

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2019

Kapiti - Mana Forest & Bird

The next meeting will be held Wednesday 25th September at 7.30 pm in the Presbyterian Church hall, 43 Ngaio Road Waikanae. Mike Jebson formerly of QE2 Trust will be speaking on *My time at QE2*. This activity of the trust is of great importance to F&B because it protects in perpetuity high ecological value areas of private land. Non members are also welcome to attend.

Editor: Russell Bell, Email russelljamesbell@gmail.com. Phone 0212266047. Your feedback on this newsletter would be most welcome as would a contribution or contributions to future newsletters.

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Chairman's Report

Forest and Birds last meeting discussed solutions to climate change. I presented the talk because I could not find anyone who could talk about how to solve the problem using the many methods that are available.

A book called "Drawdown", (edited Paul Hawken 2017) written and peer reviewed by scientists describes how this can be achieved using solutions that are already available. Those solutions need to be taken by companies, local and regional councils, governments, and individuals.

First the scientists worked out how much carbon dioxide equivalent reduction was needed to reach the point where green house

gasses begin to decline from their peak, then considered solutions that are available to us right now, then estimated what increase in those solutions was plausible over the next 30 years and how much carbon that would save. This plausible response to climate change does not quite get us there by 2050 but a slightly more aggressive response would - all things being equal.

Below I present a few solutions from Drawdown to show you why I believe stopping and reversing climate change is possible. In fact, many are being put in place now though we may not realise that they are happening because of, or will benefit, climate change. I will also identify one solution that scientists left

out and tell why. The contribution of each solution to stopping carbon dioxide rise is given as a percentage.

Agriculture 11%

A shift to regenerative agriculture which stores much more carbon in soils and plants. Already 300 million hectares. Increase to 1,000 million hectares.

Food 13%

Reduce food waste by 50% in first world and a shift to a plant rich diet (reduced meat) by 50% of people.

Energy 14%

Shift to renewable energy - wind 4% increase, solar 7% increase and wave power.

Land use 10%

Use the land to absorb carbon dioxide. Forest restoration, afforestation, protection of forests, wetlands, estuaries and peatlands.

Buildings and cities 5%

Insulation, LEDs, smart buildings.

Transport 4%

Bike-able/walkable, park 'n ride, communities, more efficient planes, trucks, and trains.

Electric vehicles provide 16% of total passenger miles and plug in hybrids take 6% of the car market.

Where I have given the percentage increases e.g. electric vehicles, you can see that Drawdown is conservative. It also has not included electric trucks although Tesla have produced one with a range of 500 miles.

If we adopted these and the other solutions in Drawdown at a slightly higher rate than scientists thought plausible, after 30 years, the climate change would stop getting worse and start its slow way back to where it is now.

My first comment is *Early is best.*

And now the good news?

If we could look back from a vantage point of 60 or so years, we might decide that climate change was a good thing, it brought us to our senses and we realised we needed to work with nature, preserving our biodiversity, our natural resources, live within our means and respect our world.

Conservation News

For some years, I have been arguing with GWRC that the wetlands in Queen Elizabeth Park, especially Raumati wetland, should not be farmed but be used for recreational use, for climate change and for biodiversity. The area

is the flat land between Poplar Avenue and Waterfall Stream alongside State Highway One. The photo shows part of it looking west and the low dune running north south.



Wetlands

The area was once a wetland and with a little work would be again. All that is required is for the drains to be partially blocked in four places raising the water table to near the land surface. If kept sufficiently wet, woody weeds such as gorse and blackberry would not grow. They grow because of draining. Wetland plants appear very quickly from seed and remaining plants and because wetland plants are very mobile.

Recreation

There is a low dune that runs north to south dividing Raumati wetland until it reaches Waterfall stream. That dune has a farm track on it and was used by local walkers and runners until GWRC denied access. It will make a fantastic walk that walkers will appreciate more as the wetlands reestablish. At the south end of the walk a connection needs to be established with the park inland track.

