

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

May 2025

Editorial: Responsibility for peat extraction

We see significant peat extractions for residential development in Kāpiti every day and soon we will see greater extractions from the New Central Park development between Paraparaumu and the Kāpiti Expressway. Given that climate change is an emergency, peat should be left in the ground or if removed, it should be stopped from mixing with atmospheric oxygen and turning into carbon dioxide.

It is currently being treated in a way that will ensure that much of it will turn to carbon dioxide over a short period of time. I started wondering what national, regional and local government were doing about this.

The NZ government determines what carbon sources are counted and acted on. In the "Second Emission Reduction Plan 2026-2030", peat (and wetlands) are called "Non-forestry removals". It says, *"Managing and restoring wetlands and peatlands can protect existing carbon stores, enhance carbon uptake, increase biodiversity, improve water quality, and protect against flooding and drought. Estimates show a significant potential for reducing emissions if drained peatlands are rewet. Activities such as peatland restoration could be viable now."*

So the government knows about peat and knows that there are areas that could be rewetted now. I think "viable" means financially viable. However the Second Emissions Reduction Plan does not come into effect until 2026.



Peat laid on top of sand and clay base

After that "The Government will prioritise *non-forest removal* activities that are financially viable and have maximum impact." So don't expect any change soon.

The plan also notes that *"Changes to our national accounting would also be needed so that New Zealand could count any non-forestry removals towards the targets. This would also mean that emissions from these categories would count against the targets, potentially making these harder to meet in the short to medium term."* It's more about accounting than doing anything that helps mitigate climate disruption.

So don't expect any changes from government until after 2030. But what about regional government?

GWRC has gone further than the government in its Regional Policy Statement April 2025. It calls wetlands and peatlands "nature-based solutions" described as the *"use and management of natural ecosystems and processes, ...to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ..."* and includes *"managing peatland in a way that retains its carbon stores"*.

Helpfully it notes that *"The regionally significant issues, ... in the Wellington region for climate change are," "Greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced significantly, immediately and rapidly" and "Climate change and the decline of ecosystem health and biodiversity are inseparably intertwined"*.

It says that *"By 30 June 2024, the Wellington Regional Council will, ... identify ecosystems that should be prioritised for protection, enhancement, and restoration for their contribution as a nature-based solution to climate change, including those that sequester and/or store carbon (e.g., forest, peatland)..."*.

So GWRC will have a prioritized list of locations that can be used as nature-based solutions for climate change. But it says that nature-based solutions are to be implemented by city and district plans.

GW's policies for the implementation of nature-based solutions are either "*non regulatory*" or "*for consideration* by district councils".

So what and when KCDC will act on nature-based solutions is largely up to them and they will be understandably reluctant when the areas will become rate-paying residential and commercial properties.

By the time peat is dealt with in a responsible climate manner, it will all have been extracted and will be contributing to climate disruption. By that time the present politicians will be retired. Carbon dioxide has a half-life in the atmosphere of 120 years. So the actions and inactions of the national, regional and local governments over this issue will negatively affect many generations making this

intergenerational theft. Of course while humans can adapt, adding double glazing and sea walls, etc., non-human life cannot and species will become extinct. We are stealing the future of generations to come and the survival of many non-human species.

GWRC has signalled that peat should be managed in a way that retains its carbon stores and has said greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced significantly, immediately and rapidly. KCDC councillors must be aware of what is happening and should be acting appropriately. We need to hold them to account.

Russell

Public meetings

Enough Fish in our Ocean?

At our May public meeting in Plimmerton, Chris Paulin spoke about the changes to the management of our fisheries since the 1970s and how they are holding up today. We learned about how fishing techniques, the incorrect aging of species such as Orange Roughy and even climate change are affecting our fish stocks. New Zealand's Quota Management System needs to consider all the right scientific data before setting quotas. While overall numbers of fish caught have reduced, this may be a reflection that the fish just aren't there, rather than it being a magnanimous action by the fishing industry.

Kāpiti Conservation Group's Mix and Mingle

Our next public meeting will be on 18 June at Waikanae Community Centre*, 28-32 Utauta Street, Waikanae at 7.15pm and will be an opportunity for local conservation groups in Kāpiti to meet up and talk with others about their projects. There'll be some snacks and (non-alcoholic) drinks to set the mood. If you want to learn more about what these groups are up to, where and when they operate, or even to join one or more, we'd love you to come along. See you there!

*It's close to the train station.

Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet AGM: 18 June 2025 at 7:30pm

We don't usually advertise AGMs but the speaker at this one is Craig Nicholson, NZTA's principal project manager for Transmission Gully who will be speaking on the work remaining to complete/meet their environmental requirements. More details at www.gopi.org.nz

Ngā Manu Winter Lecture Series

Wednesdays 1pm - Book here:

<https://tinyurl.com/2rvksh4>

4 June: Prof M Knapp - Conservation Genomics and the Future of Biodiversity

18 June: Dr C Lehnebach - NZ native orchids and research for their conservation

2 July: D H Meudt - Why New Zealand's Forget-Me-Nots Are So Special

16 July: G Clarkson - Drawing the natural world, an illustrator's perspective

23 July: Paul Ward & Jeff Hall - The Capital Kiwi Project*)

*) Capital Kiwi - Paul and Jeff will also be speaking at Wellington F&B's AGM, on 5 June from 5.30pm. Details here:

<https://tinyurl.com/mt79jsmk>

Plant of the month: *Asplenium obtusatum*, Shore spleenwort

Robyn Smith

In January 2025, Mike and Christine Jacobson and I explored the coastline at the bottom of the northern escarpment of Whitireia Park. We were there mainly to delimit the extent of the red-billed breeding colony which established on this coastline this breeding season, but I was also keen to botanise the coastline.

