



MEETING AND ACTIVITY PROGRAMME

All of our talks are open to the public – everyone is welcome. Talks are followed by supper and chat. A gold coin koha is welcomed.

We encourage families, particularly Kiwi Conservation Club (KCC) members to join us on field trips and outdoor activities, as well as friends of members, and, where there are no group limitations, non-members are also welcome. Please book in for field trips and other outings in advance, as it makes organisation so much easier and more enjoyable for us. Always let the trip leader know if you have any relevant medical condition, and always come prepared for unpredictable weather.

Prior to each activity/meeting we send out a reminder email to members. As our activities do not occur at the same time each month these reminders can be very timely. If you do not receive these emails and would like to, or have changed your email address, please email rotorua.branch@forestandbird.org.nz

All members are welcome to become involved with the Tikitapu pest control project, to lead field trips, assist in promoting the branch, and the writing of letters to MPs or the newspaper.

If you have any ideas for guest speakers or activities, please let us know by contacting a Committee member. Phone numbers are on the back page.

EVENTS CALENDAR February – June 2018

Talk - Wednesday 7 March at 7.30 pm
Rimu Room, Scion, 49 Sala St

**“Predator Free New Zealand
– how realistic is this goal?”**
Kevin Hackwell, Forest & Bird

In 2013 the government announced a goal of making New Zealand free, by 2050, from some of the major predators (mustelids, rats, possums) that threaten native birds, reptiles and plants. The concept was considered by many people to be totally unrealistic, but New Zealand Forest & Bird

says..... “it can be done and earlier than 2050”. Kevin Hackwell is F&B Group Manager for Campaigns and Advocacy and he will give us an insight into what can be done and how we can all be part of the programme.



Field Trip - Saturday 24th March
Wilding pine control -Mt Tarawera
DOC trip combined with F&B and Waikato and Rotorua Botanical Societies

We will be driven to the top of Mt Tarawera by 4WD bus and vehicle to the crater rim and hear a bit about the history and ecological values of the

mountain. We will be led by Ruawahia trustees and DOC staff with assistance from Kaitiaki Tours. We will enjoy the views of craters and surrounding landscapes and will then spend the rest of the day on the Tarawera ‘fan’ helping to hand-pull wilding conifer seedlings to assist the Ruawahia Project which aims to control the spread of wilding conifers in order to protect the unique values on the mountain.

Meet: DOC Rotorua Office, 99 Sala St, Rotorua, go in Scion (Forest Research) north entrance and turn left before the locked gates 8:30am or DOC Ashpit Road campground, Lake Rerewhakaaitu at 9:15am
Cost: Free

Grade: Medium-hard. Need to be confident walking on steep mobile scoria slopes and along high and sharp ridges

Booking: Register with Paul Cashmore by Monday 19 March at latest. 07 349 7432 (wk) or 027 650 7264 or pcashmore@doc.govt.nz

Minimum age 14 years old. Maximum of 25 people on trip on a first come basis

Bring: warm clothing, headlight / torch, lunch / snack and something to drink

Back-up date: Sunday 25th March.

Talk - Tuesday 10th April at 7.30 pm
Eric Bridgeman Room, RAVE, Hinemaru St., Rotorua

“Kokako recovery in Rotoehu Forest”
Sarah Orton

Chairperson, Rotoehu Ecological Trust

Rotoehu Ecological Trust (RET) operates in part of the wider Rotoehu Forest Conservation Area, and in particular looks after a Category One site (one of five in New Zealand) of North Island kōkako with a



population of around 150 birds. The kōkako are the keystone species but protection of this endangered species, particularly with pest control, will benefit the whole ecosystem. Currently about 990 ha are under active pest control by RET volunteers. Sarah will describe the work the Trust does, including its pest control programme and the changes that have been seen in the forest since the Trust started operating.

Working bees: Sunday 6th and Monday 7 May

Tikitapu Scenic Reserve, Lake Okareka

We will be trimming access lines and checking bait stations in preparation for the pest control programme later in the year.

Meet: 9 Acacia Rd, Lake Okareka

Grade: Medium-hard.

Contact: Please register with Frankie Blakely on 3628480

Bring: Good footwear for steep and sometimes slippery terrain, pruners or secateurs.

