

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird

Newsletter July 2021

Chair's Opinion

I have just given a presentation to U3A (University of the Third Age) about the Kāpiti projects I am involved in. By being involved, I am not saying I lead them or am responsible for them. I am just involved - either in a significant way - or as one of the many volunteers. I included ongoing operations such as nurseries. Some projects, like the rewetting of the Northern Raumati wetlands, are now completely separated from me. GWRC is undertaking the work. I, with others, just lobbied for the project.

One month before giving the talk I had to provide a name for it. I counted the projects and there were 13 so it became "13 Kāpiti Climate Change projects." Of course some of them started, and continue as, biodiversity projects but they also have a significant climate change aspect.

When the presentation was completed, I realized that I had calculated carbon reduction figures for projects involving drained peat swamps, but not for the others. Carbon calculations use the timeframe of Carbon zero by 2050 i.e. 29 years from now.

Sequestration (absorbing atmospheric carbon through plants) uses a figure 0.004 tonnes /plant over a 29 year period, although carbon capture is plant and situation specific.

Some projects are sand (rather than peat) bottomed wetlands that had been grazed but would now be permanent wetlands. They absorb about 2 tonnes /hectare per year, so 58 tonnes /hectare by 2050.

The rest are peat wetlands, once common on the Kāpiti Coast, and the figure that seems to be becoming accepted is around 29 tonnes of carbon dioxide being emitted from one hectare of drained peat each year. So, if the peat is rewetted, each year that 29 tonnes /hectare will not be emitted and the area, as it restores itself to a functional wetland, will sequester an additional 2 tonnes per hectare.

The overall results show that the 13 projects will sequester 19,000 tonnes over 29 years and rewetting the peat swamps will reduce carbon emissions by 121,000 tonnes over 29 years. Altogether, and if all goes to plan, 140,000 tonnes of carbon will not get to the atmosphere, or will be absorbed from it.

The book *Drawdown* says we need to remove more than 1,440,000,000,000 (1440 billion) tonnes of carbon dioxide over the next 30 years. At that point, carbon being released will start to exceed that being sequestered. This is a combination of increasing sequestration and reducing carbon release into the atmosphere.

Sequestration require land, lots of work, and lots of time. It is prone to failure from plants failing to thrive, and fire. On the other hand, rewetting peat, seems relatively straight forward and even in a drought, the peat will survive until the next rain.

The projects that will reduce or sequester the largest amounts of carbon are those being undertaken by Greater Wellington. They are of significant scale - 85 hectares of peatland and 50 hectares of planting. Rewetting peat and stopping the enormous amounts emitted per year is very effective.

The final thing for me is that if we can reduce carbon getting into the atmosphere, then we don't have to sequester it. So although increasing sequestration is important, reducing the amount of carbon dioxide produced is by far the most effective method to win the climate crisis.



Part of the peat swamp in Queen Elizabeth Park recovering after a short absence of stock.

Russell

It may be winter but spring is coming....

The birds all seem to know that we have passed midwinter and judging by the birdie shenanigans in our garden, love is in the air! In Waikanae this may be fuelled on the nectar of the kohekohe which are blooming prolifically at the moment.

If you haven't yet had chance, take a walk in a nearby kohekohe forest (such as Wi Parata Reserve in Waikanae) to hear the spectacular bird song and see the forest floor carpeted in the white flowers of the kohekohe trees. Did you know that kohekohe flower and seed in alternate years (but they don't all do it in the same year - probably an evolutionary strategy to ensure the species survives)?

Down at the Waikanae Estuary the birds are also strutting their stuff, with over 40 pairs of oystercatchers spotted. The New Zealand Dotterel pair that bred on the sandy island created in the estuary last year, are back - and looking ready to have another go.

NZ Dotterels

Tūturiwhatu or New Zealand Dotterel (*Charadrius Obscurus*) are the largest plover in their genus, and significantly heavier than the Banded Dotterel (distinguished by its mayoral-like chain around the breast) which is more common.

