



Peninsula Enviro News

Awhitu Peninsula Landcare Inc

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Awhitu Landcare's name seems to be cropping-up in all corners of our community of late. You'll read about much of it on the following pages. Briefly, it includes Pest Control Manager Glenn Knight's return from nautical adventures in Britain and France...Charmaine Pountney and Tanya Cumberland's visit to Kapiti Island's birds... Trish Aspin reveals more on local bush and birds... Martin Fryer visited to explain CarboNZero... Jack Harper's in-line for an eco-gong... Rob T's had a heart-stopping adventure... and we catch-up with David Millett in America.

Right now your Convenor Anna McNaughton asks:

"Are our deer too dear?"

The Pollok fallow herd is, in some quarters, a much-loved feature of the landscape. The sight of full heads of antlers or family groups of blond and near black hides is certainly charming. Local conventional wisdom has it that the deer are not damaging bush remnants. But the experiences of those struggling to protect or enhance their bush tell another story. Deer are certainly seen in large numbers in their main Pollok territory - groups of up to 30 on occasion. Significant other sightings are now a frequent occurrence north of this area, suggesting that, despite regular "harvesting" for BBQ and freezer, numbers are more than holding their own. Fencing and planting of riparian and bush margins are all proceeding apace - expensive work that (as the accompanying photo shows) does not need deer predation. This photo was taken at Kohekohe showing damage to freshly planted cabbage trees. Many more were UPROOTED!

All of which suggests deer may be overstaying their welcome. Is it time to get serious about eradicating fallow deer from Awhitu?

Anna.



Proof deer are pests!

Walking The Line

Most of us have heard about Landcare's fabled pest control barrier.

Many may imagine it as a high fence; a ditch; or magic white line from harbour to coast armed with all sorts of possum (especially) preventing devices. In some ways, as I found out recently, it's more basic than that. But no less effective.

It starts with a lone West Coast bait station and 'to-die-for-view' (no pun intended) at Aldred Gap - about a 1 hour walk from the nearest road 1 km north of Karioitahi Beach. It ends among mangroves at Larsen's Inlet to the West of Marae-O-Rehia Rd. Between those points are strategically located some 80 white bait stations soon to be backed-up by yellow Timms traps. Getting round every site weekly presently requires a day of walking and driving. And though only in operation for a few weeks it still 'eats' a 10kg sack of bait every fortnight! That means possums and probably more than we need. Probably a fair number of rats too. But proof this possum No Go Zone between the top and bottom of the Peninsula is working. Regardless of it's deadly purpose walking the bait line is a valuable experience, not only for the million-plus dollars vistas and sense of history. Glenn is already considering allowing a keen few to walk it with him for a reasonable donation to the Landcare cause.



Glenn and assistant Grant
Astely plan an inspection



Grant fills another station



Coastal barrier beginning

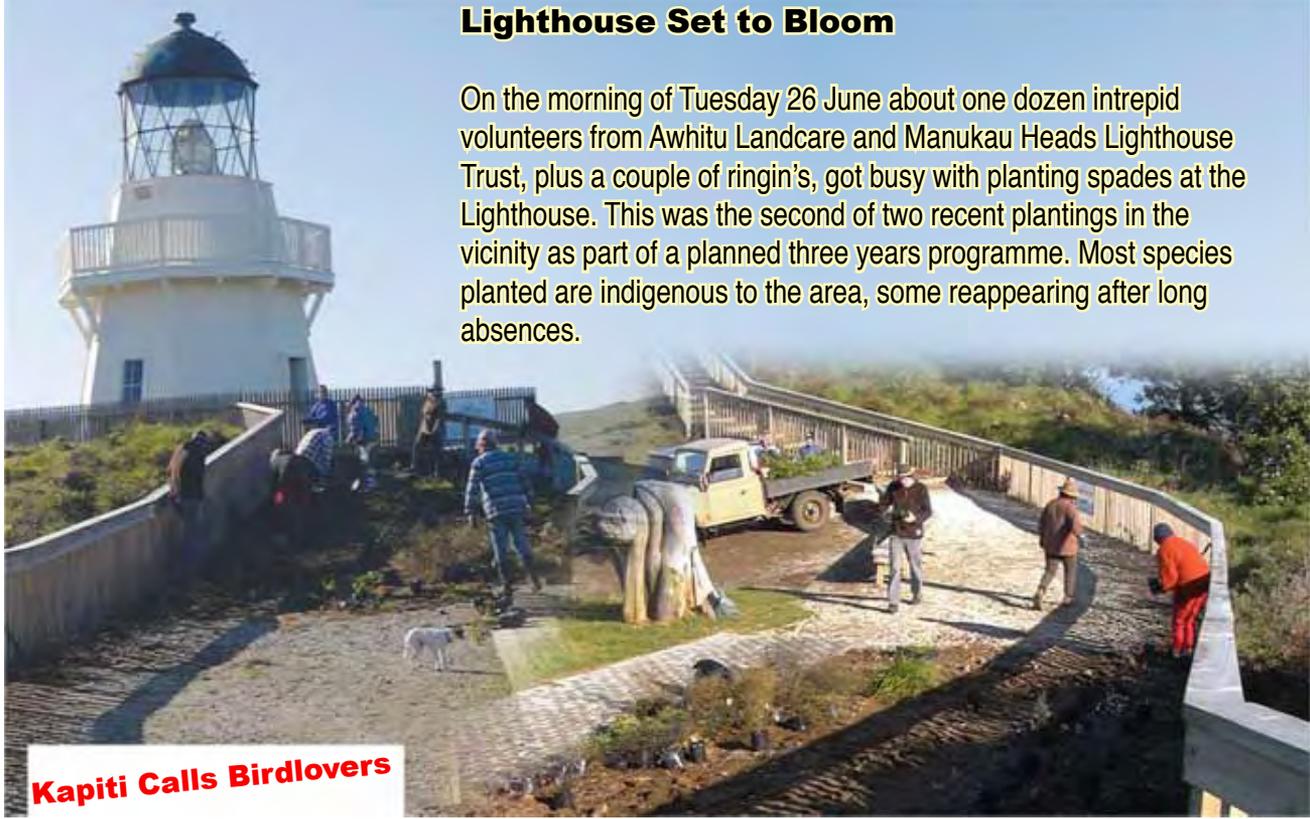
Carbon Zero or Carbon Neutral?

