

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

December 2024

Editorial: Think about the future

I have been a greenie since about age 24. At that time, my green colleagues and I were worried about the loss of our forests and, in the North Island, the potential extinction of kōkako.

It was probably fortunate for my psychological health that, as time passed, NZ became more aligned with what us greenies thought. The forests were saved. DOC was set up and The Forest Service, and Lands & Survey demolished. But other environmental matters came up and we were still out of step with the majority – tussock grasslands, wetlands, the quality of waterways and native fish.

When I was about 40, I was thinking why I was so far out of step with the majority. I decided it was because I was concerned about the long term. The issues of the moment seemed to arise from things we had done in the past. (Kōkako were declining from habitat loss (logging of natives) and habitat degradation (introduced predators). I decided that people who looked as far ahead as possible, and acted on that, were very important in society. If they saw the future correctly and if they were successful, they would circumvent many issues that would otherwise soon plague us.

The creation of DOC was a good example. If the Forest Service and Lands & Survey had remained, our best native forests would be decimated, we would have less than 10% (the current percentage) of our wetlands remaining, many of our native wildlife would be extinct, and the effects of today's increased intensity storms would have sent greater quantities of water and pine logs to devastate towns and cities. We did not foresee the pollution of our rivers being caused by dairy intensification, nor did we take climate change seriously enough when scientists first raised the issue.

Today, councils and governments are grappling with immediate problems – the

economy, the health sector, renewing inter-island ferries, the impacts on our roads from road freight, three waters (household, stormwater and sewage), climate change events, (drought, flooding, landslides, roading damage, fires, seawalls etc.).

They don't have the capacity to look well ahead and see the problems that are coming – pollution especially plastics in our waterways, seas, in wild and farmed food (and in ourselves and our pets), farm chemicals in our fresh water, the effects of insecticide use on insects, biodiversity loss, forever chemicals, and of course, climate change and the sixth mass extinction.

Climate mitigation and the sixth mass extinction brings a raft of issues to be worked on – food production, improving and leaving to nature 30% of land and sea, increasing electricity production, moving away from petroleum transport, moving from gas cooking and heating to electricity, reducing greenhouse gas from ruminating stock, not farming on peat and wetlands, the conflict between volunteer planting and NIMBYism, the treatment of peat from peatlands used as residential areas, air travel, the climate costs of concrete and steel, the list goes on.

Reducing oil out of food production is massive alone. Oil is used ploughing, producing fertilizers, harvesting, processing into products, transport internally and overseas. Oil is involved at all stages. Some products should not be allowed to be shipped internationally. NZ wine exported to Europe for instance is water in a glass container with a tiny proportion of other chemicals mixed in. Can it be justified against the climate costs? Palm oil imported from the tropics where tropical forests are destroyed to plant palm oil, which is transported to NZ for livestock feed.

Wales recognised that governing bodies were dealing with current problems and perhaps overwhelmed by future ones. It was the first

country to pass a [Well Being of Future Generations Act](#) that was legally binding on national and local governments, local Health boards and other specified public bodies.

The goals are: a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities, a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, a globally responsible Wales. It set up future milestones to reflect the goals and established a Future Generations Commissioner to help achieve them and raise issues if milestones are not being met.

If a commission, a minister, or a councillor in regional and local government was set up in NZ, whose job was to consider whether an impending decision was good for future generations, and to consider the relative value of spending money on an immediate action or an action for the future, decision making may well be improved.

I think that this is a strategy that is well worth considering. The Wales initiative is top down and would take time to implement but giving a minister or local councillor the responsibility to consider how each decision could affect future generations could be set up much more quickly.

Of course, this reminds me of the book [Ministry for the Future](#) by Kim Stanley Robinson because in the book an international Ministry for the Future was set up specifically to deal with climate change. The author put most of the ideas of dealing with climate change in the book and the book is a thriller. It also ends positively for us and the other species that share the earth with

us. It was written in 2019 just before the COVID pandemic but is still very relevant. And if you have read it, there are K S Robinson u-tube interviews where Robinson talks about how he feels about the current situation. They are also interesting, worrying, but positive about our ability to avoid the worst of climate change and a sixth mass extinction.

