

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

July 2024

Editorial Lip Service to Climate change

Scientists tell us what they discover and their projections from that. They make predictions which are used to prove the validity of their arguments. Einstein's theory of relativity and the standard model of particle physics have survived because every prediction they have made has been shown to be true to a remarkable degree.

Scientists have made predictions about climate change and they are somewhat devastating, leaving parts of the earth uninhabitable and causing huge losses. We have had a touch of those in NZ with Cyclone Gabrielle and Nelson flooding.

These predictions guide the response of the public, companies and governments. In NZ, we took three actions. We declared a climate emergency. We set up an emissions trading scheme (ETS) so that as the situation got worse, the cap (the total number of carbon credits allowed) could be reduced, and the price increase would make high carbon products more expensive. Thirdly, we produce Carbon Reduction Plans.

The first Carbon Reduction Plan runs out in 2025 so the second is now in preparation for 2026. You would expect that the high-cost weather events would result in a tough and somewhat unpleasant plan, but one we must accept if we are to play our part in world carbon reduction.

But politicians influence carbon plans and the discussion document, just

released, is not tough. It talks about new expressways; using the ETS (made ineffective by successive governments); having lots of clean energy by fast tracking (undefined) 'projects'; relying on technologies in their infancy - that need lots of energy to run (e.g., carbon capture), or (e.g. genetic variation) have risks that, if they're inadequately considered, delay action to a future generation to deal with; and planting production pine forests. Farming which accounts for 57% of our climate emissions has a free ride until 2030 and no definite plan after that.

Flying increases, walking and cycling decreases. The well-off will be able to live or shift to safe places, be able to afford insurance hikes, and holiday in seasonally climate friendly areas. Not so the rest.

The Equitable Transitions team at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) has been disbanded, this reinforces that the low emission population will subsidize the high emission population. Caroline Shaw noted in a [recent article](#) 'Overall, the top 20 per cent of people with the highest household travel greenhouse gas emissions were responsible for around 55 per cent of the total household travel weekly emissions. The bottom 60 per cent of people (those with the lowest emissions) were responsible for only 20 per cent of these emissions. Reducing these inequities is not "a nice to have" but is

fundamental to achieving emissions reduction.'

And finally, and most importantly, any emission reduction will be small, not in line with the devastation weather events scientists say will occur. The proposed Carbon Reduction Plan is paying lip service to climate change. Lip servicing usually brings consequences for future generations. Note lip servicing of Māori, the treaty, and the recently reported abuse and neglect of people in care. And while we might delay a day of reckoning with

people, climate change cannot be influenced by talk. When we get serious about climate change, tens, if not hundreds of years will pass before improvement begins. And if we don't get serious - and our government isn't - weather events will get worse until we do.

The discussion document is a disgrace to the government and to New Zealand. (details below)

Russell

Second Emissions Reduction Plan 2026 until 2030: deceitful

New Zealand's second emissions reduction plan (2026–30): Discussion document has been released.

The discussion document identifies 5 pillars that will reduce our emissions to net zero by 2050.

- The first is resilient infrastructure (mainly roads).
- The second is Credible Markets which means the Emissions Trading scheme will be used
- The third is Clean, Affordable Energy.
- The fourth is World Leading Climate Innovation
- And final fifth pillar is Nature based solutions

Pillar 1: Resilient infrastructure is not a reduction method for climate change. It is adapting which means climate change will get worse. It will make road transport more efficient so reinforce the use of roads. The only reduction in carbon will be from electrification of vehicles.

Pillar 2: Using the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) to influence markets.

The ETS has been made ineffective by successive government actions by the following actions

- Free credits given to major carbon polluters so they avoided the ETS effect which would have made them less competitive
- Carbon credits are not time limited and that has allowed companies to buy and use cheaper credits while they sit on their NZ credits as an investment.
- Some (and maybe all) of those cheaper carbon credits are foreign and dodgy. They do not represent carbon saved.
- Methane and nitrous oxide (agricultural emissions) which are 57% of our emissions are excluded resulting in farming having a free ride which will continue another 6 years until 2030 and then they will pay an agreed price rather than one determined by the ETS.
- And finally, my understanding is there is no real cap on the ETS system. The cap is the device which will drive carbon price up

and force change. No effective cap means no driver for change.

Pillar 3: Clean Affordable Energy which the government will enable by removing the roadblocks to energy production. In other words, Fast Track legislation to remove environmental restraints for "Think Big" dams in the DOC estate and wind farms in the sea.

Pillar 4: World Leading Climate Innovation which will boost the economy. Mentioned are carbon capture which so far is capturing very small amounts of carbon and needs large amounts of power to run the plants, changes to regulations for genetic technologies increasing agriculture, and creating even more power to run the increased economy. It also kicks the can further down the road to future generations because the innovations will take years to be efficient and scalable.

