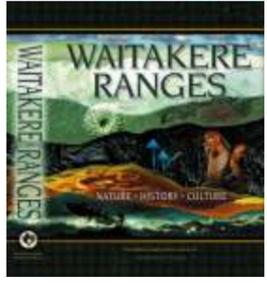


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Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc

news

PO Box 15668, New Lynn, Waitakere 0640
www.waitakereranges.org.nz

Issue 138 August- October 2008

Your President's Report



John Edgar addressing Society and friends
Photo by Tony Dunn

The shortest day has come and gone, and the wild winter storms continue. Winter is a wonderful time in the bush when everything is soaked and refreshed, ready for the new growth of spring.

It was a great day when we celebrated our 35th birthday in June with over 100 members and friends at the Waitakere Hall. The Society presented Bruce and Trixie Harvey, Bob Happy, Graeme Campbell, Jack Colmar, John Staniland, Mary Woodward and Bob Harvey with honour certificates recognising their outstanding contribution to conservation in the ranges. See p 2 for report and photos.



John showing the birthday cake with Colleen Pilcher
Photo by Tony Dunn

With the WRHA Act 2008 now a few months old, Waitakere City Council is initiating the Local Area Plans (LAP) that are provided for in the Act. It is intended that each distinct community in the Heritage Area will work with Council to create a LAP. The Society will be closely engaged in this process and we will keep you informed of outcomes.

The Environment Court has issued a decision upholding appeals by WRPS and ARC against a decision by WCC which approved a subdivision into three lots of a rural residential block owned by the Duncan family in the Swanson Structure Plan Area. The decision overturned the grant of consent but indicated that a two lot subdivision might have found favour had it been promoted by the applicants. The case was one of three interrelated matters heard by Judge Jackson's division of the Court over the past two years. The other cases concern another subdivision appeal on a nearby property (owned by Brickell and Ashton) and the Swanson Structure Plan, which is the most important of the three issues. WRPS hopes to receive the decisions on those matters within the next couple of months.

The Society is concerned at the discovery and spread of species of *Phytophthora*, the fungal disease that is attacking some kauri in the ranges. This disease was identified some time ago, and is being studied by Ross Beever and his colleagues at Landcare Research. The ARC had a workshop on 18 August to discuss *Phytophthora* taxon Agathis. (More information on *Phytophthora* is included in this newsletter on pp 3-5).

John Edgar
President



WRPS 35th Birthday Party 2008

Photographer Tony Dunn



It was a typical winter rainy day, but inside the Waitakere Village Hall on June 15 it was all conviviality, as many old and new members came to celebrate two landmarks, the Society's 35th birthday, and the achieving of one of our great aims, the passing of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008.

Waitakere Hall Subday June 15 2008

We were joined by Mayor Bob Harvey, Deputy Mayor Penny Hulse, and the MP for Waitakere Lynne Pillay, who have all battled in support of the Bill during the last few years. Plenty of lovely food, a glass or two of wine and meeting old friends and fellow supporters of the protection of the Ranges made for a very pleasant afternoon.



Catching up Gary Taylor Don Binney



Bobbi Woodward



Jack Colmar



John and Mayor Bob



Champagne ready Barmen Tim O'Shea and Max Pirini

President John Edgar welcomed everyone and congratulated all on the successful passing of the Act.

He also presented framed honours certificates to original members, Bobbi (Mary) Woodward, John Staniland, Bob Happy and Jack Colmar who have worked towards the Society's aims for 35 years, and to Graeme Campbell (right) for his work in drafting the Heritage Area Bill, and Bruce and Trixie Harvey for the completion of the Waitakere Book. Bob Harvey was re-presented with his honour certificate having missed his first presentation at the last birthday party five years ago.



John Staniland



Graeme Campbell



Bruce and Trixie Harvey



Dick Bellamy



The hall was decorated with lots of native plants, courtesy of member Geoff Davidson, and photographs and memorabilia dating back to the Society's founding project, stopping the proposed dump in Duck's quarry in the Te Henga valley.



Mike Nixon Lynne Pillay, Colleen

The first meetings of the Society were held in the Waitakere Village Hall, which has particular resonance for our long time members. Their success 35 years ago for the Ranges preservation was due to the spirited opposition of the first members, who then went on to form the strong Society we have today and to fight many more battles for conservation.



John with Colleen cutting the cake



Anna Fomison and Mels Barton



Afternoon tea and the cutting of a large chocolate cake decorated with the Society's logo completed the afternoon's celebrations to the great satisfaction of all involved.



Your Committee

Committee meetings are held on second Wednesday of the month

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WRPS Whanau 2008

Photo Tony Dunn

From Left to right: Max Pirini, Tim O'Shea, (back) Colleen Pilcher, Trixie Harvey, Lynda Williams, Denise Yates, (front) Mels Barton, (back) Robyn Binsley, Anna Fomison, Kath Dewar, Mike Nixon, John Edgar, Greg Presland, Bruce Harvey.

