

# Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

## March 2025

### Editorial: There are limits.

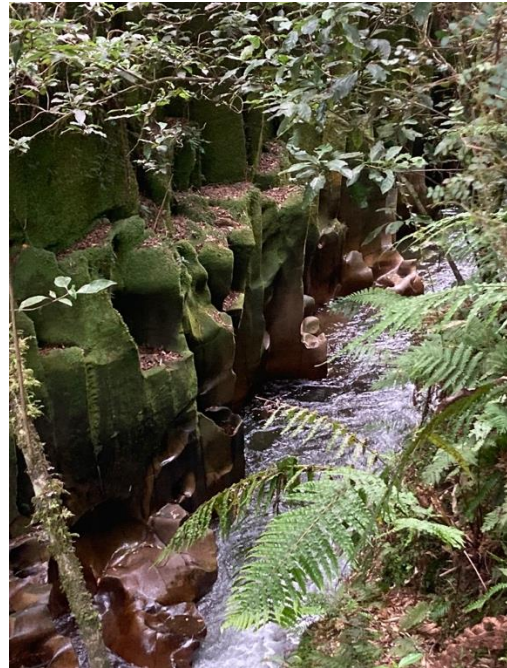
Last month, we visited Whirinaki and Pureora forests. I along with thousands of other New Zealanders fought for these forests. I was not a tree climber or physical activist, just an organizer of the local (Lower Hutt) branch of Forest and Bird.

The battle to save Whirinaki 1972 to 1979. was initially lost and for 5 years, the NZ Forest Service selectively logged block 10, the best of what was left. One evening during the battle, I drove down the newly built road in block 10. A flock of kākā (about 30 I think) flew down the shaft of the road between the massive podocarps. It was one of those sights that does not leave you.

On this visit, we walked three tracks: the Whirinaki River track, the Arohaki Lagoon, and the H tree track. I wanted to find out what happened to Block 10. A map showed that DOC had decided to protect as completely as possible the combined best areas of Whirinaki and Block 10 was included. This area was further protected by a halo of forest of lesser value. The forest is magnificent. Arohaki lagoon is beautiful – dry in summer allowing you to walk through it and filled with water the rest of the year. It is a magical place.



The Whirinaki canyon where the Whirinaki River tumbles between moss covered columnar rock walls is spectacular but hard to photograph. Birds heard and seen include kākā, kākārīki, whio, and tītipounamu (riflemen) and the other smaller birds.



Pureora 1976-1978 was a different battle. It was considered the only remaining forest in which kōkako could survive, giving us forest and a beautiful bird to promote Pureora. Conservationists secretly constructed platforms high up in the trees where the Forest Service was to log next. They sat on these platforms and waited. All NZ heard the news that loggers were in the area and did not know which trees greenies were up. It was a close thing but we won Pureora.

On this visit we walked to Maramataha Bridge on the Timber Trail cycle track (photo below), to the top of Mt Pureora and the Tōtara Loop at the Barryville road carpark.



As soon as we entered the forest, we noticed the birds, kākā nearby, kākārīki chattering further off, miromiro (tomtits), cuckoos, riroriro, and the other small birds.

There is something different about well trapped virgin podocarp forest. They have a grandeur, a silence, filled only by birdsong. They feel different to going into regenerating forests that mainly surround us. That was what the movement fought the government of the day over. Virgin – never been logged. Lowland- not high country. Podocarps – NZ large native timber trees.



The government of the day intended to log all of Pureora and Whirinaki but also Puketī/Omahuta forest in Northland and most podocarp and beech forests of the West Coast of the South Island and many others. The governments of the day were hell bent on selling our natural resources to make NZ wealthy. They were wrong.

The same rhetoric is being used by today's government. We need growth, they say, and I think that is true. The capitalist system cannot exist without growth.

But the world is finite. The atmosphere is finite and is showing its limits in climate change. The sea is reaching its limits, absorbing heat and carbon and is probably manifesting the fact by producing less fish. Rivers have reached their limits in terms of agricultural chemicals and consequently we can swim only in some of them and drink from very few. Biodiversity is in crisis measured by the loss of species.

([Millennium Ecosystem Assessment](#): Up to 8,700 species per year, or 24 species per day.

([U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity](#): Up to 150 species lost each day.)