Pillar 5: Nature based solutions. Native forests are mentioned but timber production is the major proponent while keeping productive land. Also mentioned is predator free to maximize the carbon value of forests.

Why is this plan so bad?

- Because it increases large industry, infrastructure and farming as fast as possible. Mines, dams, roads, oil and coal extraction are all go. A second Think Big.
- Because the natural environment will suffer.
- Because large projects use international companies and the major profits go offshore.
- Because while some genetic changes may be ok, it's a technology

that should be approached cautiously.

- Because many of the technologies mentioned are still future hopes and dreams, such as solving the methane and nitrous oxide farming issues, producing efficient, huge scale, carbon capture devices and very significant new power generation.
- Because we are likely to see (as we have before) pine forests in areas where they should never have been planted and are never harvested because the carbon credits are enough to profit from. (echoing the Muldoon era.)
- Finally, because while natural solutions are great and necessary, there is a delay between releasing the carbon (1 tonne of carbon per person travelling internationally) and reabsorbing the extra carbon (20 trees will have to grow for 15 years to absorb 1t CO₂-e). If this was a neutral transaction, the trees need to be planted now and travel delayed for 15 years.

Heavy lifting later

The plan says 4.1 million tonnes of carbon (Mt CO₂-e) will be reduced from 2026 to 2030 and 13.5 Mt CO₂-e will be reduced from 2031 to 2035. With most problems, early improvements are easy and further improvements get progressively harder so reductions should start high and decrease. When a plan shows increasing improvements, it is kicking the can down the road.

Notes on the technical annex

Flying is expected to increase with an annual growth of about 3% every year. There is little to no chance of low

carbon fuels or electrification of planes.

A shift to less rail and more road freight continues. No further electrification of rail.

Walking as a percentage of travel is expected to decline. Cycleways as we have seen along the expressway no longer supported so no increase in cycling or walkways.

Public transport as a percentage of travel is expected to increase from 3.5% in 2019 to 5.3% in 2035 – So minimal.

[New Zealand's Second Emission Reduction Plan consultation](#)

Closes 21 August 2024. Read it here:

<https://consult.environment.govt.nz/climate/second-emissions-reduction-plan/>

Book Review: **Angry Weather** by Friederike Otto

This is a somewhat technical but readable book of a new science - that of determining, at the time of a weather event, the extent to which climate change is part of the event or not. The science determines how much worse the event would have been under a non-climate challenged world and how much more likely a similar event may re-occur.

As a real-life event, it describes Hurricane Harvey which hit the east coast of Texas and stalled over Houston dumping just over 1 metre of rain in three days in August 2017. (Gabrielle dumped 223mm over a 24-hour period.) Weather Attribution science as it is called showed that Hurricane Harvey was 15% more intense and 3 times more likely to happen in a 2017 climate change world of 1°C warmer climate. Without climate change such an event was likely to happen every 1000 years or so but now has a return period of about 300 years.

Bring this closer to home, they worked with NZ scientists and determined that Cyclone Gabrielle was about 30% more intense and 4 times more likely

to happen than in a 1.2°C cooler world. They did not obtain a good fix on a cool world return period, saying that it was rare (about every 200 years from my reading of what is written) so now could be every 50 years and more often as climate change advances.

Because this book is firmly grounded in science, there are some significant weather events that they say were not made worse or more frequent, when they occurred, by climate change.

This science also analyzes heat waves. They estimate that heat waves in the Mediterranean are now almost 100 times more likely. The frequency of a weather event is important because whereas insurance and government may be able to help restore normality for a rare event, they will not be capable for frequently occurring events.

As the science progresses, it can estimate what would happen at 2°C of global warming. Climate scientists say we are currently heading towards a 2.5°C world. You can view their work at worldweatherattribution.org

Barriers to Native Fish

Did you know that three quarters of our native New Zealand fish species are threatened with extinction?

It seems strange to me that we are still allowed to fish for whitebait (the juvenile form of some of these species) at all, but some argue it is a way of life, and it is still allowed between 1 September to 31 October and is governed by [regulations](#). The season has been shortened to allow some juveniles to 'get through' outside of these times, and I was lucky to see a small shoal in the tributary of the Whareroa Stream a week ago. Apart from whitebaiters, these juvenile fish are also predated by birds, and it is common to see a lineup of gulls, herons and shags amongst other species waiting for nature's bounty to arrive.

Another hazard for these fish species is in-stream fish barriers. One example is a hanging culvert, but flapgates, weirs and other vertical drops are equally problematic. You may wonder why this is a problem - many of us have a mental image of salmon jumping great distances in fast flowing torrents to get upstream.

Unfortunately, our native species are generally much smaller and lack the muscle to jump when swimming. Some species have instead become excellent climbers, and some also suck onto the rock and wriggle upstream. Some fish even travel in gaps between gravel and rock (interstitial gaps) below the stream bed. This is however nigh impossible on wet vertical surfaces, and this is why such drops make fish barriers and must be resolved to enable these species upstream where they can grow to

maturity, spawn and get washed back out to sea to begin the process again. We need to act to resolve any issues soon too, as the remaining mature populations that can breed are ever-decreasing.

