



DECEMBER 2020

Kia ora koutou

November may have been one of the [wettest and dimmest on record for Wellington](#) and so far December hasn't been vastly better, but the tireless work of Wellington Forest & Bird members has nonetheless continued apace.

In this edition we feature a smorgasbord of recent happenings from our projects across the city, as well as highlight a few local stories related to nature. Finally, we finish with an introduction to greening your Kiwisaver fund and ask for your ideas for events in 2021.

Pukehinau Reserve



Pukehinau is a recent project, focussing on a bush-clad, partly pine-covered, site that lies between the top of Aro Valley and Kelburn. The long-term goal is to regenerate the forest to its pre-1840s status, and provide habitat for fence-hoppers from Zealandia.

Despite its central location, this four-hectare section of Town Belt reserve has not garnered much attention in recent years due to its steep terrain and limited accessibility. As a result, all the usual threats to native flora, and exotic flora associated with an urban setting have been able to take hold.

This year Forest and Bird agreed to pick up this project, and support the work required to turn the tide. Active work is now underway to build up a group of volunteers to plant native seedlings, remove pest plants, and undertake predator control.

The previous lack of human activity is not without its advantages. The relative lack of disturbance has made the site an attractive habitat for wildlife, and an important ecological connector between Zealandia, the Botanic Gardens, Polhill, Victoria University and the central city. With a bit of help, there is every reason to believe this area will quickly become a significant environmental asset to central Wellington.

The project team is keen to hear from new volunteers, and no prior experience is needed.

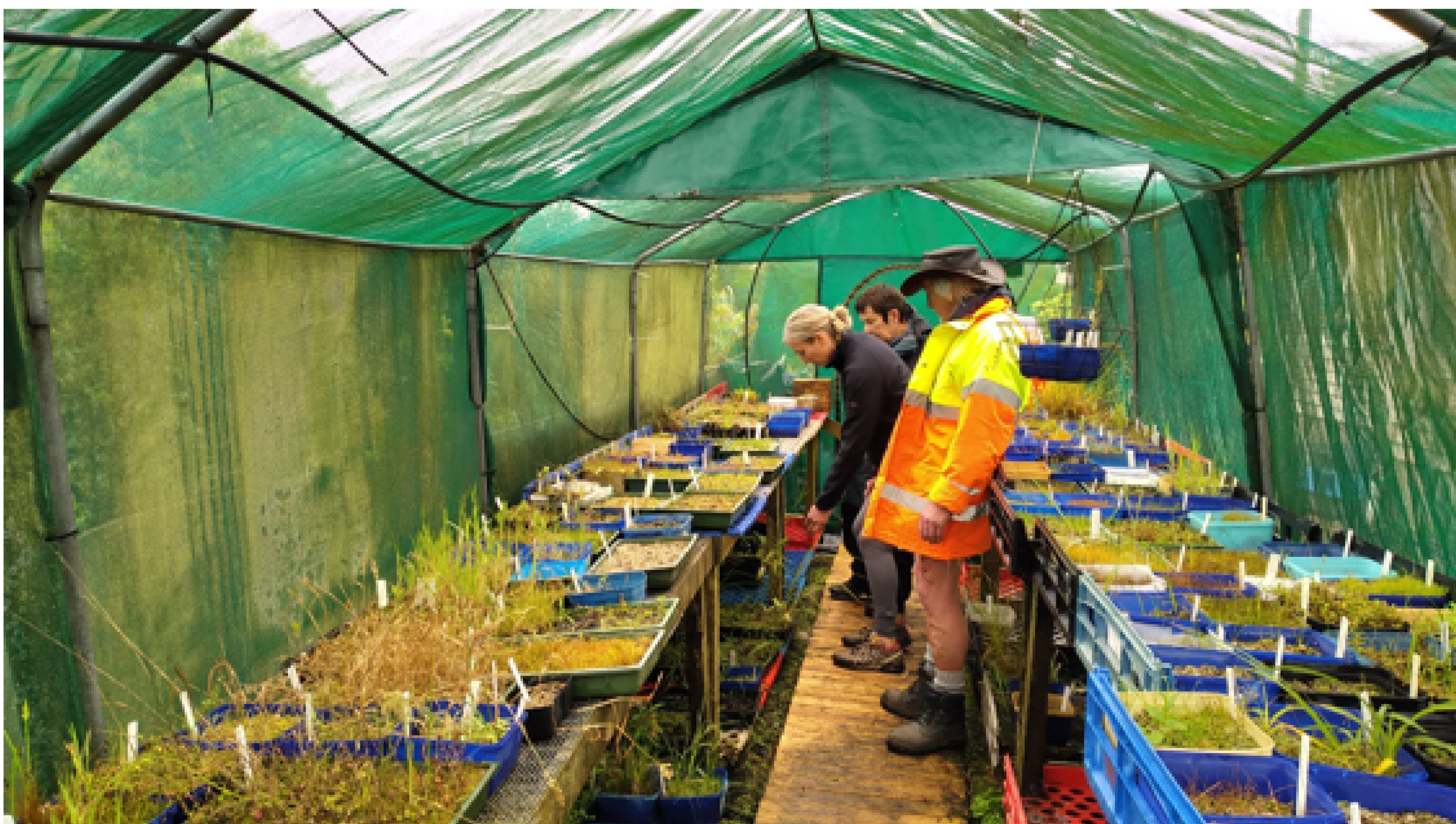
As with other volunteer activities on Wellington City Council land, the project will operate under a framework agreed by the Council with Forest & Bird. This will be formally signed early in 2021, but already Council staff are providing excellent support and training to the growing volunteer workforce.

