

North Taranaki Forest & Bird + Kiwi Conservation Club news

P.O. Box 1029 New Plymouth 4340

December 2018 to March 2019

RECENT EVENT

End of year get-together 2 December 2018

It was great! As the date for our end of year event approached and forecasts swung from 'wet' to 'thundery' and back, there was a certain amount of conjecture about whether we would need wellies and brollies for our walk through Pukekura Park, or if, indeed, anyone would want to come. But the weather gods smiled and the morning could not have been better. The park was gorgeous, the company was great and the High Tea at the Tearooms was as fun as it was yummy.



ABOVE, L to R: Tony Collins, Anne Collins, Paul McDaid, David Cockeram, Jackie Cockeram (obsc), Jill Winter, Josh Woudt, Trevor Woudt, Dawn Mills, Marion Adlam, Gary Adlam, Peter Winter, Erin McDaid, Peter Haines. BELOW: having a jolly good time.



Photos: Janet Hunt

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Wishing you a relaxing holiday season and the best of health and happiness for 2019. We look forward to seeing you in the New Year.



Who's who at North Taranaki F&B & KCC

Chair/newsletter editor: Janet Hunt
(06) 7569165
janethuntnz@outlook.com

Secretary: Anne Collins (06) 7511 927
anne46@orcon.net.nz

Treasurer: Dawn Mills (06) 758 3252
rjmills58@gmail.com

David Cockeram (06) 758 7580
davidcockeram@gmail.com

Jackie Cockeram (06) 758 7580
jackiecockeram@gmail.com

Tony Collins (06) 7511 927
racingfrog27@gmail.com

KCC: Sonya Bates 0210674751
sonyabates@goolemail.com

RECENT EVENT

Love DOC day

Staff from the Department of Conservation take a certain amount of flak from the public over all sorts of things but lately, and especially, for the use of 1080 poison in our forests.

In early October branches across the country took a few moments to show our appreciation for what they do (see also p.29 of the latest Forest & Bird magazine). Some branches baked cakes but we put together a



goodie basket to share at morning tea. It was fun and the DOC staff were suitably surprised.



TOP: Presenting the basket to DOC staff (Tony is being eaten by the green box); RIGHT: Anne Collins, Tony Collins and Janet Hunt with Senior Ranger, Dave Rogers.

FROM THE RESERVES

We are very proud of our two reserves, Te Wairoa near Lepperton and Tom & Don's near Okato. Some of us spend quite a lot of time in them, one way or another. Thanks team (you know who you are!) for all you do; the results speak for themselves.

Te Wairoa

There were no scheduled working bees in November or December because of dodgy weather. However, there has been lawn mowing and spot weeding at other times and Bill has released the plantings on Mountain Road.

We have a great predator control team. In November Paul and Erin did the rounds of the DOC 200s and noted rat kills in traps 2, 8 and 10; Peter has been out in December and recorded another five (several traps were also sprung with no apparent cause). Our trappers are registered with Trap.NZ — since July we have recorded 23 rat kills not including the four A24 traps which were recently checked and showed kills in traps 13, 14 and 15.

We have a better mower now — the clearing is looking very park-like! Call in and take a look everyone.

Weeds are slowly being beaten back. With the majority of the upper reserve clear, we have turned our attention to the lower reserve where



One of the A24s, showing one kill.



Te Wairoa's park-like lawns!



A large light well to the east of the clearing in Te Wairoa where a mature tree has fallen.

Tradescantia was knee deep and too much of a challenge for hand-weeding. Paul has sprayed it with dramatic results. A follow-up spray may be needed and thereafter, hand-weeding should be sufficient.

It's always uplifting to walk through the reserve, noting seasonal changes: flowering, fungi, bird life, the colours and smells of the forest. Recently, a couple of mature trees have fallen and taken others out on their way down.

However, as is evident from the area around the main gate where a large tree came down in 2015, it doesn't take long for seedlings to spring into growth: they're just awaiting their day in the sun!

