



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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Environment and Conservation Election Special

Thursday 29th September 7.30 – 9 pm
Ceramco Park Community Hall,
120 Glendale Road, Glen Eden

Meet the local body election candidates at our Conservation Election Special!

Hear your candidates for the Waitakere and Whau Wards and Waitakere Ranges, Henderson-Massey and Whau local boards answer pre-set questions on environmental issues of concern to West Aucklanders. Your own burning questions for the candidates are welcome after the break. Coffee and tea provided, as is ample free parking. All welcome, koha to cover costs

Hosted by Waitakere Forest & Bird, Waitakere Ranges Protection Society and Waitakere Ranges Conservation Network

For more information contact Robert Woolf email: Waitakere.Branch@forestandbird.org.nz

Of greatest concern to the Society is Council's decision to agree with the IHP that subdivision in the Waitakere Ranges that currently has Prohibited Activity status should be replaced by Non-Complying status. The Society successfully obtained Prohibited Activity status in some of the Waitakere Ranges zones in 2003, and this decision of Council will allow property owners to apply for more subdivision than is permitted which means that each application will need to be contested, and consequently will place greater demands on our planners and legal counsel. Another matter that is of concern is that councillors have agreed with the IHP that some properties that are currently within the Heritage Area and outside the Rural Urban Boundary (RUB) can be re-zoned and placed inside the RUB providing for greater subdivision and development. Council have also voted to relax the rule around the RUB allowing developers to apply to move the boundary through a private plan change. Currently only the Council or the Minister for the Environment can move the boundary. The Society is reviewing these decisions and assessing our options for appeal.

On a more positive note, we are grateful to The Trusts Community Foundation for a grant of \$10,500 to fund our Heritage Area Coordinator, Katherine Russell, allowing her to continue her research and writing of submissions for the Society.

The Society welcomes the government's announcement of a predator free New Zealand by 2050. Already this initiative has the support of many individuals, environmental and conservation groups and scientists. With adequate government, corporate and philanthropic funding for research and implementation this will lead to new predator control techniques and place New Zealand at the forefront of island conservation worldwide.

*John Edgar
President*

The wintry weather has not stopped the forest from thriving and I noticed recently some signs of new growth appearing on the native trees around my Karekare home. And there are of course, all those wonderful shrubs that love to flower in the winter. That's the special thing about walking in a forest – there is always something wonderful to enjoy.

After four years of work, the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan comes to an end, with Councillors currently debating the recommendations of the Independent Hearings Panel (IHP). Thousands of pages of documents, and thousands of hours of hearings have culminated in what might seem to be a rushed process giving the councillors only one week to make the final decisions that will guide Auckland over the next 30 years.

Heritage Area Co-ordinator Report

While it has been a quieter few months, we have been continuing to monitor key issues and engage and submit on activities that have an impact on the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area.

It was great to see that the 2016/17 Annual Plan has included upgrading wastewater systems in the Retrofit Your Home scheme. The Waitakere Ranges Local Board is also continuing its subsidy for upgrading systems in the lagoon catchments with applications due by November. In addition, the Local Board has allocated a significant portion of its budget to continuing the excellent work on climbing asparagus and other weed control, as well as initiating a marine research project that will report back in 2017.

We have also been working with Friends of Regional Parks on their draft *Auckland Regional Parks 50-Year Vision and Values Plan* and providing feedback to ensure the values and visions allow for the primary goal of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park to focus on conservation. Working with the Tree Council and other parties, we are also pursuing the ongoing issue of funding for Kauri dieback disease and are currently awaiting a response from the Ministry of Primary Industries on an Official Information Act request.

Along with a number of other submitters, we also provided feedback on the proposed Maui dolphin signs for Te Henga, supporting the key messages of the signs but suggesting they are placed in an area to get the most attention from beach visitors. Research suggests that recreational users of the beach including swimmers can provide excellent sightings data that help with our understanding about these rare dolphins.

We also recently received an update on the *Huia Water Treatment Plant*. We had been expecting this to progress to a short-list in the last few months, but Watercare has advised that they are continuing the assessment process and exploring options and will be in touch later in the year following local body elections on next steps.



Introduced Metrosideros (Pohutukawa) forest in Terceira, Azores, Portugal.

Finally, I have recently attended the Island Biology conference in Angra de Heroísmo, Azores. While it was interesting learning about a lot of island issues and research going on around the world, it was a little amusing travelling around the island of Terceira as one of the main ornamental trees in the towns is the pohutukawa; plus there were frequent instances of harakeke flax and

cabbage trees. Quite strange to think our native plants are considered invasive on this island and will need to be addressed, along with some of the weeds we are more familiar with such as ginger, agapanthus and hydrangeas.