Pukehinau Project Team

Opportunities to get involved:

To find out more, email wellington.branch@forestandbird.org.nz

Forest & Bird nursery turns 30



The Forest & Bird Native Plant Nursery was started back in 1990, so it has just celebrated its 30th birthday. Since 1990, we have produced approaching a quarter of a million native trees and plants and donated them to various restoration projects.

Our goals are to assist in the restoration of locally rare and endangered native

plants and trees back to Wellington's ecosystems, of which they are an important part; to enhance various community native forest restoration sites and existing forest remnants with nectar- and fruit-producing native trees to provide a continuous food supply for native birds; to protect the biodiversity of plant species by propagating from genetically-sourced plant material from existing remnant trees; and to propagate 94 uncommon, rare and threatened native plant species.

The nursery is in the Wellington suburb of Highbury, although it had a few homes before moving there. To source appropriate plants and seeds, we have regular collecting trips to places around Wellington. The location of mature endemic specimens has been recorded and we have permits to collect plant material from local reserves.

We also draw on expertise from the [Wellington City Council Berhampore Nursery](#) and from [Otari Native Botanic Garden](#).

Most groups restoring native forest ecosystems do not have the expertise, capability and resources to collect and propagate uncommon, rare and endangered plants for their projects, so many of them participate in this Forest & Bird project.

The aim is to have restored an eco-system representing all native flora species, including major canopy trees, in a self-sustaining ecosystem in and around Wellington city.

Sue Hobbs

Opportunities to get involved:

To find out more, [visit our webpage](#).

**Call to action: protecting Te
Kopahou from development**



Wellington City Council (WCC) has recently released for public comment a draft track plan for Te Kopahou Reserve, the largest part of the Outer Green Belt. The area is a sanctuary for rare coastal forest species which have clung on in the moist gullies and on steep cliffs since before the European settlement of Wellington.

Te Kopahou is a large area of land (around 600 ha) between Zealandia and the south coast. It includes three landfills — the Southern Landfill, which handles all of Wellington City’s waste — and two private operations: T & T Landfills Ltd and C & D Landfill Ltd. Ironically, the existence of the three landfills and the consequent need to restrict public access have been major factors in allowing the surrounding land to regenerate — albeit quite slowly, as the climate is harsh, the landforms steep and the soil generally poor.

Some while ago, WCC removed the landfill designation for much of the area and started the process of designating the area as a public reserve. Those of you who have visited will know that it is a very special place, with dramatic views and some rare animal and plant species in the regenerating bush. Apart from the landfills, most of the reserve has been designated as a Significant Natural Area.

As well as being Wellington's largest reserve and the one furthest from urban areas, the reserve contains two areas that are of particular note: the catchments of the Waipapa and Hape Streams, which between them occupy most of the reserve south of the Southern Landfill. The map below shows the approximate extents of the catchments.



