

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

August 2025

Editorial: Local Body Elections

Voting is difficult but essential. Forest and Bird tries to be apolitical, that is, it can work with any party to get conservation gains. That used to be the case when F&B fought for protection of NZ natural lands, when rivers were not polluted and F&B fought to get some classified as wild and scenic, the seas were not being overfished and we were starting to get some marine reserves, and climate change was talked about as a scientific possibility.

For some decades there was not a lot of difference in conservation terms between those in power and those in opposition. It's not the same today. Some individuals and parties boldly say they will act to make NZ rich and the environment will be exploited. One or two show that they are indeed on the side of the environment. In my opinion, we cannot as a country be well off without a healthy environment.

Some local candidates list a party beside their name and we can look up their website.

The "We love Kapiti" website has a statement *"KCDC no longer has your best interests at heart. They are pursuing harmful climate policies that threaten property value and insurability"*.

Te Pati Māori says *"Climate change is one of the greatest challenges NZ ... will ever face"* and *"The Māori Party has long been concerned about the degradation of freshwater and freshwater habitat, the impact this is having on the health and wellbeing of freshwater taonga species, and the effects this has on tangata whenua and communities in an era of increasing water shortages and the climate crisis."*

Website like this can help you decide whether to support the candidate or not. But most have the word "Independent" or no words at all beside their name and this gives us no clue as to their views.

Another clue might be flier. One that stood out for me was very brief and it became very clear what the person stood for. Others are vague and give little away about how they will vote.

As we found out when F&B designed a survey for candidates, 18 of them have indicated to the Electoral Commission that their contact details should not be shared publicly so we cannot get any information from them.

I have been to their meetings and came away so confused because what they said could be taken in many ways and, in my opinion, sometimes they flat out lied. They may say they were behind some environmental issues but behind the doors of power, were they? It is difficult to tell.

Climate change, using a combination of nature-based and other solutions is the big issues for me. Some people have difficulty connecting it to Forest and Bird.

Climate Change Impacts Biodiversity

- Rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns force species to migrate to new areas, leading to habitat loss and disruption of ecosystems.
- Heatwaves, droughts, and floods can cause mass mortality of species and damage ecosystems.
- Increased CO₂ in the atmosphere dissolves in the ocean, making it more acidic, harming marine life, particularly organisms that form shells.
- Changes in temperature and precipitation can alter food webs and resource availability, impacting species interactions and ecosystem stability.
- Some species may not be able to adapt to the rapid pace of climate change, leading to local or even global extinctions.

Biodiversity Impacts Climate Change:

- Healthy ecosystems, such as forests and wetlands, play a vital role in absorbing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- Biodiversity-rich ecosystems offer natural solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation, such as coastal protection from storms and erosion.
- Diverse ecosystems are more resilient to the impacts of climate change, meaning they can better withstand and recover from extreme weather events.

Interconnectedness and Solutions:

- Climate change and biodiversity loss are not separate crises; they are interconnected and require integrated solutions.
- Protecting and restoring natural ecosystems can be a powerful tool in combating climate change and preserving biodiversity.
- Adopting sustainable food production, reducing deforestation, and conserving natural areas are crucial for addressing both climate change and biodiversity loss.

The news around the world makes it very clear that if we don't deal with climate change, natural areas, biodiversity and

economies will be slowly and steadily wrecked. An example of effects on the economy was the flooding of the Motueka area. 15% (4,000 ha) of the region's pine forests which were between 15 and 20 years old were blown over and much was associated with slips. The damage was estimated to be between \$60m and \$80m. Added to this is the loss of productive farmland, roads and other infrastructure. If we don't deal with climate change, damage through storms, droughts, fire and disease will erode our ability to fix climate change itself.

The damage around the world and in NZ leads me to believe that business as usual and incremental change is now not enough. I want to see people in government committed to dealing with climate change. If they are not, then they cannot see what is happening here and around the world, don't realise its implications or don't care.

So I find some people easy to eliminate from the voting paper and some easy to support. I more or less have to regard the independents and no words at all as business as usual unless at a meeting they emphatically say they will support climate change initiatives.

Russell

Conservation Calendars and Diaries for sale

These are our only branch fundraiser, and they're beautiful!