Tom & Don's

Management of the King farm adjacent to Tom & Don's has recently changed, with a new sharemilker (Bernie Hall) and a welcome upgrade in tracks and fences. The committee visited the property on 15 October to walk fencelines and to meet Bernie and Kelsi Bayly, the new TRC predator control person for the reserve.

The TRC are making \$2000 funding available this year towards weed control and maintenance of the existing riparian margins. Contractors will be used. Our thanks to our liaison officer, Matthew Simpson, and the TRC.

While checking the previous riparian plantings recently Matthew and I noticed a small grassy, damp, fenced depression adjacent to well-established riparian plantings on the western side of the block. It's a perfect candidate for further planting and, on making enquiries, seems that it was always earmarked for that purpose! So we're looking at doing that as well, at our cost.

The trap lines have not been checked since before the farm closed for calving in spring. This is not as dire as it might sound because we have a network of self-resetting A24 rat traps. However, they are due for servicing, which will be done by the time you read this, by David, Lyndon and Kelsi.

Tracking tunnels have been lately been deployed in the bush by TRC contractors but we have not yet received any results.

— Janet Hunt

Were you there?
These flourishing
riparian plantings
date from the early
days of Forest &
Bird's ownership of
the property.
Well done!



The committee
visit the reserve:
from left, Anne
Collins, Dawn Mills,
Tony Collins, David
Cockeram with TRC
officer, Kelsi Bayly.



It's just waiting to
be planted!



LOOKING BACK

Remembering Peter Winter

George Mason* suggests that it is timely to acknowledge Peter Winter's contribution to Taranaki conservation. Peter, who died in 2004 aged 84, was a founding member of the Values Party and later a Green Party candidate in the Taranaki and King Country electorates.

He is especially remembered locally for his contribution to our branch as chairman for many years and for being a driving force behind the creation of both of our reserves, Te Wairoa and Tom & Don's. Peter led by example, turning over grazing land on his Motonui farm to plantings of native trees such as northern rata, rimu and totara.

Peter was also a leading figure in two initiatives in Taranaki conservation — he was a trustee of the Taranaki Tree Trust (now part of Wild for Taranaki) and had the foresight to see that without intervention, wild kiwi in Taranaki were doomed, forming the Taranaki Kiwi Trust in 2001.

Having mourned the disappearance of kokako from the Taranaki landscape, we are sure he would celebrate the bird's return to Paraninihi.

Peter's son of the same name is now a member of our branch.

* George, of course, is no minnow in conservation and is widely recognised for his own outstanding contribution to the Taranaki environment.



Peter also wrote two books about his experiences in World War II: *Expendable: The Crete Campaign — a front-line view* (Moana Press 1989) and *Free Lodgings* (Reed Books, 1993).

Photo: from *Free Lodgings*

OUT & ABOUT

Our Birdwatching Holiday

—David & Jackie Cockeram

We have just completed a touring holiday around the lower part of North Island. The main purpose of our trip was birdwatching so included visits to Zealandia, Mount Bruce and the gannet colony near Hastings.

They say you should never revisit somewhere you have not been to for a long time as your memory's expectations are often spoilt by the changes that have occurred in between times. We were quite apprehensive that since our visit to the colony in 2001 the area would now have become too tourist orientated. We need not have worried — it was exactly as we remembered it.

We chose the option of the tractor and trailer ride along the beach to get to the colony which in itself is a very enjoyable part of the experience. Our jovial driver/guide

gave an excellent commentary on the geology of the area and pointed out some impressive fault lines in the cliffs. On arrival at the colony we had a long climb up to the top of the cliffs to see the birds. It was quite hot but the slog was well worth it. Up on top there were hundreds of gannets and you can get very close to them. We were able to see all aspects of gannet behaviour including courtship, mating, bonding, nests with eggs, small chicks and large chicks as well as the graceful birds in flight.



Clockwise from L: Courtship offering of seaweed; bonding by beak fencing; mating; chick raising.