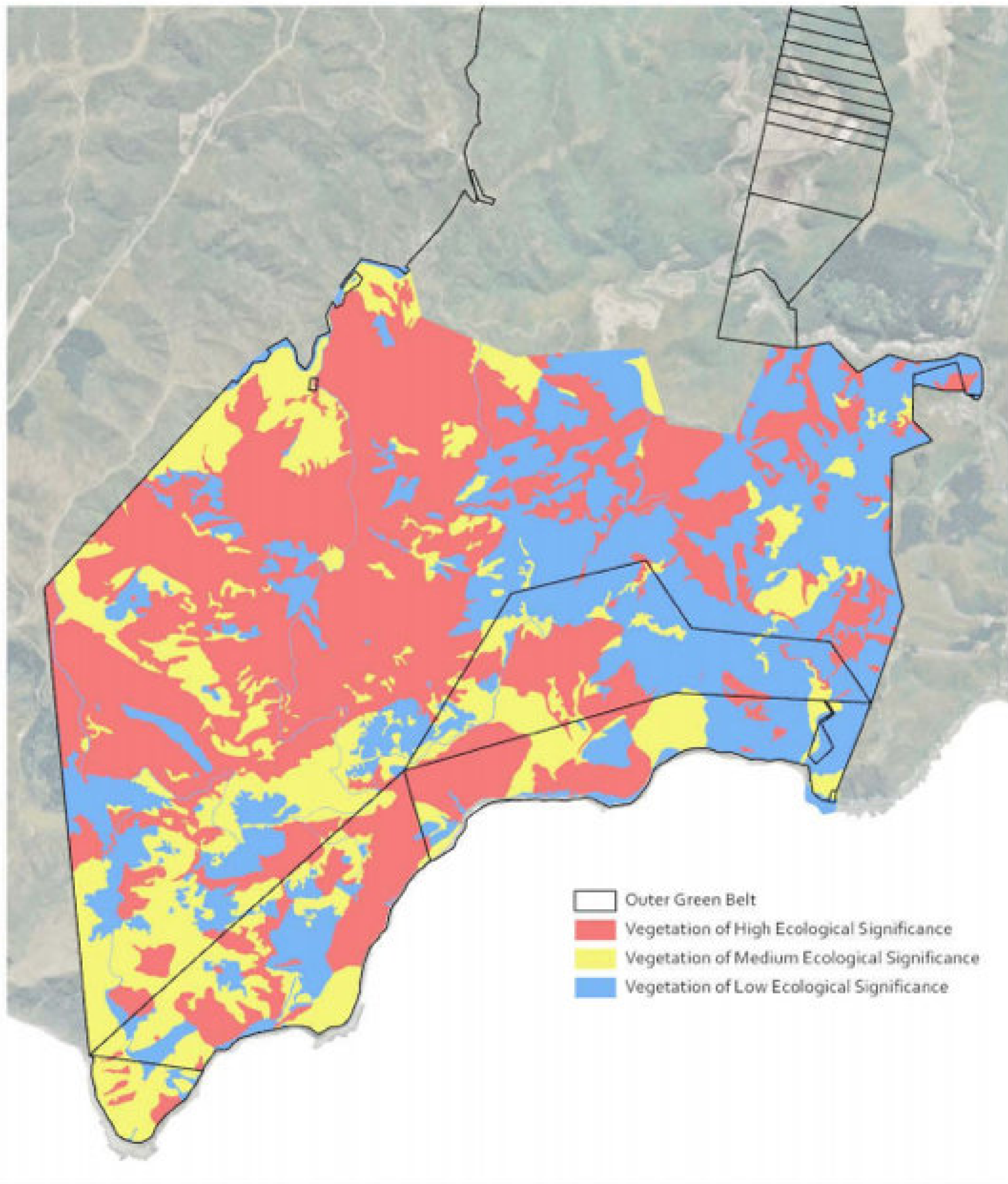
The importance of protecting these catchments has been highlighted in WCC's [Outer Green Belt Management Plan](#), which notes that:

"The streams in Waipapa and Hape stream catchments are some of the least modified in Wellington city; [we need to] protect them by avoiding any stream modifications."

The WCC plan also notes the high ecological significance of the vegetation in these catchments, especially the Waipapa Stream.

Te Kopahou Vegetation Areas of Ecological Significance

Scale: 1:30,000 0 0.3 0.5 1 KM



Rare or at risk species in these areas include:

- [Cook Strait kowhai](#) (*Sophora molloyii*)
- [Shrubby tororaro](#) (*Muhlenbeckia astonii*)
- Two threatened *Melicytus* spp: [M. crassifolius](#) and [M. orarius](#)

The catchments also contain a lot of 'grey scrub', which may not look much, but is ecologically very important, as it traps wind-blown spores and seeds — the future pioneer forest — and provides roosting and nesting sites for birds, which leave the seeds of broad-leaved native species — the future emergent

forest.