Your WRPS Spring Newsletter

This edition is later than usual due to other commitments of the Editor. Many thanks to Landcare Scientist Ross Beever for his informative article on *Phytophthora* taxon *Agathis* -the latest threat to the kauri trees in the Waitakere Ranges.

Also thanks to John, Kath and Trixie for your contributions and to Tony Dunn for his photos.

Any queries, comments or contributions please contact Anna editor@waitakereranges.org.nz.

Best wishes for a happy and wonderful spring. The Executive Committee.



Waitakere Ranges Protection Society
PO Box 15668
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Your Committee Member – Kath Dewar



Kath has been a member of the Society since moving to Piha in late 1996. A new migrant from the UK, she was surprised to find the clean green image not quite as pure in reality and keen to contribute where she could.

By 2001, Kath was setting up her own freelance marketing business and keen to use her new freedom from the corporate world to make a difference, especially in her own community. Having met John Edgar through his partner Ann Robinson, John suggested Kath join the committee. She's been elected every year since and held roles including Vice President and Secretary.

Kath has worked in professional marketing and communications for over 17 years now but her environmental knowledge and campaigning skills are largely thanks to the Society.

Her professional experience proved useful to the Society in tasks such as editing the newsletter, communicating with members and other community groups and writing submissions. Through her

involvement with the Society, Kath learned about local ecology, conservation and planning issues and about effective processes for change. Being involved in the successful Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area project was an exciting and challenging way to find out how local and central Government operates. This exposure led, in turn, to Kath becoming active within the Green Party and she is their candidate for the New Lynn electorate in the 2008 election.

She remains active within the committee on planning matters and represents the Society on visitor management issues.

Kath continues to run her own marketing business from a home office in Piha, supporting kiwi businesses, and is a member of the Sustainable Business Network. Outside of work and politics Kath enjoys Iyengar yoga and tramping with partner and photographer Tony Dunn. She also writes fiction and is currently in the last stages of revisions to a manuscript for a novel.

WRPS History Project



Bruce and I have agreed to undertake a project to order the WRPS archives and write a history of the society. Fortunately previous committees of WRPS have kept good records and many members have photographs and recollections of the society's efforts in past years. As we did not join the society till after 1989, when we came to live in and love the Ranges, it is so interesting to read about the phenomenal amount of work done by members in the 1970s and 80s. What a lot of effort was put in by those early members! We

certainly need to tell their story to present members to give the perspective of history on our concerns today.

So far we have had a preliminary look at the large volume of records and realise that it will take some time to put together the history. However, there is no deadline; we have started and will keep members up to date about our progress. We will have access to the memories recorded by Carol Shone in her oral history project, but would value any other memorabilia held by long term members.

Trixie Harvey



CLEAN YOUR BOOTS BEFORE YOU TRAMP!

Kauri under attack

By Landcare Research Scientist Dr Ross Beever

In late 2006 and early 2007, there was publicity about dying kauri in the Waitakeres and elsewhere linked to species of *Phytophthora*.

Landcare Research scientist Dr Ross Beever provided us with a brief update on this disease. He reports that recent work has clarified that there are two species of particular concern in kauri forests. *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which is widespread throughout kauri forests, damages the fine roots. Occasionally, it has been linked with tree dieback and death especially where there has been root disturbance or changes in water table. It may play a role in killing kauri seedlings and altering regeneration patterns on some sites, but is generally considered of minor concern.

In contrast, another species known by the tag name of *Phytophthora* taxon Agathis (PTA for short) is more problematic. DNA studies have shown that this species is close to one called *P. katsurae*, but differs from it in spore features. It is likely to be introduced, but this is not certain.

PTA is associated with a collar rot, that is it kills the living tissue at the base of the trunk slowly ring barking it at ground level. The affected tissue shows excessive gum bleeding as the tree "fights back". Collar rot disease was first reported in the 1970s from Gt Barrier Island but, as only a small area was affected, no particular concern was raised.

Recent work shows that it is present in patches throughout the Waitakeres, and is also in Trounson and Waipoua. It affects trees of all ages, including some of the giants in the Cascades, and seems to spread slowly through the soil. Pathology experiments confirm PTA is indeed a kauri killer but other species seem unaffected.

Ross believes this species poses a real threat to kauri, both at the ecosystem level as the present small patches expand, and to individual iconic trees. Much more research is needed to clarify the full nature of the threat and ways to combat it. In the meantime, he advocates those who tramp through the Waitakeres, and indeed anywhere in NZ, to minimise moving soil between different areas. In summary, CLEAN YOUR BOOTS BEFORE YOU TRAMP!

