

## Welcome to PEN in the Post

Tena koutou. Tena koutou. Tena koutou katoa. Welcome to issue 22 of the newsletter of Awhitu Peninsula Landcare Inc.

At this time of year Landcare is in the middle of a very active planting season with the aid of trees grown in Landcare's own shade house. That requires regular calls on every-ready volunteers to plant them (always room for more: call 235 1616 — hot scones and hot drinks the usual reward). Also, this month, we will

be considering a suggestion that, partially as a result of Landcare's possum control programme, the Peninsula might again become home for kiwi. All that and we share items of interest in the interests of increasing the sustainability of our land, it's native flora and fauna. Views and comments expressed in 'Enviro News' are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Post or Awhitu Peninsula Landcare.

## April's marram fieldday well supported

April's Marram Fieldday/Walk took place on 19 April last and was led, from the end of Douglas road out to nearby coastal cliffs, by the indomitable 'Doctor Dirt' Doug Hicks. The 30-odd Landcarers present were provided with knowledgeable insight into the success or failure of successive sand blow control attempts in the same area.

Also along were marram planting team leaders Chrissie Hull and Ian McNaughton. Some of what the 30 walkers witnessed was remnants of sand blow controls started in the 1930 and '50s, with one significant stabilisation attempt from 1960s — much of it working still. Added to that were the results of programmes through succeeding decades, culminating in the 2007 establishment, by Awhitu Landcare, of its own local marram nursery. This source, in close proximity to sand areas under stress, is proving a valuable resource.

An overall consensus by those present was, that while the process of sand erosion control involves a process of slow gains and rapid losses, some areas do respond to a variety of measures.

There is no magic one-fix for all. For example, pasturage of animals can often be factored into a programme without degradation of the sward or underlying land. It's often a matter of timing and degree.

And, though we may not be winning the war against sand blows overall, as our own Jack Harper ably pointed out two years ago, some battles are going the community's way.

For information on future investigative field walks of this nature contact Kate on 2351616.

*Below left: the marram nursery view, while, below right, Chrissie Hull demonstrates correct planting technique.*

## Possums feel pinch

Awhitu Landcare's possum control programme has scored an all-time low with contractor Peter Nichols teams work resulting in a 1.1% RTC (Residual Trap Catch) — meaning for one hundred traps set produced just one possum. Trap lines were set through Landcare's southern bait line stretching from Marae-o-Rehia via Taurangaruru Rd to the West Coast and also in the RD3 coastal zone to Kelland Road. This follows from the work of the Landcare team and local volunteers who regularly top-up poison bait stations. Anyone volunteering to service bait stations makes the overall job (possum management) easier. Attention has since switched to the Lake Pokorua/West Coast sector in preparation for an RTC test sometime before the end of July.

Landcare is delighted to be setting-up bait stations in RD4 hot spots indicated by increasing possum sightings and road kill. While these hotspots are receiving attention, the prime areas of concern are proving to be the flax gullies of the wild west coast. Cliff-top bait stations are being emptied in record time. Possums are particularly hungry at this time of year, with food choices at their lowest, so the speed of this bait-take is cause for concern.

Long term, the solution would appear to be a coastal poison bait line — a considerable undertaking given the area's difficult geography. Meantime, Landcare would welcome (235 1616) offers from landowners able to access their own coastal gullies to fill two or three bait stations located on top of them. We've got the stations and the bait as long as you will give the hour it might require every few weeks.

## A one-woman possum war

J. Renall Road's Jenny Hinton might be about to turn 70, but that is not preventing her from managing a few bait stations on behalf of herself and neighbours — some of which land includes cliff-side hotspots. "Just doing my bit," remarks Jenny of her fortnightly forays with the Pestoff bag. After a couple of months, and discovery of possum carcasses, she is noticing a drop in possum sign. "They're either taking the bait or I am

killing a heap of rats, which isn't a bad thing either." Jenny, who has lived on the same land for over 40 years, has a rather interesting theory.

She believes, the sudden re-appearance of possums may be as a result of poisoning in other areas. "I think the stink of carcasses rotting in nesting areas over the cliffs, forces others to relocate. Wouldn't you?" she explains in complete sincerity.

