



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

A rather wet and cold winter has not been so conducive to walking in the ranges but on those days where the sky clears and the sun comes out one can almost feel that spring is in the air, and it is wonderful to see the early flowering of many native shrubs like koromiko and to see buds beginning to form on kowhai and no doubt clematis will be appearing soon in the tree tops.

The Society's new committee has made a great start to the year. We received a grant of \$10,000 from the North Foundation (previously ASB Community Trust) to fund our Heritage Area Coordinator, and have held interviews for this position. We are pleased to announce that Katherine Russell is our new coordinator. Katherine lives in Swanson, has a Masters degree in Geography and has worked as a policy adviser for the Ministry of Transport for the past five years. Her studies include the Resource Management Act, and international development which includes training in resource consent applications, monitoring and evaluation.

We have expanded our merchandise selection with new mugs and T-shirts, and they are shown at the end of this newsletter, and available for purchase from our website. Anna Fomison has completed the latest round of oral history interviews and has lodged them with the Auckland and Turnbull Libraries. We hope to have some audio excerpts from them available on our website soon.

Our most important work this year is the Proposed Auckland Unity Plan hearings and a summary of these is included in this newsletter. The complexity of this 30-year plan is daunting, so we are very pleased to have excellent representation from legal counsel Douglas Allan and planner James Hook, whose expert submissions and evidence ensures that we have a strong input. The Society is one of very few organisations to have the resources to be able to play a prominent part in these proceedings. Hearings will go on into 2016.

The Waitakere Ranges Local Board published a Strategic Weed Management Plan in June written by Jack Craw. It is by far the most comprehensive survey to date, and identifies the most important weed threats in the ranges

and gives in a number of recommendations to control these weeds. The report can be downloaded from <http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/AboutCouncil/representativesbodies/LocalBoards/WaitakereRangeslocalboard/Documents/waitakererangesstrategicweedmanagementplan.pdf>

The water quality of the steams and lagoons on the west coast has been degrading for many years, and EcoMatters Environment Trust has been commissioned by Auckland Council to undertake a survey of the freshwater lagoons and identify the issues that are leading to the pollution. Although the lagoons look as though they are safe places for our children to swim in compared to the ruggedness of the open coast, water quality testing has shown that they frequently pose a health risk. Poor water quality has been linked to a number of possible sources, but water quality monitoring information suggests much contaminant input is of human origin, and in particular from malfunctioning septic tanks and long drops. The purpose of this project is therefore to improve water quality in the West Coast lagoons by reducing contaminant input from septic tanks and long drops. "Love our Lagoons", the report on their findings can be downloaded at:

www.ecomatters.org.nz/projects/loveourlagoons/

If you are interested in a nationwide report on the state of New Zealand's freshwaters, I recommend you read Dr. Mike Joy's E-book "Squandered, the degradation of New Zealand's freshwaters".

Mike writes "In this book I show how in the last few decades environmental protection was deregulated, allowing a few to profit by polluting on a massive scale, and how that has led to the destruction we see today. I also show how this reality is denied and covered-up so that relatively few are aware of the full extent of the damage."

The book can be downloaded from <https://freshwaternz.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/squandered.pdf>

*John Edgar
President*

Heritage Area Co-ordinator – Katherine Russell



Katherine Russell has joined the WRPS as the new Heritage Area Coordinator. Katherine and her husband were drawn to the Waitakeres a few years ago as the location to buy their first home because of the unique environmental and cultural history, along with the wonderful community feeling in Swanson. Katherine is excited to help protect and enrich the ranges to ensure that they are protected for many generations to come.

Originally from rural North Canterbury, Katherine studied at the University of Canterbury and has a Masters of Science with First Class honours in Geography. Her focus was on urban geography, particularly the rural-urban fringe, planning and resource management, and transport. Since moving to Auckland in 2010, Katherine has worked as a policy adviser at the Ministry of Transport, including a secondment to the OECD in Paris, France. She has also recently obtained a postgraduate diploma in International Development, with a focus on poverty alleviation, from Massey University.

Living in the Waitakere foothills, Katherine assists her husband with his ecology research including restoring and protecting their own 2 acres, spends time on crafts and music, and hopes to make an ongoing contribution to the local community.

Weed Seminar /Workshop (WR Conservation Network)

Most environmentally conscious people recognise that Auckland generally and the Waitakere Ranges in particular have a problem with plant pests. The Ranges Local Board commissioned a strategy from Jack Craw (retired head of Biosecurity at Auckland Council) to help them understand the best ways in which they can tackle the weed problem in their area, which includes the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. The Strategy was finished in April and presented to a Stakeholders Group in May. The Strategy contains many suggestions that are concerned with advocating for more weed control from various other branches of Auckland Council such as Auckland Transport, Regional Parks, Local Parks and Watercare. However, the problem of weeds infesting and

emanating from private property remains, and the Local Board is anxious to partner with environmental groups to help it in the battle to control pest plants in the Heritage Area.

