

November 2017

After a wet winter, a warm spring.

This newsletter shows how busy our committee and members have been...even in the wettest year on record! New projects (the Pure Forest Waitakere – Pest Free Waitakere proposal), repeating but exciting project (the latest Kōkako survey results), extending projects (Ark Bufferzone area includes Scenic Drive) and many activities and trips like planting, clearing, weeding, trapping and baiting. On top of their work with the Forest & Bird committee, many members are also involved in other conservation projects, like our neighbouring Matuku Link and the Whatipu Bioblitz.

The young ones haven't been forgotten either with KCC trips to Tai Haruru, the Auckland Bee Club and the Waitakere Dam. I've visited some schools as well and it was lovely to hear back from the Gladstone Primary School who did a clean-up in their

local park and even sent me pictures of the monitoring tunnels they made (see below).

If you are interested in joining our enthusiastic team in one of these projects, please contact us because we'd love to see you and the more of us who are involved, the more we can do together. Lots of people are inspired by the Predator Free 2050 campaign to help in their own backyards. And with our new government in place, it's a great time to all use this momentum and work together to save our rivers, forests and birds, with our organisation in the lead. A new dawn indeed this spring. Let's hope it will be a sunny summer!

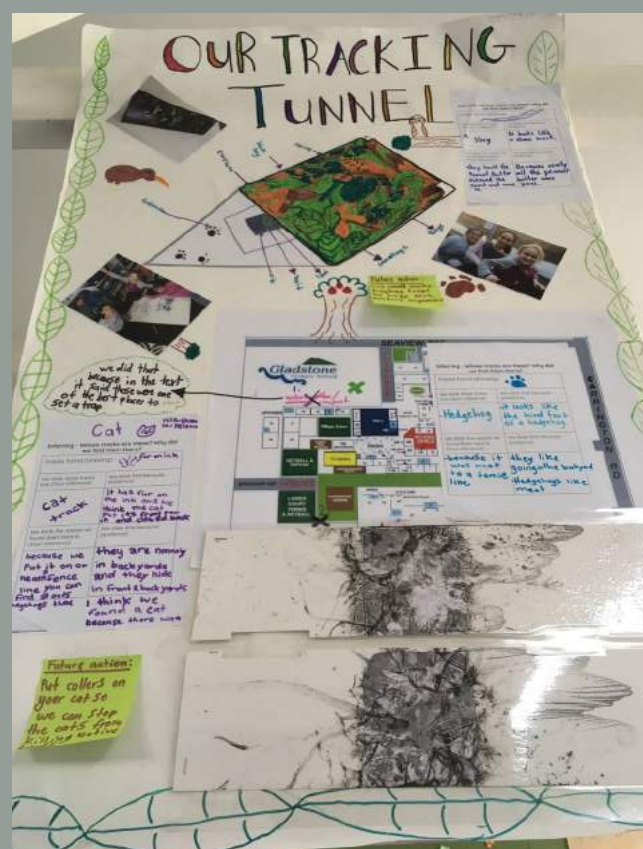
Annalily van den Broeke, chairperson Waitakere/Kaipara branch

Students start tracking

Sophie McBride, a Year 4 teacher at Gladstone Primary School, invited me to join their “Science Inquiry & Sustainable Action journey”. I brought our stuffed stoat, ferret, weasel and squeaky rat and had a great time talking to five classes of year 4 students. As I was only part of their project, this is what Sophie emailed a couple of weeks later:

“We investigated food webs, explored that in a New Zealand bush context, bird watched in our area, became interested in pests so this became a major research focus, and we eventually worked towards making tracking tunnels and tracked the pests in our community. There were some very decent tracks - the students deciphered them as primarily hedgehog, as well as cat (hair - the cats were clever enough to dip their heads in and out to nab the bait) and mice. We have plans for future action and the class loved the whole process.”

Those students are very fortunate to have a teacher like Sophie!



Students at Gladstone Primary tracking pests

Pest Free Waitakere - 'Pure Forest Waitakere'

A concept whose time has come!