Katherine Russell

Māui Dolphin

The Department of Conservation is about to install a new sign at Bethells – Te Henga, featuring local Maui dolphins. After some initial community discussions, it's been decided that the sign will go on the toilet block, a high profile spot, with a wide audience, avoiding a proliferation of free standing signs.

The discussions around the sign brought its purpose into focus. Such signs were supported by environmental groups because Maui (and Hector's dolphins) are found off shore here, and promoting awareness of Maui dolphins has got to be a good thing. The sign shows the distinctive rounded fin of the dolphins, where they're found, and their critical conservation status. All good stuff. There's also a number listed where you can report Maui sightings (0800 DOC HOT).

What you'll find from land and sea based sightings of Maui dolphins is a rich and beautiful story of human and dolphin interactions. Because Maui are an inshore species, despite their low numbers, encounters with humans are relatively common. People report Maui dolphins coming up to their boats and playing around. Board riders have intimate encounters with even better surfers than they. Swimmers, and even walkers, report seeing the little rounded fin and stubby, black, grey and white bundle of innocent joy in our west coast waters.



Maui dolphin

Every one of these encounters is a blessing, given there are only around 55 Maui dolphins left. If you've come close to one, you are witnessing something special in the

world. Sighting reports seem to have increased as awareness has grown through recent years. But a great deal of their habitat is unprotected, and observer coverage is scarce. Trawl nets in particular probably kill three or four Maui dolphins a year, and many more Hector's and other species too.

DOC's sign at Bethells – Te Henga, is a welcome one. And the sightings and incident databases recording sightings of dolphins, alive, and dead, are well worth looking at both for the quality of the experiences and their quantity and spread. And it's worth keeping your eye on the sea, from land or boat, for the chance of encountering a little local dolphin. But let's not forget, they need better protection too.

Christine Rose

Improving Waitākere Seabirds

Seabirds are important components of our indigenous ecosystems, both as top predators and ecosystem engineers. They act as a link between marine and terrestrial environments, bringing marine nutrients to the land areas they breed on. Penguins (Figure 1A) and the tube-nosed petrels, such as grey-faced petrel (*ōi*) which are found in the Waitākeres (see the November 2015 newsletter), improve soils as they dig and maintain their burrows where they nest (Figure 1B). Before humans arrived there wouldn't have been many coastal forest areas in New Zealand where there wasn't a loud roar of vocalising seabirds heard after sunset. These days the forests are relatively quiet at night except on predator free off shore islands where the evening chorus of seabirds can be deafening.



Figure 1: *Little penguin (kororā) & Grey-faced petrel (ōi) burrow at Bethells.*

An underground nest would have provided a great adaptive advantage in the southern areas of the world, protecting offspring from the elements and allowing seabirds to breed in the wild south and thus benefit from the copious marine resources in these areas. In fact, New Zealand is well known as the seabird capital of the world, with its impressive diversity of seabirds; 25% of the world population breed here. Burrows may have helped seabirds in the past, but this may have also contributed to their relatively recent demise in New Zealand. When humans arrived here, petrels were easy targets in their burrows for both the introduced pest animals (rats, mustelids, cats, dogs) as well as by humans seeking a meal themselves. Today seabirds are one of the most threatened groups of

birds. Twenty-one of the 27 seabirds breeding in Auckland are 'at risk' or 'threatened' with extinction. But it's not all doom and gloom, with a surge of conservation effort taking place of late to help improve the status of our seabirds. A wonderful example is the discovery of the New Zealand storm petrel's breeding colony on Hauturu (Little Barrier Island) in the Hauraki Gulf by a huge team of keen seabirders, led by Matt Rayner (Auckland Museum) and Chris Gaskin, and hence a hopeful path for its recovery.

Auckland Council (AC) has also been joining these aspirations to bring back seabirds, with a number of seabird programmes forming over the last few years throughout the region. Here we discuss a few recent seabird projects in the Waitākere area.

Muriwai to Bethells Seabird Survey

This seabird survey began earlier this year, when surveys were conducted to look for suitable seabird breeding habitat along this coastline, which have been followed up using Rua (Figure 2), a trained seabird dog, to locate any burrows. The focus is on the winter breeding grey-faced petrel and little penguin, as they are the most likely species able to survive on the mainland. Thus far, a number of burrows have been located at the Bethells and Muriwai ends of the track, a likely testament to the community groups and Parks staff working hard to control pests in these areas. The results of this survey will be written up later this year and should help us decide where best to continue pest management activities in this area.



Figure 2: *Rua, the expert seabird nest locator.*

Muriwai Gannet Monitoring

This Muriwai Environmental Action Community Trust (MEACT) and AC project is in its 6th year, and sets out to monitor the breeding success of the Muriwai gannet colony. Over a 100 nests are being monitored weekly by Muriwai community members throughout the breeding season to identify how many chicks are being fledged each season, and give us a better understanding of the timing of the breeding cycle at this colony (Figure 3). The plan is to do a comprehensive report on its findings after year 7 (in 2018).