There's important habitat for native fauna too:

- Wellington's principal community of wild spaniard/speargrass ([Aciphylla squarrosa](#)) is the only Wellington home of the [speargrass weevil](#) (*Lyperobius huttoni* — possibly Wellington's rarest animal).
- There are skinks and geckos, which are generally under-represented in Wellington's reserve areas.
- This is the future home of Wellington's kiwi population (the [Capital Kiwi project](#)).

However, there are major threats to this reserve:

- Pest animals and pest plants, especially major weeds such as [Darwin's barberry](#) (*Berberis darwinii*), [Old Man's Beard](#) (*Clematis vitalba*) and other introduced climbers.
- An increased presence of humans (desire for additional tracks, an increased fire risk, generally increased disturbance to a fragile environment).

We understand that some people may be lobbying for additional walking and biking tracks in these two catchments. In our view that would be an ecological disaster. Additional tracks, of any sort, increase the incursion of pest plants and animals. These are extremely fragile areas that need, as WCC's own plan states, to be protected, and any tracks that cut across these two catchments would be completely counter to their designations as Significant Natural Areas.

The existing four-wheel drive tracks are in need of maintenance and repair and we'd support this, since they already exist and, importantly, they allow emergency access for rescue and fire-fighting, and also for pest removal and control. However, we would strongly advocate against any other track work in these sensitive areas.

Te Kopahou could be the jewel in Wellington's crown (the Outer Green Belt), with a large area of native forest, habitat for rare species, even kiwi and

albatross ([Buller's mollymawk](#)). There's real potential for creating a 'mainland island' — like [Zealandia](#), except without a fence (perhaps more like [Mount Bruce/Pūkaha](#) in the Wairarapa).

The draft Te Kopahou draft track plan has just been released, we urge you to consider the implications of what is proposed. We hope that you, like us, will make submissions to WCC to oppose any proposals to inflict additional tracks on this wonderful area in the south of the reserve. [Click here to view the plan and make a submission.](#)

Ken New

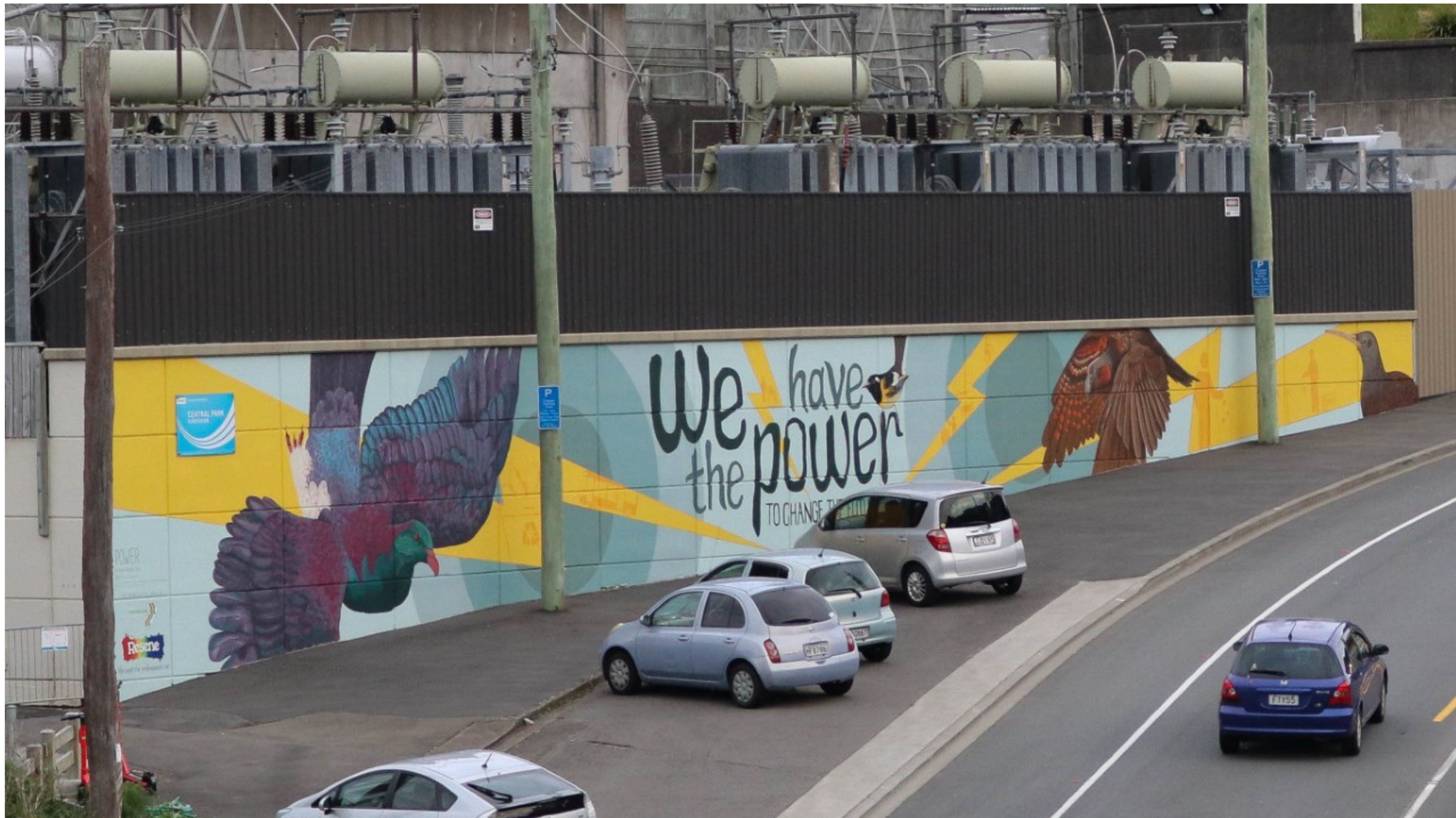
Other local news: kiwi comeback in late 2021