Monday 14 May at 7.30 pm Studio 2, Rotorua Arts Village, Hinemaru St. Rotorua Branch F&B AGM

There will be a brief Annual General Meeting followed by a presentation. Topic and speaker will be advised

Field Trip - Saturday 19th May Okataina Tracks

We will explore a number of the shorter bush tracks around the Okataina Outdoor Education Centre. These will include the Ngahopua Track which



passes the twin volcanic crater lakes of Rotongata and Rotoatua, and Tarawhai Track where a fenced-off area has been created to illustrate the effects of introduced browsers on the native vegetation.

Additional options include waterfall and lake walks.

Meeting: For carpooling from Rotorua meet at Tui House, Te Ngae Rd at 8:30 am.

Cost: \$8 contribution to driver

Grade: Easy

Booking: Phone Margaret 07 357 2024 or email rotorua.branch@forestandbird.org.nz

What to bring: Good walking shoes, clothes suitable for the weather, lunch, drink.

Working bees: Sunday 17 and Monday 18 June

Tikitapu Scenic Reserve, Lake Okareka

We will be trimming access lines and checking bait stations in preparation for the pest control programme later in the year.

Meet: 9 Acacia Rd, Lake Okareka

Grade: Medium-hard.

Contact: Please register with Frankie Blakely on 3628480

Bring: Good footwear for steep and sometimes slippery terrain, pruners or secateurs

Tikitapu Working bees July - October

Dates and activities for the Tikitapu Scenic Reserve pest control programme in the second half of 2018 involve toxin bait placement and retrieval and are summarised as follows. More detailed information will be given in the July Newsletter.

Pindone bait out – Sunday 29th & Monday 30th July

Top up pindone – Sunday 12th & Monday 13th August

Clear stations of Pindone and put out prefeed baitbags/strikers

Sunday 26th & Monday 27th August

Feratox® baitbag/striker laying and removal of prefeed

Sunday 2nd & 3rd September

Feratox® top up

Sunday 16th & Monday 17th September

Feratox® clear stations

Sunday 30th September & Monday 1st October

Note: Two field trips planned in 2017 were cancelled due to bad weather or lack of interest.

TRIP REPORTS

Ohope Kiwi Reserve Night Walk - Saturday 8 July

It was a beautiful evening, fine and not too cold, with no wind. Led by Carla Knott (from Whakatane) and her daughter ten Rotorua F&B members left their cars at seven pm and started up a narrow track into the reserve. The bush looked beautiful in the light of our torches with the moon coming and going through a patchy cloud cover. Both male and female kiwi were heard calling a number of times during our two hours in the bush. Before heading out we stopped in a clearing for hot drinks and a snack, and to listen to the sounds of the bush at night (including more kiwi calling).



Our thanks to Carla for a memorable evening
Alan Ryan, Jenny Grace, Rod Stace, Delight Gartlein and Bill, Margaret, Brian Pickering, Sue Williams, Anne Eckersley, Viv Chapman

Maketu Sandspit trip, 19 August 2017

After hearing about the various conservation projects in the Maketu area at the Forest and Bird meeting on 2nd August we decided a visit was called for. This wasn't going to be a brisk tramp but rather a more leisurely walk around the area having a good look at things.

Six of us, an amalgam of Rotorua Tramp/Ski Club, F&B and Cross Country Trampers, set off from the end of Ford Road at the Kaituna River mouth to explore the area. There are very informative notice boards telling of birds and other wildlife to be seen and also about the restoration project.

Some of the flow of the Kaituna has been re-diverted out to the main river channel into the wetland area and the Maketu Estuary. What a few months ago was a green turgid unpleasant looking sludge is turning into clearer water with healthy water life in evidence. We inspected the new bridge linking the sandspit to an island in the estuary. There is more work to be done, diverting yet more water flow.

There was lots of birdlife. We identified those that we could but unfortunately we had no great skill in this. It was good to see lots of new plantings. There are also numerous stoat traps some of which are ingeniously set in low fences that intercept predators moving along the sandspit. The aim is to keep predator numbers low as it is unrealistic to attempt predator free.

After morning tea we set off back along the ocean beach doing a beach tidy as we went. We collected quite a lot of rubbish; mainly plastic bottles and aluminium cans but also a variety of other items, including a large tangled mess of fishing line. It was good to get that off the beach as it is a real menace to bird life.



