

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird

Newsletter August 2023

Editorial – Insects

We have heard on TV that bees are in a worldwide decline. Bees are important because they fertilise crops and make honey. They are worth \$5 billion per year to the NZ economy (MPI). MPI talks about their decline because if it continues, it will negatively influence our primary industries. Many hives are moved around the country following the flowering of crops and manuka. Bees are also important for fertilisation of domestic fruit and vegetables.

Honeybees are not native. NZ has 28 species of bee – all solitary. And bees are not the only pollinators. Animals, birds, bats, lizards, and insects pollinate flowers. Apparently, most plants are not fussy so there may be many pollinators of a single plant. So, while MPI rightly worries about honeybee declines, gardeners and nature lovers perhaps should worry more about insect declines because it may be a fly, a moth, a native bee, or a beetle that fertilises your tomatoes, cucumbers, marrows, pumpkins, apples, pears, plums, citrus, rose, tītoki, nīkau, the list goes on.

I think there is an insect decline in NZ but there are few studies to quantify this. I admit that my belief comes from the windscreen test. I remember when insects had to be wiped off the windscreen as did the yellow squash marks across the vehicles front. That is something I do not have to do any more.

So, if it is happening, why is it happening?



Red Admiral butterfly (Pic: P Burton Bell)

Like most ecological declines, the primary cause is habitat loss. We are using vast areas of land and when we do, we reduce complex high-volume environments to very simple low-volume ones. We reduce forests to farms and horticultural areas, to mown grass, concrete, or asphalt.

A complex forest structure consists of deep and shallow root systems, an understory, sub-canopy, canopy and emergents, with vines and epiphytes maybe a small wetland or a meandering stream.

Farm paddocks, by contrast, have very few plant species and very little above or below ground diversity. Regenerative agriculture with its greater range of species, some deep rooted and others shallow, some tall and others short, flowering at different times of year provide a much more complex environment but not as complex as a native forest. While a pine forest has

height and physical diversity, it has limited plant diversity. Playing fields, and mown areas along the sides of town and city parks, rivers and streams, and residential lawns are poor supporters of flowering plants and therefore insects. Grass is mown at a height that cuts off most flowers.

The range of environmental niches, places for insects to complete their lifecycle (egg, larvae, pupa, and adult), to develop, hide and feed in; decreases dramatically with habitat simplification and the loss of habitat volume, so the insect species that can survive in them decreases.

The second reason for the decline in insects is the use of insecticides. When the past farmer in Queen Elizabeth Park wanted to change crops, say from plantain to red clover, he used herbicides which left dead plants lying on the ground. An insect group named springtails multiplied in this mulch of dead plants and would eat the new crop. To kill springtails, he sprayed with two insecticides, but insecticides are not specific – they kill all insects.

Dung beetles are now used in NZ to bury animal dung, recycling their nutrients, therefore removing some of the greenhouse gas emissions from cow pats and slowing the degradation of soils. The use of insecticides on farmland will kill or reduce those dung beetles, reducing the benefits they provide.

Grass grub is controlled in NZ by granules with a water-soluble chemical that binds to soil and lasts about 12 days. It kills on contact. It is an insecticide. It will kill insects that use or pass through the top layer of our lawns and elsewhere where grass grub is controlled.

NZ seed suppliers sell seed that contains coatings. Some of those coatings are to stop attacks from insects – black beetle, springtails, Argentine stem weevil. They must be completely covered by soil so birds can't get to them because they are poisonous to birds. Stem weevil control tells you that the coating gets taken up by the plant killing any insects that eat it. Water solubility means that it can spread through the soil to other plants and into waterways. You can work out the rest.

Neonicotinoids currently seem the group of chemicals that have the worst impact.

Insects multiply rapidly, so if we change what we do, they should recover fast.

Here are some things you can do:

Allow weeds to grow through and flower in your lawn. You need to mow less often and raise the mow height. Retire non-essential lawn and plant it with low herbs or shrubs such as hebe. If you can stand it, let it go semi wild. A tidy well-maintained area has fewer environmental niches. Mulch and hide cuttings, branches, and even logs within planted areas and let them rot.

Don't use coated seed or insecticides. If you make your garden more insect friendly, there will be more predatory insect to eat the ones that bother us.

Planting natives should bring in insect eating birds like fantails. You will have to sacrifice a small amount of your crop, especially for the first year, but it will be worth it.

It's time to be kinder to insects, for their own sake and because we cannot survive without them.

