

KAPITI-MANA Forest and Bird Society

May Issue 2019

All members and non-members welcome to the AGM and the monthly meetings.

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NOTICE OF 2019 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 2019 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 22 May 2019 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 2019. Election of Officers.
Any other business.

The relevant papers will be emailed to members 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.



Out and About



Good News - Long tailed bats discovered.

Until about 10 years ago, the threatened long tailed bats were thought to live only in forests, but populations have since been found in urban areas of Auckland and Hamilton - and now in Rotorua's Sanatorium Reserve. The Rotorua Lakes Council said they were found in trees at two sites in the geothermal park, but their roosts have not yet been found.

Bats are New Zealand's only native land mammals and although long-tailed bats (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*) used to be common throughout New Zealand in the 1800s, they are now classed as 'threatened - nationally critical' and are a high priority for conservation. "Population decline is mainly due to the impact of introduced predators," the Department of Conservation's Rhys Burns said.

"The risk to these bats is likely to be higher than in native forests due to the many human activities that occur in urban areas, as well as high densities of urban predators such as cats.

Bats are usually hidden in cracks or holes in trees and cannot be readily seen.

"One implication of finding this population is that the presence of bats should be considered before any large trees are felled in the Rotorua urban and peri-urban landscape," Mr Burns said.

Bats are negatively affected by increasing light and traffic. They were located during a survey with acoustic monitoring equipment that detects their echolocation calls.

On track for worst mast in 20 years

This last month the Department of Conservation staff have been out in our beech and podocarp forests sampling seed, and all signs point to a monster 'mega mast' that could spell disaster for local populations of threatened species. However, masts aren't all bad. Despite the threat of predator population booms, forest masts did have benefits, Mr Morton (DOC) said. They provided native species extra resources because they put more flowers and seed into the forest ecosystem.

"At a time before mammalian predators were introduced the forest mast was boon to native wildlife. Today, it still provides food for insects, lizards and birds and boosts breeding for forest birds like kākāriki, robin/toutouwai, rifleman/tītipounamu and mohu/yellowhead. The Kākāpō rely on rimu fruiting to breed and this year is proving to be a bumper breeding season. The sudden abundance of food leads to huge population irruptions of mice, rats, and – crucially – stoats, which feed on the mice and rats. Without some intervention some struggling species will be wiped out in some areas, becoming locally extinct.



Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage confirms \$30.47 million has been set aside for the 2019 mast response, over two financial years. This intervention will come mainly in the form of aerial 1080 poison drops. The area covered by the drops is expected to be about a million hectares. (The poison is also used to stop the spread of bovine tuberculosis.) The prediction of a mast year is based on the difference between average summer temperatures in successive years. Basically if the second summer is warmer, on average, than the last, there's a high likelihood of a mast in the coming year.



Last summer was two degrees warmer than the summer before. It was the biggest difference between two summers that we've had for a long time. It's the strongest signal. With decent masts in 2014, 2016 and, soon, 2019, that's a little more frequent than the long-term average, of two-to-six years for beech trees. Is that due to climate change? Constant increase in global temperatures will mean more frequent mast events and will place stress on the trees themselves.

Forest & Bird is interested in hearing about your trapping programmes and how they fare. Please contact your branch and tell them how well you are progressing.

OUT and ABOUT

Waikanae River restoration



There is a long-term freshwater goal to restore 50 freshwater ecosystems from mountains to the sea. The Waikanae river has been chosen from a national shortlist to improve the catchment's ecological integrity and resilience. The announcement was made at a hui where community, iwi, councils and agencies had gathered to develop a collaborative vision for the river's restoration. Jack Mace, DOC Operations Manager for Kāpiti-Wellington district says Waikanae River represents a real opportunity for catchment-wide restoration, thanks to the existing work of community, iwi and agencies.

Dear Forest and Bird Members

At a recent meeting, I was given a Maori perspective with regard to land. First protect the land, then preserve or enhance its environmental characteristics and finally use it to serve the people. Protecting the land is what Forest and Bird have been doing on a large scale since its inception

From the early campaigns to save our forests, the fight was to obtain the land. The inclusion of Mokihinui's 64,400ha into Kahurangi National Park is a recent achievement by conservationists to protect the land. That fight has changed to the protection of rivers, sea, wetlands and tussock lands and will continue.