Ross E Beever, FRSNZ, MSc (Auckland), PhD (Leeds)

"Dr Ross E Beever, Senior Scientist, Landcare Research, Auckland, has made outstanding contributions to mycology, plant pathology and New Zealand botany over 33 years of active research. In his painstaking and innovative research on fungi from the sub cellular level through to the ecosystem level he has collaborated widely with colleagues having complementary skills, and combined applied work with more fundamental studies. In this way, his research has significantly advanced our knowledge of fungal behaviour and the physiology of plant diseases. He has developed methods to manage the problems of fungicide resistance in economically important fungi such as *Botrytis*, and he led the team that identified flax yellow leaf phytoplasma as the organism responsible for the widespread death of cabbage trees throughout northern New Zealand. Dr Beever is a skilled field observer with an extensive knowledge of native plants and fungi, and an inspiring leader of his younger colleagues."

The following article was released by the ARC in August 2008.

Kauri dieback

Key facts about *Phytophthora taxon Agathis* (PTA)

The following article was released by the ARC in August 2008.

A disease has been identified in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park that is threatening the health of kauri trees in the area.

The kauri dieback is caused by a pathogen, known as *Phytophthora taxon Agathis* (PTA). Until April 2008 it had not been identified as a new species, nor was it known that PTA killed kauri.

The dieback has been observed at the Cascades in the Ranges by Dr Nick Waipara (ARC Biosecurity) and Dr Ross Beever (Landcare Research), although it was reported by local residents on the Maungaroa Ridge Track near Piha in 2006.

It is now known that it kills trees of all ages and sizes.

Symptoms include yellowing of foliage, canopy thinning, appearance of dead branches and tree death. Affected trees can also develop lesions that bleed resin.

PTA is a soil borne species spread by soil and soil water movement, plant to plant transmission through underground root-to-root contact, human and animal vectors.



Phytophthora Taxon Agathis (PTA)
Photo courtesy Dr Ross Beever

Its closest known relative is a chestnut pathogen from Korea (*Phytophthora katusrae*). The assumption is that it is an exotic pathogen, possibly tropical in origin. However nothing is known about this particular species overseas.



Kauri collar rot, Waitakere Ranges, Auckland. Caused by PTA
Photo courtesy Dr Ross Beever

There are significant information gaps about the disease, its vectors and management options. Although kauri damage has only recently been discovered, the disease may have been in the Ranges for many years, as symptoms may take years to become apparent.

The disease has now also been identified as present on Great Barrier Island, and has also been isolated from soil at Waipoua Kauri Sanctuary, Northland.

More research is urgently needed into the biology, pathology and management of PTA, the extent of PTA in the Waitakere Ranges, its vectors of spread and possible control methods. ARC is looking at supporting or underwriting initial research until national funding can be obtained.

Landcare Research is preparing a two-year research proposal to fill in necessary knowledge gaps, including a delimitation survey of where the disease is present in the region, its vectors of spread, and preliminary work on control of the disease.

PTA is not listed as Unwanted Organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993 as it would not be regarded as a new organism under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO) because it is now known to have been present in New Zealand prior to 29 July 1998.

What the ARC is planning to do about *Phytophthora taxon Agathis* (PTA)

Management options

- Eradication is unlikely due to the extent and widespread nature of the pathogen and the time since it was first recorded.
- Containment options are being implemented for known affected areas until there is more survey information to determine the extent of distribution.
- Protection of PTA-free areas is possible through exclusion of vectors (closing tracks, restricting access, disinfection of equipment). However water and feral pig movement may also be important vectors.
- Control through tree injection or foliar spray is an option as related *Phytophthora* diseases are effectively managed in NZ and Australia this way.

What is the ARC doing right now?

- ARC staff are working with outdoor events organisers to ensure precautionary management measures are implemented to prevent PTA spread during these events.
 - A protocol has been developed to cover all future sporting and recreational events in the Waitakere Ranges, which will include immersion of footwear in a disinfectant bath at both ends of the event, and the distribution of advisory material.
 - An operating procedure has been produced for Council staff and contractors working in kauri forests.
 - Information is being sent to community, conservation, recreational and related groups, and concessionaries, film companies and other commercial entities that utilise the Waitakere Ranges.
- The media has been informed and the ARC website updated.



Kauri collar rot, Waitakere Ranges, Auckland. Caused by *Phytophthora Taxon Agathis* (PTA)
Photo courtesy Dr Ross Beever

What else does ARC plan to do?

- Signs will be erected to inform the public and stress the need for all footwear and machinery exiting the Waitakere Ranges to be cleaned, especially before entering other kauri forest areas.
 - ARC Biosecurity is taking action to reduce feral pig numbers in the Waitakere Ranges.
 - ARC is consulting the Minister of Conservation and the Minister of Research, Science and Technology, expressing Council's concern that PTA is an emerging threat of national significance, and that research should be funded nationally as a priority.
 - The Council will engage with the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology, that emerging disease threats such as PTA in native ecosystems should be included and supported as part of the 2009 Ecosystems bidding round.
 - The Council will adopt further management and containment measures as appropriate.

Contact us

For more information, or to report any suspect sightings of diseased kauri (except at Huia, the Cascades and Maungaroa Ridge at Piha) phone the ARC biosecurity team on 366 2000 or email biosecurity@arc.govt.nz.