

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

(Footbridges over the stream are numbered from 1 – 6 going downstream, excluding the old bridge off the side of Wightwick's Field).

Abbreviations:

WCC Wellington City Council
 GW Greater Wellington Regional Council
 DoC Department of Conservation

APRIL 2011

Adversity has been strangely absent this summer and autumn. That means rampant growth. So far, the natives are gaining the upper hand and are in rude health.

Secretarial Assistance at Last

Welcome to Stacey Tampi who has come to us via Volunteer Wellington. She is studying landscape architecture at Victoria University, so this should complement our restoration activities as well. She came to our last meeting and is getting to grips with the multitude of issues that keep us down to the gunwales.

News from the "Spots"

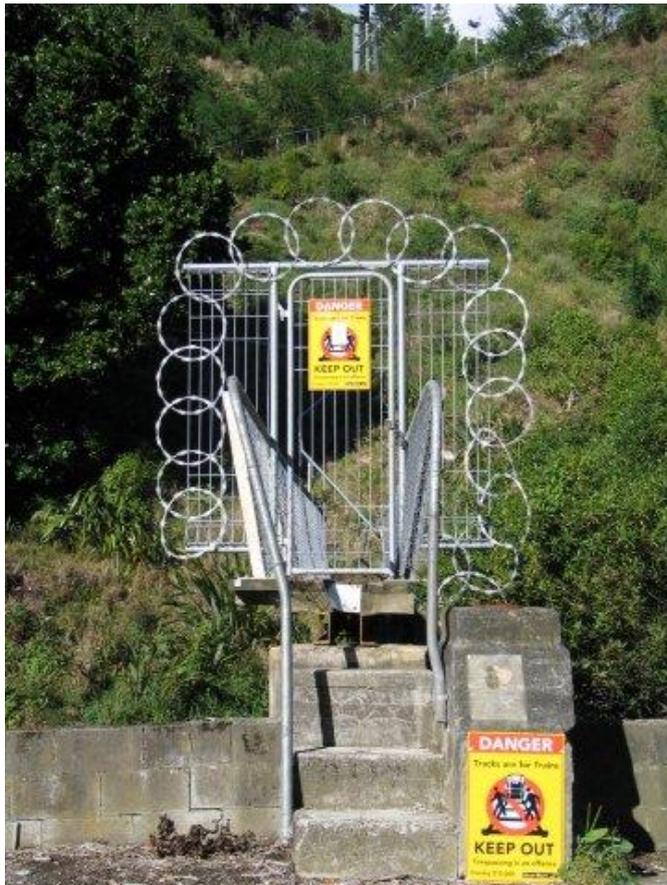
Carolyn Theiler has just visited from Auckland, waxing lyrical about the changes in the park after a year away, and finding time for some weeding. She also helped us infill plant over 50 fast-growing species on the gorse-cleared slope below Trelissick Crescent, on a perfect day.



Marilyn Hester has been working with Lauren, a student from USA, interested in the scientific approach to setting up and monitoring restoration projects. They have been cleaning up the riparian strip down from bridge 1 and planting grasses there from Marilyn's propagation assortment. She also did some weeding at the track "triangle" down from Wightwick's Field, originally planted by Mark Sheriff. Her "flood plain" spot plants down from the debris trap are growing apace, as shown at left.



The big incentive for weeding Peter Reimann's DoC-funded riparian site on railway land down from bridge 5 - delicious blackberry fruit from the slopes above. We are hoping the 300 young flax planted there will not succumb to the flax yellow leaf disease¹ affecting much of the park. Since planting a year ago, the growth has been astonishing (see photo at left from the same point as in the April 2010 newsletter²). It is gratifying to see abundant tree fuchsia (*Fuchsia excorticata*) coming up naturally. After a couple of visits to infill plant the "karaka" site down from bridge 3, he has planted Honda Treefund flaxes on the 400m² blackberry-sprayed railway land between bridges 3 and 4.



Because of its artistic merits, the Alcatraz Gate deserves a photograph. The distorted razor wire at the lower right needs some attention, to restore the awe-full symmetry. David Grace's spot on railway land lies behind. He has visited several times to minister to the surviving young trees planted by the Ontrack contractor. He plans to do some planting there shortly.

The Saphya Sai Group, having got their spot below the debris trap well planted and weeded, have now adopted an "island" across the stream above the debris trap. About 20 adults and children added 24 plants to what was already there from work over past years. January is early for putting in plants, but we figured that their feet would be almost in water.

