



Walking on Queen Elizabeth Park farm road 10 December 2020 after rain. Photographer unknown

Next Public Meeting

The next meeting will be held Wednesday 24th of February at 7.30 pm in Presbyterian Hall: 45 Ngaio Road Waikanae. I will be taking us on three audio-visual trips down the Waikanae River from its catchment to the sea - the river's characteristics of the past, its characteristics now, and the things that will or could change its future.

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Chairs Opinion - Offsetting carbon emissions

So you take a return trip by plane to Auckland (and I admit I did this many times a year for work and stayed one night only) and you plant some trees (or pay the small amount of

money) to offset the carbon cost. That's OK isn't it. Well, my opinion is, that it is not OK.

The carbon is released into the air as you take off (huge amounts) then more slowly as you cruise to your destination.

Your planting (or the money) happens some time later. The trees emit more carbon than they absorb for a few years. Then they start absorbing more carbon than they emit. After a long period of time, the equation balances. Depending on how many trees you planted and them being still alive at the balance date, the amount sequestered equals the amount released from your flight. There are enough people doing this to result in a worsening of the amount of carbon being released and offsetting can never catch up.

Let me give you another example. All the peat wetlands of Queen Elizabeth Park release about 3600 tonnes of carbon per year (120ha*30t/ha/yr). To offset that for one year, we could plant 75,000 trees and let them grow for 50 years, then they would have absorbed

about 3600 tonnes of carbon. So the equation balances in about 50 years time. But wait, there's more. Next year, the peat emits another 2,600 tonnes, so we have to plant another 75,000 trees to offset that.

And so on and so on, year after year. We feel OK. We have done our duty. We had fun. But we also made it worse until 50 years in the future.

You can see why I am so keen to have the peat rewetted as soon as possible. A month longer than necessary is too long.

The Climate Change commission has said in its report that we cannot plant our way out of climate catastrophe. We must reduce the amount of carbon we release.

But we do still have to plant and look after the health of our native forests.

We need a new Chair

I was about 24 when I joined Forest and Bird. Soon, I was on the Lower Hutt committee. The committee had lost vigour. It did not write submissions. It had no projects and did not participate in national issues. A friend had enlightened me about forest issues — logging 600 year old rimu, often for framing timber. The forests were partially logged but the damage done left boughs of the remaining trees disconnected and wind continued to fell trees for the next 20 years. Pest animal species used the roads and tracks to spread through the forests and native birds numbers plummeted. This was being done by a government department.

That turned me into an activist. I wrote submissions, took walks to local hot spots and created publicity against some proposals. Greater Wellington at that time had a proposal to build a 100-meter flood control dam in the middle of the Korokoro Stream. We strung up a rope at the height of the valley and took groups of people to show them what was proposed. The project was eventually dropped.

There was an element of adventure, perhaps opposition to authority in these actions. I got involved in the biggest national conservation causes of the day — saving our forests and their birds and supporting the demise of the Forest Service and the creation of DOC.

What I did not know was that these non-work activities were teaching me skills that would change my work life. Community change soon flows into employment change and when you lead change in an organisation, you get paid more.

The company I worked for had equipment that contained a very dangerous environmental poison. Community changes made that unacceptable and I landed my first environmental project. But to handle it successfully I had to research, write and convince people. Those were skills I had learnt and honed at Forest and Bird.

We need a new Chair and the person will hopefully be someone younger, eager to make a difference in the challenges this world faces, or maybe still working or just retired. I will still be around. I want to continue with projects.

With climate change, the world is in for a huge amount of change, similar to my day with forest and environment degradation. Exercising your ability to inform people, participate in those changes, will, I am certain, lead to opportunities that will benefit you or will give a sense of satisfaction.

And, like me, you may want to join the committee first and work up to becoming chair. Even without knowing all that much about conservation, a good chair is valuable.

Comms person for our branch

We're keen to find someone who will pick up some or all of this role. It's a great way to serve your branch, shouldn't involve meetings,

and should look good on a CV. Contact Russell if you can help.

Phil Palmer

Phil Palmer left a legacy that few can match in Kāpiti. He died 3/01/2020 at his home aged 85. His conservation ethic and activity started well before my fleeting encounter with him and his wife, Viola.

They bought land adjoining Kaimai Ranges Forest Park north of Tauranga and set about replanting it in natives. Eight hectares was protected by QE2 covenant and gifted to Native forest Restoration trust.

In Kāpiti, they bought a property in Otaihanga. Ponds, similar to the natural ones found in this dune wetland landscape were established and the whole property was planted in native plants except close to the house. Here, Phil bred North Island Weka for DOC. The 2.5 ha property proved to be too small for Phil and Viola but it shared part of its border with the 3.5 ha Greendale Reserve, a narrow strip on land with the Muapoko Stream flowing through it and a boggy paddock with one small stand of mature Kahikatea. Image above.



