



*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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### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 42nd Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at  
7 pm, Wednesday 30 March  
Arataki Visitors Centre, Scenic Drive, Titirangi

#### Agenda:

1. Welcome
2. Announcements
3. Apologies
4. Confirmation of Minutes of AGM 2015 and Matters arising
5. Annual Report
6. Financial Report
7. Election of Officers
8. General Business

#### Speaker:

#### “Predator-Free New Zealand” Dr James Russell

New Zealand has a proud and enviable track record in eradication of invasive species. In 2014 we celebrated 50 years of rodent eradications, and in 2015 we celebrated 100 years of ungulate eradications. But just how far have we come with eradications, how much further is there to go and how do we stack up against our international counterparts?

The Predator-Free New Zealand concept aspires towards removal of eight species of invasive mammal (3 mustelids, 3 rats, 1 mouse and 1 possum) across the whole of New Zealand. This bold goal would require scaling up island eradication technology from islands, to fenced sites, to peninsulas, and finally to non-fenced sites. As we move towards such a goal, the distinction between a one-off island eradication and management to zero-density becomes less and less clear.

Beyond mammals, exciting advances in eradication of other species are also emerging. As for mammals, these advances are based on a solid scientific foundation of understanding the population biology of the target species to optimise control timing and methods. Bird and plant eradications have been recorded, while ant eradication is

on the horizon. However, much more work is required on control and eradication of the whole suite of highly invasive species in New Zealand.

James Russell is a Senior Lecturer in the University of Auckland School of Biological Sciences and Department of Statistics, Strategic Advisor to the Predator Free New Zealand trust, Associate Editor of the journal Biological Invasions and member of the IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group. His work brings together diverse scientific approaches to solve contemporary conservation problems such as achieving and maintaining pest-free status on islands and reserves, and restoring terrestrial animal communities. Results from this work have been used both for conservation, and testing ecological theory, on islands around the world. In particular he has worked closely with the Department of Conservation for twelve years developing and testing tools to detect and monitor rodents at low densities, and keep islands rodent-free. His recent work focuses on environmental attitudes to pest management and tools, and scaling the application of eradication technologies to very large and inhabited islands. James was the 2012 Prime Minister’s Emerging Scientist prize winner, a 2013 National Geographic Explorer, and a 2014 MBIE Rutherford Discovery Fellow (2015-2019). James lives in the foothills of the Waitakere Ranges in the shadow of the Ark in the Park.

### **President’s Report**

Happy new year to all our members and friends. I trust you are enjoying the summer and the opportunity to visit the ranges and the west coast. 2016 is promising to be an important year for the Society, the ranges and Auckland City.

Over the past two years the Society has been very involved with the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan (UP). Our legal and planning team have worked very hard to ensure that our submissions on the many topics, and our evidence at subsequent hearings has kept the provisions of the WR Heritage Area Act (WRHAA) and the protection of the ranges at the forefront of the proceedings. At the hearings that I have attended, I felt that the commissioners had a very good understanding of the importance of the

WRHHA and its place in the UP. We have a few more hearings to conclude before the UP commissioners' decisions are received in July, with Auckland Council's response due August 2016. Once operational, this Unitary Plan will guide the development of Auckland for the next 30 years.

After many months of consultation, the Waitakere Ranges Local Board has released the Te Henga Local Area Plan (LAP). The community and the Society had a considerable input into this plan, and we were pleased with the way that the LAP progressed and the final outcome will allow the community at Te Henga to take more control of their environment.

A concern for the Society over the past years has been the closure and rehabilitation of the Te Henga quarry. Society members Colleen Pilcher (pictured below) and John Carlson were on the quarry consultative committee for many years, and Trixie Harvey and myself have also been involved for the past three years.



*Colleen Pilcher and Ann Robinson.*

When the quarry operator finished operations in May 2015, they were required to re-contour the quarry and put in place a revegetation and maintenance plan.



*Photo showing before rehabilitation*

We visited the quarry in January this year and were impressed with the restoration which has created two lakes, small rolling hillocks on the quarry floor, and the original stream flows into raupo wetlands. Already there is a sense of nature returning, the planting of native trees

will begin this autumn. No longer will the locals have to put up with heavy vehicles, dust and noise of the quarrying operations.



