 pm	Upper Hutt Branch Meeting - Hapai Club	Barry Wards 04 970 4266
January	Committee only	7.30 pm	Upper Hutt Branch Meeting - Hapai Club	Barry Wards 04 970 4266
Monthly	The fourth Thursday of each month	9am - 12pm	Working Bees	Sue Millar 04 526 7440
Weekly	Spring/Summer	9am - 11.30am	Potting up, Upper Hutt Depot	Sue Millar 04 526 7440

