

NEWSLETTER June 2020

Kāpiti - Mana Forest & Bird



The Milford Track - Harris Saddle

Editor: Russell Bell, Email russelljamesbell@gmail.com. Phone 0212266047. Your feedback on this newsletter would be most welcome as would contributions to future newsletters.

Contents

Branch adverts

Chairmans Opinion Piece - Covid learning

Queen Elizabeth Park - Update

Taupo Swamp and environs

The Upper Taieri River Scroll Plains

Ajax - The kea dog

Kea Facts

Branch contacts

New Chairman

I will be standing down at the forthcoming AGM. We simply need someone who is younger and interested in more activities. I am happy to continue with conservation and other activities. Contact me if you're willing to stand.

Russell

New Secretary

Irene has resigned because she is shifting to Palmerston North so the branch needs a new secretary. Please don't wait until the AGM to volunteer.

Meeting Survey

If you [click the link](#) you will find a very short survey which is about our monthly meetings and other activities you might like us to undertake. It will take about one minute and will help us greatly if you complete the survey.

Chair's Opinion Piece

Covid 19 taught me one serious lesson. I had always thought that peoples behaviour would have to change to solve the problem of climate change.

Covid 19 forced change upon us. In our case, we talked more and caught up on those things that really should have been done around the house. We found local things to do that did not involve commercial enterprises. We walked on the streets, we ate at home and forwent our coffees out. Our car hardly left our carport. We even cooked a special breakfast on Thursdays instead of going out for breakfast.

We saw changes around the world. The reduced activity benefited the environment and over time would do the same for biodiversity (perhaps).

But as the Covid levels went down in NZ and the old freedoms increased, we have seen a spring back to what we did before with the retention of just a few necessary behaviours (e.g. social distancing). That convinced me that while there is an immediate disaster, behaviours will change, but when disaster recedes previous behaviours will return, and quickly.

Queen Elizabeth Park - Update

I have constructed the map below so you can see where we are at. I have also seen a map where Greater Wellington indicates proposes additional retirements from the farm lease.

The best way of approaching the map is to look first at specific recreation in purple. e.g. horses and model aircraft and trains (It is a recreation reserve after all). Next look at the orange (retired for a long time - Passive recreation. Green is what has been retired since the Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park (FoQEP) started arguing for wetlands. I have labeled all W for wetlands or D for dunes. Blue is what GWRC now indicates may be retired (possibly at the end of the first five years of the farm lease - 31 Aug this year. It looks much

Because climate change is going to affect populations sporadically, behavioural change is unlikely to be sustained. So, we will need structural change or engineering changes. In other words, people are unlikely to reduce their driving or flying mileage; instead cars and planes will have have non-polluting fuels or public transport will have to get good and fast and cheap enough to compete. Zoom will have to get real enough to compete with an actual meeting.

That probably means that we will not meet the required target and ourselves and our children will have to go through the climatic disasters that are coming our way, at a place near you soon enough.

