

Gorge Gazette - June 2026

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and streams



Abbreviations:

WCC	Wellington City Council	GW	Greater Wellington Regional Council
F&B	Forest and Bird Protection Society	GG	Gorge Gazette
TPG	Trelissick Park Group	OWBT	Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust
S to S	Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara Sanctuary to Sea	OHS	Onslow Historical Society
VUW	Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington		

Our core community members are Highland Park Progressive Association Inc., Ngaio Crofton Downs Residents' Association Inc., Onslow Historical Society Inc., Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc. (Wellington Branch), Wellington Botanical Society Inc., Wadestown Residents' Association. We support Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara|Sanctuary to Sea.

Asian yellow-legged hornet incursion (Eva Durrant)

I would like to propose establishing a wasp bait line along tracks in the park, as in Tawa Bush Reserve. Volunteers could be found among local beekeepers to lay the bait line. We all know that wasps kill native insects and bees and that the park is a perfect area for wasp nests. Another urgency is the arrival of the Asian yellow-legged hornet (*Vespa velutina*).

Wellington Bee Association invited Phil Lester from VUW to talk about the threat and the work he is involved in with MPI. John Burnet from the Friends of Tawa Bush Reserve spoke about the trap line established there.



Photo: Pinterest

Following the talk at the WBA I contacted Chris Watson, Project Coordinator, Try Taiao & Wasp Wipeout, Conservation Volunteers New Zealand (CVNZ). Chris will manage the operational side of this project – provide us with bait, information and resources.

Could those interested in helping with bait station monitoring, please contact Chris at cwatson@cvnz.org.nz. Links:

<https://www.nrc.govt.nz/media/1vufgsj4/yellow-legged-hornet-fact-sheet-mpi.pdf>

[Fact Sheet - Yellow Legged Hornet 2025](#)

Vespex system (bait for the traps): [this page](#) and [this page](#)

[Yellow-legged hornets in Auckland | NZ Government.](#)

Species Overview (Evidence Based)

Origin: Southeast Asia Primary pathway: Containerised cargo, timber, machinery, ships, aircraft, freight trucks, humans. **Expansion rate:** 60–80 km/year (Europe).

Reproduction: A single nest can produce as many as 300–600 new queens in autumn, which then hibernate and establish new colonies the following spring.

Climate: Warmer climates accelerate their establishment. **Colony Cycle:** The old queen dies at the end of the season, and the newly mated gynes leave to hibernate, emerging in spring to establish new, individual nests. **Queens:** Overwinter individually; spring queen survival is the single most critical control point. **Predation pressure:** Severe on honeybees, native insects, pollination networks. One nest can consume

around 11 kilograms of insects in a single season, compared to 0.6 - 1.8 kg for Common/German Wasps. Hornet impact on not only our bees, native fauna and our bird species.

Global Impacts (Published Evidence) • France: >500,000 nests destroyed since 2006; failure to eradicate due to late detection. Introduced to Europe in 2004 (France) • Spain & Portugal: Severe honeybee losses; documented ecosystem disruption. • UK: Repeated successful eradications through early detection + rapid nest destruction • South Korea: Rapid spread where early queen trapping was insufficient.

15 pairs of leather gloves from Mitre 10

After a meeting of Angus Napier with Crofton Downs Mitre 10 Store Manager Paul Fraser, we are now well equipped for our corporate volunteers to tackle blackberry and other thorny weeds. We are very grateful for Mitre 10's generous support of our group's work.

RNZ Interview with Zealandia General Manager Mark Ormsby

[national/programmes/ninetonoon/audio/2019034179/restoring-wellington-s-largest-stream-system](https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetonoon/audio/2019034179/restoring-wellington-s-largest-stream-system)

Wild Fruits of Wellington website and nursery



Wild Fruits of Wellington: a veritable mine of information! Essential reading for plant aficionados. Helen Mechen's previous day job involved collecting seed and propagating over 100 species of native plants each year for WCC's Berhampore nursery. She started her own nursery in 2022 when she purchased her place in Stokes Valley and continues collecting and growing. She has mostly been growing for a few community groups and WCC. She is aiming to grow plants that are less common or more difficult to grow, many on her property as collection sources for the future.

