

Gorge Gazette

News about Trelissick Park, the Ngaio Gorge and Streams

(Footbridges over the stream are numbered from 1 – 6 going downstream, excluding the old bridge off the side of Wightwick's Field).

Abbreviations:

WCC	Wellington City Council	NCDRA	Ngaio Crofton Downs Residents' Association
GW	Greater Wellington Regional Council	WRA	Wadestown Residents' Association
HPPA	Highland Park Progressive Association	DOC	Department of Conservation
TPG	Trelissick Park Group		

Website www.trelissickpark.org.nz (includes past Gorge Gazettes)

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/TrelissickParkGroup>

MAY 2016

Cataclysmic?

The cat debate rolls on. This is not 'pro' or 'anti' – nothing is straightforward. Some catch birds, others couldn't care less. Cat and bird agility varies and falls with age. There are indoor, outdoor and limited-outdoor cats. Some catch rats, so reducing bird nest predation. Some birds frequent the safety of elevated trees. Add the complications of native bird species vs exotics, trapping and euthanasia of feral cats, neutering/micro-chipping and re-homing of strays. Geckos, lizards and invertebrates have been decimated by cats – but also by rats, hedgehogs and mice.

The Canary in the Coal Mine

At last viewing, the population in our weta hotel below Trelissick Crescent has swelled to three. This could be a sign that our predator control is working.

The 'Second Coming' - and Partial 'Going'

Cause for rejoicing! Kaka have re-appeared in Wellington over the last few years, thanks to the predator-fenced Zealandia. WCC Ranger, Matt Robertson set up a nesting box in Orleans Reserve, Ngaio. For 2015 breeding successes there, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAGFtuw0Ejk>. Other nests have also been monitored, such as the one in an old tree trunk in Huntleigh Park.

However, some of the chicks are in trouble. The photos show Matt near the nesting box, aided by Wellington Zoo vets and Zealandia, taking measurements, blood samples and checking the bones of a recent survivor. The chick was 45 days old, but only 250 gm and bones too flexible. Matt says the bone problem is due to humans feeding nuts to the mother. The other problem is from the parents ingesting lead, eg from old roofing nails and flashing. Matt says the lead combines with calcium and ends up in the eggs, so affects the chicks.

So please don't feed nuts to our friendly/curious and beautiful kaka!

Kaka would fare badly in Trelissick Park. It is 'off-leash' for dogs and fledglings spend a few days on the ground before they can fly. One of our 'spot' adoptees, Trevor Mowbray, reports he saw a mature kaka hopping around on the ground in the park recently. He thought this unusual, but "Zealandia staff say it is not unusual and is a reason why they became rare."



The Invasion of the Original Forest Remnant

Below Ngaio Gorge Road, large tracts of non-endemic karaka are taking possession of the original forest remnant. Warrick Fowlie has been wielding his saw and uprooting with gusto, with the following in mind:

Large Mature Trees – There must be hundreds of these prolific seed sources. Cutting them out would be a formidable exercise and expose large areas to light-gaps and weed invasion.

Smaller Trees on Their Way to Becoming Larger - An obvious target to cut and apply herbicide gel.

Prolific Seedling Patches under Large Trees – It is fruitless pulling these out as more will follow and most do not burgeon.

Isolated Seedlings Scattered Around the Forest Floor – Easy to remove.

He will infill plant exposed light-gaps this winter.

Epiphyte Wonders



With cautious optimism, Mike Lear, Jonathan Kennett and Peter Reimann hoisted the kahakaha (*Collospermum hastatum*) into the forks of large trees last year.¹ Beset by months of the near-drought conditions that followed, how could they possibly survive? Well, here is a typical example, one year on. 10 more are due from the WCC nursery this year.

At the Coal-Face

We Will Not Cease² – Wandering willie (WW) seems forever our No. 1 priority. WCC's Illona Keenan galvanised her contractors and the spray-wiltings are sights to

behold. The Ministry of Primary Industries swept up the lower valley in March, leaving heaps in their wake. WCC Ranger Tim Harkness helped. Conservation Volunteers followed up the 2015 work by BNZ upstream of bridge 6.³ WW is always 'writ large' on working bee agendas. See photos on our Facebook page.

A Working Bee Essential – The highlight of our working bees is the baking proffered at the tea breaks. Thank you Regine Blattner and Lois Hope.

