

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

F & B Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society

TPG Trelissick Park Group

DOC Department of Conservation

Website www.trelissickpark.org.nz (includes past Gorge Gazettes)

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/TrelissickParkGroup> (you do not need to be a member to look).

OCTOBER 2014

Spring has arrived with an outpouring of energy. And what could be more joyful than going outside at 5.30 AM to breath the fresh Wellington air and listen to the dawn chorus?

This year, it's the turn of the rangiora (*Brachyglottis repanda*) to put on a show.



Track Upgrade Coming

The Northern Walkway from the entrance opposite 19 Trelissick Crescent down to the Korimako Stream is to have a major upgrade later this year. Parts of the grassy slope are steep and the track at the zigzags is eroded, especially lower down. David Halliday and Matt Robertson from WCC discussed the scope of the work with us during a recent site visit. This part of the Walkway will be closed during the upgrade.

A Native Masquerade

Jonathan Anderson from WCC and others botanically versed are concerned about the spread of *Pseudopanax lessonii* (houpara or coastal five-finger). It masquerades as a 'native' here, but is indigenous to the north of New Zealand, like karo and pohutukawa. Because it is a NZ native that grows well and looks like five-finger, people think it is appropriate to use.

He says Leon Perrie at Te Papa is researching the hybridisation of coastal five-finger with *Pseudopanax crassifolius*, (horoeka, lancewood). Any lancewood with more than one leaflet on a leaf stalk is in fact a hybrid between the two species. Leon Perrie says "coastal five-finger and the hybrids have escaped from

cultivation, effectively becoming weeds in many places outside their native distribution. They can be very invasive" - refer <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2009/06/10/our-promiscuous-pseudopanax-plants/> for more, including photos.

Jonathan says "hybrid cultivars of the species have been fashionable for some years and are widely sold in garden centres. It was also planted by the Council until a few years back. Unfortunately, it is also a highly weedy species that fruits prolifically and is spread by birds.... Seedlings can germinate and grow in moderate shade and I've found them in areas of bush well removed from gardens, such as Huntleigh Park. I've also found and pulled up self-sown seedlings in Trelissick Park, although I'm pleased to say TP is largely free of seedlings at this time." However, some have been planted in past years and are at various stages of maturity. He can see a major problem in a few years' time if these are not removed.

He is concerned that it is a 'coming weed' in the sense it is still in an expansion phase in our part of the City (unlike karo and lacebark that appear to be at stable levels). It is already extremely common as a wild plant in the Inner Town Belt and on the Miramar Peninsula.

Jonathan has been working in the 'bush' at Cummings Park and refers to the end towards the children's play area as an example of the weediness of coastal five-finger. "The species is so well established because it was part of the earlier plantings to establish the woodland. Some of the original planted *lessonii* are now dying of old age but without intervention they will be replaced by the many young trees of the species."

TPG/WCC will need to discuss the idea of removal in Trelissick Park and replacing with genuine natives. Comments already received:

- influence of climate change on plant growth, encroachment of northern varieties and hybridisation?
- NZ flora have always hybridised - maybe some of today's indigenous plants came from natural hybrid propagation?

Any more comments?

Another Alien



A mystery Kakabeak has appeared in the Park. DOC^{3,4} says:

"Kakabeak/kowhai ngutukākā is named for its beautiful red flowers, which hang in clusters of 15-20 blooms and are shaped like kaka's beak. It is a member of the pea family and its closest relatives are in Australia. There are two species, both unique to New Zealand and both seriously threatened with extinction in the wild: *Clianthus puniceus* and *Clianthus maximus*.

"We don't know what the pre-human distribution of kowhai ngutukākā was as Maori are thought to have transported it around the country. We do know that kowhai ngutukākā once grew in Northland, Auckland, Great Barrier Island, Coromandel, around Lake Waikaremoana, the East Cape and Hawke's Bay. Today kowhai ngutukākā grows on Moturemu Island in the Kaipara harbour, at several sites on the East Cape, Te Urewera, near Wairoa, and in Boundary Stream Mainland Island in Hawke's Bay.

"The plants have a whole host of enemies, including goats, deer, rabbits - who find their tasty pods irresistible - and a range of insect pests.

"Sadly, there are fewer than 120 naturally seeded plants known to exist in the wild - mainly around northern Hawke's Bay, East Cape and inland to Waikaremoana.

"Many people don't realise how rare ngutukākā are, because you often see them in home gardens. But the domestic plants are all derivatives of a few wild plants that have been interbred and have little or no genetic value.

"Keeping the gene pool pure is not an issue if you live in an urban area away from natural populations."

From this, it appears that housing such an alien may not be a cardinal sin(?), especially as it is right next to another alien: the transmission tower.

Two Major WCC Updates

Trelissick Park has been governed by a 1995 Management Plan, which has served us well. Much of this is on our website. WCC are in the throes of including the Park into a Draft Suburban Reserves Management Plan. WCC are seeking comments - see Appendix 1. Frances Lee, Julia Williams and Peter Reimann are currently working on a response from TPG.