George and Andrew Symmes have been working on their spots between bridges 1 and 3. Wasps added spice (or pain?). Judy Paulin's spot above the streamside seat below Hanover Street always looks tidy.

The Plant Score

Excluding Marilyn's grasses - 220 already planted, about 1,400 to go (WCC Berhampore Nursery, Honda Treefund and home nursery). Adopt-a-spot plants for anyone? Planting plan: see minutes of April meeting on website.

The Stormwater Curse

The Kaiwharawhara Stream takes all the stormwater from about 20 km² of catchment stretching from Karori to Khandallah. Stormwater very quickly runs off hard surfaces such as roads, roofs and paved areas. The streams become brown, raging torrents. We watch in despair as stream banks get torn away, along with riparian plantings. The effect on invertebrates and fish life must be devastating. Housing developments and infill continue to reduce the bush cover in the catchment, which acts as a stormwater buffer. What we would like to see are things like permeable pavers, detention provisions in stormwater piping, soak pits, planted areas for filtering/absorption and/or roof rainwater tanks.

One stark example of the force of the stream in spate is how huge boulders at least half a metre in diameter below the debris trap have been rolled downstream. This has created more of a waterfall at the trap, thus more of a barrier for fish passage. Concerned about this, Frances Forsyth, Bill Hester and Peter Reimann spent a nocturnal hour with spotlights above and below the trap late in March. At least red-finned bully were surmounting the obstacle, but compared with a similar exercise 5 year ago, there were fewer species - by chance or because of the increased barrier?

At the "Cross-roads"

One could become poetic about the "cross-roads". The original forest remnant there is on the Northern Walkway (down from the transmission tower). Look towards Wadestown and marvel at the enormous totara on the left. On the right is large matai, with its hammered-looking bark. Below is a hoary old kanuka - surely the biggest in the Park.

Other Happenings

Thanks to Ruth/Buzz Graham of WCC for the magnificent new seat at the open grassy area between bridges 4 and 5 and for her patience with plaque wording misadventures.

Thanks to Robyn Smith and Jo Fagan of GW, Berhampore Nursery and Taupo Native Plant Nursery for the 470 Honda Treefund plants, also to Olaf John for helping Peter Reimann pot many of these on from root trainers to pb3 bags.

Frances Lee is fervently wishing for the saga of the Kaiwharawhara estuary study to be finished as the due date approaches.

BNZ "Closed for Good Day



Early in February, five stalwarts from BNZ transformed a weedy patch over the fence at the lay-by half-way up Ngaio Gorge Road. They worked like slaves. By some miracle, it rained on the 50 new plants a couple of days later. Thanks to WCC ranger Paulo Fuiono for chain-sawing a large dead tree, arranging mulch delivery and removal of the mountain of rubbish. Found: lady's knickers and a suitcase, amongst the unsavoury items (a story there?).

The Website Evolves

Bill Hester has taken over the website and is frequently updating it. Here lies a mine of information. The Home Page now includes the park maps and a link to Google Maps. The Projects Page has the recently updated Five-Year Plan, upcoming working bee details,

guidelines for adopt a spot volunteers and health and safety information. Other parts of the website have all the past Gorge Gazettes, minutes of the last 6 meetings, extracts from the 1995 Park Management Plan, information on pest weeds and contact details. It has been an evolutionary process, originally set up by Deidre Burke, taken over by Lindsay Bonnett and now by Bill. Many thanks to all.

The DoC Restoration Website

Peter Reimann attended a small workshop canvassing ideas for a website to identify and link to all the restoration groups in the DoC Conservancy area, as well as to provide restoration information. There is an accumulated wealth of knowledge and experience to tap into, which would then be available to all.

Oh for more Nikau Palms



We live within the "Nikau Belt"⁴. This stretches from the western side of the Wellington district up to the Kapiti Coast. There are some wonderful stands of mature nikau palms (*Rhopalostylis sapida*) on the Kapiti Coast and in the Korokoro valley. But Trelissick Park is relatively bereft.

The Maoris used the bases of the inner leaves and flower clusters for food. Leaves were used for wrapping food and for baskets, floor mats and waterproof thatch. Much of Trelissick Park was logged and farmed. So perhaps the dearth comes from these legacies.

