

Gorge Gazette

A newsletter to all those who care for the Ngaio Gorge

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Published by the Trelissick Park-Ngaio Gorge Working Group
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What's it all about?

It's all about having a beautiful piece of wilderness right within Wellington City. And it's all about having that freely available to all who wish to use it responsibly. It's all about having a balance between wild things and human modification – a balance which is acceptable to both the wild things and the humans.

A lot has happened

Since the last *Gorge Gazette* came out in the middle of 1997 a lot has happened – good and bad.

Possums

There has been a big campaign since early this year to get rid of opossums in the park and there have been warning notices all over the place. The operation is being carried out by the Biosecurity Department of Wellington Regional Council and is funded jointly by the WRC and the WCC. It's a bait station campaign using a *Brodifacoum* cereal based pellet. It's linked with other similar operations in places such as Khandallah Park and Otari. Scott Farrell who heads the project says it's being very successful and will continue until the bait ceases to be taken. And he says, "a good side effect is that it's knocking over a lot of rats."

Planting

Planting of native trees has been happening throughout the winter and more working bees are likely in the early spring. All helpers are welcome – very welcome! The people to contact are Barry Allen (volunteers organiser) 473-0541 and Gary James 476-4292 (planting organiser).

Cottage meetings

Would you like to tell your neighbours, friends, workmates, fellow dog walkers etc about the Ngaio Gorge and Trelissick Park? How about having a 'cottage meeting' at your place? The Working Group has a great set of slides and one or two members will willingly come and spread the word to a few people at your place. Ring John McInnes (479-5710) or any Working Group member.

Stream Pollution - a sad blow

Pollution levels in the Kaiwharawhara and its tributaries rose late last year, according to regular testing, to the point where warning notices were posted all through Ngaio and the lower watershed. These are still in force.

Main pollution indicator

The problem is shown by the faecal coliform count. At one end of the scale raw sewage has a count of 10,000,000 per 100 ml, and at the other end a safe swimming pool would be 200 or less. Parts of the lower Kaiwhara were registering up to 8,000.

Nasty sewers

Ngaio sewers are one of the main pollution causes. Intensive testing has been done in Colway and Awarua Streets. Many clay pipes laid in 1924-5 are still being used. Some are cracked and are in leaking and seeping. Some newer pipes are causing problems too.

If you'd like to:

* **Be on the mailing list** for this newsletter, please ring Gwennyth Wright.

* **Become a volunteer** (planting, releasing, stream and track clearing etc) please ring Barry Allen.

* **Adopt a Spot** (for details see page 2 column 1) please ring Barry Allen

All phone numbers are on the back page.

If you get no answer, just ring another.

Fixing

Sewer repairs are under way in Awarua and Colway Streets and more will be done in the next few months. For instance, Iwi Street (a short no-exit street off Awarua Street) will be re-laid entirely.

The Wilton branch too

There has also been a problem at the face of the old Curtis Street tip. Remedial work is being done.

Improvement in water quality – good news

Iqbal Idris, the engineer in charge of the detailed Ngaio work, says that signs so far are good. Coliform counts have dropped to 600 as a result of the repairs but until consistently lower river flows occur, a more accurate assessment can't be made. Let's hope the trend continues!

This newsletter or any part of it may be copied or quoted provided proper acknowledgement is made.

Adopt a Spot – an opportunity

A person, couple, family, group, organisation, or a party of friends, adopts a piece of track, a length of stream, part of a bank etc. Are you interested? If so please contact Barry Allen, the Adopt a Spot organiser – or anyone on the Working Group.

Adopt a Spot – thanks!

The Working Group offers its thanks to “spottees”. We hope it’s fun for you as well as hard work. We want it to be. Please phone Barry Allen if you want to change, swap or modify your spot or pass it on to someone else.

Protecting a public asset

On this page are key emergency phone numbers. Please use them when ever necessary.

Act at the time – a direct request

Although this Gazette has many times highlighted the need for ‘yelling out’ if anything is seen to be wrong in the park, the stream, the bush, or the watershed in general, people don’t. Too often people say things like: “Oh I noticed the stream a funny yellow colour one day last week.” But that doesn’t help a great deal. Better action would be to ring one of the numbers in the box on this page as soon as possible after noticing the problem. Even better, carry a cell phone and use it. All that is not just the request of the Working Group. It’s what all the relevant authorities say.

Yelling out

If ringing with a report be clear about where the incident is occurring. Several times authorities have haven’t been able to find the place. Use street names and house numbers and track signposts and descriptions which are particular to that place.

The Plastics Factory

That’s not the name we are supposed to use nowadays as the factory is long gone, but everybody calls it that so why not? It’s that unprepossessing entrance to the left on way up Ngaio Gorge Rd just above the last of the Kaiwharawhara industries. That site will be the new bottom entrance to the park. Though it still looks a mess, demolition and preparation for restoration is slowly going on. Plans are being made, budgets drawn up and one day

Reptiles in the gorge

Yes! Seven varieties of lizard are found in Wellington suburbs and some of these – perhaps all of them – can be found in the gorge. Skinks sun themselves on rocks and geckos hide amongst the branches in scrub. They eat a range of insects, nectar and berries. The Copper Skink, the Common Skink, the Brown Skink and the Common Gecko are well distributed. Less often seen are the Ornate Skink, the Green Gecko and the Forest Gecko.

Book

A good field guide to skinks and geckos is: *New Zealand Frogs and Reptiles*, by Brian Gill & Tony Whitaker, (David Bateman Ltd.)

Helicopter pipes

Recently the gorge has been cleared of more old sewer pipes – by helicopter. This is the second time in the last ten years. A few remain and will need digging out before they can be totally removed.

Heaps of work behind the scenes

The Working Group, mainly through its secretary Frances Lee, has been: making representations on the Draft Open Space Strategy; talking to New Zealand Rail about using their land; saying things about mountain bikes; debating the Kaiwharawhara mouth, and pursuing a million other matters.

Emergency phone numbers

If you discover vandalism, pollution, theft, or anything untoward, *please act straight away* – from a cell phone if you carry one, or as soon as you get to the nearest phone of any sort. Your intervention could be crucial.

Numbers: Police Urgent 111

Central 472-300

Johnsonville 478-3583

Wellington City Council 499-4444

Pollution Response WRC 384-5707

Note: All the above numbers are 24 hour, although after hours Johnsonville Police is switched through to Central.

For any stream or harbour pollution go straight to Wellington Regional Council Pollution Response.

Working Group

The Ngaio Gorge-Trelissick Park Working Group is made up of the following representatives:

John McInnes (Chairman)	Wellington Fish and Game Council	479-5710
Frances Lee (Secretary)	Ngaio Progressive Association	479-2600
Barry Allen	Highland Park Progressive Association	473-0541
Gary James	Well. Branch Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society	476-4292
Andrew White	Wellington City Council	801-3615
Judy Siers	Onslow Historical Society	479-6896
Olaf John	Wellington Botanical Society	479-7605
Gwenyth Wright	Private Landowners’ Group	472-5527
Richard Northmore (Dep. Chair.)	Wadestown Residents’ Association	473-6476

The organisations represented are local citizens groups, environmental groups, special interest groups and the Wellington City Council.