

Gorge Gazette - April 2024

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and streams



Abbreviations:

WCC	Wellington City Council	GW	Greater Wellington Regional Council
DoC	Department of Conservation	GG	Gorge Gazette
TPG	Trelissick Park Group	WW	Wellington Water
S to S	Sanctuary to Sea (Zealandia)	F&B	Forest and Bird
KATE	Khandallah Automatic Telephone Exchange	OWB	Ōtari Wilton's Bush

Message from TPG's new Chair

You may have heard the news that Peter Reimann has stepped back from the Chair of the Trelissick Park Group. In March we acknowledged his 18 years as Chair with a bronze plaque to be attached to a new seat within the park. The Wellington City Council also recognised his years of dedicated volunteer service at a recent function where Councillors - past and present - and Council staff spoke of Peter's significant contribution to the regeneration of the native ecosystem within the Park. Peter says, *'It's been a great privilege to get to know and learn from so many wonderful people over the years: volunteers and staff from Wellington City Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Sanctuary to Sea and other organisations.'* He also notes that his work has been a team effort, and that he has not done this on his own.

We all owe Peter so much for his tireless efforts, his calm and modest leadership, and for leaving a rich treasure-trove of records that document the history of the park. Thank you, Peter, from us all!

And, by way of introduction, I have worked as a volunteer in the park for the past five years where I share an Adopt-a-Spot with a friend. I also serve as a committee member and have accompanied Peter to numerous community hui, meeting many of the people in our wider conservation network who connect with the TPG in so many ways. I look forward to supporting TPG volunteers and working closely with our community network to restore the ecosystem within Trelissick Park.

Finally, please contact me directly if you are able to volunteer for the Committee. In particular, if you have interest in archives or local history, your help is needed to continue Peter's meticulous record-keeping and historical archive. And if you're a Submission Writer, we need you too! There's always something we need to respond to!

Ngā mihi nui,
Anne Tuffin
027 457 6234

"Together we will make Trelissick Park a thriving, biodiverse ecosystem"



New TPG Chair Anne Tuffin at left of group.



Old TPG Chair Peter Reimann: RH photo.

TPG committee members

All are revealed in [contacts](#). To 'refresh' for the latest version you might need to press the magic key 'F5'.

Beware – invasion imminent!

A plague skink (*Iampropholis delicata*, also referred to as a rainbow skink), has been spotted in Glenside.

Origins - They came accidentally from Australia to Auckland in the 1960s. They have since spread from the north, with outliers in Marlborough.

Plague skinks can reach high densities quickly - They mature in less than half the time of natives and lay up to eight eggs three times per year.

Most native skinks only breed once per year and may not even breed until they are around five years old. All endemic New Zealand lizards except for the egg-laying skink, *Oligosoma suteri*, give birth to live young.

Where? - They prefer moist areas and are commonly found under vegetation, litter, rocks and logs. They also thrive in urban areas, gardens, commercial areas, industrial sites, garden centres, and waste ground. These skinks will frequently enter freight and shipping containers.

Egg ID - You may find nests of 20-100 oval white eggs, 8-10 mm long, with a tough leathery shell, e.g. in the soil of potted plants.

What to do - If you see a plague skink or suspect people trading them as pets, call the 24-hour DoC hotline 0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468) or MPI Biosecurity 0800 809 966 immediately. If possible, take a photo and add your observation to iNaturalist.

For more, see [Plague skink - Greater Wellington — Pest and Weed Central \(gw.govt.nz\)](#)



Photo: Wikipedia - Matt

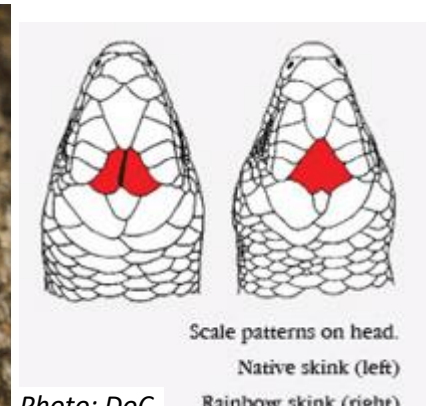


Photo: DoC

A mainly youthful Wellington Interfaith Council group



Some of the more than 30 who came on 23 March, to work at the mosque shooting victims' 51-trees memorial site down from bridge 6.

Inanga project update

Photo: thestyx.org.nz

Plant species - The January GG refers to a project led by Nate Rigler of S to S to encourage inanga spawning at the lower Kaiwharawhara Stream down from the Hutt Road bridge. Megan Ireland of Ōtari Wilton's Bush has now provided a list of recommended rushes, sedges and grasses to be planted below the Spotlight concrete wall, based on a site visit. The list in the table is after slight modifications by Stu Farrant from Morphem Environmental and Anita Benbrook (WCC).