Twenty-five years later, kahikatea planted by Phil and Viola are seeding their offspring into the reserve. Native birds have come back and when I visited, a kereru was nesting in a tree planted years ago on Phil and Viola's property. Other volunteers, Forest and Bird, KCDC and GW were certainly involved but with all these projects, there are the original movers and shakers and the Palmers were that to this project.

This article is a tiny snapshot of Phil and Viola's achievements and is restricted to those in the conservation space. His legacy is so much greater.

Check out our regional parks this summer

If you aren't already aware of it, check out Greater Wellington's [Summer Programme](#). We have enjoyed many of the experiences of this programme over the years, and it's a great way to enjoy our local parks. There are still events coming up around our area

into February and March including snorkelling at Whitirea, a family day in Kāpiti, and at Battle Hill; and the Xterra Classic Triathlon. We also highly recommend visiting the Wainuiomata water catchment on their guided walks.

Volunteer opportunity for bird lovers

One morning this summer, while I was alone and transport-less at home, I heard an unusual squeaking coming from road outside so I went to investigate. There was a line of very young ducklings marching along the

gutter, with no parent in sight... initially, and then I realised the duck had been hit by a vehicle crossing the road. What to do? I ended up calling Craig Shepherd from Wellington Bird Rehabilitation. WBRT put out

an Instagram message, and a kind volunteer came and collected the five ducklings I'd managed to catch (with help of passers by) and take them to Craig's property where he cares for and rehabilitates (where possible) birds, including ducks and kereru (they've received over 1270 birds ranging from sparrows to gulls and shags this season including over 70 kereru). Watch a [short video](#) about Craig and his work, or visit WBRT's [website](#) to find out how you can support their cause by donating time or money, or by buying plants — including fruit trees.



School strike for climate

We congratulate the 150 students and teachers from around New Zealand who gathered on the lawn outside Parliament on 26 January 2021 to remind the government of its responsibility to take action for climate change.

This was the first of their [100 days for action](#) campaign for 2021.

They delivered a list of 6 demands, which they would like us to support and share. Briefly, they are:

1. Prohibit the implementation of fossil fuels nationwide and urgently phase out their use.
2. Support a move to 100% renewable energy, and infrastructure to support this move.
3. Invest in a just transition of workers from unsustainable industries into climate-friendly industries.

Tawake and Myrtle Rust

We were all hoping that Myrtle Rust problems had gone away, until the recent discovery of more infection outside of Auckland. This wind-borne disease threatens to devastate some of our most loved species including pohutukawa, rata, manuka, ramarama, and swamp maire. We have a lot of swamp maire (tawake)

4. Honour its responsibility to our Pacific Island neighbours by ensuring its climate policies align with its commitment to the Paris Agreement 1.5 goal, and by supporting those nations (PSIDS) response to climate change
5. Take action on reducing agricultural emissions (in a recent public zoom meeting Climate Commission senior analyst, Sally Garden, noted that we would fail to meet our goal — of reducing methane emissions by 10 percent by 2030 and by 24 to 47 percent by 2050 - if we continued on our current trajectory).
6. Climate Change be taken more seriously within the education sector, and included in the curriculum teaching the basic foundations of science behind climate change, as well as it's economic, social, and cultural impacts with a Te Ao Maori perspective.

growing near us in the peatland swamps of the Kāpiti Coast, and for some reason the trees closest to us (but not those further afield) seem to be having a mast year — that is, they have much more fruit than usual.

This is fortunate as we want to see this species well established and thriving. One of the responses to this disease has been to ensure the effective seed-banking of affected native species so that new plants can be grown if many of the existing trees are wiped out by an incursion of Myrtle Rust. However, tawake are tricky to propagate as the seed embryo forms early and is damaged by freezing (which is how they preserve most of the banked seed) so Karin van der Walt from Otari has been experimenting on how to get the seed to survive the process. We hope to have Karin speak to us later in the year. In the meantime, if you want to know more about the science behind NZ's biosecurity response to the arrival of Myrtle Rust you might want to catch this [webinar](#) on 10th Feb 2021, 11:00 AM Presented by Merje Toome, Senior Scientist, Ministry for Primary Industries (you can join it live, or watch a recording later)



Jobs for nature funding — closing soon

There are two types of Jobs for Nature funding.

An \$18 million Private Land Biodiversity Fund is available to established organisations that support groups of private landowners to work together to protect and restore rare habitats that safeguard populations of native species on private land.

The second fund is a \$16 million Community Conservation fund is for community-led conservation projects on public and private land. It is available to community groups with a focus on practical projects aimed at conserving New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity. Closes 16/2/20.

Kind regards

Russell

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