



Photo Coastal Nikau Forest

Editor: Russell Bell, Email [russelljamesbell@gmail.com](mailto:russelljamesbell@gmail.com). Phone 0212266047. Your feedback on this newsletter would be most welcome as would a contribution to future newsletters.

### **Next Event:**

There is no evening meeting in January, instead our next event is a BBQ at Kaitawa Reserve, off Kaitawa Crescent, Paraparaumu (<https://goo.gl/maps/suvdJwwL6SFJ9TYv6>) . Members can see the Outdoor Classroom facilities driven by Forest and Bird, and partly sponsored by us. Come along on Sunday 2nd February at 12:30pm to join us for the sausage sizzle, which will be followed by a guided walk around the reserve for those who wish to explore (appropriate footwear required). The committee will provide some sausages, bread and tomato sauce, and BBQs to cook your own food. Please bring a drink and a seat. RSVP to Peter Kentish: [pk2003\\_595@hotmail.com](mailto:pk2003_595@hotmail.com)

### **Ghost Divers**

Next public Meeting The next evening meeting will be February 26th when Ghost Divers - a Wellington group will tell us of their experiences diving and collecting trash around our sea shores . They see the life that is near our shores and do something about it.

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## Chair's Opinion Piece

### Australian Forest Fires

When I first heard about climate change, I could see some of its repercussions for humans. Diseases associated with insect hosts may spread towards the poles, changing conditions might make our agricultural crops unsuitable and of course sea level rise and larger storms would effect coastal communities.

Now, when I use the internet to look at the effects of climate change, it shows that the effects are spread around the globe - burning in the arctic, droughts in the Amazon, fires in USA, storms in the Pacific, heat waves in Europe, etc. On TV I could see the damage to cities, towns, roads, bridges, and see people with nothing left, not enough food and no power. Naturally enough, the news reports the loss of human lives, livelihoods, homes, services and utilities.

For a long time, I struggled to connect the loss of biodiversity and climate change. Perhaps that was because TV news concentrated on human landscapes, not natural ones. The Australian forest fires changed that. The death count of people is in the tens. An estimate of the number of native animals is over one billion (1000,000,000). The sheer number of trees and other plants that have gone would be staggering. Within the areas burnt, there have been special reserves for rare and endangered plant and animal species, so not only have unprecedented numbers of animals declined, but we will no doubt find that there are species extinctions as well.

I imagine the increase of atmospheric carbon dioxide from burnt vegetation, animals, buildings far out-weigh the initiatives of those

Australians who have been restoring the natural environment.

In contrast to Australia, I read recently of California's climate change initiatives under the 7-year governorship (2003 - 2011) of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Greenhouse cap 2006 with reduction by 30% by 2020 and 80% by 2050, planting one million trees, one million solar roofs, no idling laws, tax incentives to switch to electric and hybrid vehicles, the construction of a chain of refuelling stations for hydrogen vehicles plus the toughest fuel efficiency standards 2006, 5000 megawatts of new solar power in 2009 alone and strict green building standards for new buildings 2009. (Forty percent of California emissions are from vehicles.) Some of Schwarzenegger's reforms may not have survived the next governor, but what a legacy in only seven years.

The world needs to get serious about climate change. It should have a long time ago. The loss of the 30 or so people in Australia is sad but the loss of so much forest and its wildlife is tragic for Australia and the world.

New Zealand has taken more action against climate change than Australia but in my opinion it is still small. The size of the fires of Australia, the losses and the smoke over NZ, I hope will bring the losses from climate change home to New Zealanders. We must do much more. I believe each of us should feel the sacrifice we are making to redress this problem. If not now, we will be forced by climate to sacrifice far more in future.

*"The one thing we need more than hope is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere."* Greta Thunberg 2018

## Conservation News

This year will be an important year for Kapiti Mana Forest and Bird. Every 10 years, Greater Wellington has to review its Regional Parks policies. The document is called the *Parks Network Plan*. When consultation on this plan began during 2018, the Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park ran a Forest and Bird style campaign to increase recreation and conservation in the park. Forest and Bird supported the campaign. We were pleased when the GW planners agreed with us. But

this caused significant dissent in GW. My opinion is that the planners, supported by most of the scientific staff and some of the councillors will prevail. Farming will end, or if not, will be progressively retired from the peatlands. Recreation and conservation through these areas will increase.

