

Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc.

Annual Report 2020

Presented by the President on behalf of the Executive Committee

This Annual Report is presented to the 32nd Annual General Meeting of the Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc. (Trading as the Remutaka Conservation Trust) held in Petone, Lower Hutt on 15th October 2020.

Executive Committee

The 2019/20 Committee was elected at the last AGM and comprised:

President	Geoff Cameron
Vice President	Peter Cooper
Secretary	not elected on the night,
Treasurer	Karen Baker
Committee members	Kevin Alekna, Susan Ellis, Alan Peck, Linda Olsen, Esther King, Marc Slade, and Pierre Tellier.

The position of Secretary was later filled by Malcolm Arnot. Malcolm brings long experience with the original Dawn Chorus project, as well as his scientific expertise, to the role.

Linda resigned from the committee part way through the year due to other commitments. Also, two other Committee members – Kevin and Marc – are not seeking re-election, so we have 3 positions vacant and available for nominations.

The Committee met regularly during the year, with Zoom technology used through the lockdown period. As usual, all committee members have worked extremely hard on a range of topics for our Trust. All have busy lives outside their Trust work. I continue to emphasise that we need to have the youth and vitality of our new volunteers, represented at the governance level.

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.

Covid-19

The global pandemic had a major impact on our Trust's activities. The Level 4 and Level 3 lockdowns stopped our trapping operations, stalled our outcome monitoring project and meant that most of our members couldn't enjoy the Park during those weeks. Some of our sponsors were also adversely affected.

On the positive side, the Government via the Department of Conservation, allocated funds to the post-Covid stimulus package and some of this money was spent on the Park, particularly on track work.

Kiwi Project

This Flagship project has been running from before the first Kiwi re-introductions in 2006 and 2009. Melody McLaughlin continues to manage this with her trademark skill, passion & determination. A recent emailed information sheet, as well as the August Remutalker, have described the recent activities within the scope of this project. As Kiwi continue to spread, we find new friends & colleagues in Greater Wellington Regional Council and Predator Free Wainuiomata.

Several individual and corporate sponsors continue to support this project, and we are grateful for this. However, we were unsuccessful in our recent application to Kiwis for Kiwis for a long-term outcome monitoring project.

Trapping data

The trapping success data that has been collected and analysed since at least 2013 by our volunteer statistician Winifred Long is one of the significant points of difference between us & other conservation Trusts. This data is incredibly valuable, and it belongs to us. Winifred has enrolled in a Victoria University Post-graduate Diploma course in Ecological Restoration and formally requested access to use that data in her course work, with the appropriate acknowledgements at the conclusion. The Committee willingly acceded to her request.

Restoration Project

This is another of the Trust's long-term projects. Peter Cooper has been organising this project since its inception and there is a particularly good section describing some of the activities on the Trust's website. The project continues to see corporate volunteers & school groups spending time doing this work. Peter, with assistance from Rosemary and others, manages to keep these groups interested and coming back for more. The Trust's nursery continues to be used as an essential part of this project

The most recent exciting expansion of this project has been to begin to restore the Catchpool valley wetland system. Work here has been made easier by improved access for wilding pine control, but easier access to the wetlands also allows enhanced opportunities for work experience and education days.

Finances

Karen Baker has set out the Financial Statements for the year ended 30th June 2020. You will see from these Accounts and the Statement of Service Performance the complex nature of the Trust accounts. The skill and dedication of Karen to this work continue to be appreciated by me and all the Committee.

Our financial position continues to be sound, with a small surplus. As in past years our funds have been used effectively to implement various conservation-related activities. Membership fees, and donation schemes, particularly 'Sponsor a Kiwi', continue to provide valuable financial support for the Trust's activities.

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

- Department of Conservation.
- Hutt City Council.
- Hutt Mana Trust.

Although the WN Pharazyn Trust did not contribute this financial year, it had contributed twice the previous year and made another substantial donation recently.

Placemakers Lower Hutt have been very generous in providing items such as screw drivers, batteries etc at no cost.

Greater Wellington Council have funded contractor time to track the kiwi spread into the water catchment area adjoining the Park.

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.

Communications

Alan Peck continues to be responsible for the Communications aspects of our work and implementing the Communications Plan.

Our new website, 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, ably managed by Sarah, has more than 300 followers, and our Twitter site is also active.

Highlights of the Year

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

1. Covid 19 affected most of our operations.
2. Susan Ellis and a cohort of volunteers are in the process of completing another year of acoustic recorder surveying of Kiwi distribution.
3. Winfred conducted the diurnal bird monitoring survey. This bird survey work continues our relationship with Victoria University.
4. Rosemary and Melody continued to run Kiwi avoidance training for dogs at the rate of 2 per year, and a good number of dogs went through this training procedure. Securing funding for this is proving difficult, but the local Hutt Mana Trust provided sponsorship for 2 courses.
5. 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.
6. Melody managed a project, funded mostly by the Department of Conservation's Community Fund, to enhance the Eco Hot Spot (EHS) by increasing the number of traps in that area and, with assistance from Meg Shaw, installing Lizard survey lines. This project also funded the improvement in our stocks of DOC 200 mechanisms and we now have a trap maintenance plan to assist the tremendous work that Mike White and his Fixit team does every week. Another part of this project saw Bruce Richards complete the GPS mapping of our entire trap network.

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 Trust activities including pest control trapping, kiwi population monitoring, the Fixit Team for trap maintenance, Catchpool Valley restoration, Kiwi aversion training for dogs, nursery operations, fund raising, and public relations.

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 extremely helpful to us.

Geoff Cameron
President
October 2020