"The Nikau grows up to 15 m tall, with a stout green trunk which bears grey-green leaf scars. The trunk is topped by a smooth bulging crownshaft up to 1m long. The fronds are up to 3m long, and the closely-set, sometimes overlapping leaflets are up to 1 m long. The inflorescence is multi-branched and from 200 to 400 mm long. The tightly packed flowers are unisexual and coloured lilac to pink. Male flowers are borne in pairs, and have 6 stamens. The female flowers are solitary. The fruit is elliptic or oblong, and generally measures about 10 by 7 mm, and is red when ripe. The Nikau produces flowers between November and April, and fruits ripen from February to November, taking almost a year to fully ripen. These are a preferred food of the Kereru, the native wood pigeon."⁵

All we can display is as shown below, along the track below the Ngaio Gorge Road (or similar examples behind the fence down from Wightwick's Field). However, Marilyn Hester and Carolyn Theiler did a sterling job a couple of years ago planting a few hundred throughout the Park - maybe some will bear fruit in 20 - 30 year's time.

News from the Toetoe Front

Our botanical friends have decreed that the five endemic New Zealand toetoe be placed into a new endemic genus *Austroderia* (instead of *Cordateria*). So we now have:

Austroderia fulvida
Austroderia richardii
Austroderia splendens
Austroderia toetoe
Austroderia turbaria

It is with some relief that the common name is still "toetoe"³.

The occasional pampas grass exotic can confuse (*Cordateria selloana* and *C. jubata*). Remember that pampas flower heads are erect, not drooping and their leaves can be snapped easily, unlike toetoe.

Tradescantia - the Final Solution?

Ten years ago *Tradescantia fluminensis* (wandering willie) carpeted vast tracts of Trelissick Park. Natural seedling emergence - impossible. Restoration planting - a futile exercise. A walk through the Park - an air of foreboding. However, determined and ongoing spraying, funded by WCC and GW, have wrought transformation (but don't look too hard across the stream).

Now, after trials and tribulations, Landcare Research^{6,7} have permission to release the tradescantia leaf beetle (*Neolema ogloblini*). Some notes on this South American alien are:

- Adults and larvae feed on the upper leaves.
- The beetle is 4–5 mm long, dark metallic bronze with slight iridescence.
- Life-span - about 5 months.
- Egg to adult - about 6 weeks at warm temperatures.
- Eggs/adult female - possibly 200–400 over several months.
- Generations/year - likely about 2 - 3.
- The eggs hatch after about a week into pale greyish-brown larvae. The larvae accumulate moulted skins and excrement (protection?).
- The pupal cocoons are white, star-shaped and resemble styrofoam (to fool predators into thinking they are fungus-infected larvae?). New adults emerge from their cocoons after about 2 weeks.

A garden-leaf vacuum machine is suggested for beetle transfer. Trials are proceeding with kindred beetles: the tip-feeding *Neolema abbreviata* and the stem-boring *Lema basicostata*.

Landcare Research say the beetle is "highly host-specific". We shall see.....

References

1. Gorge Gazette, December 2010 (on www.trelissickpark.org.nz)
2. Gorge Gazette, April 2010 (on www.trelissickpark.org.nz)
3. <http://www.nzpcn.org.nz>
4. Wellington Regional Plant Guide. Boffa Miskell and Wellington Regional Council. 1999.
5. <http://en.wikipedia.org>
6. www.landcareresearch.co.nz/publications/newsletters/weeds/wtsnew55.pdf
7. www.landcareresearch.co.nz/.../Tradescantia_Leaf_%20Beetle.pdf

Contacts

Chairman & Adopt-a-Spot: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz
Working bees: Dorothy Douglass (04) 472 8558
Wellington City Council (reporting slips and fallen trees across tracks, other problems): (04) 499 4444
Greater Wellington pollution hotline: 0800 496 734
Website: www.trelissickpark.org.nz

Working Bees - Check with Dorothy before coming – changes may occur

Sunday 1 May, 1.30 PM Trelissick Crescent
Tuesday 10 May, 9.30 AM Trelissick Crescent

The Gorge Gazette

Compiled by Peter Reimann about every 4 months - all contributions and suggestions gratefully received.

**Come and participate in the transformation of Trelissick Park or give us your ideas – all welcome.
Thanks to all who contributed.**

Membership drawn from Highland Park Progressive Association Inc., Ngaio Progressive Association Inc., Onslow Historical Society Inc., Private Landowners Group, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (Wellington Branch), Wellington Botanical Society, Wadestown Resident's Association.