Last year the Government announced an ambitious plan to rid New Zealand of key predators by 2050. A year later Auckland Council unveiled a similar plan. Now none of these laudable goals can be achieved without community action. In the Waitakere area a range of community groups has been working towards a pest free future for a long time, of course including Forest & Bird. More recently there has been a burgeoning of groups doing conservation work in the Ranges (often on contiguous private properties). Examples include the South Tītirangi Neighbourhood Network, Waima to Laingholm Pest-free Zone and the Waiatarua weed action group. Now we also have the brand new Oratia Native Wildlife Project Pest Free Piha Rehab!

I thought that the time was right to develop a platform where all the community groups with the same aim could come together to drive the idea of the whole of the Waitakere Ranges as a Pest Free Area, a sanctuary for native flora and fauna and to restore the mauri of the Ranges. 'Pests' includes all pest organisms including weeds, mammals, invertebrates and

microorganisms. The purpose of this platform would be to:

- identify the gaps between the areas where work is being done
- collectively apply for support
- share best practice information
- support each other by sharing things like technical knowledge and enhancing communication

I organised an inaugural meeting at the end of September and all those present expressed tons of enthusiasm for the Pest Free Waitakere idea. PFW has now submitted an 'Expression of Interest' to Predator Free 2050 Ltd for major funding for a staged process of pest control in the Ranges (over 8 years) and we await their response. PFW has held another meeting in early November and is planning the next one in January where we expect interest to continue to grow exponentially.

Robert Woolf, Waitakere Branch

Magazines wanted

Have you finished with your Forest & Bird Magazines? We'd love to give them to our visitors at stalls and schools. Just connect with Margaret at 09-837 5274 or drop them off at reception at Waitakere Gardens Retirement Village. Thank you!

Kiwi Conservation Club report October 2017

We are now at the end of a busy year for the Waitakere branch of the KCC. Recently we have had a couple of notable trips. We were introduced to various methods of trapping and various stuffed pest species by Sian Buley and Annalily. The kids were fascinated with the animals and the different methods of trapping them. The trip was held at Tai Haruru lodge so it was also a good chance to advertise this cool spot for family holidays. Another KCC adventure was to the Unitec bee club. This was a great day where the kids got to see inside a living hive and sample sweet honey. We are currently in our planning stage for next year's trips so if anyone out there has any ideas for trips or is able to lend a hand in any way please get in touch.

*Cheers from the KCC team Jean and Raelyn
waitakere@kcc.org.nz*



Got Summer sorted yet?

Why not stay a couple of days at Tai Haruru, our Forest & Bird lodge in Piha? It sleeps five (three single, one double bed) in the main house and has another four beds in the annex. House and annex can be booked together or separately for a fabulous "Girls Only" weekend or to run a small group retreat, photography course or basecamp for Waitakere walks. Only meters from the beach and surrounded by a native garden.

Well priced, proceeds fund our West Auckland conservation projects and only the person booking the lodge needs to be a member. Interested? Pictures on the website: <http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/what-we-do/lodges/tai-haruru-lodge> and bookings through volunteers Jean and Peter King (09) 812 8064 hop0018@slingshot.co.nz

Or come and have a look at it on Saturday 25th of November, see the last page.



Forest & Bird Calendars & Diaries 2018 - Support your local Waitakere Branch!

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Funds raised from the sale of our Calendars & Diaries are used for local conservation projects like Ark in the Park, Habitat te henga, Matuku. Encourage your neighbours, friends to support nature! Great for overseas gifts. Exceptional quality and value.

Contact our secretary at Waitakere.branch@forestandbird.org.nz or call 021-2207136



Ark update

Spring has arrived at the Ark and with it the bird survey season and an expansion!

The eight week kōkako census is now complete. Walk-through surveys were carried out supplemented by recorder analysis, followed up by foot survey where necessary.

Additional investigations were carried out on the new southern lines, Fairy Falls, southern Ian Wells track, along the eastern side of Scenic Drive and Upper Huia Dam Track.

