

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

TPG Trelissick Park Group

VUW Victoria University of Wellington

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

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

MARCH 2020

The Karaka Murders

It is the season for karaka berries. Dog owners want the trees gone. Vets say there are confirmed cases of karaka berry poisoning from the Park and fatalities throughout Wellington. Clinical signs are neurological. Berry kernels remain toxic for a long time and animals can be poisoned from previous year's fruit¹.

Some dog owners are pushing for removing the large karaka trees along the Kaiwharawhara valley track.

TPG's Warrick Fowle has removed many medium/small trees over the past four years from below Trelissick Crescent. WCC plan to cut down about five larger ones along the valley track after consultation with local iwi.

Anne Tuffin from TPG has met representatives of the dog owners, aiming to help Warrick. They have agreed to put messages on their dog owners' social media page asking to pull out any karaka seedlings, especially from the bottom of the valley. They will remove berries from the ground whenever possible and take them away.



Karaka (*Cornocarpus laevigatus*) can grow to 15 m with a trunk up to 60 cm diameter. "The leaves are dark green, leathery, 10-15 cm long x 5 cm wide. The flowers are small, 4-5 mm in diameter and greenish. The berries are large, bright orange 2.5-4 cm long [photo: Wikipedia]. Flowering is from late winter through spring, and berries ripen from midsummer through autumn."²

Karaka is not endemic to Wellington and out-compete the natives that belong here. WCC are removing karaka from other areas.

Frances Bows Out

Frances Lee resigned as Secretary in 2007 but stayed on the Committee for the last few years as Treasurer – remaining a staunch advocate for the environment, Kaiwharawhara catchment, the estuary area and access from Oban Street.

Frances initiated discussions with WCC in 1990 about forming a group to help restore the Park and was appointed secretary at the first TPG meeting in 1991.

Many improvements have been achieved, in conjunction with WCC and GW - tracks re-opened or built, bridges constructed, weeds removed, many thousands of native trees planted, and stream banks given increased protection.

It is wonderful to see the increased number of visitors enjoying the Park and more working as volunteers. Trelissick Park is becoming restored to a peaceful, native bush wilderness 'gem', only minutes from the centre of Wellington.

Frances was the main driving force in all this during her time as TPG Secretary. We all owe her a debt of gratitude for her dedication, persistence and hard work. Although no longer on the Committee, Frances wants to keep up with our activities and provide wise counsel, when necessary.



Our New Treasurer

Anne Tuffin [photo] arrived on the scene about a year ago, keen to become involved. Anne is our new Treasurer. Welcome to the Committee, Anne!

Progress!

Kaiwharawhara Stream Footbridge

The design was finalised by Frame Group in February. Consent applications are underway.

Tim Harkness from WCC has sent a request for quotations to three contractors for construction, asking for responses by mid-April. They all indicated they will submit prices.

Frame Group estimates that construction should take not more than six weeks, subject to weather and no delay in supply of the glulam beams from the manufacturer.

Track up to Oban Street

Tim Harkness will be organising the track at the steep area above the stream and the track with fencing past the houses. TPG's Barry Durrant is working on the middle section.

Pristine Urban Streams – ugh!

Our streams normally look crystal clear and tempting. Children play and dogs frolic. However, the lower Kaiwharawhara Stream is graded “E” for sewage pollution: “unacceptable levels of risk”. Other Wellington streams are in similar straits. Recent publicity has sparked an investigation by WCC and Wellington Water.

Many of the sewer and stormwater pipes are old and some cross-connected. TPG wrote to WCC with an example of a sewer line broached during recent installation of fibre-optic cabling.

GW monitor the lower Kaiwharawhara Stream every month. The results for E. coli & faecal coliforms cover several years^{3,4} – all excessive. It seems likely that the pollution will persist, pending extensive investigations and upgrading of the wastewater/stormwater system.

TPG has asked WCC to consider warning signs for Park entrances.

More on Streams

Continuous Stream Monitoring

GW now has a continuous logger (pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, conductivity) at the lower end of the Park. 12 months of data is being processed and should be available in the next few months.

Cotton Strips

GW has installed experimental cotton strips across the lower Kaiwharawhara Stream. These are meant to give an indication of how leaves and other organic material will break down, which influence the types of macroinvertebrates and the overall health of the ecosystem. The research is being conducted by Amy Gault, a masters student at VUW.