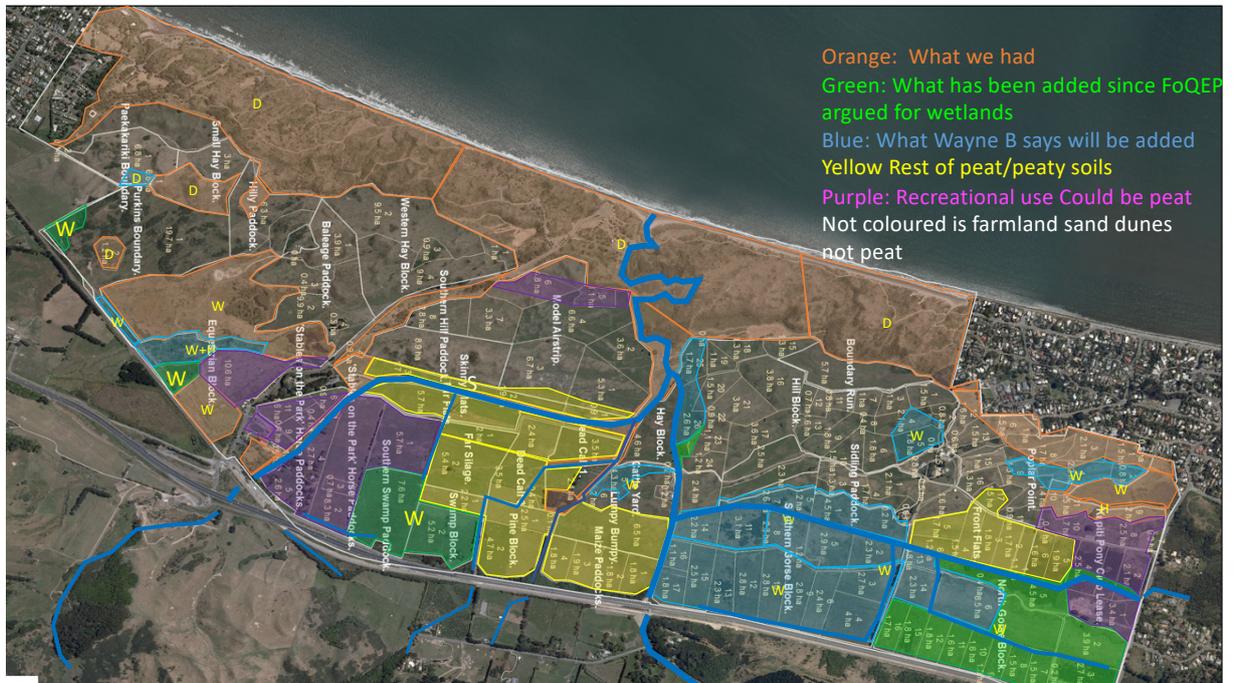
I remember, in another context, I hoped the localised disasters would come sooner, so we would go through the change earlier, and the overall negative effects for the people and planet were less.

That has left me relatively despondent.

Russell

more like a farm within a park rather than the reverse. FoQEP and Forest and Bird are particularly interested in peat forming wetlands (due to the dearth of wetlands and climate change). The bits of peat wetland that remain in the farm licence are shown in yellow. This is the land which could be contentious within GW, and without, because it is drained carbon dioxide emitting peat. The rest that is not coloured is farmland essentially on stable sand dunes.

Now in order to rewet the peat, not only does GW need to block manmade drains but also needs to return the water, that now is channeled directly through them to the sea, to the wetlands. They need to be un-channelled,



and dispersed out onto the wetlands. This is a difficult thing for people to accept because we have been preventing water flooding into paddocks for generations. But the peat needs rewetting and there is insufficient water falling on it to do the job just by blocking drains.

Some people have a concern about the effects of wet peat under the expressway (or houses). So I have included a link to a [newspaper article](#) on the subject from the Waikato: It's quite revealing.

