



**Waitakere Ranges
Protection Society Inc**

news

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Your President's Report



The next two months will see the greatest changes in the governance of the Auckland region in decades. At the time of writing nominations to Council and Local Boards had not yet closed, so it is difficult for the Society to comment on the candidates. However, standing for the Waitakere Local Board on the Future West ticket are Greg Presland and Denise Yates (two members of our executive committee who have previously been Waitakere City Councillors), and Cr. Judy Lawley is standing as an independent. Standing for Council in Waitakere Ward are independents Sandra Coney, Paul Walbran and Penny Hulse, all experienced politicians. All these candidates supported the Heritage Area Bill. We wish them every success.

By the time you receive this newsletter, the Society will have spoken to its submissions in hearings at Waitakere City Council on the Waitakere Reserves Management Plan and the District Plan Changes 35, 36 and 37. The potential effects on the ranges permitted in the three plan changes are of great concern to the communities and there have been a large number of submissions in opposition.

Our Oral History project has been granted \$3000 from the Waitakere City Heritage Fund to continue our interviews

of key conservationists in the Waitakere Ranges. We have a short list of potential interviewees, but we encourage members to nominate people who have been influential in the ranges. In future newsletters we intend to include excerpts from the transcripts.

The Special General Meeting in June was well attended and the meeting voted to adopt a new constitution which has since been forwarded to the Registrar of Incorporated Societies and the Charities Commission for their approval.

Kauri dieback disease caused by the pathogen *Phytophthora* taxon *Agathis* is spreading at an alarming rate throughout all kauri forests. It is now well-established in many areas of the ranges and we regard this as the most serious threat to the regenerating kauri forest. The research into this disease and its control is severely underfunded, and the Society will lobby the government to better resource the research teams and we will continue to work with the territorial authorities to ensure better public awareness. Further information is available online at www.kauridieback.co.nz

We note with great sadness the untimely death in June of Dr Ross Beever, a leading researcher into Kauri PTA. Ross's obituary is in this newsletter, and we pass on our condolences to his wife Jessica and their family.

John Edgar
President

WRPS Newsletter Email List

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



Photo: Sandra Jones



Photo: Sandra Jones

Kumarahou / gum diggers' soap / golden tainui
(*Pomaderris kumeraho*)

Found throughout the Waitakeres. These photos were taken in September at Spragg Monument, Cornwallis and on the harbour edge at Green Bay. However, its numbers are declining as suitable habitat (poor soil in short scrub, on roadside banks, and on gumland) is swallowed up by development and by regenerating forest. Flower buds appear very early in the season (mid to end of summer). Leaves have prominent veins, are dull on top and with a mat of fine grey-white hairs (tomentum) underneath.

Obituary for Dr Ross Beever

A long-standing member of WRPS and one of New Zealand's most eminent scientists, Dr Ross Beever died on 3 June 2010 at the age of 64. Ross was a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand, the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Science, and the Australasian Plant Pathology Society. Ross and his wife Jessica have been enthusiasts for the Waitakere Ranges since their youth when, as members of the University Field Club, they tramped the tracks and observed the flora and fauna with the eyes of young scientists. From his schooldays onwards Ross was a lover of the native flora of New Zealand.

Ross's natural history interests were wide, but he had a particular interest in botany and mycology, the study of fungi, which commonly cause diseases of plants, but can also be symbiotic partners or free-living organisms. In this field he became one of the most respected authorities in New Zealand. His career took him into the DSIR in 1968 and later to Landcare Research - Manaaki Whenua, where for the last two decades he led projects on the biology of fungi, how and where they grow, and how to control them where necessary. Many of these projects, such as the reasons for fungicide resistance, are of fundamental importance to our agricultural economy. He was the leader of a team investigating some of the more difficult problems of disease in the native flora. His study

of the sudden decline of cabbage trees, which alarmed botanists and many WRPS members in the 1990s was a classic of its kind. After a great deal of hard work by Ross and his team, it was discovered that the disease organism was not actually a fungus, but a rare and shadowy, difficult to pin down organism called a phytoplasma. Little was known about such organisms, and the work uncovering its life cycle and disease potential was pioneering in its scope. During the last few years Ross was leading the study of the disease of kauri that we call PTA (*Phytophthora taxon Agathis*). The incidence of this disease in the Waitakere Ranges and other kauri forests of the North Island continues to cause concern to Regional Authorities, DoC and to conservation organizations such as WRPS. Ross's knowledge and experience will now be sadly missed by the scientists who are trying to define and tackle this menace.

