

**THE FRIENDS OF MANGEMANGEROA
SOCIETY INC
Winter Newsletter 2005**



Chairman's Ramblings:, Allan Riley

In the short time since the AGM we have managed to 'lift a gear' and be involved in a variety of projects which continue to promote "Mangemangeroa".

Firstly it was great to see around 50% of our members present to hear from our guest speaker, Bruce Keeley on his bird life studies in the Mangemangeroa reserve & estuary. His enthusiasm for the area and his subject was infectious.

Planting Days:

So infectious, that the planting day on May 21st saw over 35 supporters turn out for the first winter planting. Organised by the Friends and two local Rotary Clubs, a total of 600 manuka (and some other species) were planted at the exit of the new southern track. The Council had cleared the gorse, Alan (our Chairman) attacked the blackberry and by 9am the site was ready for planting. The trees grown by Jim Duckworth were staked and planted by the willing helpers within 2 hours. An on-site BBQ and refreshments followed.

The next planting day is under the guidance of Graham Falla and Forest & Bird Protection Society. It's scheduled for Saturday 11th June at 8.45am starting from the Barn. The planting of trees from Somerville Intermediate (co-ordinated by Jim and Sally) is on Friday 17th June, at 9.30am starting from the Barn. Friends at invited to participate at both events. A planting spade and a few mallets for driving in stakes would be helpful.

Southern Track

By the time you receive this issue, the new southern track extension will be complete. A 'window' of good weather - until near the end of the project - helped greatly. The access to this is via the 'kissing gate' on Somerville Road (by the stock yard). This provides a much easier route through the paddocks to the walk. The new track adds a further dimension to the enjoyment of the reserve with some delightful views. The naturalness of the area contrasts with the forest sections. Once the weeds are under control it will be an area to be treasured and kept in mind when 'development' is mentioned. Enhancement of the reserve in its entirety should take precedence over unnecessary 'development'. We look forward to hearing from Austen on this.



Animal Pest Control

Great concern over the past few months at the recurring possum damage has been expressed. As well signs of mustelids in the reserve and on the foreshore of the estuary have been reported. Ferret have been sighted and it is assumed that the rodent population is also on the increase.

Discussions with MCC showed that there was no animal pest management programme currently in place nor, any immediate funds for this essential service. As a consequence of this information representations were made to the

still, in our opinion, needs further work. It will now form a basis on which can be built a more appropriate plan. To that end, several members have formed a working group from which will come recommendations, and some reworded sections, to bring to the next meeting with the Manukau Parks team. From this we hope to have a document from which restoration can be managed, through planned development, in a step-like manner, by Council, and the various groups interested in the reserve.



Plant of the Season: Fuchsia; *Fuchsia excorticata* **Kotukutuku**

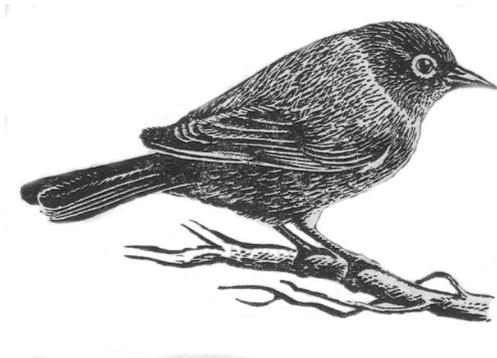
The specimen in the reserve is thriving almost on the waters edge, the almost black ripe berry providing an excellent food source for birds. The Maori called this berry the konini. Early settlers of Howick also used this berry to supplement their diet.

Fuchsia was once plentiful in the bush but now the one mature specimen near the waters edge seems to be the only fruiting specimen still producing flowers. Young fuchsia can be found growing along the track where the seeds have landed on the exposed ground. Fuchsia is a possum favourite.

Leaves of the fuchsia may be toothed but the younger specimens tend to be larger, with smooth edges. Fuchsias are one of the few deciduous native plants of the New Zealand bush but the specimen in the reserve does not appear to lose all its foliage over winter.

The most obvious identification feature of the fuchsia is the bark; a light tan colour, of a papery nature, peeling off in strips.

The flower is most attractive, being produced during July/August. These develop from the stems/branches. Fuchsia are unusual in that they have two forms of flower – hermaphrodite flowers and female flowers. The pollen on the hermaphrodite flower is a deep blue – a most unusual pollen colour. Only one type of flower is produced on any one tree.



Bird of the Season: **Silvereye or Tauhou** by Graham Falla

Other common names for this bird are waxeye, white-eye and blightbird. At 12cm the silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*) is only 1 cm longer than the little riroriro. Colourful plumage makes it easy to recognize, with an artistic blend of green on the head and back, light brown along the sides and pale grey underneath. The vivid white eye-ring is very distinctive.

The silvereye is seldom silent, especially when moving in flocks outside the breeding season. Birds in the flock seem to carry on a constant commentary of soft, plaintive- sounding cries that announce their presence. They do not mind an audience and provide plenty of entertainment with their acrobatic agility. During nesting the cock bird proclaims his territory with a tuneful, trilling song.

A nesting pair will build a finely-woven structure that is often easy to see. Up to four eggs make a clutch and nesting may occur three times in a season between August and February. The chicks thrive on a mixed diet of insects, fruit,

Weedology

By Austen Gate and Sally Barclay.

