



# Annual Report 2019



**REMUTAKA**  
CONSERVATION TRUST

Regenerating  
our natural  
habitat

# Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc.

## Annual Report 2019

Presented by the President on behalf of the Executive Committee

This Annual Report is presented to the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc. (Trading as the Remutaka Conservation Trust) held in Petone, Lower Hutt on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

### Executive Committee

The 2018/19 Committee was elected at the last AGM and comprised:

President	Geoff Cameron
Vice President	Melody McLoughlin
Secretary	Grant Watt
Treasurer	Karen Baker
Committee members	Kevin Alekna, Susan Ellis, Alan Peck, Anania Randall, Marc Slade and Pierre Tellier.

Anania effectively withdrew from the Committee immediately and did not attend any meetings.

The Committee met every 6 weeks during the year, and all committee members have worked very hard on a range of topics for our Trust. All have full-time jobs or are active in their retirement. This makes their contribution even more valuable. As President, I often need to stop and remind myself that we are a volunteer organisation, that we work on land that is not ours, and that our members do have another life outside the Trust.

Karen Baker took over the Treasurer role and brought the Society into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with internet banking, put us onto the Xero accounting system, brought us onto commercial terms with our suppliers and generally updated our financial systems.

Grant Watt continued to perform the secretarial duties required as well as the task of managing the Contact Management System, a task that has proved rewarding but not without its difficulties.

This AGM will be Grant Watt's last in his capacity as Secretary. Grant has been in this position now for 7 years and it is always sad to lose that amount of institutional knowledge and wisdom. Grant has performed a difficult role with aplomb and added significant value to the Trust through his advocacy for, and management of, our membership database. We will miss him at our Committee meetings, but he has

agreed to continue with his role with the database and of course with his Team checking traplines.

Grant's move, along with 3 long-standing Committee members from last year, highlighted the difficulties that many organisations, including us, have attracting people to their Committees, and the urgent need for us to have new people coming in. We need to have the youth and vitality, represented in our new volunteers, at the governance level. I do hope that we have a good number of nominations for Committee positions.

I wish to formally thank this Committee for the skill, thought and considerable effort they have contributed towards the effective running of the Trust during the past year. An organisation such as ours does not run itself, and the membership at large should be very proud of the efforts your Committee has put in on a voluntary basis.

### **Kiwi Project**

Melody McLaughlin continues to manage this, the Trust's Flagship project. This involves many inter-linking tasks, including but not limited to:

- liaising with a wide range of stakeholders, from Kiwis for Kiwi and the DOC experts on all the technical issues around handling our iconic native birds;
- oversight of our 140 or so volunteer trappers, including providing support to our trapping statistician, Winifred Long;
- management of over 1165 traps of different types. As part of this, Melody oversees the purchase and distribution of bait, lures and now gas cylinders to keep those effective. The Trust is budgeting to spend over \$26,000 on this alone during the year.
- Oversight of the activities of Mike White's "Fixit" teams, which notched up over 1,000 trap fixes during the year.
- Using her house and garage as the unofficial operations base for the Trust.

This project has been running since the first Kiwi re-introductions in 2006 and 2009, and it is testament to Melody's skill, passion & determination that she is still actively involved in this as well as other aspects of the Trust.

In August, the Trust put out a Mailer with a detailed update of the Kiwi project and described some of the birds. We received a response from a very senior Department of Conservation manager:

**"This is truly sensational. The work the team do and the results you achieve are not only heart-warming but a real testament to every single person involved.**

**On behalf of all New Zealanders thank you."**

As President, all I can do is deflect this comment to Melody and her team.

### **Finances**

Karen Baker has set out the Financial Statements for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019. You will see from these Accounts and the Statement of Service Performance just how complex the Trust accounts have become. The skill and dedication of Karen to this work continue to be appreciated by all the Committee, and by me.

Our financial position continues to be sound. As in past years our funds have been used effectively to implement various conservation-related activities. Donations, 'Sponsor a Kiwi', 'Sponsor a Trap' and 'Sponsor an Egg' schemes continue to provide valuable financial support for the Society's activities.

Village Accommodation has agreed to another 3-year extension to its sponsorship arrangement with us, via their Astelia Apartments. They will name another Kiwi and bring some of their staff to the park for workday experience. Sponsors since 2010, we certainly appreciate their significant on-going support.

We also gratefully acknowledge the generous support of grant sponsorship during the year from:

- Department of Conservation,
- Wellington Community Trust,
- Pharazyn Trust,
- Hutt City Council
- Winifred and Doug Long
- Seven Electrical

Placemakers Lower Hutt have been very generous in providing items such as screw drivers, batteries etc at no cost, and other items such as wire mesh and high-end batteries at cost.

Other companies, agencies, groups and individuals have also provided a range of services and support to us. All have helped to advance the Trust's goals of achieving improved conservation of the Remutaka forest ecosystems and wider public enjoyment of the forest park.

