

**THE FRIENDS OF MANGEMANGEROA  
SOCIETY INC  
Spring Newsletter 2006**



**Chairman's Ramblings by Allan Riley**

**In the last issue we discussed the shocking destruction of regenerating trees along the Mangemangeroa track. For the moment, this seems to have stopped.**

Since the article we have had some feedback from walkers who had observed a machete carrying man who was 'pruning' bush as he walked along the track and, a local making-off with stakes used to locate young trees. On top of this, the 'temporary signs' placed to warn persons not to damage bush, were vandalised at two spots, then removed by Council. Having discussed all this with the Parks team their feelings are that with more people using the tracks there is a greater opportunity for anyone behaving inappropriately to be seen. They do not intend to replace the 'temporary signs' at points of damage on the tracks, which I personally do not agree with. However, we don't have the funds to do it ourselves so that is where the matter rests at present.

**If you carry a mobile phone when walking, I suggest that you 'store' the MCC Call Centre phone number 262 5104 and call reporting anything untoward that you see.**



Did you see the great photo of the Royal Spoonbill Heron in the Howick & Pakuranga Times? It was taken by Times Newspaper's Picture Editor, Wayne Martin. Wayne also took the photo to the left. Both photos in this newsletter are reproduced with his permission.

The next update of the website will include Birds of the Mangemangeroa inspired by the articles and work of Graham Falla and Bruce Keeley. If you have any bird photos relevant to the Mangemangeroa or stories on your avian observations, please

email them to [sallyb@aaleda.co.nz](mailto:sallyb@aaleda.co.nz) or contact Sally Barclay 534 6196.

Members may want to look up the 'Friends' website before heading off to the reserve. It's great for plant identification and a tribute to Sally Barclay's research

The link is [www.aerolink.co.nz/mangemangeroa/main.html](http://www.aerolink.co.nz/mangemangeroa/main.html)

**Glow-worm walk:** The recent "Glow-worm Walk" organised by Alan La Roche is one example of 'fun' activities we want to provide. This walk offered the opportunity to see the glow-worms under the more damp vegetation along the track.

These glow-worms are really the larva of the fungus gnat *Arachnocampa luminosa*. The Maori name for the glow-worm is titiwai.

The glow is from excretory organs and attracts prey on which the larva feed. To catch their food the larva produce silken threads or "fishing lines" which hang like beads. Each "bead": being a viscous droplet is able to trap their food. Glow-worms are most numerous during the summer months

The adult fly has a slender grey striped body about 16mm long. The adults live only for a few days, to mate, and then the female lays about 80 eggs and dies. (David Miller: Common Insects)

During the past 18 months there has been a lot of work with Manukau City on three 'plans' involving the reserve. These include the MMR Management Plan; the MMR Conservation Plan; and the MMR Restoration Plan.

For the Management Plan, the 'Friends' have been represented during the draft stages by Austen Gate. This plan is now open for public comment. We think that the outcome is a very balanced document which forms the blueprint for all future developments on the Mangemangeroa Reserve, and also in the Valley up to Haley's Reserve off Point View Drive.

The three plans follow our concept of maintaining a 'green corridor'. This corridor links the Mangemangeroa with the Point View Reserve and then beyond to Murphy's Bush at Flatbush.

Planting plans for the 2007 and 2008 seasons are well advanced.

The usual pioneer species of manuka, kanuka & karamu, plus cabbage trees are underway for the Friends and schools' plantings. The F&B plants are coming along nicely. Along with plants from other members, this allows (in Autumn 2007) for further infill planting in areas commenced during the past 5 years.

**Allan Riley**

## Bird of the Season: The Royal Spoonbill

Bruce Keeley

The 'bird list' for Mangemangeroa and its environs has been augmented by the occasional appearance of the elegant Royal Spoonbill, in ones and twos since 2002. This year two birds have been around from at least May to August, and were seen by many people feeding out



on the mud-flats or roosting near the high-tide line.

More closely related to ibises than herons, the stockily-built spoonbill can nonetheless be mistaken for a white heron, especially when in flight. However, at closer range it is quite different, with its amazing long black spatulate bill, black legs, and sideways 'floor-polisher' action of the bill as it searches for small fish and invertebrates in shallow water.