It took 3½ hours to clamber from Kaitawa Point to Rocky Bay, climbing boulders, wading through shallow water and exploring caves.



Kaitawa Point to Rocky Bay, Whitireia Park, Porirua

We came to an area where there were several *Veronica elliptica* (syn. *Hebe elliptica*) and I almost walked past another plant of *Veronica elliptica*, but something made me stop and examine it more closely. To my delight it was paranako, *Asplenium obtusatum*. Although they really don't look alike, they are both very fleshy leaved and love growing on coastal cliffs.

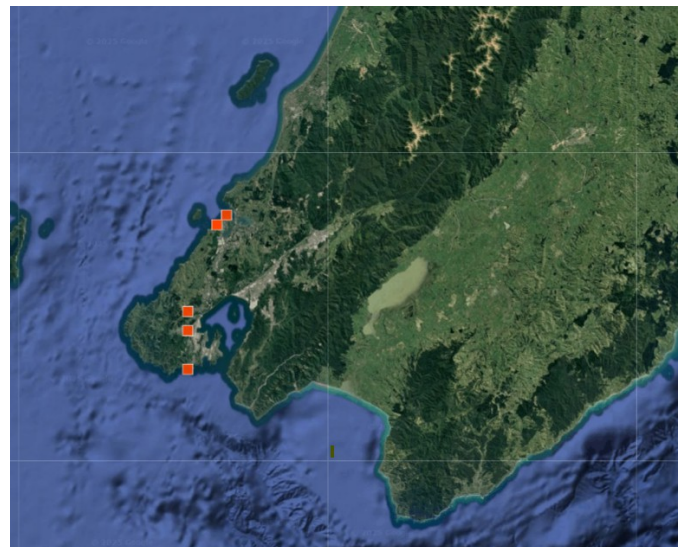


Asplenium obtusatum with *Pseudognaphalium lanatum*
Robyn Smith

A brief survey of the area revealed 7 new plants of paranako and more *Veronica elliptica*.

These new paranako plants are around 450 metres from the only other known plants in Porirua which are on rock stacks near Rocky Bay.

This fern's northern distribution limit is Cook Strait, but it is very uncommon in the Wellington region. It is much more common in the South Island where it grows amongst other coastal vegetation such as *Veronica elliptica* and *Austroblechnum durum*. Paranako is often associated with seabird colonies (NZPCN, 2025). Although it has no national conservation threat status, it's regional threat status is critical.



iNaturalist records of *Asplenium obtusatum* in the Wellington region- accessed 3 April 2025

Paranako grows in the cracks of coastal rocks and must store a lot of water in its leaves to get through dry periods, however some of the 6 plants which previously lived at Rocky Bay have disappeared, probably due to a very dry summer in 2023-24.



Photo - Robyn Smith

A wider survey of the coastal escarpment is needed to determine if there are any other plants of paranako or any other uncommon or threatened coastal species.

References

de Lange, P.J. (2025): *Asplenium obtusatum* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.
<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/asplenium-obtusatum/> (20 March 2025)

Local planting events

Waikanae Estuary Care Group: 7 June and 28 June, 9am - noon, meet at their nursery on Hana Udy Place, Paraparaumu Beach

Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet: 15 June 2.15pm – 4.30pm at Ivey Bay, Paremata

Whareroa Guardians: 15 June 9am - noon

Ngahere Korowai: 4 June Community Planting Day at Takapu Valley,

8 June Community Planting Day at Battle Hill

Queen Elizabeth Park: Planting every Tuesday and Wednesday, and the second Saturday mornings of each month.

** If you need more details on the above, contact the group using the list provided with this newsletter.*

*** If we missed your group's event please email future details to*
kapitimana.branch@forestandbird.org.nz

Have Your Say

Kāpiti Flood Maps - your knowledge sought by 8 June 2025

KCDC is seeking feedback on our draft flood maps to make sure they reflect what you see and experience at your place and local areas of interest – whether that's drainage issues in your neighbourhood, historic flooding you've witnessed, or unique property characteristics their modelling might have missed.

<https://haveyoursay.kapiticoast.govt.nz/floodmaps>

Crisp, P (2020): Conservation status of indigenous vascular plant species in the Wellington region. Environmental Science Department, Greater Wellington Regional Council.

<https://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Documents/2020/03/Conservation-status-of-indigenous-vascular-plant-species-in-the-Wellington-region.pdf>

Public Planting at Parangahau Lakes (Eastbourne):

Last month's editorial was about the purchase of Gollan's Farm by Greater Wellington. This is not in our branch area, but if you don't know this area much, and would like to, why not join the public planting day Sat 14 June 9am-3pm. You need to register as you'll need transport:

<https://www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/events-and-meetings/parangarahau-co/>

Give your feedback on two important plans for nature

DOC is seeking your thoughts on two important plans to help nature and welcomes feedback on these plans from 5 May to 30 June 2025:

- The next implementation plan for New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy
- The Predator Free 2050 Strategy to 2030

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/have-your-say/all-consultations/2025-consultations/give-your-feedback-on-two-important-plans-for-nature/>

Other Items

Kererū – missing in action?

We received a call from a concerned Kāpiti local about the lack of kererū in her backyard this year, and wondering if others have noticed the same? If so, please let us know (email kapitimana.branch@forestandbird.org.nz) and we'll try to find out more.

Have you visited Denniston?

Russell and Pene were fortunate to attend the F&B Celebrating Denniston weekend hui recently. Our visit to the plateau was awesome-inspiring. We'd love to hear how many from our branch have been to this wonderful place and your thoughts/memories of it, please let us know (email kapitimana.branch@forestandbird.org.nz).

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

Russell and Pene