

**THE FRIENDS OF MANGEMANGEROA
SOCIETY INC**
Winter/Spring Newsletter 2009



Chairman's Ramblings

This issue recognises the first ten years of the Society and the 'forward thinkers' who knew what the Mangemangeroa Valley reserves could be like if plant regeneration and pest eradication was practiced and stock were kept out of the bush areas.

These same people, with strong leadership and support from Forest & Bird members and local residents and enthusiasts, got the Council to agree to the major land purchase from the estate of the late Archie Somerville.

Then the group registered as an Incorporated Society. Membership was sought. Many newer members were elected to positions on the committee and plans were made.

A formal structure of governance followed with:

- The Friends of Mangemangeroa Partnership Agreement with Manukau Parks (revised bi-annually);
- A Mangemangeroa Reserve Restoration Plan (March, 2007);
- A Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves Management Plan; and
- The Mangemangeroa Conservation Plan.

None of this could have happened without the agreement and willingness of the Manukau City Council. Neither would these documents had as much value if it were not for the 100's of hours of work contributed by members in helping to develop these as workable and 'living' documents.

They are the back bone of the work being done in the Mangemangeroa Valley. Many other community conservation groups don't have such a framework to work within. Often they are the poorer for that.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter which elaborates on some of the people and events of our first ten years.

Looking Forward:

The past six months has seen developments which will change further the face of the Mangemangeroa Valley.

We can now look forward to the Mangemangeroa Walkway extending up the valley to Hayley's Lane. We are suggesting a series of possible 'loops' within the walkway which ends up passing through the three Hayley's reserves. There's some wonderful bush in there which will be opened up for public use. Some plant species there, are not seen lower down in the existing walkway areas. \$200,000.00 has been set aside by Council to commence the work this year.

A detailed submission has been made of the Society's suggestions for the development and future of this new section of bush and walkway.

An expansion of parking at the 'Barn' was completed. Now a further \$20,000.00 will see the parking area increased further, with a separate entry and exit.

Meetings have been held with Parks staff and the solicitor acting for the late Archie Somerville's Trust. They were to determine whether the Trust and Manukau Parks can agree on a way to some modest development of visitor facilities etc in what will be the main entry point into the Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves. Further conceptual drawings have been done, while investigations for other requirements are being sought by Council. Hopefully this will lead to a proposal in which the Trust will agree to financially support the Council in bringing these concepts to fruition.

The 'Barn' Gullies are again slipping. A report was prepared by BECA Infrastructure which highlighted some of the causes. The main problem was water from the barn and parking areas flowing into the gullies below. The bulk of roof water has now been diverted.

However, the consultants strongly pointed out that the gullies would benefit from bush restoration planting, as we are doing elsewhere in the reserve. The result is that the 'living' document I referred to - the Reserves Restoration Plan' - will now have another area added for replanting - Area Q. It will be a significant area of the land below the Barn which is presently grazed. Restoration planting will commence there in 2010. Most of next year's 8000 plus plants are destined for there.

The Auckland (Super City) Council will have a major impact on the plans now held by groups like ours and the Local Authorities they will absorb. There will be winners and losers in the 'environmental' area. We are working towards getting early commencement in the above matters, but ultimately their 'progress' remains in Council's hands.

A special 'thank you' is owed to those Council leaders who supported our efforts.

This year's MCC budget round and Long Term Plan were very important for us.

We particularly appreciate the interest of Mayor Len Brown and local councillors Jamie Lee-Ross and Sharon Stewart. They kept the Mangemangeroa Reserve in front of Council and staff. Approvals were agreed which will allow these key events to take place with the funds to support them. It is now up to the Parks Team (and Friends) to see that progress happens soon.

Again in this planting season, the commitment of a core of dedicated members enabled us to put in over 8000 plants again. With them were many community groups, including schools, churches, service clubs, interested members of the public who rolled up for a planting day, our plant raising people, our own members and the support we have received from the Manukau Parks Team.

The bulk of the Restoration work currently envisaged will be completed in our second decade.

For our first ten years, well done everyone.

Allan Riley
Chairman

Manukau City Council at their recent Volunteers Day recognized the work done by members of the "Friends of Mangemangeroa".

Back row (left to right); Brian Hanlon, Bruce Keeley, Sally Barclay, Allan Riley, Graham Falla, Warrick Kitchen.

Front row: Deborah Grant, Mayor Len Brown, Jim Duckworth, Austen Gate, James Lee

Wishing You all
Merry Christmas



A Decade On

In the early 90's Betty Harris, Jack and Dorothy McKenzie, Jim Duckworth and Austen Gate were members of a small group who actively promoted the protecting of the coastal strip of bush beside the Maungamaungeroa Estuary. In 1994 the Manukau City Council purchased this land owned by Archie Somerville to become, what today, is known as the Mangemangeroa Reserve. To ensure that the land was managed in a controlled way the "Mangemangeroa Reserve Management Plan" was drafted.



