KAPITI-MANA
Forest and Bird Society

June Issue 2018

Next Club Meeting
Speaker Glenda Robb

" The Kapiti Biodiversity Project.
Three years in the making.
What we found and looking forward."

7.30pm Wednesday 27th June 2018
Library Meeting Room,
Iver Trask Place, Paraparaumu.

We had the Kapiti Mana Forest and Bird Society AGM on 23 May 2018 and we are pleased to introduce the new Chairman, Russell Bell. Russell Bell has been honoured with Forest & Bird's Old Blue award for his significant role in many of the most important conservation projects in and around the Hutt Valley over the last 40 years and now we have his expertise in our region. Welcome Russell.

Chairman's Report

Dear members

Before I tell you a little about me, let me first express my thanks to Alan Froggat who stood down at the last AGM. Alan has been the chair for the last two years but Alan is remaining on the committee so his experience, knowledge and wisdom will not be lost.

This part of this report is hard for me as it is about me. My first introduction to the beauties and the plight of New Zealand forests was when I was 23 and living in Eastbourne. Stan Hunt (who some of you will know) took me to Butterfly Creek and introduced me to a 600 year old rimu and a group of kahikatea. That day started this journey.

My main involvement with Forest and Bird has been in the Lower Hutt area getting bits of ecologically valuable land saved from development, farming or neglect and putting them on a path to restoration. I was at the right place when those bits of land were at a point of uncertainty and with a bit of a nudge in the right direction, they were saved. They include the Matiu Somes Island, Pencarrow (now Parangarahu) Lakes, Waiu wetland and others. I did not do the hard work of restoring them. I had two roles in Lower Hutt Forest and Bird, as convener of the conservation sub committee and twice as chairman.

My present conservation challenge is to persuade Greater Wellington to retire from farming all the wetlands and peat-lands in Queen Elizabeth Park and rewet (stop water escaping down the drains) and reflood the peat soils and restore the wetlands. There are about 100 hectares of wetlands to be won in Queen Elizabeth Park.

I suppose the idea that drives me is that we don't, and would not want, to be the only species on earth. We share the earth with millions of other species, both of plants and animals. They have a right to be here and the loss of a species is also a loss for us. We have to give up some of what we have taken. It will be good for us if we do that, it is necessary for our survival and our lives will be richer. You will hear more about this later in this newsletter

Finally I hope I can serve you as well as I know past chairs have.

Russel Bell, Chair, Kapiti Mana Branch of Forest and Bird
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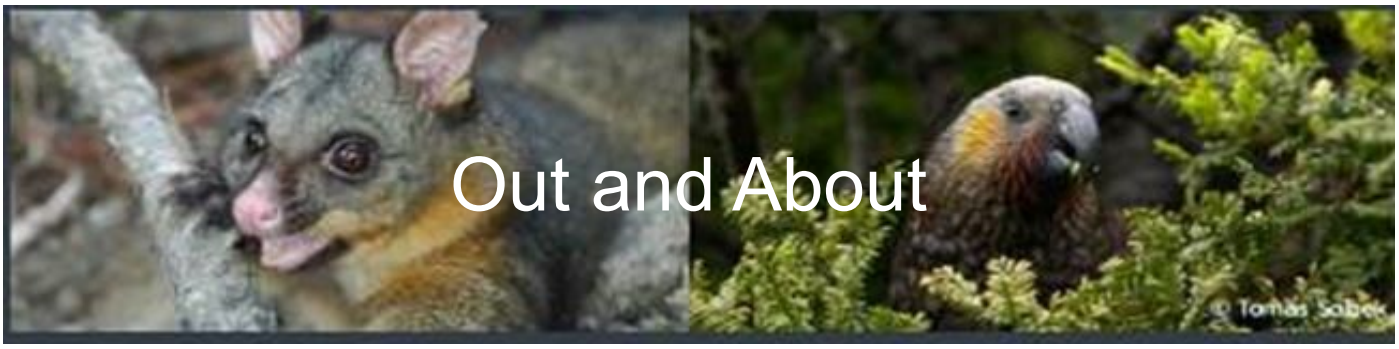

Watch out for your free-range hens!

Over the last few months the newsletter has followed the stories of NZ falcons, (Karearea) and Argentine Ants as they have made the Kapiti Coast their home. They are still in the news!

The Kapiti Observer reported about the blood thirst activities of the Karearea in May when one swooped down and killed a hen. Robert Guyton says " Native falcons are rare and are protected but seem to be gaining confidence around our suburbs that are invading their shrinking habitat. They strike from a great height, plummeting down at high speed and dispatching their victims in a flurry of feathers and squawks"

Watch out for the Kareaera if your hens are free roaming. Even your roofless chicken run is not safe.

