

THE FRIENDS OF MANGEMANGEROA SOCIETY INC

Autumn Newsletter 2006



Chairman's Ramblings:

The AGM was very well attended. There were many relevant and interesting observations and ideas to take from the address. Some will find their way into the MCC draft.

- Anthony Bellve spoke on the subject of the Claude Stream Valley and Hog's Hill. A new organization, "The Society of the Whitford Estuary Conservation Trust" has been formed and an invitation was extended to FOM members to visit the Claude Valley.
- Bruce Keeley gave a report on the year long bird study he undertook within the reserve.
- Chris Ferkins from Gecko spoke about bush restoration and the participation of volunteers.

A summary of both these talks is published in this newsletter.

Time was taken to remember Dorothy McKenzie who along with her husband Jack had been a wonderful supporter of the Friends.

Retiring from the committee was Stuart Armstrong. Stuart was thanked for his service to the Friends.

We welcome two new members onto the Friends committee: **Deborah Grant** who is our new secretary and, **Bruce Keeley**.

Your committee is:

Chairman: Allan Riley

Secretary: Deborah Grant

Treasurer: Allan Lovett

Members: Jim Duckworth (Deputy Chairman), Ted Swanney, Jessica Pybus, Graham Falla, Sally Barclay, Bruce Keeley, Austen Gate

At time of penning these 'Ramblings', the first planting day has taken place on 13th May, organised by Jim Duckworth. 2000 'pioneer plants' (manuka) were planted



in 2 hours in the newly fenced gully on the southern access to the Rotary Loop. Thanks are due to the 30 volunteers from the Friends, and Somerville Howick & Howick Rotary Clubs. It was all made much easier by the assistance of Don Stehr (Howick Rotary) who made 2 trips with his loader to deliver all the plants to the planting site. The rain held off for the planting period and only closed in again when the BBQ was finished around 11.00am. A last minute surprise was the advice that a 'midden' was located in the planting area.

Continuing projects include the discussions with MCC Parks on the draft Restoration Plan and on the MCC review of the Mangemangeroa Reserves.

A visit by the Botanical Society, organized by Ros Nicholson, and including Ewen Cameron the botany curator from the Auckland War Memorial Museum has identified further species in the reserve. This group was impressed with the species richness of our Mangemangeroa Reserve and the excellent condition of the reserve natural vegetation.

Cheers
Allan Riley
Chairman

Deborah Grant "Residing in Howick for most of my life I have seen many changes take place to the landscape. Somehow this has instilled in me a passion, almost an urgency to preserve what little we have left of nature's bounty in the area;



a characteristic no doubt passed down to me by my parents who are founding members of the Friends of Mangemangeroa. For some time I had been thinking that I would like to continue with the work that they helped to begin and when approached to take on the role of Secretary for the Friends this gave me an ideal opportunity. I am fortunate to live quite close to the Reserve with my 12 year old son and work locally for a well known property valuer, both of whom keep me on my toes for the most part.

I have always had a great love of the outdoors and gardening in particular and have already gained a little knowledge from my association with Friends of Mangemangeroa.

I look forward to sharing the challenge with such a sincere group

of people and shall endeavour to fulfill the role to the best of my ability."

Bruce Keeley: "I have a BSc in Zoology, am a life member of Ornithological Society of NZ and Miranda Naturalists' Trust and also a member of Forest and Bird and Birds Australia.

I have lived in Howick for 13 years and work as Co-Vicar of All Saints' Anglican Church.

I am keen to contribute, as time permits, to the excellent work being done by so many to preserve and manage the Mangemangeroa Reserve, not just as an isolated reserve, but as a vital corridor linking other local ecosystems."

Bruce was one of our speakers at the AGM; his report is printed in this newsletter.



Bird of the Season: .

By G. Falla

Pukeko or Swamp Hen

Other common names for this well-known bird belonging to the widespread rail family are Pook and Old Swampie. *Porphyrio melanotus*, a large bird with bold colouring, loud voice and personality to match, is perhaps the most conspicuous of the birds at Mangemangeroa, whether on the paddocks or on top of the forest canopy. Plumage in colours ranging from black to purplish blue is set off by the heavy scarlet bill and frontal plate, and strong pink legs. When walking the bird defiantly flicks its tail to display the brilliant white coverts underneath.

If you cannot see pukeko you can nearly always hear its penetrating squawks or other calls of varying pitch and tone, all evidence of vigorous communication that goes with a strong sense of community. This communal spirit is particularly evident during nesting, which extends over a long season starting in August, and helps to explain the remarkable success of pukeko in not only surviving in the face of a host of predators, but increasing its numbers wherever open damp ground is bounded by some natural cover. Chicks hatching from clutches of up to seven on a nest built usually on ground near water are well guarded by both parents and the colony's vigilantes. Diet is wide-ranging, including grass and other vegetation, insects, aquatic life and even small ducklings. A favourite pastime is pulling out newly planted seedlings on bush restoration sites.

