

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

(Footbridges over the stream are numbered from 1 – 6 going downstream.)

Abbreviations:

WCC Wellington City Council

GW Greater Wellington Regional Council

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

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/TrelissickParkGroup>

DECEMBER 2018

Cabbage Tree Christmas

Cabbage trees (*Cordyline australis*) are having a celebration this year. For some mysterious reason, this has been a simultaneous decision of all the cabbage trees of Wellington (and elsewhere?).



The "Wood Wide Web"

Communication between trees brings to mind the discovery of an underground fungal network, which trees and plants use for good or evil. The following link calls it "the wood wide web":

<https://www.facebook.com/bbcworldservice/videos/2037134556305660/>

Those who Fly Under the Radar

It's time to bring into the limelight our team of five, targeting rats, stoats and hedgehogs:

- Barry Durrant - DOC200 traps in the lower Kaiwharawhara Stream area, also a number of the bait stations coming down the slope from Oban Street in Wadestown and A24 self-resetting traps. He is very experienced and keeps all our traps maintained and in good mechanical order.
- Steve Mackle - bait station replenishment in the bulk of Kaiwharawhara Stream and below Hanover Street in Wadestown - and one A24.
- Andy McIver - bait station replenishment on the Ngaio side of the Park, mainly on the Forest Remnant Track area on the slope above Kaiwharawhara Stream.
- Hila Naish - DOC200 traps in the Korimako valley, recently replacing Ben Curran.
- Bill Hester - bait stations in the Korimako Valley and coordinates with the Regional and City Councils on bait supply, used bait removal and station/trap supply and placement.

They aim for a monthly replenishment and checking cycle - to help keep the predator levels low.

Bill is keen to maintain sustainability of the predator team - hence the relatively short routes so that they are able to keep to a monthly cycle.

We have 33 bait stations, 15 DOC200 and 5 A24 traps.

The trap scores since 2008: 238 rats/mice, 17 stoats/weasels and 17 hedgehogs. Untold numbers succumbed to the bait. At right is Barry, looking rather pleased.

We have not seen evidence of possums for many years. But GW worry about re-invasion and recently installed 20 lever-operated bait-safe stations, which they service.

For more: <http://www.trelissickpark.org.nz/predators.htm>



A "Small Success Story"

So says WCC's Jonathan Anderson. The kahikatea trees planted in the late 1990s in the small streamside wetland area at the bottom of the gully below Hanover Street are now about 5-6 m tall and reproductively mature. There are 2 males and 3 females and the male cones are producing pollen. He says it will be interesting to see if the female cones go on to produce fruit.

The Competition for the Biggest Tawa Tree



The October newsletter of Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves, referred to their tawa tree 1 m in diameter at chest height and about 35 m tall¹.

David from Conservation Volunteers noticed one of ours above the end of the vehicle track. However, it is only 0.8 m in diameter and barely 30 m tall. Many large tawa trees grace the original forest remnant - perhaps another contender awaits discovery?

Down in the Park

Below the western end of the Forest Remnant track lies a large, bare slope of fearsome steepness. Undeterred, WCC's contractor, Kaitiaki o Ngahere cleared it last year. To our relief, access worries evaporated and Jim Gifkins has started planting. We will fill it next year. He has also planted more of the Trelissick Crescent verge, aided by Marilyn Hester.

Peter Reimann cleared old gorse above the track near the Hanover Street entrance to allow removal of wandering willie by Joan Waldvogel.

Park users are delighted with track improvements from the Waikowhai Street entrance.

About 20 Khandallah Cubs, plus adults, performed weed-clearing miracles beside the vehicle track from the lower entrance.

There are more gems on our Facebook page.

Oban Street Entrance/Footbridge Update

WCC's residents' and users' survey closed on 29 October. Many thanks to those who participated. Council Officer's recommendation that the project proceeds will be aired at the Council meeting for decision on 13 December. The prospective footbridge contractor, Abseil Access, says "ready when you are".

Cautious Three Cheers for Gall Mites

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) have approved use of the leaf-galling mite *Aceria vitalbae* to combat old man's beard (*Clematis vitalba*), See:

<http://community.scoop.co.nz/2018/10/approval-to-use-gall-mite-to-curb-old-mans-beard/>

The galls the mites form on host plants provide shelter, enabling them to multiply. The plant redirects resources into the galls, which reduces its capacity to flower and envelop the forest canopy.

Landcare Research, the science provider for the application, is confident there would be no significant damage to other plants, such as native *Clematis* species.

If it works, this biocontrol will be much better for the environment than our current use of chemicals.

Megan Banks from GW advises that first release is hoped to be next spring by Horizons Regional Council (the applicants for the agent). GW will be in line for a Wellington release, most likely in spring 2020 (allowing time for the build-up of a viable population of mites).



Not Quite 'Shining'

Steve Mackle reports seeing two shining cuckoo in the Park.

This bird sensibly spends the winter in the tropics. 'Shining' of hue, yes - but maybe not of personality. On return to New Zealand, it settles into a host nest, rudely evicting any eggs and nestlings. It is prone to fly into windows.

Photo at left (and for more):

<http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz>.

The Kaiwharawhara Rubbish Catchment.

Amanda Valois of NIWA is working with Zealandia's Sanctuary to Sea project and ourselves to develop a plan to reduce rubbish and eliminate waste going to the sea. Gravity, wind and water conspire to defile our Park, as it is located in a downstream urban valley. Secondary school student Shannon Palmer has kindly offered to help. Hope reigns...

Kaiwharawhara Stream Flow Monitoring

GW's Sam Gunderson will be installing telemetered flow monitoring in a concrete channel downstream of the Park, to be displayed on their website. It will measure flow directly (rather than by inference from level). It will only measure flood and mid-range flows as they carry 90% of the contaminant load.

The data will be useful for linking water flows from the catchment to both water quality and ecological responses. Our Group will be interested to relate the flow with rainfall, due to our problems with devastating fast stormwater run-off from hard surfaces.

In the future, GW may monitor low flow. There is also potential to install continuous water quality monitoring equipment. Currently, GW only take samples manually, once per month.

No Longer Ranging

Best wishes to Matt Robertson who worked with us in the past and thanks to Tim Harkness, who is now Trails & Reserves Specialist in the Assets and Projects team. WCC is recruiting new Rangers.

The PM Next?

Interest in the Park and catchment is spreading. We are grateful for the recent discussions with MP Greg O'Connor and for the opportunity to take MPs Sarah Dowie and Brett Hudson for a walk in the Park.

Thanks and season's greetings to all our volunteers, supporters and staff from WCC and GW.

References

1. <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#sent?projector=1>

Contacts

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WCC (reporting problems): (04) 499 4444, GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

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.