



Mangemangeroa Reserve Planting 2019 Sally Barclay

Over the past season, 8100 trees, flax and grasses were planted in an excellent community effort from 'Friends', schools and, on our two "Community Planting" mornings. There were further pioneer plantings in the northern paddock with Cockle Bay school and the GECKO Trust. Most planting went into the large area southwards from below the Trig to the car park entry to the reserve. The carex and flax were provided by Council Parks. Their use was of necessity, an exception from the well-founded eco-sourcing regime we follow. That is covered separately in this issue.

The use of carex virgata was to help retain views across unmowable fringe areas and provide a 'soft edge' to the mown paddocks. Again, infill planting of a wide range of specimen trees took place throughout the reserve areas.

With all four plant raising units at capacity we are once again looking at a full planting season this year. A band of willing helpers have pricked out and potted up a variety of species over the winter and these are growing well.

Unfortunately the recent fire below Archies Lookout destroyed an area of recently planted flax and manuka which has set the restoration plan back a little. Some of this ground has since been replanted. Being a late planting and the very dry ground, the replacement trees require watering, with welcome assistance from Jim Duckworth and his tractor using a water tank kindly provided by Louise Lonsdale-Cooper.

On the weed front, Council have attacked the climbing asparagus on the northern reserves end and the blackberry. Some of this was encroaching on the lower slopes of the 2017 slip areas. Excellent weed clearance work led by Karyn Graydon and Martyn Neal has been done on the remainder of the 2017-2018 slip faces in preparation for planting in the 2020 season.

A small group has been at work cutting and poisoning wattles below Archies Lookout. Control of invasive plants is an important task. The wattles are often not visible from within the undergrowth but when looking down on the bush they can be seen and targeted.

Finally, a start has been made by contractors on treatment of bindweed (convulvulus) and other invasive plants to allow the restoration plantings this year. The site is from the Mangemangeroa bridge southwards to the redwood seating.



MANGEMANGEROA VIEW

ISSUE: JANUARY 2020

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SNIPPETS OF INTEREST

- The Friends exist financially through subs, donations and contestable grants and greatly appreciate such donations. Thank you to members for your welcome donations.
- For membership enquiries or other assistance, you are able to offer please contact our secretary below.

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Eco-sourced Bush Restoration at Mangemangeroa

Graham Falla

We are often asked why we eco-source our seeds from within the Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves. One of the treasured features of the Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves is that they contain a notable reservoir of native plants ranging from small herbs through to forest giants that have grown there since long before human times. They have adapted to local conditions, establishing a balanced relationship with each other, with soils, slopes, water supply, drainage, climate and the multitude of other life forms (e.g. birds, insects, microbes, fungi) that surround them.

This natural association of living things together with their life cycles forms the local unique ecosystem. The natural plant life of Mangemangeroa has its own inherited genetic identity, which the Friends of Mangemangeroa aim to maintain. In our efforts to reclothe the unstable land on steep slopes and in gullies, or simply to broaden the narrow belt of old forest, we are using eco-sourced seed, i.e. collected from the local surviving natural bush.

In deciding what to plant we try to imitate the natural patterns that can be seen in that surviving bush, starting with a nursing crop of pioneer plants, like manuka, to prepare the ground for a succession of forest trees. It is not at all surprising that plant communities restored in this way usually thrive, adapted as they already are to the local conditions, and our experience over the last twenty years bears this out.

Assorted trees for planting season - all from eco-sourced seeds



A

Changes at the Howick Local Board

Congratulations on their election as new Howick Local Board members - Bo Burns and Bruce Kendall. They succeed Jim Donald and Garry Boles. Congratulations to all other members for their re-election and to new Howick Board Chair, Adele White, and deputy Chair, John Spiller.

To Jim and Garry, thank you from the Friends for the interest you took in the Mangemangeroa and the help given when we felt little progress was being made, especially for unresolved maintenance issues. Also a special thanks to former Chair, David Colling, for giving us the support to bring matters to the Board meetings.

Success in Auckland Council Local Grant application

The Friends are pleased to acknowledge the support of the Howick Local Board in approving our Local Grant application for pest management within the Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves.



The grant will be used to purchase a further 1000 corflute tree protectors and 17 GoodNature A24 CO2 Kill Traps. The value of the Local Grant is \$6,360.08.

The protectors have become an essential item to help protect newly planted trees from rabbits and pukekos and incidental damage. We use around 4000 annually, leaving them in place for a minimum of three years. The GoodNature traps will be loaned by the Friends society to the Howick College Enviro-Group. Our support for the Enviro Group is acknowledgement of their pest management and research actions within the reserves. There may be elements of research involved again in the extension of their existing trap line. That could for example refocus on the comparative species 'kill' results from use of the different trap types.