The fabulous Conservation Diaries (\$25) and Calendars (\$18) can be ordered online by emailing pk2003_595@hotmail.com (note the underscore between 3 and 5 in the email address) and depositing the money into our branch bank account. Our bank details are:

Account name: Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Kapiti Mana Branch

Account number: 38-9020-0171967-00

Please include what you ordered (e.g. 2C1D - 2 calendars & 1 diary)

Also, could Mr D Klein get in touch as we have your order but no delivery address...

Public walks & meetings

Botany Walk through Parkwood Retirement Village

On afternoon of 27 July 2025, a group of 26 Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Birders enjoyed a guided botany walk through the Parkwood Retirement Village, Waikanae on a lovely sunny and calm Sunday afternoon. The walking route was through the areas where the notable trees are identified with information boards.

In the Bush Walk we saw that the native Fuchsia (Kōtukutuku) on the left-hand side of the walk had several small flowers on it. The group were very impressed with the abundant Tank Lily (*Astelia hastata*), which is an epiphyte, growing up in the trees. Elsewhere some of the Kiekie (*Freycinetia banksii*) with large fruit. These fruit are edible and are considered a delicacy in Māori cuisine.



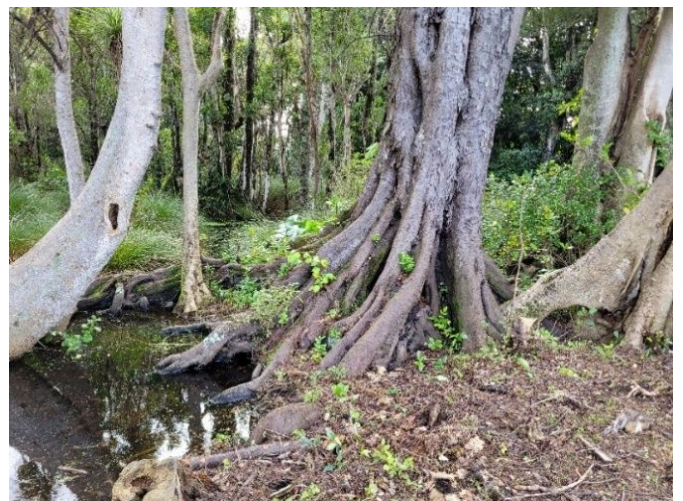
Kiekie in fruit

Many of the exotic plants behind the Parkwood Lodge were in flower and this added some colour to the day. In Forest Walk 'street' we noticed several magnolia trees in full bud and about to bloom, there was a huge San Pedro Column Cactus near the Plateau Centre, and a spectacular Elephant's Ear plant (*Alocasia brisbanensis*) with its very large leaves.



Elephant's Ear plant

Near the allotment area we noticed the impressive buttresses on the Pukatea trees by the swamp area and a multi-trunked Puriri tree.



Trunk buttresses on the Pukatea tree

There was quite a lot of interest in this botany trip, and we hope to repeat it during the 2025-26 summer period.

Doug Miller

Trip leader

**Next meeting: on 28 September 2025
from 2:15pm (for a 2.30pm start) at
St Andrews Parish Centre,
11 Steyne Avenue, Plimmerton**

Wendy Ambury, from the Love Bittern Project will be speaking to us about the

plight of Australasian Bittern, and the Great Matuku Muster. We know from incidental reports that there are some Bittern in the Porirua area, but we want to help them thrive. Please come along and learn more about how you can help.

Plant of the month: Nīkau Palm / *Rhopalostylis sapida*

Pene Burton Bell

Nīkau are New Zealand's only endemic palm which occurs in damp lowland forests of the North Island to the South Island as far south as Ōkārīto, though it also occurs on offshore islands, and even Pitt Island where it is the world's southernmost palm at 44° 18' S.



Mature nīkau near Punakaiki

It is thought its name nīkau comes from that of the "coconut palm" *niu* (though it produces no coconuts) and in its scientific name *sapida* refers to the very edible nature of its fresh growth known to taste similar to cabbage. This earned the name Millionaire's Salad because harvesting the tips kills the tree (so we request no one tries it!).

They begin flowering in November with oval seeds forming in February. These start out in

green sprays from the top of the trunk or crownshaft just below the fronds. They turn red over nearly a year and then become an important food source for both kākā and kererū. The flowers have sweet nectar enjoyed by silvereyes, tui, bellbirds and others, and pollinated by these and many insects.