Ross's contribution to the WRPS publication *Waitakere Ranges* in 2006 on the fungi of the Ranges demonstrates his scholarship, clarity of thought and appreciation of the biodiversity of these often overlooked organisms. Although his main interest was in research, he was also a valued supervisor and teacher of fungal biology and genetics at The University of Auckland. He was a quiet man, lucid and careful in his explanations, but with a sense of fun and humour when the situation allowed. Students and colleagues will miss his keen intellect and helpful

advice. WRPS also called on his knowledge and expertise, and he was our first port of call for many years for information on disease in native plants.

The large attendance of New Zealand's scientific establishment at his funeral demonstrated the esteem in which Ross was held. Our sympathies go to Jessica, his children and extended family. We have lost a valued member and New Zealand has lost a great scientist.

Trixie Harvey

Book Reviews

I have been fortunate enough to be asked to review some new books for this edition of the newsletter. Researching them has been a great pleasure and I'm very grateful to Murray Gray of Gone West Books in Titirangi and New Holland Publishers for the opportunity. You can buy all 3 books from Murray by visiting his shop or online at www.gonewestbooks.com

1. *Walking the Waitakere Ranges* by Alison Dench and Lee-Anne Parore published by New Holland

This new edition features 10 new walks and I have very much enjoyed reading and doing many of the walks in this handy little book over the last few months.

The walks are well described, with clear maps and directions. I especially enjoyed the historical and natural history aspects that each walk includes. The timings are spot on (for my walking pace anyway) and the gradings also realistic – if it says hard, it means hard!

There is a great variety of walks to suit everyone from a flat easy Sunday stroll with grandma to a great adventure for the fit and determined, and the walks cover the whole Waitakere Ranges area. I especially liked the list of walks in order of difficulty for planning my expeditions and the fact that each walk indicates whether or not you can take a dog.

If you'd like something to inspire you to get back out in the Ranges this summer I can highly recommend this little book. I certainly have a long list of walks I am itching to do. The book gave me the confidence to get out and do long tramps on my own for the first time, which I have now become quite addicted to. The quality of information means you can plan very effectively what walk would be appropriate for the time and weather conditions you have on the day with confidence.

The only improvements I could suggest would be to issue a ring-binder version with thicker pages so you only need to take the pages that you need with you, rather than the whole book, and to increase the visibility of the Kauri Dieback Disease information.

2. *A Photographic Guide to Trees of New Zealand* by Lawrie Metcalf, published by New Holland

While on my walks I took along this handy sized tree identification book and tested it out every time I saw something I didn't recognise, which was quite often!

I found it quite easy to use the identification key after a bit of practice, and the photos of the trees are good sized and clear in most cases. There were very few occasions when I couldn't identify what I was looking at and perhaps they weren't actually trees when I failed to do so.

The book is a good size for taking out on walks, small and narrow and not heavy, so it easily slips into a backpack or coat pocket.

3. *A Photographic Guide to Birds of New Zealand* by Geoff Moon, published by New Holland

This little book is from the same series as the Tree book and is equally handy in size for taking out and about.

However I found it much more difficult to use and due to the fact that there is no identification key to follow it is not a book for the novice twitcher. Since I know nothing about bird classifications I had to leaf through the entire book hoping to spot a likely looking photo if I saw a bird I didn't know. I found this very frustrating and unhelpful.

The book is organised so that birds are grouped by their Latin family names, based on their anatomy. While this is completely logical from a scientific point of view it is not user-friendly if you have no idea what these Latin names mean.

The addition of an anatomy-based simple identification key would add a great deal of value to this otherwise lovely book with Geoff Moon's superb photos and detailed descriptions of the birds and their range.

