Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird

Newsletter August 2022

Editorial. We are no match for the weather. We must try reduce what is coming.

Three macro solutions to climate change.

Nelson floods

"The climate crisis is not the warming of the planet. What unnerves scientists is what the warming will do to life on the planet". Paul Hawken 2021.

There are three options to solve the climate crisis or as the above statement implies the biodiversity crisis. They are de-growth, natural solutions, and technical fixes.

The option that is hardest to sell is Degrowth; planning to use less, not more, of the earth and its resources. We can do that by efficiencies, by eating local and seasonal produce, by having appropriate housing, by recreating only in our neighbourhoods, by not engaging in our high energised lives where public transport is considered too inflexible, where fast, junk and pre-processed foods are the norm, where food intake is excessive, where sports teams and audiences travel constantly between countries, where the affluent must holiday to almost all of the world, where world-wide family must be visited often, building ever larger houses, the list goes on. By scaling down our resource and energy use, we will not have to build massive energy systems and not have to increase exports to support our excesses. If we don't degrow, we will continue to use more of the earth, more plants and animals will become extinct, natural environments will continue to unravel, climate change will get worse and bit by bit, civilization will be imperilled.

A second option is natural solutions -regeneration. An example is the way we treat our oceans. They have absorbed over 90% of our greenhouse enhanced heating and 25% of our carbon emissions. They could do more if we treated them differently. Set up no take zones over 30% of our sea. Ban destructive practices like bottom trawling (dredging). Use more restrictive fishing quotas which allow the survival of greater numbers of fish in the sea. Use methods that only catch wanted species. Protect and restore kelp beds, mangroves and tidal salt marshes. Stop residential and industrial encroachment onto the sea and its margins. Restore the margins of our rivers and manage our stormwater to reduce their effect on the sea. Drastically lower our use of synthetic nitrogen because it causes dead zones in rivers, estuaries and harbours. These would affect climate change because, for instance, kelp plants are very fast growing carbon stores and bits that break off and end up in deeper water exit the atmospheric carbon cycle. Fish, similarly exit the cycle if they die and sink into deeper water, whereas caught fish remain in the atmospheric carbon chain. Many scientists believe that there would be more abundance, and potential take, outside no take zones, if we set aside large areas of sea.

Regeneration applies to land also. All our marginal land should be considered for climate change mitigation. Much of the material from dead plants and animals returns to the atmosphere, but some of it especially larger tree trunks and roots get locked away as soil components.

Wetlands acts like the sea by denying dead plant and animal life access to atmospheric oxygen. Peat wetlands lock up carbon for thousands of years, yet we are still allowing them to remain drained, though with the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater, we are at last beginning to restrict them being filled over and converted for farming, residential and industrial use.

All "no take" land and sea areas will help biodiversity survive climate impacts and that will help us survive. Intact diverse natural communities sequester and store much more carbon than those areas used by us.

There are plenty of other regeneration techniques that could solve much of the climate crisis, but I think our financial ideas, (Can we mine, mill, hunt, farm, or fish it for profit) will stop "at scale" regeneration occurring.

The third solution and the one that I see us following is technical solutions. Change our cars, ferries, planes, heaters, houses etc. for more efficient or battery powered ones. Kāpiti has changed its street lights to more efficient LEDs. Extract carbon from the air or water and bury it. Produce more green electricity. However doing this requires more resources including land, produces more carbon and waste, so it's not all upside.

Technical fixes are attractive to some because they believe we will not need to reduce our excessive lifestyles. Air NZ recently announced with delight that passenger numbers had increased nearly to prior Covid numbers.

The loss of environments (with the loss of their flora and fauna) exploited for new chemicals to resource new technologies needs to be considered. These are hard questions to get good answers about and promoters of technical fixes have biases.

The world is following all these options to some extent, but in my opinion, not fast enough. That will lead us to a frightful outcome. We will see carnage. We will become desperate. People will (and are) migrating to areas where they hope there are less harsh conditions. Crop failures, storm damage, forest fires, residential flooding and water shortages will drive up prices, will exacerbate the haves/have not issues and result in social and political instability which could result in political inactivity and radical swings of policy. There may soon not be the political will to put in place climate change solutions that all need long lead times to implement. Unplanned degrowth and regeneration might be forced outcomes rather than planned options.

Showing my bias, I prefer regeneration solutions (because they will be good for nature), then degrowth (because it will be good for us), then technical solutions (we will need them too). But I think the human race will follow technical solutions (some real but some *miracles on the horizon and don't make me change my lifestyle*), degrowth (for some not all), then regeneration (conflict between capitalism and the environment). And the scale will be too slow and small. We will have to be forced to move and the later we do, the greater the cost and pain. I hope I am wrong.

Russell

2022 AGM Report

On 24 August 2022 we held our branch AGM. About 26 people attended and there were about 10 apologies. Minutes are not yet available but here is a brief summary:

Russell gave a report on the activities of the branch since the last AGM, highlighting that while public meetings have not been possible, the committee has kept up lobbying, and has kept members informed through newsletters. Russell has elected to stand-down as chairman but is still on the committee. His full report was sent out twice, so find it in your emails if you want to read more about our activities.