Thanks to Auckland Zoo who led the census fieldwork and also made a financial contribution. The zoo team were supported by Ark volunteers

As a reminder of kōkako terminology a 'founder' is a bird caught elsewhere and released into the Ark to add to our population size and genetic diversity. To complete our translocation we must have 40 founders establish. We band as many chicks as we are able to each year, they don't count as founders but they do help with reaching other targets such as having 25 pairs. Due to the elusive behaviour and extensive, dense terrain of the Ark we don't manage to find all the nests, and sometimes nests found are inaccessible. This means we end up with some unbanded birds each year.

The final tally from this year's census is as follows:

Founders = 24

Total territorial pairs = 15

Of those 15, six are founder pairs, five are combined founder/unbanded pairs and four are unbanded pairs.

Ark progeny = 6 of 7 chicks fledged last year were found this year.

This is a great result with the most birds identified since kōkako were reintroduced in 2009 and surveys began.

Not to be out done by kōkako, Robins/toutouwai are now nesting and the whitehead/popokotea survey is now underway. So far the latter have been detected in last year's territories of Long Road and Arataki Visitor's Centre again.

Conservation Week 2017 has recently ended and the Ark participated via two events in addition to the normal activities carrying on through the week.

Firstly a forest protection workshop was held at the Matuku Link barn, mainly targeting households within Ark's buffer zone. The two components of the workshop were trapping skills and information for kauri dieback disease spread prevention.

Kauri are a keystone species in the Waitakere Ranges ecosystem but also very precious to the people of the Ranges. Hand-outs added to a very educational presentation. When it came to the trapping side self-resetting traps, lures and trap locations were discussed and participants had a great morning in the sun on the deck of the house.

A booked out dawn walk took our guests through the heart of the kōkako territories. Despite the blustery conditions the resident kōkako showed off their vocal talents and people saw a glimpse of the 'grey ghosts' moving through the trees.

On the way back as the misty morning dawned, people enjoyed

learning about the other plant and bird species of the Waitakere Ranges.

This Spring the Ark is growing around 170ha.

We recently baited a new area to the south of the current bait lines where Auckland Council had installed bait stations as an addition to the possum control work they had recently completed.

Ark volunteers have been baiting these new lines and adventurously tackling some challenging terrain! This area covers some valuable habitats – kōkako and fernbirds were seen on a number of the lines.

Also, as part of the Squawk Squad initiative the Ark has been donated 60 Goodnature self resetting devices. These will be installed west of the existing Ark and will be fitted with Encounter Solutions nodes so that instant notifications of traps firing can be received.

Speaking of additional areas: Waitoru Reserve on Bethells Road is now being actively trapped and baited by an Ark volunteer.

Over recent months the Ark has hosted groups from BNZ, Eli Lilly and Toll. These groups have enjoyed their new experiences weeding, baiting and helping with seed collection.

Coming months will feature rat monitoring, another baiting round, further work on the new areas and hopefully a productive bird breeding season!

Gillian Wadams – manager Ark in the Park



Tahi Kaha, one of the founder birds caught at Mapara and released in May 2016.
Photo: Mark Darin



Cloud, one of Marty and his unbanded partner's chicks fledged last breeding season.
Photo: Deja Rivera

Forest & Bird Motu Manawa Restoration Group

Te Atatu Pony Club's pastoral grounds in Te Atatu Peninsula's Harbourview Park have been revealed as a veritable treasure trove of native and migratory bird habitat.

Rare birds like banded dotterel, New Zealand dotterel and wrybills can be found within the pony club's fenced paddocks.

More common birds like pied and variable oystercatchers and pied stilts turn up there as well.

These birds alight from their roosts in the horse-grazed fields to feed on the estuarine foreshore of Harbourview Park at low tide.

Birds New Zealand (Ornithological Society of New Zealand) has voluntarily counted the shorebirds at the pony club for 21 years and achieved the longest continuous sequence of data available on them.

While the NZTA-originated Causeway Alliance partnership was operating out of a temporary works depot at the pony club as it enlarged the State Highway 16 motorway causeway, it too had bird counts going on in its close environs as a condition of resource consents.

These counts discovered nationally significant numbers of wrybill roosting within the pony club's fenced boundary.

