



February 2016



Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on the 21st October 2015.

The committee members elected for 2015/2016 are: Geoff Cameron (President), Rosemary Thomson (Vice President), Grant Watt (Secretary), John Cranfield (Treasurer), Ian Armitage, Melody McLaughlin, Janet Lawson, Penny Evans, Peter Harvey, Kelly Anso, Pierre Tellier. Thank you to these volunteers for being prepared to commit their valuable time to the Trust, in what is generally seen as the 'not cool stuff'.

The Committee held a strategic planning day at which they confirmed some of the work that had been started in previous years but not finalised. An agreed vision: "*A thriving healthy forest ecosystem, rich in indigenous species, which can be enjoyed by the wider community*", and a strategic plan for the next 30 years. The committee now aims to put some specific annual targets into place to achieve that Vision.

The guest speaker for the evening was Dr. Hugh Robinson. Hugh is a scientist and member of the Kiwi Recovery Group in the Department of Conservation who since 1989 has focused on research of ecology and biology of all kiwi species. Hugh gave an interesting and inspiring talk on his research, in particular the effectiveness of the different types of predator control to provide a successful, sustainable kiwi population.

Kiwi Aversion Training

We have been running kiwi aversion training for dogs since 2009 and we are the only organisation providing this service in Wellington region. Our best friends and companions are one of the main threats to adult Kiwi. The success of the introduction and breeding programme of Kiwi in our Park relies on the opportunity to educate dogs to avoid kiwi and to catch up with their owners to help them spread the word.

Kiwi aversion training uses a kiwi stimulus (a stuffed bird and some fresh droppings) and an electric shock collar which is triggered when the stimulus is investigated. Dogs quickly associate the stimulus with the shock and learn to avoid kiwi.

Research has proven that this method of aversion training is very successful and is endorsed by Kiwis for Kiwi and by the Department of Conservation. After a year, 87% of dogs are still averse. It is recommended that dogs be trained every year. Some veteran dogs are given up to three years sign off, as many of these are so averse that re-training is not required as often.



Warily approaching a kiwi in Tawa Grove
Photo – Penny Evans

A Kiwi Aversion Training certificate issued by a certified trainer is a requirement for all hunting dogs entering Forest Parks around New Zealand.

A very successful Kiwi Aversion Training for dogs was held on the weekend of 7/8 November at the Catchpool Centre. Eighty five dogs were put through the training by Jim Pottinger, certified kiwi aversion trainer.

We caught up with Jim over a much deserved coffee after the training on Sunday and asked him a few questions.

How did you get into this type of training?

In 1997 I was working as a DOC hunter in the Waikato area and in Coromandel. Dogs were killing kiwis and we decided to create the 1st Kiwi Aversion programme and it has evolved from there.

Where do you travel from?

I live at National Park, Ruapehu.

Do you do aversion training for other species?

I have done, but kiwis mostly. Little blue penguins are also a species where aversion training is much needed and could make a big difference, informing dog owners about the tools available to protect these little guys.

Who else do you do aversion training for?

Used to be for many hunting clubs etc in the North Island but there are more trainers around now, I do the Ruapehu area and the “awesome Rimutaka Trust”.

How do different dogs respond/react to the training?

Like people some learn fast and some slow, but they can all learn – eventually. I like to work with all types of dogs and love the results when they return and are still showing consistent aversion to the kiwi they come into contact with.

Is this part time, what else do you do?

Yes. I hunted feral goats full time for 15 years, now I operate my own workshop in National Park Village as an automotive engineer specialising in race engine building, Pro-system diagnostics and general mechanical repairs and servicing.

If anyone would like to contact Jim his details are:

Jim Pottinger, PO Box 69, National Park Village. Phone: 07 8922691 or 0212598299.

Email: jpautomotive@outlook.com

The Rag is a newsletter of The Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc.

Rimutaka Forest Park Trust, PO Box 38-564, Wellington Mail Centre, Lower Hutt, 5045. Reg.Charity No. CC37211.

Website: www.rimutakatrust.org.nz Facebook: www.facebook.com/RFPTrust

The Restoration Project



Yellow Mistletoe
Photo Trevor Thompson (Google)

Our efforts to re-establish *Alepis flavida* (Yellow mistletoe) and *Peraxilla tetrapetala* (Red mistletoe) in the Rimutaka Forest Park were bolstered by a visit by Trevor Thompson to the Catchpool Valley. Trevor is the Regional Representative - Wairarapa and Wellington for the QEII National Trust and is an acknowledged expert on New Zealand's endemic mistletoe species. Trevor met with Jonathan Bussell and Peter Cooper to discuss and to locate suitable host trees/ sites for mistletoe reintroduction in the Catchpool Valley and Graces Stream areas. He will be donating viable seed to us in 2016.