Argentine ants threaten Kapiti Island

Argentine ants have been found at the mainland departure point for tourists to Kapiti Island's nature reserve, posing a threat to the native bird sanctuary.

DOC has called for a robust quarantine regime after the ants had been found on Paraparaumu Beach. Argentine ants are super aggressive and can form large super colonies with huge appetites. They are a threat to our native species because they displace and kill native invertebrates including native ants. Argentine Ants also compete with kiwi and other native birds and lizards for food such as insects, worms and nectar.

The Kapiti Mayor said the infestation threatening the reserve was a "clarion call for a proper best practice bio-security facility at Paraparaumu Beach for visitors wanting to visit Kapiti Island's nature reserve".

The ants can still be prevented from getting to Kapiti Island but everybody needs to help. DOC will implement a monitoring and response plan on the Island to ensure the invaders are picked up immediately. However, robust quarantine measures to minimise the risk of them getting there is the best first line of defence.

The ants crawling over a hand of a DOC worker when he touched the ground near the visitors' departure point.

Mortality Counts around wind turbines.

When I heard my grand-daughters and their parents were going to Canada for the summer I had a look at what they might see. I was surprised to read an account from a New Zealander who had worked on mortality searches around wind turbines. Is this happening in New Zealand? We have many wind turbines now. It's important to keep tabs on how many and of which species are being effected, and what solutions can be implemented to reduce the impacts of wind turbines on local populations.

Some people may be surprised that, in Canada, bats are being effected more often 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 but that is not the 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 usually too much for them. It causes lesions and ruptures on their vital organs and the bats die from the inside.

Spur winged Plovers increase in numbers at the airport

Native spur-winged plovers, also known as the masked lapwing in Australia, were once a protected species, but an increase in numbers around regional airports has prompted the move for a cull to help prevent potential bird strikes. At Marlborough Airport Spur-winged plovers were culled for safety reasons in 2017 as their numbers grow. The Bosses searched for a suitable candidate with a gun licence and a good aim.

Bird strike is a major concern for airports everywhere and passenger safety is always a top priority.
At Marlborough, every day there is wildlife to be scared away and we do that with blank noise-makers such as the ones used on vineyards or run vehicles up and down the runway.

This happens at airports across the world. Some have kangaroos or even elephants to chase off so in that respect we're lucky," Airport Manager says. "At airports in New Zealand every day there are near misses with strikes. However, at Kapiti airport there is only a low risk of bird strikes.

The Waikanae Estuary Care Group

has opened a shadehouse at their new base in Hana Udy Place. Paraparaumu Beach. The Group was established in 2005 by some locals who were concerned by the forgotten weedy wasteland at their doorstep. They wanted to restore the native plant habitat surrounding the Waikanae River Estuary to its original state. Since then they have planted more than 53,00 plants, refining their processes and working out what plants last and what plants do not. They try to use only eco-sourced seeds coming from plants in the area. This ensures the plants are robust enough to survive as they have come from their naturally suited environment.

Wing transplants for injured Butterflies

It is the most delicate of operations, a surgery in miniature.
Linda Archer's patient is a monarch butterfly and it needs a wing transplant. Without the procedure it won't fly, and that means it will perish.
The tools of the trade are tweezers, glue, talcum powder and a very steady hand. The operation is carried out on the dining table. A butterfly's wings are like human fingernails: there is no pain when they are cut.

They are held in place by a fork-like tool, the butterfly's damaged wing is cut off, leaving a tiny flap on which to glue the new wing. It's stressful work, if the glue sticks to a leg or antenna, it's a sticky ending for the insect. Talcum powder is then applied to the wing so all the glue is covered. After a day or two in a butterfly cage, the patient is released.

a paper splint and a brand new wing, the butterfly is ready to flutter another day.

A lot of people think you're hurting the butterfly by doing it, but you're not."
The lifespan of a monarch butterfly ranged from a matter of weeks to months, depending on when it breeds, and a monarch will lay up to 1000 eggs during its lifespan,

The History of Raumati Wetlands

Russell Bell

The Raumati wetland in Queen Elizabeth Park was once part of the Great Swamp from Paekakariki to Levin that Maori canoed through and used as a resource. Europeans were impressed with it and gave it the name of the Great Swamp. Nga Manu is a sample of it but in few places other than Queen Elizabeth Park can it now be seen and it is owned by DoC and only administered by GWRC. We have drained it, built over it and put highways through it.