Lunch at the Maketu Sandspit



Back at the cars with the rubbish

We stopped off for coffee at Comvita in Paengaroa on the way home, finishing off an interesting and enjoyable trip. Brian Pickering, accompanied by Jessica Pickering, Peter McKellar, Viv Chapman, Anne Eckersley and John Turner.

Forest & Bird Ruapehu Lodge, National Park - Friday 27th—Sunday 29th October



Sunrise on Ruapehu from the Lodge

The Forest and Bird Lodge at Ruapehu sits nestled in beech forest at the end of Rahui St at Whakapapa Village. Rahui St follows the path of the Whakapapanui Stream where you can sometimes hear the high pitched 'song' of the whio, blue duck. Fifteen people spent a wonderful weekend in the comfortable lodge. Saturday morning dawned with the top of Ruapehu cloudless and gave plenty of options things to do; everyone was free to select the walks or activities that suited them. Silica Rapids and Taranaki Falls were among the most popular, with three people heading for Hauugatahi, the smaller peak that is visibly from Whakapapa. Back at the lodge we shared experiences of what had happened during the day over a lively pot-luck Saturday night dinner. We commend Sue van Dorsser's organisational skills in getting 15 people around one table.

The threat of rain on Sunday did not deter most people and shorter morning walks were undertaken in a light drizzle. The rain became serious shortly after midday but by then most people were back and tucking into a lunch of leftovers from the previous night's banquet. All participants voted it a most enjoyable weekend and declared their desire to repeat the event in 2018.

Hauhungatahi

Margaret, Leonie and Judy were keen to explore Mt Hauhungatahi, a long extinct volcano, east of Ruapehu in the centre of the Wilderness Area named after it. Wilderness Areas in New Zealand are areas set aside with minimal huts, tracks, route markers and bridges so the wilderness qualities are retained.

On other trips the lack of track markers has not been a problem this time we were in for a surprise. A recent strong wind had left a swathe of fallen trees in the podocarp forest. Giant rimu and kaikawaka (mountain cedar) have been thrown to the ground in disarray and the usual route had turned into a giant jigsaw puzzle. Often the safest way to travel was for one person to stop and wait until the person ahead found an old blaze or pink ribbon.

Finally the tarns at the bush edge were reached and it was out into the red tussock and scrub, old lichen-covered snow poles lead the way to the top. The climb to the bush edge had been tiring from clambering over giant tree trunks and with mist playing on the top of the mountain and rain threatening we found a sheltered place and enjoyed a leisurely lunch. We saw the occasional New Zealand pihoihoi (pipit) or kaireka (skylark). The latter is more likely as pihoihoi are discouraged by the heather. The heather was deliberately introduced into Tongariro National Park in the 1800s with the idea of introducing game birds such as pheasants; thankfully the introduction of the gamebirds into that area did not happen. On the way down a harsh shrieking call drew our attention to a koekoea (long tailed cuckoo).

Judy Gardner



At the tarn on Hauhungatahi



Alpine flowers at Tama Lakes

Awahou Stream Restoration Project – Saturday 10 September

The Awahou is one of the major streams flowing into Lake Rotorua. Since riparian areas within the primarily farmland catchment were fenced off, the sides of the stream become infested with blackberry, willow, barberry and other exotics. Over the last 25 years Jaap and Sue van Dorsser, with a small group of friends, have transformed 9 hectares of riparian zones along the Awahou Stream, from dense exotics to native shrub land and forest. Jaap led a dozen fascinated F&B members through the area explained, in his own entertaining and informative style, the stages of the project and the plans for the future. We then enjoyed a sumptuous pot-luck barbeque meal.