At this time of year, NZ Dotterel colouring gets much more reddish - especially in the males. Unlike their South Island relatives, who prefer subalpine sites for nesting, the North Island NZ Dotterels like a beach (preferably sandy) to nest on. Unfortunately, nests on beaches can get swamped by rogue waves or floods. Dotterel's eggs are extremely well camouflaged but this doesn't help if predators hunt by smell (which mustelids do). Another reason for breeding failure is disturbance of the adults while breeding and raising chicks - they are flighty, and the presence of dogs or humans will cause the parent to fly off feigning injury to lure the harmful presence away from the nest. If gone too long, eggs can get too cold to remain viable, or chicks can get sunstroke. This is why it is so important to give nests a wide berth, and stay off sandspits.

With our pair back at the Waikanae Estuary, it is worth reminding beach users that in the Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve dogs are only allowed on formed tracks (humans should stick to this rule too), and [dogs](#) must be on leads. Similar rules apply near other dotterel nesting sites in our region.

Sure, it's interesting to see if you can spot a bird - or better still the eggs in a nest, but please don't try. You may think one person won't make a difference, but you might be the 10th in a given day, and the birds should be allowed the space to raise their young undisturbed so the population keeps growing.



NZ Dotterels at Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve - Photo credit: Pam Stapleton

F&B submission to KCDC on cats

Our position is: Except with the approval of Council, no person shall keep more than three (3) cats over the age of three months on premises within the Kāpiti Coast District. Any cat over four (4) months must be: microchipped and the cat's microchip registered with the New Zealand Companion Animal Register; and de-sexed unless: the cat is kept for breeding purposes; and registered with a nationally recognised cat breeders body; or the owner provides a certificate from a veterinarian stating that the de- sexing of the cat will adversely affect its health and/or welfare.

Kāpiti F&B Youth Hub

The local Kāpiti Forest & Bird Youth Hub is officially underway.

Forest and Bird Youth is a branch of the organization set up by young people, for young people. We aim to advocate for our environment as well as educating young people. Since the beginning of 2021, we have been working in creating a youth hub out here on the Kāpiti Coast. We are a small team of eight young students from all around the district. We are so thankful for the support the Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird branch has offered us, as well as the opportunity to collaborate and support we've had from sustainable coastlines.

We are currently focusing on getting to know one and other and organising what's coming up for the hub through our fortnightly potlucks! New members (14-24) welcome.

Ella Harvey

No more RMA?

While the Resource Management Act has had its failings, it's important that whatever law(s) replace it protect the interests of the environment. Without a benign and benevolent environment, landowners, businesses and investors will not benefit from ecosystem services and will have no certainty to make decisions. Nightly on TV News, we can see the devastation damaged environments visit on the earth and the consequent challenges we are facing. We can't ignore these indicators.

A good way forward is to ensure robust legislation, by being involved in the drafting of the law, and encouraging discussion about the importance of not losing or degrading any more natural places. Listen to the arguments and look for opportunities to contribute in coming months, so that feedback will be meaningful and the laws effective. Forest and Bird HQ has provided a [submission guide](#), so you can read the [Parliamentary Paper and make a submission](#) (before 4 August 2021)

Sounds of Science podcast

DOC has created a series of podcasts on various scientific and conservation topics.

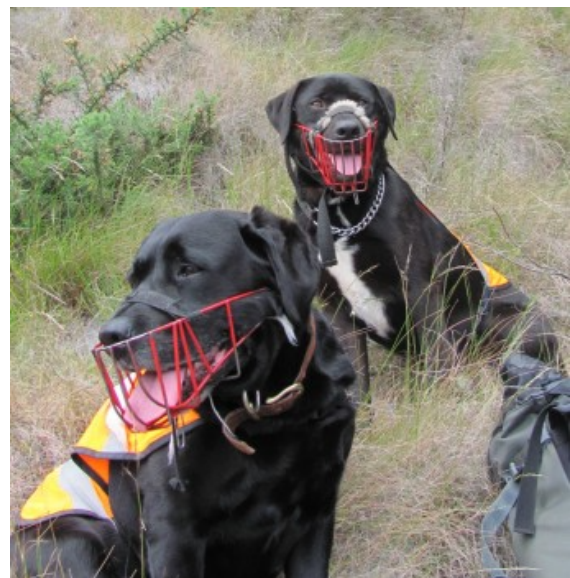
So far there are 14 episodes covering all sorts of things including predator control, marine mammals, bats, lichen and more.