It formed after sand dunes built up against the escarpment. You can see in the photo taken facing north that rain landing on the escarpment would flow down and be trapped behind the first and second dunes and form wetlands. The easternmost low dune with a farm track is in the centre of the picture with the now farmed wetlands on either side. These wetlands have been drained and farmed for years. Some will remember peat fires that burnt years ago and smoked out State Highway one. The peat was created by the swamps. Reeds, rushes, some bush, kahikatea and other wetland trees would have dominated the swamps. Over thousands of years, the leaves, branches and dead plants and even large trees fell into water and decayed in the absence of oxygen creating the peat.

With a lot of effort, and sweetening the wetland could be turned into good farmland, but currently it is very acidic and unproductive. Nowadays with the recent storms and parts of Queen Elizabeth Park being washed away, climate change is a concern and drained peat contributes significantly to climate change releasing 20 to 30 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare per year. So the Raumati wetland releases 1700 to 2500 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year. If the wetland was retired from farming and rewetted that release of carbon dioxide would cease. It would be a small step in the climate change battle but the cost would be minuscule. The drain that was put through the wetland in the early days could be partially blocked to raise the water table. That might have to happen in a few places.

If the peat was no longer farmed and rewetted, the wetland plants would return very quickly. Wetland plants are very mobile. Missing wetland grasses and flaxes could be added. We would add to the small percentage of wetlands left in the Wellington Region -only 2-3%. It would be a very big wetland and in habitats "Big is good". It would provide a walking trail down the low sand dune that bisects the wetland, its historical story could be told and we would have done one definite thing as a community to stop emitting so much carbon dioxide.

Please write a submission for Queen Elizabeth Park

Greater Wellington Regional Council is reviewing the plan that controls all of its regional parks. This Parks Network Plan is our opportunity to convince GWRC to retire from farming and restore all remaining wetlands, build ecological corridors and fence and plant the sides of streams and channels. These actions will clean up the park's streams, stop the farmer converting wetlands and connect the park's bush areas to the Raumati escarpment, to Whareroa and to the coast.

The biggest prize of all is the Raumati wetland. Once retired from farming and re-wetted, it will quickly revert to a beautiful wetland and the public will be able to walk right through the middle of it on a low sand dune that starts at Poplar Avenue and ends at Waterfall Stream. GWRC are continuing to drain this 85-hectare peat wetland and drained peat emits enormous quantities of carbon dioxide a year (20 to 30 tonnes per hectare per year). The release of that carbon dioxide would stop as soon as the wetland was re-wetted. This is the best opportunity GWRC has to mitigate climate change at a very small cost and the public get a significant walk through an increasingly attractive wetland.

The other items we would like you to support are:

- Implementing the ecological corridors so that the natural areas surrounding the park (the Raumati escarpment and Whareroa farm) are connected to the bush and streams of the park. Greater Wellington agreed to do this the last time its regional parks were reviewed but has not built them.
- Protecting the remaining wetlands throughout the park that GWRC still farms.
- Fences at 10 metres from each side from all streams and channels. GWRC has agreed to do this for the Whareroa Stream and Waterfall Stream but the other streams and channels have fences about 2-3 metres from the stream sides.
- Planting the riparian strips on the stream sides. So far GWRC has not planted any of its streams to protect them from farm effluent. The areas that have recently been planted have been done by the Kapiti Biodiversity Project.

GWRC documents on the parks can be viewed here parks-network-plan
Submissions can be posted or emailed as below before the 29 June.

Parks Network Plan Review
Greater Wellington Regional Council
Freepost 3156
PO Box 11646
Manners Street
Wellington 6142

Email: parksplanning@gw.govt .nz

BIG SPIDERS

M Latimer

We have all heard the stories of big spiders jumping, stalking or swinging down on silken ropes onto unsuspecting victims below, but how BIG are some New Zealand spiders? My granddaughter wanted to know before she went travelling so that she could prepare herself and try to control the horror she felt even for little spiders.

One of New Zealand's largest spiders measures up to 12 centimetres across and is big enough that it feeds on wētā. Its eyes shine so brightly it can be seen up to 20 metres away in a headlight beam. The home of the Rangatira spider – *Dolomedes schauinslandi* – is Rangatira Island and two other islands, which are part of the Chatham Islands.

A female Rangatira spider guards its silken nest on Rangatira Island

A male Rangatira spider snacks on a Novoplectron wētā at night

A good indicator of how big the spiders are is that people are known to have declined to visit the island because of them. Rangatira spiders are found at night time when they hunt on tree trunks and the forest floor for their preferred prey – wētā,

Huntsman Spiders - Often we read about a Huntsman spider caught at Auckland Airport hiding in camping gear they don't occur naturally in New Zealand. However, some Aussie immigrants have made it across the Tasman. There are two species "definitely established" in Auckland, and a third in Hillmorton, Christchurch, but that one hasn't been seen for a while. They are bigger than your average New Zealand spider, they're not "bitey" They're quite harmless.

