



The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc. is a registered charitable entity in terms of the Charities Act 2005. Registration No. CC46103

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President's Report

This is our last newsletter for 2016. The year seems to have gone very fast, but thanks to your hard working committee the Society has achieved some excellent outcomes to a number of projects.

As you know we made extensive submissions on the proposed Auckland Unitary Plan. The hearings came to an end mid-year, the Independent Hearings Panel made their recommendations, and Council's decisions were released in August. Submitters had until 16 September to file appeals. The Society has filed an appeal in the High Court on Council's decision to remove Prohibited Activity Status on subdivision in the Waitakere Ranges. We gained this provision in 2003 and it was a very important control over subdivision and development. The Society has also become a party to two appeals in the Environment Court which seek an increase in the intensity of development enabled in the ranges. These appeals will be heard in 2017. We thank Douglas Allan and James Hook for their legal and planning advice over the past two years.

In 2018 we will celebrate the tenth anniversary of The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act. The Act has been very effective in giving certainty about subdivision and development to the Society, Council and landowners. We plan to commission a history of the Act which was a culmination of 35 years of work by the Society, other groups and individuals.

We congratulate our two west Auckland Councillors, Penny Hulse and Linda Cooper and the six members of the Waitakere Ranges Local Board who were all re-elected in October.

We also congratulate The Matuku Reserve Trust on their purchase of the 37 hectare property at Te Henga, which will create a link between Ark in the Park, Matuku Reserve and Habitat te Henga. The Society was pleased to support the purchase of this ecologically important property with a donation of \$30,000 from our land acquisition fund.

Thanks to all our members and friends for your support

and on behalf of the committee I would like to wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and New Year.

*John Edgar
President*

Heritage Area Co-ordinator Report

We have continued to monitor and engage in activities around the Waitakere Ranges over the last few months with our biggest activities being a funding application to undertake control of *Vespula* wasps and submitting on the Trans-Tasman Resources Limited (TTRL) consent applications for seabed mining.



Common Wasp.

Photo retrieved from: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/>

In September, we submitted an application to Auckland Council for funding to undertake control of *Vespula* wasp species (e.g. the common or German wasp) in the Waitakere Ranges by registered users. If we receive funding (the new council is considering grant applications in December) we hope to run a wasp control programme on private property in the Ranges in the new year, once conditions are right for using the new Vespex wasp bait. We will be approaching members in strategic locations to participate in our project, but if you live in the Heritage Area and notice wasps around your property or are interested in potentially having a bait station at your place let us know. The great thing about the new bait stations is that you don't have to find the wasp nest, just have enough activity of wasps in the area to ensure conditions are right to use the bait and the wasps then take it back to the nest.

The conditions of use also ensure that bees are not harmed. If we don't receive grant funding, we will need to look at other options for funding a programme in 2017.

In October, we submitted on TTRL's application to undertake mining of the seabed, including discharging sediments back into the water; a project that would affect the marine environment of the west coast of the North Island. We raised concerns about the lack of understanding of the existing marine environment and the potential effects the proposed activities would have on that environment; particularly effects on rare mammals like the Maui dolphin. We urged the EPA to take a precautionary approach to the activity and decline the application in full. The submission period has recently been extended following release of additional information to 12 December 2016 – you can make a personal submission online at www.epa.govt.nz.

Along with these activities, we have reviewed the select committee report on the Wildlife (powers) Amendment Bill, which supported it with minor changes, and look forward to this legislation strengthening protection of our native species. We also submitted on the Resource Legislation Amendment Bill that has yet to have a select committee report. The Select Committee discharged it without report on 7 November 2016 and then Parliament discharged it from a second reading on 10 November 2016 and sent it back to the Select Committee. We are monitoring its progress and next steps with interest.

For more information about our wasp project contact Katherine on HAC@waitakereranges.org.nz.

Katherine Russell

Conservation News



Matuku Link makes its \$2M target Wetland and forest to be restored for wildlife and public access.

Matuku Link, the 37 ha bush and wetland you have all helped to fundraise over \$2 million dollars for, is SAFE! It is safe from subdivisions and will be well managed by the Matuku Reserve Trust with full predator control to protect the native flora and fauna.