Russell

Pepe tuna - Pūriri Moth – *Aenetus Virescens*

Walking to the river last Monday, I happened upon this lovely moth on the middle of the sidewalk. It not being an ideal environment, I picked it up, photographed it to share, and moved it to a place where it was less likely to get trampled, and more likely to have a chance of surviving its 48 hours of its 'third' life as a moth. These moths are the largest in New Zealand, females can have a wingspan up to 150mm, and males up to 100mm. They are called pūriri moths because their caterpillars are commonly known for using pūriri tree trunks to burrow their 7-shaped tunnels into, to pupate. However, the caterpillars also use putaputaweta trees (so called because the weta love to reuse the tunnels the moths leave behind), kanuka, fruit trees, eucalyptus, and beech. That is in the second stage of their lifecycle. Their first stage begins on the forest floor, where the eggs are scattered by the female moth, and the tiny grubs eat various forms of fungi to get to caterpillar size.



Female pūriri moth laying eggs © Andrew Simpson, iNaturalist

The moths have beautiful patterns on their wings, The males (like the one I saw) are green and white with a camouflage pattern, and the females

have a similar but more expansive pattern in green and brown/black.

Professor Rangi Matamua [writes](#) that as they're usually only seen between September and March, moths like the pepe tuna and other insects that fly in the summer are called 'ngā manu of Rehua (the birds of the summer star), so my discovery was seasonally early. He also notes that their name pepe tuna comes from the fact that the moths are often eaten by eels (tuna) after they die and fall into water ways. Sometimes they are also called ghost moths as in Māori mythology, because it flies at night, it is considered to be from the spirit realm and can represent a visit from an ancestor (or ghost).



Male Pūriri Moth © Pene Burton Bell

F&B Favourite Walks in Kapiti

(Could your favourite walk be next?)

Kaitawa Reserve – Forest walk – Paraparaumu

by Tony Ward August 2023

Distance: 1 km each way.

Attire: Comfortable walking shoes, grass or gravel surfaces, boardwalks and some stairs.

Note: There are two places on the track where it is necessary to climb 8 or 10 wooden steps.

Transport: Car parking on Kaitawa Crescent, 1.5km east from Paraparaumu train station.

Food and drinks: Supermarket and cafes at Coastlands Mall near Paraparaumu station.

Toilets: At Kaitawa Crescent entrance to the reserve.

Dogs: allowed only on a lead.

Why it's special: This is the most diverse area of native bush you will find on the Kapiti Coast. An outdoor classroom project in the reserve displays 24 illustrated panels about native trees, ferns, and fish living in the bush and stream at Kaitawa.



You will see many old original native trees including kohekohe, tawa, kahikatea hīnau and others. The Wharemauku stream snakes through the reserve and there is a flying fox and playground for children.

Directions to the reserve: Cross the railway lines north of Paraparaumu railway station. Take first right turn into Ruapehu street and head on up the hill. Turn right into Kaitawa crescent: 4th street on the right. Two hundred metres along where the Kaitawa Cres turns hard left you'll see the entrance to Kaitawa Reserve. Park on the grass area by the footpath.

At the entrance a map of the reserve is displayed. This shows where the walking track is and where the Outdoor Classroom display signs are located. The track generally follows the Wharemauku Stream west/upstream to the Paraparaumu Golf Course. A shaded section of board walk 2.5m above ground level provides a birds eye view of native ferns growing below next to the stream and there are open areas of lawn surrounded by bush and seating in places to take a rest.



The walking track crosses Rewai Street at about its halfway mark (0.5kms) then continues on to the top half of the reserve at Hookway Grove playground.

Walking down the Wharemauku stream from the reserve entrance at Kaitawa Crescent provides an opportunity to experience the original old kohekohe bush where massive trees arch over the stream to form a cathedral effect. Bird song is particularly clear in this environment; tūī, bellbird and kererū are abundant.

Note: Pics in this story by Russell Bell

Forest and Bird Upcoming events, Calendars and Dairies

“Making Room for Rivers” and discussion with GW

Wednesday 6/09/23 @ 7pm Friends of the Waikanae River AGM at St Luke’s Church corner Elizabeth and Pehi Kupa Street Waikanae

The AGM includes a summary of the activities that GW Flood Control undertook on the Waikanae River and their actions related to flood and risk management.

We will then have a presentation by Forest & Bird Freshwater Advocate Tom Kay, who will be talking about how 'making room for rivers' can help us out of the flooding problems we've engineered.

In this talk, Tom will show us how the way we have managed our environment has exacerbated disaster risk. He will talk about

the impact of flood protection engineering on the health of our rivers, how this is made worse by the loss of wetlands and forests, and outline a 'new' way of thinking about building resilience to climate change in our communities.

Tom will also outline some examples of councils, including GWRC, starting to make room for rivers,.

After the presentation, there will be time to ask questions of Tom and Graeme Campbell, GWRC Manager for Flood Protection.

