

Kapiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

December 2020



Chairs Opinion

I first joined Forest and Bird when it and Native Forest Action Council were fighting the great native forest battles. Nothing was more important and saving them for all time gave such a sense of achievement even though my part in them was very small. The idea of saving those forests for all time, when I was 25 years old, changed my future.

From then on, a portion of my life, the most important part, was dedicated to taking actions that could not easily be undone.

F&B provided quite a few local opportunities to get natural areas of land protected. Restoring the Queen Elizabeth Park peat wetlands is simply the latest project. It springs directly from the those early greenies saving NZ's native forests. Once the QEP carbon emissions are stopped and wetlands created, the legislation (Reserves Act) and the world situation will ensure their long term survival.

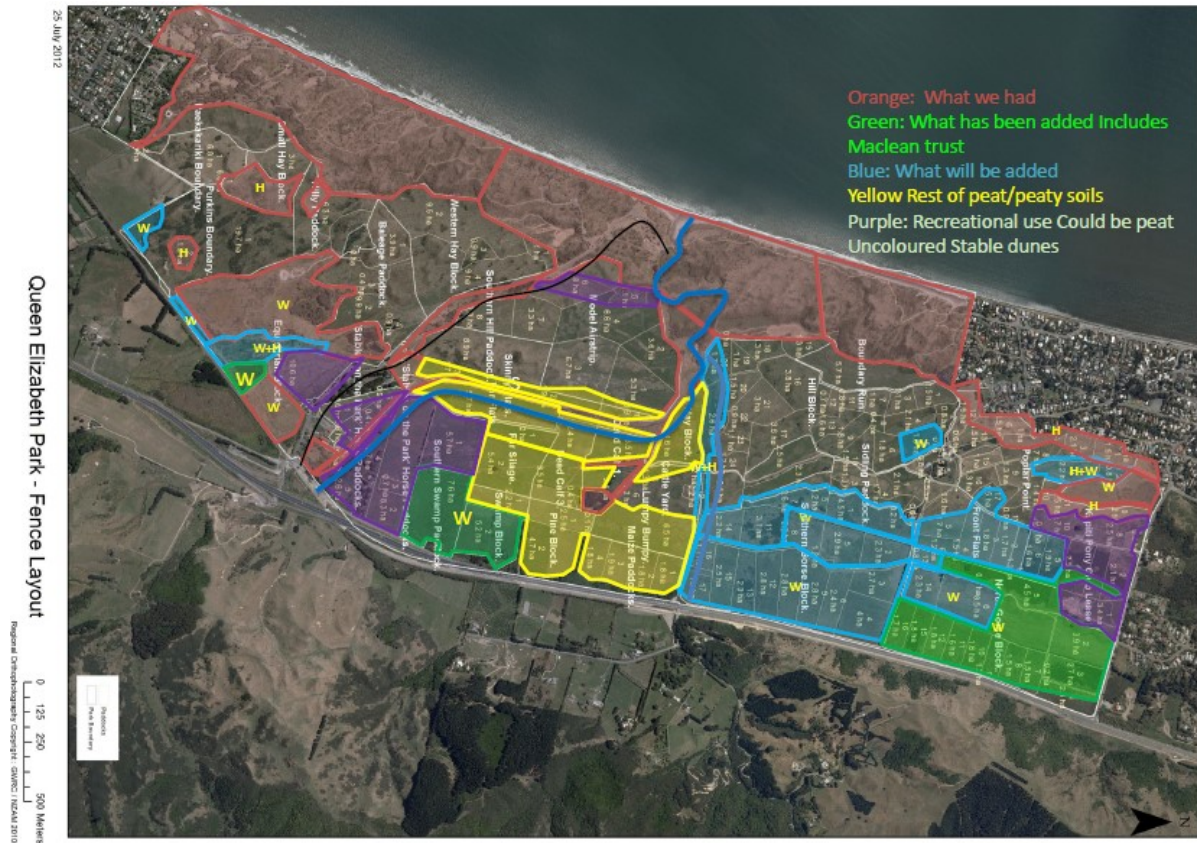
I did not see trapping predators in the same light until I discussed this with a friend recently.

The drive for predator free status encourages the development of trapping devices and methods, better lures, predator and trap success monitoring, understanding predator behaviour, future focussed jobs, the setting and achievement of larger goals and people interested in solving the myriad problems therein.

Trapping not only allows our native species to survive where they otherwise would not, but also removes the number of plant predators that eat mature plants and the seedlings in remnants and newly planted areas. This leaves the forests unhealthy, incomplete, incapable of fulfilling all their functions. They will not achieve their full carbon sequestration potential. Saving the land is not enough. We now need to take actions to ensure its health in the degraded environment we have created.

I can now see that predator eradication could provide the same sense of achievement for this generation.