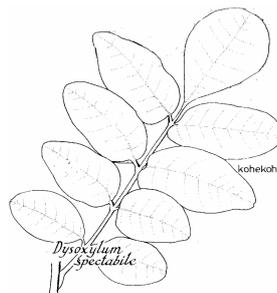


Pukeko is common in most lowland rural areas of New Zealand and also favours city parks and motorway verges. Although most familiar on the ground it is a strong flier, often covering long distances at night. We must presume that the large numbers legally shot down during the annual shooting season have been flying birds. It is probable that, closely related as it is to the purple gallinule found from Mediterranean lands through to Australia, pukeko's forebears were relatively recent pre-European immigrants to New Zealand.

Plant of the Season:

By S. Barclay

Kohekohe: (*Dysoxylum spectabile*)



Coming into flower for the winter is the handsome kohekohe.

The straight grey trunk of the kohekohe leads to a spreading canopy of leaves above. These leaves are sometimes confused with the puriri. Kohekohe can be easily distinguished by the paired arrangement of the leaflets

(see diagram above)

The tree is anchored well in the soil by the small but noticeable buttress roots. This tree is also known as the native cedar has separate male and female forms



Panicles of white scented flowers are produced directly on the trunk and branches but only the female trees produce seed. Some trees have been found which are both male and female!. The development of the seed takes over a year. It is unusual to see both seed and flowers on a tree at the same time, hence flowering tends to occur in alternate years.

The green seed capsule splits open to reveal an attractive orange/red seed. The leaves, bark and fruit of the kohekohe provided a range of medicinal uses for the maori people including treating of colds, sore throats, and skin infections.



Planting Dates

Meet at the barn Somerville Road 9am

Friday 2nd June – Friends & Somerville Int

Saturday 10th June - Forest and Bird

Friday 16th June – Friends & BBI

Thurs 8th June? – Friends & Star of the Sea

Sunday 25th June - Howick College

We are still experiencing damage within the reserve with cutting of rata vines and other undergrowth. PLEASE phone Trudy our park ranger 263 7100 or Allan Riley 534 4067 if you see any damage being done

Subs are due payable to:

Friends of Mangemangeroa Inc

Allan Lovett,

44 Gillett Place, Howick

Single: \$10; Family: \$15; Corporate:, \$20.00..

Guest Speaker - Chris Ferkins

Chris Ferkins, of the Gecko Trust, and who works for the Waitakere County Council in Parks Planning, as Environmental Co-ordinator to support local community groups gave a most informative talk on bush restoration and community participation in relation to the Mangemangeroa Reserve.

He emphasised the need to follow the lines of nature as much as possible rather than upsetting the natural balance by becoming gardeners of the bush rather than caretakers. He suggested observation to work out the areas of regeneration from the various species. For example most species eg Totara, Puriri would regenerate within a radius of up to 300 metres and it is better to follow nature by not planting the same species within these areas.

A key point was to identify areas of significant weed growth and, determine where the 'outlying' individuals of that species were located. Start the weed control by controlling the outliers and work in towards the main area of infestation. That way the containment of the weed species starts first and the main areas can be tackled later. He contrasted this technique of dealing with outliers first v blanket ground spraying, saying the latter is often unnecessary, more expensive and, takes out desirable regenerating plants too.

He reiterated the point of keeping the community, particularly within the immediate areas, informed and involved in activities and maintaining accountability with MCC.

He spoke quite passionately about the advantages of the Toitoi (*Cortaderia fulvida*) plantings when mixed with other pioneer species. It helps to keep the weeds out, is extremely drought tolerant, requires no mulch and encourages wider biodiversity as it is a safe haven for some breeding birdlife etc.

"Friends of the
Mangemangeroa"

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web address:
[www.aerolink.co.nz/
mangemangeroa/main.html](http://www.aerolink.co.nz/mangemangeroa/main.html)

Link to other conservation
groups in the Auckland
Region:
www.manawa.org.nz

See also www.arc.govt.nz
for upcoming events in the
Auckland region

PLANT-RAISING FOR REVEGETATION MANUKA (best sown May to September)

- Collect seed from local wild bushes near your planting site. Strip capsules from stems – a small handful will be plenty.
- Capsules dried off in an open container placed in a warm spot will shed seed in 3-4 weeks.
- Fill small containers (yoghurt pots etc with drainage holes punched, or root trainers) with damp potting mix. Firm down and top up.
- Sprinkle a light pinch of seeds onto the mix in each container and water it in, using a fine-rosed watering can.
- Set out containers in an open site (seed trays are useful for holding them together) **with protection from slugs and snails**. Look for germination in 2-3 weeks.
- Main needs for manuka are water (eventually a daily soaking) and maximum sunlight.
- Delay thinning until plants reach about 10cm, when strongest growers can be identified and retained. Thinnings do not transplant readily.
- **Note:** The same system works with kawakawa, but shade is needed for germination and growth. Collect ripening fruit at Christmas/New Year.

