



### 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](mailto: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.

The year has got off to a fine start with lots of sunny, though windy, weather. We hope that it will be a great year for conservation generally as many national projects such as 'Predator Free NZ' and 'Battle for our Birds' are gaining impetus. A number of local groups (Hamurana, Ngongotaha and Eastside) have begun urban rat eradication programmes. Rotorua F&B will be continuing with the pest control programme at Tikitapu and maintenance of the Violet Bonnington Reserve on Mt Ngongotaha.

To all those who joined Forest & Bird in the last few months of 2018 welcome to the Rotorua Branch. We hope that you will find some of the branch activities interesting, and we look forward to meeting you.

As the Arts Village meeting room is often a little cramped when we have a speaker the committee has sought an alternative venue for 2019. This will be the Netherlands Society clubrooms in Neil Hunt Park, Lynmore (turn first left after The Outdoorsman on Tarawera Rd into the park – there is a cluster of club buildings). Forest & Bird's year end has now changed to 31 December (from end of March) so subscription dates may change. They have also changed to Kiwibank (from ANZ) and if you use online banking the new account number is 38-9019-0456965-01.

### REPORTS

#### Tikitapu Care Group (Manager – Frankie Blakely)

A successful poison operation was carried out in Tikitapu Scenic Reserve in the second half of 2018. Post baiting rat monitoring results were similar to results obtained in 2017 but due to the possum-excluding baffles being added to the bait stations (as reported in our previous newsletter) FAR LESS Pindone poison was



*Stand-off.*

*Photo courtesy of Dave Edwards*

required than in previous years (38.9kg in 2018, 152.4kg in 2017) to achieve this result. There was an 81.8% reduction in rat numbers from the pre-bait assessment.

Six wallaby and 61 possum (56 adult + 5 joey) carcasses were found by the bait stations – just under the target. The Goodnature traps around the perimeter of the reserve provide additional catches during the year.

It is always good to have some new people involved in the project and new volunteers are most welcome. Monthly working bees will be held from May to July to prepare the lines for the baiting in spring. Working bees start at 9am and normally finish by 12 noon

at the latest. There is a “cuppa” and something to eat when you get back to base. Working bee dates for May to July this year are included in the programme of events. The work plan for the baiting programme in spring is yet to be finalised. I would love to hear from you if you are interested in becoming involved with this project. Contact: Frances Blakely Ph 362 8480 email [jandfblakely@gmail.com](mailto:jandfblakely@gmail.com)

### **Violet Bonnington Reserve (VBR)**

The VBR, under the able care of Manager Jim Rofe, provides access to the Mt Ngongotaha Bush and is well used by the public. The Nature Walk in the bush has become a very popular short excursion and the Jubilee Track provides a longer walk up the mountain.

## **TRIP REPORTS**

### **Forest walk – Pureora – Saturday 18 August**



*The Pouakani totara*

As a follow up to the documentary about Pureora Forest, and the 1970's protests that saved part of the forest from logging, eight F&B members made their way out to Pureora Forest on the 18<sup>th</sup> August. Our goal was to find big trees and hopefully hear lots of native birdsong. It was an unhurried day, we could stop and marvel at the majesty of the trees as often, and for as long, as we wished. Travelling into the forest from Kakaho Rd off SH 32 we stopped first at Kakaho Campsite to take in the Rimu Walk which is a 1.7 km loop that takes in many the tall rimu trees of the and also fantastic views of Mt Pureora from the high viewing point. Next we had a wander through the Totara Walk which is situated near Pureora settlement and the start of the Timber Trail cycleway. This easy loop walk winds its way among awe-inspiring tōtara, and also rimu, mātai, miro and kahikatea, the giant podocarps for which Pureora is famous.

Most of us then climbed the 12 m high Forest Tower which takes you part-way to the tree tops. It gives you an entirely different perspective of life up in the forest canopy. Although we didn't see (or even hear) many birds we could see close-up the epiphyte communities on the branches of the bigger trees.

Our final stop for the day was at the Pouakani totara. This very well known tree is the largest recorded totara tree in New Zealand. It is not within Pureora Forest but is located nearby on private land (Wairarapa Moana Incorporation) on SH30. The tree is a 15-20 minute walk from the carpark and is well worth a visit. It is estimated to be about 1,800 years old which is also the time of the last major volcanic eruption in the area. Despite its great age Pouakani is a healthy looking tree.

It was a pleasure to see the enjoyment that everybody derived from engaging with these big trees. A great trip with excellent company.

**Margaret Dick**

### **Tree Planting – Tikitapu Scenic Reserve - 25 August**

There was a great turnout for this joint event with the Rotorua Botanical Society led by Mike Goodwin. Mike and experienced locals had, over some time, cleared an area badly infested with scrambling and woody weeds, leaving a sheltered clearing. By the time planters arrived, plants still in their planter bags were laid out in approximate sites. People just needed to dig a suitable hole, remember to remove the planter bag and tuck the plant into its new home. A couple of children scurried around collecting empty planter bags, and work progressed amazingly quickly. The quota of 500 plants was dealt with in not much more than a couple of hours, to the satisfaction of all. An impressive morning tea provided by Sandra Goodwin was greatly appreciated. It was a pleasant, useful morning's work and we thank all the volunteers who turned out.