Nīkau were also very useful to Māori who used the fronds for weaving, leg guards, hats, mats, baskets, thatching and more. The green seeds are edible (and a laxative) and were used for jewellery, and the trunks used for containers and pots. Parts of the palm were also eaten.

We are fortunate to have some fine nīkau forests in our area, including in our own Field Reserve, and the more accessible Barry Hadfield Nīkau Reserve in Paraparaumu (which has a nice walking track). Other fine examples are at Punakaiki, and at the West Coast end of the Heaphy Track.



Barry Hadfield Nīkau Reserve

The fronds can suffer from a rust-like fungal infection called *Pseudocercospora areacearum*.

Nīkau also make a fine specimen tree in gardens, and with all the benefits described above, should be considered a good addition, though remember they are slow-growing and particularly susceptible to frost when young.

Spotlight on local conservation group – Friends of Taupō Swamp & Catchment

Nurturing Nature: The Work of Friends of Taupō Swamp & Catchment Inc.

by Bill McAulay

For those of us in the Kāpiti-Porirua area dedicated to safeguarding our natural heritage, the work of Friends of Taupō Swamp & Catchment Inc. (FOTSC) stands as a beacon of community-led conservation. This passionate volunteer group is at the forefront of protecting and enhancing the Taupō Swamp, a significant lowland topogenous mire and the largest remaining flax swamp in the Wellington region.



Taupō Swamp at dawn

FOTSC's mission is multi-faceted, encompassing hands-on restoration, robust advocacy, and vital community engagement. Their "Taupō Swamp Restoration Project" is a testament to dedication, with over 18,000 locally sourced native plants already established in areas cleared of aggressive pest weeds. This ongoing effort aims to restore the swamp's unique biodiversity and improve ecosystem health.

Beyond the physical work, FOTSC plays a crucial advocacy role, making regular submissions to local and regional planning bodies. They champion the protection of the Taupō Swamp and its intricate connection to the wider Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour, particularly concerning the impacts of urban development. These efforts have been instrumental in raising awareness and ensuring environmental considerations are at the forefront of development discussions.

The most recent planting day in June 2025 resulted in another 1100 plants and trees being planted in the wetlands, on Porirua City Council land that had previously been covered in two-metre high blackberry. FOTSC work continues to attract a lot of support and this latest project was made possible by the generosity of a local philanthropist.



Planting day at Taupō Swamp

The success of FOTSC is evident in tangible outcomes such as the recent thrilling camera capture in new areas of a population of the rare māātātā (fernbird) – a true indicator of a thriving wetland ecosystem. This, along with increasing sightings of other native birds like matuku-hūrepo (Australasian bittern), underscores what restoration work along with local pest control can achieve.

For conservationists in Kāpiti-Porirua, supporting FOTSC means contributing to the health of a critically important local wetland. Whether it's through volunteering for planting or weeding days, offering expertise, or simply staying informed and supporting their advocacy, our collective efforts can help ensure the Taupō Swamp complex continues to endure and to function well into an uncertain future.

Additional information and contact details can be found at www.facebook.com/FriendsofTaupoSwampandCatchment/

Local planting events ^{*)} ^{**)}

Miyaki Tiny Forest in Waikanae

Congratulations to Tree Space Kāpiti who recently planted the first North Island tiny forest using the Miyaki method. The 100m² plot contains 400 plants (33 species) planted much closer than we're used to, and these will rapidly grow into a thriving forest. The site is a trial using the miyaki methodology which required a lot of preparation but should achieve rapid and effective gains in biodiversity and carbon capture. The project was funded with the help of KCDC and others.



Read more about it here:

www.kcnews.co.nz/2025/08/07/treespace-kapiti-plant-tiny-urban-forest/

www.carbonnews.co.nz/news/35216/kpiti-group-plants-new-miyawaki-forest

Final planting day at **Motukaraka Point** with Plimmerton Rotary Club on Saturday, 6 September from noon, contact brettjones55@gmail.com

Have Your Say

Kāpiti Coast Parks & Reserves Management

How do you want your parks and reserves to be used and managed? Tell KCDC what you value about your local parks and reserves, what might impact their use or activities, and anything else you'd like them to consider in their Reserves Management Plan at haveyoursay.kapiticoast.govt.nz/RMP

The key messages Forest and Bird would make would be:

- Reduce grass and need for mowing across all reserves with a focus on planting natives for carbon sequestration and habitat creation.

