

Welcome to Issue 29 of the newsletter of Awhitu Peninsula Landcare Inc. We hope that you are looking forward to a restful Easter – perhaps a spot of fishing? We at Landcare have lots of projects on the go – we're moving, we're hoping to set up a new shadehouse, we're setting our

sights on mustelid trapping, we've set a winter planting programme, we're hopeful of good results with local biocontrol of flannelweed, possum monitor results are under 3% again, winter marram planting approaches... phew. We're looking forward to a restful Easter as well...

Awhitu Landcare on the move!

The Landcare base, located at Matakawau in recent times, will move to the Old Pollok Store at the end of April.

At the corner of Awhitu and Pollok Wharf Roads, readers of a certain age may remember

its past life as a 4-Square and fuel stop. For anyone unsure of the location, we are reliably informed that the colour Pink will be at the forefront (beggars can't be choosers when it comes to free paint...)

From May we will be open every weekday – Monday to Friday, 9am until 12pm.

We look forward to welcoming you to our new home. Phone number stays as 235 1616 (we hope!)

Hard work pays big dividends



Despite threatening grey clouds, the rain held off and an autumn Landcare walk was enjoyed by a crowd of about fifty. Pollok farmers Robert and Kaye Hamilton gave us a rundown on their farming operation before leading a walk over their beautiful farm.

Robert and Kaye bought their 155-hectare drystock farm in 1988, with an additional 29 hectares added this year. The focus has been beef finishing, plus they run a small ewe flock.

Robert described their conservation work, which began 13 years ago with a Queen Elizabeth II protective covenant over mature bush close to the farmhouse.

There are now a total of 25 hectares protected, with more than 7km of full boundary fencing in place.

Protection of wetland and ri-

parian areas has been underway for five years, with 'sweat equity' from Robert and Kaye, funding assistance from DOC Nature Heritage fund and the ARC Environmental Initiatives Fund.

Waiuku College students have assisted with replanting riparian margins with native trees grown in the Trees for Survival growing unit, accompanied by the NZ Steel environmental team – sponsors of the College growing unit. Manuka, kanuka, ake ake, pohutukawa and kahikatea, planted from 2008, are beginning to show their heads through grassed banks.

Walkers viewed high-health mature bush, with outstanding specimens of puriri and kohekohe, wetlands with raupo, kiekie and kahikatea, and on the western slopes, open areas dotted with healthy pohutukawa.

Forty possum bait stations dot

the property, which Robert fills on a 'pulsing' system 3-4 times per year. The improved vigour of the trees and the increase in birdlife has been a clear result of the possum control.

From the highest point of the property it is heartening to note that all bush on the surrounding properties is now fenced, with the Norbis, Kurth, Martin, Marson, Craig, and Russell/Sharp bush covenants all visible from the Hamilton farm.

A cuppa and freshly baked scones, thanks to Pollok's scone baking champion Leonie Picard, were very welcome after a good workout over the hills.

Our thanks to Kaye and Robert for letting us view the impressive results of their years of dedication and hard work.

Above: Robert Hamilton explains the benefits of fencing off bush areas

Successful pest trapping is something of an art form on the Peninsula

Mustelid control is becoming more of a focus for Landcare. Mustelids (stoats, ferrets, weasels) pose a serious threat to our native animals and NZ's farming industry.

Wild ferrets can carry TB which they spread to cattle and deer herds.

They voraciously attack chickens, ducks and eat eggs - also pets such as rabbits and guinea pigs. Even water is no barrier – stoats can swim long distances.

Sightings of stoats and ferrets on the Peninsula seem to be on the increase.

Mustelids are very alert, wary creatures, and successful trapping is an art...

We have had assistance from John Parker, Animal Health Board,

who has been following up the 2010 TB outbreak with a mustelid population check. John has recently caught a total of seven ferrets within RD4.

Meanwhile, local rabbit shooter Martin Robertson has kick-started our mustelid programme, having accounted for six ferrets in the Kohekohe district.

Martin has given us some great tips for tempting mustelids into traps:

- Select a trap which you find easy to set – Timms with a tunnel attachment (available from RD1) is the most user-friendly one

- Oil the metal trap parts with fisholene, this will maintain a rust-free, quick trap

- Try to avoid too

much human scent on the trap exterior

- Mustelids use established tracks to move around. Position the trap along fence lines, beside streams and ponds, bush margins and on banks

- Set into place very firmly – wobbly traps will spook mustelids

- Attractive baits are – smoked fish, fresh rabbit, salted rabbit, eggs slightly cracked, smeared with marmite or vegemite

Pestoff manufacture a fish-flavoured Pestoff bait – this must only be used in appropriate (mustelid) traps, is poisonous and must be kept well away from pets.

Below left: The Perfect Set Up. Below right: And – Success!



2011 Winter Planting Dates

If you want exercise, some company, feel the wind in your hair and help the environment – come join us for an hour or two!

Awhitu Lighthouse – 10am Wed 8 June - with the bonus of yummy food. Awhitu Central Reserve, Kemp Road – 10am Sun 10 July and 10am Sun 31 July. Pollok Wharf Reserve - 10am Sun 21 Aug 'Pohutukawa Planting Day'

Running out of room in the shadehouse

Landcare volunteers plant out thousands of native seedlings to assist revegetation - for the benefit of local biodiversity, and to enhance the landscape for all to enjoy.

Thanks to the generosity of David and Antonia Craig, we have been using a shadehouse on their land.

Whilst they are happy for this to continue, it is not ideal to have a public facility on private land, and plant numbers are outgrowing the site.

Looking to the future, we want to ensure that

revegetation on the Peninsula is continued and, if possible, extended.

To do this, our objective is to create a purpose-built shadehouse and base on easily accessed, centrally located public land. This would:

- give revegetation / possum control work some surety of existence into the future

- enable the collection and propagation of local seeds (eco-sourcing)

- enable the growth of more native plants than is currently pos-

sible

- make the shadehouse operation more accessible to volunteers and visitors

- increase educational opportunities

- enable the propagation of some of Awhitu's uncommon species

We have just had the opportunity to present to the Franklin Local Board and we are working with the Auckland Council to try and make our vision a reality.

It seems likely at the moment that, working in conjunction with Awhitu School for water supply, a nar-

row strip on the Matakawau Local Purpose Reserve (alongside the driveway leading to Playcentre) would be the ideal location for siting a shadehouse base.

Thanks to all those who have given Landcare their support for this exciting proposal, which we believe could dramatically advance the biodiversity of the Peninsula in years – and for generations – to come.

Right: we have run out of room in our current shadehouse.