Unfortunately the Causeway Alliance discontinued these

bird counts after a short while for petty cost reasons despite repeated objections from Forest & Bird Motu Manawa Restoration Group.

The new threat to the rare birds residing in the Te Atatu Pony Club grounds lies in development proposals for Harbourview Park.

The Henderson-Massey Local Board is funding a new master plan for Harbourview Park that will eventually go to public consultation with potentially negative consequences for wildlife.

Quite separately, the Auckland Unitary Plan has incorporated an arbitrary designation of 2.5 hectares of Harbourview Park land from the now defunct Waitakere City Council for the proposed building of a Te Atatu Marae for urban Maori.

This marae would occupy a grassy knoll in the Te Atatu Pony Club grounds that is most frequented by rare and endangered birds.

A conservation disaster lies in the making with the various development plans for Harbourview Park emanating from Auckland Council and the Henderson-Massey Local Board.

Forest & Bird has a serious effort ahead to ensure that nature's voice is heard loud and clear in Harbourview Park.

Michael Cooté - Chair, Forest & Bird Motu Manawa Restoration Group



Caption: Birdwatching at the pony club. Photo: Kent Xie.



South Island Wrybills in June visiting the pony club. Photo: Kent Xie.

Summer stalls

If you'd be interested in joining our team of volunteers at the Waitakere Forest & Bird stall, which we take to markets, schools and community days, we'd love to hear from you. Our aim is to raise awareness about conservation by answering questions and giving out free information. Contact Chris Bindon to learn more: kereruchris@gmail.com or 0274 305 407.



Spotlight on the Swamp



Caption: Some of the volunteers at the July working bee at Matuku Link. Photo: Jacqui Geux

Habitat te Henga, the branch's wetland project continues to provide protection to the pateke released in 2015 and 2016 and their progeny. Our trapping contractor notes them not infrequently as he does his circuit around the Te henga wetland. Recently he saw a group of four swimming toward him as he checked a water edge trap. A film producer scouting Matuku for some of the shots to be used in a video for WWF about last year's award-winning drone that I and Philip Solaris developed, asked what a pateke was and within minutes John Staniland was able to show him a pair quietly paddling on the river. Matt, our contractor, records also bittern and spotless crane. This year several new volunteers have come forward to assist in other trap lines that are part of the array. A new line of Goodnature traps purchased from an Auckland Council grant was placed along the south side of the wetland close to where a marsh crane was recorded last year while others were placed on the north side closing the final gap in defences [with the generous permission of Matuku's neighbour]. Banded rail were possibly heard in part of the swamp; if it were confirmed, that record, as with the marsh crane, would be the first in decades.

Further upstream at the head of the swamp Matuku Link which while not a branch project is intimately related, is changing month by month. It's floral treasures are being uncovered as the bait lines and monitoring lines are established through the hillside slopes with large puriri and kauri being seen and even sizeable uncommon matai and taraire. The flats

have been greatly changed since we took possession-fences and posts removed, drains filled; reed beds widened, new ponds dug, water levels raised and over 3000 plants planted. Pateke, shovelers and matuku [bittern] have been seen and will benefit even more in future. Diverse groups, eg KCC, and Henderson Rotary all planted a mix of wet loving species-reeds; sedges; flax, kahikatea, pukatea, maire, tawake.

The house has been made liveable for our specific needs and our first visitor will be a German intern from Ark in the Park, who will be joining our caretaker Anita. Last March we raised \$85,000 through the "Million Dollar Mission" for materials to convert the barn into the Sustainable Wetland Education Centre. This enabled us to start working with Unitec students for the design and construction of the building. But first their Landscape design students did a great job with Master Plans for the overall development of the property, and Architecture students came up with fabulous 'bird hide' designs.

The first plants in the nursery that will provide all the thousands of plants needed to revegetate the alluvial flats have been planted. This nursery, to be run by volunteers from Waitakere Rivercare, will soon be completed and ready to get into full swing.

John Sumich – chair Habitat te Henga subcommittee and trustee Matuku Link.

Spring is in the air... and the sea.

