



Peninsula Enviro News

Awhitu Peninsula Landcare Inc

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Convenor's Report

Busy, busy, busy...that's Landcare these days. I'll begin by reporting on the Maioro trip which saw a good turn-out by our own members, ARC personnel and coastal farmers; Ted Lever representing the Community Board and boffins Dr. Doug Hicks and Professor Kenneth Cumberland. The party was shown industrial scale marram plantings at the NZ Steel mine site by Senior Mining Engineer Modhur Barakat. The most recent planting – 20 hectares of contoured sand tailings – accomplished in just one week using state-of-the-art machines and already showing impressive growth thanks to a liberal application of poultry manure. Several sharp eyes also spied healthy patches of Pingao on the established sand. Perhaps we could tap into this equipment and expertise for our own sand erosion strategies?

Following this visit Awhitu Landcare hosted a Sand Erosion Strategy meeting. Before a good size crowd Dr Doug Hicks led discussion with the help of ARC's Rob Hughes (who began his working life specializing in Sand Dune Botany with the UK's Nature Conservatory Council). Their input stimulated several ideas, including retiring coastal country and reveging as a carbon sink, to using Waiuku estuary dredgings as mulch. Most sand-blow affected farmers appear to favour a Sand Control Scheme in co-operation with the ARC with some funding assistance as a serious solution to the problem. Doug Hicks has the experience of involvement with similar and successful schemes elsewhere in the country. I believe, to quote Rachel Hunter "It won't happen overnight, but it will happen..."

That's enough from me on this page. I'm itching to tell you about Ian and my Catlins Capers so keeping reading. And keep up all the good work - especially Ann's planters. Her report makes interesting reading too.

Anna McNaughton

QUICK QUIZ.

From the birds here choose what you believe were the three most commonly seen and heard over the Peninsula during the past year.

Answer and more see
Birds Count Page 8.



Helpful Hint: Fencing Natives

Most caveats for locking-up valuable chunks of regenerating bush usually require a tight 5-wire fence. The theory being, should cattle or sheep find their way in, it's easy to cut the fence. Yeah right! Much easier to install a gate somewhere and close it with a twist of No 8 as well as a catch. Not strictly 'legal' but a lot more practical.

Proud of Our Performance

By the time you read this Glenn Knight will be either calmly cruising on a French canal or aground and (therefore) commiserating in a pub.

First stage of the Pest Control Project has been completed. This job may have been the most enjoyable I've ever had. It's definitely most useful to the community. Over the peninsula's entire 220,000 hectares, from Wattle Bay to south of Taurangaruru Road we, meaning Awhitu Landcare and the ARC, have blitzed the possum population. And the vast majority of landowners agree to help us continue keeping the numbers down, hopefully to the current 3% residual level or less. 5% only of possums appears be the magic figure. Below that bush regenerates along with invertebrates possums eat in winter through spring.

So, where to from here? Firstly, we're continuing to supply bait to those who help by poisoning possums. Secondly, I will never give up on the handful of large landowners yet to take part. And, then, there are newcomers to the Peninsula. I hope to encourage Real Estate Agents to introduce me to all who move here. And, while on the subject of immigration, my dream of a 'barrier' across the peninsula has come to fruition. It's not a pest proof fence but a line of stations and traps constantly baited with a variety of lures designed to attract any possum that thinks they can just 'move in'.

So it's business as usual for the Pest Control Project. If you need anything – bait, traps, bait stations or advice on both animal and plant pests - please call me on 2351501.

Community Planting Team Busy.

It took Convenor Anna's regular potting squad plus a few ring-ins to move a truck-load or two (Denise Shepherd's flat deck) of strong young trees and flaxes from Awhitu Landcare's Hamilton Rd shade house to Ann Lee's yard on Wednesday 18 April. Ann herself relates what subsequently has become of them.

“On 29 April we began by adding to the previous substantial plantings at Waimatuku (Hamilton's Gap). While protecting this windswept zone we are endeavouring to create areas of shelter for day-trippers and campers. It is, therefore, rewarding to observe our initial plantings of Flax have bulked-up providing essential shelter for plantings of successive colonizers of Pohutukawa, Ngaio, Ti kouka and others. Waimatuku is a peninsula treasure deserving our continuing care.



May 5 and a brilliant day for nearly 20 volunteers to get busy with shovels at the Lighthouse. Their efforts in planting Pohutukawa, Flax, Ti kouka, Muehlenbeckia and Carex virgata will eventually become an impressive tree-lined corridor for visitors.