Yet our Prime Minister is reported as saying *"Absolutely core to our plan in 2025 is unleashing economic growth"* and environmental law is being dismantled. It seems that in the face of global limits, there are a number of leaders around the world who are vociferously pedaling the rhetoric that turbo-charged growth is what we need, and the environment should be ignored.

The thing they don't want to recognize is that the limits are finite.

We cannot recover from them. We cannot recreate a virgin forest. We cannot remove carbon from the atmosphere nor heat and carbon from the sea. We cannot bring back lost species. In the face of these limits, we need to look for constructs or methods of human existence which fit comfortably within them.

*Russell*

## Looking to move?

Forest and Bird founder Captain Val Sanderson lived in Paekākāriki. His home is currently for sale. It is a small, beautifully restored home with established garden and views of Kāpiti Island. Here is the [15 Pingau Street](#) listing.

Our next meeting is 16 April, 7.15pm in Waikanae (details below)

## Call for KCC Volunteers

Kāpiti-Mana Kiwi Conservation Club for kids is looking for volunteers to assist our current KCC Kāpiti Mana Coordinator, Lindsay.

If you can provide any assistance in a range of tasks including:

- administration of the email box
- adventure record keeping
- contributing to the KCC branch newsletter
- organising events
- assisting in the field at events

We'd love to hear from you.

To learn more about KCC, register your interest in volunteer roles, visit their web site and complete the sign-up form

<https://kcc.org.nz/volunteer-for-kcc/>

*Kids are our future: can you help them discover nature's wonders?*

## Events

### Joint Regional F&B BBQ: 4pm, Sunday 30 March 2025 at Pāuatahanui Wildlife Reserve

A chance to meet fellow Forest & Birders from around the Wellington region for a BYO picnic and/or BBQ in the reserve, here: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/e3e13LxNR3y76y4x8>

Enter between Lighthouse Cinema and the Pāuatahanui village, off Paekākāriki Hill Road. Please bring food for yourself, or a little extra to share. BBQs will be provided for anyone to use. Bring a blanket or seat too.

This is an opportunity for Forest & Bird members to make connections and possibly find new ways to contribute to conservation in our region.

We hope you will join us for a fun meet-up, and perhaps a chance to see mātātā/fernbirds or the reserve's other exciting wildlife!

### Talk: The value of native trees and how to grow them for environmental and commercial return

Ōtaki Carbon Forest have a speaker at 7pm, Tuesday 1st April at [The Rotary Lounge, 25 Aotaki St., Ōtaki](#). *This may interest those with land suitable to forestry.*

Mr. Ben Disney is the MPI-Te Uru Rākau Forestry Advisor for the Greater Wellington

area. He will be sharing his expertise on why, how and which native tree species to grow; harvesting, income, and boosting biodiversity; pest control; timescales; and legal considerations.

### Making Room for Rivers Public Talk in Waikanae – Wednesday 16 April @ 7.15pm

At our next F&B branch public meeting, we will hear from **freshwater advocate Tom Kay on Making Room For Rivers**. This will be an excellent and interesting talk - please invite your neighbours and friends. Our meeting starts at 7.15pm to let people grab a cuppa and greet each other, so we start promptly at 7:30pm and end by 9pm.

We meet at the Waikanae Community Centre, 28-32 Utauta Street, Waikanae <https://maps.app.goo.gl/c87CVr62vxfTNmSx8>. The venue is close to the station, and is timed to coincide with the train timetable as far as possible.

Please remember some coins for koha and/or our fundraising raffle.



## Have Your Say

### Local Water Done Well

There are three submission processes for our rohe. Local water (3 waters) includes bulk water supply, storm water and sewage treatment and disposal.

**Kāpiti** (consultation closes 13 April 2025): <https://haveyoursay.kapiticoast.govt.nz/local-water> Your submission may help to decide between the two options 1: KCDC manages the 3 waters alone. 2: KCDC combines with Horowhenua, Manawatu and Palmerston North to manage 3 waters.

**Porirua** (consultation closes 20 April 2025): <https://poriruacity.govt.nz/your-council/reforms/three-waters-reform/> Your submission may help to decide how Porirua City combines with Wellington City, Hutt City, Upper Hutt and Greater Wellington.

**Greater Wellington** (consultation closes 22 April 2025): <https://www.gw.govt.nz/environment/freshwater/local-water-done-well/> Greater Wellington provides bulk supply to Wellington City, Hutt City, Upper Hutt and Porirua City so GW is involved with the 4 cities.