The Muriwai Beach community conservation group, MEACT, placed 32 penguin boxes for little blue penguins (Korora) in the four bays to the south of Muriwai Beach two and a half years ago. Last winter they lost six boxes in a storm surge and didn't see any signs of occupation for two seasons...until last weekend.

Mike Fitchett, one of the volunteers, reports: *"It blew us away to find we had not the one but two penguin chicks. While we were there we surprised a mother and pup seal - not threatened by us, quite happy to just watch us. Also we had a look into one of the greyfaced petrel burrows in the cliffs and we have a big fat fluffy chick in residence."*

Their dedication and persistent predator control definitely paid off this season



Photo: John Stanford



Little blue penguins have a very distinctive footprint. They might be taken for oystercatcher tracks – but their very focussed dash for the safety of the sea is a distinctive characteristic as is their tail mark.

Activities Forest & Bird Waitakere

Third Thursday Talks are evening talks on conservation related topics hosted by our branch. Venue: Kelston Community Centre, cnr Awaroa/Great North Rd. Non-members welcome, join us for supper afterwards. Koha appreciated to cover hall hire. For further information ph Liz 0274 762732 lizanstey@hotmail.com

Third Thursday Talk: Thursday 16th November 7:30pm

Serena A. Simmons: Research on the Norfolk Island Tasman Parakeet

The Tasman Parakeet (*Cyanoramphus cookii*), a close relative of New Zealand's kakariki, is endemic to Norfolk Island. This parakeet is critically endangered and is restricted to the Norfolk Island National Park (NINP) due to the abundance of food resources and high levels of pest management. Serena's research investigates the carrying capacity of the NINP by assessing the vegetation structure of the park and seasonal variation in habitat use by the Tasman Parakeet. This talk will address the importance of this study for conservation management on Norfolk Island, the methods used and early results from this study.

Third Thursday Talk: Thursday 15th February 7:30pm

Jacqui Knight: Monarch Butterflies and their new home in Henderson

Jacqui lives in Blockhouse Bay, Auckland where she is a freelance writer, desktop publisher, and the persona of 'Madam Butterfly' when she visits schools to talk about... butterflies. She is a founding trustee of the Monarch Butterfly New Zealand Trust (MBNZT). Their mission is to increase biodiversity within New Zealand to benefit present and future New Zealanders so that our butterflies and moths and their

habitat is enhanced and protected where possible. The MBNZT is now planning to build a National Butterfly Centre at Tui Glen, Henderson. Jacqui will tell you all about Monarch (and other) butterflies, where they migrate and how we can take better care of them.

Tai Haruru Shared Christmas Lunch, Piha

Saturday 25th November 1 pm, 92 Garden Rd, Piha
RSVP by 20 November to go4shaz@xtra.co.nz

The Tai Haruru sub-committee invites you and partners to our pre-Christmas shared lunch... please bring something for the table to share. We will provide beverages. This annual get together gives us the chance to showcase what the sub-committee continues to do each year to keep this fabulous asset up to scratch and gives you a chance to see Tai Haruru if you've not stayed here before. We look forward to hosting you.

Sharon (secretary) & Tai Haruru sub-committee: Chris Bindon (convener), John White, Zena R, Annalily, Anko, Peter & Jean King (bookings).

Ark in the Park evening Bat Walks

The popular Bat Walks are back!

And Ark in the Park is hosting the walks on the Friday evenings on January 12, 19, 26 and February 2nd. The other evenings Auckland Council staff will be leading the walks. All walks start at 8.15 pm.

First you'll learn about our secretive Long-tailed bats and hopefully spot them as dusk approaches. After dark we then head off for a one hour easy walk along a bush track to look at other nocturnal animals that inhabit the bush and stream.

Adults \$12.50, children \$6.50, family (2 adults and 2 children) \$32.00. Proceeds of the Friday nights go towards Ark in the Park.

Bookings essential with Auckland Council on (09) 3010101.

Contact details Waitakere Branch Committee Members as at March 2017:

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Michael Coote, Motu Manawa and Harbourview	021 622 122	marquisnz@clear.net.nz
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