*In yonder copse the privets grow
The wandering Jew is creeping low
The ginger flowering round the edge
And strangling vines in every wedge
On every piece of idle soil
They hinder, smother, taint and spoil,
The bushland's scathed, and pasture weak.
Is this the kind of land we seek?*

A. Esler. 1991

Weeds: what is a weed? It's a plant out of place in its local environment

Restoration Plan: Manukau City Council (MCC) has recently issued a detailed plan for the restoration and enhancement of the Mangemangeroa Reserve. Friends of Mangemangeroa (F.O.M) has a partnership agreement with MCC Parks and a prime objective is to control weeds invading the reserve and its extensions to the Chisbury Reserve at the northern end. This has been formally incorporated into the Restoration Plan for the Mangemangeroa. The last revision of this plan was in Feb this year (2005). Interested members should have a look at this plan through one of your committee members, local information centre, or local library.

Plant Aliens: Several areas in the reserve and the extensions **north** to Shelly Park carry heavy populations of undesirable plants. The partnership arrangement with MCC seeks to control and eradicate a number of these. As well, education of the public in weed identification, and where practical, help with removal of these weeds is one project we are trialling this year. The track where these aliens can best be identified & manually removed is at the **northern** end. There is a host of undesirable alien invaders which are out of place, in what was original natural and unadulterated bush. A trained eye can identify many alien plants e.g. plectranthus, wild ginger, Woolly nightshade, Privet, Inkweed etc.

Weed Survey: The weed survey, in the plan, commences at the northern end with reference to the Chisbury Reserve which includes a large triangular area of natural bush extending from Chisbury Drive to the estuary. The reserve is threatened by alien plant invasion from housing development, particularly on the south side, which borders the old farm gate area. This invasion carries on to the farm gate area where there are most of the aforesaid weeds. What was originally farmed has been turned into upmarket housing with adjacent grassed area. This is a great place to illustrate the way in which adjacent properties can threaten the natural bush. It provides an opportunity to identify the weeds in various stages of growth.

Giving the natives a hand: Weed invasion in the Mangemangeroa Reserve threatens the very livelihood of

Letters to the editor

I have enjoyed reading the informative articles in recent newsletters. I write now to add something more to Betty Harris's article in the December 2004 issue that covered her outstanding advocacy to preserve the Mangemangeroa block for development as a passive reserve. Betty concluded her article with reference to the success of the preservation campaign by stating that in 1994 MCC announced the purchase of the block for development as a reserve for all to enjoy. Herewith is a brief account of the key developments over the following ten years.

MCC Parks department, in 1995, issued a draft management plan for the development of the reserve. It is interesting to note that the draft plan was entitled Somerville Reserve with Mangemangeroa only in parenthesis. Subsequent documents have used Mangemangeroa as the preferred name which Maori supporters would appreciate. Cattle grazing had seriously opened up the undergrowth of the bush & therefore the first priority was to fence off the bush area along the estuary. The recovery of the bush has been spectacular so that it is now difficult to imagine how it was when the cattle had access.

In the mid 1990's my wife & I moved to North Park & began to take notice of this much bigger park close by. About the same time, I had joined the Howick branch of U3A (University of the 3rd Age) with special interest in the Botany Group. We were fortunate to have Betty Harris in the group. Jack McKenzie, another active supporter of the reserve concept and his wife Dorothy with friends such as Jim Duckworth & others formed a group to promote action on the MCC Parks Draft plan.

We noted that a substantial fund had been created when the Harbour Board became Ports of Auckland & that the annual interest from the fund was to be distributed to the city councils for development of recreation associated with maritime environments. Using these funds, our group, with the support of the Howick Community Board, proposed development of a walkway through the bush along the estuary of the reserve. The proposal was successful & the first stage of the walkway was completed in the year 2000 & opened with great aplomb by Sir Barry in October of that year.

Around this time, Jack & Dorothy McKenzie, who had served as secretary & treasurer of our informal group of friends, recommended that we should become an incorporated society. We made the necessary applications under the Companies Act & became incorporated with Alan Riley & Jim Duckworth as President & Vice President

The next major step was the development of the second stage to extend the initial walkway south to the lower end of Chisbury Reserve & from there to Shelly park. Again the Howick Community Board was supportive. Another public meeting was held with Alan la Roche as Chairman and the motion to apply for maritime recreation money was carried with acclamation. In November 2003 the second stage was opened by Sir Barry on a fine spring day. It was interesting to have members of the Nicholas family present. They had originally farmed the open areas of the block. (Now subdivided into sections for large homes.)

In order to continue expanding the bush area we had to seek funding guided by our corporate Rotarian members. By using the technical & practical skills of Graham Falla & associate members of South Auckland Forest & Bird Society we have continued nursery propagation & the planting out of selected areas.

We now look forward to the opening of the 3rd stage of the walkway that will continue the track southwards nearly to the bridge & from there up to Somerville Road to the swing gate adjacent to the cattle yards.

Perhaps it would be timely now to introduce discussion on stage four of the walkway that would extend the track southwards & up the valley to the bottom of Hayley Lane where it would join a small council reserve which reaches down to the high water mark of the estuary.