

# KAPITI-MANA

## Forest and Bird Society

### Next Club Meeting

April Issue 2018

“Hidden treasure - what we found under the full moon in the Wharemauku stream at Kaitawa Reserve”.

Dr. Jean Fleming

7.30pm Wednesday 25th April 2018

Library Meeting Room,  
Iver Trask Place, Paraparaumu.

#### In this issue

- Out and about
- AGM Notice
- Bell Birds
- Ocean Food Chains
- Godwits on the move
- Short-tailed Bats on Kapiti Island.

**Members and non-members welcome**

### Chairman's Report

Dear Members,

I am finding it hard to believe April is upon us, but then I have been very busy. Our Branch brochure is now available at “I” sites in Waikanae, Paraparaumu and Porirua. If you would like a few to give to friends or others email me your address and I'll mail some to you.

As part of our plans to develop an Outdoor Classroom in the Kaitawa Reserve at Paraparaumu we have had specialists survey life in the Wharemauku Stream and the trees, creepers and ferns for insects, moths and butterflies. In both cases the results have been spectacular. This has been attributed to the very successful riparian planting along the stream and equally successful restoration of the reserve. A number of those who visited during Parks Week confessed to having been “Blown away” by the experience.

In terms of the Outdoor Classroom our plans are now well advanced, and we will soon be seeking quotes for the design and manufacture of informative panels covering the Reserve's history and what lives there after twenty or so years of restoration effort i.e. birds, insects, life in the stream, trees, vines, ferns, wetlands and pests and weeds. We are hoping to be able to have a formal opening of the “Classroom” later in the year. In the meantime, we will be working with a range of educational specialists and several schools to develop “teacher guides” for each school year group that we hope will make use of this wonderful outdoor learning environment on their doorstep.

You may wish to note we will soon be announcing details for a weekday guided trip to Wilton Otari Bush Native Botanic Garden and Forest Reserve and a weekend trip including Bushy Park and Rotokare Lake and Wildlife Sanctuary (Near Eltham).

On a less, optimistic note. On 22 March I emailed you to let you know I will be standing down as your Branch Chair at our May Annual General Meeting due to health issues. In this email I pointed out that we must find a new Chair and have this person elected at the AGM if the current committee is to be carry on. I pointed out that no one on the current committee no one is able to take on the role. I also noted that the new Chair can be assured of an elevated level of secretarial and other support from all committee members, and this includes myself, as I wish to stay on the committee. I closed my plea “In hope and anticipation.”

With hope for the future of the branch.

Alan Froggatt

Chair

Kapiti Mana Branch of Forest and Bird

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# Out and About

**Homes for skinks** the local conservation group, Nga Uruora, is inviting the community to come and help build rock piles beside the Paekakariki Escarpment Track to help create habitat for skinks and geckos. Paul Callister leading the project says the volunteers have a good chance of seeing at least 2 of the 4 species of lizards, Northern grass skinks and Raukawa geckos. Copper skinks and Brown skinks are also there but difficult to find. There are over 100 species of lizards in New Zealand and 85% of them are at risk or threatened due to habitat loss or predation. A groups of geckos on Mana Island have been fitted with tiny backpacks so that researchers can find out how far they move when transferred to new homes. Offshore, pest free islands like Mana provide safe habitats for them as their natural habitats is reduced by urban development, and they are preyed upon by rats and cats.



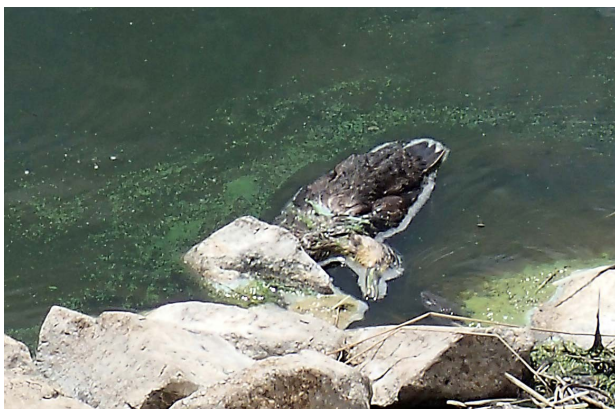
Photos and note sent in by Tony Ward



During the past few weeks we have been entertained from time to time by an adult and young falcon overhead going through the lessons about 'finding your own food'. A neighbour took these photos of the Young falcon investigating a hedgehog who was not at all interested in the game.

