

# Waitaki branch Forest and Bird Newsletter

## Summer 2019



### Botanical and Heritage walk in the Oamaru Public Gardens

Andrina Butcher and Hugh Wood led an historical walk through our Public Gardens as part of the 80th anniversary of the Oamaru Early Settlers Association. The walk and talk included a brief history of some of the features of the gardens and a look at a range of trees from around the world. Some, such as the collection of large trees from the Himalayas that stand near the Craig Fountain could have been grown from seed by James Kidd, the first Head Gardener in 1876. He had asked the Borough Council for money to buy trees and they subsequently gave him 30 pounds. This amount would not have bought many plants so he spent it on seeds. This gave him a much greater variety and quantity of plants.

There are still a number of trees that by their size alone could have come from the original plantings but a greater number would have been lost through storms, weather, neglect or design changes. However, all the following Superintendents would have made their mark on the gardens by planting replacement and new trees and shrubs. The result is a fabulous collection of trees from Europe, Asia, the Americas and Australasia that provide something of interest all year round. Council has recently been doing a good job at labelling the trees, with more to come. This makes identification much easier and we urge you to have a wander. You will be pleasantly surprised!



Mature Red Beech  
(*Fuscospora fusca*,  
formerly *Nothofagus*)  
on the left, near the  
aviary.

Mature Kowhai  
(*Sophora microphylla*)  
on the right in the  
native gardens.



## Chloe Searle visits Sirocco at the Orokonui Sanctuary

Last September Mark and I went down to Orokonui Sanctuary to see Sirocco the kakapo. This was my third encounter with Sirocco. I voyaged to Ulva Island to see him at his first public appearances back in 2005. Then I saw him at Orokonui a few years ago. If you haven't had a chance to see a kakapo I highly recommend this experience. They are such incredible birds and it is inspiring to see one up close and learn more about what the kakapo recovery team get up to. As someone growing up in the 1980s and 1990s the kakapo conservation programme really captured my imagination and it is thrilling to see numbers increase from 51 individuals back in 1995.

This summer is on track to be a very productive breeding season for kakapo, which is just as well given numbers are still less than 150 individuals. All going well by the end of the season they might reach near 200. An important milestone on a long journey. If you are interested in what is happening I can recommend the podcast from Alison Balance on radio NZ. Well worth a listen:

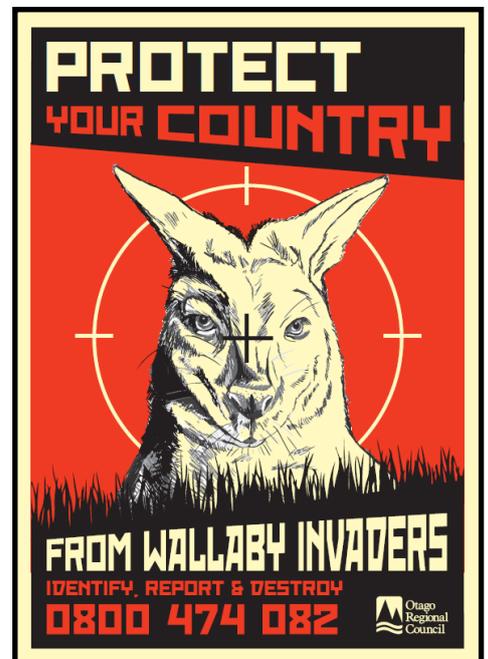
<https://www.radionz.co.nz/programmes/kakapo-files>



### Weeding and tree planting on Cape Wanbrow

Fortunately, this year we have had sufficient rainfall (so far) to nurture the 6,000+ trees and shrubs planted on the Cape in the last 5 years.

However, of course, the weeds have also enjoyed the warm wet weather and the exotic grasses have been abundantly tall this year. We are lucky to have a great band of people willing to put in half a day's work, planting and weeding. Here is one of our enthusiastic young helpers, eradicating some wilding pine seedlings.



## Waitaki Forest and Bird finalist award from Community Trust

Mayor, Gary Kircher presented the Waitaki branch of Forest and Bird with a Finalist Award from the Waitaki Community Trust. Thank you.

## Upcoming events

**Thursday 14th February** at 6pm at the Oamaru Library. Kevin Allan from the Otago Regional Council will explain what council are doing about the wallaby invasion into Otago and how we can help.

**Saturday 23rd February at 1.30** beach clean up at **Awamoa Beach**. Meet at carpark opposite Old Bones Lodge. Do your bit to reduce ocean pollution. Please wear suitable footwear and sun protection.

**Sunday 3rd March. Gards Rd Reserve working bee**. Meet at Gards Rd car park at 10am or at Towey St at 8.30. Help us find the rare native *Lepidium* and *Carmichaelia* and weed around them. Please wear boots, hat, gloves, knee pads, long trousers and shirts and bring some loppers.