Another area is currently being prepared for planting a further 500 plants later in the year (24 August). Do try to fit a planting or work day into your schedule from time to time.

**Elizabeth Miller**

### **Mt Ngongotaha Bush Reserve and Beyond – 8 September**

Driving through town alone it was pleasing to know that at least one person was meeting me for the walk but the Violet Bonnington carpark had plenty of cars and a group of likely looking people standing around the sign. Five people were gathered and between Graham Young, an active member of the now defunct Mt Ngongotaha Restoration Trust, and I we were able to talk about the history of both the Trust and how the Violet Bonnington Trust came about. Ignoring the abandoned couch behind the flax bush we were delighted at the lack of rubbish, on my last visit there had been enough rubbish to fill a small skip and when Jim Rofe, F&B committee, approached the Council they declared the land was not the Councils! Jim soon put them right and the rubbish was cleared away. Pausing on the sunny flat area we were all impressed at the trees, only 7 years ago it had been grassland with young trees.



*Unusual chew marks*



*Neil and Vanessa on the track*

Entering the cool shady bush we were soon engaged in the wonders of the tawa forest and impressed with the interpretation signs along the way. The giant and solitary rata tree with its necklace of iron to protect it from possums, the tall rimu and the occasional large fallen tree and then a puzzle of fallen and tangled trees were encountered. Telling stories and sharing knowledge and puzzling over the unknown (e.g. unusual chew marks on a sapling) we were soon at the top junction with the Jubilee Track where dividing into two groups three went up and three carried on along the Nature Trail. Climbing the Jubilee Track we arrived at Mountain Road sooner than expected, here two went to the top of the Road

and I returned. Checking for cattle damage at the fence by the seat overlooking Rotorua, passing the rata tree and arriving back at the car I reflected on the joy of being with conservation-minded people and the lack of unruly people. Those on the trip were: Neil McCready and Vanessa Cotterill (the summiteers), Judy Gardner, Graham Young, Sonia and Peter Stowe.

**Judy Gardner**

### **Insects galore – 6 October**

The feeler, at least 10 cm long, groped in the dark, apparently oblivious to the 8 eyes peering in the trunk of the long dead tree. The feeler belonged to a large weta, one of the many insects seen by the 14 people on Bryce McQuillan's night trip to the Tikitapu Nature Walk. It was a spring evening and colour was fading from the forest. Dusk and dark are the best times to spot insects, thankfully we were allowed torches. Our eyes were opened to creatures, big and small, everywhere: on the forest floor or making their way slowly along a leaf. We saw weta of all sizes, from tiny to the one with the long feeler. Spiders had left their 'food traps' with spider webs spun from branch to branch. I think quite a few of us were glad that some of the spiders were not inhabiting the webs!

The walk up to the giant pukatea tree and back usually takes about 20 minutes, when looking for insects it takes two and a half hours up to the tree. The return trip was about 30 minutes but with people still calling

out to our experts, 'Look what I have found', what is this?' Thanks to Bryce McQuillan (www.brycephotography.co.nz) for sharing his expertise both at the walk and at the talk the previous evening. Thanks also to Angela Simpson and Carl Wardhaugh who, along with Bryce were so patient with our questions and cries of excitement. My eyes were opened to a whole new world and I could not stop talking about it for days!

**Judy Gardner**

### **Bird identification at Tikitapu – 3 November**

Local bird specialist Carmel Richardson led a group of ten enthusiasts for an early morning session to brush up their bird identification and bird-call skills. Seated in the bush on the Tikitapu F&B Nature Trail we absorbed the information and knowledge, derived from her lifelong passion for birds that Carmel imparted. Tui, chaffinch and tomtit were particularly vocal that morning. We were also entertained by participant Jeanne's ability to mimic bird song using a leaf or piece of grass

**Margaret Dick**

**Guest Speakers:** We had some great speakers in the second half of 2018

**Catherine Kirby** of the Waikato Tree Project showed the documentary "On the Shoulders of Giants" about Pureora Forest and the protest movement that prevented the felling of the giant trees

**Paul Cuming** – sponsored by Bay of Plenty Envirohub ran a well-attended session on bird calls at the Rotorua Library

**Bryce McQuillan** spoke on "Understanding the role of insects in ecosystems" sharing his wonderful photos and his passion for these creatures

**Alyth Grant** spoke about the establishment and development of Orokonui Ecosanctuary near Dunedin.

## **EVENTS CALENDAR February – June 2019**

**Talk – Wednesday 20 February**

**"A Paradigm Shift for Agriculture"**

**Dr Alison Dewes**

Head of Environment, Pāmu (Landcorp)

*Venue:* Netherlands Society Clubroom, Neil Hunt Park, Tarawera Rd (turn left immediately after Outdoorsman shop)

*Time:* 7:30 pm

PAMU is the brand name for Landcorp Farming Ltd. The new name reflects its meaning "to farm" and Kaitiakitanga - guardianship. Its focus is to lead NZ agriculture through innovation and excellence to sustainability. With more than 120 farms PAMU is NZ's largest farmer, developing alternative products such as deer milk. [www.pamunewzealand.com](http://www.pamunewzealand.com) Forest & Bird signed an Accord with PAMU in 2018 sharing a common goal of environmental stewardship.

