



North Taranaki Forest & Bird + Kiwi Conservation Club news

P.O. Box 1029 New Plymouth 4340

March 2021 to June 2021

SOS! A BIRD IN THE HAND!

It's that time of year: baby birds are fluttering from nests like leaves in autumn, usually under the watchful guidance of parents. It's a crucial time in the bird breeding cycle and dangers abound. You might be out for exercise, as New Plymouth woman Katy Sigurdsson was on Wednesday last week, or you might just find a small bird cheeping helplessly on your doorstep or in your garden. Katy was walking a friend's dog around Lake Rotomanu when she spotted a fallen nest beside the trail. Two part-fledged nestlings lay in and about it, clearly dead. A fourth, however, was alive and cheeping. She waited but there was no sign of any adults.

What to do? The easy options were to pass by and let nature take its course or (had she been able) to put the bird out of its misery.

Katy did neither. She didn't know the species of bird (it was a goldfinch) but thought a rescue was worth trying even if the odds were against her.

And she did incredibly well! Friends loaned a cage and gave advice; she researched online, bought special food from a pet shop and fed and warmed the nestling goldfinch, which she called 'Manu', for seven days before it too died. It fluttered its wings as fledglings do, chirped, danced in its cage and ate hungrily.

Everything looked positive, and discussions were had about Manu's long-term future, possibly in an aviary because of the difficulty of reintroducing him or her to the wild.



Then, shockingly, Manu died. Perhaps the little bird became chilled overnight when power was off because of Tuesday's high winds. Katy will never know.

What we at Forest & Bird do know, however, is that there is a constant and urgent need for people to help with injured and sick *non-native* birds. (Depending on species, native birds are accorded higher priority for assistance by the Department of Conservation). We understand that Experience Purangi is planning a bird rescue centre but it is a long way off. In the meantime, we and people like Katy and others, do our best.

It's a demanding job, however, and not something that easily falls to just one household. North Taranaki chair, Tony Collins, recently put out a call for a team of interested and able people who could help set up an emergency bird rescue team.

Tony says: 'Often I get asked to attend some non-native bird in distress. This could be a duck with injuries to its wing or leg or maybe something tangled about its body. Sometimes it's just a thrush or sparrow that needs attention.'

Tony feels that this team would have a lot of support

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Here's your chance to make friends and influence people — join us on the committee! The AGM + 'Toutouwai on the Mounga' talk is on 14 April. See p.3 for details.

from different organizations. Certainly, the local branch is keen to encourage anyone who would like to help with whatever they need.

Are you that person?

If so, please talk to a member of the committee. See names and numbers at the bottom of page 4.

Pukeiti in summer

Tony and Anne Collins recently spent a couple of days at Pukeiti and observe that it's not just a place for rhododendrons in spring! It's a great spot to explore, soak up the tranquility and find delicate orchids and fungi. It's a credit to the regional council and a first class Taranaki asset.

Right: This picturesque mountain stream is below the visitor centre. It leads to the waterwheel that, in times past, supplied the park's buildings with electricity. Inset: a striking example of wood ear fungus, *Auricularia auricula-judae*.



Photos: Tony & Anne Collins

Return to Te Henui



For a number of years up to 2013 there was a series of working bees and planting days along the upper Te Henui walkway, organised by then chair, Carolyn Brough. She also led an intrepid team of Wednesday weeders, who regularly attacked alien species on the upper walkway.

On 21 February a group revisited the plantings. It's inspiring! Where there were once slopes of bamboo, grass, honeysuckle and other weeds, there are now flourishing native trees — as you can see behind us in the photograph above. And even though we don't necessarily remember exactly *which* trees we planted, It's satisfying to think we played a part!

Keep planting those trees, folks.

A night at the movies

Our final event of 2020 was a film evening on 9 December at the Community Centre behind the YMCA. We showed the inspiring *Fools & Dreamers: Regenerating a Native Forest* and *Mauri o te Kauri*, and shared supper afterward. (You can find the movies online if you missed out.) The evening was made doubly interesting by the presence of Forest & Bird CEO, Kevin Hague, who just happened to be in town!



Unless otherwise credited, Photos by Janet Hunt

COMING EVENTS

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Sunday 7 March, 10–12.00 Te Wairoa working bee

See the Te Wairoa report on p.4.

