

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

January 2026

Climate Change

My impression of climate change is that it is off the agenda. The government does not mention those two words any more. Nor does television. A weather event happens that is clearly exacerbated by climate change, but is reported on as a weather event. I noticed that Dan Corbett no longer mentions that it is "6 degrees above where we should be at this time of year". Conversations in groups that I associate with also seem to have dropped the subject, and when I raised the subject of the recent Australian events (see below) one person said "I suppose you think it is related to climate change."

It does seem to me that the existential threat of climate change is becoming a taboo subject, an elephant in the room, a "Don't mention the war". It worries me, because not talking about it will mean that we will do little about it and it's existentiality will become a reality. I tried to write an editorial on it, but it wrote itself as a satire. Here it is as I wrote it:

Climate change solved

In a stunning turn of events, climate change seems to have finally been resolved. The solution, as it turns out, was simplicity itself: We just stopped talking about it. The solution started with Donald Trump. He said it was a hoax and from then on, it was not on the US agenda. He had already withdrawn the US from climate talks. Our government followed suit. While still saying it was an important topic, others, such as the economy, landlords being taxed unfairly, the inability for the ordinary man not to go out and shoot a prize winning stag in a national park, potholes and too many road cones were more critical at this point. The opposition said that its focus was on jobs, health and homes. TVNZ seems to have sensed their owner's silence and decided that the subject is taboo. Since then it seems, climate disruption events have been

attributed to "The weather". Dan Corbett no longer says "x degrees above where we should be at this time of year" and slowly the whole subject of climate has submerged.

The events continued to happen; melting glaciers, rising sea levels, and record-breaking heatwaves. The town of Harcourt in Victoria, Australia was all but wiped off the map by fire, and at the same time a camp ground on the Great Ocean Road was washed into the sea and parts of the road were closed. In NZ, a weather pattern swept in from the tropics and inundated the land from Northland to Gisborne, killing people at Mt Maunganui and elsewhere, and also another section of the same weather drenched the West Coast. A NIWA official on the news that night reported that this was a normal weather pattern for this time of year.

As conversations about climate change went quiet, so too did the public. The news cycle, now free from dire warnings and exhausted climate activists, has miraculously seemed to rid the world of all environmental woes. Who knew that silence, not solar panels, would save the planet?

Scientists baffled

The world's top scientists are baffled. "We thought we needed international cooperation and innovative technology," admitted one researcher while deleting decades of climate data, "but all we really needed was to lose interest." Apparently, by simply averting our collective gaze, the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere felt unappreciated and quietly left, like a party guest realising the hosts had gone to bed.

Weather Forecasting essential

Now that climate change is no longer a topic of discussion, the weather has settled into a cyclical pattern of pleasant days, hurricane force winds, droughts, rainstorms, unseasonal snowstorms and heat waves. They come and go but now they are just the

weather. Farmers don't have to worry about the 53% of NZ's emissions they produce and agricultural prices are up, so all is well. Now that the subject has disappeared from the public mind, the government has decided that the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) should acquire the MetService. This will allow a reduction of headcount and a concentration on what the public want – accurate prediction of tomorrow's weather.

Other Global Issues

Inspired by this climate breakthrough, experts suggest that we should extend the same approach to other global problems. Poverty? War? We simply don't mention it. In fact, I heard from a visiting American that the United Nations is considering a new slogan: "If you ignore it, it will go away." Apparently, critics argued that this might not be a robust long-term strategy, but their complaints have already been scheduled for complete radio silence next quarter.

Conclusion

Because the world now appears to accept that the weather is really only the weather, one lesson is clear: Silence is golden,

Celebrating the Kāpiti Ecological Restoration Maintenance Trust (KERMT)

The Kāpiti Ecological Restoration Maintenance Trust (KERMT) was established almost 18 years ago to facilitate volunteer restoration efforts in Kaitawa Reserve, Greendale Reserve, Weggery Lagoon and Waikanae River Corridor (south bank). Due to changing circumstances, KERMT is to be wound up this year, but the volunteer work in the reserves is continuing.

KERMT became an incorporated society on the 15th of May, 2008 in order to establish a legal entity to receive the Kāpiti Coast District Council funding that was available at the time. The Society's Constitution outlines the aim of the Society - to manage the

especially when it comes to existential threats. So, next time you hear about an inconvenient problem that could end our existence, remember: The less said, the better.



[Wikimedia - Climate Change Doesn't Care](#) by Benjamin Von Wong (cropped)

If a tree falls in the forest and nobody tweets about it, did it really fall at all?