The Howick College Trapping Programme (of the Howick College Enviro Group) began in early 2018 with two separate projects.

The first project involved two rat traps provided by Auckland Council which were used around the school. The second project was assisting the Friends of Mangemangeroa Society with their pest control by monitoring for pest animal species with corflute chew cards, designed and created by the Enviro Group.

This has resulted in a trap line of twenty-five rat traps and one possum trap on the Mangemangeroa Reserve and fourteen other rat and possum traps in use by members of the Enviro Group at their homes or in school. We want to extend the area covered by introducing the A24 traps.

Overall these forty traps have caught eighty-six pest animals. Of those eighty six, the Mangemangeroa traps have caught forty-three rats and one weasel while other traps have caught thirty-five rats and seven possums as of 31st December. Monitoring of the Enviro Group's Mangemangeroa trap line is carried out fortnightly in a system that has been running since mid-2018.

There are several remote areas assessed as not currently well protected by traps. Additional chew card monitoring was carried out in June, with results finding an infestation of stoats. The current rat traps were not designed to catch stoats, leading to the decision to supplement existing traps with the Goodnature A24 rat and stoat traps.



A Weasel was the first catch on the Howick College trap line

Ethan McCormick, Enviro Group, Howick College.

Mayoral Conservation Awards

The restoration work of the Friends was again recognised at the 2019 *Mayoral Conservation Awards*. A Highly Commended Certificate was awarded in the Restoration category, by the Mayor of Auckland, Phil Goff CNZM.

Allan Riley accepted the award on behalf of the Friends and all of the volunteers working with us.



Pupils pricking out seedlings for 2020 planting



Tribute to Stuart Armstrong

It has been a sad time for our Society to farewell Stuart George Armstrong, a long serving member of The Friends of Mangemangeroa. Stuart passed away on 31st October 2019, aged 89 years. Our deepest sympathy was sent to Karen and their family on Stuart's passing.

Stuart very willingly became our treasurer and in more recent years, the Society's auditor. To many he was a familiar face on the community planting mornings and became a Friends photography archivist, recording many of the helpers and events which have changed the cattle-ravaged farm into the successful bush restoration project we continue with today. Stuart was a very active and supportive member of the Friends, bringing with him life and business experience which he put to good use, living out the Rotary ideal of "Service above Self".

A brief glimpse of Stuart's background prior to coming to New Zealand may be of interest readers.

Stuart's involvement with the Friends derived from his Rotarian membership in Africa and NZ.

An "International Rotarian" in the truest sense of the word, Stuart was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka, educated in England, emigrated to South Africa, worked in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), returned to South Africa, and ultimately came to New Zealand in 1999.

Stuart held many roles within Rotary including Club President of Margate, Natal in 1994/95. He joined Howick Rotary in Feb 2000 becoming Secretary in 2001, later treasurer for four years, then in 2008 its auditor.

In 2005 he was awarded one of Rotary International's highest honours, a Paul Harris Fellowship (PHF) followed in 2015 with a Sapphire pin. (This was a second PHF, an award established to recognise a founding member of Rotary International.)

Rest well Stuart.

Pyromania at Archies Lookout

Allan Riley

Thanks to watchful neighbours and prompt Fire Service responses an arson attempt at Mangemangeroa Reserve was foiled. This incident drew a multi-station attendance of four fire appliances.

This fire was deliberately lit, quickly spreading through dry kikuyu (grass) thatch into flax and manuka.

Fortunately it was stopped at the edge of tightly planted native bush. Had it spread into there it would probably have required use of the helicopter which was on stand-by to assist.

Two masked persons were seen running from the site. Their car and registration plates were photographed, but on police investigation the plates were found not to match the car.

With the arson occurring on the 4th November we were left wondering if this was a prelude to Guy Fawkes night.

The good news—the coprosma on the fire site have all resprouted from the ground. An adaptation to fire "remembered" from their Australian ancestors !



Coprosmas regrowth



Dampening down smouldering Kikuyu thatch

Blueprints for management of Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves

The first plan is a new document — the Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves Development Plan 2019.

It aims to:

- Articulate the vision for the Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves
- Outline the reserves ecological context and significance
- Provide guidance on asset renewals

Dealing with reserve infrastructure, it includes standards for signage and parks furniture, track design and path reconstruction, slip remediation & stabilisation of affected slopes, drainage, and objectives in the Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves Management Plan 2007.

Potential developments of interest to the Friends are outlined in each of the six valley reserves in pages headed: 'Attachment A'.

For the Board's consideration, we will soon have a suggested short list of projects for consideration for improved visitor safety and enjoyment. That includes further track and access improvements, reserves extension and similar works which will directly benefit reserve visitors.