Below are some of the more interesting plants she is increasing in range and numbers:

Lophomyrtus obcordate, *Pseudowintera axillaris*, *Pseudopanax crassifolius*, *Raukaua anomalous*, *Paratrophis heterophyllus* (small leaved milk tree), *Hoheria sexstylosa*, *Astelia hastata*, *Astelia solandri*, *Olearia rani var colorata*, *Juncus pallidus*, *Plagiantus divaricate*, *Syzygium maire*, *Neomyrtus pedunculata*, *Passiflora tetandra*, *Ripogonum scandens*.

She says you are most welcome to come and visit the nursery or get in touch if there is anything you might be interested in. [Helen Mechen: 021 251 5939, or at virescentgardensnz@gmail.com].

While in the nursery vein

Jonathan Anderson says he is in the throes of his annual seed collecting. It's something he has been doing as a volunteer for about 15 years. He sends them to the WCC Berhampore nursery, where the staff germinate the seed and raise the seedlings. They become some of the plants supplied by the council each year to our group and other groups.

It's a good year for collecting podocarp fruit and seeds, also two hundred from a regular fruiting kahikatea tree in the park, and many hundred more from several trees in Huntleigh Park.

Tōtara fruited well - he has collected over 1,600 seeds from three trees in the park. For genetic diversity he tries to collect from different trees as much as possible.

There are three female mataī trees in the park, two at the 'crossroads' and one in the recent addition to the park near the top of Ngaio Gorge Road. Our trees are not fruiting this year. Mataī is a 'mast-seeding' tree and only produce fruit every few years. He has been fortunate to find three trees fruiting heavily in Huntleigh Park and collected 2000+ seeds.

The last species to fruit in a season is usually miro. Trelissick Park has only one wild miro, which is small and has only started fruiting in the last few years (see p.5 of the October 2023 GG). His main area for collecting this year has been Huntleigh Park. As at mid-April he has collected around 1,400 - more to follow.



Mataī fruit.

Photo: Jeremy Rolfe

The new Transpower protocol for vegetation clearance under lines

Following recent discussions between Transpower's Vegetation Supervisor | Transmission Lines and TPG's Jonathan Anderson after the felling of a swath of trees in the past, Transpower's arborist contractor Ventia will in future climb larger trees to top or prune them, rather than cutting them down. They will also manage the vegetation along the track edges

nearby by cutting out faster growing trees and saplings, leaving slower growing trees such as a mature lancewood and five-finger.

Jonathan's plan for the kahikatea and tōtara seedling in the area is to let these grow up to about 3-4m, over the next 20 or so years. They could then be kept at that height and encouraged to spread sideways.

What's attacking tradescantia?

Tradescantia yellow leaf spot fungus (*Kordyana brasiliensis*) was released into the park below Oban and Hanover Streets by Jim Mitford-Taylor, GW's Biosecurity Officer Pest Plants, on 10 October 2024 – see also p.2 of the December 2024 GG. Spores from the fungus are supposed to disperse naturally by air currents.

Although Jim said there will be at least three years before we see any results, Angus Napier has now found what might be the fungus:

- downstream of the Northern Walkway.
- in the truncated roadside gully just above entrance 5 (upper photo) and at several places up to the top of Ngaio Gorge Road.
- track-side south of Wightwick's Field.

His observations are along the roadside (open, little or no canopy) and stream side (heavily shaded with full canopy). He entered several observations to iNaturalist.

Nigel Charman of Old Man's Beard Free Wellington says it is also spreading well in Tanera Gully [Brooklyn] and a few private properties. 'I haven't seen it completely kill the trad, but the density is a lot less.'

Following advice from Jim and plant pathologist Sarah Tallon of Manaaki Whenua (now a group of the Bioeconomy Science Institute), TPG aims to monitor the progress of the disease, irrigating to maintain high humidity and placing infected leaves amongst healthy growth. WCC's Illona Keenan asked TPG to keep an eye out for what native seedlings start (or don't) come up through the sick tradescantia and add those records to iNaturalist.

Jim added, 'I believe it's the splotchy mottled yellow spots on the leaves that confirm the fungus, as well as seeing if the undersides of the trad leaves show signs of the same infection pattern on the upper leaf surface. Usually, a pale-yellow leaf without these signs means that the tradescantia is just stressed or suffering from another type of pathogen.'

[Photos by Angus Napier – the lower two of affected upper and lower leaves on a plant between bridges 4 and 5].