Jaap and Sue demonstrating plant preparation

Our thanks to Jaap and Sue for their amazing hospitality

TIKITAPU PEST CONTROL PROJECT

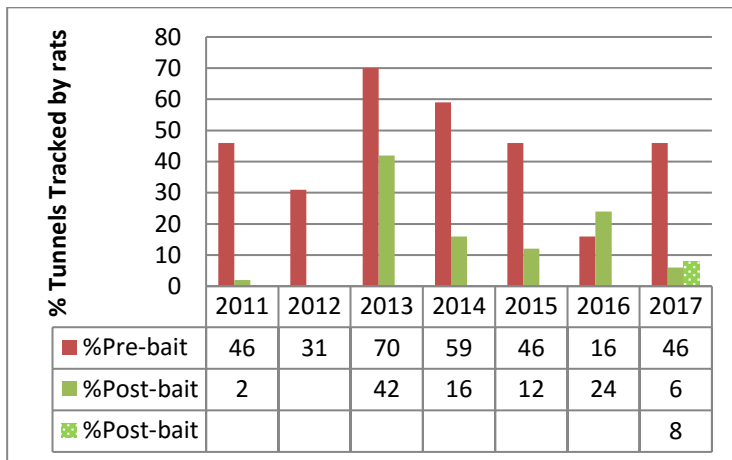
Monitoring results for 2017

In 2017 a second post-bait monitor was carried out for both rats and marsupials in mid-November (a month after the main post bait monitor in October) to determine if rat numbers had decreased since October.

Results:

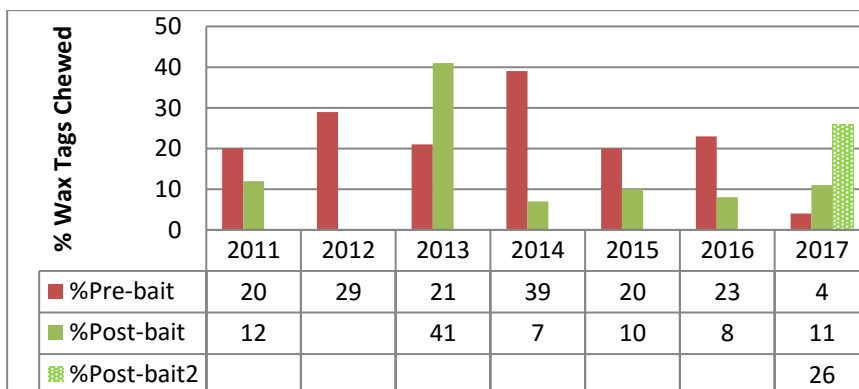
- Rats - Pre baiting 46%, post baiting 6%, November follow up 8%
- Marsupials - Pre baiting 5%, post baiting 11%, November follow up 26%

The graphs below show what a great success this year's post-bait results are compared to other years:



Rat monitoring tracking tunnel data from 2011 – 2017. In 2017 we achieved our post-bait target!

Post-bait target for rats is 5%



Marsupial monitoring wax tag from 2011 – 2017. Note the very low pre-bait numbers in 2017 – probably a result from the kill traps placed around the perimeter of Reserve in December 2016.

Target for post-bait marsupials is 20%

However, even though this was a comparatively good result for the rats, it was surprising to end up with a post-bait increase for the marsupials. Most of the wax tag bites post monitoring were those of youngsters, possibly

“back riders” who had survived after their mothers had succumbed to the toxin. Unfortunately it is not possible to differentiate between bite marks of possums and wallabies and it is possible that the increase in marsupials is largely due to wallabies who are unlikely to put their heads in bait stations or in the kill traps.

Numbers of carcasses found by the bait stations were:-

- Possum = 29 adults
- Wallaby = 4 and 1 Joey

Goodnature Kill Traps

Possum traps were installed at the end of 2016 and rat traps in June 2017. Kills recorded by December 2017 were

- Possums 53
- Rats 40
- Rat counter strikes 264 (strikes indicate kills but the carcass has been predated).

The Mistletoe track and Nature walk were checked and maintained by volunteers on a monthly roster. About 30 plants donated by DOC were planted near the Mistletoe track where some plants had been cleared.

Review/Planning Meeting

- Possums were taking the Pindone intended for rats and then rats were destroying the Bio bait bags intended for possums.
- Philproof bait stations will therefore be adapted to prevent possums getting the Pindone. This will be done over summer by adding a baffle underneath the baseplate and the baseplate then inserted upside down. This method allows the baseplate to easily be reverted for use without the baffle.
 - Biobags (or strikers) prefeed for marsupials will be put out after stations are cleared of Pindone.
 - Feratox® bait bags (or strikers) intended for marsupials put out by volunteers with their Control Substance Licence (CSL), or a contractor, a week after the prefeed. The majority of volunteers with CSL have licences which expire in May. DOC and BOPRC are investigating the cost of renewing these licences compared to having a contractor handle the Feratox®.