May 12 a small and enthusiastic (including 11-years old Daniel Parry plus a dog-walker who 'just happened' to be passing) made short work of tree planting on the cliff-top buffer zone above the car park. Several present then moved on to take care of some in-fill planting at the end of Hatton Rd. Again the weather gods were kind (to planters). The mood of the day best summed-up by Daniel: “We are doing something for the community. We are helping prevent erosion and...it's fun!”



May 16 found more of us out again on the Matakawau Scout Den/Play Centre driveway where earlier planting had been damaged during re-sealing last year. We added Renga renga, Carex virgata, Pohutukawa, Flax and Hebe. We plan to mulch this area in June; so will be looking for helpers. All we need now (at time of writing) is rain.

A big THANKS to all who have pitched-in this season.

Ann Lee, Plantings Co-coordinator

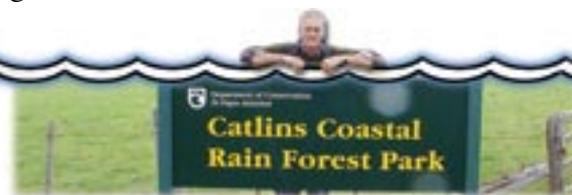
“Sustainable Communities”

– report on presentation by Astrid Lambert,
CEO Enterprise Franklin Development Trust

In her April presentation to a receptive Awhitu Landcare meeting Astrid spoke of sustainable communities and how they develop. In her view “Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work now and in future. They meet the needs of existing and future communities, are sensitive to the environment, contribute to a high quality of life, are safe, inclusive, well planned, well built and well run.”

Her presentation went on to highlight the work of Australian Peter Kenyon – the fundamental being ‘communities don’t develop from the top down or from outside in. They build from inside out utilizing resident investments of themselves, their ideas, capabilities and resources in the process’.

By way of demonstration Astrid singled out Kenyon’s case study of the Beechworth Bakery, located in Beechworth (pop. 3100) in North East Victoria. A town once going nowhere. But the bakery, which employs 65 people, now helps attract up to 650,000 visitors annually. Tom O’Toole, Beechworth Bakery owner, attributes this success to networking and cross promotions with other businesses; practicing positively outrageous customer service, by daring to be different and by banishing bland. Astrid made it clear she believes a similar transformation could be possible in Awhitu. She encouraged all present to look at their community through fresh eyes, identifying opportunities and the gems existent already and help them grow. “Build from the inside out”, she reiterated.



Two Chill-out In The Catlins

“A few days free of computers, mobiles and TV on the Catlin’s Coast in April allowed Ian and I to appreciate the remaining bush in this special Southern landscape between Dunedin and Invercargill. Though large areas have been deforested, the cool, moist microclimate has allowed the remaining lush rainforest to thrive. And it’s in great heart. Cooperative operations against possums, mustelids and rats by DOC, Forest & Bird and Maori forest owners over a long period have had great effect. The proof: birdlife on bush walks almost rivals offshore sanctuaries for numbers and musicality. A heartening prospect for our own local initiatives. (See Birds Count p8). Also interesting was our ‘old friend’ marram grass appears to have formed a protective buffer along the dune coastal margins. We were unable to discover whether or not this was the result of deliberate planting or colonization by escapearram did not appear to have compromised local bush, though native sand-binders did not appear to be present. Further south still, in Curio Bay, heroic Hebe elliptica thrives down to the tide line. (This tough character is found in remnants of Gondwana like South America and the Falklands and has naturalized in Tasmania and France.) Once again, coastal bush in shades of green contrasting with the reds of Horopito (*Pseudowintera colourata*) give the lie to the theory native plants are boring and bland. My photos tell more.”

Horopito red contrasting with the many greens of pittosporums and flaxes



Three-digits version of five finger – showing tell-tale results of possum snacking

Munchtime for Boneseed

Regular readers of the Herald will have noted a recent article that would have pleased all Boneseed Policemen and Women. On Waiheke Island one scourge of Awahitu cliff faces and bare plots – *Chrysanthemoides monilifera* or Boneseed - is facing a new biological control. In a joint project the ARC and Landcare Research are releasing a South African leaf roller caterpillar on this one-time garden ornamental. Apparently the caterpillars are rapacious feeders and can kill entire Boneseed plants. Whether or not they find a New Zealand native more attractive is one reason for the trial, conducted under approval of the Environmental Risk Management Authority. Tests at home in South Africa and in Australia have shown the risk to be negligible. According to the report, Australia is also trialing a rust fungus in its' own boneseed war. ARC's Chris Katterns welcomes any initiatives in the war against weed pests. But warns it could be some time before results are conclusive.

