

North Taranaki Forest & Bird + Kiwi Conservation Club news

P.O. Box 1029 New Plymouth 4340

July 2019 to September 2019

RECENT EVENT: PROJECT REEF LIFE + AGM

We had a great turnout for the Project Reef Life evening on 11 April. The AGM was over in a flash, with a new chair, Tony Collins, stepping up, and old chair, Janet Hunt, stepping down, and the rest of the committee staying on.

The award-winning Project Reef Life team gave a fabulous illustrated presentation. They also brought along some of their specially devised gear — such as their ingenious underwater camera and hydrophone.

We were very appreciative that they had made the long trip from Patea just to talk to us. There's way more than can be covered here — check them out online, especially their FaceBook page. *Awesome!*



TOP: Karen Pratt points out the reef off the Patea coast. ABOVE, from left: Karen Pratt (joint Project Lead); Joshua Richardson (marine scientist); Bruce Boyd (joint Project Lead); Charlotte Borra (marine scientist/plankton researcher) and Richard Guy (Project Engineer).

FROM THE CHAIR: MEETING REPORT

On June the 6th I attended a Wild for Taranaki biodiversity round table, an informal discussion group at the Taranaki Regional Council in Stratford. Although there was no fixed topic, climate change was to the fore, as it affects everything we do in the field of conservation. I felt it was worthwhile attending as we could gain an insight into who was doing what, and connecting with others.

—Tony Collins

2019–2020 COMMITTEE ROLES

In addition to the chair, Tony takes health & safety; Janet has overall responsibility for Te Wairoa and the newsletter; David and Janet share Tom & Dons, with David on predator control and Janet on planting and weeds; Dawn is Treasurer and Anne is Secretary. Sonya continues as KCC coordinator.

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

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At the weekend of 29th to 30th June, Tony and Anne Collins attended the Forest and Bird annual conference at Te papa, Wellington. Anne reports.



Saturday's programme was full-on with presentations and panels.

Keynote address: Eugenie Sage, the Conservation Minister spoke, and updated attendees with the following:

- Extra 100 DOC staff
 - Increased predator control
 - From the new visitor levy: \$180m to DOC over 4 years, better response to visitor numbers, compliance systems; CITES, marine reserves and concessions at the most popular sites.
 - DOC can now give infringement notices not prosecutions.
 - Freshwater: increased monitoring, managing, containment.
 - Review of NZ Biodiversity Strategy: discussion document due for release in July
 - RMA advocacy
 - Mokihinui conservation land added to Kahurangi Nat. Park. This saved it from being dammed by Meridian. (Big applause!)
 - Sediment restrictions for the Whangamarino wetlands
 - Tahr: 10,000 will be removed this year.
 - Kauri Dieback- 20m for research and RMA protection.
 - Whitebait: a discussion document is coming out.
 - Marine reserves: progressing networks (particularly South Island)
 - Dolphins: DOC will get action plan for toxoplasmosis
- Plus, more I did not get down!
Eugenie's address was warmly received by everyone.

Raukumara Ranges: This was a presentation from Ora Barlow-Tukaki, Te Whanau a Apanui and Tina Ngata, Ngati Porou on the neglect and imminent collapse of biodiversity in the Raukumara ranges. It's best described as a mess! There's no understory due to ungulate browsing, dead and dying totara from possums, declining bird numbers and high numbers of rats and stoats. These ranges are not on the list of areas to be treated with 1080 by DOC this year.

Graeme Elliott, DOC: Graeme gave an interesting talk on this year's megamast with excellent charts and maps that graphically showed how huge this is this year. Both podocarps and beech are flowering together. The resulting surge in rat/mouse numbers was also well illustrated. They will be able to breed during winter and then feed the stoats all year leading to 6–7x increases in stoat numbers.

Graeme showed that even birds that are sometimes killed by 1080 still do better than without it. Stoats re-invade treated areas and trapping should take place at the edges of these areas. He explained that they cannot fit all operations in at the optimum time. It looked like vast areas will be treated but targeting the most urgent.

Trapping during a mast year: Learning from the 2014 mast, Debs Martin, Te Hoiere Bat Recovery Project (Pelorus Bridge), and Gillian Wadams, Ark in the Park spoke.

Ark in the Park Rats were bigger and responding to behavioural lures rather than food-based baits. Since the mast they have not been able to get rat numbers down by trapping alone, a 1080 application needed.

Pelorus Bridge Could not bring rat numbers down lower than 30% with traps in 2014. The flowering this year is twice that and now mouse numbers are rising as well. Rats and stoats move in from the adjacent Richmond Forest Park which is not on the 1080 list to be treated. They are just crossing their fingers and were obviously upset.

Forest and Bird's Zero Bycatch Pledge — Sue Maturin, Otago/Southland Regional Manager, spoke on this campaign. Branch Marine Champions are being sought. Signatures from the public are being requested to help stop birds and sea mammals dying in nets and on hooks.

FROM THE RESERVES

Tom & Don's

The weed control and infill planting along the riparian margins, as well as the new planting in a hollow on the western side of the property is complete, thanks to contractor, Brett Simpson.