Photos: Jackie Cockeram

A highlight at the end of the trip was seeing a bittern. We have tried hard to find them where friends have seen them but they have eluded us. We were driving towards Kawhia when we spotted a large brown bird take off from a fence rail along the side of the road. Our car had frightened it off but we turned around and tried to find it. We had not seen it clearly but were convinced by its size it was likely to be a bittern. On the opposite side of the road was a wetland area with tall reed beds so David pored over the landscape

with his binoculars. I decided to study the other side as there was a small overgrown stream along the edge of the paddock. I looked and looked, camera at the ready but no luck. I was just about to give up when a sudden glint caught my eye and I used the good zoom lens of my camera to home in on it. Imagine my joy when I saw that the glint was the bird's eye moving. If it had not been for that tiny movement we would never have found it as it was so well camouflaged in amongst the plants. Awesome eh!



Photos: Jackie Cockeram

OUT & ABOUT

Pureora Forest visit

In anticipation of a branch expedition to the forest in 2019 (see programme p.8), Anne and Tony Collins have been doing a bit of homework.

Tony and I visited Pureora Forest again on our way home from Palmerston North in late October.

We accessed the forest from the southern side, from Link Road which continues from the end of Kakaho Road. We spent the night at the campsite at this end. There are lots of keruru and there was an unseen long tailed cuckoo there.

Next morning we walked the adjacent Rimu Track which climbs up to a lookout and loops back to the campsite. It was pleasant and not too strenuous, taking about an hour.

The Bog was next, off nearby Tihoi Road. It promised to be an interesting wetland but it turns out it is along a logging road, and we drove along it with no sign of the Bog turn off until we came to a 'no entry' sign. This was a bit annoying and we had to negotiate round a large truck on the return.

We continued along the Link Road through a mixture of pine trees



Photos: Anne Collins

and native forest until we reached an historical site a short walk from the road. A tractor display was nicely presented and interesting in pretty bush.

Then on till we came out at the Ngaherenga Campsite.

We next checked out a site we had visited before, where trees from the Taupo eruption (c.180AD) had been preserved in a wetland. The road in was nigh on impassable, and when we arrived there was almost nothing to see anymore aside from

some trapping activity.

From here we drove on and across the highway to the road to the Pureora Forest Lodge. There is a gate blocking access at the bottom of the hill but we walked up and found the lodge situated in a flat grassy area. It looked OK with bunkrooms and kitchen etc and a BBQ area outside.

The Waipapa Loop Walk starts a short distance away and takes between 30 minutes and an hour. The big trees in there are impressive.

We spent the night at Ngaherenga, and it started to rain which dampened our desire to look for bats here at dusk as we had planned. We felt we had earned ourselves a drink instead!

Next morning was sunny again and so we drove along to see the Pouakani Totara, the world's largest totara, thought to be 1800 years old and so large you think you are approaching a cliff, not a tree! There was plenty of birdsong and beautiful



Totara Walk near the lodge is an easy, well-signed 1-kilometre loop past awe-inspiring giant podocarps — totara, rimu, matai, miro and kahikatea. Ferns are abundant and you are very likely to encounter tomtits or robins.



Photos: Janet Hunt

bush. We noted quite a number of fallen trees. When we reached the big Totara it was disappointing to find the surrounding fence broken by a fallen astelia, and the

information sign almost unreadable.

That aside, the Pureora area is huge, varied, beautiful and interesting. It's definitely worth a visit!



Come on a treasure hunt — be a Weed warrior at Te Wairoa!

On Sunday 13 January KCC are going to visit Te Wairoa to explore and find out about some of the plant nasties that grow there. There are creepers and stranglers and sprawlers and ground hogs! None of them belong and all of them stop or slow down native insects, lizards, birds and other creatures.

See what you can identify and earn a Toyota Guardians medal for your efforts!

Meet at the Clearview Rd carpark at 3pm. Bring clothes to explore in and gloves to keep your hands away from the weeds. And bring a picnic tea to eat in the clearing afterwards.



RIGHT: KCC visiting Rotokare in 2018



Photos: Sonya Bates

Care of Injured Wild Birds

A lot of wild birds get injured. They are caught by cats, especially at this time of year when there are a lot of inexperienced fledglings about. Pukeko, morepork, Australasian harrier and kereru particularly, get hit by cars or by collisions with hard objects. Sadly, most of these birds don't make it.