For the uninitiated, Boneseed is a bushy shrub up to 3 metres high, with leathery, slightly toothy leaves, masses of yellow flowers and white seeds truly hard as bone. Once identified you too will appreciate the boneseed Policeperson's Lament:

Pity the Boneseed Policeperson
Whose work is never done.
Tho' they pluck monilifera high and low,
There's always another one.

Anon.



Grave Concerns

BBC news of 3 April reported that China plans to curb steep rises in the cost of grave plots due to speculators. Cost per square metre is already double that for houses in some provinces. Future purchasers will be required to produce a death certificate for approval to buy. (Perhaps, we could sell them space on our Sand Blows – Ed)

our EcoHeroes

Before Landcare arrived in Awhitu Pixie Craig was already a local legend. Most are aware of her wider community contributions – especially her tireless championing of creative expression. What is not so widely understood is hers and late husband Ian's contribution to erosion control and plant propagation. We explain why this latter facet alone qualifies Pixie as a true EcoHero.

Turepo (*Paratrophis microphylla*) – Milk tree.

The Craig property at Potllok carries the peninsula's largest concentration of Turepo – a small tree of up to 12 metres. It's also the largest wild Turepo remnant in the Auckland region and considered endangered. Even the largest copse of just 20 mature specimens possesses only a single male.

Pixie had son David fence-off these trees from predation and was soon able to observe the male tree producing greenish-yellow catkin type flowers (similar to a Walnut) every two or three years.

Through trial and error (including suggesting eating them herself to observe if they propagated better after digestion) she succeeded in growing from seed and cuttings – progeny that were replanted in new bush lots on hers and other properties in the district.

Kotukutuku (*Fuchsia excorticata*) – Tree fuchsia.

At up to 12 metres high, possibly the world's largest Fuchsia and once numerous on the Craig family's home property. However, from the 1950's (according to David), it was reduced to a handful of plants in inaccessible areas. Stock, possums and demand for deformed roots by wood carvers all took their toll. Pixie reacted by successfully growing a large specimen in her home garden. From this cuttings regularly found new homes in the district. Pixie discovered that Fuchsia can be grown from seed or cuttings; do best in partial shade but will tolerate full sun if planted in rich moist soil.

Para (*Marattia salicina*) – King fern.

Another on Awhitu Peninsula's rare list due to decimation by sheep, cattle and human consumption. (David remembers, when younger, playing with local Maori children while their parents foraged for Para fronds – the base of which was a favoured food.) From one large specimen still living on David's front lawn, Pixie propagated plants that soon found new homes in her own and other's bush lots. Most of these are now large shrubs adding their own progeny to Awhitu Bush.

Sadly, Pixie left us forever early April. But her legacy continues to grow.



Pixie Craig (right) and daughter Francie's eye-stopping use of recycled materials on EcoHero day March 2004.

Ways to Zero Waste...continued.

Last year David Millet spent several days on a fact-finding mission into waste recycling in the South. His intention was to look at how others are turning problem waste into a resource. PEN continues with Part 2 of David's long-awaited summary.

Selwyn District Council.

Curbside Collection Fees Curbing Recycling

The Rolleston transfer station has a 'Hot Rot' composting facility for everything from cows to chickens to lawn clippings. The \$1.2 millions plant does not accept un-breakdown-ables like flax and cordyline. David remarks that, in his view, their graduated curbside collection fees discourage recycling.

Ashburton District Council.

New Trials

Ashburton's Mayor, Bede O'Malley, reported favourably on a recent curbside putrisables trial.

Canterbury.

Education Key

Wastebusters Trust Canterbury Resource recovery Park believe so strongly in education as the key to recycling they have two full-time staff visiting primary schools. (Apparently a group in Tauranga does something similar.) Wastebusters Park also features an education centre with lots of re-use examples on display. Another feature is a recycle shop. Another is a metals recovery area (very popular with local thieves) and large composter. A converted bus makes curbside recyclable collections and sorts on board – a time-consuming process that, in David's view, could be better handled by a flat deck with removable bins.

McKenzie District Council's Twizel Operation.

Lack of Landfill Forcing Diversion

One of three local depots serving a large area. Utilises a converted wool press for recyclables. No landfill available so diversion of as much as possible is required. Their claim to fame is an 'as seen on TV' vertical composting system costing about \$250,000. "Beautifully simple" according to David.

Central Worm Worx. Worms Eating Council Sewage

Tiger Worms turning organic waste from a range of sources into nutrition for plants. Currently engaged in a trial with a local council to gauge how well the worms can process material from sewage ponds. Results already encouraging.