## Hundreds of dead ducks found at Pharazyn Reserve, Waikanae.

Avian Botulism is thought to be responsible for the deaths KCDC Parks and Recreation manager Alison Law said. The KCDC is working with local groups to collect sick and dead birds as the disease is spread through the carcasses and could make other animals sick if they were eaten. Avian Botulism is caused by a bacterium that lives in rotting vegetation. Affected birds show signs of paralysis and are unable to fly, and have drooping heads. Most outbreaks of avian botulism occur during the summer when there is less oxygen in the water due rapid evaporation. In January 2 swans were found dead on the Waikanae River and since then we have had hot weather. Other cases, ducks, shags, gulls, were found at Waimatu Lagoon. KCDC have plans to cull large numbers of feral domestic geese and relocate them.



# KAPITI-MANA Forest and Bird

## NOTICE OF 2018 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 2018 Annual General Meeting of the Kapiti Mana Branch of Forest and Bird will be held in the Presbyterian Church Hall, 43 Ngaio Road, Waikanae at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 23 May 2018 prior to guest speaker address and supper.

### Agenda

Chairman's Report.  
Matters Arising.  
Income and Expenditure Statement and  
Balance Sheet for the fiscal year ending 28 February 2018.  
Election of Officers.  
Any other business.

The relevant papers will be emailed to members ten days before the event.  
Limited hard copies will be available at the event.

Any member wishing to add an Agenda Item is asked to so advise Irene Thomas, the Branch Secretary, of this by telephone on 04 2936490 or email [Thomasi@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Thomasi@xtra.co.nz).

## Invading ants on the march

Armies of aggressive ants have invaded the Kapiti Coast killing birds and biting people. The suburb is under attack from millions of ants who had spilled into houses and cars. The honey-coloured argentine ants measure 2-3 mm long and form large nests which can expand to super colonies. They travel in large distinctive trails, often 4 or 5 across and will travel over an object, rather than around it. Unlike other ant species they do not give off an odour when crushed. If you have a colony that matches the description, call KCDC or the Ministry for Primary Industries.

Argentine Ants established themselves in Auckland in 1990 and are considered to pose a biosecurity and human health risk. When these ants create super colonies they co-operate to find food and defend their territory. There have been reports of them eating trapped lizards that are skeletonised in hours. Unlike other ants Argentine ants do not run away when disturbed. If you think you have killed off one nest it may be only a part of the colony and is soon re-inhabited. It is advisable to call in the Experts to eradicate the ants so that they can use the most effective products available.





# BELL BIRDS

Item and Photograph provided by Alan Froggatt



The Bellbird is only found in New Zealand and on New Zealand's offshore islands. It's also known as korimako, makomako, mockie and New Zealand Bellbird. Male and female birds often visit our garden.

It is the most widespread and familiar honeyeater in the South Island and is common over much of the North Island. Although they have a brush-like tongue which is used to reach deeply into flowers to reach nectar they also feed on fruits and insects.

As they feed on nectar they play a significant role in pollinating the flowers on many native trees and shrubs. Subsequently when feeding on the fruits that result from this pollination they have a role in dispersing the seeds, and so assist in the regeneration of the forest in at least two ways.

Their song varies regionally but it is in ringing notes without grunts or wheezes. They have survived well on the mainland and elsewhere in the presence of introduced predators but occur in much greater densities on predator free offshore Islands. They breed in Spring and Summer producing a clutch of 3-4 eggs. The female incubates and both parents care for the young.

They are difficult to translocate to islands or mainland sites and none have yet resulted in well-established populations.

Reference: [NZbirdsonline.org.nz](http://NZbirdsonline.org.nz)

Most New Zealanders can easily recognise the bellbird by its song, which Captain Cook described as sounding 'like small bells exquisitely tuned'. They have three distinct sounds, and songs vary enormously from one place to another. When Europeans arrived in New Zealand, bellbirds were common throughout the North and South Islands. However, their numbers declined sharply during the 1860s in the North Island and 1880s in the South Island, about the time that ship rats and stoats arrived. For a time it was thought they might vanish from the mainland although their numbers recovered somewhat from about 1940 onwards. Although Bell birds are still on the New Zealand mainland, research has shown that mammalian predators, such as rats and stoats, keep their numbers low.

In 2010 the bellbird was rediscovered on Motutapu Island, after an absence of more than 100 years. This follows one of New Zealand's largest ever island pest eradication programmes on Motutapu and Rangitoto Islands in 2009.

***Predator Free 2050.*** An ambitious goal to rid *New Zealand* of the most damaging introduced predators that threaten our nation's natural taonga, our economy and primary sector. Ridding *New Zealand* of possums, rats and stoats by 2050 is a *New Zealand*-wide goal.