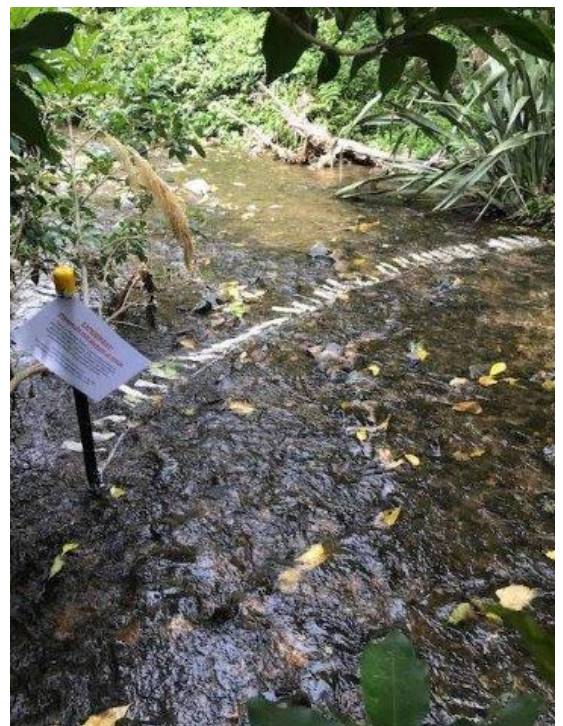
The strips will be collected each week over four weeks to test break-down rates.

Other Monitoring Links

A wealth of information for the catchment is available - somewhat depressing...^{5,6}

Fish Barriers

We are keen to allow migration of our native fish between the harbour and catchment headwaters. The Korimako Stream north of the Park is bristling with culverts to thwart even the most determined species.⁷ We are forever optimistic that maybe one day WCC will ease their passage. In some cases, spat ropes are a cost-effective solution.⁸



Industrial Dimming

In the September 2019 newsletter we reported on the efforts of local resident, Lucy Alcock, living above the lower Kaiwharawhara commercial area, to reduce the effect of industrial lighting. It affects biological cues for wildlife in the ecological corridor. According to a publication by WCC, birdlife is increasing in Wellington.⁹

Lucy advises that ExxonMobil has now fixed their LED lights to align with the site boundaries, although there is still some 'spill' onto regenerating bush on the hillside. CourierPost says, "We are currently engaging a lighting engineer to see if there are any cost-effective ways of shielding the lights, while still providing a safe environment for our staff to work in."

The Bank is Rising

When Alex McKendry adopted her streamside spot below Waikowhai Street in 2016 it was a flat and stony wasteland of weeds, prone to flooding.

We were worried that her plantings would get washed away. But instead they thrived. The grasses slowed the sediment borne on floods, building up the ground level. The soil quality improved. Now the area suffers from less inundation. The nikau palms are thriving. The pukatea have grown to three metres and kahikatea only slightly less.

The upper photo was taken in May 2016 and the lower is the same area in March 2020 (the large rock on the right is still there).



Doug's Bounteous Tree

Under the kowhai tree in Doug Tennant's garden lies a circular garden plot. Birds do their seedy business aloft, resulting in natives emerging below. Peter Reimann has thrice visited to uproot cabbage tree, kawakawa, rewarewa and lancewood for potting and planting in the Park.

Down at the Coal Face

'Busy' is the word. All is revealed on our Facebook page – a wealth of photos and news, regularly updated by Bill Hester.

Apart from bi-monthly working bees and adopt-a-spot activity, we are grateful for the recent work done by Conservation Volunteers, Khandallah/Northland Cubs, Raroa Intermediate, Treasury, MBIE Legal and VUW.

Our animal pest team is still catching rats and having the block bait eaten. Roaming volunteers have done weed-eating and eliminated cherry trees. Now old mans' beard is blooming.



Flammable NZ

Unfortunately, the Taupo Native Plant Nursery no longer exists, but their excellent catalogue listed the flammability of native species, based on consultation with experienced fire managers throughout New Zealand. Here are the 'high' to 'moderate' species for our Park:

High (burns readily) - kānuka, mānuka.

Moderate/high (may have flammable green foliage and/or produce high levels of litter and elevated fuel) – toetoe, akeake, tree ferns, mingimingi, tōtara.

Moderate (most produce heavy accumulations of flammable litter and elevated dead material, and/or have flammable green foliage) – flax, kahikatea, rimu, cabbage tree, tawa, kohuhu.

Thanks to all our volunteers, supporters and staff from WCC and GW.

References

1. <https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/AK1402/S00393/dogs-poisoned-by-karaka-berries-in-wellington-suburbs.htm>
2. John Dawson, Rob Lucas. "Nature Guide to the New Zealand Forest". Random House 2007.
3. <https://www.gw.govt.nz/annual-monitoring-reports/2019/rivers-water-quality-and-ecology/index.html>
4. <http://graphs.gw.govt.nz/>
5. <https://www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/wellington-region/river-quality/kaiwharawhara-stream/kaiwharawhara-stream-at-ngaio-gorge/>
6. <https://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Whaitua-Te-Whanganui-a-Tara/REPORT-Whaitua-Te-Whanganui-a-Tara-River-and-stream-water-quality-and-ecology.pdf>
7. <https://fishpassage.niwa.co.nz/>
8. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/conservation/native-animals/Fish/fish-passage/mussel-spat-ropes.pdf>
9. <https://wellington.govt.nz/your-council/news/2019/09/bird-numbers-growing>

Working Bees

See website 'Projects' page for dates, locations and health and safety information.

Contacts

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WCC (reporting problems): (04) 499 4444

GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 734