



North Taranaki Forest & Bird + Kiwi Conservation Club news

P.O. Box 1029 New Plymouth 4340

June to September 2020

From the Chair

Hello fellow Forest & Birder

Well, it's been a strange year with a lot of compromises. The committee had its first online meeting using Zoom during lockdown. This proved very successful and was good training for me, as the national council meeting and Forest & Bird AGM was also held via Zoom. This also went well.

The reserves are still surviving, but lockdown meant we could not do anything. As we are now heading into winter, things will probably stay on the slow burner.

Because our own AGM fell during lockdown we have postponed it until the 12th of July. The AGM is a good opportunity to have your say. Maybe trapping, weeding, or track maintenance is not your thing, but consider coming on the committee. We don't have a lot of meetings and they are quite sociable.

Items for the agenda are welcome. Contact any member of the committee (see sidebar).
~ Tony Collins

ABOVE: Tom & Don's bush, 9 June 2020. Carol Burgess from the QEII trust, in company of Peter Haines and Pipi, was making a periodic check of the fences and the reserve in general.

**There is no KCC news this issue
but keep your eyes on your email
for notice of upcoming events.**

Who's who at North Taranaki F&B & KCC

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Mid-winter celebration and get-together/AGM 2020 Tawa Glen, Sunday 12 July, 1.15pm

Long time no see! Our last event was on 22nd of February, and we all know what happened shortly after that! We therefore thought that our next event should be a mid-winter, hurrah-we're-back-together meeting, and combine it with the AGM (which would otherwise have been in April). The branch will shout a few plates of afternoon tea fare as well as cups of tea and coffee.

This event will be on Sunday 12 July. Meet at 1.15 in the side room of Tawa Glen café on Mountain Road, grab yourself a cuppa and a bite to eat, and find a seat. The AGM will be at 2.00pm. It won't take long and then we can relax and continue our post-lockdown catch-up.

We look forward to seeing you there!

~ Janet Hunt

It's on us!
**To celebrate mid-winter
& hurrah-for-level-1
join us for tea and cakes
at the AGM**
**Please let us know if you
intend to come so we can
organise the food —
phone or email
janethuntnz@outlook.com**

Recent event: Te Henui bush walk

On Saturday 22nd February Carolyn Brough showed a group around the lovely tract of forest that she and her husband John own alongside the Te Henui Stream. We followed that with shared lunch at their house.

It was also the occasion that our health and safety

preparedness was tested and found wanting — ironically by the two committee members who had recently completed a Red Cross refresher course — the chair, Tony Collins, and Janet Hunt! Both were stung by an unidentified species of bee that was disturbed and took offence (or should that be

offensive?) down by the stream. *Ouch!*

They had to leave promptly to get antihistamine medication and missed lunch. (We've now added antihistamine to the First Aid kit!)



The group near the beginning of the walk, with our guide Carolyn second from the right.

Notes from the committee

- Because we lease grazing land alongside Tom & Don's bush, our branch was in the fortunate position of having sufficient funds to help out in a time of shortfall at a national level and therefore, over lockdown we approved a donation to National Office of \$15,000.
- We also made a small donation of \$50 to Friends of the Lake at Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust. We are strictly limited in our ability to make donations to outside organisations but encourage members to consider making their own private donations. Like our National Office, the Rotokare team have been seriously impacted by the events of recent times.
- As Tony mentioned, our April committee meeting during lockdown was via Zoom. We were pleasantly surprised at how easy it was. It saves travel time and expense and is easier on the environment. We'll do it again!
- Four committee members attended a consultation meeting hosted by DOC about whitebait regulations at the end of January. A large number of Taranaki whitebaiters were also in attendance. The outcome is yet to be decided.
- Forest & Bird president, Mark Hanger, passed through Taranaki in mid-February and joined us for afternoon tea at Tawa Glen.
- Many useful things were accomplished during lockdown. Dawn Mills planted out a large number of harakeke/flax seedlings (right) for future use in their wetland.



From the reserves: TOM & DON'S

- Tom & Don's lease comes up for renewal this year. Because we want to spend time in the next months making an in-depth consideration of how we manage this reserve in the future, we opted for a one year renewal, which is currently in process.
- Mark Perham of Bushguard Pest Service continues to be our man on the ground at Tom & Don's. He was unable to visit the reserve during lockdown but intends to go out again before calving and will check and service the traps as well as tidying the traplines.
- Nick Heslop and Kelsi Bayly from TRC recently took a walk around the reserve. Nick is our new liaison officer. We are grateful for the continued support and expertise of TRC, who are helping fund the A24s.
- Tom & Don's bush and some of the riparian plantings are covenanted with QEII Trust. Carol Burgess from the trust visited in early June as part of their periodic oversight of the reserve and went for an inspection walk with Janet and Peter. Thanks to John King for lending us his jeep. It made the visit very easy. (See also, the photograph p.1)
- Bernie Hall, manager of the Kings' farm (adjacent to the reserve) is doing a cracking job of keeping tracks and fences in top order. The pastures in our lease land are also looking great.



Above & right: Then (2016) and Now: our plantings are looking fabulous. Soon this gully will be full of trees.



Above & left: Then — Marion takes a break during planting day, July 2011 — and Now. The riparian planting is flourishing. Were you there on a previous planting? We'll plan a trip some time so you can view your handiwork.

