

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

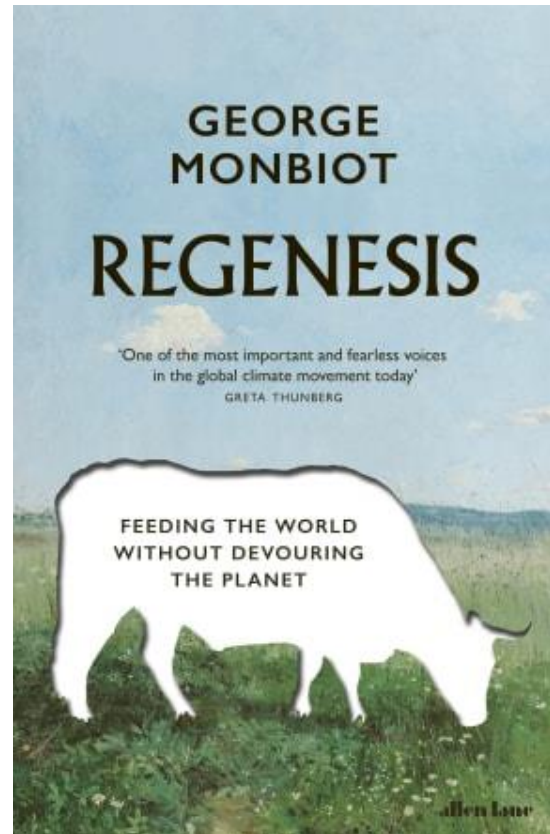
January 2023

Editorial. NZ Farming

Recently I travelled from Auckland to Wellington by (BEV) car. I am interested in land and was intrigued by the statements made by George Monbiot in *Regenesi*: *Feeding the world without devouring the planet*.

He said amongst other things:

1. Land use is the most important of all environmental metrics.
2. Every hectare we use for extractive industries is a hectare of land that can't be used for wild ecosystems, such as forests or wetlands or natural grasslands, on which the great majority of the world's species depend.
3. While emphasis has been placed on the growing urban sprawl, we should be more concerned about the amount of land required for farming. The entire urban area occupied by humanity is 1 % of the planet's land. Farming occupies 38 percent of the planet's land, 12 % grows crops, 6% of those crops are for animals, and 6% for humans and the other 26 % used for pasture-fed meat production.
4. From pasture feeding alone, we get 1% of our protein. This is a phenomenally profligate and wasteful way of producing our food and it carries a vast ecological opportunity cost."
5. If we switched to a plant-based diet, our total land use could be reduced by about 75%. Soy crops require only two m² of land for every 100 grams of protein - compared to 163 m² for beef and 185 m² for lamb.
6. It's because of those [metrics] that the nation with the world's greatest hunger for land is New Zealand.
7. While NZ does have some very high-yield farming, it is outweighed by our "extraordinary degree of agricultural sprawl".
8. If everybody ate the average NZ diet, we'd need another Earth sized planet to feed us. That's because of the very high proportion in New Zealanders' diets of free-range lamb and beef.
9. Because we haven't got an extra planet, we cannot... justify ... eating that diet. It's simply wrong to do so, it is unethical to eat that diet.



So, as I travelled from Auckland, I looked at the countryside and considered all this.

- Every farmed hectare produces carbon, from buildings and machinery, from animals, weed control, fertilizer use and from servicing. In contrast, every natural hectare absorbs carbon.
- Ignoring grain and horticulture, 9m of NZ's 27m ha (33%) is farmed for pasture fed meat or milk.
- Wetlands are the most easily farmed and we have lost 90% of them. Only pockets of unconnected lowland native forests remain. Like the Mackenzie basin many of our native grasslands have or are turning green through irrigation or forestry.
- A proportion of farmed land is steep and ridges can be seen where the soil layers (pedosphere) are rolling down the slopes of the underlying rock. Economically, this land must be marginal.
- If only 1% of protein comes from pasture fed animals and much of our milk has the additional carbon cost of being dried using coal and oil before export, NZ cannot justify the use of marginal land.

- From a NZ climate mitigation point of view, given the current and future cost of climate damage, the steeper, less productive, marginal areas within farms should be retired and allowed to regenerate. The cost of the damage that is being caused by climate events (remember West Coast, Nelson, Ohau, Northland) must far exceed any loss of NZ income.
- But the land is privately owned so perhaps it should be like buying an EV car. If a farmer permanently retires a fenced area of land under a climate change covenant, they will be entitled to a rebate of \$X. If they produce from marginal land, there will be a cost. Much of this land surely will be close to being uneconomic.

Russell

Why you should visit Queen Elizabeth Park

Michael Stace

Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP), can be accessed by road from Paekakariki, Mackays Crossing (first offramp after Transmission Gully travelling north), or Raumati.

