

# Gorge Gazette - July 2024

## News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and streams



### Abbreviations:

WCC	Wellington City Council	GW	Greater Wellington Regional Council
DoC	Department of Conservation	GG	Gorge Gazette
TPG	Trelissick Park Group	WW	Wellington Water
S to S	Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara   Sanctuary to Sea	F&B	Forest and Bird
		OWB	Ōtari Wilton's Bush

Membership drawn from Highland Park Progressive Association Inc., Ngaio Crofton Downs Residents' Association Inc., Onslow Historical Society Inc., Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc. (Wellington Branch), Wellington Botanical Society Inc., Wadestown Residents' Association.

## The place of birds

Who would have thought? No, not streetwise sparrows and pigeons. We now host celebrities: tūi, kererū, kārereā, ruru, kākā, pīwakawaka... And - great excitement - a titipounamu has arrived in Ngaio. It's all down to the spread from Zealandia, our unique bushy suburbs, diligent volunteers and back-yard trappers, supported by WCC and GW. Possums in the park have long been consigned to history. Rats, stoats and hedgehogs should be worried. Who is doing what/where in the park?

- *Steve Mackle* – 12 years bait station replenishment in most of Kaiwharawhara Stream valley and below Hanover Street in Wadestown.
- *Andy McIver* – 8 years bait station replenishment on the Ngaio side of the park, mainly in the Forest Remnant Track area on the slopes above Kaiwharawhara Stream.
- *Finnigan Illsley-Kemp* - 4 years of looking after a series of 11 self-resetting A24 traps, mainly on the Wadestown slopes below Oban Street. He coordinates directly with WCC's Debbie Hawker who gives him the supplies.
- *Richard Grasse* - many years of servicing DOC200 traps in multiple Wellington locations and in the last year has taken over 7 DOC200 traps in the Korimako Stream valley.
- *Bill Hester* - bait station replenishment in the Korimako Valley and, until recently, servicing 9 DOC200 traps in the Kaiwharawhara Stream valley. He has handed over those traps to Warrick Fowle. Bill also updates results on TrapNZ and coordinates with GW and WCC on bait supply, used bait removal and station/trap supply and placement.
- *Shelley Kininmonth* (under Briony Ellis of Predator Free Khandallah) looks after a line of 10 'tunnel traps' near bridge 7 – originally set up by a



Rifleman – titipounamu

Photo: RNZ website

group of Scots College students a year and a half ago. Surprisingly these have caught about 60 rats/mice in 18 months - in an area mostly covered by the A24s.

The team aims for monthly replenishment and checking cycles where possible and sensible - to help keep the predator levels low and to have relatively small areas for each volunteer to cover, encouraging 'volunteer sustainability'.

Our arsenal: 30 bait stations, 16 DOC200s, 11 A24 traps, 20 bait-safe stations for possum prevention (serviced by GW) and 10 tunnel traps.

There have been no discernible trends in bait station and trap results over the years, apart from a dramatic drop in A24 trap catches below Oban Street after the first year.

In the past about half a dozen volunteers participated with different aspects of the predator control schemes, in particular *Barry Durrant* and *Peter Reimann*.

For more see our website predator page: [Trelissick Park Group: Predators](#).

## The fungal foray

WCC's Hoake ki te Taiao City Nature Challenge is an annual global event where cities compete to see who can log the most nature observations on iNaturalist over four days. As part of this, people turned up in droves to Wightwick's Field on 28

April to look for fungi, led by Dr Geoff Ridley of Manaaki Whenua (a New Zealand Crown Research Institute). 59 results are recorded on [Observations iNaturalist](#). Four of those are below.



Ear fungus (*Auricularia cornea*)



Brittlestems & Allies (Family *Psathyrellaceae*)



*Coprinellus* sect. *disseminati*



Shelf fungi (Order *Polyporales*)

## From the 1973 'Onslow Historian'

'What a gem,' said Anne Tuffin. Essential reading: [The Onslow Historian, Vol. 3 No. 3, 1973](#).

'A brief history of sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Kaiwarra District, with special reference to Trelissick Park' refers to early settlement in the area from the 1840s, 'The railway in the Ngaio

Gorge' covers the construction from 1879, including the five tunnels and the formation of the Wellington and Manawatu Railway Company. An early map and photos enhance the articles.

Thank you, Judy Siers, for unearthing it. She was the Editor at the time.

## Wanted: more 'spotees'

Do you fancy tending your own spot in the park? Immense satisfaction ensues. For more, see

[Trelissick Park Group: Projects](#) under 'Adopt a Spot Scheme'.