The Waitakere Ranges Conservation Network held a weed seminar/workshop on July 26 at Arataki Centre with the aim of showing that weeds are “doable” and there are some strategies which groups can employ to maximise their impact. About 30 people attended, among them representatives of working groups, already trying to control weeds in their areas. The seminar opened with Saffron Toms, Local Board member, explaining the weed strategy recommendations. She explained that although the Waitakere Ranges Local Board has extra responsibilities, because of the Heritage Area, this is not recognised with extra funding from Auckland Council, as funding levels are decided by population low in the Ranges area, rather than by need. She also said that she could not see this anomaly being addressed soon, and so the Board needed the help of environmental organisations. The report by Jack Craw identified the most important areas to protect, and the species of weed that posed the greatest threat.

The second speaker was Chris Ferkins from the Gecko Trust. Chris is well known as a weed warrior in the Waitakere Ranges and has led various successful projects such as Twin Streams and the Green Network in previous years. He began by identifying the ‘environmental weeds’, the dangerous ones which have the potential to change a whole ecosystem, by blocking restoration. He outlined various strategies such as tackling the outlier populations of weeds, before they spread, and being careful about maintaining the edge of a forest block, to prevent weed seeds blowing into the interior. In some cases it may be better to drill and poison large exotic trees on forest edges, so that they die slowly while native plantings are becoming established. Problems will persist in disturbed or high light areas, such as roadsides and exposed sites, but planting the right species of natives can eventually win the battle, although we need to be persistent. Chris advocated helping nature strategies, where ideally nature does 95% of the work of restoration, leaving only 5% for the weed warriors to do. An interactive session followed with participants grouped in tables representing the four corners of the Waitakere Ranges. Social cohesion among members of groups is also most important.

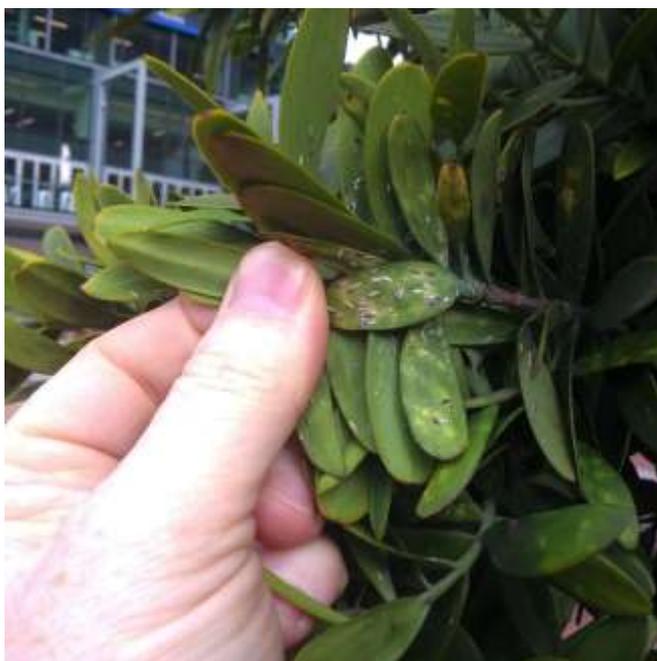
Winding up the workshop, we heard summaries from Christine Mitchell and Wayne Mackenzie, and Saffron Toms announced that the Local Board had negotiated with the owner/manager of the supermarket in Titirangi to allow weeding on the property, and an offer of drinks and food for weeders. As the ginger infestation around the supermarket carpark at Titirangi has long been an eyesore, this was greeted with enthusiasm by the participants. A working bee is planned for the Spring. Efforts are also underway at Huia and Piha, two areas identified as weed hotspots. Let’s hope that weeding groups will be encouraged and energised to further efforts by the weed strategy and the seminar/workshop.

Trixie Harvey

Kauri Scale Insect damage

Stephen Thorpe, a contract entomologist working from The University of Auckland, Tamaki Campus, noted a potentially new scale affecting planted kauri (*Agathis australis*) trees at Britomart Square, Auckland Central. The scale, possibly a species of *Leucaspis*, was first collected in late 2014 by SCION staff examining kauri plantings but for some reason its significance seems to have gone unnoticed until earlier this week when Thorpe independently noted the scale at Britomart Square. Since then there have been five more discoveries of the scale made in inner and western Auckland - so far only on planted trees.

Please keep your eye out for it and notify MPI should you see it.