TREES FROM FOREST DUFF (Collect May to July; lay out July to September)

- Collect duff from ground under a large canopy tree (preferably puriri) in the nearest bush to your planting site. Rake up to a depth of about 10cm, sift out coarser twigs and leaves and bag up the residue, including as many large seeds as you can. Hold in cool shade.
- Prepare seed-trays by half-filling with damp potting mix. Top up with forest duff, firm down and water well.
- Place trays in semi-shade and keep moist. Protect against slugs and snails. Birds and domestic animals can be kept out with netting.
- Most germination will take place from September to November. Delay weeding until plants are big enough to identify.
- In early December prick out seedlings into separate pots, planter-bags, or root-trainers.
- Apply liquid fertilizer, provide more light and keep well watered through summer and autumn. Harden off in full sun from March onwards.
- Hold until next season plants that have not reached 30cm. Over winter they may need shelter from frost.

Summary of a report of the Birds of Mangemangeroa Reserve by Bruce Keeley

Between November 2004 and December 2005, the birdlife of the reserve was surveyed by regular, standardized walks along the walkway, from the Somerville Road barn to the Shelly Park boat club. The emphasis was on ascertaining the range of species present and their relative abundance. Notes were made of breeding and feeding behaviour. The results are printed in a fuller report presented at the recent AGM of the Friends of Mangemangeroa. They will form a basis for further investigations by other observers in the years ahead.

The Reserve is set within a wonderfully diverse part of the Auckland Isthmus, comprising open sea, tidal estuary, farmland, coastal forest, wetlands and suburban parks and gardens. Within this Howick/Whitford/Beachlands area, I have recorded 70 bird species over a period of 13 years. Of these, 47 species were recorded within the Mangemangeroa Reserve during the months of the survey – 28 native species and 19 introduced. Thirteen of these species were confirmed as breeding in or near the reserve, and a further 16 were considered likely to do so.

In the full list below, introduced species are marked with an asterisk (*), and the status of every species is indicated as one or more of the following:

resident (R) migrant (M) occasional (O) confirmed breeding (BC) probably breeding (BP).

| | | | |
|------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|
| Black Shag | O | Pied Shag | R |
| Little Shag | R | White-faced Heron | R, BP |
| Black Swan* | O | Canada Goose* | O |
| Paradise Shelduck | R | Mallard* | R, BC |
| Grey Duck | O | Australasian Harrier | R, BP |
| Pheasant* | R, BP | California Quail* | R, BC |
| Pukeko | R, BP | Pied Oystercatcher | R/M |
| Variable Oystercatcher | R, | Spur-winged Plover | R |
| Pied Stilt | M | Bar-tailed Godwit | M |
| Red Knot | M | Black-backed Gull | R |
| Red-billed Gull | R | Caspian Tern | O |
| White-fronted Tern | R | NZ Pigeon | R, BC |
| Spotted Dove* | R, BP | Kaka | O |
| Eastern Rosella* | R, BC | Shining Cuckoo | M, BP |
| Morepork | R, BP | NZ Kingfisher | R, BC |
| Welcome Swallow | R, BP | Silvereye | R, BC |
| Grey Warbler | R, BC | Blackbird* | R, BC |
| Song Thrush* | R, BC | Dunnock (Hedge Sparrow)* | R, BP |
| Skylark* | R, BP | Fantail | R, BP |
| Tui | R, BC | House Sparrow* | R, BP |
| Chaffinch* | BP | Goldfinch * | R, BC |
| Greenfinch* | R, BC | Yellowhammer* | R, BC |
| Starling* | R, BP | Myna* | R, BP |
| Australian Magpie | R, BP | | |

Other observers will no doubt be able to confirm the breeding status of some of the species designated above as 'BP'. And several 'new' species may qualify for the list through the present knowledge of other people, or will be added through sightings in the future. For example, the Banded Rail, a very secretive inhabitant of saltmarsh is almost certainly present, and has been recorded in the area previous to the present survey. The migrant Long-tailed Cuckoo may well stop-over in the forest cover from time to time.

The Mangemangeroa Reserve, with its splendid remnant of mature, intact coastal forest, is a precious *taonga* to be protected and nurtured at all costs. This rich habitat will be greatly enhanced by the continuation of well-planned planting and pest-eradication programmes.



White Faced Heron



kereru



Morepork

Photos from: Geoff Moon, "The Birds Around US"