<https://www.gw.govt.nz/parks/queen-elizabeth-park/>

Farming in QEP finished in October 2020. Recently Greater Wellington (GW) decided that the park would be devoted to recreation, including rewetting much of what was wetland. That process is underway. The process of putting tracks in much of what was farmland is well advanced and is covered in GW's pamphlet 'Queen Elizabeth Park': https://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Documents/2022/12/Queen-Elizabeth-Park-Brochure-2022-2.4_WEB.pdf. This also shows where dogs are prohibited – that is around the wetlands near Mackay's entrance. The new tracks are (all well worth walking):

Old Farm track (3.5km) – Poplar Ave to Marine Memorial (well-marked, gravelled and suitable for bikes)

Peatland Ridge track (1.4km) – Rainbow Court to old Pony Club (The Pony Club is moving into the paddocks around what was the Milking Shed and Woolshed on this track not far from the Rainbow Court).

- Farmland reduction is already happening. Over the last 20 years, farmland has reduced by 2m ha, but that does not reflect a decrease in animal numbers.

A separate study found ... *that humans and their livestock now comprise about 96% of all mammal biomass on Earth. All other mammals – whales, sea lions, bears, elephants, badgers, shrews, deer, bear, cougars, rats, wolves, and all the rest – are about 4.2%.*

<https://tinyurl.com/4j56znhp>

There is a case for retiring much more marginal farmland, for seriously reducing meat consumption and changing the carbon cost of our agricultural exports.

Peatland Loop track (2.2km) – remote grass track.

Kanuka track (500m) – from Te Ara Whareroa (i.e. the cycle way/multi use track) to the intersection of Old Farm and Peatland loop tracks.

The southern farm (approx. 1.3km) – entrance on the left going south just past where the Yankee Trail reaches Te Ara Whareroa. Not mown but the track through grass is visible which gives views over Paekakariki and goes to the corner of the Dune Swamp Loop by the railway line.

While signposts have been installed for the first three tracks, the signs themselves are yet to be attached. It is really encouraging to see what is being done. It's sad though that there has been no follow up and elimination to much of the blackberry at the northern end, which was cut about two months ago. Given the fantastic growing conditions, it is just about as bad as it was before it was cut. The new tracks have opened up large chunks of blackberry growth which should be ready for harvesting from Anniversary weekend.

Pukeko, pheasants, Canada geese (and the nests of each) and hares are also frequently on display as you explore this part of the Kapiti Coast.

New Zealand Copper butterflies

Pene Burton Bell

Did you know there are at least four species of copper butterflies (pepe para riki) in New Zealand? They're all endemic, unlike the much larger Monarch butterfly (but it's still beautiful). Watching butterflies is a great way to lift your spirit.

In December I joined a small group of Waikanae Estuary Care Group members (<http://www.waikanaeestuary.org/>) on an outing to discover and photograph our native copper butterflies in our area. We visited Pukerua Bay beach and Stuart Park which were both excellent locations for spotting butterflies, as well as lovely places to walk, with amazing views. We lost count of how many glorious Māui Copper butterflies we saw at either site - at least 200 at Stuart Park (and you'd probably still see as many now), 50+ at Pukerua Bay. The butterflies were feeding on the nectar of lots of different plants (they're important pollinators): flowering clover, ngaio, yarrow & wild turnip, but had a special affinity with the muehlenbeckia on which they were often seen in pairs.

This is perhaps because muehlenbeckia is what they lay their eggs on. The females have lovely mauve spots on their wings.



Male & Female Māui Copper butterflies on muehlenbeckia Photo Credit: Pam Stapleton

Use your voice

Improving Market Governance of the ETS

<https://consult.environment.govt.nz/climate/market-governance-nz-emissions-trading-scheme/>

The Ministry for the Environment is extending the deadline for submissions on market governance proposals for the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZ ETS). New written submissions, as well as edited and expanded versions of previously submitted responses will now be accepted **until Monday 27 February 2023**.

Review of sustainability measures for fisheries

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/consultations/review-of-sustainability-measures-for-fisheries-2023-april-round/>

The next round of reviews of quotas for fish and shellfish is underway and the Ministry of Fisheries is inviting submissions **until 08 February 2023**.

Getting out and about in Porirua

If you want to get amongst it close to home, Porirua City Council has a web page listing their top 10 walks with maps and more information.

<https://poriruacity.govt.nz/discover-porirua/walking-biking/walk/top-10-walks/>

I also found a neat video (12 min) of three mountain bike tracks, some of which are listed on the above page as walkways too. This is a good way to get a feel for the terrain, and for those no longer able to make it on foot, a way to live vicariously, checkout: <https://youtu.be/z7f7Ft9mCVI>

Ōtaki Gorge Road still closed

A reminder that sadly, due to continued instability, access to the Ōtaki Forks and Tararua Forest Park via Ōtaki Gorge Rd, is closed at Blue Bluff. You gain a new appreciation for things when you can't access them...

Getting out in the Garden? Get to know your pest plants

When it's not too hot, it's great to be in the garden in summer, so this is a good time to deal to any pest plants. You can read a brief summary of some common pest plants and how to deal with them on this Kapiti Coast Council web page: <https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/whats-on/news/2022/pest-species-weed-or-welcome/>

If your weed isn't mentioned, try the Weedbusters website: <https://www.weedbusters.org.nz/>

The problem with weeds is that they can invade our reserves, but if we all do our bit, we can stop (or at least slow) their spread.

Enjoy your summer

Russell and Pene

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