Preservation of the environmental values of the land is an area that Forest and Bird has moved into in a big way. Damming rivers within conservation land, mining in the conservation estate, sucking 8000 tonnes of sea floor every hour for the next 35 years and dumping unwanted material overboard in the Taranaki Bight are just three examples of protecting the environmental values. Today many of these issues cannot be won except in court. The companies that want to become rich on the public estate have deep pockets already and often appeal court decisions and move up the court systems and F&B must oppose them again in each arena.

F&B are asking for donations to defend nature and an anonymous donor will match that donation \$ for \$ and of course donations above \$5 are tax deductible.

Climate change and species in crisis will force us to pursue the 3rd principle. We will have to work out how we can survive and allow the natural world to sustain and support itself and us. The exploitation, to extinction, of the natural world for the preservation of human -only values cannot continue. In my opinion, our past and continuing wasteful use of our world's natural resources – plants, animals, soils, water, seas, and systems has led directly to loss of human life and livelihoods – maybe not in NZ yet. David Attenborough put it more bluntly – the collapse of civilization is on the horizon.

It is comforting to think that F&B has been doing the right thing for decades.

Russell

The Laughing Owl

Item for Kapiti Mana F & B Newsletter by Alan Froggatt.

Image courtesy Te papa.

Laughing Owl -Family Ninox

Other name Whekau

Endemic i.e was only found in New Zealand Extinct 1914

The DNA of this bird relates it to the wider family of Owls, Ninox and thus to the New Zealand Morepork. In short, though closely related it looked and behaved quite differently.

It probably populated Nelson, Canterbury and Otago but in 1880 specimens were also obtained in Stewart Island. Maori traditions suggest they were also commonly found in the Urawera ranges prior to European settlement. It had yellow eyes, a prominent bill, small head and short and stubby wings. While it could fly it was primarily a ground feeder that fed on the leaves of Tawa, hinau and other forest trees but it developed the capacity to prey on a wide a wide range of small birds, mammals and insects and favoured the Polynesian Kiore rat.

While it was widespread in the mid- 1800s it declined rapidly , with the arrival of ferrets and stoats. Some sources suggest the demise of Kiore, and this owl were related). Perhaps it was a combination of all three.

It liked to hunt on the forest floor and use its strong long legs to pounce on its prey which it would then carry back to its roost then eat it whole as the regurgitated hard bits fell to the ground.

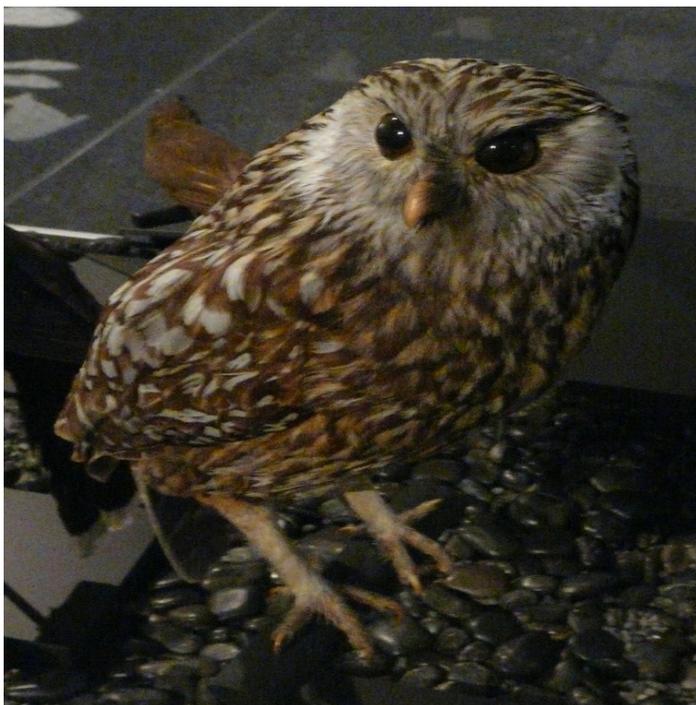
In 1882 a friend of Walter Buller, the famed author of the 1888 classic 'Buller's Birds of New Zealand' reported finding some nesting in a crevice in a limestone cliff. He reported the entrance was difficult to find and so narrow the birds had to squeeze to enter but it then appeared to open out. He also reported the male is very attentive to the female when the eggs are hatching September through to October. Interestingly he reported seeing the birds flying quite high and for a considerable distance. He also reported they seem to prefer flying on cold and drizzly nights when they would often laugh, and this would travel for kilometres. This laugh has been variously referred to as 'doleful shrieks' to frequently repeated "loud disquieting shrieks' that would go on for some time. An amateur naturalist describe the call as "like two men cooing to each other over a distance,"

The last specimen was found dead on a road in Blue Cliffs, Canterbury in 1914. Despite discoveries made by archaeologists digging through the middens of early Maori and European it was not realised how many small species of New Zealand's birds (and other small insects) had become extinct until the cave beneath the nest of this bird was investigated.