In an attempt to unravel some of the hype and jargon driving politicians and press the world over into a feeding frenzy, Awhitu Landcare and Awhitu Enterprise jointly invited Landcare Research Senior Advisor, Martin Fryer, out to shed some reliable light on the subject. Nearly 20 locals from as far afield as Waiuku turned-out at Pollok Hall, Sunday 22 July, to hear how we as a community might join the quest to achievable carbon emissions control. Sadly no specific 'how to's' were forthcoming because it became apparent to all that policymakers are focussed on the easy targets – big biz. There's little yet anyone under the current 50 hectares threshold qualification can do that is measurable and, therefore, meaningful – despite the plethora of information Martin was able to demonstrate. Nevertheless questions came fast and forcefully. Martin confirmed ours is a spirited and well-informed community. He personally offered to seek, from the highest levels of his organisation, answers to several questions posed by his audience. Much discussion followed over drinks and Jan Lowndes' natty nibbles, with Martin joining in freely. The consensus was of disappointment at our inability to contribute (yet) in measurable ways to achieving carbon reduction targets. Jack Harper captured the mood best when he asked, "When are we going to face the comet (CO2 overload) that is about to crash into our planet?" Before that happens we hope to bring you Landcare Research's answers.



Lighthouse Set to Bloom

On the morning of Tuesday 26 June about one dozen intrepid volunteers from Awhitu Landcare and Manukau Heads Lighthouse Trust, plus a couple of ringin's, got busy with planting spades at the Lighthouse. This was the second of two recent plantings in the vicinity as part of a planned three years programme. Most species planted are indigenous to the area, some reappearing after long absences.



Kapiti Calls Birdlovers

Are you drawn to watching quirky native birds at close quarters? And are you going to be anywhere near Wellington in the near future?

If so, a visit to Kapiti Island Nature Reserve is a must.

You can take a day trip, or stay overnight with a mana whenua family, the Barretts, at their lodge (www.kapititours.co.nz).

In April, from our rustic cabin on the island, we watched the antics of takahe, kereru, kaka and weka; and along the walking tracks we also saw tui, saddlebacks, stitchbirds, robins and bellbirds, plus of course the wetland and coastal birds. And at night, a guided walk by torchlight revealed the little silky-grey spotted kiwi scuttling along in the undergrowth.

This strategically placed reserve - only 5km off the Kapiti Coast - has been regenerating for 110 years in the south and 40 years in north. It's been possum and rat-free for around 20 years now, so the bush is lush and the bird-life prolific.

It's accessible by boat from Paraparaumu (www.kapitimarinecharter.co.nz), and any visit requires a DOC permit (Kapiti.Island@doc.govt.nz). Enjoy! And think what our bush on the Peninsula could be like in twenty years if we keep up the good pest control and restoration work!

Tanya Cumberland & Charmaine Pountney

Awhitu Bird Alert

Reports of Kaka continuing to camp at Kohekohe. Other sightings welcomed by Kate - 2351650.



