

KORIMAKO



Annual General Meeting Forest & Bird Lower Hutt Branch

7:30pm Thursday May 3
Hutt Valley Tramping Club Rooms, Birch Street, Waterloo
Presentation of Reports and Election of Committee.

Members are urged to attend the AGM to support the Branch and ensure the continuation of our conservation work.

The AGM will be followed by Kevin Hackwell, F&B Group Manager, Campaigns and Advocacy. Title of Talk – Pros and Cons of large scale irrigation. Why large scale irrigation may not be the obvious response to climate change and why should we be cautious about providing public subsidies.

Annual Plant Sale

9am Sunday 2 September

Now that we are into autumn weather it's time to pot-up or repot your plants and seedling trees. Starting now will give them a good 4 months to establish and grow well before our Annual Plant Sale at the beginning of September. They are forecasting a mild winter so plants should grow on, providing we get sufficient rain.

Last year's Plant Sale profit was down a on previous years, however we made \$2,600. Considering the awful autumn and winter we had when it never seemed to stop raining, it was still a good total. We certainly had less plants and trees than previously and many were of smaller size which reflected the "growing conditions" and we also had less people through.

However we had a wonderful turn-out of helpers on both days – so many that I can't name you all! Thank you, thank you all so much. From putting out street signs, advertising, transporting plants, setting up trestles, carting in plants, sorting, labelling, selling, providing morning teas, arranging finances and change, cleaning up, and most importantly engaging with the people who came to purchase. This is much appreciated and I had comments as to how helpful and friendly buyers found us. So please keep on assisting us with your knowledge on plants and growing conditions, etc for this year's sale.

Please mark your calendar (F&B one of course) towards the end of August with a reminder – the sale dates to note are - Saturday 1st September 12.30 – setting up the hall, collecting, sorting, setting out plants. Sunday 2nd September 8.45am - Doors open 9.00am!

We need all native and exotic trees, plants of all descriptions, cacti and succulents, ferns, any garden plants, especially if in flower, sell well, also veges and herbs.

If you need pots or plastic planter bags or any other help just contact:

Margaret Ph: 577 0558 Email: margaret.anderson@outlook.co.nz

Note: If you are receiving this newsletter by post and you have an email address, you would save Branch funds by asking National Office <membership@forestandbird.org.nz> to include you on the Lower Hutt email list (your membership number is on the envelope label). You'll receive the newsletter with colour images.

Lower Hutt Branch, Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society Inc

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Report from the Chair

The past year has been interesting for Manor Park and we have continued to work at Waiu with Gary James' team. With an active committee F&B Lower Hutt Branch has been able to support both projects. Now at the AGM we look forward to fresh blood on the new committee.

During the year Margaret Anderson has ably organised the supper at the monthly branch meetings and the project at Manor Park. We all look forward to her baking at both places. She also organises the annual plant sale which is the main income earner for the Branch. Gerry Brackenbury has taken charge of pest control at Manor Park and has established an extensive array of traps and tracking tunnels. David Cornick (another committee member), is also involved on the committee at Pauatahanui inlet and gives specialist advice to our committee. He does a lot of "behind the scenes" work especially in relation to the plant sale. Theo Fink as Deputy Chair is much appreciated for his humour and excellent advice. John Groombridge as always, has managed the Branch finances to ensure there is enough money to support our projects in addition to providing grants to Kiwi Conservation Club and other environmental campaigns, as the committee sees fit. David Inness, a committee member is actively campaigning to ensure that Department of Conservation, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Hutt City fulfil their legal obligations in relation to protecting their reserves from browsing by pest animals, namely mauling deer. Henry Steele, our second deputy is also on the Committee of Friends of Waiwhetu Stream. He is absolutely committed to ensuring that Hutt City Council carries out due protocol in obtaining resource consent for the Waiwhetu Waste Disposal facility and that it abides by its legal obligations. Our Secretary Jennifer Vinton has been active in organising an interesting array of speakers. She is always on the look out for engaging and controversial speakers to present at our monthly meetings.

Outside the committee, Gary James coordinates the Waiu wetland project. Jane Kettles and her group of ladies help with the suppers at the Branch meetings. Marion Lloyd manages the sale of the Forest and Bird calendars and diaries; she also liaises with Waterloo School for the annual Plant Sale. Finally Malcolm McEwen has been working hard at Manor Park clearing tracks and removing weeds.

Manor Park has entered an exciting stage in its history. The pest control programme enacted by Gerry Brackenbury has made Manor Park suitable for the translocation of some native lizard species. When submissions for the Resource Consent conditions for a housing subdivision in Kelson were notified, the Branch put in a submission which recommended that the developer employ Eco Gecko to do a lizard survey of the site. Not only did Manor Park acquire 58 skinks but also received a \$7,000 Reserves Contribution towards their care. To support

this staff at Greater Wellington Regional Council lent us some cameras to check if there was a problem with cats and other animals at the site. Unfortunately one camera was stolen but the pictures revealed that there was at least one cat and three rabbits visiting the site. We thank John Groombridge for checking all 6,000 photos. Greater Wellington Regional Council has also given the Branch a live cat trap. Hutt City has also supported the project by mulching blackberry at the site and helping with spraying.

Waiu wetland continues to progress. The Branch appreciates Gary James' organisation of regular working bees at the site. There is currently a Mountain Bike Park on the hills above the Waiu wetland that has tracks around our plantings. The Branch has also become involved when it was notified that a Resource Consent was being sought for earthworks at a nearby and ecologically more significant wetland at Mohaka. To assist the Branch the City Assets Manager and the ecologist in charge of the project met Gary James and some committee members at the Waiu site.