*Photo showing the recontoured landscape and lake*

Towards the end of last year, I was contacted by Miles Davies (11 years old), a pupil at Glen Eden intermediate school, who had an end-of-year project that involved him writing, editing and producing a comic about kauri dieback in the ranges. Miles and his family are from the UK and had only been in New Zealand for a few months. Here is his email to me about the comic.

*Thank you again for writing a foreword for my comic - I am very grateful. Here is a little bit about myself and why I like the Waitakere Ranges. I've grown up loving natural history from dinosaurs to Oaks - I have always loved nature. I especially love birds as my dad was an ornithology lecturer and used to take me bird watching when I was little. I loved it so much when we went into the woods and all I could hear was bird song and the whistle of the wind. This is where I realised how important it was to preserve the natural world. Last summer my family came out to New Zealand for a holiday and I fell in love with the beautiful, primeval kauri forests - especially the Waitakere Ranges.*

*Now, here is a bit about my comic. It starts off in the real world where you meet Kid - the main character. Soon after in a Chemical research lab 'Chemical X' and 'Chemical Y' touch and cause a huge explosion which turns the world into a comic version of itself. Here kid meets the Terehu, a fairy folk who in Maori culture were said to have lived in the Waitakere Ranges among the Kauri. The Terehu Queen, Nyarde, tells kid about how the Terehu once lived in New Zealand but after the European people came and started to cut down the kauri the Terehu started to die. Things only got worse as a disease started to spread throughout kauri killing them off. Nyarde tells kid that the magic in the comic world has let her survive but she and the kauri are still not strong enough to fight the die back. The rest of the story is about Kid fighting the dieback with the help of a Terehu called Nymph. From Miles.*

To see if Kid succeeds, here's an online link to the comic:  
[fliphtml5.com/zlhs/vnzb](http://fliphtml5.com/zlhs/vnzb)

Miles' youthful enthusiasm gives me hope for the future. He has also generously donated \$170 from the sale of the comics to the Society. In return we will give his family a year's membership and a copy of "Saving the Ranges".

*John Edgar*  
President

## Heritage Area Co-ordinator Report

Over the last few months, I have been engaging with both small and large projects in the Ranges, along with regional and national policy issues that are under development. The big issues include the proposal to renew the Huia Water Treatment Plant and Central Government's legislation reform for marine protection. We are also preparing to engage with Auckland Council's consultation document for the Annual Plan 16/17 and the Resource Legislation Amendment Bill 2015.

Last year we completed the submission on the *Auckland Regional Pest Management Plan Review Discussion Document* and look forward to the draft plan that will be open for consultation later this year. We also submitted on the Ministry for the Environment's *Topics for Environmental Reporting* discussion document; and issued a press release on issues with oil and gas exploration permits affecting Maui dolphin habitat and concerns with scope of marine legislation discussion document.

### *Huia Water Treatment Plant*

In November, we let you know that Watercare is considering the options to replace the Huia Water Treatment Plant, which at nearly 100 years old is reaching the end of its life. Over the summer, the Watercare project team has been investigating potential sites in the area that could be used for the new plant. This has included using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to identify sites that meet the key criteria of size, elevation that enables gravity feeding, proximity to existing infrastructure (e.g. pipelines), land slope and are outside dam catchments.

From this mapping exercise, Watercare have identified a long-list of possible locations and done an initial visit to check for fatal flaws (e.g. complete forest cover, poor access). They are now doing an initial technical assessment of the long-list to identify 3–4 sites to include in the short-list.

The stakeholder group met in February and provided feedback on the assessment criteria and methodology for assessing the long-list. We expect to meet regularly over the next few months with Watercare at key stages to get an update on progress. Once the short-list is identified, Watercare will also undertake broader public consultation with the local community.

### *Marine protection*

In January, the Government released the *Marine Protected Areas Discussion Document* which outlines a number of proposed reforms to marine protection legislation. The largest proposal is repealing the existing Marine Reserves Act 1971 and replacing it with a new act that covers four types of marine protection: marine reserves, species

specific sanctuaries, seabed reserves, and recreational fishing reserves. The act will also introduce the first two fishing reserves: Marlborough Sounds and Hauraki Gulf. Existing protected areas including marine reserves and mammal sanctuaries (e.g. the Maui's dolphin sanctuary) will be retained and transitioned to the new act.

We agree that there is a need to modernise the existing legislation and the general protection tools proposed seem like a more flexible and modern approach. However, major concerns with the legislation include that it only covers the territorial waters and not the complete Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the focus on economic analysis rather than an environmental focus or recognising the economic benefits of environmental protection.