I think it did, but it seems politicians, the media and many New Zealanders might disagree with me. Or do I spend too much time online?

Russell

maintenance of Approved Sites within the Kāpiti Coast District which have been restored with native species, by planning, contracting and supervising appropriate services (weed control, pruning, spraying, etc.) so as to support the restoration work of Voluntary Ecological and/or Environmental Interest Groups and the Territorial Authorities, and enhance the life of the community.

Early achievements

The inaugural team leading the Society were chairman John Topliff, deputy-chair John McLachlan, Judy Driscoll and Graham Petterson. The team invited a councillor from both KCDC and GWRC to participate, and developed a strong and supportive partnership with the Councils. Under their leadership, and with KCDC funding, KERMT

was able to employ a contractor, Brent Buckler, and volunteer work in the reserves accelerated, especially at Kaitawa, Greendale and the south bank of the Waikanae River. An enormous amount was achieved as a result, including planting of large areas of Kaitawa Reserve that had been covered in gorse and other weeds, for example the hillside from the Riwai Street water reservoir down to the Wharemauku Stream.



Before and after photos of the restoration achieved (ca. 2017)

Greendale Reserve was transformed from a weed patch which locals used to graze animals, to a growing forest.

Many thousands of trees were also planted on the south bank of the Waikanae River. Volunteers on the three sites have included many Kāpiti-Mana Forest & Bird members.

Changing of the Guard in 2019

John McLachlan died in July 2019 and was much mourned by the volunteers who had worked with him. John Topliff handed over the Chairman's baton to Tony Ward who has continued in the role since then.

Mark Byers became the Treasurer/secretary. A number of other volunteers have since served on the committee including Mark Byers, Peter Kentish, Helen Mitchell, Viola Palmer and Irene Parminter.

Between 2019 and 2024, KERMT continued to play an important role in enabling the Reserves to thrive. With Council funding, Brent supported volunteer efforts, so that weeds were well-controlled in the Reserves, and planting continued in suitable areas.



Kaitawa Reserve planting

KERMT to be wound up in 2026

In 2023, KCDC advised that funding could no longer be provided to the Society beyond the 2023-24 financial year, as available funding needed to be spread across the many Reserves in the district.

As a result, KERMT could not renew the contract with our much-valued contractor, Brent Buckler. This was a great loss, as Brent held a great deal of knowledge of the ecology of the Reserves, and was very good at coordinating and upskilling volunteers. Thankfully, Brent was able to find similar work in the area.

In November 2025, KERMT's AGM agreed to wind up the Society before April 2026, as there is no further need for a Society to manage KCDC funding. The work has continued at Greendale and Kaitawa, with a good band of volunteers. Other volunteer groups are also working in the Waikanae River Corridor.

Riroriro / Grey Warbler / *Gerygone Igata* by Pene Burton Bell

Sometimes known as the teetotum or rainbird, and more often heard than seen, these sweet little insectivorous birds are New Zealand's only warbler and are endemic to our country. They're grey and a little smaller than silvereyes, with no green on them, a white frill on their tail, and red eyes. This is how I tell the species apart if they're not singing.



Riroriro in flight – Gavin Klee

I love their warbling, trilling song which usually has a calming effect - unless there are shining cuckoos around, in which case I'm likely to wish they'd hush, as these cuckoos drop their eggs into warbler nests so they will raise them. The cuckoos are known to break an egg (to replace it with theirs) or even to evict warbler chicks.

The cuckoo chicks are far bigger than riroriro and from mid to late summer you can see these little birds slogging away to feed their imposter chick (who's two-to-three times their size) until the cuckoo decides to migrate to better climes for winter.

One would think that this parasitism by the cuckoos would spell disaster for the riroriro, but their breeding season lasts six months, so their first clutch (up to four chicks) has usually fledged before the cuckoos have migrated back to New Zealand, and they often still have some success from the

second brood despite having one extra-large chick to feed.

The females build the nest – a wonderful pear-shaped hanging nest with a hooded side entrance woven with thin vines, rootlets and moss, and lined with wool, feathers and clematis seed heads depending on what's available.



Riroriro nest – Pene Burton Bell

The one photographed fell out of a macrocarpa due to high winds - it was empty but beautifully intact. The nests are usually built hanging in small-leaved native trees like kanuka, mingimingi or tōtara. It is the only nest of this form in New Zealand, and they show the individual taste of their creator. They are very well camouflaged, and for good reason. The male often keeps watch and sings nearby (only males sing) while the female builds.