Tom will be repeating his talk in Wellington on 7 September Details here

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tom-kay-on-making-room-for-rivers-tickets-699986808387?aff=oddtcreator>

Our next public meeting – save the date: 25/10/23 in Waikanae

We’ve been hearing about how GW is electrifying public transport, wants to turn Wellington green, and has committed to planting over 400,000 trees a year across our regional parks until at least 2030, so we’ve asked Greater Wellington Councillor, Quentin Duthie, to tell us more...is this ‘smoke and mirrors’, can it be true? Is there more...?

Calendars and Diaries

F&B 2024 Conservation Calendars and Diaries STILL AVAILABLE through your local Forest and Bird branch.

Buy now and sort out your Christmas pressies - even for overseas friends and relatives. Diaries: \$25 & Calendars: \$18.

They’re our only branch fundraiser
Available now. Pay cash or online – order from our treasurer Peter Kentish on 04 298 1255, or 02102770520, or email pk2003_595@hotmail.com (NOTE: there’s an underscore between 3 and 5)

Keeping watch: Reporting Aquatic Animal Mortality Events and Imposters...

If you see anything out of the ordinary including unusual marine plants and animals, or unusual numbers of dead fish or aquatic life, let the Ministry of Primary Industries know by calling 0800809966 or report online at <http://report.mpi.govt.nz/pest>.

The sooner authorities know, the quicker appropriate action can be taken. The document linked below will help you define if you are looking at something native or foreign:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/10478-New-Zealand-Marine-Pest-ID-Guide>

The 2023 Forest and Bird Annual Conference

The event was held at Te Papa. The venue is great, but it is the meeting of old friends, people who share many of your values and listening to talks and debates on environmental subjects that were the highlights of the conference.

This year was like no other. Forest and Bird has included Māori and youth for many years but they were not the main event. This year they were. I was glad to be the minority.

Youth and Māori must become major players in F&B which has its roots, though not exclusively, in well-off people who had time to concern themselves with conservation.

Māori brought more energy to the meeting, more emotion, a sense that too much has been lost, and there is no alternative but to take action.

Māori, active in the badly damaged Raukumara ranges, taking responsibility for the health of their rohe, dealing with the predators and herbivores that have devastated the undergrowth of these great forests, singing waiata and haka on receiving an award from F&B. They also generously gave credit for the 100 years of F&B's struggle to protect NZ's natural places from the exploitation of those who would have logged our native forests, drained our wetlands, and over exploited our natural resources.



Youth did not blame the previous generation as they had a few years back. They have matured and look to be taking on the mantle and realizing that environmentalists can fight but often may not win.

He conference reminded me of the Manapouri and the Native Forest Action Campaign days, when Forest and Bird had temporarily lost its way, supporting the Forest Service schemes to log huge areas of the South Island, but came around late in the piece and helped get petitions too big for governments to ignore.

They are not **yet** as effective as those in the "Save the Forests" period, nor have we seen leaders such as Gerry McSweeney, Guy Salmon and Kevin Hackwell – they were young and took on government departments with facts and arguments, were eloquent and likeable, and they won.

The situation is different today. We may have the land, but we and the government are not doing enough to protect it. We have climate change to deal with, pollution of our rivers, and the exploitation of our fisheries.

But from what I saw at the conference, the leaders that could help us out of the current situations could well come for the young people and Māori groups that are joining or acting in sympathy with Forest and Bird.

Russell

Conference sessions can be viewed here:

<https://youtube.com/@forestandbird>

Left: Deputy President of Forest & Bird, Kate Graeme, presents the Kōtuku Award to Raukumara Pae Maunga for their outstanding work restoring 150,000 ha of their rohe in the Raukumara Range through pest control. Pic: © P Burton Bell

Select committee on Cat Control

The Environment Select Committee finally released their report in response to the Petition of Erica Rowlands (about cat control) on August 2, 2023. It is only eight pages long and supports the petition's suggested action; That it is time to legislate a national cat management framework.

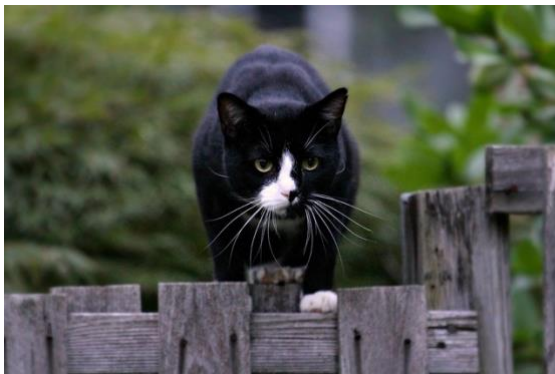
You can view the report here:

<https://selectcommittees.parliament.nz/v/6/a6a98bdc-5cb1-420f-0845-08db92e63a06>.