There are reports of possums in the reserve so we are in the process of employing Mark Perham of Bushguard Pest Service to deal with them. He will also check the rat/stoat traps while he's there.

Te Wairoa

Thanks to the dedicated team of weed-pullers, it's hard to find *Tradescantia* in the upper area of the reserve. White pegs dotted here and there are evidence of long-gone infestations. *Whoopee!*

However, there are still a few substantial patches in the lower reserve. Spraying has dealt to a huge expanse under the kahikatea near the style, that now needs to be occasionally picked over to catch small remnants.

A group from U3A are coming at 10.30 on Wednesday 31 July to spend a couple of hours in one of the patches. We'll also show them around. Come along if you are interested.

In line with the nationwide surge in rat numbers because of prolific fruiting of native trees (a mast year), we have caught quite a few lately, both in the DOC 200 traps and in the A24s. Quin is undertaking the annual possum poisoning in the next weeks — it will be well signposted.

Tony will soon be constructing the improved entry to the reserve — a metalled track from the gate to the clearing. This will make it easier to negotiate and protect tree roots at the same time.

Here's a wee puzzle! There's a reasonably large area just south of the wetland area where young kawakawa have died (picture below, right). Possible causes include a fungal infection/kawakawa dieback similar to the *Phytophthora* that is killing kauri. Spray drift is another possibility. We may never know but will keep an eye on it.



White pegs: indicate areas that once were infected by *Tradescantia* but are now clear.



Janet plants a rare King fern/para *Ptisana salicina*, a gift from the branch to the retiring chair, near the stream in the lower wetland.



Falling trees are a constant in a reserve. Tony takes his chainsaw to one that fell over the boardwalk.



Kawakawa die-off. It's a mystery.

COMING EVENT

We will keep you posted by email about events 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. KCC members and their families are welcome.

Pureora Forest trip

Unfortunately, the realisation that this trip was going to be right in the middle of the roar (read: competitive hunting season!) made us think twice and we postponed until spring. We haven't set an alternative date yet but the programme will be similar. We will send out notices nearer the time. If your name is already down we'll keep you on the list. Contact: Janet 06 756 9165.



HOW TO HAVE YOUR CATS AND WILDLIFE TOO

No matter how much effort we put into the control of mice, rats and stoats, there remains one animal that we haven't a solution for — the cat. Cats are great companions. Nevertheless, when our old cats died at the grand ages of 18 and 17, and despite the temptation, we didn't replace them. There were a number of reasons, but mainly — and especially because there's a lot of bush around us — we wanted to safeguard native wildlife.

The jury's out on the impact of domestic cats in urban areas. Some suggest that their role as rodent controllers-in-chief outweighs the damage, and possibly even benefits, invertebrate, lizard and bird populations.

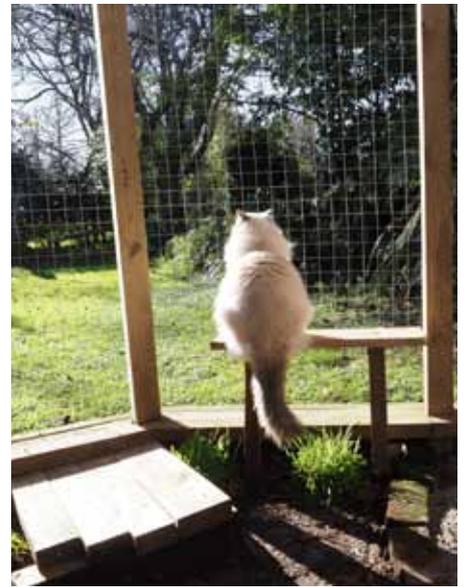
But, like people, cats are individuals. They are Jekyll and Hyde characters, presenting one sweet face to their humans at the same time as, deep down, they are really little lions or tigers, wired to hunt and wander. That's why current advice for cat owners is to keep them indoors at night and in the hours of early morning and evening (train them early).

One Taranaki woman has another innovative solution. It won't be for everyone but she has created a light, airy cat enclosure on the back of her house. It's substantial, with garden areas, decks, arches, perches and air-bridges. It connects via a cat door to the inside of the house and gives the animals plenty of play and outdoor areas at the same time as keeping them confined.

Once they got used to it, she says, it's working perfectly.

The cats are safe and so are the birds!

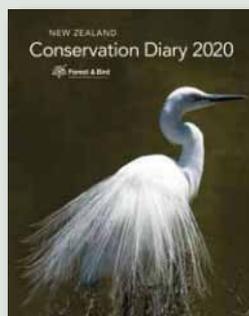
—Janet Hunt



Life's a breeze for these two cats.



Calendars are \$20.00 and diaries are \$25.00.



Dawn is shortly expecting the arrival of this year's gorgeous Conservation Calendar and Conservation Diary. They are great gifts — both feature beautiful New Zealand through the superb photographs of leading nature photographers. The calendar weighs less than 200 g for economic postage and comes complete with envelope.