Marc Slade convened a Funding Sub Committee to take over the work that Rosemary Thompson did with sponsors and to take a long-term view of funding sources.

## **Communications**

Alan Peck has taken on responsibility for the Communications aspects of our work and formalised the draft Plan that had been developed last year. The Communications Plan has now been accepted by the Committee and will form the basis of our communications in the future.

Our new website, [www.remutaka.nz](http://www.remutaka.nz) continues to be popular and is the major point of access for information about us. Peter Cooper continues as our webmaster,

Our Facebook page has more than 300 followers, and our Twitter site is also active.

Kevin Alekna has assumed responsibility within the Committee for a review of our signage in the Park, building on the style and nature of the bird interpretation panels already in place.

## Highlights of the Year

This has been another momentous year for the Trust, with many achievements and highlights.

1. Early in the year we became aware that another mast year – in this case a “super mast” - was underway. Melody initiated a detailed plan to ensure our objective “a self-sustaining kiwi population under active pest control, with recruitment higher than mortality, within 10 years” was not lost. The Operation Nest Egg option no longer appeared to be a truly viable option. So a small team developed a plan and worked to get to a position where:
  - There are now fortnightly trap checks throughout the year;
  - All traps are tested and fully operational; indeed, we noted and celebrated the fact that the Fixit Team led by Mike White, have now fixed or mended over 1000 traps!
  - Different lures are used at different times over the main trapping period;
  - A number of A24's have been overlaid over the DOC200 network;
  - These are re-baited every 3 – 4 months.
  - Winifred's time series trap catch analysis enabled the identification of pest hot spots, and the trap intensity was increased in those areas.
2. In addition, we decided to proceed onto Outcome Monitoring – clearly identifying whether or not the activity being performed is effective or not. In this case checking the effectiveness of pest control by monitoring the survival of chicks from the nest. DOC and MOA supported us this year, but our application for significant DOCCF funding for this work over 2 years was not fully successful.
3. Susan Ellis completed another year of acoustic recorder surveying of Kiwi distribution. The quality of this work was such that Susan presented the results to a meeting of Birds NZ and impressed the audience with the rigour of her work as well as the anecdotes of kiwi behaviour. She presented a similar talk to our volunteers.
4. Susan also completed her morning recordings at 75 sites of diurnal bird call data for call count monitoring. This added to the datasets collected in 2015, 2016, and 2017, and allows us to monitor the effect of ongoing predator control in the Remutaka Forest Park. This bird survey work continues our relationship with Victoria University, and the selection of our guest speaker reflects this work.
5. Rosemary and Melody continued to run Kiwi avoidance training for dogs, and a good number of dogs went through the training procedure. Securing funding for this is proving difficult, but the local firm Seven Electrical provided sponsorship for 1 course. This was certainly appreciated.
6. Sarah Hutchinson organised and ran a highly successful “Wild Kiwi Family Day” at the Catchpool centre. A number of activity stations were set up, and families were able to learn about a range of things that go on within the park as well as enjoy themselves. Over \$800 was raised for the Nga Taonga track improvements and signage. Those present on the day may well remember a young lad who saved his pocket money to give as a donation to saving Kiwi!

7. The Catchpool restoration project continues under the leadership of Peter Cooper. A number of corporate volunteers seek to spend time doing this work and Peter, with assistance from Rosemary and others, manages to keep these groups interested and coming back for more. In recognition of this work, the Trust received a Volunteer Wellington Award for hosting volunteer groups, and it was entirely appropriate that Peter accepted this award.
8. As mentioned in my last Report, we have been working with the Department of Conservation to complete the harvest of the remaining mature pines in the Park. DOC have been very keen to get this project onto a sound basis, and to this end have:
  - Commissioned a detailed survey of the volume and quality of the logs remaining;
  - Developed an Expression of Interest document for advertising in GETS;
  - Completed an exhaustive consultation round with affected neighbours, including those with mature pine resources who may be interested in joining the project;
  - Introduced several prospective harvesting companies to the area.

The issue of wilding pine control is separate but linked, and DOC have engaged their internal experts to develop a control plan which is being consulted on now.

9. Our Health & Safety policy and procedures continue to be implemented. Again, I am very pleased to report that we had no Serious Harm incidents during the past year. Several minor and near-miss incidents were reported at Committee meetings, & actions have been taken around those.

## **Appreciation**

On behalf of the Committee I want to give a big Thank You to all who have helped the Trust operate successfully as a voluntary environmental organisation during the year. Members and non-member volunteers have contributed enormously to the full range of pest control trapping, kiwi population maintenance, the Fixit Team, Catchpool Valley restoration, Kiwi aversion training for dogs, nursery operations, fund raising, public relations and other activities.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance and friendly cooperation from the staff of the Department of Conservation. We do appreciate your support and we look forward to cooperating again in the future. Staff of the Greater Wellington Regional Council and the Hutt City Council have also been very helpful.

Geoff Cameron  
President  
October 2019