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

MARCH 2012

Growing conditions during the autumnal summer have been exceptional. Some home nursery plants have roots sprawling with abandon from the bottom of their bags. Planting has started. 70 have taken up residence already. There is a law that says this will signal the start of a drought.

Wellington Community Champion's Award

Congratulations to Dorothy Douglass, who received this award from MP Grant Robertson at a small ceremony at the Wadestown Library, last month. Dorothy has been secretary for the Highland Park Progressive Association for years and is their representative on our Group. As such, she has pursued many causes, always with a sunny warmth and unerring diligence. She is famous for her muffins, supplied at working bees.

Fishing News

WCC Ranger Matt Robertson and David Moss from DoC have carried out a survey of invertebrates and fish barriers within the Kaiwharawhara catchment. Within Trelissick Park and down to the estuary they found four places that some species of fish may find difficult or impossible to negotiate: the concrete culvert near the fuel tanks, the detritus trap, the speed of water in the tunnel for the Kaiwharawhara Stream under the railway and the tunnel for the Silverstream (from Crofton Downs).

There was a dearth of invertebrates - essential food for the fish in the stream. Detergent from car washing on roads and driveways, paint-brush cleaning and chemicals into the storm-water system, cement washings, oil and rubber from roads, pesticides, leachate and sewage leakage all end up in the streams. It's a wonder anything survives. Moreover, fast storm-water run-off from hard surfaces of roads, paving and roofs washes away stream banks and deposits a layer of silt on the stream bed - no place for invertebrates.

Matt says this may become the subject of a discussion document by WCC in collaboration with GW, looking at potential solutions, monitoring and funding.

Frances Forsyth from Wildlands has also been surveying the streams in the catchment, assisted on the first occasion by Kate Zwartz of GW and Massey University student Ali Caddy. Gee minnow and fyke traps were used overnight (see photos on left and right respectively - with Ali and Frances). The two fyke traps caught a writhing mass of 8 eels, just above the detritus trap. In the half-light of dawn we could not see whether they were the short-fin eel or the endangered long-fin type, as they quickly slithered away.

A week later, 23 Gee minnow traps and two fykes were deployed in the stream from School Road to the bottom pond (below the tunnel). The minnow traps caught one eel and the fykes caught 4 eels.

While spotlighting there, they found pollution tolerant species (redfin bully and common bully) and inanga, all of which were common but not abundant and a number of eels of all sizes (long and short-fin) plus one freshwater shrimp (Paratya). Frances plans more excursions.

A Bog no Longer

The "triangle" formed by the junction of tracks downstream from Wightwick's Field used to be a boggy mess from storm-water coming from up-hill. The water would also spread over the track on its way to the Korimako Stream, below. In 2009 Marilyn Hester and Carolyn Theiler added sedges, grasses and rushes as a dense infill among the trees just planted there by Mark Sheriff.[1] The photo shows some of the infill now, with the track above the stream on the right. Marilyn has started weeding/planting the bank between the track and the stream and is astonished at the effect of the infill on the "triangle": transformed to bog-less and dry. As well as aiding storm-water detention, sedges, grasses and rushes are good for filtration of pollutants - all to the benefit of stream life.[2]

Catchment Hydrology

Last year a hydrology study of the catchment was carried out by Jackson Shanks, while a student at Victoria University. This catchment stretches from Karori to Khandallah and all the storm-water ends up in the Kaiwharawhara Stream. The study was to examine speed and volume of water, pollutants and sedimentation. We are looking forward to seeing the results.

A Nikau Bonanza

On the eastern side of a ridge in Hataitai below Overtoun Terrace, is a fine nikau palm, said by Maori to be 150 years old. David Barr's back section contains this treasure. "Do we want any seedlings?" he asked. Peter Reimann came away with 90 and now they are in pots, waiting for their years in Trelissick Park. Most still had their seeds attached to the roots, so this augurs well for survival.

People

Farewell, thanks and best wishes to our meeting secretary, Stacey Tampi, who has moved to New Plymouth.

Welcome to Alison Melling, who has joined the Group, initially to assist with specific secretarial projects, such as submissions.

David Grace has decided not to continue as Projects Coordinator. David adroitly steered a path through the projects he took on, the most notable being the controversial Dog Control Policy. He will continue with his working bee emailing and tending his "spot".

Welcome also to Alexandra Harper, who has taken over the stream-side spot downstream of Bridge 2, originally planted by the Tararua Tramping Club. Alexandra is looking forward to in-fill planting.