Two local examples help put some of this in context.

We should manage cats as Wellington and the Hutt City are. Feral cats could then be managed and wildlife would have one predatory pressure removed. It would be positive for the future but a bit unpopular for some cat owners going through the transition. Porirua is in the process of passing the bylaw. Kāpiti has not started.

We should remove weeds and encroachments and plant appropriate native plants to reestablish a more natural sand dune sequence on the coast wherever we can, to help them fulfil their role as places for threatened biodiversity, and as resilient climate change buffers. This would be good for the future but may upset some residents who would lose their mown encroachments and whose views would change over time. If Council was looking to the future, the decision would be easy. Instead, we had the fiasco where KCDC environmental staff destroyed the work done over 18 months by a dune restoration group. Now the dunes are likely to revert to weed infested, non-resilient land with little biodiversity value.

Russell

Have your Say through submissions and surveys

Cats in Porirua (by *Amelia Geary*)

Porirua City Council has notified its *Keeping of Animals* Bylaw and has included cat provisions that we would encourage members to support. They are proposing compulsory microchipping, registering and desexing of cats. This would bring Porirua into alignment with Wellington and Hutt City Councils who introduced similar regulation in

the last 12 months. You can make a submission here:

<https://haveyoursay.porirua.govt.nz/keeping-of-animals-bylaw-2025>. Personal submissions add weight to submissions from organisations like Forest & Bird.

Helpfully, the online submission form also asks whether there is anything else council could include to regulate cats, we encourage

members to suggest a three cat limit. This would give council officers a very helpful cap on cats when they are called to houses with too many cats. These new regulations should provide the impetus to encourage responsible cat ownership across the city. A positive step forward to protect the biodiversity of Porirua and to provide the best outcome for cats. See our longer article on this topic from our [June 2024 newsletter](#).

Look out for the **Purple Loosestrife** weed, it's flowering now. If you spot any, please send details to: pestplants@gw.govt.nz . Read up more about it in our [past newsletter](#).

Kaikōmako / The 'Duck's Foot' tree

Pennantia Corymbosa

The Māori name Kaikōmako comes from kai (food) of the kōmako (South Island name for bellbird) for whom it is a favourite snack. Preferring mild temperatures, kaikōmako is often found in coastal areas (where it tends to be shorter due to sea breeze) and forests where it can grow to 5m tall.

Maori treasure kaikōmako for its usefulness for fire making – being a hardwood, it was often used as the spindle against a softer wood like mahoe to make a friction fire. Legend has it that the Māori goddess of fire, Mahuika, left her magic flame preserved in a Kaikōmako stick to aid mankind in making fire.

This tree is one of many in New Zealand which starts off life as a bushy shrub (divaricating) and which completely change form when big enough. Some theorise that this divaricating habit was developed by plants to prevent the destruction of the whole tree when it was grazed by moa. When it is small, the leaves look like a duck's foot, with quite strong veining showing through (a bit like marbleleaf in this regard). The stems are light grey and quite knobbly/rough, with branchlets coming off at all angles.

Kāpiti Draft Plan Change 1E – Rural Indigenous Biodiversity Incentives

This responds to a review of the current District Plan's "development incentives" provisions, and aims to refocus those provisions to provide incentives for the restoration, enhancement, and creation of areas of positive indigenous vegetation and in exchange for a limited number of bonus allotments in all rural zones (including General Rural, Rural Production and Rural Lifestyle zones).

View the [new draft of this plan change](#) and Provide feedback here: <https://haveyoursay.kapiticoast.govt.nz/draft-plan-change-1e-rural-biodiversity-incentives> by **Friday 14 February 2025**.

When the tree grows out of its juvenile form it grows into a handsome upright specimen with glossy dark green leaves quite unlike the juvenile form.