Given the depth of detritus under the nest it was calculated the site must have been used continuously for around ten thousand years. As these birds preyed on a wide a wide range of small birds, mammals and insects the discovery of this site and nest provided a very useful 'picture' of the country's prehistoric diverse and abundant small bird life. Among other fauna the bones of 43 species of birds were found of which only four survive today.

Though it was considered extinct since 1914 creditable reports of hearing and sightings continued into the 1930s.

Like very many species preceding it, it had no real defences against the combined onslaughts of stoats, ferrets, weasels and cats.





New Zealand Bumble bees

Do we really appreciate the work bumblebees do for us?- Article and Photos by M.Latimer

The story of the bumblebees of New Zealand started about 130 years ago when they were introduced from England specifically to pollinate the pasture plant red clover (*Trifolium pratense*). They have long tongues called a proboscis that they plunge deep into vertical flowers such as clovers. Together with the nectar stored at the bottom of the flower bumblebees also have the ability to buzz so vigorously that they dislodge up to 50 times the amount of pollen that a honeybee can manage. If you have watched bumblebees in your garden you will have seen them going about their business quietly, ignoring any interruptions. However, their business is very important because one bumblebee can do the work of 50 honeybees. They can work in many conditions a honeybee doesn't. They can

- work at temperatures just above freezing, in rain and fog, from first light until dark
- Fly in covered areas such as glasshouses or within shrouded crops and they can pollinate up to 450 flowers per hour in such a space.

In fact, the hardworking bumblebees are only ever 40 minutes from starvation due to the speed at which they travel (up to 54 kilometres an hour), and the strength required to carry their own weight plus up to 90 per cent of their body weight in food. Beside using their long tongues they also use "buzz pollination" or sonication, meaning they vibrate their bodies to cause pollen to be released, sometimes in a visible cloud. In this way, they gather more pollen than many other insects and create extremely effective cross-pollination as they move on to the next flower while literally covered in pollen. If all fails, they simply use their long proboscis to nip a hole in the base of a flower and go straight to the source of otherwise inaccessible nectar.

Entomologist Dr Barry Donovan says Bumblebees are essential to pollinate the introduced pasture plants that we rely on. Our animals graze on them and they in turn nitrify the soils for grass to grow in.

Bumblebees are vital to the New Zealand tomato industry which has a farm gate value of \$100 million a year, and the *Bombus terrestris* is bred commercially by several companies to be used in the indoor production of tomatoes.

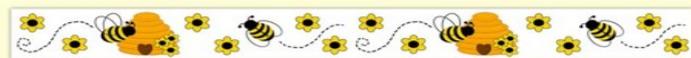
Waiuku-based bumblebee producer [Zonda Beneficials](#) has seen "huge growth" in outdoor covered crops such as kiwifruit and passionfruit which have traditionally relied on honeybees,

Demand for bumblebee hives has outstripped supply. Zonda says "Before, it was more for the indoor tomato growers, but over the last few years it's also been kiwifruit, avocados and strawberries.

Bumblebees require very little in order to flourish. The queen can form her nest in an old rodent hole or other dry space underground which can be replicated with a relatively simple box construction containing nesting materials such as insulation padding or underfelt.

Home gardeners around New Zealand will need to look after bumblebees, especially those in the South Island who are encouraged to plant wildflowers including red clover, viper's bugloss and Russell lupin (which is considered weedy in areas with braided river systems), as well as the Weigela florida shrub, *Silene dioica* and *Robinia pseudoacacia*, along with lavender, borage, cat mint, foxglove, geraniums, and herbs.

I have been reading a very interesting book on Bumblebees by Dave Goulson. It was first published in 2014. It's title is "[A sting in the tale](#)" - [My adventures with bumblebees](#). Dave Goulson was fascinated with all forms of wildlife but it was the bumblebee that fascinated him the most. Later, as a research scientist, Dave Goulson was passionate to re-introduce the extinct short-haired bumblebee to its homeland, the UK. This species still exists in the wilds of New Zealand. The bees have descended from a few Queens shipped to New Zealand in the nineteenth century. The book tells of the groundbreaking research into these bees, their history and the disastrous effects intensive farming has had on the bee population and the potential dangers if it continues.



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Until after the AGM

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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**