Rats and Mustelids

We re-fill the 19 possum bait stations in the Park about every month with Brodifacoum pellets. The bait stations are black tubes nailed to a tree trunk with a lid on top and angled feeding entrance at the bottom. We eliminated possums long ago, but this poison also attracts rats. Recently we have been lowering some of the bait stations to 1.5 m above the ground to make them more accessible to Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) that are heavier and more ground-based.[3] Bruce Brewer from GW says of our other species: "Ship rats (*Rattus rattus*) are very agile, and will get bait out almost wherever you put the station."[4] At the same time, we have been doing some re-positioning to avoid rain wetting and fusing the pellets at the lower feeding entrance.

Barry Durrant and Bill Hester service of the 15 traps for stoats, weasels and rats. Some Z-hooks for dried rabbit meat have been added, to supplement the eggs. Matt Robertson from WCC provided these. So far we are not sure that this has made much difference. However, since installation in September 2008, the traps have caught 78 mustelids/rats and 8 hedgehogs.

Bill's Willows

Bill Hester has scoured the valley many times to end the lives of interlopers. This time the victims are willows - with occasional gorse diversions.

The Kaiwharawhara Estuary Area

Following the completion of the study by Boffa Miskell[5], Frances Lee has circulated papers about the complexities of titles/ownership, Maori interests, statutory regulations and public recreational access to relevant organisations for discussion.

Plans for this area will be in a state of flux for some time and Frances is looking for someone to make sure that the study and papers are taken into account during the planning and future development. The aim is to ensure that this important ecological corridor is protected, public access enabled (including a route for the Great Harbour Way) and that the estuary is restored to a fully functioning ecosystem.

Wineberry and Japanese Honeysuckle

Wineberry (Aristotelia serrata), in the photo on the left, is a wonderful, fast-growing, bird-attracting tree, which reaches 10 m. We often use it as a pioneer species for re-vegetation. It is a perfect "bomb-proof" plant - frost-hardy, preferring well-drained soil and full sun. The underside of the serrated, ovate leaves is often wine-coloured. We find seedlings appearing unbidden at cleared sites. Flowers, then berries appear in the spring/summer period.

Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), in the photo on the right, is a weed - also "bomb-proof". It is a vigorous, smothering climber, with stems that can grow to 15 m. New invasion can occur from cut stems. It has sweetly scented, yellow flowers and black fruit.

The steep railway land just upstream of the junction of the Korimako and Kaiwharawhara streams is clothed in Japanese honeysuckle. This has migrated to the opposite slopes in Trelissick Park. Plants are spread by seed, so birds eating the fruit are the likely culprits.

To protect the "Key Native Ecosystem" (KNE) status of Trelissick Park, this weed has been sprayed over the past few years under joint funding from GW and WCC. However, some is returning. Peter Reimann has been attacking small out-breaks, using Vigilant gel for anything that cannot be uprooted. This problem will always exist, as long as it is on the railway corridor and used for hedges in the suburbs.

Tradescantia Leaf Beetle Release

We were elated to learn that Trelissick Park had been selected for the release of the tradescantia leaf beetle (*Neolema ogloblini*).[6] The release area had to be without any previous spraying and not included in any operational plans - and, of course, carpeted in tradescantia (wandering willie). The site chosen is across the Kaiwharawhara Stream on the slope below the railway line, half-way between the lower Park entrance gate and the railway access footbridge.

It was a warm day when the beetles were released by GW in mid-December. Megan Banks said they were very active and as they are good flyers this will help with their dispersal.

It is expected that the beetles will spread throughout the Park. In some areas spraying will probably still be needed, but the beetles will help suppress the growth. Their establishment and impact is going to be monitored. They will not be assessed until after at least one year (after they have weathered all extremes). Please note that minimal disturbance at the site is necessary until they are established.

Planting and Nursery News

Around 1,400 more plants are to be grounded this year. 500 are coming from WCC and 350 from the Honda Treefund (via Robyn Smith of GW). The rest are at various stages in home nurseries - benefiting from the recent plant propagation workshop at WCC's Berhampore Nursery (attended by Jack Stanton and Peter Reimann).

References

(For access to previous Gorge Gazettes referred to below, go to our website www.trelissickpark.org.nz)

1. Gorge Gazette. August 2010.
2. Greater Wellington Regional Council. "Mind the Stream". June 2004.
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_rat
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_rat
5. Boffa Miskell. Kaiwharawhara Stream and Estuary Ecological Values. August 2011.
6. Gorge Gazette. April 2011.

Contacts

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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.

Usually 1st Sunday of the month at 1.30 PM and 2nd Tuesday at 9.30 AM. See web-site for updates.

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.