Juvenile birds are distinguishable by their black wing tips and smooth surface to the bill. Adults have several funky additional features: a small yellow 'eyebrow' patch of skin above each eye, a red spot on the forehead, and a wrinkly pattern on the bill. In breeding plumage, a shaggy crest adorns the back of the head and there is a yellowish smudge across the breast feathers.

Like many of our birds the Spoonbill was originally an Australian immigrant, blown across the Tasman by the westerly winds, and finally setting up business here. Spoonbills have nested alongside the Kotuku (white heron) at Okarito, Westland, since 1949. Over the past 30 years, new colonies have been established along the Otago coast, near Blenheim and Invercargill and, in the North Island, on Kapiti Island and the Parengarenga Harbour.

After breeding, birds disperse widely to various favoured locations; hence their regular appearance around the Auckland isthmus. So look out for them next autumn and winter, and check for black wing-tips, which would indicate that a new generation had found our neighbourhood to their liking!

## Plant of the Season:

### Cabbage tree *Cordyline australis* Ti Kouka.

Sally Barclay

Not common in the reserve, but a magnificent stand is located in Hayleys Reserve further up the valley. This stand flowered profusely last year. The flower, white and sweet smelling is followed by smallish white berries which are a good source of food for birds.

The grass-like leaves of the cabbage tree are long and fibrous extending from the trunk like a "bushy head". These leaves were used by the Maori for rope making, baskets etc. The dead leaves take some considerable time to decay hence this can make them quite an unattractive plant for more formal garden and streetscape plantings.

Cabbage trees are excellent colonisers as they grow both on bare ground and on exposed sites. Their particular value is their strong tap root which extends up to a metre into the ground helping to stabilise the soil. They are tolerant of wet conditions and therefore excellent colonisers for boggy situations. An observer of the early 1840s, Edward Shortland, noted that the Maoris "prefer those grown in deep rich soil; they have learned to dig it at the season when it contains the greatest quantity of saccharine matter; that is, just before the flowering of the plant. They then bake, or rather steam it in their ovens. On cooling, the sugar is partially crystallised, and is found mixed with other matter between the fibres of the root, which are easily separated by tearing them asunder, and are then dipped in water and chewed". The trunk is often seen in photos of old whares serving as a chimney, it is fire resistant and proved an excellent "ready made" source for this purpose in pioneering days.

Unfortunately cabbage trees can be attacked by a tiny organism which blocks the sap movement within the plant. This micro-organism is transferred from plant to plant by a sap-sucking insect

Contact details for the  
Friends of the Mangemangeroa Society Inc

Allan Riley – Chairperson

Ph: 09 534 4067 [allan.r@ihug.co.nz](mailto:allan.r@ihug.co.nz)

Deborah Grant – Secretary

Ph 09 535 7072 [debsgrant@ihug.co.nz](mailto:debsgrant@ihug.co.nz)

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](http://www.manawa.org.nz)

See also [www.arc.govt.nz](http://www.arc.govt.nz)

for upcoming events in the Auckland region

## A Restoration Guru



'Graham admiring the rare carmine rata that has climbed up an old ponga in the Mangemangeroa Reserve.'

A quiet but steadfast worker - anyone who has had the opportunity to work on restoration projects with Graham will know that his will to keep "at the job" until the plants are planted sees him still putting "spade to the ground" long after the younger more energetic but less experienced "hole diggers" have retired for a "breather".

Graham's interest in nature was evident at an early age. His mother a keen painter, thus observant by nature, had a lively interest in things "alive". She nurtured the inquiring mind of her son and encouraged the foraging into the "duff" in the back yard. His childhood home in Christchurch was this boy's dream, a large section with areas of undisturbed understorey in a "garden" of native trees. It was in this "fun" garden that Graham became interested in the flora and fauna of New Zealand. The vege patch at the back became Graham's "transplantation" patch. Here seedlings were fostered until big enough to be planted out. Friends with rather bleak gardens (to Graham's eye) were the recipients of the natives.

In his teenage years the family moved to Wellington. The house here was surrounded by bush on three sides, beech and rata forest growing on the hills above Eastbourne (Williams Bush). Here the denseness and variety of species opened up a whole new experience for Graham. His father recognizing this growing talent, presented him with, "Kirk's Forest Flora" (a pre 1900's edition located in a second hand book shop). This rather large volume, written as a guide to the value of the timbers of NZ for forestry in the late 1800's, extended Graham's understanding of things "flora". Today this book is still a valued reference. His home also boasted a good library of books. It was from studying these books that Graham developed an impression of how NZ used to be.