Links:

[Barreto report 2010](#)

[Tradescantia yellow leaf spot fungus » Manaaki Whenua](#)

<https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/publications/progress-of-tradescantia-biocontrol>



Launch of the Onslow Historian history of TPG part three 2014-2025

The celebration at Tāne Whakapiripiri | Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Visitor Centre on 25 March was well attended, with speeches by OHS President Felicity Wong, TPG's Chair Anne Tuffin, previous Chair Peter Reimann and founder of the group in 1991 Frances Lee.

Peter Reimann said that although his name is on the front cover as author, the end-result owes as much to TPG reviewer Catherine Van Hale and OHS editor John Martin, both with plenty of ideas and suggestions. We were a 'dream team'. He thanked OHS for agreeing to edit and publish it and Anne Tuffin for her encouragement.



Photo: Anne Holmstead

Order from trelistickgroup@gmail.com for \$10 (as well as \$10 each for the two earlier parts).

What stories lie therein! The A5 booklets are immaculate. And 'print' endures.

A fine afternoon for the hiko



Anne Tuffin welcomes the guests.

Photo: Peter Reimann

Porirua Harbour, and Paparangi - around 14 people. They headed down the concrete track to the debris trap, upstream to the Northern Walkway and up to the 'crossroads'. There they split into groups - one returning via the gorge lookout, and others via the forest remnant track or back the way they came.

Along the way: discussions on karaka, the debris trap in the stream, the sewer tunnels, stormwater outlets, dog damage, recent storm damage, tradescantia yellow spot fungus, the Christchurch mosque shooting memorial and seat and the forest remnant trees.

Stories, common challenges and questions emerged, from regeneration to water quality and everything in between, the difficulties of keeping their groups going over time and leadership succession. A great opportunity to build connections with other groups with similar objectives to ours.

Michael Player from Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour and Catchments Community Trust later commented, 'Bird life and emerging forest giants bear testimony to the work of the Trelissick Park Group over the last 40 years - turning back the clock to a natural state similar to that existing before early European settlers in the 19th century [who] clear-felled the area for farming. Big thanks too to local residents who in the 20th century lobbied to stop the city leaders from piping the stream and turning the Ngaio Gorge into a landfill.'

At the coalface [Photos: see TPG Facebook posts and website 'Photos' page]

Corporate groups

9 March: Weeding by Kiwibank, Famers Mutual Group and the Environmental Protection Agency around entrances 5 and 6.

23 April: ANZ at the memorial grove down from bridge 5 and a little planting near bridge 4.

3 May: ANZ again visited to help at a TPG working bee from entrance 5, weeding, supervised by a pair of NZ fantail fluttering around the bush where they worked. (A few days earlier a pair of NZ parakeet (kākāriki) were also observed by walkers in the area).

13 May: IAG & NZ Safety Blackwoods put in hours of work removing montbretia and blackberry from the memorial trees site down from bridge 5 and around bridge 4, in conjunction with a TPG working bee.

Thanks must go to the Sustainable Business Network and Volunteer Wellington for arranging contact with some of these organizations and their staff.

As TPG Facebook custodian Anne Holmstead says, 'Trelissick Park is classified as a Scenic Reserve, which gives it higher protection status. As such, our city has a statutory duty to protect and preserve its native

The Te Hononga | Wellington Catchments Collective hiko on Sunday 26 April went up-valley from entrance 5. TPG hosts were Anne Tuffin, Angus Napier, Ian Duncan, Florence de Ruiter and Eva Durrant. There were group representatives from Karori Stream, Ōwhiro Stream, Lyall Bay, Belmont, Korokoro, Waiwhetū, Pāuahatunui,



Anne Tuffin and a dog channel.

Photo: Michael Player



NZ fantail (Pīwakawaka) Photo: DoC

flora and fauna. Corporate volunteering is a significant contribution to fulfilling this duty ... having this thriving green space for us all to enjoy makes Wellington a better place to live.'

April TPG working bees

From Anne Holmstead: 'Well so much for the April working bees! Both cancelled due to the shocking bout of poor weather we had!'

Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award candidate

14-year-old Max Clayton is weeding between Marilyn Hester's Trelissick Crescent verge and the tracks below for 13 weeks. Anne Tuffin is supervising. If he finishes early, he could extend to the steeper slopes beyond entrance 4, to help Marilyn.

Planting news

Delivery to various locations of plants is in full swing. For more, see p.4 of the March GG.

Anne Tuffin unearthed a variety of seedlings from Gail Andrews' garden to grow on.