Figure 3: Local Muriwai resident Phil collecting gannet breeding data at the Muriwai colony.

Grey-faced Petrel in the Waitākere Ranges

BSc(hons) student Lea Stolpmann is working with supervisors James Russell (University of Auckland) and T.L. (the author) on improving our knowledge of Grey-faced petrel throughout the Waitākeres. Species distribution models of the birds will be developed using a mixture of available environmental data as well as via ground surveys. This will help better predict and locate unknown grey-faced petrel colonies. Lea will also be mapping pest control activities, as well as looking at how pest animals are interacting with the birds using video cameras to capture pest events.

Todd Landers

For information on any of the above projects, please contact the author:
todd.landlers@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Todd is Auckland Council’s seabird expert, working on a variety of seabird research and monitoring projects in Auckland, and also helps with a variety of other animal ecological work (e.g. Terrestrial Biodiversity Monitoring Programme).

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

The following images offer a sneak peak into what is available on our website.

Thank you for your continued support.



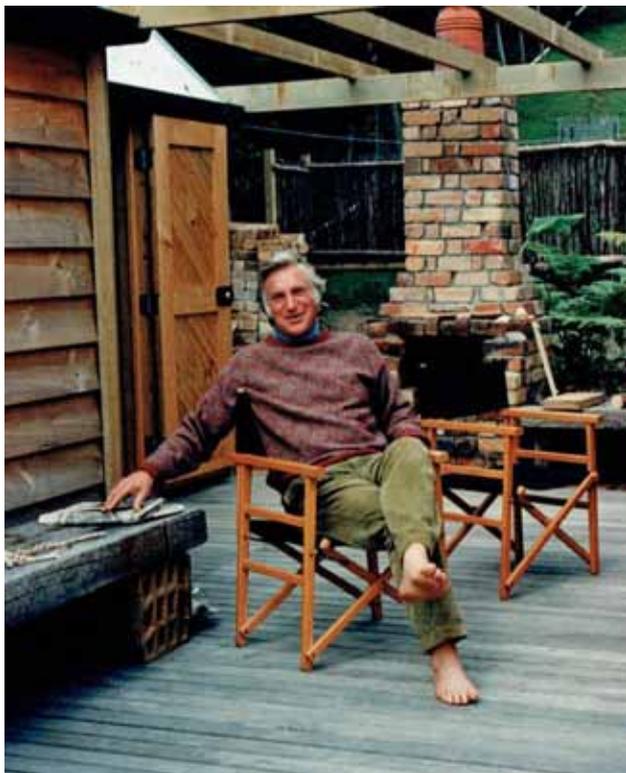
WRPS mugs are hand painted and available via the website for \$35.00 (includes P & P).



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.



Harry Turbott

1930 – 2016

Harry was not just a landscape architect. He was the New Zealand landscape architect. He showed us the way. His architecture embraced the landscape and caressed it with humility and love. If you called in to visit his house in Karekare he would always insist that before korero you should take a long walk along the beach, or through the bush. It was a necessary preparation. Only when you had felt the West Coast salt in your hair could you catch the flavour of hot soup, or feel the warmth of an open fire. Shelter for Harry was nothing more than a pause on a journey.

Tiriwa, with powerful incantations, lifted Rangitoto, the mountain that blocked the view to the south from Te Ahuahu to the entrance of the Manukau, onto his shoulders. He strode across the Waitakeres and walked out across the Waitemata. When the cold water hit his loins he dropped his burden, and that is where you find Rangitoto today. Harry's Arataki Visitors Centre is but a pause on Tiriwa's journey. If you do not know the story you cannot understand the architecture.

Great architecture may not be a building. As you look south from Arataki you can still experience the changing moods of the Manukau landscape. That land came close to being killed by dead, commodified architecture. Harry worked with the WRPS to protect the magical light. Today it is enjoyed by all, as are Harry's gentle interventions in so many of our National Parks. Mimiwhangata was another astonishing coup in convincing developers that a resort would come between people and their land.

Becoming one with the landscape, rather than just looking at it, led to Harry's involvement with vernacular cultures and local people. Restoring the Para-o-Tane Palace in Rarotonga was concerned with recovering the mana and traditions of a family, rather than controlling the lives of others through architecture. In Fiji he always felt the locals knew more than he could ever know.

In the same way his long teaching career was noted for the humility with which he introduced students to the passion of those who loved the natural world of fish or insects. Harry has left us some 800 projects.

Today we would describe Harry as "the sustainable man". He left the world very much richer than he found it.

Tony Watkins

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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Committee meetings are held monthly, from February to November, on the second Wednesday of the month.



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