She can start building as early as August (it takes a fortnight or more) and usually only waits a week or so after completion of the nest before laying her four eggs – each two days apart, soon after dawn, then broods over them for up to 21 days being fed by the male until the chicks hatch. Both tend the chicks for another 17 days until they fledge. Thereafter the father is the primary feeder, as the female needs to recover condition and prepare for having the second brood.

Riroriro's preferred habitat is forest, but they will hop through any shrubby vegetation looking for caterpillars, moths,

aphids, grubs, spiders and similar prey.
Most they eat while on the wing.



Riroriro catching small insect – Gavin Klee

There is a Māori whakatauki about the riroriro:

"I hea koe i te tangihanga o te riroriro?"

which means

Where were you when the riroriro was singing?

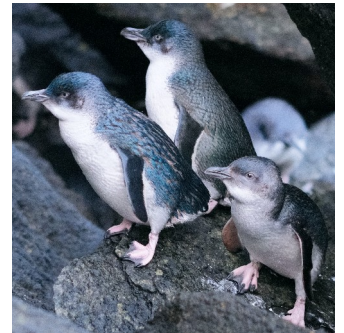
It is designed to get people out diligently preparing their gardens for spring planting.

I find my pace, and heart rate almost inevitably slows when I hear a riroriro and, just for a moment, I find it easier to believe all is right with the world. A good bird to look out for.

Next Public Meeting – AGM and Penguins!

Our next meeting and AGM is on Wednesday, 18 February 2026 from 7.10pm, at the Waikanae Community Centre, 28-32 Utauta Street, Waikanae. We will get through AGM business matters promptly to give the floor to our awesome guest speaker, Professor John Cockrem speaking about his passion - Little Blue Penguins.

AGM papers will be distributed electronically soon. It is important we have a good turnout for our AGM, so please do come along.



End of summer fun at Pāuatahanui

Please join us for a shared potluck/picnic/BBQ from 3.30pm on Sunday 22 February 2026 at Pāuatahanui Wildlife Reserve!

BYO everything except the BBQ (there's one there).

Enjoy the summer together with other Forest & Birders from around the region.

This will be a great opportunity to connect and catch up with like-minded friends.

Upcoming meetings

We are trying to adjust the schedule of our meetings, but dates are not as regular as we'd like for 2026 so please put these in your diaries now:

Waikanae	Plimmerton
Wednesday, 18 February 2026, 7.10pm	Sunday, 8 March 2026, 2.30pm
Wednesday, 22 April 2026, 7.10pm	Sunday, 10 May 2026, 2.30pm
Wednesday, 17 June 2026, 7.10pm	Sunday, 12 July 2026, 2.30pm
Wednesday, 26 August 2026, 7.10pm	Sunday, 13 September 2026, 2.30pm
Wednesday, 28 October 2026, 7.10pm	Sunday, 8 November 2026, 2.30pm

Have Your Say

Submissions on the Resource Management Act's replacement

Submissions for its replacement, the Planning Bill and the Natural Environment Bill, close on 13 February 2026.

Find out more information on the [process on the Parliamentary website](#).

On Tuesday 27th Jan, there was an hour-long Forest & Bird webinar for those wanting to submit on this – you can watch the [recording](#), and the [Environmental Defence Society's webinar](#) also provides a good overview.

Private Bach permission extensions to 2054 Submissions

close on 13 February 2026.
These applications are for the licence to occupy land for the purpose of existing private baches

located on Ocean Beach Road in the Ocean Beach Conservation Area and Remutaka Forest Park, on the southern coast of the North Island, near Wellington.

Planned reforms of local government

Submissions close on 20 February 2026

Submissions on a discussion document outlining proposed major changes to local government from the Department of Internal Affairs. A link to the discussion document is here:

<https://www.dia.govt.nz/Simplifying-Local-Government>

Notices

Join our branch committee

To help our branch achieve the best outcomes for Forest and Bird, and for our environment - we need a strong committee.

Our longstanding treasurer, Peter Kentish, is standing down, and we would love some new committee members (especially from the Porirua end of our branch).

We meet monthly and share what needs to be done.

We sure have enough to fight for!

Please call or email us to find out more.

A Paraparaumu trapping champion?

We need one (or a few!) – Predator Free Kāpiti has been searching for someone to lead the Paraparaumu part of this initiative (or part of it).

Could it be you? Or someone you know?

Some people love to be shoulder-tapped, but it's hard if you don't know who they are.

Please get in touch to find out more, or talk it through: predatorfreekapiticoast@gmail.com

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

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