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### **March 2019 - Sustainable Backyards programme**

Held every March, Sustainable Backyards (SBY) is a month long Calendar of Events hosted throughout

the Bay of Plenty by Envirohub BoP. SBY aims to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of people in the community via informative workshops and activities. These range anywhere from growing your own food, beach/estuary clean ups, consumer choices, cooking, solar home seminars, bush walks, exhibitions, farmers/ night markets, kids events and movie screenings. SBY provides a mechanism for communities and organisations in the Bay of Plenty to have a voice in the protection of their environment and people. Check out the programme at:

<https://envirohub.org.nz/sustainablebackyards/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/sustainablebackyards/>

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**Talk – Tuesday 2 April**

**"Catfish – what are they doing in our Lakes?"**

**Lucas MacDonald**

Biosecurity Officer at the BoP Regional Council

*Venue:* Netherlands Society Clubroom, Neil Hunt Park, Tarawera Rd (turn left immediately after Outdoorsman shop)

*Time:* 7:30 pm

Lucas MacDonald will be speaking on the Regional Council's response to the Brown Bullhead Catfish incursion which was discovered in March 2016. The presentation will cover the issues that Catfish can present, where they are in the Rotorua Lakes area and what Regional Council and their partners are doing to stop the spread to further lakes.

**The talk will be preceded by a brief Annual General Meeting.**

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### **Field Trip – Saturday 20 April at Lake Okareka**

#### **“Steve’s “special place”**

Lake Okareka resident Steve Goodin has been nurturing and restoring a small area of the DOC Scenic Reserve behind his house for many years. Join Steve for a stroll around his ‘special place’ to see and hear about his successes, his failures, the issues he faces, and his goals for the future.

*Meet:* 7 Wattle Grove, Lake Okareka at 9.00am

*Grade:* Easy

*Booking:* Phone Steve on 3628138 or email: [stevegoodin@slingshot.co.nz](mailto:stevegoodin@slingshot.co.nz)

*What to bring:* Good walking shoes, clothes suitable for the weather

### **Tikitapu Scenic Reserve Pest Control Working bees May - June**

These work days will involve clearing bait lines and checking bait stations.

In the second half of 2019 we will be placing toxic baits and later retrieving untaken baits. More detailed information and dates will be given in the July Newsletter.

May - Sunday 5th & Monday 6th

June - Sunday 2nd & Monday 3rd

June - Sunday 30th & July Monday 1st

Volunteers to assist with the pest control programme are welcome.

Contact Frankie Blakely Ph: 362 8480 for more information

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### **Kiwi Conservation Club (KCC)**

The goal of KCC is to connect Kiwi kids to New Zealand's amazing wildlife and wild places. This junior branch of Forest & Bird has great support from the national organisation. Members receive Wild Things magazine which has a range of articles, cartoons, games. The volunteer coordinators arrange adventures for members to explore their nearby environments, get involved in local conservation projects, and much more. Rotorua's KCC coordinator Judy Gardner has a great programme lined up for 2019. If you think you would like to be a part of KCC, or would like to help in any way please contact Judy on 345 7477 or 021 109 3808 email [judyPETEG@gmail.com](mailto:judyPETEG@gmail.com)

### **The Cacophony Project**

Want to measure the bird song at your place? Now you can!

The Cacophony Project is a mix of technical innovation and conservation which started with the development of a simple cell phone based tool that can measure birdsong. “We’re designing our own hardware, collecting a huge amount of data, looking for new ways to analyse sound and video, and building software to show the world what we discover. If we get it right, we’ll discover the best ways to protect New Zealand birds.”

The product is now ready to be more widely tested around New Zealand The project is completely open source. This means that anyone can contribute.

Read about “The Cacophony Project” <[newsletter=cacophony.org.nz@mail252.sea81.mcsv.net](mailto:newsletter=cacophony.org.nz@mail252.sea81.mcsv.net)>

**Rotorua Forest & Bird Committee  
P.O. Box 1489, Rotorua 3040**

**Email address: [rotorua.branch@forestandbird.org.nz](mailto:rotorua.branch@forestandbird.org.nz)  
Facebook: Forest and Bird - Rotorua Branch**

Tania Heasman (Treasurer) ph. 3502021

Nell (Helen) Ranson ph. 347 7819

Frances Blakely ph. 362 8480

Margaret Dick ph. 357 2024

Mike Goodwin ph. 362 8865

Judy Gardner ph. 345 7477

Heather Sayer ph. 3323352

Brian Pickering ph. 0273020057

Jim Rofe ph. 348 6636