Bikers

The Sunday Social Riders, for the second year running, organised a sponsored ride to support the kiwi programme – a big thank you to the guys and gals. They raised a further \$2,000 towards much needed PLB (personal location beacons) so our volunteers can get help in a hurry, if in trouble!



As it was the 31st October the theme was Halloween. Some interesting characters appeared on motorbikes to take part in the ride and there is nothing stranger than watching a pumpkin head drive down the Hutt motorway on a Harley! The Kinsman Motorcycle Club then hosted the end of the ride with a BBQ and prize draw.

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Wildbase at Massey University



We recently took a Massey student and Massey wildlife vets up to the kiwi zone to check out our kiwi. They are conducting research to measure the concentration of vitamin D in the blood of kiwi as part of a Masters of Veterinary Science research thesis. The research goal is to establish the dietary requirements of kiwi by understanding the pathways of vitamin D metabolism in these birds. We are always happy to help in this way to support any research that will help kiwi in the future.

Most people are not aware that Massey Wildlife vets provide an amazing service, free, which has proved invaluable over the years since the start of the kiwi programme.

Kiwi Update

We were amazed earlier in the season to find a young male, not yet two years of age, starting to incubate! We were even more amazed when this was the result!



If you look closely you will see Dad kiwi sitting on the chick with another chick just to the right. I asked the experts and the youngest recorded male to incubate was 11 months old but he was on a predator free island! The general rule is kiwi mature at around 4 years. The mum of these two is an unmonitored kiwi, born in the park and truly wild!

Photograph by Jo Sim

Out and about with Rimu

In May "Rimu the Kiwi" attended the Imagine Childcare family day out and picnic at the forest park entertaining the children and adults alike with his antics. Rimu also went to wave off the Motor Cycles at the Sunday Social Riders annual sponsored ride.

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Whittaker's Chocolate



Check out the new chocolate kiwi by Whittaker's Chocolates. 20 cents from each chocolate kiwi sold will go the Kiwis for Kiwi Programme.

New Zealand Orchids



New Zealand has such an amazing collection of native orchids and we have quite a few in the park too. This photograph was taken on the McKerrow Track a few weeks ago, so fragile looking yet so tough.



Look out for the scented and attractive Easter Orchid, or Raupeka, (*Earina autumnalis*) in coming weeks; it mostly occurs as an epiphyte on trees throughout the forest park.

A new smartphone 'app' is now available that helps a user to identify orchids wherever they grow. The app is free and works in off-line mode; it is called 'NZ Orchid Key' can be downloaded and installed from the Android 'Playstore'.

Joining the Dots Project



Photograph: Kelly Anso

Over the Christmas holiday period the Trust deployed additional traps along the existing trap-lines. Possessing historical trapping data helped the Trust identify pest hot spots or rather places where there was a higher than average catch rate. So they figured the sensible thing to do was to deploy 40 additional traps, helped by support from an amazing pilot, Maurice Wooster of Rimutaka Heli-Services. Funding to purchase the additional traps was provided by the Pharazyn Trust and the Nikau Foundation.

A special thank you to the volunteer trappers who now have extra traps to check on their rounds!

Dates for your diary

Volunteer get together dates

Trap Line Quiz night, Sprig and Fern, Tuesday 5th April

Stoat Trappers Challenge Bingo, Wednesday 15 June

Trap Line Quiz/Pub night, Sprig and Fern, Tuesday 15 August

End of year BBQ, Catchpool, Sunday 6 November

Sponsors and Supporters

As much as we would like to, we cannot operate without financial backing and these organizations have been instrumental in providing the Rimutaka Forest Park Trust with the financial or in kind support needed to enable us to develop and deliver the projects we have today. Thank you.



Pharazyn Trust



RON and EDNA GREENWOOD ENVIRONMENT TRUST



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Sunday Social Riders

Wainui Joinery



Te Runanganui o Taranaki Whanui

**Lottery Grants
Ngā Takuhe Rota**

All those like minded people who have sponsored a kiwi, a trap, a tree – thank you