Charming Kaka



David Millett's Letter from America

People on the Awhitu peninsula are very aware of how important water is as a resource because most of us are on 'tank' supply. We know how to keep the supply clean and to use it wisely. People in America, on the other hand, have enjoyed abundant water for centuries, and never really had to consider protecting their supply until fairly recently. Ever-increasing demands for progress and productivity have meant vital water supplies are often ignored until it's almost too late. Here are three stories from the local media that show how America is gaining a new appreciation for water.

In the town of Cortland, where we live, the water supply comes from the ground. People are pleased that the town is prospering and businesses want to open stores here, but a previously unknown problem has recently arisen. Many of the so-called 'big box' stores like Walmart and Home Depot demand very large paved parking lots. What this means is more and more of the re-charge area for the underground water supply is covered with tar-seal. Much needed rain does not get a chance to soak into the ground, but is diverted into storm water drains to the rivers. Ground water levels are dropping year after year and water restrictions for the area are becoming more frequent.

We visited the City of Columbus, Ohio recently, and they have a different problem. Here, they rely on reservoirs for city water. These reservoirs are fed by run-off from surrounding farmland. Increasing use of pesticides and fertilisers has meant an increasing level of pollutants like nitrates in the city drinking water. On several occasions the levels have reached levels higher than should be consumed by children. City authorities are urging farmers to reduce the amount of chemicals the use on their farms but there is no real inducement, or will, for them to change.

The mighty Mississippi river carries vast amounts of water and sediment from the heartland of America to the Gulf of Mexico every hour. It is also an important shipping route. In years gone by, the river flowed into the vast river delta and bayou system at the mouth of the river and deposited much of the sediment there. That doesn't happen anymore because the river has been dredged and channelled to allow ships access to the centre of the country. At present, the state of Mississippi is losing land around the bayou area at the astounding rate of half an acre every 15 minutes as the sea erodes it, because the river cannot replace it.

There may be worries about declining reserves of fossil fuel for the future, but people are also beginning to realise one of the biggest crises to face the modern world might be the shortage of something as fundamental as water.

Congratulations Due

To our Convenor, Anna McNaughton, for collecting Waiuku Rotary's Max Bruce environmental work award on behalf of Trees For survival on 20 June. How good is that!

Congratulations Pending

Our own lovable scourge of environmental vandals, Jack Harper, is in the top five for a major ARC eco award on 9 August. Rumours are he might be on breakfast telly next morning! We'll be watching Jack.

ECO HERO

Trish Aspin



Trish would like the world to know she is not a trained botanist; she prefers to be thought of as a 'plant enthusiast'. Few would hesitate in adding the word skilled before her preferred appellation. And few would complain at recognising this one-woman field force as an important contributor to the environmental health of our neighborhood.

Much of Trish's work is conducted on the quiet ('furtive fossicking' she calls it) in search of the Peninsula's flora and fauna. She often pops up in the most unexpected places, from backyards to the most uninspiring coppices. As a result Trish has located and identified more known plant species on the Awhitu Peninsula than any other person. And discovered quite a few unknowns to boot. Important work that is the subject of a book Trish is working on. Trish is recording local birds too – regularly counting them at five sites for Awhitu Landcare as part of her bush monitoring. Our Kate Fegan adds the information to a growing file (PEN 13's Bird Quiz featured a few of Trish's findings).

Trish and husband Wayne are well known for their outdoor activities in farming, land rehabilitation, land utilisation history and orienteering – that form of cross-country running which pits people armed with map and compass against the clock over unknown ground.

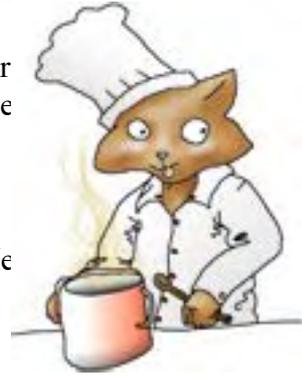
Her botanising started in earnest in the early 1990's with the establishment of Matakawau's bush walkway when Trish contacted the publishers of New Zealand Native Orchid Journal about a thumb-size specimen she discovered. They replied with enthusiasm asking for more. Trish has since added some 600 specimens of native plants plus several unusual imports to the nation's plant inventory. That includes 33 of our 73 endemic orchids. Her observations confirm that native birds are returning to many local areas, because important food sources (like Kohekohe) are no longer being hammered by predators. And while she has shared environmental awards for her work with husband Wayne, they do not excite her as much as her next 'find' or the achievement of her ultimate (probably unreachable) goal - recording every plant species in the district.



Trish identifies another Peninsula plant mystery.

Trapping Trap-shy Possums

Glenn suggests first changing the bait. Or, if the animal will take bait but avoids the trap, swap the Timms for one of Glenn's cages (or vice-versa). He also recommends placing a lure outside the trap – apple and cinnamon/peanut butter on toast/orange seasoned with curry powder or soaked in aniseed oil. If that goes without the trap being sprung you have a possum who has already lost his whiskers to Mr. Timms. Time to switch traps or to Mr. Pest-Off (poison bait – ask Glenn), or Messers Winchester, Remington or Ruger's lead pills and a torch. Now, while possum tucker is in short supply, is the best time to strike. He suggests a tasty morsel of Apple and Garam Marsala (learned, no doubt, at Mala's Indian Cooking Class) will be hard to resist.