Recent adopt-a-spot custodians

Wightwick's Field - Nick Wood's family and partners are active releasing around the Field, visiting every four weeks. They are looking forward to planting on the north side. They also cleaned the signpost and repainted the words.

Area beside the grass slope below entrance 3 (which is opposite #19 Trelissick Crescent) - A much needed adoption by James Mowat and Leeann Williams.

The life of the spotee ... Andrew Cutler

The scrubby bank above Tunnel 4 on the Johnsonville line hid many things (none good) when I first ventured into it in the early 1990s. Scrambling down the bank behind our house there was first the blackberry, then the wattle, then the roofing iron, broken bottles, car parts, fifty years of household rubbish, not to mention tradescantia. The possums were unseen, but there in big numbers.

Oh dear.

It's worth remembering just how degraded the Kaiwharawhara was in those days. Now, with 25 years of pest eradication, revegetation and the impact of Zealandia the valley seems alive and on the path to recovery. But in earlier days it was a bit rubbish – literally.

Excepting fantail and waxeyes, there were few native birds to hear or see. Tūi were a rare treat, kererū even rarer, bellbirds non-existent and kākā not dreamt of. In terms of native flora the canopy of this dry, north-west facing slope was dominated by ngaio and mahoe. One juvenile tītoki was smothered by wattle and further down some old kōwhai clung to a ridge.

During the mid-late 1990s my partner and I tackled these things one by one. A long day with a chainsaw eliminated the worst of the wattle, and the blackberry succumbed to hand elimination. The battle with tradescantia began – and continues to this day.

Then roofing iron, bottles, car parts and general rubbish was hauled up to Oban Street for disposal. Much remains buried, and glass fragments are a particular hazard.



Then the pests. We put out the first Timms trap in the early 90s, soon followed by a second. Over the next few years between 80-100 possums were despatched and buried down the bank. By the early 2000s their graves were so numerous I was regularly digging up skeletons as I moved onto tree planting! A small network of Goodnature A24s took the place of the Timms traps as possum numbers collapsed.

All this time I didn't know I was a spotee. Sometime in the mid-90s I had met Stan Reid, who undertook botanical surveys of Ōtari in the late 1930s and had been working in the valley since the 1940s. Stan invited me to some planting days in the lower valley, in the road area opposite the Wadestown

Tunnels 4 & 5. But after this I had little involvement with the Trelissick Park Working Group as other conservation projects took up my time: first Wellington Forest and Bird, then Natural Wellington (the project behind Zealandia), then the South Coast Marine Reserve Coalition (the group behind the Taputeranga Marine Reserve), then seven years on Forest and Bird's National Board, five as President.

All the while the trapping and poison (Brodifacoum – thanks to Greater Wellington) did their job. A large old kōwhai that backs onto our deck was restored to health, no longer a party-zone for possums, and likewise the kōwhai on the ridge above Tunnel 4 began to flourish.

Thanks to friends in Wellington Forest and Bird (Gary James, Vaughn Bell) I was also able to begin planting. Vaughn and I borrowed some milk wood (*Streblus banksii*) from the Lower Hutt Branch nursery on Mana Island, several of which are now approaching maturity. One or two kohekohe also joined the mix, along with a few tōtara, tawa, pigeonwood, nīkau, mataī, miro, lemonwood and lancewood. Results are mixed: some early kohekohe are now fruiting, a hīnau is flowering, nīkau are doing well and one or two of the mataī are approaching four metres.

But the north-west facing slope is dry and exposed to the wind. Low-rainfall years have been tough on seedlings, and I'm nervously anticipating the

coming super El Niño forecast for 2026-27. A great many more kohekohe, nīkau and a range of other species have now been planted, but tawa and tōtara in particular have struggled, with many being stunted by the wind or failing altogether. The standout survivor is kohekohe. It seems to thrive in both dry and damp conditions.

In the last few years, the changes in the valley seem to have accelerated. Pest control has led to increasing bird life, which in turn is now resulting in natural seedlings of kohekohe, pigeonwood, tawa, and understory species like hangehange, appearing on the slopes.

Hopefully the next step is integration into Predator Free Wellington – and clearance of rats / stoats that will hopefully (certainly) see kiwi migrate into the valley, and then if we do our job we might start to see whitehead, more bellbird, and the ultimate outcome of vulnerable species like kākāriki. I hope that by the time I've finished my journey with the valley we may even see ground dwellers like robin or saddleback. That would be some trip!