Tidal stream area	Stream bank area	Channelised wall area
20 <i>Carex secta</i>	10 <i>Austroderia fulvida</i>	10 <i>Coprosma robusta</i>
20 <i>Carex geminata</i>	20 <i>Carex virgata</i>	10 <i>Coprosma repens</i>
20 <i>Juncus pallidus</i>	20 <i>Ficinia nodosa</i>	5 <i>Plagianthus divaricatus</i>
30 <i>Apodasmia similis</i>	20 <i>Cyperus ustalatus</i>	

Protection from destructive flood flows – Stu Farrant from Morphem Environmental and Vikki Chanse from Victoria University are keen to trial heavy-duty planter boxes attached to the channelised wall. Megan Ireland suggested also planting sequentially - first directly in the stream and along the bank without using any external engineering, assess the situation over the first year, and then deciding if harder infrastructure is needed later. Some plants may be lost, but those that remain will improve the conditions for secondary planting. Removal of some woody plants gradually, starting with the invasive wattle trees, would provide space for rushes, sedges and grasses.

Consents - Nate Rigler is currently working with Tim Sharp from GW on the necessary consents.

Upper limit of salinity - A recent site visit, timed for high king tide, established the upper limit of salinity. This is where inanga spawn and is just down from the mid-stream clump of flax. Dozens of inanga and other marine fish were seen.



Alice Jenkins and Abbey Huriwai (Mountains to Sea) with Peter Reimann (TPG) measuring salinity. Photo: Nate Rigler

Search for inanga eggs – Later, Zealandia staff searched for inanga eggs within the streamside rushes, sedges and grasses, finding around a dozen likely eggs (see photo).

Rubbish removal - On Sunday 11 February, Anna Fensom (Zealandia) and Nate Rigler met with two TikTok influencers John and James who make videos about cleaning different areas in Wellington. Collectively, they removed 470 litres of rubbish from this site which was picked up by WCC. Some rubbish had flowed back in, but the majority is gone, and the site looks really good! You can see the video John and James made [here](#).

Predator trapping - Predator Free Khandallah will be setting up traps on this site, mainly targeting rats and mice. Briony Ellis from Predator Free Khandallah's Council Reserve trapping team will train two staff members from Woods Waste nearby to monitor these traps. Woods Waste is one of the businesses in the S to S group 'Te Ohu Kaiwharawhara / very Business Restoring Nature'.



Photo: Nate Rigler

Funding - Up to \$25k from Frances Lee's generous donation will be committed to be used in the best way possible to support the inanga spawning project. Part of this funding could possibly be used for 'seed' funding, such as research grants.

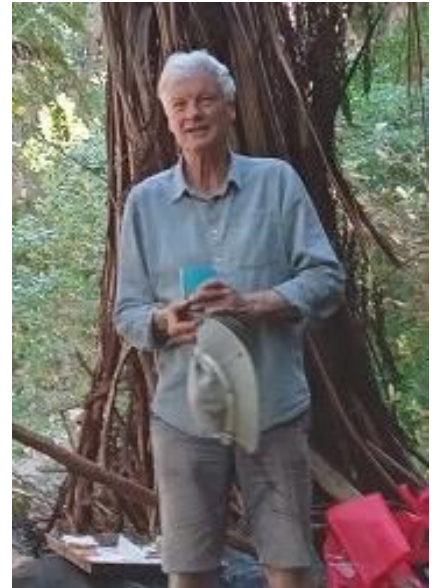
Mike Lear

One of our working bee stalwarts, Mike was diagnosed last December with a terminal brain tumour and deteriorated quickly. He took steps to activate the assisted dying process and sadly died on 28 February.

Mike came to most working bees and specialised in thinning branches enveloping slower growing canopy species. His last working bee was in November 2023.

Bill Hester says, 'He'll be missed, not only for his hard working - but also for his cheerful approach to everything. One of the hard bits in ending the session was usually finding Mike who would be off at a distance attacking an unwanted tree somewhere. But he then always added a bright spot to the group photos and to the discussions over the tea time in solving the world problems.'

Thanks to Mike for his approach, willingness to help, and cheerfulness on all occasions. We miss his company.



Jonathan at large

There would hardly be anywhere in the park not traversed by Jonathan Anderson. As at late January (update in next GG):

Non-endemics – Some willows, puriri, sycamore and small/medium karaka were exterminated.

Canopy and emergent species

The score – 130 planted tawa, 65 pukatea, 20-21 black maire, 4 white maire. Still counting tītoki, rātā, kōwhai and kohekohe.

Releasing – Podocarps, canopy and emergent species.