## The fast track to hell

The coalition government elected last year has myopia. Money rules. The environment takes a back seat. Already the environment is giving us reminders: more natural disasters. Their latest proposal is the Fast Track Approvals Bill. TPG's submission is on [FastTrack.pdf](#) ([trelissickpark.org.nz](http://trelissickpark.org.nz)). Anne Tuffin recently elaborated to the Select Committee about our

saga of environmental damage from past 'fast-track' projects, and the long-term effects, both environmental and economic (rail, road, sewer, stormwater, pylons, old landfill leachate).

Wanted: the final version of the Fast Track Approvals Bill substantially re-written so that environmental protections and checks and balances are included.

## Our fears allayed

The alarming prospect - A development crammed into two steep parcels of land zoned 'Residential' for 17 townhouses at the corner of Ngaio Gorge Road and Trelissick Crescent. TPG was very worried about an old female mataī tree on the land, and effects on the environmentally sensitive forest remnant and streams in the park below (green areas in the diagram), especially:

- Stormwater run-off
- Stability due to stripping vegetation from such steep land.

More is on the 'Current Issues' page on [Trelissick Park Group](#) under '128 Trelissick Crescent'.

Salvation – Frances Lee\* came to the rescue. After early consultation with WCC she purchased the 0.25 Ha parcel ringed in blue in the diagram. It was then transferred to WCC, classified as 'Scenic Reserve' and added to Trelissick Park. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Frances for such generosity.

## Aquatics

No longer will wastewater overflow from the grill at the lower Ōtari Wilton's Bush carpark and find its way into Kaiwharawhara Stream. According to the WCC Long-Term Plan a new pipe under Churchill Drive is to be installed, to replace the under-sized one.

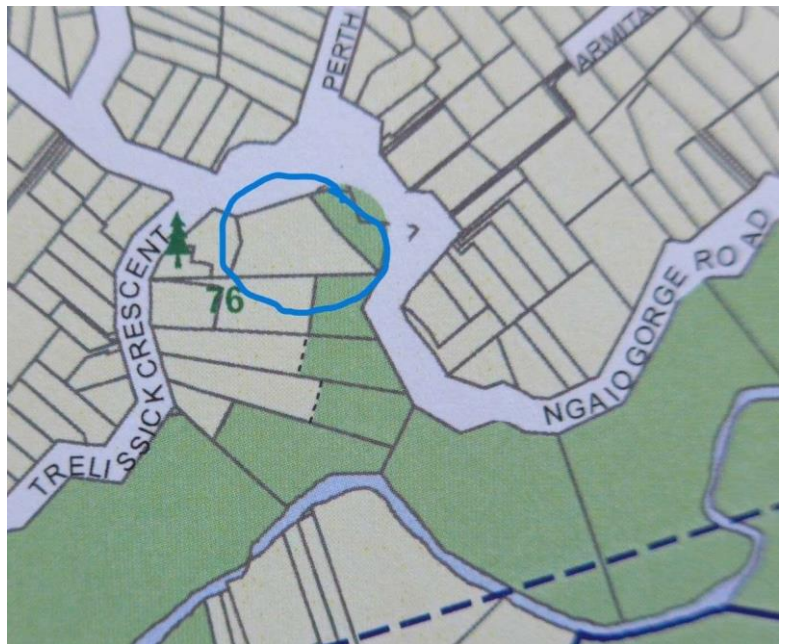
Speaking to TPG's submission on the Long-term Plan, Anne Tuffin referred to sewer lines traversing the park, and all the stormwater from the

## The 'skyscrapers'

WCC's District Plan was referred to the Minister and it was accepted that the Johnsonville railway line be identified as a rapid transit service and enable buildings with a maximum height of 22 metres within a 10-minute walkable distance from its stations.

## What's in a Name?

A Te Reo name for Trelissick Park? There is information on the pre-European history and the naming of Trelissick Park in the [Onslow Historian](#) or on our website [Trelissick Park Group: History](#). The Wellington City Council's [Naming Policy](#) ensures that the process of determining appropriate names takes account of the views of



Next steps – Exploration, removal of rubbish and plant pests.

\* Frances Lee formed TPG in 1991 and was heavily involved with subsequent park restoration and catchment advocacy.

surrounding suburbs flowing into the park and streams. She strongly supported increased investment in stormwater and sewer infrastructure and advocated for mandatory stormwater slowing provisions in new builds, as well as more public education about keeping stormwater free of contaminants. The submission is on the 'Current Issues' page on [Trelissick Park Group](#).

For the areas in the Councillor Proposed amendments (accepted), see [22m map](#).

The end of the bushy character of our catchment.

interested parties and communities, including mana whenua.

Please let us know your view – email [Trelissickgroup@gmail.com](mailto:Trelissickgroup@gmail.com) and put 'Park Name' in the subject line.