Agathis australis (kauri) scale damage, Britomart Square, 14 July 2015. Photo: Peter J. de Lange

Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan Hearings: summary of all current topics

The Society is involved in a wide range of hearings related to the Waitakere Ranges. For more information please email wrps@waitakereranges.org.nz

Topic 016 – Changes to the RUB 1

A pre-hearing meeting is scheduled for 4 September 2015. Hearing dates have been added on 12-14 and 19-21 January 2016.

Topic 019 – Natural Features, Landscape and Character

WRPS has numerous of further submissions.
Hearing: 26-28 July

Topic 020 Viewshafts

WRPS had 1 submission and 27 further submissions.
Hearings completed: 29 and 30 June

Topic 023 – SEA's

WRPS has 4 primary submissions and a range of further submissions.

Hearings: 6,7 and 10 August

Topic 025 – Trees

WRPS has 2 primary submissions and a range of further submissions.

Hearings: 13-14 August

Topic 041 – Bethell's Quarry

Re: the rehabilitation of the Quarry.

Hearing Completed: 19-22 May

Topic 047 – Lakes, Rivers and Streams

WRPS has 14 further submissions

Hearing Completed: 6-7 and 15-17 July

Topic 056 and 057 – Rural Objectives and Policies and Rural Activity Controls

WRPS has five primary submissions and nine Further Submissions on Topic 056

WRPS has 13 Further Submissions on Topic 057

Hearing Completed: 22-24 and 26 June

Topic 064 - Subdivision

WRPS has two primary submissions on Topic 064, which support retention of the objectives and policies that protect natural features and SEA's from Subdivision

Hearing: 2-3 November

Topic 075 – Waitakere Ranges

Following completion of the Workshop process the following dates have been scheduled.

Mediation: 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 September

Hearing: 5 and 6 November

Topic 059 Residential objectives and policies

WRPS has two primary submissions, supporting limited or no growth in the Rural and Coastal Settlement Zone, and requesting an amendment to a Zone objective to clarify this position.

Hearing: 15-16, 18-19, 22-25 February 2016:

Topic 081 - Topics 066, 068, 069, 071, 072 and 073 have been joined together and will be known as topic 081

Hearing: 3 March to 29 April 2016

Winter Walking Requires Extra Care for Kauri

Winter is upon us and while it seems less like tramping weather now, our forests still offer shelter from the elements if you're brave enough to venture forth. It's also a special time of year for fungi, and fruit, so there are still plenty of subjects of botanical interest, and there's no risk of over-heating!

Tracks are extra muddy with winter rain and that means more risk of spreading kauri dieback disease, so kauri advocates ask walkers to please remember to scrub all mud from shoes and wash them before and after visiting kauri areas to stop the spread of disease. Auckland Council's Kauri Dieback Community Co-ordinator for the

Waitakere Ranges, Christine Rose, says “Because kauri dieback disease is spread on soil, even a small amount of dirt on shoes, or even dogs’ paws, can transmit the disease from sick trees to healthy kauri”. “When it comes to kauri dieback, cleanliness is next to godliness”. “None of us want to be unwitting vectors of this disease that’s lethal to kauri, and by keeping our footwear and gear clean, we can all play a part in preventing its spread while also enjoying the splendour of the Waitakere Ranges and their magnificent forests and trees”.

“Regular walkers will have seen the boot cleaning stations at track entrances, exits and some junctions in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park, with a harmless disinfectant, trigene to help stop the spread of kauri dieback disease. It’s important to use these spray stations whenever you find them. To stop the spread of the disease requires us all to scrub then spray our shoes, when going in or out of the forest and every time we see a spray station along the track”. “Significant trees in the Waitakeres are afflicted with the disease, and it’s our united task to ensure we prevent its spread”.

“Important trees and areas of kauri remain uninfected as well, and in some cases, these areas have been protected through track closure. To keep kauri standing in these areas requires us all to respect these protection areas and avoid closed routes”.

“Some of our Waitakere Ranges communities are contiguous with regional parkland, which makes kauri protection even more important. We don’t want to spread kauri dieback disease from infected private land to healthy parkland, or vice versa. Both Laingholm and Karekare for example, have healthy kauri in ‘Protection Areas’ where tracks have been closed to prevent the spread of the disease”. Mrs Rose says “we encourage people to keep out of these protection areas, as the risk of disease spread to healthy kauri is too high”. “We’ll be talking with people in these communities about kauri dieback disease and the Protection Areas themselves in coming months”.