Mels Barton

Your help needed

With the increased workload the Society faces in these times, having a part-time paid advocate for the Ranges has been hugely valuable. Our thanks to those of you who have supported our efforts to pay a small wage for a Heritage Area Co-ordinator with a regular donation. Just a few dollars every week soon stacks up. The funds we've received are a start. But we have much further to go if we are to avoid being dependant on unpredictable grants. Could you spare \$5 or \$50 or some other sum on a regular basis to help us keep paying the Co-ordinator? If you can, please email us at wrps@waitakereranges.org.nz and we can forward to you the forms you will need and the details of our bank account.

Heritage Area Coordinator's Report June – August 2010

Submissions / Advocacy:

District Plan Changes

We made further submissions on the proposals after reviewing all submissions (which were 99% against). The Hearing date has been set as 19-20 August for the 3 Plan Changes 35, 36 and 37 and we will continue to oppose them strongly.

Auckland Governance

The Local Government Select Committee announced the outcome of deliberations on the 3rd Super City Bill and made a few minor changes due to the intense lobbying and high quality submissions made by many groups and individuals, including WRPS and a number of members. Thanks to our petition the new Spatial Plan will now be required to have regard to the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act.

Henderson Valley / Opanuku LAP

We have made detailed submissions on the draft LAP and have concerns regarding the proposals around sub-division for the large properties in the area which already have sub-division rights, based on previous experience of clustering of development. In addition WCC are proposing increasing sub-division rights within the Heritage Area along the Metropolitan Urban Limit (MUL) boundary ("softening the edge") and we strongly oppose this.

WCC / ARC Notice of Requirement

We are preparing our oral submission on this to include land acquired relatively recently and incorporated into the Regional Park before the amalgamation. The Hearing is planned for 26 August.

Waitakere Ward Local Reserves Management Plan

We made detailed submissions on this draft plan, which included a lack of clarity over which reserves were included, or omitted, and concerns regarding weed control, replanting and a lack of focus on the risks associated with Kauri PTA.

RMA Changes – Phase II Reforms

I took part in a lively panel discussion at the EDS Conference in June to discuss what the Phase II RMA Reforms should comprise. I think we agreed that further reforms were not required, however it is unlikely that Government will pay much attention to our views!

WRPS Facebook Group

The membership of our Facebook Group has increased to 106 members. You can join here:
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/group.php?gid=156550153926&ref=ts>
or by searching for "Waitakere Ranges Protection Society" on www.facebook.com

Consultation:

Kauri PTA

I keep lobbying Waitakere City Council regarding enhancing their approach to PTA. They have now put sanitary stations on some of the tracks in places like Titirangi where the disease is rampant and many trees are now showing advanced symptoms and dying. However the Council continues to promote commercial economic development and tourism in the foothills, on the Hillary Trail and the development of the Foothills Walkway, all of which have a high risk of spreading the disease still further in our view. I have been discussing with ARC ways of increasing the publicity and raising public awareness of the disease, with spring approaching and uncertainties about how the disease will be handled by the new Auckland Council a great concern.

LAPs

Due to staff shortages the LAP for Anzac Valley and Te Henga will only reach the draft stage before the council amalgamation takes place. However the Henderson Valley LAP is anticipated to be finalised by November.

Local Parks Improvement Projects

I publicised this consultation by WCC to encourage local people to make submissions for small grants to improve their local parks.

Piha Carpark Sand

We submitted our views regarding relocation of the sand collecting on the Domain carpark in Piha onto the beach. We have some concern regarding the potential pollution of the sand with motor oil.

ARC Track Re-routing at Cascades

ARC consulted us regarding their proposal to re-route the main track through the Cascades on the Auckland City Walk, away from the kauri due to the risk to the trees from Kauri PTA. We believed that this was a sensible precaution to take should the Council decide to do so and would also be a good opportunity to publicise the risks of the disease more widely.

Grass Carp at Lake Wainamu

DoC and ARC are collaborating on a project to tackle the severe weed infestation in Lake Wainamu by using tagged Grass Carp to graze the weed and improve the water quality. A number of the fish have been released into the lake and the outlet blocked with a net to prevent escapes. The first yearly report was issued and shows some improvements, but not as rapid as was hoped. The remote tracking devices placed on the fish have not been successful, but the project is continuing.