Climate change

These wetlands (about 85 hectares) are old peat swamps with peat that is about 3-4 metres deep. Currently Greater Wellington allows the peat to be drained and farmed and

that releases carbon dioxide of up to 10 tonnes per hectare per year (all peatlands are different so the figure is a bit of a guess) So, perhaps 850 tonnes of carbon dioxide is being released every year. If GWRC was paying carbon credits for those emissions at \$25 per unit, they would pay about \$20,000 every year. If the wetlands were rewetted, all that carbon dioxide would stop being emitted, and the wetland be reestablished, absorbing about 1.5 tonnes per hectare so the carbon dioxide balance would be about 1000 tonnes better off every year. Penny Gaylor, our GWRC counsellor has not yet fully supported this recreational, biodiversity and climate change initiative. She wrote that she tried to encourage staff to retire wetlands.

Latest News

On the map below, the green area below is the Raumati wetland we want retired. The yellow areas are where ponding occurs despite draining. The red area is the area retired and being restored by the Macleans Trust. **GWRC has just agreed to prioritise the retirement of the blue area and not use herbicides and insecticides or lime on it because of pressure from F&B and the Friends of Queen Elizabeth park.**

We and the Friends of QE park would like GWRC to rewet the wetlands thereby stopping the emission of tonnes of CO₂, dealing with woody weeds, and preparing the land to a return to wetland. The blue area is bounded by SH1, a farm access way to north and south, and the low sand dune to the west. That means that the quadrant can be rewetted. This would stop the peat releasing between 2 and 14 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare per year (46-322 tonnes per year for the blue area). If that happened, gorse and blackberry control would significantly reduce and reeds and carex would reestablish and we could plant flax, etc.

Note the odd shape of the Maclean Trust land (red) especially the rectangle within it that was retained by GWRC for farming. It stops rewetting the area. Furthermore, GW has not agreed to any rewetting yet, rather the reverse.



Large Parrot Bones found in Otago

Excavations at St Bathans in Otago have revealed much about NZ's past but during August, an announcement was made that NZ had a child sized (80-90 cm) parrot about 20 million years ago. The parrot weighed in at 7 kg, over twice as heavy as a Kakapo and was most likely flightless.

Islands are known to produce very large birds. New Zealand, possibly because of its isolation, produced more than most. New Zealand is still rather special in that birds rather than mammals were the dominant species.



Restoration Contribution To Kapiti and Mana

I hope to present a restoration group in this and following newsletters in the hope that those groups receive a bit more physical help in their endeavours. Most of them are making a significant contribution to our environment. This month the Waikanae Estuary Care group is featured.

The Waikanae Estuary Care Group

The Waikanae Estuary Care Group plant the estuary during winter, they weed it during the rest of the year and of course nursery work continues most of the year. This year about 3500 plants were planted. The people are great to work with and as you can see they socialise on each planting day. If you want to join any of their activities, Contact details are Pam Stapleton. Telephone 04 9046845 or email poes8915@gmail.com.



Birds and Wetlands

Item and image by Allan Froggatt

The definition of a wetland is “an area where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and associated plant and animal life.”

Since European settlement 98% of the 672,000 hectares of our wetlands have been destroyed. Only 13% of those that were in private ownership remain.

Despite their important environment role, wetlands, there is considerable pressure from private quarters, local councils, regional councils and some government agencies to convert wetlands into arable farmlands and suitable land to cope with urban sprawl or industrial development.

Six of our significant wetlands are protected by the international RAMSAR Convention. But, except for the Firth of Thames and Foxton Estuary, they are remote from significant population centres and difficult for those interested in bird watching to access.

Losing any portion of the remaining few wetlands will be another blow at attempts to

mitigate global warming. What will happen to our endemic and native flora and birds (which are part of the animal kingdom) that depend on them such as the Australasian bittern and Fernbird or the very shy and secretive Banded rail, Spotless crane and Baillon's crane.



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Other Conservation and Restoration Organisations on the Kapiti Coast

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