Although we have a good variety of speakers, turnout at Branch meetings tend to be relatively low. For me one of the most inspirational was the fitness and commitment exhibited by Lisa Whittle. Several times a year Lisa and her husband drive up from Wellington to the Ruahines to service a trap line in a remote part of that mountain range. On the other hand the most thought provoking talk was the discussion of the impact of irrigated agriculture on a small remnant of native vegetation on a property neighbouring a dairy farm in the Wairarapa. This talk by the Wairarapa Representative for the Queen Elizabeth II Trust also exposed problems around the interpretation of the RMA by the local regional council.

All in all I think this year has been very successful for our branch. Planting at Manor Park is maturing, the branch is in a good financial position and we look forward to increasing our committee members.

Brenda Johnston



Manor Park work party

Observations from Keep Guard Cameras at Manor Park Restoration Site



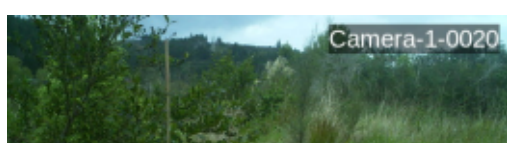
Volunteers working at Manor Park were interested to find out whether predators other than rodents were visiting the restoration site at times, either during the day or night when workers were not present. To assist in answering this question Dr Roger Uys of Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) kindly loaned the group cameras that would record any activity at the site. Thank you Roger.

Eight movement sensitive cameras were carefully positioned at selected locations on Tuesday 6 March 2018. The cameras were retrieved two weeks later on 20 March and all images (6000) were viewed by a volunteer and Forest and Bird committee officer, John Groombridge. One camera, a Bushnell was unfortunately taken from the site. This report therefore reveals images collected from only seven cameras.

Images from cameras 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 clearly show that a ginger cat visits the site during the day. Camera 7 also shows a dog sniffing around during the day. Rabbits also feature on images taken from cameras 3, 6 and 7. At night cameras 1 and 7 show the presence of both the (ginger) cat and rabbits, while cameras 3 and 4 show rabbits.

It is interesting and significant that these animals were picked up by cameras placed at some distance from each other as this provides evidence that these 'pests' traverse the entire locality during their visits. The image below gives the locality of the cameras at the site. The golf club is at the bottom left. The camera at position 10 (the Bushnell) was stolen.

Jenny Vinton



Showing
camera
locations



Pests

While fine weather is always a bonus in this lovely and pluvial land of ours, the six weeks straight of sunny days before Xmas was, like everywhere else, a challenge for the plants at our Manor Park restoration site, and we lost some.

One of a number of highlights at Manor Park was its dubbing as an unofficial skink sanctuary! In short, a proposed sub-division at Kelson saw us put in a formal submission to the developer, that included the request for a herpetological survey be done at the site before the bulldozers moved in. The survey, to be done by the professional lizard experts EcoGecko, used a hundred pitfall traps over two weeks. This produced 63 skinks (a third gravid) of two species, being the Common Skink (*Oligosoma polychroma*) and the Copper Skink (*Cyclodina aenea*). The Department of Conservation considered the pest control work being done at the park was enough to allow the skinks to start a new life in the safety of Manor Park, where, along with rat and mouse control, twelve hedgehogs are now resting in their hedgehog heaven!

In anticipation of the skinks' Winter hibernation, I have built a number of what I call "skink palaces", using a variety of materials including carpet, logs, plywood and wooden pallets filled with bark chips.

Blackberry has taken a beating at our restoration site, with spraying done by professionals, including Treescape in the NZ Rail section and the Hutt City Council contractor in the main conservation area. We thank both organisations for their generous help.

Finally, the Wellington Regional Council lent us eight security cameras so we might "see" what might be cruising around when the park was empty, especially at night. We filmed a number of rabbits present and one cat (eater of skinks). The Council tell us the rabbits may well succumb to the recently released virus. And as to the cat? Let's just say that several of its nine lives have just been used up.

Gerry Brackenbury

Waiu Wetland Restoration

The Waiu wetline is approximately 6.74 hectares, and is representative of the once vast wetland system that covered much of the lowland Wainuiomata. The wetland contains several at risk plants such as swamp buttercup (*Rununculus macopus*), *Oleria virgata*, dwarf mistletoe (*Korthalsella salicoeniodes*) and *Carmichaelia australis* (native broom).

The aim is to eradicate pest weeds, in particular blackberry, gorse, horthorn, etc, and to replace them with appropriate native species to enhance and increase the wetland area.



Planting of 470 sedges and tree took place on Saturday 22 September 2017. 19 people attended including Forest & Bird members, general public and mountain bike people. This event was followed up during 2017 with semi regular Mondays or Thursdays according to Gary's work schedual. 2018 has seen a attack on blackberry clearing to make space for winter plantings.

Gary James

If you would like to help, or only look, contact Gary
938-6751, 021 286 6282, mistletoe1957@gmail.com

A New Cloak For Matiu

Our booklet describing the restoration of Matiu/Somes Island, written by branch member Janet Hector is a must to read before visiting the Island. If you are intending to visit, or have overseas visitors who may, then please read the book. You will gain so much knowledge and appreciation of what there is on the island and where to see so many interesting birds, insects and plants (the giant weta are creepy but gentle!). Makes a great Xmas gift.

Special price to members \$15.00

Available at our monthly meetings or contact:

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