Consents:

Grendon / Landing Roads Walkway, Titirangi

I have followed up a number of times in the last 12 months regarding the lack of progress on this walkway, which was required by the Environment Court as a condition of the

consent for sub-division and development, but has still not been built. We have now been told by WCC that the developer (Maxwell) has paid a contribution to enable Council to do the work, although additional costs will have to be met by ratepayers, and the work has still not begun. We believe this is unacceptable and that Council should be enforcing the consent conditions and the developer should be fully funding and building the walkway.

Karekare Surf Club

We have reviewed the consent application to both ARC and WCC with the help of EDS and made submissions. Our main concern is regarding the location of the wastewater disposal field in a thin sand dune on the steep slope of the Watchman above the proposed new building. We believe this may not be sufficient to treat the effluent that may flow down the bedrock and into the Karekare Stream. We have asked that the proposal be peer reviewed prior to the Hearing.

Other:

ARC Regional Parks Forum

I attended this evening Forum hosted by the ARC. We were updated on the new Council structures and personnel who will be looking after Regional Parks after Nov 1. There was great support for the development of an independent "Friends of Regional Parks" group to be established and I will attend the first meeting of this group shortly.

Fundraising

I have helped with developing a funding strategy for the Heritage Area Coordinator's role in the future so we can become less dependent on grant funding to support our core work. Uptake of our suggestion for small regular donations towards this work has been gratefully received as we continue to work towards the goal of independence.

WRPS Information Email List

Are you on our email list? If not please email Mels on mels@waitakereranges.org.nz to be updated on taking action and important issues affecting the Ranges.

Mels Barton
August 2010

Historical snippet

"Tramping Girls of Auckland" by Arnold Wall

The following poem by Professor Wall of Canterbury University was published in the *Auckland Star* on 1 November 1930. The "Olive and two Lucies" - the Tramping Girls - were Olive Lloyd, Lucy Cranwell and Lucy Moore. Lucy Cranwell was our Society's Patron until her death in 2000, aged 93.

"The heavens lifted up their gates and opened all their sluices,
When I went forth to wander with an Olive and two Lucies;
Rain-laden westerlies blew fierce and roared among the trees.
A lot they cared, those Amazons, those little Herculeses!

For these were heroines of fame, not skilled in arts cosmetic,
Not fussy about hygiene or fads dietetic,
While other girls devote their days to tennis, tea and scandal,
They brave the pigs and cattle round the steeps of Coromandel.

They've couched upon the cold, cold ground, and in the forest bedded,
In the frost and fog and sleet and snow, in places drear and dreaded;
And as for frills and furbelows, I'm sure had not got any,
But instead are deeply read in ólogies and botany

Although beneath their little belts a dreadful aching void is,
They trouble not if they can find *Corokia buddleioides*.
From their glib tongues the awesome names come trooping with decorum.
Marattia, Blechnum, Agathis, Panax and *Pittosporum*.

They are not ignorant of Scott, Dickens and of Thackeray,
But better versed in many ways across the wild Waitakere;
Perhaps they are not exactly strong in Gibbon, Burke and Johnson,
But know the way anywhere from Henderson or Swanson.

They scurry down the slippery slopes, their scanty "duds" defiling
They trip, they slip, they slide, they fall, and always come up smiling;
Regardless of abrasions dire, contusions, cuts and rigours,
When they see a hill before them they fly at it like tigers.

To ragged, ink-black cliffs we came with thunder at their bases.
Where leaping breakers cream and crash in foam against their faces.
We looked on leagues of leaden sea that fleet white horses fly on.
The Gap, The Nun, The Blowhole, the beaches and the Lion.

Three days we tramped the lonesome hills by wicked ways and miry,
The little reeked of mud and slush, their spirits are so fiery;
What comrades these for gloomy days, with boisterous gales,
and rainy,
So brisk, so bright, so brave, so strong, so cheery, and so brainy."

The collaborative effort to address kauri dieback includes MAF Biosecurity New Zealand, Department of Conservation, Auckland Regional Council, Northland Regional Council, Environment Waikato, Environment Bay of Plenty and Maori.

“Is my kauri sick?”