Sir Barry Curtis speaking at the opening of the track

Cattle grazing this land had seriously opened up the undergrowth of the bush making the fencing of the bush area the first priority. In 1995 this was undertaken. Since then the bush undergrowth has regenerated rapidly.

The small group of Friends, with the support of the Howick Community Board, proposed that funding from the "Ports of Auckland fund" be applied for, and used to develop a walkway along the estuary of the reserve. This first stage of the walkway was opened in 2000 by Sir Barry Curtis.

The initial access to the bush was instigated by Austen Gate approaching Jim Duckworth and suggesting that a kissing gate be constructed to provide easier access. This happened ten years ago; Sept 1999.



Austen Gate and Jack McKenzie at an early planting day



Track development has involved steps to negotiate some quite hilly sections, boardwalks over the estuary and gentle leaf strewn paths through ancient stands of bush.



Jim Duckworth at an early planting

Jack and Dorothy McKenzie, who had served as secretary and treasurer to this informal group of Friends, recommended that an incorporated society should be formed. Applications were completed and in 2001 "the Friends of Mangemangeroa Incorporated Society" was officially registered. Alan Riley & Jim Duckworth were respectively President and Vice President

Under the leadership of Jim Duckworth three groups of volunteers were involved in the initial planting of pioneer species in the reserve; Rotarians, Forest and Bird, and Somerville Intermediate students. Since this first planting restoration work has continued each year with 8000 plants being grown and planted out in 2008.

The photos show just how successful this first planting has been.



One of the first areas to be planted and the same area today showing the pioneer species forming a wonderful nursery for the next stage plants



Alan La Roche speaking

In November 2003 the second stage was opened by Sir Barry Curtis. Alan La Roche also spoke giving a little of the historical aspects of the land. It was interesting to have members of the Nicholas family present as they had originally farmed the open areas of the block.

The third stage, known as the Rotary Loop, involved considerable clearing of weed before **the restoration work was able to proceed**. Local Rotarians have worked along with schools in this area to provide an excellent thatch of pioneer species. As well the Rotarians have also provided both the money and labour to provide seating. These marcocarpa seats are a wonderful asset to the reserve. Jim Duckworth's tractor has become a welcome sight at plantings making many trips delivering timber, stakes and planting materials.



Rotarians clearing the site before planting



RYLA making gaps in the bracken before planting



Cementing



Planting



Eating

Cape Kidnappers & Ocean Beach Field Trip Sept.'09

by John Spiller



As part of Sanctuaries 2009 I was given the opportunity to take part in a field trip to experience the “Cape Kidnappers” project. This is a significant ecological mainland restoration project situated on privately owned land and largely funded by the three landowners with support from DOC and the BNZ Kiwi Trust. Their vision is *“To create a peninsula that once again bustles with wildlife”* and *‘To restore the flora and fauna representative of an East Coast, North Island coastal system’*

After a morning briefing by project manager, John McLennan, we were taken in 4WD buses up on to the Cape road to see for ourselves how this restoration work is being achieved with conventional tools – intensive pest control, species reintroductions, exclusion of domestic stock from forest patches and re-planting of selected habitats. It focuses on a predominantly coastal ecosystem with nationally significant dune systems and seabird colonies.

The 9.6 km predator-proof fence snakes its way across the land from coast to coast and was designed to keep out all mammalian pests apart from mice. The preserve is still a working farm so it is not considered practical to try to keep mice out as they will inevitably enter via animal fodder such as hay. The system is also ‘leaky’ in that animals will enter around the fence ends and at gates. This is minimized by intensive trapping in these areas.

Since February 2007 over 250 cats, 15 ferrets, 23 stoats and 32 weasels have been caught within the preserve. Forested blocks have a 50 x 100m bait station network for rodent control. The mustelid trap boxes also contain poison bait for rodents. Tracking tunnel rates for rats have declined in these areas from 29% in Dec. 2006 to 1% in Sept. 2008. Routine night shooting for rabbits has resulted in 7000 being shot as well as 192 goats. Possums were already at near zero numbers but interestingly over 900 hedgehogs have been caught as bi-catch in traps.

Robin, tomtit, rifleman, whitehead, pateke (brown teal) and brown kiwi have been liberated into the preserve. Twenty of NZ’s 21 families of land birds will be represented in the preserve by 2015 compared to 13 now. Three endemic species identified in 2005 (pigeon, bellbird and tui) will increase to eight by 2015 with the introductions (some already) of North Island brown kiwi, little spotted kiwi, rifleman, whitehead and saddleback. The total number of land bird species will increase from about 15 to 25. Seabird species breeding in the preserve will nearly double to seven from the current four.