Here's a link to Episode 11 which gives a Conservation Week summary of some of the best snippets so far, to give you a taster: <https://www.podbean.com/ew/pb-bbb2z-e801f1>

Jo Sims on Dogs for Conservation

It was great to hear Jo Sims talk about her work in bird conservation with Rua, her current conservation dog. She has travelled far and wide (and up and down and round and round) looking for birds! Some of her challenges extend beyond dog training and terrain, to human interactions.

Jo's work reminds me that there are many ways to approach any problem, and many ways to find solutions to help our native birds. If you couldn't make it, you might like to watch a video of Rua in action: <https://de-de.facebook.com/DabChicknz/videos/a-day-in-the-life-of-rua/2498802730357648/>, or follow Jo on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DabChicknz) to hear more about her work with Rua, and the new German Pointer dog, Milo, whom Jo is training. (Maddi, Jo's first bird dog, is retired)



Conservation Dogs Maddi and Rua - Photo credit: Jo Sim

More Kōkako for Kāpiti Island

On Kāpiti island, there are about 100 pairs of kōkako. I have heard their extraordinary haunting song twice when visiting, but have never seen them. They come from a release about 30 years ago where 11 pairs successfully breed. Numbers have nearly doubled over the last 5 years however their genetic diversity is small making them not as robust as they could be.

On Monday, 5 July, 11 North Island kōkako from a different population were translocated from Pureora Forest to Kāpiti Island and up to 35 kōkako will be transferred over the next 2 years adding diversity to this nationally important population.

Forty or so years ago, kōkako were a fast disappearing species because of habitat loss (mainly NZ Forest Service) and predators. F&B and NFAC (Native Forest Action Council) stopped the logging of native forest in NZ. The preservation of North Island forests, such as Pureora, was crucial for the continued existence of kōkako. There are still rumours of the South Island orange wattled kōkako, but searches have not borne out their continued existence.

It has taken a huge amount of effort by organisations, but mainly DoC, to bring North Island kōkako from almost certain extinction. Recently, kōkako numbers have reached a milestone of 2,000 pairs in the wild and you can see them (if you are lucky) within an hour's boat ride of Kāpiti. How cool is that?!



North Island Kōkako [Callaeas wilsoni](#) – Photo credit: [Matt Binns](#)

Our next meeting

Our next public meeting is planned for Wednesday 22 September, at Waikanae Presbyterian Church Hall. Our speaker will be Andrew Stewart, Marine curator at Te Papa, on marine biosecurity threats in our environment.

Electric Utes & Tractors Coming

News may not yet have reached our tradies and farmers, but electric tractors and utes are on the horizon, and some are being tested here. The fully electric [Rivian R1T Ute and R1S SUV](#); and the [Amazon delivery vehicle](#) have been spotted testing New Zealand's driving conditions, and there are already Nissan electric vans, the eNV, on the market. Kubota and [John Deere](#) are committed to 100% electric tractors. Of course, many Utes and SUV's in New Zealand have never seen a dirt road, but having electric options for drivers who prefer this style of vehicle will be a relief I am sure.

F&B Calendar & Diary Fundraiser

Our fabulous Craig Potton Calendars and Diaries are on order from publishers and arrived today! Their early arrival will help get these away as gifts in good time for Christmas (given shipping hold-ups) We've kept our prices the same as last year: \$15 for calendars and \$23 for diaries, so they're a great buy, and everyone loves them.

You can order now through Peter Kentish: 021 027 70520, or 04 298 1255 or via Pk2003_595@hotmail.com. Cheques can unfortunately no longer be accepted.

Editors: Russell Bell & Pene Burton Bell
Email: russelljamesbell@gmail.com
Phone: 021 22 66 047

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