



Welcome to Issue 32 of the newsletter of Awhitu Peninsula Landcare. We wish you all a peaceful Easter, spending time in an environment you love. As we put this issue together, one message stands out above all else. Whether we delight in feeling the sand beneath our toes, marvel at the green dappled light in our precious

bush, enjoy the splendid colour of autumn flowers in our gardens, pause to appreciate clean water rushing through our fingers, or simply give thanks for our day to day lives - we each have a responsibility to care for our environment. If each of us plays a part, however small, we really can make a difference. Kia ora.

A special place in our hearts

Hamiltons Gap / Waimatuku proved again what a special place it has in people's hearts when 52 helpers arrived for a March beach clean up. Some travelled from as far away as Karaka and ages varied from three to 83. Marvellous!

We had thought that the king tides would deliver much rubbish, but on the day there was less on the beach than there has been in recent times. This meant we were able to concentrate on cleaning up the multitude of tiny plastic fragments which are most harmful to wildlife, and in fact humans, as these are digested by marine animals and enter our food chain.

As we worked our way along the beach, people were asking: 'where does all this debris come from?' Well, NZ has the 9th longest coastline in the world, and over 80% of marine debris comes from land, most of it from storm-water discharges into rivers and coastal areas. Other debris originates from recreational activities including fishing, and windblown litter from near-shore environments.

Why Should we Bother?

There is an increasing quantity of

marine debris entering our waterways every year. Apart from being unsightly, it is harmful in so many ways:

- Birds, mammals and fish swallow bits of plastic, it can clog their stomachs, they die of starvation

- The plastic that marine animals ingest stays in their stomach and attracts other toxins

- Abandoned fishing gear and plastic (such as 6-pack rings) can entangle marine animals and birds, causing strangulation, suffocation, loss of limbs

- Litter that sinks to the bottom damages the seabed

- Plastic acts as rafts for small creatures, allowing them to travel long distances where they are not native

Thanks to Auckland Council for their assistance supplying sausages to sizzle and rubbish bags for this beach clean up. We plan to make this an annual event. *Below left: Although Tim Mahon only stays locally 2 days a week, he shows his love for the area by regularly collecting rubbish. Below right: All ages helped clean up Hamiltons Gap / Waimatuku. Joshua and Shanelle McOnie give their Mum a hand.*

Our Rubbish Lasts a Very Long Time
How long does it stay in the environment for?

- Orange peel 2 years
- Cigarette butts 1-5 years
- Plastic bags 20-50 years
- Tin cans 50 years
- Aluminium cans 80-100 years
- Glass 1 million years
- Plastic bottles 250 years



Above: Landcare walks are enjoyed by many.

Great crowd for a favourite walk

Over 80 people participated in our Anniversary Weekend walk which is becoming a favourite fixture for both locals and visitors.

This year we were visiting the properties of members - Jack and Mick Harper and their neighbours Ian and Anna McNaughton.

First stop was the ruins of the old boiling down works that are visible from the Awhitu Road.

Many people have wondered, whilst driving past, what that tumbledown concrete structure was.

David Craig explained the mystery and regaled us with gory stories of cattle lined up awaiting their fate in the pot.

Other locals told us their childhood

experiences many years ago - on the back seat of the family car holding their breath whilst driving through the stench - some things do change for the better.

George Flavell of Ngati te Ata was unable to join us on the day, but had very kindly prepared a commentary to help inform us as we clambered up to Otawheinga defensive Pa.

The view was stunning and we could see how important this site had been during its past occupation.

From this vantage point we set out on the track down into the valley and the wetland regeneration that Jack Harper (Sustainable Environment Award Supreme Winner) had undertaken about a decade before.

Having spent so much effort improving his farm, some were surprised to see the battered hulk of a Subaru Justy sitting perched on the side of a gully.

Even more surprising, as we approached it, was the emergence from the car of said land owner - the indomitable Jack had driven the clunker up hill and down dale to meet us in the back of beyond.

One joker suggested that maybe a trip to the panelbeater may be in order, to which Jack replied - 'Why? The panels look beaten already!'

We then journeyed to the McNaughton's property and were shown the native bird corridor they had developed on their property (Anna McNaughton is also an Environmental Award winner).

A fenced area of remnant bush was next and people packed into this cool oasis to observe the lush growth that has sprung up in the absence of browsing stock - most impressive and a great incentive to anyone considering this option.