A separate priority listed in this plan involves the MEEF Trust, who continue to work with the Howick Local Board and Auckland Council for the construction of an Environmental Education Centre near the Somerville Road reserve carpark and barn.

To view the full Development Plan and Restoration Plan (Item 15), please copy and paste this link into the search bar of your search engine.

https://infocouncil.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/Open/2019/09/HW_20190916_ATT_7308_EXCLUDED_WEB.htm

This second plan is The Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves Restoration plan.

The prime objective is to restore the indigenous vegetation and fauna of the Mangemangeroa Valley Reserves, to a state that may potentially have existed before pakeha/European intervention 200 years ago. It is a long term objective which has required the commitment of resources and interest groups during the past 15 years. It will require the same management of resources and interest groups for the 10–15 years as set out in this revision of the 2005 Restoration Plan.

There are separate 'Planting' and 'Management Plan' goals.

The six Planting Plan goals include:

Maintain and enhance representative type of vegetation planting patterns, e.g:

- Taraire, Puriri, Kowhai, Titoki forest
- Kokohe, Totara forest
- Kahikatea, Puketea forest
- The edge plants are encouraged to protect the forest interior i.e. Mahoe, mapou
- Saltmarsh

The first Management Plan goal is to promote the reserve as an integral part of the Auckland Parks network and to encourage the public to make use of it consistent with resource protection.

This very well illustrated plan shows on Attachment B, A2 "Works in Progress to Date" the annual planting areas from year 2000 to 2018. There are interesting reports on a bird survey (Bruce Keeley), weed control tables, site and species matching (G Falla), botanical report (Cameron & Haines), fungi report (Wanda Daley) ... and more

The Friends of Mangemangeroa have a formal Partnership Agreement with Auckland Council and work voluntarily to help Council fulfil the Plan's objectives, planting and management goals.

Howick Buffer Zone Project 2019

Auckland Council contracted New Zealand Biosecurity Services to implement initial pest plant control for residential properties bordering onto Chisbury and Pohutukawa Reserves in the Howick Ward. The project also offered free traps supplied by Auckland Council to be distributed by the contractor, with the additional benefit of support and advice relating to safe pest plant and animal control practices. The overarching aim of the project was to reduce pest plants and animals inhabiting the Howick ward, working towards creation of a pest-free 'buffer' around the Chisbury and Pohutukawa Reserves.

A list of thirteen pest plants were provided for the contractor to focus on as a priority – climbing asparagus, bushy asparagus, jasmine, madeira vine, moth plant, rhamnus, wild ginger, woolly nightshade, tree privet, Chinese privet, Japanese honeysuckle, blue morning glory and pampas.

New Zealand Biosecurity Services commenced work on the project on Monday 5th August, initially working in an area of shared bush block at 14A Estuary Views before moving on to door knocking at surrounding properties to offer the pest plant control service and offer advice on pest plant and animal control. A property entry form was completed when possible. The project concluded towards the end of November 2019 when an agreed budget of \$30,000 from Auckland Council had been utilised.

Two main recommendations were:

Definitely schedule a re-visit at each site after the treatment has time to take effect. Having done this at a number of properties, it made it far easier to identify pest plants that had been missed or needed a top-up treatment and left the team more satisfied with the job that had been done for the resident. This was especially true of larger properties with a wide variety of pest species requiring control.

If budget allowed, it would definitely be beneficial to conduct follow-up maintenance work, as the difficult and steep terrain on many of the properties may discourage home owners from continuing to monitor and control these invasive species to benefit the surrounding reserves long-term.

Abridged from NZ Biosecurity Ltd report by A. Riley.

PestFree Howick Initiative

The Friends joined the PestFree Howick committee convened by Pakuranga Rotary. We are represented by Allan Riley and Warwick Kitchen.

Actions so far include: introducing Council officers to the Estuary Views/Chisbury land owners group, encouraging animal & plant pest control on buffer properties here and in Point View Drive, supporting Howick College pest control, and on the Kowhai Walk have established a FoM stoat/rat/possum trapline.

VOLUNTEERS WELCOMED

Visited Mangemangeroa Reserves lately? Assistance always needed with:

Plant raising; weeding seedlings; bird watching and counting; help with children on school planting days; community planting mornings; IT or graphic art skills; weed busting team; & more ...

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The Nikau Grove

It survived the 2017 land slips. This is an area of remnant and regenerating Nikau bush within the older (and for some species), ancient bush.

Most of the main walkways are now resurfaced with improved drainage.

The remaining section of walkway still to be resurfaced is the Kowhai Walk, southwards from the Mangemangeroa Bridge.