

North Taranaki Forest & Bird + Kiwi Conservation Club news

P.O. Box 1029 New Plymouth 4340

November 2021 to March 2022

Adieu, Tony

Our chair, Tony Collins, died unexpectedly at home in early September.

Tony was a larger-than-life personality, clever, sociable, cheeky, fun-loving and passionate. He became a keen member of North Taranaki Forest & Bird in 2014, having just retired from a full life

as a plumber. He served on the committee since then and was chair from April 2019. Together with his wife Anne, who is the committee secretary, he attended Forest & Bird events all over New Zealand, usually in their trusty motor home.

Tony was a keen trapper, in his backyard and local neighbourhood

Continues... ➤



Look, we're on the cover!



This is Forest & Bird's gorgeous 2022 Conservation Calendar. It's a great gift, full of superb photographs from leading nature photographers. It weighs less than 200g and comes with envelope.

\$20. Contact Dawn for your copy:
(06) 758 3252 or rjmills58@gmail.com

Top: Tony at a Forest & Bird meeting, 2015. Left: Anne & Tony on Tryphena Wharf, Great Barrier Island, 2018. Above: a high point on the same trip: Tony is at left with his mascot, Casey the frog, peering from his pocket.



Check out the KCC news on p.7!



as well as further afield — including our own Te Wairoa Reserve as well as the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust.

At Rotokare, he helped with practical tasks and biosecurity, as well as hihi management and often camped overnight in order to get an early start.

Tony especially liked a tidy lawn! At Te Wairoa he and Bill Lofroth transformed the slope in the clearing from hayfield to a bowling green. He also installed a shed to keep our gear secure, built a path to enable wheelchair access to the clearing, made a communication box for the gate and constructed steps along the trapping route. He was concerned by the weeds in the lower reserve and keen for us to

do something about them (see Te Wairoa report).

Irreverent, irascible, impatient, inspired — Tony was all these and more! He leaves shoes that are impossible to fill and we miss him. Our love and condolences to Anne and his family.

Clockwise from top left: Te Wairoa clearing; Tony clears a trap; lost in thought; clowning around; the shed.



In recognition of their commitment to Taranaki conservation, Tony and Anne have been made Kiwibank Local Hero Medallists for the 2022 Kiwibank New Zealand Local Hero of the Year Award Te Pou Toko o te Tau. Only 100 are selected from names submitted across New Zealand. An official Awards Gala Presentation Dinner will be held on 31 March 2022 in Auckland. Congratulations, well done! Left: Anne with the award.

from the Committee

Winter is always slow but this year felt worse for many reasons, including lockdowns and Tony's death. We were not able to have a committee meeting until early November and likewise, haven't held recent working bees or anything else. However, Lee has continued to run KCC events (see her report).

We wish you all a safe and happy festive season and look forward to catching up with you in the New Year.

Coming events

**BYO picnic, Te Wairoa clearing,
Saturday 12 February 2022,
10.00/11.30**

Covid makes planning for events uncertain just now so we are skipping our customary end-of-year celebration in favour of getting together in February 2022. Come early if you can, and have a bash at one of the Te Wairoa tasks (p5) or just come for the picnic.

**AGM, Saturday 10 April 2022, in the
side room at Tawa Glen, 1.30pm**

We held our AGM here in 2020 and it was so good, we're going to do it again. We've timed it so that we can have afternoon tea (our shout).

Recent events

Before Covid lockdowns slowed us down we managed a few good events. On 21 March we visited the Potaema Bog on the mountain in the company of botanist Barbara Hammonds. We took our time and really appreciated her expertise and informative commentary as we looked at the plants along the track.

On 14 April we were treated to an excellent illustrated talk on the subject of toutouwai/robins on the mountain by Pat Murphy. Then on 18 April, we took a ramble around the Mills' Hydro Rd property to look at their lake and wetland plantings. On Sunday 16 May we visited Araheke Bush Loop walk near the Meeting of the Waters. Lovely!



Top: This maie miromiro accompanied us on the Potaema walk.



Upper left: walking the Araheke loop — Gary & Marion Adlam.

Left: Silvia & Ben Croker, Marcella Volino, Rose, and Helen Lander.

Oh well done

The Department of Conservation's Taranaki staff have recognised Rob Mills' decades of care for ill and damaged birds by making him a 'conservation hero' as part of Conservation Week this year.

Rob is the clinical director at the New Plymouth Vet Group; he and his wife Dawn (who is our treasurer and committee member) are both vets and keen rescuers of birds. The clinic works closely with Massey University's Wildbase Hospital and has treated more than 1200 injured native birds.

Read more about it on the RNZ website. (Google the details).



From the reserves: TOM & DON'S

Not a great deal has happened at Tom & Don's reserve over winter.

Mark Perham will soon undertake another trapping round and while on site will maintain tracks as needed.