## Bouquet - Helping Fish and People in Kenakena

We're pleased to see that fish passage has been considered and catered for in the Kenakena Flood Relief project on Te Atiawa Stream in Paraparaumu.

The stream flows beside Te Atiawa Park, under Mazengarb Road and Manly Street to enter the Waikanae Estuary. A survey before the start of the work found good fish life including both longfin and shortfin eels and elvers, as well as bullies.

The flood mitigation works will help prevent flooding of properties but also make it easier for fish to move between the sea and the headwaters, with the help of a slow-moving Archimedes-type screw mechanism to allow for fish migration. This means we should have even more fish in this stream in future. Read more about it here:

<https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/council/news-and-information/news-and-stories/2025/march/te-atiawa-stream-fish-life-points-to-brighter-future/?tag=>

### Kāpiti-Mana F&B walk in the Wi Parata Reserve

On Sunday 23 March, 11 people gathered for a botanical walk through the Wi Parata Reserve in Waikanae. We did a loop track looking at the many ferns and high kohekohe trees amongst other flora. This reserve is noted for its many epiphytes (*astelia solandri*).

Several interesting fungi were seen including an unusual flat purple one from the class Agaricomycetes, and a very good specimen of the Orange Pore Fungus (*favolaschia claudopus*).

The general lack of undergrowth, compared to other native forest areas, was noted by the group, and this was mainly due to lack of water.

Some of the bush was looking particularly sad due to lack of rainfall, however it looked a lot better than two weeks prior to this walk. The high dense canopy including the epiphytes is preventing almost all of the light rainfall from hitting the ground except for the odd area where a large tree has fallen and the canopy has gone.

At the southern point of the reserve the bush is beginning to be smothered by Mile-a-Minute (*Dipogon lignosus*).

Near the end of the walk one of the group found a large plastic rubbish bag and the rest of group soon filled the bag with rubbish lying about the reserve and the two undeveloped, but privately owned, sections next to the road at the south of the reserve that are an extension of the same fine forest remnant. Many of us commented on the [For Sale sign at one of the private sections](#) and hoped that the KCDC would buy the land to add to the existing reserve. It was disappointing to see several full dog poo bags in the reserve.

A handout, including a plant list, was given to all the attendees. Thank you to all of the group members who took part in this walk and especially to those who helped with the rubbish clean up.

**The next botanical walk will be on Sunday 25 May at 2pm where we will walk through the Waikanae River Estuary Reserve.**(No walk in April due to Easter)

*Doug Miller*

## Velvet Worms / ngāokeoke / Peripatoides novazealandiae

Something velvet this way creeps...  
(Apologies to Shakespeare) That's the way I described it when Russell and I spotted this New Zealand Peripatus in March 2015 while clearing a piece of derelict garden to build a deck. I thought there was only one peripatus species, but it turns out there are thought to be 30 species in New Zealand (9 described) and over 200 species around the world. Sometimes they are called 'living fossils' as they've barely changed in the past 500 million years (no that isn't too many zeros) and they are considered an evolutionary link between worms and insects.

Cryptic and reclusive they hide in damp woody places, under logs for example, partly because they struggle to retain moisture with their coat. We found one a couple of years ago in a patch of tradescantia on a rotting log.

They are stealth predators hunting at night and shooting out jets of sticky fluid to trap their prey (usually insects).

Their velvety soft bodies range from brownish to blue and even purple, with orange spangled spots and they have lots of stumpy legs.

Peripatus are not well studied but it is thought they can live for up to five years, and have up to 20 young (in eggs, but hatched internally) each year. You might be wondering why we decided to feature peripatus this month? ...

Well, they won the 2025 New Zealand Bug of the Year competition (bugs are at least as important as birds after all!).

We'll try and give this competition more coverage next year but you can learn more about it, and more about peripatus, here: <https://bugoftheyear.ento.org.nz/2024-bug-of-the-year-nominees/ngaokeoke-nz-velvet-worm/>. You can also watch a three-minute video about peripatus here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMKHmWT3dZg>. Maybe you could make a habitat to help peripatus in a wild corner of your garden? If you build it, they might come...



Photo © P Burton Bell, 2015

*Thanks for loving our natural world like we do*

*Russell and Pene*

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*Your feedback on this newsletter would be most welcome as would contributions to future newsletter*