“The Waitakere Ranges Local Board would also like to see a network of kauri advocates, keeping an eye on and maintaining boot cleaning stations, speaking to other recreational users, acting as watchdogs for our forest”, says Mrs Rose. “We’re looking for people with an interest in preserving kauri in the Waitakere Ranges to be part of a volunteer ‘army’, helping to keep kauri standing”. “Anyone with an interest in being part of the solution to kauri dieback spread is welcome to contact us. We’ve already got the making of a great team, with lots of interest particularly in places like Karekare that have both significant healthy, and diseased kauri, and lots of visitor pressure”.

Karekare local and President of the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, John Edgar, says he avoids visiting significant kauri on his property for fear of introducing the disease. He says “you don’t have to go up to a kauri and hug it, to show you love it. In fact, the best way to care for the healthy trees on my land, is to leave them alone, to avoid walking on or near the roots, and to admire them from afar”.

Mrs Rose says “it’s essential to stick to tracks, keep dogs

on leash, stay off kauri roots, and be extra careful not to transmit mud or soil on your footwear or equipment. There’s no cure for kauri dieback so we all have to help keep kauri standing by preventing the spread of the disease”.

The Auckland kauri dieback programme run by the council offers tree inspections if you’re concerned a kauri on your property might have the disease, and the team is always willing to offer advice or resources to help protect kauri. They’d also like to hear from anyone interested in being a kauri ambassador as part of a kauri advocates network. Call 0800 NZ KAURI or email Christine at Christine.rose@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz to discuss further.

Christine Rose



Update on the control of the water fern *Salvinia* - a pest water weed in Te Henga wetland

On 2nd July, as part of the ongoing program by MPI to eradicate *Salvinia molesta* from the Te Henga wetlands, the wetlands were treated, using a helicopter, with Reglone (active ingredient 20% diquat) at 30 litres per hectare. At this rate, diquat will be diluted to approximately 1 part per million (ppm) in 0.5 m of water.

As part of this programme, MPI undertook monitoring of diquat levels in the waterbody. The analysis was carried out by an independent Hill Laboratories. Commencing on the morning of 2 July, samples were taken from six locations in the wetlands at set intervals; 1 hour pre-treatment, and 1 hour, 24 hours and 48 hours after treatment. No diquat was detected in any pre-treatment samples – this was expected as the last treatment occurred on 22 April 2015. At all sample locations, diquat was detected during the course of the sampling. As expected, the highest diquat readings were 1 hour post-treatment and at sites within the treatment zone. The highest 1 hour post-treatment reading was 0.775 ppm. Within 24 hours, the diquat level had dropped to 0.113 ppm. At all sample sites, 48 hours after treatment, diquat levels were very low or not detected at all. Over the course of time, levels would be expected to drop further.

The next steps involve ground based treatment under overhanging vegetation inaccessible to helicopter based treatment is scheduled to occur week commencing 20 July 2015. This will take place with expert advice on site when treatment occurs to ensure that minimum amounts of treatment are required. Following that, weather permitting a thorough ground survey in combination with a drone survey using NIR (near infra-red) imagery will be done to access the effectiveness of treatment and remaining areas with plants. As with previous operations, as a precaution, signs will be put up to remind people to keep out of the water for 24 hours post-treatment.

For further information on the eradication program
<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/files/pests/salvinia/2014-salvinia-fact-sheet.pdf>
<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/files/pests/salvinia/salvinia-aerial-treatment-plan-april-2015.pdf>

Waitakere Ranges “Halo” project

The Waitakere Ranges Halo Project is for everyone living in the beautiful Waitakere Ranges who wishes to learn about or needs assistance with pest possum, rat, mouse, stoat, ferret, weasel and wasp control on their patch by offering free advice and very affordable supplies via the project’s online shop at www.waitakererangeshalo.org.nz.

The project aims to bring wildlife and people together, with conservation happening in everyone’s backyard.

In May 2013, when Duncan the kokako appeared in Glendowie after being missing for two years from the Ark in the Park, he had travelled a long way for a bird that hops like a squirrel up a tree to glide to the next. He was found to be having a lovely time eating olives in the leafy suburbs of East Auckland. Goodness knows how many backyards Duncan passed through and how many other endangered birds try their luck outside the bounds of Ark in the Park’s predator controlled sanctuary. I have been setting traps and filling bait stations for years hoping that one day a kokako pair may make a nest near my home. Imagine the return of kiwi to the Ranges!

Please make the Waitakere Ranges Halo Project your project and start hoping too!

Jane Ferguson

Operations Director, Wildlife Conservation Trust of NZ

Contact: jane@waitakererangeshalo.org.nz

WRPS Merchandise

As you may or not know 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. The following images offer a sneak peak into what is available on our website.



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



All photos of merchandise supplied by Russell Scott.

For a full listing of all available products please also refer to the WRPS’ online shop at 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.

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