Major donations from the Native Forest Restoration Trust, the Nature Heritage Fund, Forest & Bird Waitakere, Waitakere Ranges Protection Society and over 330 generous donors through Givealittle have secured this important connection. Matuku Link is connecting several predator controlled areas in the Bethells valley. It will be a safe corridor for instance for the endangered pateke (brown teal) coming upstream from Habitat te Henga to kokako flying between Ark in the Park and Matuku Reserve.

John Staniland, Matuku Reserve Trustee, says: *“We are thrilled that donors of both large and small amounts have brought success to this great project! This land purchase will allow wildlife from the Ark in the Park to safely connect with the rest of the valley, after some restoration of the wetland portion and pest control on the forested hills. In addition it will enable visitors to learn about wetlands, the most reduced habitat in New Zealand, and more easily access the adjacent Forest & Bird owned Matuku Reserve. With a growing Auckland population and a higher number of visitors wanting an experience of nature, this acquisition will increase in future value both for native plants and wildlife and for people.”*

Givealittle Chief Giving Officer Tom Beyer says *“this proves what we all knew already - New Zealanders are a generous bunch who are always there to back a great idea or to help each other out when the going gets tough.”*

The land was handed over from the current owners to the Matuku Link Trust on the 1st of November.



A celebration of the land purchase will be held once the weather is warmer and the site is drier. This Open Day will be during Waitangi weekend for World Wetland Day in February 2017.

www.matukulink.org.nz
www.facebook.com/matukulink
www.twitter.com/matukulink

Or donate directly:
Kiwibank 38 9018 0039553 01,
Matuku Reserve Trust (a charitable trust with tax status)

Pest Seminar Report

On September 4, the Waitakere Ranges Conservation Network (WRCN) held a seminar on animal pest control at Arataki Centre with over 70 people attending. The focus was on new approaches including the latest technical innovations. As well as a number of speakers on various topics there were displays of control technology.

After an introduction by Robert Woolf (chairperson of the network), **Dr. James Russell**, Senior lecturer at the School of Biosciences, Auckland University described current efforts to remove undesirable mammalian predators from offshore islands and a few mainland native biodiversity sanctuaries around New Zealand. James then discussed future prospects for the Waitakere Ranges and the problems of extending the Ark in the Park's successful pest control programmes outwards to other sites.

He described various technology advances being implemented by ZIP (Zero Invasive Predators) to promote the challenge of Predator free New Zealand by 2050, the goal that was announced by the government recently. Such a tool is *Catchit* which offers data management and analysis for community pest control projects. Data from trap-lines, bait-lines, tracking tunnels, and from wax tags and other lures can be secured and stored. People can log in and enter their catch records to the online database, and also upload historical trapping records via Excel spreadsheets.

Auckland Council Biosecurity officers, **Phil Brown** and **Malcolm Harrison** followed with an account of the Council's biosecurity operations in the Ranges. The successful 1080 drop in the Hunua Ranges was briefly discussed, and the challenges of repeating such an exercise in the Waitakere Ranges canvassed.

Dr. Helen Blackie, Ecologist and principal at Boffa Miskell, then introduced PAWS, (Print Acquisition for Wildlife Surveillance). This is an evolving tool for the identification of animals, (including pests) that is being developed by her company. This promises to be a hugely useful tool for conservationists in the fields of pest control and monitoring. It detects all animals which go across its surface via digital information and can identify them right down to species level. Minimal maintenance is required and information can be relayed immediately to a central location. This could make monitoring of wildlife much simpler than at present. Dr. Blackie predicts that the NZ version will be available in about 2 years.

Simon Croft, director at Encounter Solutions described a wireless sensor technology they have developed called Celium. This is aimed at wildlife management in large areas with difficult terrain (we have plenty of that in NZ!), and should make the job of DoC and Regional Councils much easier.