## Rethinking off-leash?

Trelissick Park is a dog off-leash area. This may need to change. Kiwi are spreading from Ōtari Wilton's Bush and the northern skyline.

Dogs are inquisitive and when a bird doesn't fly away, they move in for a closer look.

Dog walkers: watch for native birds feeding or roosting close to the ground. Two large dead kererū were found near the main track, one last spring and one the other day. Also, a dead mallard

## Paws for thought

Down up, down up - ad infinitum. Dogs love the water to frolic, swim and retrieve a stick thrown by the owners. Stream banks below tracks now have countless dog-worn channels. Some are large enough to deserve a name. All the work of paws and ground-softening from dripping dogs.



Between bridges 4 and 5

## Water catchments anyone?

Te Hononga Ki Te Upoko, also known as the Wellington Catchments Collective, is an initiative that brings together representatives from various catchment restoration groups such as TPG to collaborate and advocate on environmental restoration efforts, particularly related to water catchments and harbours.

## Interlopers no more

Following years of Bill Hester's pest-weed exterminations, Jonathan Anderson in the last month tackled 258 cherry, 57 sycamore, 51 *Pseudopanax* hybrids, 15 pūriri, 8 wattle, 8 evergreen buckthorn, 3 holly, one plum, one sizeable alder and innumerable karaka. Some were up to 6 metres tall.

The worst concentrations were in the 'Middle Valley' between the gorges. The alder was a sizable tree on the edge of the stream, just up from the 'plunge pool', between Bridges 3 and 4. There are

duck last summer next to the stream. All possibly from dog attacks.

Please keep your dog under control, or on leash, or muzzled to protect our birds.

Under the Wildlife Act it is an offence to kill or disturb wildlife and penalties can include seizure and euthanizing of the dog, owner imprisonment or a fine of up to \$20,000.

Put a barrier across the channel or plant trees within? The dogs will find another way.

Angus Napier and Ranger Martin McCrudden are proposing edge-boarding to protect tracks worn by dogs plunging towards the stream.



Between bridges 3 and 4

The Collective is looking for new committee members. If you are interested in volunteering your time and expertise, please contact Kate Littin at [HonongaCatchments@gmail.com](mailto:HonongaCatchments@gmail.com) or Lynn Cadenhead at [lynn.cadenhead@xtra.co.nz](mailto:lynn.cadenhead@xtra.co.nz).

two further alder and several willows destined for removal in summer.

WCC's Illona Keenan arranged for Treescape to tackle large cherry and sycamore along the railway corridor.



Cherry: colourful, but...

More on weeds: [Trelissick Park Group: Weeds](#).

## Local tōtara revealed



The Collingwood Street tōtara

A recent query about the origin of two large tōtara at the end of Collingwood Street, Ngaio, sparked the following comments from Jonathan Anderson, convinced they are wild trees, as it's not somewhere you would normally plant a tree.

*From my study of other tōtara and podocarps in the city, my guess is the two tōtara are between about 120 and 150 years old, possibly older if they were suppressed as seedlings in their early years. I don't think they predate European settlement. Tōtara is the most light demanding of the podocarps and many tōtara around New Zealand have regenerated on lightly grazed farmland.*

*My hypothesis is the original forest was cleared in the decades of the 1840s, 50s and 60s. Secondary vegetation of māhoe and other species then reestablished in the stream gully. The two tōtara germinated and grew up through a low canopy to become emergent trees. Assuming they are older than 1900, they would predate the construction of the surrounding houses that date from the 1920s and 30s.*

*One or both of the pair of tōtara are female. They haven't produced much fruit in recent years. I have been able to collect several hundred seeds, which have been used at the Council's Berhampore Nursery for revegetation planting around the city.*

*There are a number of other large self-established tōtara in the wider Ngaio/Khandallah area. There is a similar sized tree on the walkway between Kenya St and Waikowhai Rd. Sadly, it's been*

*mutilated in recent years, first by power company pruning and then by an owner who removed all the lower branches to raise the canopy. This tree is female.*

*There are two large trees up the hill on the western side of Ngaio that certainly have wild origins. They are gardens at 40 Heke St and 2 Patna St. Both are also located in small gullies. They are pollen producing male trees.*

*You will know the large spreading tōtara in Cummings Park, which is the female parent of a considerable number of saplings and young tōtara in Cummings Park. Two have recently become reproductively mature (both are male).*

*Another pair of tōtara have grown up amongst sycamore in a gully at 262 Cockayne Rd (one or both are female). Another large tōtara grows at 5C Ngatoto St. It can be seen over the top of building near the old telephone exchange on Khandallah Rd. I've collected a large number seeds from this tree, on two different occasions.*