From the reserves: TE WAIROA



Te Wairoa Reserve from Mountain Road/SHW3A. Our trees are looking great but some, especially those on the bluff at the southern end of the reserve, are definitely too close to the lines. Time to reconsider our planting strategies!

- A significant lapse in communication among several parties early in the year led to messy and unsatisfactory tree trimming beneath the power lines over the bluff along Mountain Road beside Te Wairoa reserve. Stumps were chopped at any old height and trimming debris left where it fell (see below). Our committee was not consulted and was unpleasantly surprised to discover the damage. Fortunately, thanks to the efforts of chair Tony Collins, QEII rep Neil Phillips and TRC Land Management Officer Quin Amooore, in consultation with Powerco, the crew responsible (Asplundh) will return to tidy the site up.
- There were no working bees in the reserve over lockdown and now that it's winter, we are putting them on hold, with thoughts of resuming monthly working bees in spring. We'll keep you posted by email. If you would like notification by any other means, please let us know.
- In the meantime, three of us went out on 18 May. Anne dealt to the agapanthus on the Clearview Road verge; Janet lopped and pasted wild cherries in the wetland and Tony worked on the steps. Autumn is a grand time to spot cherries . . . they wave their brilliantly coloured leaves and say *come and get me!* See Anne's article on p.5.
- Predator control has continued with a small pause over level 4 lockdown. Predator numbers appear to be high and we will be reviewing our trapping operation to ensure we get as many of them as we can! Thanks to the team for their ongoing efforts.
- Tony has constructed wooden steps on the perimeter path on the eastern slope leading to the wetland. All they need now is gravel to fill them. We'll be calling for volunteers to help



carry bucket-loads across sometime soon. The more the easier . . . again, look for the email notification.



The steps are ready and waiting to be filled.

- As weather permits, Lodi Amooore continues to mow the lawns. (They look great, thanks Lodi). Call in if you are passing and take a moment to enjoy the reserve.



As the trees around the edge grow, the clearing is slowly shrinking . . . we will soon have to decide whether to trim to keep it open or let it grow over.

Those pesky cherries

Did you know that new Zealand is one of the weediest countries in the world? It is not hard to believe when you go for a drive. Look around. Weeds crowd the roadsides and garden edges. We spend a lot of time battling animal pests but should we be more aware of the problems that arise when we allow plant pests to multiply unchecked? How would New Zealand look in the years to come if humans were no longer here? It doesn't take much imagination to picture blackberry, gorse, woolly nightshade, *Agapanthus* and *Tradescantia* dominating the countryside at the expense of native forest. Pines and cherries would form thickets, and Japanese honeysuckle would cover hillsides.

But we can do our bit now by being vigilant at home. Now is a good time to hunt out and eradicate just one of these — wilding cherries!

In spring they may be pretty but when their fruits ripen they are eagerly snapped up by birds and the seeds are pooped out wherever. The seedlings germinate readily in your garden, your neighbour's garden or in a nearby reserve.

Wilding cherries, and who cares what species, grow rapidly. They often form multiple trunks, and attain heights exceeding those of grafted cherries. Removing them at this point is daunting and expensive. At this time of the year, they have changed colour as they prepare for winter defoliation. They show up against the green of the forest. You may spot their bright coloured fallen leaves on the ground.

At Te Wairoa, volunteers routinely look for and find cherry trees. Each spring, hundreds of seedlings pop up. Many will be crowded out but some always succeed to grow on.

Where practical in the reserve, they are pulled out or cut down. Currently, we have one large tree on the northern boundary that has



A cherry sapling in the wetland at Te Wairoa.

escaped detection. Because of its location over a drain, this will have to be removed by professionals.

At home you should do the same. Encourage your neighbours to remove theirs. They are sure to have at least one!

~Anne Collins

[An additional incentive: the cherries make great firewood once dry!]

Covid 19, possible upside?

Level 4 lock down and social isolation left us all with time on our hands to watch the world around us — time to sit and watch the wildlife around our homes, birds in our backyards or bunnies by the roadside.

We have often seen kingfishers feeding from the power lines and even from our front fence about 20 or 30 metres from our window, they would catch skinks or worms from the grass returning to the same perch to eat their prey.

One bright morning during the 1st week of May we saw the kingfisher sitting on our gate, approximately 10 metres from the house. It was focused on the shrubbery and seemed to be hunting.

It flew into the bushes but returned immediately, no catch this time! It sat motionless for several minutes seemingly transfixed and concentrating on one bush, then suddenly darted



into the bush and returned to its perch with a katydid (Bush Cricket) in its beak which it then proceeded to hit against the gate before swallowing it whole. This hunting behaviour was repeated successfully before it flew off.

The conditions on that day must have been just right because we have not witnessed this since.

We have been lucky to see plenty of bird life recently, including a black morph fantail that was very dark although it looked lighter in the sunlight, and



a pair of kererū feasting on our young kowhai trees.

Goldfinches in flocks of 30 to 40 are quite common but we were most surprised to see chaffinches in a flock of 24 in a lavender bush all at once.

Normally we see only three or four and sometimes as many as eight on a good day!

It really is amazing what we can see if we can just spare the time to STOP and LOOK.

Safe Birding!

~ David & Jackie Cockeram



Coming up: Conservation week, 15–23 August 2020

For obvious reasons, DOC will not be running a 'Legends of Conservation' event but will promote key biodiversity messages, videos and stories through various media, education packs for schools, online competitions and activities as well as backyard activities. Look out for them and consider planning your own event! (Don't forget to take photos and send articles in for the next newsletter.)