

# Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird

## Newsletter February 2023

### Editorial: Kāpiti wetland and peatlands

Forest and Bird, Kāpiti Coast Biodiversity Project and Low Carbon Kāpiti suggested to KCDC that they buy the 28ha property, 77-109 Kāpiti Road Paraparaumu - the bare land west of the city Centre - and use it for a Paraparaumu 'central' park. It would have been ideal, adjoining the city, having dry areas that could be used for passive recreation and having peat wetlands that could be restored as natural areas helping with climate change and biodiversity. It was worth a try but it failed.

The other reason for this initiative was to raise two issues with Council: peat in relation to climate change, and wetlands in relation to both climate change and biodiversity.

Peat is reasonably straight forward because scientists are clear. "*Wherever peatlands are allowed to be damaged or drained, harmful emissions will continue to be released for decades,*" (Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP). "*If we are going to keep on track with the Paris Agreement goals, peatlands need to be protected and restored globally,*" (Dianna Kopansky, UNEP *Global Peatlands*). We need to stop peat emissions, which occur if the peat drained, otherwise we cannot avoid catastrophic climate change. The world's peat contains just too much carbon to ignore.

Wetlands are now subject to the *National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM)* which should slow or stop the development of any

existing wetlands but one of the problems is: *Is that wet piece of land a wetland or not?* While the definition of a wetland is clear, each wetland needs to be assessed to see if it meets the criteria. Authorities who wish to see development rather than wetlands, because development brings them more income, may not wish to have the wetlands in their area classified, and development thereby restricted.

The Kāpiti Coast was comprised largely of sand dunes and peat wetlands. To do our bit to save the world from catastrophic climate change, KCDC should not allow development on any more peat areas and to do this, they would have to determine where those peat areas are.

Because the National Policy Statement for Freshwater protects wetlands (of which the Wellington region has less than 3% left) and because there is also a biodiversity crisis, KCDC should not allow the development of any more wetlands, but to do this, KCDC would have to determine what land meets the wetland criteria.

The Kāpiti Road property has been sold to a company which understandably will wish to develop it. The two issues of peat and wetlands have not gone away. Before the sale, we wanted to discuss those issues with KCDC to find out how they would approach any development of them, but any discussion was put on hold until after the sale.

Kāpiti has not had any climate events and while NZ has only had the occasional incident related to climate change, it has had nothing like storm and accompanying floods that hit NZ this month.

Imagine if the next cyclone delivered a westerly atmospheric river to Kāpiti. What would happen to Kāpiti's low-lying developed land on former wetlands in such an event.

Councils' actions prior to this month's event could be excused for the past loss of wetlands and development of peat areas and for not taking climate change too seriously. That is no longer the case. Future loss of wetlands and development of peat areas will not be so excusable. That would be especially true if any reduction of wetlands in the Kāpiti Road property caused flooding to existing properties elsewhere on the Wharemauku Stream.

Climate change does not plateau at some new level. Unless it is stopped, the events will just get worse. The government has put an estimated cost of \$10 billion on this single event. Imagine if we continue business as usual, how much worse a similar event

### February Public meeting: Marine Ecosystems

At our February public meeting we had three speakers on the marine ecosystems of the Wellington Coastline. Valerio Micaroni and Francesca Strano talked about the sponge forests off our coast and showed us videos of these amazing places taken on their dives. They are both passionate about raising awareness of these taonga and the importance of protecting our oceans and their inhabitants (including sponges). They have both recently completed doctorates - Valerio on human impacts, and Francesca on the effect of marine heatwaves. We learned that sponges are our local equivalent of coral, and provide

could cost in the future. And because we know that similar events will recur more frequently, should NZ help reinstate those flooded areas and will insurers insure them?

The Minister of Climate Change James Shaw (quoting Winston Churchill) said recently "...we are entering a period of consequences."

I fully acknowledge that authorities have very difficult decisions to make because significant climate change events are now happening in NZ, they can no longer be ignored, they require mitigation because they do not plateau. They are particularly difficult because they affect public safety, council finance, private property, personal loss and even loss of life.

I look forward to a discussion with an appropriate council representative. Long term, there are ways through this.

The decisions made will determine how long we and our children suffer those consequences and the seriousness of them.

*Russell*

habitat for baby fish as well as many other animals and plants. You can watch the video of their dive off Ohau Point here: <https://tinyurl.com/5n7ufmrv>

Dr Nicole Miller also spoke about kina barrens (where kina are annihilating kelp and seaweed forests due to overfishing of crayfish, snapper and blue cod) and it's affecting us locally. Learn more here: <https://tinyurl.com/4sx5ydf2> .

We learned about how important it is to involve recreational divers in reporting their findings, and teaching people about underwater worlds. Nicole does this

through Project Baseline:  
<https://projectbaseline.org/wellington/>

Dr Miller also brought along an amazing VR mask to give us an 'up close and personal' virtual reality experience of a dive.