The 17 km of coastline not only supports the Australasian gannets but has enormous potential for further seabird restoration. It is on a very large scale, 2200ha (bigger than Kapiti Island) and includes a mosaic of different habitats including native forest, pine trees forest, coastal dunes, coastal cliffs, grazed gullies and farmland. It integrates conservation goals with economic ones in a way that has not been attempted before. Most of the land behind the fence will continue to be farmed or used for eco-tourism or forestry. The golf course ponds and watercourses should provide prime habitat for kiwi and takahe in times of drought.

Near the Ocean Beach foothills we each planted a Nikau Palm as part of our contribution to the on-going welfare of the project.

It was a wonderful day; I would certainly recommend the excursion to anyone interested in dramatic scenery, birdlife and native bush.

Visit www.oceanbeachnz.co.nz for more information.

***Pennantia corymbosa* (Kaikomako)** By Sally Barclay

Flowering profusely in the middle of November this tree can be seen in the bush across the valley from the proposed entrance to the Mangemangeroa Walk below Hayley's Lane. The most attractive white flowers (male and female on separate trees) are seen mid-November high in the canopy extending out from the foliage. Their delicate nature earned this tree its title of "the bridal tree".

The kaiomako black drupes are a favourite food of the bellbird from which the Maori name is derived.

Although not strongly perfumed the kaikomako does have a pleasant fragrance. At the present time this is masked in the Mangemangeroa by the invasive privet.

A number of mature specimens are found in the vicinity of the "new walk" and juveniles are also present. The interesting leaf shape of the juvenile form (goose feet) change as the tree matures.

It was the wood from this tree which was used, by the Maori, with either the mahoe or pate to start fire.



The Bar-tailed Godwit By Bruce Keeley

Over recent years, there has been a significant increase in public awareness of the Bar-tailed Godwit and its phenomenal migration between NZ and its arctic breeding grounds. This awareness has been created by increased knowledge, through such things as colour-banding and satellite tracking, and by international concern over threats to the godwits' feeding areas along their northward migration route, particularly coastal China and Korea.

Just a few months ago a magnificent book appeared covering every imaginable aspect of this remarkable bird. *Godwits – Long-haul champions* is written by Keith Woodley, manager of the Miranda Shorebird Centre in the Firth of Thames. I cannot recommend too highly this superbly researched and illustrated book.

While one could visit Mangemangeroa Reserve many times and never see a godwit, since it is a bird of open estuaries rather than narrow tidal creeks, we are fortunate indeed that the reserve is situated right under a major godwit flight path.

The best time of year to see this is late summer/early autumn when the godwits are preparing for migration to the northerly summer. Their drab canvas-coloured non-breeding plumage is changing into a wonderful brick orange/red (especially the males), and their need to put on condition for the journey requires almost constant feeding. Consequently there is a regular commuting of several thousand birds, in relation to the tidal sequence, between the Manukau Harbour and the eastern coastline, including the Turanga/Waikopua estuary.

The sight of many hundreds of godwit (often mixed with their smaller fellow-travellers, the Red Knot) stretched from one horizon to the other, and the sound of their wings and their excited chattering, make for an unforgettable experience of awe.

It is of great importance that we protect our estuarine areas from indiscriminate dredging, pollution and reclamation. For if the high biological productivity of the intertidal zone is diminished, the godwit – along with many other estuarine birds – will be unable to fuel up for their vital journeys.



Voluntary Work by International Students at Mangemangeroa Reserve 2009

By Graham Falla



A group of tertiary level international students is working at Mangemangeroa on a roster system that makes three or four of them available every Thursday morning. They are sponsored as a contribution to the community by The National Technology Consortium, P.O. Box 911 312, Victoria St West, Auckland, where they study, and started working under my supervision in March.

Tasks they have carried out include weed eradication with special attention to seed sources, site preparation prior to planting, and restoration planting, amounting to about 180 man-hours to date.

The main contributors have been Gopal Krishan, who has put in additional time as a personal volunteer, Ritesh Joshi, Pavan Kacha, Kamalpreet Singh and Ravinder Singh.

They are currently working systematically and with enthusiasm along the upper bush edge concentrating on removing gorse that is shedding seed into restoration plantings, and cleaning privet etc. out of weedy gully heads. Their efforts so far have made a marked improvement to the condition of the reserve.



Who has grown
the most?

Grandchild
OR
tree?

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www.aerolink.co.nz/mangemangeroa/main.html

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