Bird counts

While there are annual fluctuations in numbers for a given species, there was no significant positive or negative trend in numbers ($p < 0.05$) between 2011 and 2016 in Tikitapu Scenic Reserve. Five-minute bird counts were not undertaken in Tikitapu Scenic Reserve in 2017. It was decided to continue with the 5-minute bird counts at Okataina Scenic Reserve so that we have a good idea of bird numbers if pest-control is carried out there at some time in the future. Some bird species showed increases, whilst others showed decreases compared to the previous three years of data. Thanks to our volunteers: Liz and Peter Harding, Neil McCreedy and Steve Lawrence. Jenny Grace coordinated the programme for 2017, collated and graphed the data, and prepared the report.

From the manager of the Tikitapu Scenic Reserve project

I would like to acknowledge the support this project receives from BOPRC and DOC. This involves supplying bait, monitoring equipment and expert advice. Committee members of the Rotorua Branch of Forest and Bird now manage other parts of the project. Nell Ranson collates the records and data, assists with administration and continues to use the project as an excellent teaching resource for Wintec students. Brian Pickering has taken charge of the Goodnature traps and their records. Although no longer a committee member, Sandra Goodwin has regularly helped me at base during working bees. I am also grateful to the volunteers who enable this project to take place. My sincere thanks to you all.

Frances Blakely

Tikitapu Mistletoe Foliar Browse lines

Remeasuring of the mistletoe foliar browse lines was carried out from 9th - 12th of January 2018 by **Paul Cashmore** and **Kevin Buttle** from Rotorua office of DOC, assisted by Mike Goodwin a volunteer from Rotorua F&B Committee. The aim is to determine the response on the mistletoe population to the animal pest control work being undertaken in the reserve by volunteers from Rotorua F&B group. This assessment is carried out every 5 years along 3 lines near the Lake Okareka settlement end of the Tikitapu Scenic Reserve. In all 22 circular plots, each having a 10m radius, are assessed.



Counting mistletoe plants in Tikitapu Scenic Reserve

This work has shown that pest control has a significant effect on the survival and spread of mistletoe plants compared to areas with no animal pest control. While it was disappointing to see a lot of storm damage to both mistletoe and host plants from the high winds in early January 2018, there is still abundant recruitment of new hosts and mistletoe plants. The high turnover of host trees, such as five finger, *Pseudopanax arboreus*, was very noticeable in some areas. However, there are significant numbers of new young five finger plants coming through and a lot of bigger existing five finger trees, with very few or no mistletoe plants on them yet.

Rotorua F&B volunteers should be well pleased with the spread and health of the mistletoe in the reserve, as a result of their efforts to control possums and rats.

Mike Goodwin.

Insects in decline world-wide

Over the pot-luck dinner at the Forest and Bird Lodge there was a discussion about insect numbers declining. This appears to be a common trend and is of considerable concern. See:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/18/warning-of-ecological-armed-don-after-dramatic-plunge-in-insect-numbers>.

On a recent trip to Great Mercury Island, organised by the Moehau Environmental Group and attended by Jenny Grace and Rod Stace, a comment was made that bumble bee numbers have increased following rat removal. This is good news. Interestingly we quite often notice bumble bees at Okareka. Maybe this is a result of the pest-control programme at Tikitapu.

Two fascinating books

“The hidden life of trees” by Peter Wohlleben

“Great Mercury Island, The Maori story concerning Mercury Island” by Pat Mizen

Both are in the Rotorua Library

Green Drinks in Rotorua

Held at the Blue Baths with open bar is between 5pm and 5.30pm and presentations starting at 5.30pm.

Tuesday, 6 March - Industrial & Medical Cannabis - Chris Woodney

Tuesday, 3 April - Tane's Tree Trust - Jacqui Aimers and Gerard Horgan

Tuesday, 1 May - Product Stewardship Council - Sandra Murray

Tuesday, 5 June - Rotorua Spatial Plan - Portia McKenzie

**Rotorua Forest & Bird Committee
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If you have any contacts with people who would be interesting and informative speakers, or thoughts about places for a field trip, please let one of the Committee members know. We are always looking for new places to visit.