So the life of the spotee is lots of scrambling down banks, checking A24s, worrying about drought and being constantly on the lookout for new weeds. It's worth every moment, and the support of WCC, GW and the Trelissick Park Group make it all possible.

[Ed: When Anne Tuffin visited to take photographs she said, 'We were drowned out by kākā gathering at dusk.']

Te Rākau Karaka – The Karaka tree (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*)

[Hoana Kaa says, '... we wanted to give the readers more of (what) is not always easy to find online. Much of this kōrero has been handed down from our teachers.

We now have a company Ronga Taiao Ltd we're slowly setting up and have added this at the end along with our names. Bella is our mum who also works with us.']

It's important to research and connect with who Karaka is. What does it look like (from seed to maturity)? Where does it grow? Who does it like to grow with? What are its needs? What is its purpose or purposes in the forest? What is its purpose for the future? Are there any whakataukī, waiata, mōteatea, places or spaces in Aotearoa that acknowledge this rākau? Are there meanings within them?

Karaka's deeper meaning within Te Ao Rongoā is multiple and layered. Each story has underlying messages to connect with different perspectives and understandings.

In breaking down the kupu/word Karaka here are some meanings:

Ka – to illuminate, fortified, become one, equal

Ra – Enlightenment, can see

Ka – to illuminate, fortified, become one, equal

A – Forms/shapes in mental foundation

Karaka also means orange and has deeper meaning about relationships, creativity and reproduction. The most important relationship is with the Self. Can you see your own talents, skills and gifts/taonga tuku iho (ancestral traits)? Creating space to acknowledge tīpuna (ancestors) helps to deepen understanding of



Karaka trees

Photo: theplantcompany.co.nz

Self and the contributions you can make in your lifetime. Within te taiao (the natural environment) are teachings about ourselves.

Our traditional education system acknowledges the responsibility of Māori elders and tohunga to observe the natural skill sets and talents of children. Every person seen as an important contributor of society. If their skill set and interests were not supported, it was seen as a failure of the community and detriment to society. Therefore, personalised teachings and learnings/akonga were created for each person. If the child gravitated to water, they would often attribute this trait to tīpuna and Atua who also held this attribute and contributed to the caretakership of this space. Tohunga and the elders of the child also held whakapapa.

Is the ngahere doing more for us than we think?

When we choose a rākau/plant or tree to write about, we also reflect on why we are choosing this particular tree. What does this tree that I am resonating with have to teach me? Not until we took the time to contemplate our observations did we know why we truly made a connection with Karaka, as written above. For us it's about recognising and thanking those who have made an impact in our life, including our whakapapa, from whom our traits come from.

In the stories of our grandmother Karaka berries were a staple diet. Although it contains a poison, when cooked properly it is edible. Some of our family members still cook Karaka berries in season today. Our great great grandmother used to cook the Karaka berries for four days in a big copper pot. Our grandmother said those were like their peanuts.



A Karaka seed found in Trelissick Park after the flesh decayed.

Precautions: Karaka is poisonous, containing karakin. You cannot consume any part of the Karaka if you do not know how to cook it.

Nga mihi nui, nā Ronga Taiao Ltd – Bella-Marie Kaa, Mererangi Kaa and Hoana Kaa.

Another visit to Frances

Anne Tuffin took Nate Rigler (S to S) to Malvina Major to meet Frances Lee early in April. Anne said they talked non-stop about the Kaiwharawhara and the estuary, the work that has been done, and the strategy for the future.

Nate gave Frances an etching from Zealandia to acknowledge her impact on the restoration of the catchment.



New WCC seats and benches

Seats: At entrances 2, 5 and 6, and below Hanover Street (photo).

Replacement benches: streamside and Wightwick's Field.



Master's research monitoring kākā/Brodifacoum interactions

With permission from WCC, Ryan Jagers, Masters of ecology student at VUW, is setting up cameras at Brodifacoum pelifeed stations in reserves around Wellington to capture kākā interacting with them. With the kākā images he intends to use machine learning to identify the individual kākā, their numbers and behaviour. Trelissick Park will have two cameras. Images of people 'captured' will be deleted, so do not be concerned if you accidentally stand in front of one.

TPG is grateful for the generous donors and all the wonderful volunteers, organisations, corporate, school and scout groups who make such an enormous contribution.

Contacts

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[Trelissick Park Group website](#)

WCC: (04) 499 4444 or [WCC Fix-It](#)

GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 734