Residential Development of land alongside Taupo Swamp - Update

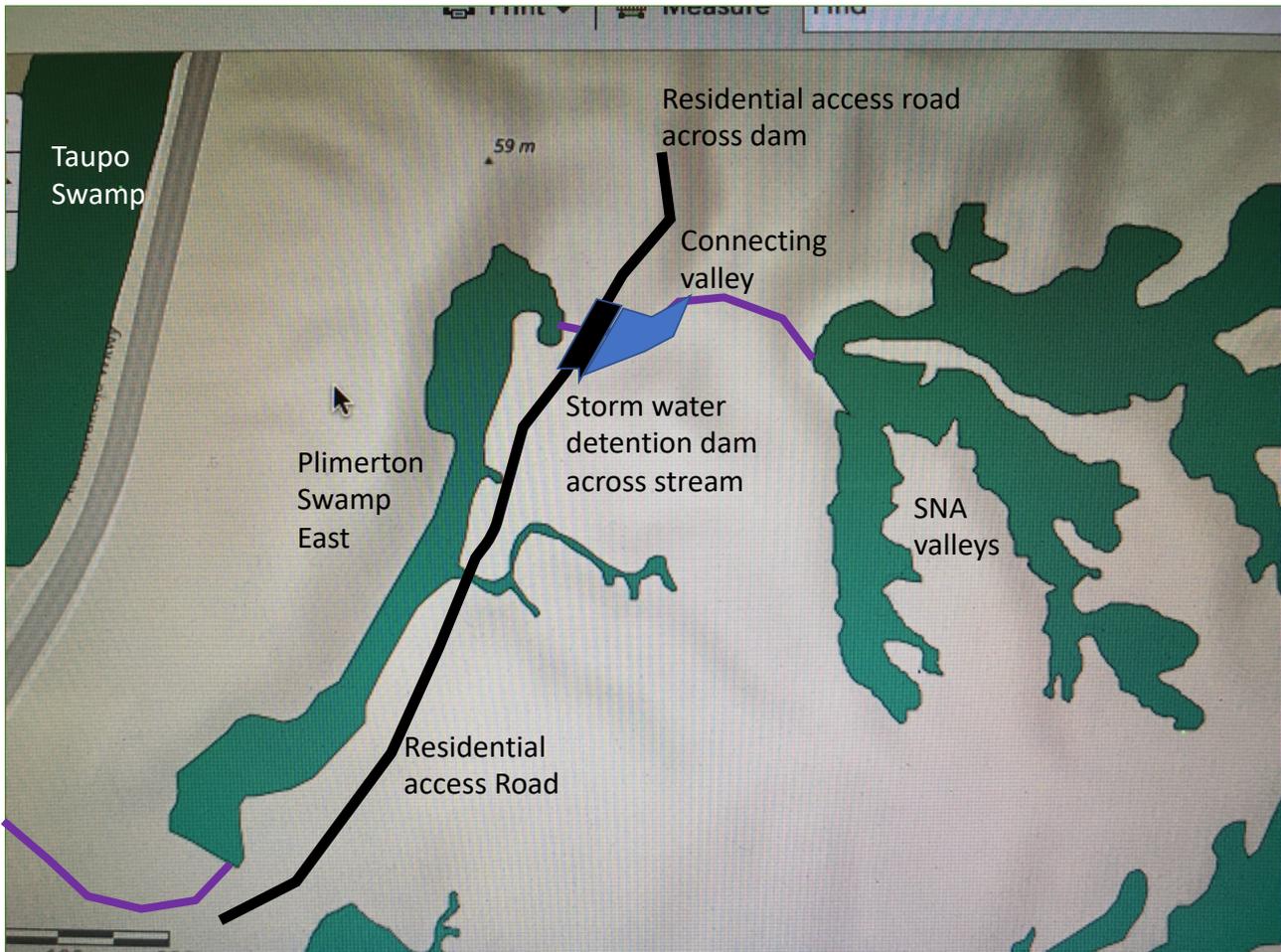
Minister Parker has given Porirua City Council a directive to proceed with the plan change to allow the residential Development of land alongside (to the north-east of) Taupo Swamp. This is a fast track of the proposal. Decisions will be made by a Commissioner. Minister Parker also stated that Taupo Swamp, the Significant Natural Areas and ecologically significant sites are to be protected.

Significant Natural Areas (SNAs)

To find out where the SNAs are, we can look at pcc.maps.arcgis.com (SNAs) and we find quite a few in the development area. The unfortunate thing is that they are not connected. An instance of this is the rather large SNA of interconnected valleys (See SNA valleys below). The valley continues down the

valley to connect to Plimmerton Swamp East (shown in purple). This connecting valley is not protected in any way. There are three issues.