Several methods can be used to overcome these barriers. One is to change the exit so that the gradient is gradual by creating a skirt out of concrete or rocks. Often if it's a hanging culvert, a pool is eroded beneath where the water lands, exacerbating the problem. Filling up the hole with river stone is often ineffective as the rocks have been nicely rounded by natural erosion, and will roll downstream in the power of the water, potentially creating flooding issues lower in the catchment. Using angular rock and making sure it is well embedded works though.

Another solution which has been effective is using 'Super Xmas Tree Mussel Spat Rope'. This rope looks a bit like overgrown french knitting, slowing some of the water down and providing cavities where the fish can rest on their way upstream, however it is made of finely woven plastic twine and as it breaks down it will release microplastics into the environment, so it's also not ideal.

One idea being proposed by our local iwi as a natural solution is by weaving tī kōuka (cabbage tree) leaves, which are notoriously slow to degrade, into a three-strand rope and using that instead. Great idea, I love a nature-based solution, and we will watch with interest.

If you know of a fish passage barrier on public land we'd be happy to follow

up to see if we can get the problem resolved.

Greater Wellington will support landowners to resolve issues on private property too. It is required under the [National Environmental Standards for Freshwater Regulations 2020](#).

Here are some links so you can find out more on this from [DOC](#) and [GW](#). We'll provide links to the local trial when we can get them, but in this photo, you can see a demonstration model of a hanging culvert with mussel spat rope, and the tī kōuka alternative. If you want a closer look, it's currently on display at Paraparaumu library.



Next Meeting: 21 August 2024, 7.15pm at Waikanae Community Centre

Wendy Ambury will be speaking to us about Matuku-Hurepo Australasian Bittern and the Love Bittern! project.

Wendy, who is currently visiting our area, will tell us about bitterns, what she has found while visiting our area of the motu, and how we can help the remaining Threatened - Nationally Critical birds. Find out more here: <https://lovebittern.com/>

Help your local birds make it through winter

We all know the cold makes one hungry, and birds are no exception. Unfortunately, they can't drop into the supermarket (well, let's exclude those cheeky sparrows) - and in winter there is less food around. This is the time of year when we can best support birds to thrive by providing what they need in this time of lean. Having well fed birds will also ensure a good breeding season ahead. So what should you feed them? Bread is not good for birds - the odd crust now and then probably won't kill them, but it's not natural.

Four great ways to support them are to:

- provide fresh sugar water. Replace this every day with a fresh supply in a clean container as you don't want to spread disease but don't use honey. Sugar water will support your nectar loving birds such as tui and bellbirds and even silvereyes. I have to note that we found this drove dominant misbehaviour by tuis at our place (we all know how sugar affects some people) but for a short time it will support the birds. You can stop when you see plenty of spring flowers for them to sup on.

- make energy balls. Melt some suet and add some peanut butter, nuts and seeds and you can add a bit of dried fruit (I use currants). I make a muffin tray worth each winter then freeze

them and put one out every few days. The silvereyes go wild for this mixture.

- Got an old piece of fruit no one is going to eat - you'll find the birds are much less fussy than us, cut them in half, they'll be gobbled up and provide great minerals and vitamins.

- Birds need water in winter too, so if you haven't already it's really helpful to have a bird bath - keep it clean and topped up, and break the ice if it freezes.

With both your feeding stations and your bird bath make sure birds can visit without risk of being predated. Never put out too much, you will only encourage vermin.

It is great fun watching the birds when they call in, why not encourage them to visit you? Your local kids will love it too.



Kereru enjoying our bird bath
Pic © P Burton Bell

Order Now: Calendars and Diaries

The Forest & Bird Conservation Calendars and Diaries for 2025 are now available. They have magnificent photos, make good gifts, and are our branch's only fundraiser. They are also excellent value at \$18 for a calendar and \$25 for a 'page a week' spiral-bound diary. To order, please email Peter Kentish (copied) on pk2003_595@hotmail.com (there's an underscore between the 3 and the 5) or call him on 02102770520.

You can pay cash to Peter, or by online banking into our account: **38-9020-0171967-00**
Forest and Bird Kapiti Mana Branch
Ref: Your name and e.g. 2C1D (for 2 calendars and 1 diary)

Last chances for planting in 2024?

Waikanae Estuary Care Group are planting from 9am on 17 August, starting at Hana Udy Place in Paraparaumu Beach. Contact debbie@waikanaeestuary.org

Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet are planting on 17 August too, from 2-4pm at Motukaraka Point. Contact pauainlet@gmail.com

Parikawau Restoration Group in Waikanae welcome new volunteers on Thursdays 1:30-3pm. Contact Heather on 0274727838

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