**Environmental Volunteering in Kāpiti and Mana**

By Russell Bell, 2020

There are many ways to volunteer your time effort or resources into the environment. Volunteering can also be arranged to suit your talents and your lifestyle. There is individual work of all sorts that needs to be done and there are about 30 groups some of whom arrange group activities. Also, Kāpiti and Mana have many reserves and that means that volunteers don’t have to travel far to find meaningful volunteer activity.

Groups usually identify with and area of forest, wetland, estuaries, beaches, or waterway where they undertake pest and weed management, restoration of a native habitat by growing and planting native plants local natives, bird, and lizard counts. In some cases, they run nurseries, get involved in saving areas from development or mitigating the effects of development. Of course, organizing and funding are part of this. Groups sometimes initiate large projects looking at feasibility, funding, and manpower. These sometimes result in valuable public recreation and biodiversity assets.

Most of these activities can be undertaken, at least in part, by an individual either in association with a group or not. Groups, even loosely connected ones, form small interest communities and these can be very rewarding and quite supportive.

A list of past and present activities is shown below to demonstrate the breadth of activity that can be found in our region.

* A grant of $300,000 was secured and successfully completed for biodiversity work in Kāpiti mainly centered around trapping carried out by the public.
* The escarpment track was initiated by a Paekākāriki Group. Only when the project hit very difficult terrain, were grants and contractors used to finish the track.
* All the plants planted in Queen Elizabeth Park and Whareroa Farm Park are raised and planted by volunteers.
* A Mana group has started restoring the lower reaches of Taupō swamp.
* An individual has single handedly trapped Queen Elizabeth Park for many years.
* Penguin studies and the placement of nesting boxes is being undertaken by volunteers.
* A Kāpiti group has been publicly agitating to stop poisoning and farming the wetlands of Queen Elizabeth Park and rewet and restore them to benefit climate change and Wellington region’s dearth of wetlands.
* An environmental watch and involvement is being undertaken on the huge residential development on the eastern side of Taupō Swamp. The quality and flows of water from this land and the protection of natural areas within it as it transitions from farmland to residential will determine the environment and recreational opportunities of the local people and indeed the Taupō Swamp itself.

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird supports, in principle, all the efforts to protect and restore our natural landscapes and biodiversity. Please ask us for our updated list of local opportunities to consider.

**Volunteering for Forest and Bird**

There is any amount of volunteering activities within Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird. We would welcome a diversity of ideas around the things we do – public meetings, events, newsletters, conservation and restoration opportunities and climate change activity. We also would welcome people onto our committee to learn, participate or to take over a portfolio.

Finally, volunteering is a way to gain valuable skills. I joined F&B when I was 23 years old. In my opinion, I would not have progressed to near the top of a large company without the many skills learnt on F&B committees and activities.