Rabbits Make History

Interesting facts on those most-prolific breeders from, of all places, Britain's Family Tree Magazine.

- ✱ The Normans introduced rabbits to Britain from the Mediterranean.
- ✱ Until the 1700's the common name for rabbit was 'coney'. A 'rabbit' meant a young 'coney'.
- ✱ Once highly prized for food and fur, rabbits were protected by rich landowners and monasteries in vast warrens ranging from about 200 metres to over 400 hectares in area.
- ✱ "Warrener" or Warren Keeper gave rise to the common name Warren and even Warner. Warreners once lived well on landed estates too.
- ✱ A female ferret was called a "Jill; the male a 'Liner hob'. These were used by Norfolk's Breckland warreners to supply 200 dozen rabbits daily to London furriers and food merchants.
- ✱ Poaching became punishable by death under Britain's 1723 Waltham Black Act. And severe penalties (like transportation to Australia) pertained in much of the 19th and early 20th centuries.
- ✱ Rabbit only became a staple food of the poor after the repeal of its protected status in 1880.
- ✱ Britain's 1935 Myxomatosis epidemic killed more than rabbits, it destroyed the nation's appetite for rabbit meat as well as the livelihoods of traditional warrener families.
- ✱ Rabbits had arrived in New Zealand by 1838 (probably from New South Wales). Breeding pairs were on sale in the Hutt Valley in 1842.



1880's Warreners.

Helpful Hint

Don't consign retired cellphones to the trash when they can be handed in at any Vodafone store. Or sent to: FREEPOST, Vodafone Handset Recycling Programme, Private Bag 92-222, Auckland.

Take Heart.

Rob T., another of our Ecoheroes, should be back home from his 'surprise' triple-bypass by the time you read this. We wish him a speedy recovery.

A Wee Walk in the Wet

If you would like to see what exciting things Nicky Reynolds and Viv Wise have been up to up at Central just be there! 2pm sharp 23 September, Awhitu Central Road.

Paul's Piece: Another Way to Pat Your Own Back

Enjoy that flush of pride every time you see Landcare associated with the many projects crying-out for completion around you? Love basking in the limelight your \$10 membership fee earns? Then pause for a second...!

Some members seem to think that \$10 is all it takes for stuff to get done around these parts. When it's only the beginning. Landcare can only care for things that matter to you and others if you are among those doing the work. And there's much to be done.

We urgently need more helpers for things like the book keeping and reporting demanded by the organisations we get grants from; like potting plants at our nursery; planting out too. Or, would you take a turn at keeping an eye on our flash recycling centre?...or make the tea at meetings?...or mind the office whenever Kate can't? How about it! There's no pay, but a pat on the back is always a good start.

Matakawau Mural



A preview of what the new Matakawau Recycling Centre will look like – hopefully later this year. Awhitu School pupils under the direction of our own graphix-wiz Euan Craig have incorporated aspects of Peninsula life into the design.

NEW PROJECT TO REVIVE THE ICONIC CABBAGE TREE OVER NEW ZEALANDS RURAL LANDSCAPE

Project Ti Kouka is made possible through the financial support of **Computershare**, an Australian company that distributes company annual reports electronically, and which sponsors environmental projects through a programme known as **eTree**. With every email registered with eTree's website the relevant company donates \$2 to a designated reforestation project.



Pole about 6 months. Must be stabilized with a standard and kept moist for first year.

Why Promote Cabbage Trees?

The cabbage tree is an iconic and unique symbol of the New Zealand landscape. The most common of the five species - *Cordyline australis* - is found in every region of New Zealand and thrives on an extremely wide range of soils from heavy moist valley bottoms to hard steep hillsides.

Being fire resistant cabbage trees survived the pioneer bush burns but subsequent grazing has prevented new trees from becoming established. Many cabbage trees on farmland are at least a hundred years old and showing the effects of age, disease and stock pressure. Project Te Kouka aims to revive this symbolic landscape feature through planting new trees or protecting from stock the coppices of existing trees that are failing. An additional benefit will be cabbage tree's ecological contributions. They make available habitat and food for some native birds, and provide shade and shelter for livestock. In this respect they do not out-grow themselves like exotics.

Project Ti Kouka will promote cabbage trees generally, but its focus will be to establish new trees over open pasture. Trial work on cost-effective protection systems from livestock, and propagation from "poles" (similar to poplar and willow establishment) is underway at Havelock North's Poukawa Research Station.

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