Recap of Queen Elizabeth Park Progress 2020



We have had several big wins in 2020 - especially the rewetting north of Waterfall Stream. See below.

Farming illegal

I managed to get Forest and Bird lawyers to present the case to GW that farming was not legal in the park after they decided to dismiss my argument. (Note: grazing is legal.) The farmer who has just left (deciding not to renew his lease) had a *so called* grazing lease with additional farming provisions written in. This shows that GW staff knew a farming lease was not allowed. GW has never admitted they were farming. All that spraying allowed by GW Parks was grazing! Yeah-right. While not admitting their wrongdoing, it is very doubtful that they will do it again.

Greener councillors

The second win is the new councillors at Greater Wellington. Those that stand out for us are Thomas Nash, Josh van Lier, Ros Connelly. There are others who work positively for the environment but the three

mentioned have climate change and the QEP wetland high in their agenda. There are other councillors who support an environmental approach but there are still those councillors who have old ideas in their heads and don't recognise the issues humanity, and our fellow flora and fauna travellers, face. There are also those career councillors who never really say anything so they can swap sides if they think it will keep them in a job. I think the Council has turned a corner. The majority support a new more environmental direction.

Rewet North of Waterfall Stream

On 22 September 2020, a proposal was passed by Council to rewet and restore the northern half of the Raumati wetland.

Essential work of about \$250,000 includes an hydrology study (so residential properties and public assets are not affected), an ecological study (so we eventually create an appropriate wetland), and the design and implementation of structures to change the water level to about ground level. We strongly support this.

Less important work of about \$130,000 includes walking tracks, boardwalks and signs. We support this but question whether the funding should come from the Climate change acceleration fund.

Aerial Spraying of herbicides

There is also about \$50,000, some of which is to be used for spraying (including aerial spraying) gorse and blackberry in the peatlands. Gorse and blackberry grow where conditions are suitable. They can grow in quite wet conditions but not where it is too wet. Rewetting makes the conditions too wet for gorse and blackberry except on raised areas. In addition, gorse seed will rot in rewetted soil. We strongly oppose spraying the wetland because it is misguided.

No action on southern wetlands

Of course there is the other half of the peatlands to rewet. No mention of that yet but because we believe GW council has changed, we think it will happen certainly within a few years. We will keep on it.

Grazing the rest of QEP

Following the rewetting proposal was a second proposal to graze the leftover land. That was also passed. The grazing lease was to be for 3 years. I objected because we don't want the peatlands grazed and if climate change gets worse quickly (fire, storms flooding, drought, etc.), GW will decide to rewet the remaining peatland and would not want to pay out the remains of a three year grazing lease. Some councillors saw the sense in this and the Chair had the conditions changed to allow council to break the lease each year with no compensation. GW have to publicly notify the lease before signing up and we have asked to be notified when that happens.

Access

With farming gone, we thought that access would be open. After all, the public has not been allowed onto 60% of the park for perhaps 20 years and the Reserves Act (you will remember that QEP is a recreation reserve under the Act) is very strong on access. It is difficult to recreate on the land when you cannot enter it. I thought I would

give you the full text from Wayne Boness' reply (the QEP Ranger's manager).

We won't immediately be opening up the licence area to the public.

There are a range of assets in the area that still need to be managed. No track direction/visitor management signage or visitor tracks are identified or marked.

At this point no H&S or risk assessment has been undertaken in relation to public access. We are currently undertaking a significant amount of pest control to control rabbit and hare populations ahead of next winter's restoration throughout large parts of the newly retired areas.

The terms of public access may be different under a new licence – if or when that is in place. But in the interim, there is no change.

The masterplan process that follows the adoption of the new Parks Network Plan will help identify, address and manage much of the future visitation within these area.

So I interpret this as **No access for a year**. Friends of QEP have advised GW that they will not abide by this email.

New Parks Manager

Finally, the Parks Manager (Wayne Boness' boss) has been transferred to another part of the Council and a temporary stand in has taken her place. From what we have seen, Jo Frances is very different from the previous manager and we think that means that the GW Parks may change.

I remember well what we said five years ago at the public meetings over the first mass sprayings. We said we wanted a change of attitude by GW. We have not had that from GW Parks but perhaps we will see that soon.

Ngā Manu Success

[Ngā Manu](#) kiwi couple Ātaahua and Puha are delighted to announce the arrival of chick number 2, with another egg on the nest (that's number 4 this season!). Chick number 1 (Tīmara) and her parents can be seen up close and personal if you do a Kiwi Encounter visit. These run Thursday-Sunday evenings starting at dusk. Vouchers can be bought from the new [online store](#) on their website - **Wouldn't that make a great Christmas present for someone you know?**



Volunteer with Ngā Uruora Kāpiti Project, Paekakariki

Looking for a volunteering opportunity you can catch the train to? Ngā Uruora might be the group you want to meet! They have two major projects, both near Paekakariki. On Tuesday mornings, they're on the amazingly picturesque Paekakariki Escarpment (steep territory, good for the fit!) and every second Sunday of the month, from 9.00 am working on the Waikakariki Wetland, close to Paekakariki which is even suitable for kids.