Another love of Graham's was adventure stories including history, and it is of little surprise that he went on to Victoria University to study in this field, his botanical interests being kept as a hobby. From university, a life in the teaching profession followed.

The war years were lean but Graham's father realized that the army's need for Coast Watchers on offshore islands provided a very good opportunity for biologists to spend some time studying the flora and fauna on these remote islands. After years on the Auckland and Campbell Islands his Dad brought home lots of film to be enthusiastically viewed by the family.

Graham in his turn ventured south. Military training saw him join the navy. This period of service saw him leave Dunedin as part of the escort with Prince Phillip to the Chatham Islands and then on to the ice edge, as part of the expedition taking Edmund Hillary to the Antarctic. It was on Scott Island that the expedition was able to collect rock, but saw little evidence of life.

When asked what changes in attitude he has noticed over his lifetime he spoke of the pioneering attitude prominent in his youth of "who cares?" This attitude has subtly changed to today where the remnants of bush are valued. "People assume that the bush is protected and think that that is right but the predominant attitude is still indifference. Natural scenes are still viewed as something to be utilized, almost a form of real estate. There is little appreciation that remnants need to be cared for adequately, more of a bland assumption that some government agency will look after them. People still see trees as objects, either useful or a nuisance, not as something as of living significance but rather as features of a landscape. The concept of each plant being a living organism, part of a living network, and an attitude of "respect for life". Plants are 'life'; such ideas have yet to take root in our society." The urge to foster them explains Graham's long-term activity with Forest and Bird, and through that with the Friends of Mangemangeroa.

Much of his remaining time is given to music. His 'cello is a part of three orchestras that perform in public and is involved in a variety of chamber music ensembles with friends.

## The Falla way



1st year kanuka



1<sup>st</sup> year pohutakawa



2<sup>nd</sup> year taraire

### Pioneer Species:

**Pioneer species** are species which will grow on exposed sites (sites which do not have tree cover) ie **manuka, kanuka, karamu, cabbage tree**. Manuka and kanuka need full sun but karamu will tolerate both shade and full sun. These species take about 9 months from sowing of seed until ready for planting out onto the chosen site. They are ideal plants for school students grow and plant out.

**Cabbage trees** with their deep root systems are excellent species for planting in the more wet areas.

The next group (successional plants) take longer; 12 months or more to grow to a stage where they can be planted out under the shelter of the karamu and manuka. These species include **mahoe, mapou, kowhai, totara, pigeonwood, puriri**. They will happily tolerate full sun, but need protection from wind.

**Kanuka** forms a dense a canopy that does not let enough light through for the successional plants. Thus where kanuka is closely planted no understorey planting is needed and the site is best left alone to let nature do its work. After about 20 years the canopy will open and seed deposited by birds and wind will germinate and grow. Ground conditions too, affect the success of planting. **Manuka** tolerates wet "feet"; **kanuka** does not.

To tell the difference between manuka and kanuka look for tiny hairs on new shoots. Manuka has tiny hairs; kanuka does not. These give manuka a silvery appearance. Manuka also feels prickly on the older foliage.

### Collecting and sowing of seed.

**Kanuka, manuka, karamu, pohutakawa** seed won't keep; collect it and sow it by placing on top of the soil (don't bury it) and water it in using a watering-can with a fine rose.

**Tairaire, tawa** and **kohekohe**: bury shallowly in humus.

**Cabbage tree, kahikatea, totara** and **nikau** are easy to germinate; mix in the surface layer and keep moist.

**Titoki**: scrape off the black bit of the seed and bury. For **puriri** scrape the "lid" from the outside of the four "domes". In nature this scraping is achieved by the grinding in *the crop (gizzard)* of the birds.

To successfully germinate **kowhai** nick it at one end. Birds do not eat kowhai seeds.

**All germinating seeds** need protection from hungry slugs (bait) and foraging birds and cats (plastic netting). Once they have leaves they need more light. **Manuka** and **kanuka** need **sun**.