We will shortly be contracting a fencer to protect the trees that are in the paddock outside the reserve.

From the reserves: TE WAIROA

• Trapping

A big *thank you* to the team — David Cockeram, Quin Amoores, Matt Kyle, Paul & Erin McDaid, Peter Haines (and, of course, Tony & Anne Collins). They walk the perimeter and the transverse trap line once a month, clearing rat bodies from the DOC200s and rebaiting the traps, including the A24s. At the same time, they are regular eyes on the ground, noting significant changes in the reserve (often fallen trees).

Paul and Erin are retiring from this task after quite a few years on the team. We appreciate your promptness and thoroughness, Paul and Erin. Many thanks.

Especially big thanks also to Quin and the TRC for the continual supply of bait and for taking care of the possum round for us.

Kills are registered with TrapNZ. From there we can

see that 67 rats and one weasel have been caught in the DOC200s in the past 12 months. We don't have counters on all the A24 traps but those that do show even higher numbers — trap 16 registers 15, if it is correct.

The evidence is clear, if it were not also apparent from these numbers: the trapping is making a huge difference. The forest floor is carpeted in seedlings that would not be there if it were not for the team's efforts.

• What now?

A few days after our November meeting, Anne, Janet, David and Peter from the committee walked around Te Wairoa to consider the things that require attention. We wrote down everything and came up with quite a list! Some will be familiar as having been awaiting attention for a little while.

Starting at the Clearview Rd entrance, there are a number of jobs, from cleaning the sign to cutting back growth around the stile and path. Down the roadside, grass needs trimming back and agapanthus needs spraying or digging out. Plus there are a couple of wattle-like bushes at the southern end that should be removed.

A pile of shingle beside the gate is destined for the steps Tony constructed on the other side of the reserve. If we take it there in buckets, we can carry them up to the steps in one go. (A dry weather project).

In the clearing there are a number of tasks, from



updating and repositioning the signs, to some light clearing and to mowing under the rimu trees.

From there we walked clockwise around the perimeter track. Drums and old carpet needs removing from around the trees in the lower Clearview Rd area — they have well outgrown the need for this protection.

The upper reserve is pretty clean as far as weeds go but it's a different story once we reach the area that was once the wetland. We decided to target specific areas for working bees, starting with the area beyond the stile, focusing on *tradescantia* and *selaginella*.

Future weeds to target are the green goddess lily, honeysuckle, blackberry and hydrangea — those who have known this reserve from the outset will recall that hydrangeas once lined the edge of the bush beyond the paddock that is now the lower reserve. Most have now gone but it's surprising how they survive in the shade of the forest.

It was a damp, misty day when we walked around, perfect for demonstrating just how wet it can be along the track. We have sufficient funds and have decided to use them to substantially extend the boardwalk in this area. It will make the access more weatherproof and will protect the vegetation underfoot, especially in the wettest areas. This will be a long-term project!

There's a large tree across the track a little further on. Despite Peter's enthusiasm for tackling it himself with his chainsaw, we agreed to employ High Frontiers who have done similar work for us in the past.

Finally, we reached the South-West corner, where,

in 2015, we planted quite a number of seedling swamp maire (mainly), kahikatea and karamu/coprosma. The grass is as high as an elephant's eye . . . but the young trees are saplings now and are largely above it. They would respond to releasing nevertheless — a case for someone with a weedeater or maybe volunteers with clippers and spades at our next working bee.



Above: Yes, that's the path David's standing on among those juvenile pukatea! This the the area where a boardwalk would be good. (And some trimming in the meantime would be helpful.)

Left: Peter and the fallen tree.

Opposite: seedlings galore.

• Kevin Hague retirement

We are sorry to hear that CEO Kevin Hague is retiring to live on the West Coast in April 2022. We've enjoyed seeing him here on several occasions since he took the role.



As President Mark Hanger said: 'With his . . . exceptional ability to build personal and professional relationships, political nous and connections and genuine passion for Forest & Bird and its purpose, he has made our Society a stronger, more effective and robust organisation. We are very grateful for Kevin's commitment and work for us and for nature.'

We second that and wish Kevin all the best in the future. (Maybe we will yet see him up this way before then.)

• Covid and vaccination

We are reminded by National Office that under Forest & Bird's Vaccination Policy, everyone taking part in activities that may involve in-person contact with other people must now be fully vaccinated (both doses plus 2 weeks immunity building following the second dose). This Policy is in place so that we can protect all members of the Forest & Bird whānau to the best of our ability.

If you want to take part in F&B activities where you will be interacting with other people, you will be asked for evidence of your vaccination status. This will obviously affect our events management, hopefully without too much disruption.

• Joint membership changes

Are you on a joint/dual membership? There have been changes to membership status recently that have inadvertently removed the partner member!

