

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

TPG Trelissick Park Group

WRA Wadestown Residents' Association

GW Greater Wellington Regional Council

Website: www.trelissickpark.org.nz. (includes past Gorge Gazettes) and link to Facebook.

FEBRUARY 2016



No, it's not the surface of the moon - it's the Northern Walkway. As we walked up from the bridge towards Ngaio, David from Conservation Volunteers noticed the holes in the track. "Native bees" he said. They could be one of the 18 species of *Leioproctus* who dig nest holes in the ground.^{1,2} There are about 60 such holes, right on the track, and more on other tracks nearby.

While on the subject of arthropods, we visited our weta hotel on an animal pest walk-through with WCC's Illona Keenan. To our delight, a discriminating weta had moved in, along with some spiders. A photo is on our Facebook page.

The Fortunes Ahead

We have 55 from the Ministry of Primary Industries visiting on 4 March for a BYO picnic at the magazine site, followed by a weed-sweep up the valley. Amanda Dobson from EnviroSchools and Oliver Vetter from Sustainable Coastlines are busy organising 100 school children for one day in June, to put in 400 plants. Conservation Volunteers would like to visit us again. The bi-monthly working bees have been programmed. We will have around 600 plants to spread around, most from WCC.

The Wadestown Fair is coming, as is our talk on experience of pest animals for a 'Predator Free Parks Workshop'. Illona Keenan has her contractors lined up for control of wandering willie, Japanese honeysuckle, climbing asparagus and Asiatic knotweed - with abseiling on the cliff edges bordering the original forest remnant. We continue with old man's beard, sycamore, buddleia, wandering willie and Himalayan balsam.

For more on our future, see our updated Five-Year Plan on the website.

So far, 2016 is looking good - 'fortune' hopefully. Our wonderful bush is fodder for the soul.

Animal Pest Review Needed

Bill Hester has provided a comprehensive treatise on pest animals for our website. But conflicts abound and with the benefit of experience, now is the time for a review.

Bait stations have been in the park since 1998, to deal with possums. Following their rapid demise, the targets have been rats, stoats, weasels and hedgehogs, using a combination of the original bait stations and traps.

For the bait stations, possums still need covering in case of new visits. Rats like the pellets, but the stations are too high for Norway rats, who do not climb as well as ship rats. However, the bait stations need to be above the zone of dogs and children. Rain sometimes gets into the entrance, gumming up the pellets.

We have been using hen eggs in the traps that were installed in 2008. Trials elsewhere with other baits are ongoing, such as by Goodnature³ and Victoria University with pheromones⁴.

Perhaps we will never know what goes on in the minds of rats and stoats. Are they teaching their progeny to avoid traps and bait stations?

A Blank Canvas

A 200m² clear area has emerged from the railway wilderness upstream of bridge 6, thanks to a recent visit from Conservation Volunteers and earlier weed control by WCC. It will be highly suitable for the June influx of school children for planting. It is one of the few north-facing slopes in the park and the full sun, dry stony soil and winter frosts will be a severe test for nascent trees.

Of course, the weeds just carry on, regardless.



News from the 'Spots'

Alexandra McKendry, helped by her mother, has adopted an area for restoration beside the stream below the Waikowhai Street entrance for her Duke of Edinburgh Award. This requires regular visits until around May, when they will plant the area.

Warrick Fowlie continues with his quest for wandering willie and karaka seedlings in the forest remnant below Ngaio Gorge Road, also collecting a vast array of rubbish.

Fiona Shrapnell from WRA is looking for people from Wadestown and Highland Park to adopt spots in the park.

Marilyn Hester has 'upgraded' her riparian strip beside the Korimako upstream of Wightwick's Field, where our kahikatea, five-finger and grasses were starting to struggle.

The Ultimate Survivors

A shrub that thrives on dry, wind-swept Wellington hills is tauhinu (*Ozothamnus leptophylla*). It is fast growing, reaching 2 m in 10 - 15 years. We have been trying to beautify the lower entrance from Ngaio Gorge Road. Here it is wind-swept and sun-blazed, frosty in winter. The soil is dry and hard. That anything survives is a miracle. Yet, the tauhinu we planted last winter is full of the joys of life. We have ordered some more from WCC.

The grasses there are also still looking good. The vigour of gossamer grass (*Anemanthele lessoniana*) never fails to impress. In other parts, it even out-smarts wandering willie.



The Aberrants

They surely add spice to our lives.

Dog walkers - They fastidiously scoop up 'the business' into the regulation blue plastic bags, then leave them on the track. Brain re-wiring is needed. We sometimes find confused dogs looking for their owners - but it would be useless reverting to the park being 'on leash', because that would be ignored anyway.



Rubbish Dumpers Should people desire to view the rubbish collected over the years, just scroll down the photos on our Facebook page. By now it would have filled a warehouse. Warrick Fowlie and Bill Hester take grim delight in harvesting the incredible assortment - see Appendix for list. Train passengers should avert their eyes on arrival at Crofton Downs station - their travel experience might be sullied by trackside paper and plastic snared in the blackberry.

Garden Waste Dumpers - Don't get us started on garden waste dumping. Past wars have been waged on Trelissick Crescent. Such dumping is a major source of the exotic invasions which take up so much of our time. WCC are so concerned that they employed Miriam Sherratt from Victoria University to study how best to deal with this. The

photo shows some healthy hydrangea specimens below upper Ngaio Gorge Road, a result of dumping from a residence opposite - on-going.

Cyclists - Intrepid cyclists roam our tracks, blind to the 'no cycling' notices and deaf to our (polite) admonitions.

Graffiti Artists(?) - Recently we found a magnificent art work adorning a wall of the magazine building. It seemed a pity to call it 'graffiti', but it had to go.

The Polluters - Our streams are victims to detergents from car washing, cement washings, chemicals and paint entering the stormwater system from houses and streets. All the stormwater in the entire 22 km² catchment ends up in the streams.

Another Footbridge

Abseil Access have selected a site for a footbridge across the Kaiwharawhara Stream, just upstream of the debris trap. This will allow our long-sought connection to Oban Street. They will provide an estimate and drawing to allow applications for resource consents and funding.

References

1. <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ourchangingworld/audio/20174685/new-zealand's-smallest-bees>.
2. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/wasps-and-bees/page-4>.
3. www.goodnature.co.nz.
4. <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/research/expertise/ecology-biodiversity/analysing-rat-urine>.

Contacts

Chairman & working bees: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz
Wellington City Council (reporting slips and fallen trees across tracks, other problems): (04) 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 website for details.

The Gorge Gazette

Compiled by Peter Reimann about every 4 months - all contributions and suggestions gratefully received.

APPENDIX

List of Rubbish Collected

Cars, shopping trolleys, TV sets, sofas, furniture, windows, advertising signs, road cones, tyres, wheel covers, pipes, planks, glass, wire, bottles, pots, drink cans, paper, cardboard, cartons, books, plastic bags, disposable cups, bottles, clothes, carpet, roofing, bins - you name it...

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.