There is a threat that GW will want to plant the former wetland areas (indicated by peat soils) rather than rewet them and restore them as

wetlands. They may want this because of the promise of future carbon credits.

From a climate change perspective, we need to convince them to rewet the peatlands and restore them as wetlands. This will stop them emitting huge quantities of CO<sub>2</sub>. This is far more effective than planting forest on the peatlands. The non-peat sand dunes can be planted in forest.

## Wilding

In the last few months, I have been reading about wilding or rewilding. This is about letting nature take over on land that perhaps should not have been farmed in the first place or should not now be farmed with the threat of climate change and biodiversity loss. It differs from restoration because it allows nature to do the vast majority of the work.

Not controlling what happens, and reintroductions of animals that have been missing from the landscape are two of the tenets of rewilding. The reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone National Park thereby reestablished the different predator/prey relationship is part of this movement. In England, reintroducing pigs to dig the ground, beavers that changed the river scapes thereby reflooding areas, deer, longhorn cattle and Exmoor ponies to browse grasses and trees. All of these were reintroduced onto the same land with no fences to keep them separate. The animals were chosen because they were close to what was originally there. Then the owners, mainly, stood back and watched. The reintroductions did not include predators such as lynx, wolf, bear and wolverines that may have kept animal numbers in check. The reintroduction of predators was not acceptable to people in England. Partly because of the lack of predators, some species increased in number until death by starvation was the only population limit. That resulted in staving animals and rotting carcasses. While this is all part of a wild environment, it also was not be acceptable in England especially for species like horses. The English wilding project finally decided to cull cattle and horses and found markets for the meat. But in Oostvaardersplassen in the Netherlands, dead animals were moved away from public view,

From a biodiversity perspective, the Wellington region is not short of forest but we are very short of wetlands having less than 3% compared with 10% nationally. Once the peatlands are rewetted, they can be encouraged to restore themselves as wetlands and that is where F&B gains. An additional 200 hectare wetland in the south of Kapiti will represent the most significant ecological gain Kapiti Mana F&B has made in many years. And the gain will be both important to climate change and biodiversity.

then left. Dead animals were considered part of the ecosystem.

So what were the results? Amazing. The land became vibrant again. New things were discovered, such as oak regeneration out of bramble bushes where animals could not browse them. The land became more diverse because while some areas developed forests, other areas were cleared by browsers and beavers creating clearings and new wetlands. The large variety of habitats suited a wider range of birds, insects, and mammals so the number of species dramatically increased.

Another benefit was that much more carbon was trapped in the environment in the form of forests, deep roots, perennial plants rather than annuals, greater animal biomass overall including a very lively soil biomass. Tractors and spraying equipment was sold and agrochemicals were not bought because there was little or no intervention.

How was this paid for? Initially by grants but later by visitors, teaching classes and specialist food supplies and a specialist shop.

How would this play out in NZ? I don't know. We have lost so much. No moas to munch trees, fewer animals that dig the earth, no possibility of reintroduction of our eagle and many introduced mammals to confuse the results. But I am sure there are lessons to be learned from it and with very large projects like the Yukon to Yellowstone conservation initiative, rewilding, where control is impossible, will be a conservation subject that I think we will see much more of. References are;

- Wilding by Isabella Tree 2018.
- New Scientist 13 October 2018.

## Restoration Contribution To Kapiti and Mana



### A WETLAND RESTORATION PROJECT WITH OCEAN AND ISLAND VIEWS

The Pharazyn Reserve (<https://goo.gl/maps/hTgaqBAEyZtyHfvR8>) is a KCDC project for the rehabilitation of about 40 hectares stretching from the old Waikanae sewerage distillation ponds, already rich in birdlife, at the junction of Rutherford Drive and Paetawa Road, and across the road to the beach.



Children from Waikanae schools plant about 2600 natives in the area annually for Arbor Day. There is also enrichment planting underway. The redevelopment, which started in 2007, envisages the rehabilitation of the former wetland area, and the creation of passive recreation areas and walkways from the wetlands down to the beach.



Volunteers meet KCDC workers at the reserve on Friday mornings 8.15 armed with equipment and a thermos, to maintain existing, and prepare new, areas for planting. More helpers are very welcome - call Noel Sundgren on 022 353 4436, or email [sundgrenz@hotmail.com](mailto:sundgrenz@hotmail.com).

## Branch Committee Contacts

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## Other Kapiti Coast Conservation and Restoration Organisations

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