There is a thinly stretched and patchy network of people trying to care for and rehabilitate injured birds in New Zealand. Department of Conservation staff may pick up injured wild native species, but do not deal with introduced species such as blackbird and magpie. Auckland Zoo, Wellington Zoo and Massey University Wildbase all have bird hospitals, but also deal only with native species. Auckland, Manawatu, and Wellington in the North Island have bird rescue volunteers, who put in huge hours caring for birds which need often many months of rehabilitation after veterinary treatment.

In Taranaki, the New Plymouth Veterinary Group and Brooklands Zoo, along with Department of Conservation, have a voluntary service to care for injured wild birds brought in by the public. As this is all pro bono work, birds must be brought in for assessment, there are no outcalls.

Treatment is just the beginning. Feeding, cleaning and rehabilitating these birds can take many weeks to months, and for this, more help is required. A DOC licence is required to keep *native* birds, including for nursing care.

If you find a young bird, be very sure that it is injured before you pick it up and take it away. It may be having feeding or flying lessons from its parents, who are out of sight. It is easy to feed a baby bird, but much harder and more time consuming to teach it to forage on its own, as it must do to survive in the wild.



If you can pick up an adult bird, there is something seriously wrong with it, even if you can't see anything from the outside. Do not "wait and see" for a day or two. Take it immediately to Department of Conservation, or New Plymouth Vet Group or your local vet.

Do not be surprised if the injuries are so severe that euthanasia is necessary. Birds are light and fragile compared to vehicles and cats or dogs.

Prevention is far better than cure.

- Have a compost heap so there are plenty of worms for the blackbirds.
- Leave a wild space in your garden, with insects for fantail, tui, thrush and blackbird.
- Keep your cat indoors at night and wearing a collar and bell when out and about during the day. (Consider keeping your cat in all day during nesting season.)
- Drive more carefully.
- Put ultraviolet stickers on large windows.
- Don't plant native food trees such as kowhai and puriri near windows, where kereru are more likely to collide with them.
- Join Trap.NZ and trap rodents and possums in your area.

—Dawn Mills



Photos: Dawn Mills

Programme for January to April 2019

We will keep you up-to-date by email about these activities as they approach. If you are interested but not on our email lists, please let us know so we can keep in touch by other means. All events are weather dependent. We'll carpool if we can. KCC members and their families are welcome.

Sunday January 13, 3–5pm: KCC weed warriors check out Te Wairoa

See p6 for details.

Sat Jan 19: Morning walk to Wilkie's Pools

Meet at Dawson Falls carpark at 10.00. We will walk the loop track through goblin forest to Wilkie's Pools — about 1.5 hours. Afterwards eat at the Dawson Falls Lodge café (or bring a picnic lunch if you prefer).



Wed Feb 6 Rapanui evening visit

Meet at the Tongaporutu car park at 4pm. We'll walk to the rivermouth and explore (low tide at Port Taranaki is 6pm) then have a picnic tea back at the carpark and then hope to go up to the Rapanui petrel colony for a look. The petrels will be finished breeding and gone by then but fluttering shearwaters may be breeding and the views are spectacular.



March 10: Sunday Explore Mahood-Lowe Reserve

Note: this is Taranaki Anniversary weekend. We're going to take a wander around this 133-hectare regionally significant wetland forest (mainly around the perimeter). It has recently been purchased by the NZ Native Forest Restoration Trust. Carpool from Rogan St, New Plymouth at 10.30/ meet at the top of Alfred Road at 11.00.



April 11 AGM, 7.00 pm, Community House

We have the prospect of an exciting speaker but if not, might just have our AGM and then go out for a meal. We have a great committee but would love to see some new faces. Come along if you would like to join us (come along anyway).

April Friday 26–Sunday 28 (two nights): Pureora Forest

We have booked Pureora Lodge (see Anne's article, p.5). We plan to drive up on Friday, stay Friday and Saturday nights and return on Sunday. We anticipate short walks and interesting sights and who knows, might hear or see kokako. Please indicate as soon as possible if you are interested.