Thursday 11 March, 7–8:00 pm, Albatross talk, Central Baptist Church, 89 Liardet St



Drs Kath Walker and Graeme Elliott will speak about monitoring albatross populations in the Auckland and Antipodes Islands. These magnificent creatures often suffer accidental death as they attempt to feed behind fishing vessels at sea.

This is a Seaweed 2021 event, organised by DOC and sponsored by the George Mason Charitable Trust. Entry is by koha. All welcome, including children.

Sunday 21 March, 10–1.00: Potaema Bog + Kamahi loop walk, picnic lunch



Arrgh. There be goblins here!

Mounga Taranaki is renowned for its gnarled and twisty trees. They are weighed down by epiphytes, such as mosses, liverworts and ferns, that hang in curtains and blow like veils in the wind. It's not a stretch to imagine these trees conversing of an evening, like Treebeard or the Ents in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*!

These two short walks are a great way to experience the goblin forest.

Carpool from Rogan Street carpark (beside Pukekura Park) at 9.00 or contact a committee member (see p.6) if you would like a lift.

Otherwise, meet at the Potaema Track entrance (off Pembroke Rd, 3km inside the Mt Taranaki park boundary) at 10.00. We'll walk to the Potaema Bog

lookout and hope to see the mountain across the wetland. Fernbirds sometimes hang out just beside the platform, and there are often tomtits on the path.

It's an easy walk along well formed track and takes 15–20 minutes return.

From here we'll continue to the Stratford Mountain House for the Kamahi Loop. It's another easy walk (15–30 minutes return).

Take lunch for a picnic before heading home.

Wednesday 14 April, 7.30pm: AGM + Toutouwai/robins on the mountain, an illustrated talk by Pat Murphy. Community House, behind the YMCA

The AGM will start at 7:30 and will be over in the flash of a rubber stamp. Would you like to join us on the committee? Please don't hesitate. New faces would be most welcome.

Pat's talk will follow at approximately 7:30. Pat has monitored toutouwai on the mountain since the release in 2018 of 45 of these endearing birds into a predator-free safe haven of 1000 ha. Pat's a great storyteller and a superb photographer, with many fabulous and interesting images to share.

Don't miss this one!

Sunday 18 April, 10–12.00: Mills wetland walk, 50 Hydro Rd. PLEASE NOTE THE AMENDED DATE — it was incorrect in the last newsletter!

Dawn and Rob Mills have substantially improved their place, enhancing a lake and wetland area with plantings. We walked around there in May 2018, but nothing in nature is static — come and have a look. Park outside the property.

Sunday 16 May, 10–12.00. Araheke Bush Loop walk

Araheke Bush Loop is accessed from Meeting of the Waters and is a lovely walk with views of the Waiwhakaiho River. The trail is an easy 2.1km. If time permits, we will include a loop back to Burgess Park.



NOTES FROM THE RESERVES: TE WAIROA

- It was drizzly but not cold for our first working bee of the year on 3 January. Six keen volunteers spent a very productive two hours clearing the path through the lower reserve. Seedlings were removed for planting elsewhere, overhanging branches were chopped back and saplings were nipped in the bud. Thanks team!
- Our next working bee is on **March 7**. Let's visit the South East corner. The August 2015 plantings need releasing and there's a goodly patch of *Tradescantia* that is just begging to be removed and bagged! To be safest, we'll park at the top gateway on Clearview Road and walk from there.
- A large tree has fallen across the path not far from the Mountain Rd boundary. High Frontiers has been contracted to remove it in early March.



NOTES FROM THE RESERVES: TOM & DON'S

- The caravan at Tom & Don's was great in the days when we had working bees on the reserve but since we have moved to using a contractor, has been rarely used and, as noted in the last newsletter, was falling into disrepair. It has been given to the farm manager, Bernie Hall, who has removed it and looks forward to renovating and using it.
- A group of unprotected trees in the paddock outside the reserve are worth preserving by fencing. We are seeking a contractor to do this work for us.

Below: the caravan in 2012. From left: David Cockeram, Dawn Mills and Gary McCracken, taking a break.



- The lease with the Kings expires on 1st June and will be renewed for three years.
- Our trapping contractor, Mark Perham, will carry out a trap run and check the tracks in the near future.

No KCC news this time but look for us in the next newsletter!

As always, items for the newsletter are welcome.

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

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