



NEWSLETTER May 2020

Kāpiti - Mana Forest & Bird

The north west corner of Queen Elizabeth Park

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Chair's Opinion Piece

I have been working on saving the wetlands of Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) for about 4 years. When I started, I was concerned about small wetland in farming areas. There was also a Greater Wellington (GW) document called the Sustainable Land Use Plan (SLUP) that told GW to set aside quite a lot of land as wetland. It was being ignored by GW. GW Parks seemed to be more sympathetic to farming the park rather than using it for recreation and conservation.

As the discussion/debate with GW continued, I realised that there was the potential for far more wetland than I had realised. I thought that there was one connected 80 hectares (ha) potential wetland north of Waterfall Stream. Also I realised that the industrial farming at QEP was not consistent with the legislation that the park is required to operate under - the Reserves Act. Under the licence, grazing is OK but industrial farming is not. After some time, I realised that in fact the flat land south of

Waterfall Stream was also old wetland, giving a total of about 200 ha. In fact, all the flat land alongside SH1 was part of the wetland that Maori canoed through and early Europeans called the Great Swamp. The wetland was a historical and geological feature that the Reserves Act says should be protected. Instead, it was being converted to farmland. Then I found out all 200 ha were peat forming wetland and when drained would emit huge amounts of carbon dioxide but if rewetted would stop emitting carbon dioxide almost immediately and over time would revert back to a functioning wetland and start to absorb carbon dioxide and convert it to peat.

The GW website bemoaned the fact that we had only 2-3% of wetlands left in the Wellington Region and said they were precious.

If this wetland was re-established, it would be the biggest on the coast and a regionally significant wetland. Not only that but it is the best bang for the buck climate change opportunity on the coast.

The Friends of QEP managed to get the wetland recognised, calling it the Raumati Wetland though unknown to us, it was earlier known as the Whareroa wetland. The Maclean Trust negotiated with GW to save 30ha of it and that area is being restored. We argued with GW over grazing versus farming and GW has stopped the conversion of another 23ha of the wetland. Central office of Forest and Bird is currently in discussion with GW over this legal issue.

Something to enjoy

This is a youtube clip looking back on Coronavirus from a few years from today and putting it into perspective, perhaps.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nw5KQMXDiM4>

Something to do?

This is a pro climate change petition from Low Carbon Kāpiti and the Kāpiti Climate Change Action Group to Kapiti Coast District Council. Their goal is to reach 500 signatures and they need more support. You can read more and sign the petition here:

<http://chnng.it/T8hTYSL2BB>

The next step of the journey was the rewriting of the Parks Network Plan (PNP). This gave us the opportunity to influence the future of the park and the wetlands. Was its future to be conservation (and climate mitigation) and recreation, or farming and limited recreational access.

We put a lot of effort into influencing the PNP and so did others especially a group who wanted changes to similar treatment of Belmont Regional Park - large scale industry farming with very limited access. We ran a petition which was supported by 781 signatures and we ran the 100 strong "Walk in the Park" through the wetlands.

The PNP review process has taken a lot longer time than planned but that has been a good thing. GW councillor re-elections were held and there have been significant changes - (its greener).

On 29th of April the council voted for new directions for all parks. Conservation, recreation and access have won. Farming will end or be minimised. The direction is now set. The timing will be an area of interest.

I congratulate the council over this decision. Not only will it be good for biodiversity and nearby communities, it will significantly help GW become carbon neutral.

Russell

Basket Fungi

You might be interested to know that we saw basket fungi this week on the cycleway near Nga Manu. They were eaten by Māori who called them 'tutae kehua' which means 'ghost droppings'.

Evidently, being part of the stink horn family they smell horrendous when mature (this is how they attract flies to spread their spores). They usually appear in autumn after rain.