## Rock Lobsters

In our newsletters, we let you know about submissions you can make to influence local or national decisions.

The most interesting aspect of this month's Kāpiti F&B meeting, for me, was the kina barrens. This is where a thriving kelp forest with all its attendant species is reduced to a barren rock wasteland, eaten out by kina which are moving on the new kelp forest. Why is this happening? Because of 'trophic cascade'.

This is where the addition or the removal of a top predator cascades down through food chain by changed behavior. The most famous example is the addition of wolves into Yellowstone NP changing the behavior of elk. Elk decreased in number, did not use areas where wolves could easily attack them especially on the river valleys. This allowed plant regeneration. Plant growth alongside rivers stabilized the banks keeping the rivers in place allowing the development of pools and riffles. So, the reintroduction of wolves, after some time changed the geography. The environment was much healthier.

The existence of kina barrens in the Wellington region is due to too few kina predators and the main predators are snapper and rock lobsters (Crayfish).

*A NZ fisheries report says: ...where there are fewer rock lobsters, there is an increased population of kina, thereby increasing the grazing activity of kina, and resulting in the loss of strands of seaweed, particularly kelp forests, in coastal areas, described as a "trophic cascade"; ...*

She also commended the work of [Mountains to Sea Wellington](#).

You can get involved with Mountains to Sea's next free community snorkelling event at Whitirea on 4 March 2023. Details here (Age 8 and older: 8-16 need adult buddy):  
<https://tinyurl.com/56s275jn>

*trophic cascade has been reported in New Zealand, and areas affected by it are described as 'kina barrens' ...loss of kelp forests is ecologically damaging for surrounding coastal systems, in fisheries production, biodiversity, and ocean carbon sequestration and take decades to reverse. Read more here:*  
<https://tinyurl.com/3xbymfeu>



Where there are kina barrens, the quota for crayfish and snapper are too high. The chance to influence decisions on this have passed. We missed it (sorry). Fisheries have outlined four options. They range from continuing current practice to significant reduction in crayfish catch. But the best ecological option, significant reduction, is of course the most unpopular for commercial and recreational users. The decision is expected in early April.

## Peacock Moth

*Pene Burton Bell*

The Northern Wattle Moth (*Dasytopia cymatodes*) is sometimes called the Owl moth or the Northern Old Lady Moth. In te reo it is known as the Pepe kehue or Pepe atua and Māori believe they are connected with the returning Spirits of their ancestors. The species feeds on acacia plants such as wattle and self-introduced from eastern Australia (so they are native rather than endemic) but their presence was noted by Māori well before the arrival of settlers.

Their name comes, no doubt, from the similarity between the 'eyes' on their wings, to the 'eyes' on male peacock tail feathers. They are a large moth with a wingspan of about 80mm, apparently the zigzag patterns can go either way (vertical/horizontal).

### STAND UP PEOPLE:

#### Global climate strike: Friday 3/3/23

Stand with Forest & Bird members and Aotearoa's youth at the Global Climate Strike on Friday 3 March 2023.

After the devastating extreme weather across the North Island in recent weeks, the time is now to amplify our call for urgent climate action. Nature will help us navigate the climate crisis, but only if we help nature first.

### The Legacy of Audrey Eagle (1925-2022)

Accomplished botanist and artist Audrey Eagle passed away on 27 November 2022. Born in 1925 in Timaru, Audrey was raised and educated in England but returned to New Zealand in 1949 with her new husband Harold. As she put it in 2006 *"I had to return to New Zealand, because there was something there I felt I had to do"*. She was a founding member of the Waikato Branch of Forest and Bird. It was through this association that she developed her passion for New Zealand flora. As she said *"I thought*

I spotted this one when opening up at the Friends of the Waikanae River nursery.



Photo credit: P Burton Bell

Locally, gatherings are being held at 2pm at Civic Square, marching to Parliament. 3pm at Parliament Lawn. BYO voice, placard etc. to get the message across. More details on F&B Facebook page.

### Urban Trees and Open Spaces

Both important and both vulnerable...

A Kāpiti group is being formed to defend them. Next meeting is on Saturday 9 March at 9am. Contact Viola Palmer for more details on (04) 293 6639

*that if I looked at a plant long enough to paint it, I would remember both how it looked and what it was called"*. This philosophy was no doubt key to her remarkable career as a botanical illustrator. John Barkla, in describing her influence, said of her two-volume publication Eagle's Complete Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand: *"In scope, it is more comprehensive than any work of botanical illustration covering New Zealand's trees and shrubs that has been produced hitherto and it is unlikely*