Showing the classic 'duck's foot' leaf form of juvenile kaikōmako © P Burton Bell



All the leaves you see in this picture are kaikōmako. All photos © P Burton Bell



Sprays of white kaikōmako flowers just setting fruit

The pretty clusters of white flowers started in November, and the dark, shiny berries are produced in autumn.

Avian-Influenza – Part 2 *(by Karen Woods)*

This is a follow-up article to the one printed in our last newsletter.

As bird flu has spread around the world, it has left a trail of devastation killing thousands of birds from the Antarctic peninsula in the south to the Scottish islands in the North. Nesting sea birds have been particularly hard hit with the disease, especially during breeding seasons due to the close proximity of nests. Some colonies have been decimated by 50 – 60 % of their population.

Information from the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI), the lead agency for Avian-Influenza in New Zealand, indicates that on the arrival of Avian-Influenza infected sites will be subjected to environmental risk assessment. This may lead to infected sites being managed differently.

If the virus outbreak occurs in New Zealand, then the public are likely to see a large numbers of dead birds in an infected area which could be distressing, especially due to the odd posture of the dead birds.

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/pest-and-disease-threats-to-new-zealand/animal-disease-threats-to-new-zealand/high-pathogenicity-avian-influenza/about-avian-influenza-and-the-risk-to-nz/>

How Bird Flu Spreads and Reporting

Infected birds shed the virus in their saliva, nasal secretions and faeces (droppings). Droppings from a single bird can contain enough virus to infect thousands of birds.

Bird flu is very infectious. If a single bird in a flock is infected, it can spread through the flock within days. This makes it critical to promptly report any sightings of 3 or more

sick or dead birds to the **New Zealand Exotic Pest and Disease Hotline 0800 8009966** with information on the Species, Number of birds, GPS/Location and Photos.

More information on this here:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/64557-How-to-report-suspected-bird-flu>

Guidelines for Protecting Wildlife and Pets

With summer holidays here, people are enjoying our great outdoors and nature at its best. Everyone can help to protect our natural environment by following good practice:

- Keep pets away from wildlife.
- Prevent cats from roaming. Always keep dogs on a short leash, especially in areas with native wildlife. This will protect the pets, as well as the wildlife.
- Take part in habitat restoration activities to improve local habitats. Activities include revegetating, predator control, weeding or removing rubbish from local natural areas.
- Keep footwear and clothing clean **especially** when visiting national parks, nature reserves or agricultural areas. This reduces the risk of diseases spreading between locations.
- Keep Garden Feeders and Bird Baths clean by following good hygiene practices.

More information on the above is available at this DOC site:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/wildlife-health/avian-influenza/>



Black Swan, Waimanu Lagoon © P Burton Bell

Garden Feeders - Reminder to follow good hygiene practices.

If you have bird feeders in the garden, then follow good practice in weekly cleaning and throwing away any remaining water/seed before replacing with fresh supplies. It's also important to clean perches as faeces may contain diseases which can be spread by the feet of birds. Where possible, change feeder locations to prevent a build-up of faeces underneath.



Kereru on Bird Bath © P Burton Bell

Have your Own Birds?

If you have your own birds, ensure that you are prepared for the arrival of bird flu.

Check out the MPI guidance:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/pest-and-disease-threats-to-new-zealand/animal-disease-threats-to-new-zealand/high-pathogenicity-avian-influenza/bird-flu-and-protecting-your-birds/>

Our Next Public meeting/AGM is Wednesday 19 February 2025

Our next public meeting will also be our AGM and will be held at the Waikanae Community Centre: 28-32 Utauta Street, at 7.15pm on 19 February 2024, our speaker will be Kevin Sheppard who has been key to setting up Predator Free Waikanae.

Nominations for our committee are also welcomed, please get in touch to discuss.

Kāpiti-Mana Branch newsletter index

Did you know you can search and find articles on topics we covered in recent issues?

<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/branches/kapiti-mana/index-articles-kapiti-mana-newsletters>

Thanks to Tom for creating and maintaining this for us.

Finally, best wishes for the Summer ☺



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