Sean O'Brien, Sales and Account Manager at **GoodNature** then talked about their self-resetting traps for both possums (A12) and mammalian predators (A24). These traps are suitable for smaller organisations or

individuals in semi-urban areas and for people who do not want to handle poisons. The device works by striking the skull of the pest animal with a CO2 powered piston, killing it instantly - thus it is humane. It uses a gas-powered mechanism to automatically reset itself after activation. Counters are also available to maintain a tally of pests dispatched. These traps were demonstrated in the foyer by the makers.

After lunch we heard from **Neil Dingle** of DoC, who described the programme *Walk the Line*. This Android mobile application is designed to be used in conjunction with the Trapping and Whio web applications. It will improve the data collection of trapping networks across the country, from small community initiatives to landscape scale multi-pest operations.

Dr. Jacqueline Beggs, Associate Professor in the School of Biosciences at Auckland University then talked about the growing problem of vespine wasps in northern forests not only for humans but also native biodiversity. *Vespula germanicus* and *V. vulgaris*, attracted by the honeydew exuded by a scale insect on beech trees have caused huge problems in beech forests of the Nelson Lakes. The wasps are effectively denying various native invertebrates and birds this very important sugar resource.

Fipronil is the poison of choice for wasps, and has been used effectively in the beech forests, but northern forests are different. As Fipronil is toxic to bees, it must be used with bait that is unattractive to honeybees and aimed at a suitable time in the wasp life cycle (when they are collecting protein rather than sugar). Paper wasps, another undesirable exotic species, feed only on live prey so they cannot be killed by this poison regime. There is currently no effective control agent for paper wasps.

Gillian Wadams, Ark in the Park manager updated the seminar on pest control in the Ark. This intensively managed Forest and Bird area has had some notable successes, such as the reintroduction of 3 species of locally extinct endemic birds that are now successfully breeding in the Ranges. There has also been a marked increase in invertebrates and amphibians in the area.

A session of '**Challenges and Opportunities**' followed. Firstly Annalily Van den Broeke, John Staniland and John Sumich made a plea for support for the Matuku Link. The aim is to raise money to purchase an important block of land next to Matuku Reserve and the Te Henga Wetland.

Several local groups then reported their predator control successes and aims. **Mark Harvey** from the Waima-Laingholm group and **Vicki Sargisson** from the Otitori Bay Sanctuary Project outlined their plans. These two recently formed groups plan to rid these areas of possums and mammalian predators.

Bruce Harvey then summarized the efforts of the Friends of Whatipu in conjunction with Auckland Council to protect both dune-nesting birds on Whatipu beach and Grey-Faced Petrels nearby.

Trixie Harvey

The Passing of an Era



Oratia Native Plant Nursery For Sale

In the early days of WRPS the widening of the Piha Road led to some dedicated WRPS members rescuing seedlings that were about to be bulldozed into oblivion. Many of these ended up in drink cans under the oak trees at Geoff Davidson's property in Oratia. Geoff, who was on the committee at the time, recalls hearing Barbara Harre saying that there needed to be a proper native plant nursery so people could buy natives as an alternative to exotics which, by then, were beginning to reveal their weed-like propensities.

The rest is history. A hobby became a business and in the early 1990s the Oratia Native Plant Nursery moved from its home in Parker Rd to the current site at 625 West Coast Road. Since then, it has grown to be New Zealand's leading native plant nursery, with the widest range of species available. Specialising in rare and endangered plants, it has won multiple awards for its conservation efforts.

But for the last few years Geoff and his wife Bev have been trying to retire. Several very promising prospective buyers have looked at taking over the nursery, but with the specialist nature of the business and the depressed market for nursery plants, each of them has decided it was too big an undertaking, leaving Geoff and Bev to weather yet another summer.

This year the decision has been made to wind down the business, and after Christmas the nursery will no longer operate in its current form. As there are plants which need to be held over for next year's planting season, the nursery will continue to maintain these, however as existing stock is sold, new stock is not being propagated to replace it. The likelihood is that the nursery will open for restricted hours such as Saturday and Monday, or by appointment only, until existing stock is gone. Orders will be taken via email or the website, www.oratianatives.co.nz, but the nursery will not be attended full time.