The Avondale spider starred in the 1990 movie Arachnophobia, standing in for a fictional deadly spider from Brazil.

NZ has several very large water spiders. They survive on and in water. Some species weave a thick mat of silk thread and wait for prey to swim by. Others actively stalk their prey.
They can be found at the edge of water and in among the water weed and reeds.

We have some 2000 different spider species in New Zealand, but only 1157 have been "described". Ignoring the immigrant arachnids, 97 per cent are unique to our islands..They're everywhere, estimated at about a million per hectare. They're mostly in our forests.
Our largest spider by leg-span is the "very neat" Nelson cave spider. Found only in caves around Nelson, where it preys on the cave weta.

The **Tunnelweb spider** is the largest spider by mass. In Wellington it's quite common under rocks, and it's quite a decent size. It would cover the palm of your hand ".

The tunnelweb spider is New Zealand's largest, and is commonly found in Wellington.

There seems to be confusion in literature about whether the **Tunnelweb spider** and the **Trap-door spider** are the same There's over 40 species of trapdoor spiders dotted around the lower-North and South Islands. Their lifestyle is kind of neat, The young females leave their mother's burrow to dig their own hole, which they live in for their 25 year life span.
This results in tunnel web spider suburbs of 30 to 50 burrows within a couple metres of one another.

Worker unearths giant Wairarapa spider

This spider was identified as one of 10 from the Stanwellia species which are similar to the trapdoor spider, only they burrow under the ground.
Matt Charlton discovered this large native spider from the stanwellia species, crawling across pine cones as he cleared a road through bush at Pongaroa.

Farmer comes face-to-face with mysterious giant spider in Waingaro,

The farmer had been removing ivy from the side of his home in Waingaro, 140km south of Auckland, when he revealed the gigantic spider lurking beneath. It still has not been named.

Perhaps it is related to this one from Australia!

We have only had a brief look at some of the spiders in New Zealand. I expect you have many stories about encounters with spiders. Please share them with us. Email the editor on emailmlatimer@gmail.com or any other committee member.

Little Blue Penguin (Korora)

This article provided by Alan Froggatt

Photograph by Alan Froggatt © Alan Froggatt

This is the world's smallest penguin. It is just over 25 cm tall (slightly taller than a football) and weighs around 1 kg. It is native to New Zealand, South Australia and Tasmania and declining in New Zealand. Its main threats are from dogs. Lesser predation is by Cats, ferrets, stoats and road kill. Urban development is resulting in the loss of original breeding sites.
Rising sea temperatures, set nets, being hit by a boat, nest disturbance and interfering with moulting birds also play a part in their decline.

They live around all New Zealand's coastal areas (except the Sub-Antarctic Islands and the Kermandec Islands) but are rarely seen on land, and generally only come ashore under the cover of darkness.
When not hunting, they are usually spent in their burrows. Mainly during the months January to March and June to December. During April and May the adults spend a lot of time at sea feeding in preparation the next breeding season. .
They hunt for small sardine size fish and are amazing swimmers as their paddle-like flippers allow them to "fly' through the water at speeds of up to 6 km/h. They will often swim up to 25km in the open sea and up to 70km from their colonies and they are excellent divers.
May to June they may waddle up to 1.5 km and climb to 300 m to find the perfect nesting site. They have also been found nesting under houses and boat sheds, in storm water pipes and stacks of timber.
They come ashore in December to shed their feathers and grow new ones. This moult will last about three weeks and can happen any time between until the end of March. Prior to doing so they feast at sea and are about twice their normal body weight as they fast during this catastrophic moult and cannot swim. Other species of birds' moult bilaterally in such a way that they can continue to shed old or damaged feathers and still be able fly. The scruffy looking Korora are not ill but are very vulnerable at this time and should not be disturbed or touched.
They can be very vocal from May though June as they pair up and sort out nests. Chicks hatch between September and December when they are looked after by both parents. By eight weeks they are trebled their weight and at three months are fully grown. At this stage they are left alone to encourage them to head for sea.
During the New Zealand 2018 Autumn thousands of dead Korora were found on North Island beaches as the result of El Nino weather patterns on wind and sea conditions.

References:

Personal observation supported by:
Forest & Bird "Little Penguins: Life Cycle.
DOC "Little Penguins/Korora.
Forest & Bird Places for Penguins Projects

Nesting with eggs

Moulting

Swimming in front of boat. Bay of Islands

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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://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]**