



**Waitakere Ranges
Protection Society Inc**

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news

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Your President's Report



This is our last newsletter for 2011, and I am surprised how fast the year has rushed by. It has been a good year for the Society, with quite a few matters being resolved, and those to be carried forward into next year being reasonably well under control. Your executive committee has worked hard and we are pleased with the progress. It has been good to have Paul Walbran and Nardia Yozin on the committee this year and they have both made valuable contributions to various projects.

We go into Environment Court directed mediation on Plan Changes 35, 36 and 37 this month, and I will be attending together with our legal counsel Douglas Allan and planner James Hook. We are also working with Auckland Council towards resolution by consent order for the subdivision of a large property in the Henderson Valley and another in the lower Oratia Valley.

Last month we made a second submission on the draft Auckland Spatial Plan – the 30-year vision for Auckland, and we await release of the Waitakere Ranges Local Board three-year plan.

We are currently compiling a list of interviewees for our on-going Oral History project, and Anna Fomison will

begin those recorded interviews over summer. Bruce and Trixie Harvey are working on a history of the Society. They have nearly completed a frame-work from the committee agendas and minutes from the past 38 years and when that is complete they will begin delving deeper into the Society's archives and talking to key people who have been involved in our work.

The Society welcomes the decision by Auckland Council to temporarily close some walking tracks in the ranges to halt the spread of Kauri dieback disease. A list of the tracks and a summary of the most recent survey of the disease can be found later in this newsletter and the findings give great cause for alarm. We are most concerned that up to 11% of kauri trees in the ranges are now infected.

An algae bloom in early spring in the Karekare stream proved, after water testing, to be a native species that thrived on low water flow, sunlight and warmer temperatures. The tests also showed that the stream was not polluted from septic tanks. Two flood events in the past weeks have cleared the bloom from the stream.

On behalf of your executive committee I would like to thank you for your support over the past year and wish you all a very happy Christmas and New year and we hope you get to spend some time in the ranges and on the coast over the summer.

*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
Ford and Jackie Peak, Little Huia, October 2008

Track closures – preventing the spread of kauri dieback

A number of tracks within the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park will be closed in an attempt to prevent the spread of kauri dieback disease.

These track closures will be effective from 14 October 2011 and will remain closed until 12 December 2011. This is being treated as a trial and will enable the Council to monitor the impact of visitors on unaffected areas of forested parkland as well as an attempt to reduce the spread of this disease.

The following tracks will be closed:

- Robinson Ridge Track
- Wainamu Bush Track
- Walker Kauri Track
- Summit Track
- Crusher Pipe Track
- Destruction Gully
- La Trobe Track
- Lucy Cranwell Track
- Forbes Track

If you are planning a trip to the Waitakere Ranges, please look for alternative tracks to use or explore, visit the Arataki Visitor Centre or phone 09 817 0077 for advice on an alternative route.

For more information about kauri dieback, also known as *Phytophthora* taxon *Agathis* or PTA, go to www.kauridieback.co.nz. When heading out into our region's kauri forests:

- Make sure shoes, tyres and equipment are clean of dirt before and after visiting kauri forest.

- Clean shoes and any other equipment that comes into contact with soil after every visit, especially if moving between bush areas.
 - Keep to defined park tracks at all times. Any movement of soil around the roots of a tree has the potential to spread the disease.
 - Keep your dog on a leash at all times. Dogs can inadvertently spread the disease if they disturb the soil around the trees.

Track closure – for upgrading Auckland City Walk

The Auckland City Walk will be subject to temporary closures to enable the upgrading of the walkway.

The first track closure took place in the first half of November.

The second track closure will occur on weekdays from 1st to 25th December. No public access will be available from the lower car park at Falls Road across the suspension bridge to the start of the Fence Line Track.

However the following tracks will still be accessible from the upper entrance of the Auckland City Walk during this period:

- Andersons Track
- Fence line Track

If you are planning a trip to the Waitakere Ranges, please look for alternative tracks to use or explore, visit the Arataki Visitor Centre or phone 09 817 0077 for advice on an alternative route.

Report of Kauri Dieback in the Waitakeres

Research into the causative organism of Kauri Dieback (*Phytophthora* taxon *Agathis*) is proceeding and some new information has been assembled. Scientist Dr Nick Waipara and colleagues from the Council explained the latest findings to interested Titirangi residents at a meeting at French Bay Yacht Club on 20 October.