The Capital Kiwi project has been progressing, and with tangata whenua partners' support, is on track for re-introduction of highly endangered rōwī kiwi from near the Fox and Franz Josef glaciers on the South Island's West Coast to Wellington's rural west and south. The video features Te Kopahau, part of which we discussed saving from further development above.

[Read more about the progress.](#)

Other local news: Brooklyn's new birds



An enormous mural featuring kiwi, kākā, hihi and kererū now graces the side of the substation in Brooklyn. Created by the hugely talented artist Kiran Parbhu, it has recently won the top prize in the Keep New Zealand Beautiful's Resene Nature Murals Competition 2020. Kiran said he "really wanted to capture the energy of the many Wellingtonians who have worked hard to enhance the local biodiversity over the last 20 years."

[Read more about the mural.](#)

Other local news: re-introducing kākāpo to Wainuiomata



Greater Wellington Regional Council is looking at a proposal to create a mainland eco-sanctuary in the enormous Wainuiomata Water Catchment area east of Wellington. [Forest & Bird's Bird of the Year 2020](#), the critically threatened kākāpo, is being considered for re-introduction after an absence of a century or more.

[Read more about the proposal.](#)

Other local news: Victoria University to plant thousands of trees in Ōhāriu Valley



Wellington City Council and Victoria University of Wellington have signed a lease agreement which will see the university plant 11 hectares of Outer Green Belt land in native trees in return for carbon credits. The collaboration will also provide students with opportunities to research ecological restoration.

[Read more about the project.](#)

Cleaning up Kiwisaver



Recently I finally got round to doing something I've meaning to do for years: to move my Kiwisaver funds out of companies investing in fossil fuels, as well as other dubious industries such as palm oil, weapons, pornography, animal testing, tobacco and alcohol.

Using the website Mindful Money I was able to quickly find a provider that better fits my values - I chose one called Caresaver. It turns out that Caresaver [fared much better than other schemes during the Covid-19 lockdown](#) which crippled the aviation and hospitality industries, and saw the demand for petrol drop through the floor. Of course past performance is no guarantee of future returns, but I hope that an increased emphasis on investments in growth industries like wind farms, solar electricity, healthcare, electric cars, data centres etc. will offer a brighter, more prosperous future for us all. What's more Caresaver donates 20 per cent of its management fee to one of 17 selected charities. Naturally I chose Forest & Bird!

Benjamin Swale

[Read more about Mindful Money.](#)

Events

The Wellington Branch events programme for 2021 is being planned and we would love to hear your ideas. What sort of events would you like to attend? Talks? Walks? Site visits? Taking action? Would you like to help deliver an event?

Please provide any feedback to wellington.branch@forestandbird.org.nz and watch this space for the release of the programme next year.



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