The Annual 'Sea Week' Clean-up - Again organised by Malcolm McDonald, vast quantities of rubbish were harvested from the Kaiwharawhara estuary and right around the reclamation to the gorgeous northern beach, not normally accessible to the public. There must be a story behind the fathoms of thick blue rope found.

More on Predators – In our February newsletter⁴ we discussed problems with the bait station set-up. With this in mind, WCC/GW/TPG have reorganised locations/heights and installed two Goodnature⁵ A24 self-resetting traps on trial.

Bill Hester prepared a presentation for inclusion in the WCC Predator Free Parks workshop in March. This was attended by local luminaries, who have been achieving wonders. With such dedication, Wellington is becoming a paradise for birds.

Kate Guthrie of Predator Free NZ has just produced a beautifully written piece about the park, based on information from Bill Hester - see <http://predatorfreenz.org/trelissick-park-group-cares-for-idyllic-wilderness-area/>. Their Facebook page is also well worth a look - <https://www.facebook.com/PFNewZealand/>

The Freshwater Hui – This was organised by the Whitebait Connection⁶, keen to enhance the aquatic life of our streams. Some are in a parlous state, with barriers for fish migration, pollution, sedimentation and unfriendly riparian habitat. Oliver Vetter and Peter Reimann emerged greatly stimulated.

Planting has Started – At last the rains have come, just in time for two big planting days. 10 June will see an influx of school children organised by Oliver Vetter of Sustainable Coastlines⁷ and Amanda Dobson of EnviroSchools⁸ to plant areas on the Wadestown side of the stream around bridge 6. Oliver is also widely recruiting volunteers to come early on 12 June, then join our normal working bee to weed, plant and mulch

areas in the lower valley. Dishevelled flax lies opposite the magazine building ruin and the stream bank up from the debris trap is a barren wasteland - two places to be 'fixed'.

About 700 plants will be available from WCC and TPG nurseries for this season.

WCC had some surplus plants from seed trays, which Peter Reimann pricked out and potted – 700 for next year, although some are struggling. As Zorba the Greek said in the 1960s movie: "Man needs a little madness".

Footbridge Update

Abseil Access has provided an estimate for the proposed 21 m long suspension bridge 80 m upstream of the debris trap. This will open up the much-needed second access to the park from Wadestown/Highland Park via Oban Street. They envy their neighbours across the valley, who have six entrances.

TPG has drafted the resource consent applications, aided by Kate Sanders (nee Mackenzie) of Kept Consulting Ltd, familiar with the park from adopt-a-spot work in 2006-7. HPPA and WRA are on-side. Now we have to convince WCC, worried about risk, usage and maintenance. Then we will be looking for funders.

Barry Durrant was inspired by other ideas, such as the Vietnamese one in the photo. Of course the ultimate solution is a bridgeless crossing. 99% of the time feet hardly get wet.



The Ecological Corridor in Action

Trevor Mowbray says "Once when walking through I saw a shag paddling in the stream and making its way down the stream. It seemed out of place but unafraid and not injured. When I was next in Zealandia I asked them about it and they said that the shags there often stop in the Park on their way down to the harbour, partly they may use it to find their way but also because they like to take a break in somewhere where they feel safe."

One Saturday Morning

It was one of those crystal-clear, still mornings, unique to Wellington. We stood on the Northern Walkway bridge 6 and looked upstream into the original forest remnant. It was absolutely quiet, apart from the gurgling of the stream. We could have been in the middle of some remote Fiordland valley. Then a helicopter shattered the peace and thoughts turned to a future of drones buzzing around.

References

1. Gorge Gazette, June 2015.
2. Archibald Baxter. *We Will Not Cease*. Victor Gollancze Ltd, 1939.
3. Gorge Gazettes, November and September 2015.
4. Gorge Gazette, February 2016.
5. www.goodnature.co.nz
6. www.whitebaitconnection.co.nz
7. www.sustainablecoastlines.org
8. www.enviroschools.org.nz

Contacts

Chairman & Adopt-a-Spot: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602, peter.reimann@paradise.net.nz
Working bees: Peter Reimann (04) 938 9602
Wellington City Council (reporting slips and fallen trees across tracks, other problems): (04) 499 4444
Greater Wellington pollution hotline: 0800 496 734

Working Bees

Usually 1st Sunday of the month at 1.30 PM and 2nd Tuesday at 9.30 AM. See web-site for update

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