*In fact there is a spread of tōtara trees of variously sizes, extending down the valley from the Ngatoto tree along the line of the Korimako stream. They continue well down Waikowhai St most of the way to the Crofton Downs entrance of Trelissick Park.*

*In Trelissick Park there are nine wild tōtara, five of which are female and there are numerous wild seedling and saplings (mixed with regenerating kahikatea and mataī). A large number of tōtara have also been planted throughout the park, although none are producing pollen or fruit yet. Some are now 20 to 25 years old and must be close to maturity. I will continue to look out for pollen cones or fruit.*

Judy Siers, versed in local history from her association with The Onslow Historical Society, agrees that the clearance and destruction of the indigenous forest occurred in the 1840-50s to feed the Kaiwharawhara sawmill on the riverbank on the corner junction of Kenya Street and Crofton Road. The [Lower Hutt Historical Society newsletter June 2024](#) includes paintings of William Fox's beautiful landscape views of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. (Judy says that on Page 9 the title 'Crofton' is misleading. The house is Fox's house 'Westoe' at Crofton in the Rangitikei where he lived after his time in Kenya Street, Ngaio and should not be confused with the Domett's house at #25 that we call 'Crofton'.)

## **Inanga Spawning Enhancement Project - Update from Nate Rigler of S to S:**

Restoration work in the upper Kaiwharawhara estuary is underway thanks to Trelissick Park's generous donation and to over 19 organisations who have offered their support.

- Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne is currently working with landowners DoC to establish an ongoing Agreement that will enable the collaborative S to S initiative to care for the 'Spotlight' site.
- The site, located in between Spotlight Kaiwharawhara and the Metlink bus terminal off Old Hutt Road, is a section of the only open estuary in Wellington City connected to Wellington Harbour. It is one of the very few locations where inanga (the main species of 'whitebait') can reproduce which makes the site one of the most important ecological locations in all of Wellington.
- In late May and early June, Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne teamed up with WCC, Woods Waste, and Mountains to Sea Wellington to remove the large invasive wattle trees that shaded out precious stream bank. The newly available space will be used to plant native vegetation that inanga lay their eggs in. This tree removal work also received invaluable support from GW and Spotlight Kaiwharawhara.
- In July, we will plant around 150 natives along the true right bank for inanga to spawn in and to increase overall biodiversity of the site. These plants are provided in-kind from WCC.

### **The Facebook team**

Welcome to Anne Holmstead who has taken over lead responsibility from Bill Hester. Suggestions for Facebook postings (and photos when available)

### **Spreading the word**

See the TPG Facebook photo of Anne Tuffin at the 7 April Ngaio Community picnic. She also intrigued

### **And more...**

Scroll down our Facebook page for photos of TPG working bees below Oban Street, beyond lower entrance 6 and the ANZ visit to work between bridges 4 and 5. 500 plants from WCC were delivered – some already planted. (Also, Jonathan Anderson planted one of the kōwhai to replace the strawberry tree at the Ngaio War Memorial).

### **Contacts**

[trelissickgroup@gmail.com](mailto:trelissickgroup@gmail.com)

[Trelissick Park Group website](#)

[Trelissick Park Group | Facebook](#)

- Afterwards, Morphum Environmental Ltd will install experimental fastened planter boxes along the channelised true left bank to provide more habitat for inanga to thrive. If this is successful, then this work can be replicated in other urban streams all over the country, maybe even the world!
- Once this initial work is completed, we will explore celebrating this project with an educational sign for the public and the installation of a mural that draws attention to the ecological importance of this site. We will especially look to mana whenua Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika for guidance on which stories they would like highlighted in their whaitua.
- We'll need ongoing maintenance work that we hope TPG can support. Woods Waste, with support from Predator Free Khandallah and Exxon Mobil, will maintain predator traps to make sure the inanga remain safe.

On behalf of the S to S initiative, we would like to sincerely thank TPG for enabling this work to happen. Toitū te Kaiwharawhara!

**TPG footnote, via Ian Shearer:** There are some wonderful photos of tank-reared fish, including inanga, on [nzgeo.com/stories/fish-out-of-water/](http://nzgeo.com/stories/fish-out-of-water/). The article says that the juvenile inanga, are 'overly carnivorous'.

should be sent to Anne - and copied to Bill Hester as backup. Anne is contactable at [aeholmstead@gmail.com](mailto:aeholmstead@gmail.com).

the Khandallah Cubs on 13 June with a weed display.

### Website

- A wealth of information, updated by Bill Hester.
- Upcoming working bees on the 'Projects' page.
- The new committee on the 'Contacts' page.

**Thanks to all our volunteers, supporters, WCC staff and weed control contractor Kaitiaki o Ngahere.**

WCC: (04) 499 4444 or [WCC Fix-It](#)  
GW pollution hotline: 0800 496 7