To read far more about them, go to <http://www.terrain.net.nz/friends-of-te-henui-group/fungi-te-henui/basket-fungi.html>



Barking Gecko

During lockdown, I walked to the back of my section (See photo on last newsletter) and saw the lizard in the photo on the grass. It ran across the path and under the lemon bush. We knew where it had gone, so I stood ready with my phone (camera) and Pene pulled aside the branches of the lemon. For scale the black tube is a 20mm sprinkler hose. It was identified as a Barking (or Wellington Green) Gecko, quite big, probably male and hopefully part of a clutter. Google tells me is it a clutter of geckos and a lounge of lizards.



Forest and Bird Finances

Since Covid 19 happened, many companies and organisations have asked the public and government for financial support. Unfortunately, the contributions to Forest and Bird have suffered the same fate. Individuals and companies have withdrawn their support because of the changed financial situation. But at this time, when the government is deciding how to stimulate the economy and fastback "shovel ready" initiatives, we need the voice of Forest and Bird and others to steer at least some of that money to projects that will benefit our biodiversity and help set up our infrastructure for a more sustainable future. That may include helping our farmers to move towards regenerative agriculture. To do that F&B needs to be strong. Like most organisations, it will not survive as it was before Covid 19, but it does still need to be affective. The branch has given Central Office \$10,000 to help and other branches have also given support. If you can help. please do.

International Energy Agency Statements

I have included because of my opinion piece last month. Russell

“The coronavirus is turning into an unprecedented international crisis, with serious repercussions for people’s health and economic activity. Although they may be severe, the effects are likely to be temporary. Meanwhile, the threat posed by climate change, which requires us to reduce global emissions significantly this decade, will remain. We should not allow today’s crisis to

compromise our efforts to tackle the world’s inescapable challenge.”

“Governments are drawing up stimulus plans in an effort to counter the economic damage from the coronavirus. These stimulus packages offer an excellent opportunity to ensure that the essential task of building a secure and sustainable energy future doesn’t get lost amid the flurry of immediate priorities.”

Predator Free NZ

Every week of the COVID Lockdown, Predator Free New Zealand is releasing a free new webinar. There are seven so far, covering a range of topics from layout and maintenance of traps, choice of traps and locations, and even becoming a bat

spotter. These can be viewed here:

<https://predatorfreenz.org/resources/2020-lockdown-webinars/> and viewers can sign up to be notified by email when a new one is available.

Big changes at Regional Parks and Queen Elizabeth Park

Below is part of the Draft Regional Parks Network plan recently approved by GW Councillors. It has only those bits that I thought would be of interest to F&B members. The next step is a further vote by councillors and a second round of consultation.

Part of Draft Parks Network Plan 2020-2030 Approved by GW Councillors 29/4/20

All Park Goals

Protect and restore high levels of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystem health to enhance indigenous biodiversity and ecosystem services

Parks are managed in highly sustainable ways, building environmental resilience as part of the natural solution to climate change

Core values

Natural heritage; We value the protection and enhancement of the natural environment of parks for future generations

Access; We value having a diversity of satisfying and memorable recreation experiences, and support full and easy access to parks for health and wellbeing benefits

Climate change; We value and utilise parks as a natural solution in helping to reduce the effects of climate change

Some statements in the Draft Plan

Greater Wellington acknowledges that there is still much work to do in parks before high levels of natural heritage are restored across all parks. Restoring and enhancing wetlands and waterways and working alongside mana whenua and community partners is a key part of this work.

Broad-scale restoration of the areas of park currently grazed by stock is proposed in this Draft Plan. This key shift will help Greater Wellington visibly demonstrate good land care practice and deliver multiple ecosystem health, climate change mitigation and recreation benefits.

By restoring and protecting our parks ecosystems, we will be making a significant contribution towards reducing our region's carbon footprint. The protection and restoration of peatlands, which are a particular type of wetland, is especially important.

Restoring wetlands, phasing out stock grazing activities and progressively restoring natural heritage are key activities for the next ten years and well beyond.



This is the park after a large rain event trying to turn back to a wetland.

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