Edgewater Park Community Planting Day

Greater Wellington, alongside Parikawau Restoration Group, Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai, Friends of the Waikanae River, and KCDC is leading a re-vegetation effort to plant 2,000 locally sourced native trees on Monday, 15 September, 10am–3pm at Edgewater Park, Fleetwood Grove, Waikanae.

Waitohu Stream Dune Planting Day

Saturday 20 September, 10am–12.30pm
Come down to the Waitohu Stream mouth to help plant 1,200 foredune plants to help grow and protect our dunes. Bring gloves, warm clothes, snacks and drinking water. Walking access from the northern end of Marine Parade or Moana Street. (Follow the paths through the dunes to the stream and you'll find the gazebos at "planting central".) Please don't drive on the beach.

Contact biodiversity@kapiticoast.govt.nz with any questions

Houkura

Saturday 20 September, 9.30am–12pm
Dune hollow/wetland between Raumati Road/Hillcrest Road and Kapiti College's Performing Arts Centre.

RSVP to raumati.technology@gmail.com

^{*)} 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

- Plant large specimen trees for shade.
- More trapping in reserves.
- Better signage and enforcement of dog bylaw at parks.

You can also chat to the their team at:

- Coastlands Paraparaumu: 4–7pm, Thursday 28 August
- Maclean Park, Paraparaumu: 9am–1pm Saturday 30 August
- Waikanae Park: 9am–1pm, Saturday 6 September
- Ōtaki Centennial Park: 9am–1pm, Saturday 14 September

Love your lobsters!

MPI is currently consulting on the take for rock lobster in our region. They are suggesting the limits be reduced to enable recovery of rock lobster. Given we have problems with kina barrens locally, this seems like a good idea, so why not submit in

support of reductions? Submissions close on 8 September 2025. Details here:

Draft fisheries plans and proposed management targets for the Hauraki Gulf/Bay of Plenty (CRA 2) and Wellington/Wairarapa (CRA 4) rock lobster fisheries
www.mpi.govt.nz/consultations/draft-fisheries-plans-and-proposed-management-targets-for-the-hauraki-gulfbay-of-plenty-cra-2-and-wellingtonwairarapa-cra-4-rock-lobster-fisheries/

Upcoming Forest & Bird Events

Date	Title	Where
28 September	Public meeting – speaker Wendy Ambury re Australasian Bitterns	Plimmerton
22 October	Public meeting – speaker Bruce Brewer re Argentine Ants	Waikanae

Other Items

1700 fish rescued during Waikanae River Work

Greater Wellington reports that 13 different species including the piharau/lamprey, longfin eels, giant bullies and torrent fish were moved to safety upstream by kaitiaki from Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai, when the gravel island in the river near the upper reaches of the Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve was removed as part of erosion prevention work. The work was done under the guidance of Waikanae ki Uta ki Tai. Kaitiaki Matua Les noted that to find “piharau shows the health of the awa is improving, and that work to stop erosion can be done safely to protect mahinga kai and taonga species”.

www.gw.govt.nz/your-region/news/threatened-fish-rescued-during-kapiti-coast-river-work/

Local Body Elections

Responses to our questions are starting to dribble in from candidates and we hope to report back more soon. In the meantime, start sussing out your local candidates any way you can (they show up at lots of events like markets or candidate evenings

around this time) so you can make your vote count as a vote for nature too. Here are links to event listings:

www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/council/about-council/local-elections/local-elections-2025/meet-the-candidates/
poriruacity.govt.nz/your-council/mayor-councillors/elections-2025/vote-poti/meet-the-candidate-events/elections.gw.govt.nz/meet-the-candidates/

Predator Free Kāpiti progress

Pene attended a recent hui with over 40 local trappers and local representatives to get an update on the setup of this group. It was a lively and interesting meeting - informative speakers (James Wilcox of PF Wellington, and Phil Hartwick of PF Porirua) where great connections were made and ideas shared. The group's vision is "A Kāpiti where nature thrives" and their mission is to be "community-led and community powered". Their committee are currently looking for help at the management and finance level, but also welcome general queries:

predatorfreekapiticoast@gmail.com

Editors: Russell Bell & Pene Burton Bell
Email: russelljamesbell@gmail.com
Phone: 021 22 66 047

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

Russell and Pene