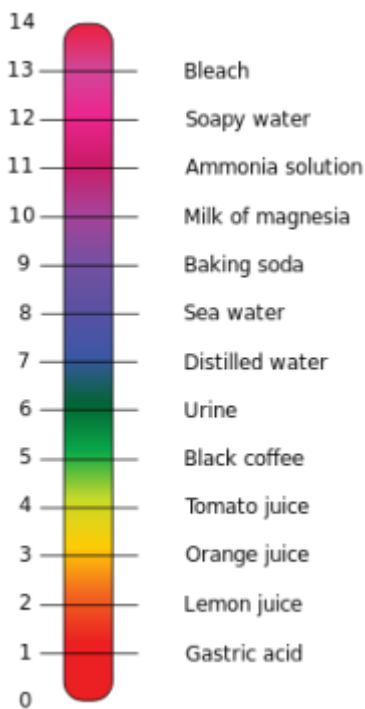
# Climate Change and CO<sub>2</sub> levels threaten Ocean Food Chains

M Latimer

These three ideas come together to form the concept of Ocean acidification, one of the most serious human-based threat to our oceans through the absorption and storing the high levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide emitted by human activities. Ocean acidification is predicted to continue to increase indefinitely unless the carbon dioxide emission from human activity is not decreased.

Ocean acidification causes widespread harm to our marine ecosystems. The more acidic waters become the more difficult it will be for shell-building species to maintain their survival, growth, and reproduction. These organisms include plankton, which form the base of the marine food chain, and other species harvested for customary, commercial, or recreational purposes. Ocean acidity also affects the behaviour and physiology of some fish and invertebrates. Creatures that live in the oceans are used to a certain, slightly alkaline pH level, but as the seas are absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> and becoming more acidic many marine creatures are getting stressed.

A scale of acidity to alkaline.



This is a simple pH gauge. The higher number is more alkaline and the lower number more acidic.

The scale is not linear but logarithmic and therefore small changes have a big effect

In pre-industrial levels the sea had a pH of 8.179 and today it is 8.069 which is a change of 0.11 and a 29% increase in acidity.

The simple cause of this is that CO<sub>2</sub> moves easily between the atmosphere and the sea and as we have increased the CO<sub>2</sub> level in the atmosphere from 280ppm to 400ppm, more CO<sub>2</sub> has moved into the oceans.

In a normal world the rate of change would not be fast and would be spread over 100,000 years but the burning of fossil fuels has had a bigger effect in only 100 years and is expected to double again in the next 50 years. **Nature simply can not keep up.**

Phytoplankton normally removes the CO<sub>2</sub> from the seas by the process of photosynthesis. It uses the carbon part of the CO<sub>2</sub> to make its calcium carbonate to make its calcium carbonate shell or skeleton, and oxygen is released to the atmosphere for us to breathe. The carcass of marine life containing the carbon, sinks to the seabed when it dies and the carbon is locked up for ever. **50% of the oxygen we breath comes from the sea for us to breath.**

The base of the marine food chain are pteropods and phytoplankton-whose structure is made of calcium carbonate. Although they are very small they multiply in vast quantities and are absolutely fundamental to the health of the oceans and the base of the food chain.

**Their calcium carbonate structures are very sensitive to changes in the acidity of the oceans.**

cyanobacteria



diatom



dinoflagellate



green algae



coccolithophore



Aquatic life with calcium carbonate structures include plankton but also all shell fish such as mussels and oysters and lobsters, crayfish and of course coral. There is plenty of current evidence that these creatures are having deformed shell structures and also problems with reproduction.

**Coral reefs** are a vital part of the marine ecosystem and provide habitat for a wide range of marine life. Their carbonate structure relies on a stable pH level of the oceans and they are sensitive to excessive acidity. Coral is a refuge and breeding ground for many types of fish. **We must reduce carbon emissions!**



## The Godwits are on the move again



Bar-tailed godwits in Canterbury. They also visit Foxton Beach, Ohau estuary, Otaki estuary and Waikanae River estuary.



Bar-tailed Godwits often visit the Kapiti Coast. They drop in to feed in our river estuaries on their inward journeys and just before they take off on their extraordinary non-stop flight back to Yalu Jiang (Southeast Asia ) then onwards to Yukon Kuskokwim Delta in Alaska. Most godwits muster at Miranda Bay, NZ before take-off. In 2007 one female had a satellite transmitter implanted in her abdomen so that she could be traced by satellites. On March 17th 2007 E7 as she was labelled, took off and landed in Yalu Jiang 7 days and nights, a journey of 10,200 km. Godwits are known to be very faithful to their feeding sites and it is a concern that the mudflats in this area are becoming degraded. If this happens the Godwits will continue northwards with insufficient fuel to reach Alaska or to breed successfully if they did get there. E7 made the journey and then after breeding flew non-stop to Miranda, NZ. It was a direct flight of 11,760 km.