1. The two areas are essentially disconnected apart from water flowing between them. This is also true for the output of Plimmerton Swamp East and its connection to the southern end of Taupo Swamp (also shown in purple).
2. The development will discharge water from the development's hard surfaces (roofs, drives etc.) much quicker than would be discharged from natural systems. To slow the discharge, an earth dam with a flow restricting hole will be built across the valley between the protected valleys and Plimmerton Swamp East. Excess discharge will build behind the dam (in the blue area) and be released as rainfall



decreases. This is a problem for the passage of native fish. There is also a build up of mud behind such dams. They become dangerous for people and usually are fenced off. The dam further isolates the protected valleys from Plimmerton Swamp East.

3. The developers intend to construct a road across the top of the dam further isolating the two areas.

Connectedness is always a significant issue for natural areas. Imagine if we constructed a residential area without telecommunications, roads, power, water and sewage connections to the outside world. The residents could only connect between their own properties and walk through, say, scrub to connect to the outside world. This is why isolated natural areas are not as valuable as they should be.

Other issues

Many of the smaller ecological areas are not shown as SNAs, so unless they are protected

by the Ministers words "and ecologically significant sites" which I doubt , they can be ignored. We have seen the developers initial plans and they do indeed plan to fill and put houses over these smaller ecological sites (small wetlands and a very large Totara that should be listed as a notable tree).

It seems that Porirua City Council PCC does not want more protected land so instead, the development company intends to put the areas into sections and covenant them. This means that the way these are looked after or mistreated will depend on the owner.

Summing up

Our issues with the development are:

Not all ecological areas are protected. Some will be eliminated.

The connections between ecological areas will be used for construction of rain event smoothing dams, roads etc. further isolating

them. Rain event smoothing (to mimic a natural situation) is of critical importance and probably should be done at property level and road level.

Our branch will be submitting, but you are also invited to submit.

Plimmerton Farm submissions

Porirua City Council is consulting on a plan change to allow a streamlined process (aka fast track) for the suburb development of Plimmerton Farm. This is your chance to make your views known concerning protection of natural and heritage values. For some more detail follow this [link](#) to the latest newsletter from Friends of Taupo Swamp and Catchment.

P.S. Plimmerton Swamp East was once a significant arm of Taupo Swamp. Now State Highway one, industry, a highway, a weigh station, and a paddock now sit on the land between the two.

The consultation time frame is short, so act soon. [You can view the documents here.](#)

Submissions need to be in by 2 July 2020.

The Upper Taieri River Scroll Plain wetlands

The Upper Taieri River Scroll Plain wetlands are three large wetlands on the Upper Taieri River - the Styx basin wetland 560-600m ASL, The Maniototo basin wetlands 360-380m ASL and the Taieri Lakes wetlands 340-360m ASL.

They cover 2,727 ha and have nationally and regionally significant landscape and biodiversity values. If you look on Google Earth for the town (or place) of Paerau, you will see something like the image above. If you zoom out, you will see the scrolls in both valleys and they are both huge.



A scroll plain is a flood plain of a meandering river that changes its course during flooding, leaving ox-bow lakes and depressions that hold water for varying periods of time. The Upper Taieri Scroll Plain is New Zealand's best example of such a meandering river.

Key to the long-term survival of the wetland values of the Upper Taieri River Scroll Plain are the dynamic natural forces that occur during seasonal flooding which create new wetlands and change existing ones.

The scroll plain's unique wetland status is recognised in and protected by the Otago Regional Council's Regional Plan: Water as a "significant wetland". The Central Otago District Council's District Plan describes the same area as an "area of significant indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna and wetlands". The Department of Conservation administers reserves and covenants on the scroll plain and surrounding areas, covering more than 500ha



however most of the scroll plain wetlands are privately owned.