Bleeding small amounts of gum and shedding bark is natural for kauri trees. However, there are some signs of disease that you should look out for:

- **Gum at the base of the trunk and loss of foliage** may indicate *Phytophthora taxon Agathis* (PTA), aka kauri dieback. This is a soil borne disease which infects kauri through the roots.

PTA is associated with a collar rot causing bleeding lesions at the base of the trunk, yellowing foliage, severe defoliation and tree death. PTA is highly pathogenic to kauri and it can infect and kill kauri of all ages from seedlings to large trees.

This disease is specific to kauri in New Zealand. No other native or introduced trees are known to be affected.

There is currently no known control method for PTA. Preventing the spread to healthy trees is the only management tool for landowners. Make sure shoes, tyres and equipment are clean of dirt before and after visiting kauri forest.



Thinning foliage (top)



Globs of gum (middle image), develop into large bleeding lesions (below)



- **A slow decline in health, occasionally with small scattered bleeds up the trunk** can be caused by simple root damage and/or *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. This introduced soil pathogen is now found throughout New Zealand. This disease affects many plant species, particularly plants that are weak or stressed. In kauri trees, *P. cinnamomi* infection causes damage to the feeder roots of kauri and may cause a spotty pattern of bleeding up the trunk, reduced leaf size, a slow decline in canopy health and in some cases death of stressed trees.

- **Yellowing, wilting and death of seedlings** is caused by damping off. This root rot disease is caused by a range of microbes common in poorly drained soils. Strict hygiene in nursery situations is essential to avoid this disease.
- **Rotting in the centre of the trunk** is caused by core rot disease. This often affects large mature kauri trees, rotting the heart wood, leaving the giants hollow inside and causing a slow decline in health. Core rot is caused by several different species of native wood-rotting fungi. Physical damage to younger kauri can also allow core rot fungi to enter and infect the inner tissue.
- **Cone disease:** Warm wet summers can give rise to the infection of cones by the *Pestalotiopsis funerea* fungus. This reduces seed viability and can cause cones to drop prematurely.
- **Leaf disease:** Kauri leaves are affected by the fungus *Vizella tunicata* which causes small black spots on top of leaves. Damage is normally superficial and will not cause a major decline in health of the tree. Leaves may also be affected by *Trichopelthea asiatica*, a sooty mould which can live on secretions from insects. This mould covers the leaves in black soot but does not cause any physical damage.

Insect and animal pests

Both native and introduced animal species use kauri trees as a food source. At the seed stage, the ripening cones of kauri are often broken open and eaten by kaka in the forest. Ripe seed that falls to the forest floor may be eaten by the common weta, ground-feeding kakariki, the Australian rosella, mice and rats. This effectively reduces seedling regeneration.

Throughout their lives, the root systems of kauri trees are easily damaged by feral goats, pigs and stock. Such damage can lead directly to loss of health and/or the spread of disease. In order to maximise kauri health, effort should be made to control non-native pests.

Although kauri leaves are leathery and resilient to many pests, they can suffer feeding damage from weevils, caterpillars of kauri leaf rollers, the kauri leaf miner and the bronze beetle. Such insect damage is usually superficial and will not cause a decline in otherwise healthy kauri.



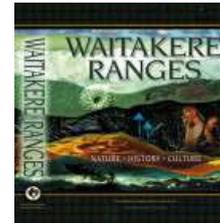
Acknowledgements: Auckland Regional Council: Nick Waipara, Plant Pathologist, Biosecurity; Amanda Peart, Communications Advisor, Biosecurity; Brendan Mackie, Horticulturist/Ranger; Damon Keen, Creative Direction Advisor; ARC Natural Heritage Team; ARC Biosecurity Team. Thanks also to: Ian Barton, Forestry and Environmental Consultant; Ian Horner, Plant Pathologist, Plant and Food Research and John Hogan, Three Streams Reserve.

The booklet “Care for Kauri Guide” is available on request from Stacey Hill at the Auckland Regional Council (stacey.hill@arc.govt.nz or 027 567 4402). It will also be available at the ‘Going West’ book market to be held on Saturday 4 September at the Titirangi War Memorial Hall from 9am-2pm. The electronic version will soon be up on the website www.kauridieback.co.nz available for download.

Your Committee

Committee meetings are held on the
second Wednesday of the month

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