The spores of the organism are of two types, those that move in free water and those that stay in the soil and are moved around by animals or people who move the soil. It seems that the spores that move in water are not so much of a problem in the Waitakeres because the clay soils inhibit their movement. Most of the infection therefore results from the soil spores. This is further shown by the close relationship between sites of disease and the track network, indicating that people movement is a significant factor in spreading the disease. About 65% of diseased trees are near a track. Animal disturbance of the soil, particularly pigs which root around the base of trees, probably accounts for most of the remaining disease incidence. About 11% of kauri in the Waitakeres are

infected. Unfortunately it is still not known how long it takes for the disease to become apparent, but it probably varies according to the general health of the tree and whether it is affected by any other environmental factors such as drainage shifts or root damage.

The Council have closed some tracks to try to minimize use and have installed cleaning stations at the entrances to other tracks. The problem is that many people are not taking any notice of either the track closures or the cleaning stations. **It is important that WRPS members emphasise to their friends and all track walkers that compliance is a necessary part of the effort to prevent spread of the disease.** The track closures are now only until December but they will be reviewed next year. The scientists are going to test the soil in the grates at the entrances to the tracks to see if soil spores of the disease are present to confirm the efficacy of the cleaning procedures, but **if we are serious about keeping our kauri we will keep that cleaning procedure going every time we enter a track.** Raising walkways, or redirecting tracks, so that damage to the delicate roots of the kauri is minimized is also important.

There is no cure for the kauri dieback in the forest but scientists have been testing a cure (Phosphorous Acid) that is used successfully for avocado trees, which are susceptible to a related *Phytophthora* disease. The kauri dieback organism is also killed by this treatment. This is hopeful but it is obvious that it cannot be a cure for a whole forest, as each tree must be individually treated, although it might be useful for individual trees that have become infected in parks or gardens.



Photo: Sandra Jones

Passiflora tetrandra (native passion vine) male flowers, Kitekite Falls car park, 24 November 2006

Weeds – biocontrol news
Tradescantia fluminensis
(wandering Jew/wandering willie)

The great success of the *Ageratina riparia* (mist flower) biocontrol programme which was carried out in the Waitakeres in the early 2000s gives us high hopes for a

similar outcome for a programme underway to control *Tradescantia*.

First release: In late March this year Landcare Research and the Auckland Council released the *Tradescantia* leaf beetle (*Neolema ogloblini*) for the first time in New Zealand, at Mt Smart Stadium. The beetle is native to Brazil and Argentina, and was imported in 2007 by Landcare Research into containment for testing its suitability as a biocontrol agent for *Tradescantia*. Permission to release it in New Zealand was granted by ERMA (the Environmental Risk Management Authority) towards the end of 2008. The results of the first release of the leaf beetle should be known soon when its ability to survive in the winter elements and its impact on the host plant have been assessed. A further 300 adult beetles have since been released in other regions of the North Island.

What to look for: Adult feeding damage is quite noticeable as they tend to chew notches around the edges of leaves and may consume entire leaves. They don't feed on actively growing tips or on the stems. The main damage is done by the larvae which can skeletonise whole leaves sequentially along a stem and, if several are feeding in the same area, the damage will be obvious. Adults are dark metallic bronze in colour with slight iridescence. Adults may be seen feeding or resting on the upper leaves during the warmer months but tend to fall off or fly away when disturbed. The larvae are pale greyish-brown but they accumulate moulted skins and excrement which they hold as a protective covering over their backs. Young larvae are gregarious and may be seen in packs forming feeding fronts; older larvae feed individually. The pupal cocoons are extremely unusual and are often visible on damaged foliage. They are white, star-shaped and resemble styrofoam in texture and appearance.

Effects on our native flora and fauna: Landcare Research considers the beetle to be highly host-specific and says it is highly unlikely that any plant other than *Tradescantia* will be attacked. Rigorous tests were undertaken to ensure that the beetle would not attack other plants, did not contain any unwanted parasites, or have any unwanted effects whatsoever on the native flora and fauna.

Further agents of control: ERMA has recently given permission for the release of two further host-specific *Tradescantia* agents that Landcare Research has been studying. The rearing process has begun with the aim of releasing these two beetles later this summer: the tip-feeding beetle (*Neolema abbreviata*) and the stem-boring beetle (*Lema basicostata*). Meanwhile work is continuing in Brazil on a fourth promising agent, the yellow leaf spot fungus (*Kordyana* sp.).

How to collect some of the beetles for release elsewhere Refer to the *Tradescantia* Leaf Beetle information sheet in Landcare Research's "The Biological Control of Weeds Book" August 2011. Available on line at http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biocons/weeds/book/documents/Tradescantia_Leaf_Beetle.pdf

Your Committee

Committee meetings are held monthly, from February to November, on the first Tuesday of the month over summer

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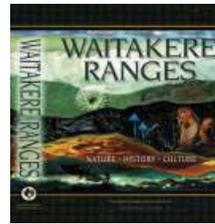
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