During lockdown, Eugenie Sage announced that John Falconer (a Maniototo farmer) is protecting the largest remaining scroll plain wetland in New Zealand. The report said the 45ha area of the Upper Taieri Scroll Plain wetland near Paerau in the Styx Basin was the largest of its type in New Zealand, and one of

the world's most significant examples of this type of wetland area. Otago Fish and Game will manage the area as a publicly accessible Wildlife Management Reserve in perpetuity.

Regarding wetlands in general, Eugenie Sage said New Zealand had lost more than 90% of its wetlands and, since 1990, 23% of the country's remaining wetlands had been lost — 97% of that loss happened on private land.

Ajax the Kea Dog

A working dog's life in the high country, by Corey Mosen.

A friend lent me this local book on New Zealand's only conservation dog (Ajax) trained to find Kea and their nests (with owner Corey Mosen). A light and informative read, which taught me a lot about kea, and the grit it takes

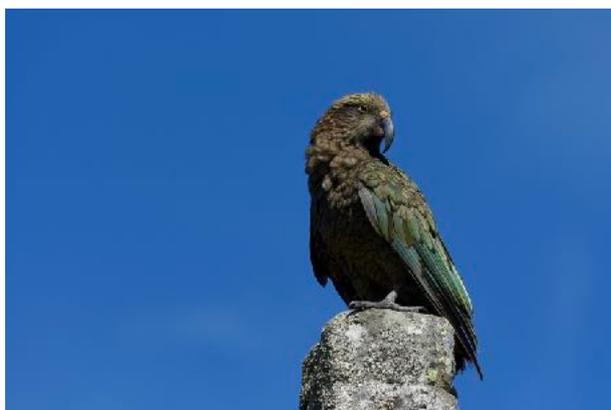
find them. This book is suitable for dog lovers, bird lovers, conservationists, and teens interested in a different career too. Follow link for [pictures](#)

Ajax has his own [movie](#), his own [facebook](#) page and [instagram](#) account too, and is a bird and conservation ambassador for the [Kea Conservation Trust](#).

Kea facts

10 things I learned about Kea reading the Ajax book.

- Kea are more at risk than yellow eyed penguins, great spotted kiwi, banded dotterel, and the whio or blue duck
 - Over 150000 Kea were shot for a bounty before they were protected by the Wildlife Act in 1970, and killing continued for 16 years after that until they received full protection. It is completely illegal to kill a Kea now, but it still happens
 - There are less than 5000 Kea left in the wild
 - Kea hate the taste of cinnamon or garlic
 - Kea are highly collaborative, creative and curious, especially if somethings malleable, and they love colour and noise
 - Kea usually pair for life, and usually use the same burrow to fledge their chicks
 - Kea occur throughout the Southern Alps but also down to sea level at Kaiteriteri, and to the Inland Kaikoura's
 - Kea won New Zealand Bird of the Year 2017
 - NEVER feed a kea, they remember, tell their mates, and come back
- The [Kea Conservation Trust](#) was set up in 2006, with the aim of finding out how many Kea there actually were still out there, problems they faced and how to solve them, including through education and working with the community.



Kea on top of the cairn at McKinnons Pass (Milford Track)

Landcare Research

Biosecurity Bonanza webinars

These are a range of recorded webinars (about 30 minutes long) on a range of biosecurity issues from natural native plant viruses, to introducing dung beetles, to using artificial intelligence in pest monitoring. Take a look [here](#).

Branch Committee Contacts

Chair: Russell Bell russelljamesbell@gmail.com
M 021 2266047

Treasurer Peter Kentish
PK2003_595@hotmail.com P 04 298 1265

NZ Garden Bird Survey

This year's survey runs from 27 June to 5 July 2020. Why not enjoy an hour counting birds in the garden, and recording what you see? It helps us know how well they're doing around the country. Find out more [here](#).

Pene Burton Bell. pburtonbell@gmail.com
M 021 1592409

Tony Ward. kotareg@exta.co.nz 04 293 7203

Sue Boyde sm.boyde@gmail.com M 0211198085