Readers may care to comment.

## Fill your bait stations now

Possoms hungry to feed on any of the following in your backyard over coming months: JUNE; Mahoe & Kanuka, Pines, Grasses and Invertebrates. JULY: Kanuka, Macrocapa, Grasses, Invertebrates. AUGUST: Pines, Macrocapa, Grasses and Invertebrates

## Catch it; cook it!

The following is a tried and true recipe from artist Owen Mapp of Paraparaumu. It is recommended you select a possum killed other than by bait station poison.

Skin and gut the animal and check for signs of disease. If so, bury the animal.

Remove all glands from the tail, and throat area. Section the body into portions, throwing away ribcage and attached section of spine. Use a heavy knife to chop up lower spine and back steaks.

Place meat in casserole dish and cover (almost) with water.

Mix the following and add: 1 teaspoon cayenne; 6 cloves crushed garlic; 1 or 2 onions, diced; several sprigs thyme finely chopped; pinch of oregano, basil or other herbs; pepper to taste.

Dissolve 1 serving spoon peanut butter and 1 teaspoon honey together in very warm water and stir into casserole. Add 1 liberal dash of soy sauce. Cover with sheet of tinfoil and place in 200c oven for 2 hours or until meat is tender. Remove foil for a short period to enable meat to brown, but not to burn or dry out. Serve and be amazed.

## Calling all traps!

Should you no longer require the Timms, leg or cage traps you borrowed from Landcare, kindly return them to the office at Matakawau. Or call Kate 235 1616 and tell us where they might be collected from.



## New planting project appointment

From dentistry to farming may seem an unlikely career change for many, but Awhitu's Adam Scattergood appears to have made the switch with ease.

Now he has also taken on the role of planner/leader of Awhitu Landcare's numerous and, often, on-going public plantings.

Some private planting has been undertaken too — as an offshoot of Landcare's dune project and as a means of local employment. Because Adam is naturally interested in New Zealand's native flora (despite hailing from the UK) he is able to add his knowledge to the wide

pool possessed by Landcare members.

He is very appreciative of the supportive nature of Landcare — especially in view of most workers being volunteers — and looks forward to future planting weather being kind to them.

Right: from dentistry to farming — Andrew Scattergood joins the team at Awhitu Landcare. Below: Lighthouse maintenance crew member Grant Astley installs an explanatory sign on Landcare plantings. The signage was made possible with assistance of the ARC and Waiuku-Awhitu Community Board.





## Changing of the guard

At the AGM on Tuesday 16 June our much-respected convenor Anna McNaughton relinquished her two-and-a-half years' tenure of the leadership. Anna, thanking all present, graciously welcomed Judith

Parker to the role. We know all members will remember Anna for the tireless and enthusiastic ways in which she inspired, cajoled, chivvied others, then rolled up her own sleeves, to get jobs done — especially

when the weather was not kind. We trust she will now have time to devote to her (and, presumably, husband Ian's) many other projects. Thanks Anna. **Above: Anna unwraps her farewell gift.**

## Local bird news

There's been a bit of news on the avian front in recent weeks, with Bittern (matuku) — sighted on roadside at Orua Bay — dusk Sunday 3 June '09. Additionally, it has been noted that Wattle Bay's Oystercatchers (torea) nested at Tipitai this summer past.

## Native trees don't grow too slowly

Bruce Burns of Landcare Research published this in January '08's Tane's Tree Trust Newsletter. It follows from a similar article published here on the viability of commercially planted natives.

One oft-used argument against not planting native trees for timber or other purposes is they 'grow too slowly'.

Native trees can grow extremely well and this perception is not justified. Mr Burns uses an example of kauri planted at Tauranga growing at around 2cm diameter and 1 meter in height annually.

"You can just about see them grow," he states. Somewhat slower, but still good, are totara, kahikatea, puriri and beach at least 1cm in diameter and half a metre annually.

And this mostly occurs in stands with little silviculture management.

While these rates are still less than those provided by well-maintained local radiata pine, Douglas fir, or Cupressus stands they are not by so much. In fact they compare well with growth rates of temperate forests in many other parts of the world.