Seed collection & natural regeneration

- It's been a heavy fruiting year for tītoki, which is a mast species that only produces significant crop at intervals of about five years. About 2,500 fruit were collected for WCC and the F&B nurseries.
- Tītoki seedlings from the last heavy crop have established naturally and are growing happily in many parts of the park.
- Tawa have just started to drop their fruit.
- He has noticed pigeonwood seedlings and saplings are common throughout the park. Absence of any fruiting trees suggests they are being dispersed from other forests - a positive change over the last 15-20 years, since the start of predator control.
- A similar dynamic is with the dispersal of kohekohe. Despite being common throughout the western hills, there are only a handful of mature kohekohe in Trelissick Park. They are all at the top of the slope around Trelissick Crescent – a reflection of climate change? Kohekohe may have been killed in the past by frost inversion in the main valley.
- Podocarp seedlings are appearing in new places, notably the mosque shooting 51-trees memorial spot. The six planted kahikatea are now mature and are producing pollen or fruit.

Comments from Richard Grasse

Note [mature] tītoki by the Ngaio Gorge Road just below Trelissick Crescent, and some below Crofton Downs railway station.

There are a lot of pigeonwoods on Mt Kaukau.

Areas by the lower Silversky track and Heke Reserve are awash with kohekohe seedlings. He does not think they disperse far from seeding trees.



Pigeonwood (*Hedycarya arborea*)

Forestflora.co.nz



Black maire (*Nestis cunninghamii*)
Jeremy Rolfe

A veritable mine of information

Bill Hester ministers to our website [Trelissick Park Group](#). Recently he updated the 'History' and 'Contacts' pages and added all 87 meeting minutes from 2006 to the 'Meeting Info' page – an invaluable resource.

The 'Maps & tracks' page now includes sections on tracks, entrances, bridges, memorials and features, including photos. Well worth a browse.

Archives on the move

The TPG archives held at KATE had to go. Judy Siers of OHS advised that earthquake strengthening of the building was coming. WCC inspected the collection and will take most of it, catalogued/titled as ours, part of the OHS Collection, held by WCC. Long-term it will be accessible to anyone. WCC archives are at 28 Barker Street, Te Aro.

Anne Tuffin is discussing with WCC the prospect of storing some additional computer discs, also paper and photographic records. Anne has photographed then destroyed the award certificates that were hanging on the KATE wall, except for the beautiful 1999 DoC tiles depicting a kereru, currently held by Peter Reimann (see photo).

These archives, along with the extensive records on our website 'History', 'Meeting Info', 'Current Issues' and 'Gorge Gazettes' pages, as well as years of Facebook posts, means that we are awash with history.



Down in the park

New 'spotee' - Kena Duignan has adopted the verge of Wightwick's Field.

Track upgrade - WCC's Tim Harkness has organised improvements to the streamside track from bridge 6, heading downstream.

Cherry and sycamore trees euthanised at last - Along the railway corridor from Crofton Downs station, by Treescape during the Easter shutdown. Thank you Illona Keenan (WCC)!

Working bees - weeding

- Waikowhai Street verge
- Between bridges 2 and 3
- 57 Kaiwharawhara Road
- Below Hanover Street.

Other group visits – more weeding

- Interfaith Group (see p.1)
- SPCA (at the memorial trees down from bridge 5)
- VUW Tramping Club (entrance 6 to magazine building)
- Environmental Protection Authority (along steep concrete vehicle track below entrance 5)
- Treasury (on both sides of the Northern Walkway down from Hanover Street).

More photos are on our Facebook page.



VUW with Nate Rigler (S to S) in foreground

More trouble at the verge

Marilyn Hester spent years planting the ½ kilometre Trelissick Crescent verge – a delight to the eye and a barrier to deter rubbish dumping (see GG April 2022). Following earlier plant thefts, the latest upset is from the power company, contracted to trim the trees away from the lines. They left much slash on top of seedlings.

Jonathan Anderson says the most unfortunate thing is the drastic pruning of the mature hīnau, also opening the forest canopy up to wind exposure. It is a rare situation where large remnant wild trees come to a road edge (with power lines) in the same way as at this corner of Trelissick Crescent. It was somewhere people could easily see hīnau flowers and fruit developing.

He wonders why it was necessary to prune the trees so far away from the lines when they have sat in close proximity for 30 years or more. The saddest loss is a 30-year-old pukatea in the gully head in a corner of the road. It has been cut off at about a metre high with one



The affected corner - Marilyn at the verge, April 2022

Photo: Bill Hester

low branch surviving. It was 6m tall - a beautiful tree with a full canopy of foliage extending down to the ground on the road edge.

This has been discussed with WCC and may provide a catalyst for contractor improvements.

A young tītoki tree (see article p.4)

Photo: Jeremy Rolfe



For more...

Scroll down our Facebook page, or read a wealth of information on our website, updated by Bill Hester.

Contacts

trelissickgroup@gmail.com

[Trelissick Park Group website](#)

[Trelissick Park Group | Facebook](#)

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

GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

Thanks to all our volunteers, supporters, WCC staff and weed control contractor Kaitiaki o Ngahere.

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.