Myfanwy Emeny of WCC is updating the 2007 Biodiversity Action Plan. This is the document that guides our biodiversity activities and identifies local priorities and actions to protect and restore biodiversity and engage the general community. Following attendance at one of the prior workshop sessions, TPG will be interested in reviewing the draft, due late this month.

Olaf's Whau



How about this for a healthy looking whau (*Entelea arborescens*)? It is probably the only one in the Park. Olaf John's propagation now resides below the entrance opposite 41 Trelissick Crescent, planted about two years ago. It is about 2 m tall, on the way to its potential 6 m and 25 cm diameter. Another, planted earlier below Waikowhai Street succumbed to frost and wind. John Dawson¹ says "The wood of whau is very light, said to be as light as balsa, and was used by Maori for fishing floats. Whau is restricted to New Zealand and is the only species of its genus"

More Epics in the Valleys

BNZ on their 'Closed for Good' Day worked like slaves to completely strip wandering willie and montbretia from a riparian shelf upstream of the Northern Walkway bridge on the Wadestown side. They planted a grove of kahikatea and other species. Some may remember Julia from the photo, one of Kate Mackenzie's 2006 'spotees' who restored the gorse-fired patch below Trelissick Crescent.



One of our long-term groups, the Sathya Sai Service Organisation, once again rescued the plantings on the bank across the stream above the debris trap. The lush weed growth since their visit in March is astonishing. Koromiko was added to the struggling toetoe, cabbage tree, karamu and five-finger.

Best wishes to Angela Incedon, our chief supplier of delicious refreshments, pictured here with one of our other stalwarts, Bill Hester. With an off-spring on the way, she is taking a short break. At that working bee, we planted a riparian shelf on the Ngaio side between bridges 4 and 5, including kahikatea.



Paradise Saved

TPG features in this impressive book², one of the many small groups restoring parts of New Zealand. The book is also a testament to the work at larger areas and off-shore islands. According to Kevin Hackwell of F & B at a recent talk to the Tararua Tramping Club, a predator-free New Zealand is not far-fetched, based on experience at ever-larger island areas and more sophisticated technology.

This Year of Weeds

Earlier this month Peter Reimann walked through the Park with WCC's Ilona Keenan to prioritise patches of wandering willie for spraying by the contractor. Some of this is returning after spraying over recent years. The idea is to prevent spread into the forested areas, mainly in the valley of the Kaiwharawhara. TPG will be manually removing smaller infestations and raking them into heaps - see Appendix 2. Rich dividends await those who persist with repeat visits. The forest adjoining Heke Reserve below Peter Reimann's residence was a depressing sight two decades ago, but now the natives have taken over, with ferns, kohekohe and kawakawa everywhere, also some rewarewa and pigeonwood.

TPG will also be targeting old man's beard, Japanese honeysuckle, climbing dock, buddleia, sycamore and cherry.

We are being Archived

The Onslow Historical Society have kindly offered to act as a repository for the TPG archives. This prompted a major operation on the records, occupying more than 5 m shelf-space. By eliminating duplicates and rationalising, this has been reduced to 2 m for the archives and 1 m retained. Not so daunting for a new incumbent.

References

1. John Dawson, Rob Lucas. *Nature Guide to the New Zealand Forest*. Random House, 2000
2. Dave Butler, Tony Lindsay, Janet Hunt. *Paradise Saved*. Random House, 2014.
3. <http://blog.doc.govt.nz/tag/ngutukaka/>
4. <http://www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/native-plants/kakabeak/>

Contacts

Chairman & working bees: Peter Reimann 938 9602, peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz
Wellington City Council (reporting slips and fallen trees across tracks, other problems): 499 4444
Greater Wellington pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

Working Bees

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

Appendix 1

Draft Suburban Reserves Management Plan

WCC has prepared a new draft reserve management plan for the 168 local parks, reserves and protected open spaces in the suburban areas between Khandallah and Miramar (including Makara). The draft plan provides clear guidance for the adequate provision of open space and play areas and management of suburban reserves for the next 10 years.

Have your say on the **Draft Suburban Reserves Management Plan** by visiting the WCC website <http://wellington.govt.nz/have-your-say/public-inputs/consultations/open/draft-suburban-reserves-management-plan> and completing a submission form or send your comments via email: suburbanreserves@wcc.govt.nz, or post to:

FREEPOST, **Draft Suburban Reserves Management Plan**, Parks and Gardens (REPL01), Wellington City Council, PO Box 2199, Wellington 6140, or Fax: 04 8013155.

WCC need your feedback and ideas by **5pm, Friday 5th December 2014**.

For further information please email WCC at suburbanreserves@wcc.govt.nz,

Appendix 2

The 'Heap' Method of Wandering Willie Removal

- Aided by a steel-pronged garden rake or a 3-pronged hand-held tool, pile up the wandering willie into a heap (vertical sides and flat top).
- The heap must be in the shade and in contact with the ground, to assist decomposition.
- Go over the area again to make sure all remnants are removed. For well established infestations this will require some surface excavation. If anything is left behind, it will 'take off' again!
- Stomp on top of the heap to compress. Covering with black plastic helps.
- If the heap is not covered, re-visit every few months to stomp on it again and rake up side-emergents.
- 10 - 20 years later, the heap is transformed into wonderful compost.

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