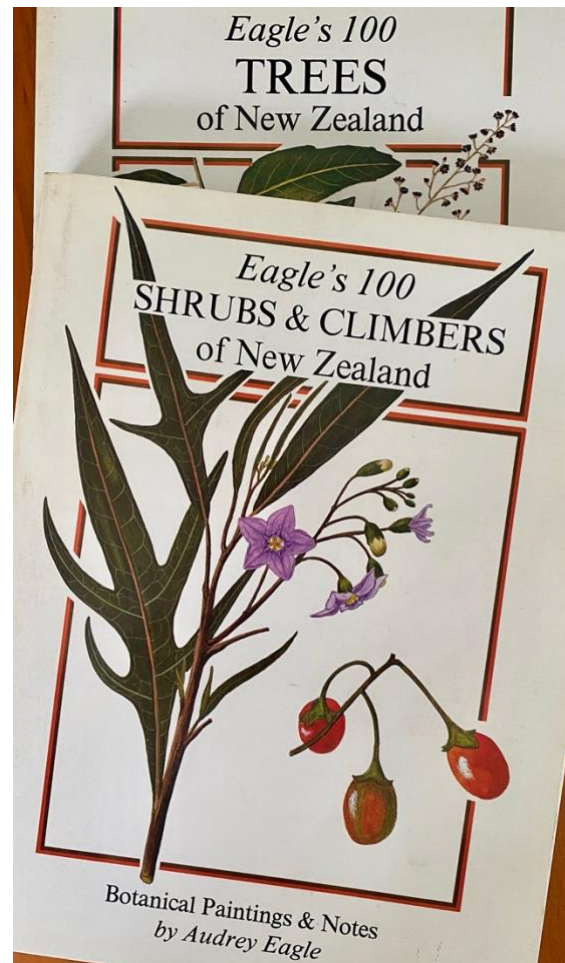
*that a project of this magnitude will ever be completed again by one artist."*

Some of us may be fortunate to own a copy of this taonga, or to have a copy of another of her books.

As a result of her endeavours Audrey received (not a complete list nor in order) an honorary Doctorate of Science Degree from Otago University, became a Distinguished Life Member of the Royal Forest and Bird Society, won the Loder Cup, was appointed a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, and won four book awards.

Reflecting on Audrey's contribution reminds me that while each of us have different strengths, we can each choose to use our strengths to benefit the greater good as Audrey did. We can each leave a legacy.

You can hear a 2009 interview with Audrey speaking about her work here: <https://tinyurl.com/yz3dhrur>.



## Global Ocean Sanctuary

UN Global Ocean Sanctuary meeting now: The IGC5 talks will finish on 3 March 2023. This Treaty is needed to provide the legal framework to create fully protected areas in international waters and would allow 30% of the world's oceans to be safeguarded from destructive human practices by 2030 – including bottom trawling and deep-sea

## Kāpiti Districtwide Emissions targets

Districtwide Emissions Reduction Discussion - 11:15am on 28/2/23 at Council Chambers target. Councillors will be briefed about options for setting a districtwide emissions reduction target and provided a range of scenarios so they can consider the benefits, costs and trade-offs of setting a districtwide target. You can view a livestream, or

mining. Almost 70,000 New Zealanders have signed a Greenpeace petition calling for a strong Treaty, joining over 5 million voices across the globe.

You can join them here: <https://tinyurl.com/4h25czur>

you can attend in person.

<https://tinyurl.com/2zynn4na>

Comment. James Shaw said, *We are entering a period of consequences.* We have known consequences are coming for decades, only now is council being briefed on whether they should set a target for reductions, but this is not their fault. They are voted in or out by us.

## Have your say on Public Consultations:

### Paua catch limits in lower and central North Island

Submissions close 24/3/23

Fisheries New Zealand (Part of MPI) is currently reviewing catch limits, allowances, and recreational daily bag limits for pauwa in the lower and central North Island, an areas known as PAU 2. MPI have put up 3 options – 1 Continue to catch current tonnages, 2 Reduce the catch by a bit, 3 Reduce the catch by an amount that will ensure their survival. The threats are: 1- Silt runoff from land (Cyclone Gabriel will certainly increase that), 2- Increasing sea temperature and 3- increasing acidity due to climate change. Details here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc35k2jb>.



On 25/26 March 2023 our organisation turns 100. Happy Birthday Forest & Bird!

*That's all for now folks... ka kite anō au i a koutou.*

*Russell and Pene*

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### Resource Management Fines

Submissions close 31/3/23

The current fines available for infringement of the Resource Management Act were set in 1999 and are now too low to discourage non-compliance. Tell MfE (Ministry for the Environment) your views on their proposed changes to fines.

Details here:

<https://tinyurl.com/5ftcnzdz>.

### Porirua: Titahi Bay Beach Reserve (and associated reserves)

Submissions close 28/3/23

The review aims to create a series of development plans for the Titahi Bay Beach. The review will include two Council reserves, namely Arnold Park and Titahi Bay Beach Reserves in the master planning, and the council is asking what plans the public have (would like) for these areas. There are pieces of native bush on this land, if anyone has plans to improve/protect it, now's the time to speak up.

Details here:

<https://tinyurl.com/mr3wa57m>

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