Oamaru.

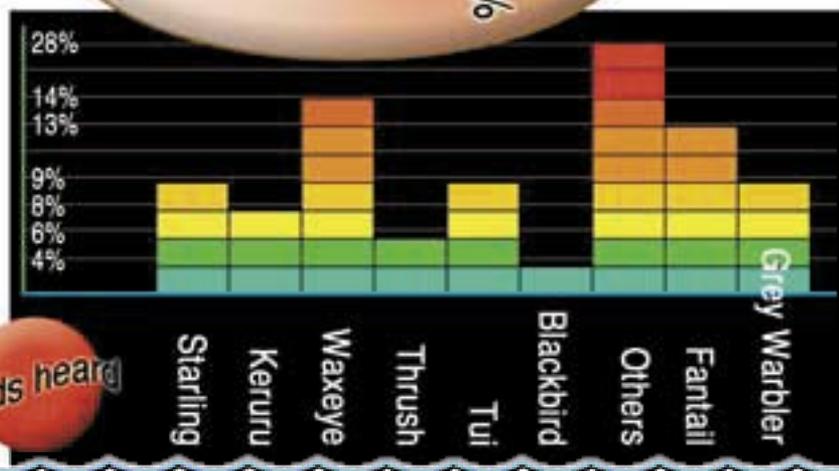
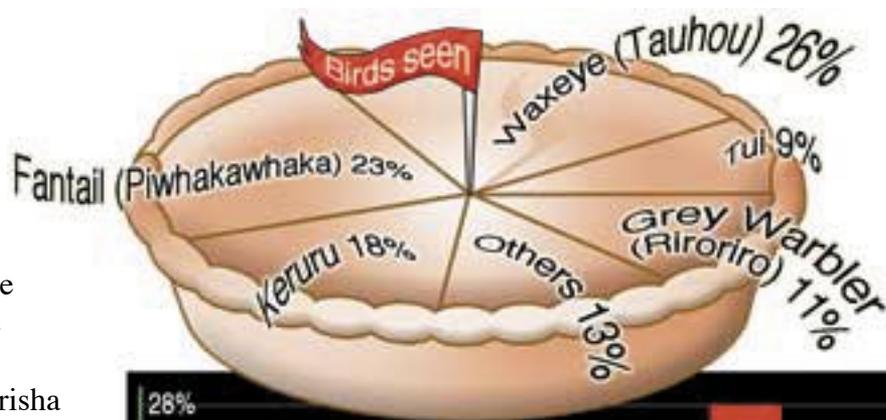
Waste not Wasted

Waitaki Resource Recovery Trust operates a sizeable shop and waste recovery area. The shop alone turns over some \$100,000 annually with further sales on Trade Me. Staff range from volunteers to unemployed to ACC beneficiaries. Nothing is wasted. Large staff means they are able to dismantle appliances. Interestingly, the Council does not charge for lease of the site.

\$11 Million Investment

Operates a joint venture with Envirowaste, who have invested some \$11 millions into plant and machinery. They pay the Council an annual return generated from recyclables.

Birds Count



Readers will know that since June 2006 Awhitu Landcare has been overseeing the FORMAK bird counts by Trisha Aspin on five local properties. Nimble-fingered Kate Fegan has been digging up interesting facts on Birds Seen and Birds Heard during that period. Graphix-wiz Euan Craig has made the information more palatable.

Rare Holidaymakers on Peninsula!

Kaka have lately been reported noisily overnighting in Kohekohe bush.

Opportunity Knocks.

More information from Kate (09) 2351650

kate@awhitu.org.nz

Winner Announced

Winner of the Pest Control pack courtesy of RD1 in our recent questionnaire draw is Philip Twidle of Ponsford Rd. Congratulations. Thanks to all participants.

Tractor Driving: 27 June & 19 July, ARC Park
 Instructor: Farmsafe
 Fee: Nil

Chainsaw Handling: 29 June & 12 July, ARC Park
 Instructor: Farmsafe
 Fee: Nil

Basic Computer Course – max 6 people
 Instructor: Grant Mackenzie
 Duration: 2 days
 Day 1: Playing with images, music, video, etc
 Day 2: Getting more from the Internet
 Fee: \$15 per day per person

Agrichemicals Approved Handler
 Training: 17 July, 5 to 5pm,
 Awhitu Central

Instructor: Growsafe
 Fee: \$50

Animal Handling: Expressions
 of interest
 wanted
 Fee: Free to NZ residents
 over 16