We first noticed this when Tony was still alive — he was chair of our branch but was no longer a member! The same has happened to others but it is not something you would immediately notice — you don't know that you have failed to receive emails, for example.

We have notified National Office about this but at the time of writing this newsletter, have not had a response. It's a little ironic, given the current drive to increase member numbers — up by 30% since 2018.



• Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's . . . a bat!

If you voted for one of the *feathered* entrants to the New Zealand's 2021 Bird of the Year/Te Manu Rongonui o te Tau (see the placegetters below) you may be thoroughly discombobulated to find that this year's winner is not a bird but New Zealand's only flying land mammal — a 'flying furball', in fact!



This is the first time the pekapeka-tou-roa/long-tailed bat has been included in Forest & Bird's annual contest, and it has flown away with the title.

"I think I'm going to be fired," says Forest & Bird's Bird of the Year spokesperson Laura Keown.

After a two-week campaign that nearly broke the internet, and turned friends against one another, the pekapeka-tou-roa/long-tailed bat was the winner with both the most number-one ranked votes, as well as most votes after transferable vote rankings were applied.

However, as Laura pointed out, "A vote for bats is also a vote for predator control, habitat restoration, and climate action to protect our bats and their feathered neighbours."

And that makes them most worthy winners!

"Long-tailed bats, or pekapeka-tou-roa, are a unique part of Aotearoa's biodiversity, but lots of people don't know they even exist," says Ben Paris, Senior Conservation Advisor at Auckland Council and New Zealand Batman.

'Manu', as in Te Manu Rongonui o te Tau, does not only mean birds but includes many flying creatures including bats.

The voting closed at 5pm on Sunday 31 October with 56,733 verified votes cast, making it the biggest ever Bird of the Year.

Taranaki's own bat man, Dave Bell, must be feeling very chuffed.

The top ten finishers and ranked votes were:

1. Long-tailed bat/pekapeka-tou-roa (7031)
2. Kākāpō (4072)
3. Rifleman/titipounamu (2808)
4. Kea (2801)
5. Antipodean albatross/toroa (2790)
6. Black robin/kakaruia (2413)
- 7 & 8. A tie — Little penguin/kororā and Morepork/ruru (both with 1762)
9. Blue duck/whio (1648)
10. Rockhopper penguin (1603)



A view into space

We visited the NP Observatory on 22 July 2021 at 7pm. The KCC'ers, friends and families who attended were very appreciative of the knowledge shared by the two volunteers from the Astronomical Society.

We split into two groups between the two telescopes and then swapped over. The Society has a 100yr old telescope, which was used to focus on the moon. We also viewed stars, including Alpha Centauri and the Jewel Box.

I think the highlight though for kids and adults was seeing Saturn and its rings. Lots of excitement about this.



We were shown four rocks and asked to pick the meteorite. That was an interesting exercise. I think we will all be hoping to see a meteor shower now!

Traps & Bird Feeders



On 15 August 2021, 12 KCC'ers & their parents took part in this activity. It was good to hear how much the KCC'ers already knew about trapping and predators. We didn't have any rats in the traps but those who came now know a cool tip to tell the difference between a ship and norway rat.

There was loads of rubbish collected — 6 council bags full plus a tyre!

The birds loved the feeders every bit as much as the KCC'ers enjoyed making them. Three KCC'ers took pictures of waxeyes enjoying the treat.



How to make a pine cone bird feeder

Pine cone feeders are easy to make! They offer garden birds a little extra when times are hard in long, cold winters or hot, dry summers.

You need: • a pinecone • string • scissors • peanut butter and/or lard • birdseed (special garden bird seed) • a plate or bowl • an iceblock stick or butter knife

Find a pinecone that has opened out. Cut about 60cm of strong string and tie it tight around the top of the cone.

Put a layer of birdseed into your bowl.

Scoop the peanut butter onto a plate and then use the stick or knife to push peanut butter into all the spaces and onto the outside of the pine cone. Roll the pine cone in the bird seed.

Hang your pine cone out of the reach of rats and cats and watch and wait for the birds to arrive!



Covid affects KCC programme

Unfortunately our planned expedition to find native frogs and fish at the beginning of September was cancelled due to Covid restrictions. We are hopeful that this can be scheduled again in the future.

Likewise, the visit to "The Junction" Zero Waste Hub that was scheduled for October was cancelled by National Office and the visit to Ratapihipihi Reserve and scavenger hunt planned for November did not attract any interest, again, most likely because of the Covid situation and because of vaccination requirements.



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

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

Peter Winter: (06) 752 0167
peterjwinter@hotmail.com

KCC: Lee McCracken
027 755 6729
northtaranaki@KCC.org.nz
or leemccracken16@yahoo.co.nz

Newsletter: Janet Hunt
(06) 7569165
janethuntnz@outlook.com