# BATS

M Latimer



Last month we heard about a giant, burrowing bat that was three times the size of the average bat today. The extinct creature, which weighed about 40g, represents the largest burrowing bat known to science, and New Zealand's first new bat genus for more than 150 years. In this newsletter I have explored status of the two remaining New Zealand's species of bat in our area of the Kapiti Coast. Information is scarce and not well documented but there are some interesting articles about the re-introduction and care of the Short-tailed bat on Kapiti Island.

To save the threatened short-tailed bat, the Department of Conservation attempted to establish a population on predator-free Kapiti Island. In 2005 and 2006 pregnant bats were transferred from a colony in the Tararua Forest to Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre, where their pups were born. When the pups were old enough to fly, the mothers were returned to the Tararua Forest and the pups were taken to Kapiti Island. This pup is one of the three taken to Kapiti Island in March 2006. The next paragraphs tell of the treatment given to the young bats that became infected.

In April 2006 photos were taken of the bats where they had developed an infection on the pinna of the ears. May/June/July 2006 supplementary feeding from the aviary they were in, occurred a couple of times a week with bats again showing variable visitation rates. It was noticed they would not visit to feed in the colder weather (southerlies) but fed when the winds were from the west. In August 2006 bats were trapped in aviary when they came to feed to check their condition. The 3 bats from February '06 were speculatively identified by ear condition. Bad ear lesions were seen on these bats and two of them were sent to the wildlife ward at Massey University for ear biopsies. The bats were treated with antibiotics and creams. Some had surgical amputation of the pinna but when a large portion of the ears was removed the bats could not echolocate in the dark.

Though the bats survived, the loss of their sonar system for navigating and catching prey meant they could not fend for themselves on Kapiti Island. The department's conservation analyst, Colin Miskelly, said it was disappointing the population did not establish on the island. However, they would provide a unique opportunity for staff to develop skills in captive husbandry and discover the causes of the disease. Later 5 samples of the ears were submitted for bacterial and fungal culturing. No bacteria were found on the samples but all grew *Candida albicans* which is a yeast.

In the wild short tailed bats go about their normal tasks. We don't think of bats as pollinators but they are very important in the native forests. The purple colour around the muzzle (on the right) is Fuchsia pollen which the bat distributes from flower to flower as it feeds.



This doesn't only happen in New Zealand. The photo on the left comes from Canada -a bat completely covered with pollen. Some people might be surprised that bats are being effected by wind turbines (often



more than birds!). Bats are great flyers and fantastic hunters in the dark. They catch flying insects right out of the air. They certainly can detect and dodge the blades of a wind turbine. That's not an issue.

The issue is related to air pressure, and is known as barotrauma. As the huge turbine blades whip through the air, they create a region of higher air pressure in front of the blade and a region of lower pressure behind them. When a bat dodges the blade he/she flies through the region of intense low pressure. This change in pressure on the body is typically too much for them. It causes lesions and ruptures on their vital organs and the bats die from the inside.

The threat status of the short tailed species remains the same as in 2012 - they are declining.



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## List of some of the organisations concerned with Conservation in our region .

- Greater Wellington Council Biodiversity Strategy Group
- Kapiti Restoration Group
- Guardians of the Kapiti Marine Reserve <https://www.facebook.com/groups/161934010888715/>
- **Wellington Regional Native Plant guide pdf**
- <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/guidelines-highway-landscaping/docs/highway-landscaping-appendix-5.pdf>
- <http://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/contentassets/81cf8e07395c466da729ff9337412620/best-practice-subdivision-and-development-guide.pdf> how whole sub divisions are planned and planted.
- [http://www.rnzih.org.nz/pages/2003\\_conference\\_proceedings\\_pdfs/13\\_john\\_sawyer.pdf](http://www.rnzih.org.nz/pages/2003_conference_proceedings_pdfs/13_john_sawyer.pdf)
- <http://kapitiindependentnews.net.nz/cinema/> good info about Kapiti
- 
- **How to Put Nature into Our Neighbourhoods**
- **LRSS35 nature\_neighbourhoods.pdf**
- <http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/get-involved/backyard-projects/backyard-biodiversity/create-coastal-garden> Good ref for home projects.
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- **Save our sea lions**
- **Department of Conservation [whatsup@doc.govt.nz]**