So, where did the perception of slow growth stem from?

The problem, of course, is that the potential of our native species to perform in plantations is not consistently realised.

This poor perception is often the result of poor establishment rates, with seedlings sulking for several years in the ground, or variation in growth rates between seedlings — some doing well while others stagnate.

This shows we still don't fully understand the environmental conditions that suit individ-

ual species, and particularly how to shorten the establishment phase to kick-start the growth we know can occur with natives.

Also, native seedlings that are available generally have not gone through any selection process to choose the desired growth and form characteristics.

Tane's Tree Trust is well placed to perform a number of important roles around this issue — acting as an advocate for native tree species, making New Zealanders aware of the tremendous potential inherent in these species and showcasing examples of plantations that are growing well.

It is, also, developing and circulating knowledge of how to realise this potential in better establishment techniques, tree selection and management.

More info at: [www.tanestrees.org.nz](http://www.tanestrees.org.nz)

## Kiwi again on Peninsula?

This topic has recently gained traction in view of similar successes on other regional peninsulas like Tawharanui and in the Kaipara Harbour. Tim Lovegrove of the ARC's Heritage Section attended our AGM on Wednesday 16 June with a presentation show-casing several bird species we might welcome back to the Awhitu Peninsula as a possible precursor to wider Franklin distribution.

Tim, who has worked under

the famous Don Merton, suggested kiwi, weka, pateke/brown teal, falcon/karearea — among others.

He has promised us something on the subject for a future issue of PEN. Meantime, he recommends we maintain the pressure on those pests — leafy and leggy — because a lot of preparation is required before any species is officially translocated.

**Right: Tim Lovegrove in full flight.**



## Awhitu fighting invasion of mangroves too

The on-going struggle with mangroves by Waiuku and Pahurehure residents (among others fringing the Manukau) was recently aired at a meeting at Grahams Beach occasioned by local alarm at dramatic and illegal mangrove destruction.

Despite mangroves being locally indigenous for about 19 millions years, according to Richelle Kahui-McConnell, and anecdotal evidence by very long-term residents of considerable areas being previously mangrove free, wholesale slaughter is not condoned.

According to Te Toro resident,

Christine Schofield, speaking at the meeting: "At the moment it is illegal to remove/cut any mangroves without a resource consent.

When the Auckland regional Plan: Coastal, Proposed Plan Change 4, finally emerges from the RMA process (don't hold your breath — it started in October '07) it will allow communities to 'hold the line' against mangrove spread by allowing removal of seedlings up to 60cm high, and small areas of mature mangroves to allow access to lawful structures eg boat ramps. (BUT lots of 'special ARC' conditions apply!)"

Christine is part of a group seeking feedback on the issue and offers A4 aerial maps of local areas of interest.

The objective is to reach a community consensus on Peninsula mangrove management. Christine can be contacted at 235 5401.

Mangrove management is not currently part of Awhitu Landcare's programme although the above meeting was held under its auspices in the public interest.

**Below: Mangled mangroves: a recent example of 'illegal' mangrove destruction.**



## Surprising info on wood pigeons

One of our favourite newsletters — Kereru News (Issue 71 of 15 June '09) surprised us with the following:

1. Names you may be unaware of. As well as the familiar kereru and kukupa/kokopa, in other districts the New Zealand Pigeon is known as kuku/ku and, in the Chathams only, parea or Chatham Islands Pigeon.

2. Thanks to pest operations, including Landcare's own Possum Control, the threat status of kereru has improved from 'gradual decline' in 2005 to 'not threatened' in 2008. Parea is still listed as 'nationally critical'.

3. Heat stress during handling by humans can result in pigeon dehydration — which has been observed as a reluctance to fly for an hour or more after release. Remedies have included cooling fan, light misting with water and, in extreme cases, tube-feeding with a dilute glucose solution.

4. Researchers are beginning to believe that loss of small contour feathers during capture may be part of the bird's defence mechanism (like a lizard losing its tail). Tail feather loss, however, is more

serious.

For more visit [www.kereudiscovery.org.nz/](http://www.kereudiscovery.org.nz/)

Pictured (inset) kereru and their favourite tree — Puriri.