To find out more email kapitibush@gmail.com, or call Andy on 027 914 6598.

Waikanae River wins big

In March 2019, Waikanae River was named as one of 14 rivers in the country to receive special attention as part of DOC's [Ngā Awa](#) Programme. [Waikanae ki Uta ki Tai](#) is the project which looks at improving the river from its source in the mountains to where it meets the sea. Last month, Waikanae River received a big boost (\$8.5 million) through [Jobs for Nature funding](#) – this will be spent over the next four years, and focussed on environmental restoration through riparian fencing and planting; animal and plant pest control; sustainable land management; community engagement and training. Do you want to learn more about the river? In July 2020, [LEARNZ took a field trip to the Waikanae River](#) and produced a series of 12 short videos targeted at teaching school aged kids about rivers. Topics include the value of the river to mana whenua, water quality and treatment, river inhabitants, risks and flooding, as well as restoration and planting.

Friends of Otaki River: Last speaker for 2020

Max Lutz gave a very interesting and inspiring talk on the Friends of the Otaki River and all they have achieved since they were set up two decades ago. They have achieved their original goal of getting trees planted along the eroded edges of the river from its source to the ocean, and completed many other community- and environment-focussed projects along the way. Ideas for improvement keep coming, so they're not about to run out of opportunities to improve the environmental outcomes for the river. Find out more about joining their group of enthusiastic volunteers [here](#).

Editor: Russell Bell,
Email russelljamesbell@gmail.com.
Phone 021 2266047.

*Your feedback on this newsletter
would be most welcome as would
contributions to future newsletters.*

Declarations

[NZ Parliament declared a Climate Emergency](#) on 2 December 2020. This is good news - if you want to hear some comment – read the summary, or listen to the interview from [Morning Report](#) with Dr James Renwick and Climate activist and School Strike 4 Climate organiser Lourdes Vano.

The UN has declared 2021-2030 [The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#). This is a rallying call for the protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world, for the benefit of people and nature, and to achieve a sustainable future. It aims to halt the degradation of ecosystems, and restore them to achieve global goals of enhancing people's livelihoods, counteracting climate change, and stopping the collapse of biodiversity. The aim is to build a strong, broad-based global movement to ramp up restoration and put the world on track for a sustainable future. What form the response will take in New Zealand, and elsewhere, remains to be seen but you can learn more [here](#).

True to the Blue: Last week, 14 Pacific Countries endorsed the [Vemöore Declaration](#). The declaration covers "Commitments to nature conservation action in the Pacific Islands region, 2021-2025". There are five key areas within the declaration: Our Ocean, Our Islands, Our Connection with Nature, Implementation and Call to Action. In this Declaration nations recognise, endorse and commit to implementing 21 priority Action Tracks by 2025 to ensure the recovery and flourishing of both nature and people in the Blue Pacific.

Other Ways to make a difference

STOP plastic in the ocean: Remember back in February we learnt about Ghost Fishing New Zealand? They help clean up the trash – including dumped goods, abandoned fishing nets, bottles and lots of plastic, even electric scooters from our ocean. In October, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) adopted [Resolution 022](#) supporting a global agreement to address plastic pollution. The World Wildlife Fund recently reported that, at the

current rate, experts predict there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050 - an appalling thought! WWF have a [petition](#) you can sign to encourage governments to work together to stop this madness.

[Coromandel Watchdog is seeking support for its petition](#), asking the government to place an immediate moratorium on accepting any applications for and any further processing or granting of, any prospecting, exploration or mining permits on, in or under public conservation land in Aotearoa New Zealand, including stewardship land, administered by Department of Conservation under the Conservation Act.

Greenpeace has a petition to bring back [General Tree Protection](#) rules which were removed in 2012. Since 2012 they estimate that a THIRD of Auckland's urban trees have been destroyed due to lack of protection.

[Rewild Aotearoa](#) is seeking support for their suggestion that the entire 100km of the Kawatiri/Buller River is a unique landscape ideal for the rewilding of riverbanks, grazed public land, regeneration, and native forest.

Christmas Message

Your Forest and Bird committee hope you will have time to relax and have a break at year end. Maybe GW will have changed their "unlawful" stance on the previously farmed parts of QEP (smile) and you can walk and explore the unknown areas and picnic on a high dune and gaze on the sea.

We look forward to seeing the start of visible evidence of environmental restoration especially in QEP and the Waikanae River in 2021.

Kind regards

Russell