So

- anyone who wants one of those rare or endangered plants that they've been meaning to buy for a long time would be best advised to get in soon;

- anyone who would like to place a forward order for stock that can be ready for uplifting by the end of April should get in quickly;
- and for anyone who is keen to take on a real challenge, full of satisfying rewards (though maybe not huge financial ones), it's not too late to talk to Geoff and Bev. With several other nurseries also closing down, and the core staff willing to continue doing the work they love for some time yet, now may be just the time to look at an exciting new venture for 2017.

Geoff and Bev Davidson 09 813 0229

WRPS Merchandise

We at WRPS have a range of quality merchandise. Ranging from high quality reference books to t-shirts and uniquely hand crafted mugs and bowls.

For more details of the Society's merchandise (publications, pottery, casual wear and a Don Binney poster print) please refer to the WRPS online shop at:

www.waitakereranges.org.nz.

The following images offer a sneak peak into what is available on our website.

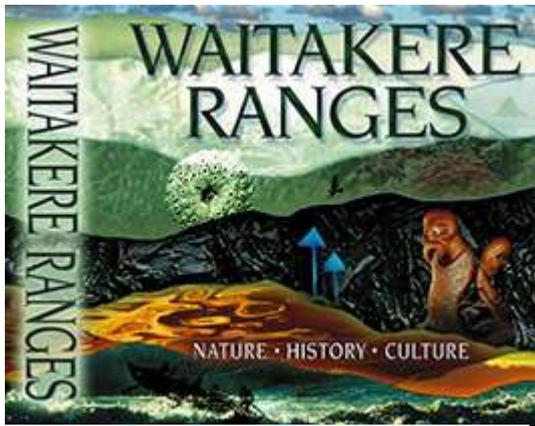
Thank you for your continued support.



WRPS mugs are hand painted and available via the website for \$35.00 (includes P & P).

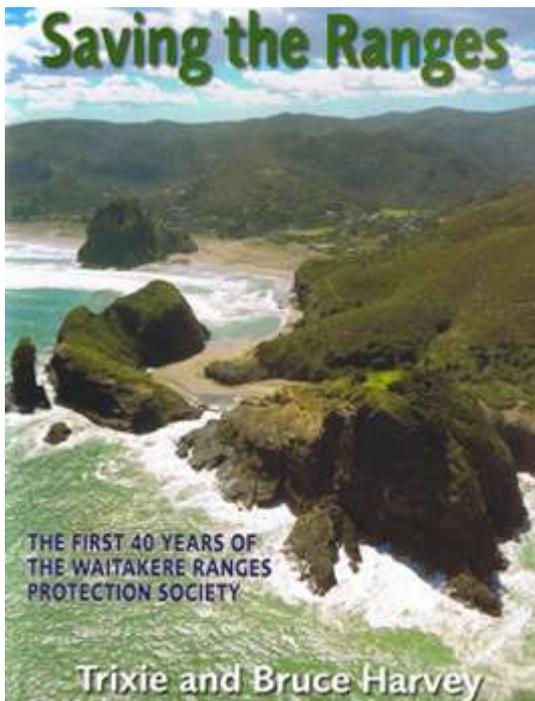


Pictured above is the ultimate supporters set and will complement any household (individual prices are available on the WRPS website).



The story of the Waitakere Ranges is written by many authors who tell us from various points of view, what it is about the Ranges that they love and value.

Edited by Bruce and Trixie Harvey



These books make great Christmas presents. Saving The Ranges tells of the many people who have contributed to the conservation and protection of the Ranges.



WRPS supporters T-shirts are available in male and female cuts with a variety of colours and sizes in stock.



Please see our website for all supporters gear and merchandise: www.waitakereranges.org.nz.

WRPS Newsletter Email List

If you are receiving this newsletter by post but would prefer to receive it by email (as a .pdf file), please let us know (email us at wrps@waitakereranges.org.nz). You will have the added advantage of being able to view the photographs in full and glorious colour.

YOUR COMMITTEE

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Committee meetings are held monthly, from February to November, on the second Wednesday of the month.



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