Along with submitting on these issues and reviewing the proposed collaborative process for investigating marine protection to ensure it is accessible for the community, we are interested in proposing that the Waitakere Coast is the first area to go through the new process. We've already been talking to Forest & Bird and other local stakeholders about greater marine protection on the Waitakere Coast given its unique diversity and relatively natural state, and this might be an opportunity to work collaboratively with Government.

If you want to submit as an individual go to [www.mfe.govt.nz/consultation/mpa](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/consultation/mpa) for more information.

*Katherine Russell*

## Vespex® wasp bait



*Common Wasp.*

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

This summer, there is a lot of excitement as the new wasp bait Vespex® is going into use by community groups across the country. The new bait was developed by Richard Toft and was trialled in the South Island last summer. Within the first week of baiting, wasp activity dropped by nearly 95%. As a protein bait, it does not attract bees and has the ability to kill several nests from one station.

The bait is now available from Merchento however you need to have an approved user to purchase the bait and physically supervise any operation. You can become an approved user through the online information and testing, then register and pay \$58 + GST. Once approved, you can then purchase bait and get going! Bait costs \$160 plus GST for 1.5kg and \$3.60 plus GST for stations.

There are now a number of approved users in the

Waitakere Ranges with Auckland Council and Forest & Bird doing a major operation at Ark in the Park and other users doing smaller community operations. Let someone know if you have a wasp nest on your property as they may be able to put you in touch with an approved user who can come and set up a bait station.

Check out [www.merchento.com/vespex.html](http://www.merchento.com/vespex.html) for more information.

*Katherine Russell*

## Māui Dolphin

### Purse seiners in Maui dolphin habitat shows more needs to be done with West Coast fisheries management



*Māui dolphin in situ.*

Photo supplied by Christine Rose

Recent regular sightings and reports of Māui dolphins in the surf at Piha and Muriwai are a great sign for improved recognition of these most rarest of marine mammals, even if it's not an indication of more dolphins per se. Māui dolphins, and the occasional Hector's dolphin among them, come closer to shore in summer months, and it's a rare treat for anyone who happens to share a wave or see them from land. Because knowledge of the dolphins' movements are essential to dolphin conservation, all sightings should be reported to 0800DOCHOT.

The last official count in 2010-11 had Māui numbers down to around 55 adults (in a range between 48 and 69 individuals over one year old), but scientists agree at least three are killed in fishing nets every year. The only sustainable bycatch rate is next to zero if the species is to survive extinction.

New Zealanders have a special relationship with Māui and Hector's dolphins, and the hotspot of the remaining Māui habitat is around the Waitakere Ranges coast, and north and south of the Manukau and Kaipara Harbours. We owe these wee dolphins a debt of responsibility to keep them and their species alive.

But for several weeks over January and at the beginning of February, the Talley's purse seiner Eagle, sat off the West Coast, sometimes allegedly fishing using an enclosed net method, for skipjack tuna, only 150m from shore. This method of fishing is particularly indiscriminate, catching

everything enclosed, at a rate of up to 8% bycatch for target fish returned. Yet for several weeks, the Eagle was just off our coast, often within a stone's throw of shore, upsetting local fishers, residents, and Māui dolphin advocates alike.

Locals who rang the Ministry of Primary Industries were told to verify the ship's distance from shore, its name, and what it was catching. Reports of illegal fishing (all gill nets are banned only 2nm from shore) were unverified via the required GPS notation. The burden of proof to verify whether the ship was illegally fishing seemed to sit with residents, instead of on the vessel to prove they weren't.

It was only when the issue reached national media that the seiner left the area and quickly reberthed in its home Nelson port.



*A purse seiner type fishing boat passing by Piha beach.*

Photo supplied by Christine Rose

The provocative, dangerous, and potentially illegal activities of the Talley's vessel showed a disregard for our rare endemic Māui dolphins. It showed weakness and complacency on the part of MPI, and the relative powerlessness of the public. While the claims of illegal fishing in Māui habitat were unproven by photographic evidence or GPS markers, the very presence of the purse seiner so close to shore for a sustained period, does raise questions about west coast fisheries management and enforcement, and the Government's approach to Māui dolphin protection. More clearly needs to be done.

*Christine Rose*

## 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](http://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 supporters T-shirts are available in male and female cuts with a variety of colours and sizes in stock.*



*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).*



## 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](mailto: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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