The report essentially said:

- cats to be defined in three categories: domestic, stray and feral
- domestic cats should be registered, microchipped, and desexed before breeding age with certain possible exemptions (for example for cat breeders) before they are six months old. This is already in place for dogs.

Nothing is said about how stray or feral cats would be dealt with but defining them would allow different actions to be taken for animals in each category.



© Kerri Lee Smith

At our last public meeting, we undertook a straw poll to see how engaged the audience was with the cat management act idea.

The results were:

- How many people here have a cat? (3 or 4 out of 50ish)
- How many would support the proposed approach? (Close to 100%)
- How many would be willing to sign a petition to encourage parliamentarians to see through this approach? (Close to 100%)

Do this here: <https://predatorfreenz.org/cats/>

- How many would be willing to have a conversation with another person about cat control? (About 80%)

Getting people talking about this is possibly the best way to make sure actions get followed through.

Final note: Do you have friends who have suddenly stopped getting our newsletter and magazine? This might be because of a legal change F&B had to make – but it's easily fixed – they just need to get in touch with Membership on 0800 200 064. Thanks

That's all for this month folks...

Russell and Pene

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

If you think your conservation volunteering group should be included in the volunteering opportunities lists that follow, please email kapitimana.branch@forestandbird.org.nz. Thank you for your mahi - we'd be pleased to hear from you.



Kapiti Coast Conservation Volunteering Opportunities

Fieldway Dunes Group (Waikanae), call Susie - 021 549 22

Friends of Waikanae River Monday 9-11.30, call Jo 022 083 1550

Friends of Wharemauku Stream 3rd Sunday 1:30pm, call Sue 027 846 5488

Greendale Reserve (Otaihanga) Meetup Tuesday 9-12, call Chris 04 904 6174

Kaitawa Reserve (Paraparaumu) Meetup Thursdays 9-12, call Tony - 027 5514443

Kapiti Biodiversity Project, including Queen Elizabeth Park Stream Planting Group: Tuesday 9 - 12, email biodiversity.kapiti@gmail.com

Kapiti Weekend Wetland Restoration Group (Mackays Crossing, Paekakariki), 2nd Saturdays 9:30-12:30, email jillvissercox@gmail.com

Kotukutuku Ecological Restoration Project (Paraparaumu), call Peter - 021 215 9262

Ngā Uruora Kapiti Project (Paekakariki/Pukerua Bay) Tuesday mornings & 2nd Sundays from 9, email kapitibush@gmail.com

Ngā Manu Nature Reserve (Waikanae) Monday afternoons and plenty of other opportunities. Check out <https://ngamanu.org.nz/get-involved/>

Nikau Valley Restoration Society, call Wayne 022 395 5867

Paraparaumu Beach Restoration. Check out their Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100093383598502>

Predator Free Paekakariki. Email : predatorfreepaekakariki@gmail.com

Queen Elizabeth Park Restoration Group (Mackays Crossing, Paekakariki) Wednesday 9-12. Email pburtonbell@gmail.com

Tikotu Stream (Paraparaumu). Sunday, monthly. Call Rose 027 756 2713

Waikanae Estuary Care Group (Paraparaumu Beach/Waikanae Beach) Saturday and Thursday mornings. Check out <https://sites.google.com/view/waikanaeestuary/home>

Waikanae River Trappers. Contact Alison 027 452 7425

Weggery Restoration Group. Call Julian 022 090 3868

Whareroa Guardians (Mackays Crossing, Paekakariki) 1st Sundays 9-12, more during planting season, email whareroa.guardians@gmail.com



Porirua Conservation Volunteering Opportunities

Friends of Battle Hill, email battlehillranger@gw.govt.nz

Friends of Mana Island, email fomi@manaisland.org.nz

Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet, checkout <https://gopi.org.nz/>

Kahotea Stream Group (Titahi Bay) Quarterly releasing, litter clean up events and winter plantings. Email kahoteastream@gmail.com

Maara Roa (Cannons Creek) Meetup Saturday fortnightly 9:30. Call Sef 04 234 7747

Mexted Stream (Ranui). Call Bill 0276770180

Pauatahanui Reserve (Porirua Harbour). Email pauatahanuireservecommittee@outlook.com

Pest Free Porirua – email pestfreeporirua@gmail.com

Taupō Swamp and Catchment (Plimmerton) email tauposwamp@gmail.com

Whitirea Park Restoration Group (Titahi Bay) Check them out on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1055760224479856>

If you think your conservation volunteering group should be included, please email kapitimana.branch@forestandbird.org.nz, we'd be pleased to hear from you.