All of the existing committee, except our youth rep - Ella Harvey (moving away to study) - were re-elected. The committee members for 2022 are: Tony Ward, Sue Boyce, Eraena Catsburg (Secretary), Peter Kentish (Treasurer), Russell Bell, and Pene Burton Bell (Chair). Thanks to those who agreed to stand - it is essential to keep the branch running. We would still love to get a replacement youth rep, and Porirua people on the committee to ensure the needs at that end of the branch catchment are well represented by us.

Thanks also to those that attended the meeting to give us a quorum. It was lovely to see everyone and feel a sense of 'normality' returning to life.

For those that are interested, most people wore masks when not eating/drinking, and we kept the outside door open to ensure good air circulation.

As the new Chair, I have been asked what the branch vision is for the year ahead and while we haven't had chance to discuss that as a committee, two things seem key to me:

First, we seek to protect and improve natural biodiversity in our area and this includes responding to climate change as well supporting the work of the Head Office on wider campaigns.

Second, we keep members informed, giving them the opportunity to learn and to get involved, so that they feel glad to be part of Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird branch, and of the outcomes we achieve.

The Problem with Pest Fish

Our AGM speaker was the very patient Andrew Stewart, a fish scientist at Te Papa Tongarewa, our national museum. (He and I first planned this close to two years ago.) Andrew gave an interesting talk about pest fish and the impact they have. He began by asking us what our first question should be when looking at a fish (or other natural object) - it is WHAT IS IT? If we don't know that, we won't be able to assess whether it is native or not, or what damage it might be causing. As one attendee said "it was a topic I didn't know I was interested in"! I guess we find it easy to focus on rats and other invasive land mammals but tend to forget the impact of what's in our waterways and ocean. I thought most pest fish probably arrived in the ballast water in ships hulls (they're meant to empty them a long way offshore – but who monitors this?) Problem fish do arrive this way, but it is much easier for them to hitch a ride in sea chests. Sea chests are cavities in the side of a boat which are open to the sea and have calm water that the vessel can use for cooling and to treat for drinking water. We also heard about some misguided members of the public who release tropical fish into waterways (much better to euthanize them by freezing them) and some have already become a problem in the Far North where they can naturalise (and that boundary is moving south as temperatures increase). There are also those who have deliberately released other fish - carp, gobi and rudd. The great danger is that these introduced species have no natural predators and will often predate smaller native fish, as well as eating their food source. We tried to record Andrew's session, but are having difficulty downloading the file. We will make the talk available if we can.

PHOTO - During the long wait for Andrew to deliver his talk, our grandson caught a fish, and fortunately we asked Andrew the right question - What is it? It is Southern Conger Eel (conger verreauxi).

Pene

Next Meetings

We plan to arrange a branch picnic at a nursery in Te Horo on a weekend in September, when flowers are in full bloom and the birds in full flight.

We are still planning our next speaker for our public meeting in October, and an event for late November – Watch this space…

GREENDALE RESERVE

Whenever I mention to a Kapiti acquaintance that I have been volunteering at Greendale Reserve the response is "Greendale reserve, where's that ?" Greendale reserve is tucked away off Otaihanga Road. To visit, take the Greendale Drive turn off and head to the car park on the right about half a kilometer down Greendale Drive.

It is a KCDC reserve which was a patch of blackberry and other weeds until my late husband, Phil, and Kapiti F & B began restoring it. That was 24 years ago. It is now quite a fine piece of kohekohe/kahikatea forest with some rare plants and plenty of birds. The reserve is a narrow corridor along the Muaupoko Stream which takes a meandering course to flow into the Waikanae River near the expressway bridge.

A recent eDNA survey identified two species of eels as well as inanga and kakaho (freshwater mussels) present in the stream, along with possum and black rat.

A group of 4 to 10 volunteers continue to maintain and improve the reserve. We care about the environment, biodiversity, climate change and the beauty of the reserve, as well as the happy experience of doing something worthwhile as a group. Jobs at present include planting, removing flood debris, cutting up fallen trees, animal pest control, weeding, pruning, and stream DNA monitoring. Summer jobs are watering, weeding and spreading mulch.

Our dream has always been for a track alongside the stream to join with the Waikanae River track.

Opening of Phil's loop track

We work on Tuesday mornings from 9am to noon with a break for morning tea (home baked goodies) and socialising. If you would like to help, phone me on 293 6639 or 022 1080 053

Viola Palmer

Make Your Voice Heard

Kāpiti Coast District Council has a new report out about their **Climate Response**.
They are also asking for **feedback** on whether they should have a **district-wide emissions target**.

Both Porirua and Kāpiti Coast District Councils are consulting on proposed changes to their District Plan to allow **intensification of housing**. This issue is a two-edge sword. If we don't intensify we will continue to spread and use more land (which is currently natural, agricultural, forestry) but intensification zones could eliminate remaining natural areas within the development envelope?

Start observing and finding out about candidates standing for your area in the **Local Body Elections**. For Porirua, the GOPI questionnaire is a good place to start…Are they pro-environment? How is their track record? Ask around, check public and social media and websites etc. as voting pack information isn't adequate… and yes, it's important to VOTE so we know nature will get the best protection, and we can hold them accountable.

The Ministry for the Environment is consulting on the **Management of Coastal Wetlands**

Ministry for the Environment also this month released the our first **National Climate Change Adaptation Plan** (note there's no reference to mitigation)

DOC is inviting action for better **protection of Sharks** or sign the **F&B Petition** on this.

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Is there something we missed? Let us know…

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