



So, what is it for?...

Residents and visitors to the Peninsula may have noticed a new building appearing behind the public toilets at Makakawau. This is the base of the Landcare native plant nursery, which we are setting up specifically to be able to eco-source Peninsula plants, and grow them on in significant quantities for revegetation work. This major project for Landcare has been more than two years in the making, and we are thrilled to see it reach this stage. We still have a way to go before we are operational and, like all volunteer projects, we are struggling to raise enough money to complete the final stages of work.

Last year we wrote about Fred Lichtwark, the inspirational leader of Whaingaroa (Raglan) Harbourcare. Many of you

heard Fred speak at the Landcare AGM last year. Our aim is to make it possible to duplicate the successes Fred's group has achieved in Raglan with his water catchment planting scheme. Catchment planting reduces run-off of silt, manure and nutrients from adjacent pastures into streams and harbours and improves water quality. There are additional benefits for wildlife, landscape values, employment, and recreational/tourism benefits for the local community. For instance? Whitebait catches in Raglan have increased from 1/2 a cup a day to 1/2 a bucket per day! And the fishing catch has increased from 1 fish every 18 hours to 1 in less than 2 hours. Sounds good to us.....

Right: the plant nursery base.



Volunteers notch up a few more thousand plants

We are eternally grateful to our regular band of volunteers. This winter has seen another several thousand plants being started off on their way to becoming native bush of the future. The more mud on our boots, the smaller our carbon footprint becomes...

We started the year off at Queens Birthday Weekend when, in conjunction with the local Orua Bay Residents Assoc, we assisted with planting pohutukawa to replace radiata pine trees.

In 50 years or so the coastline of the Bay to Mako Point should be a blaze of red for Christmas.

In July at Waimatuku/Hamilton's Gap the promise of a sausage sizzle attracted a goodly crowd to our beach clean up and planting day.

As well as removing many bag loads of plastic from the environment, we were able to supplement the foredune planting of the previous years with more pingao and spinifex.

Planters commented on the massive amounts of sand collected by the plants in our initial dune restoration. The sand build up must be close to 1.5m in some areas – all done by the dune plants, for free, self-repairing and no concrete required.

The Awhitu Social Club is undergoing a well earned makeover – and we got with the programme and organised a planting to replace the nasty patch of gorse that fronted the Heads Road. Flax and cabbage trees will be far more appropriate for the Club's fresh new look and shouldn't grow too tall to spoil the stunning views from the veranda.

Across the way from the Club the wetland area that we fenced off last year was the site of our final planting this winter.

A bad weather forecast didn't dampen the spirits of the hardy folk assembled and many were heartened by the amazing regeneration already taking place in such

a short time. Seedlings are popping up everywhere and with the stock kept out, this will be a haven for biodiversity in years to come.

Below: Community beach plantings are starting to hold sand in place.

Bottom: the planting at Awhitu Social Club will enhance the Club's makeover.



Walking on the seabed

These days, there is much talk of the problems of rising sea levels associated with climate change. All very worrying – especially for those on low lying land. For one of our members, the rise (and fall) of the tide was top of mind recently.

Most will be familiar with the Channel Island of Jersey as the origin of the famous breed of milking cow. It has another claim to fame – it has some of the highest tidal ranges in the world – 12 metres. These facts are relevant when you plan to stay in Seymour Tower, as did our member in July. Constructed in 1762 as a defensive tower to ward off the French, the granite structure lies two miles offshore – but these massive tides mean that there is a small window of time at low tide when it can be reached on foot.

Accompanied by a guide, this walk out on the seabed is a chance to see fascinating creatures normally hidden by 12 metres of salt water. It is hard not to get carried away exploring the rock pools on the way – a sometimes fatal mistake. Many have been caught out by a tide that rises at 5cm per minute. For the careless, there is a 13m tall metal platform at the halfway point so those, literally caught short, can climb to safety. The Coastguard will collect the marooned to avoid the long wait till another low tide. The whole area surrounding the tower is a

Ramsar site – a wetland of international importance – similar to the one at Miranda in the Firth of Thames. Like our wetlands in NZ, the area is regarded as a threatened environment that requires protection. It is a source of huge biodiversity and with other similar offshore reefs, it is regarded as the "engine room of the English Channel".

Do you have a wetland on your property? These areas are severely threatened in NZ – we once had 2.4 million hectares – now only 250,000 – just 10% of the original area remains. There may be assistance available to you if you need help in protecting these sites – contact the Landcare Office for more information.

Below - Seymour Tower



DID YOU KNOW? Virtually all animals cease killing prey once their hunger is satisfied, but Mustelids (stoats, weasels and ferrets) continue to kill ... purely for the love of it. There have been numerous sightings in our area recently. Landcare has traps and advice to help you get rid of these ferocious pests; phone 235 1616.