

# THE FRIENDS OF MANGEMANGEROA SOCIETY INC

## Winter Newsletter 2010



### Chairman's Ramblings

#### AGM:

Colin Dale past MCC City Manager and his team from ATA (Auckland Transitional Authority) were our guest speakers at the AGM held in April. Colin updated us on how the Super City should support the efforts of conservation groups. He stressed that there should be little change in the administration associated with how volunteer groups are managed or the funding which they receive.

#### This year's tree planting:

By the time you receive this newsletter there will have been another 8000 or so plants put into the ground. This is about the same number as we have planted in the two previous years. If you do not feel like walking in the reserve, drive into our new car park and go about 10 metres inside the new 'kissing gate'. From here you will quite clearly see the result of our efforts. The numerous shade cloth enclosures each protect one of the 200 nikau donated by **Don Stehr of Liberte Palms**, 76 Kimpton Road, Brookby, RD1, Manurewa Ph: 537 8450 or nikau raised from seed by Jim Duckworth. These plants were eco-sourced from the Mangemangeroa Reserve and grown by Don or Jim for us. This work was overseen by Jim Duckworth who undertook to stake and staple in place windbreak. The windbreak was bought with a grant from **ARC**. The 1100 stakes were donated by the manager of **Kiwi Pallets**.

Within a few years the pioneer species planted around the nikau will grow to provide the protection needed for these shade loving palms. They are interspersed in the swampy rush area with many of the 500 cabbage trees either grown by Jim Duckworth or from the Naturally Native nurseries.

Planting started in late May when Bucklands Beach Intermediate students provided the beginning of our bamboo stakes forest\*. This area is in addition to the sites shown in the Mangemangeroa Reserves Restoration Plan and was undertaken because of the erosion happening below the barn.



Our Arbour Day planting, organised by Graham Falla on 5<sup>th</sup> June, saw 40 members for F&B, FOM, and friends, plant 2350 trees. The secret to such numbers was the carefully pre-dug holes by Graham's team. Flaxes were planted in areas where the taller pioneer species would obstruct views.

The second mass planting on 12<sup>th</sup> June organised for the Friends by Jim Duckworth with support from both the Howick and the Somerville-Howick Rotary Clubs resulted in the planting of 200 excellent Kowhai and a variety of other climax species. The planting of these larger specimen trees was completed the following weekend by John Spiller and members from the Howick Tramping Club.



Another excellent planting of note was by a 50-strong group of 18 – 26 year olds on a two week Rotary course (see photos to left). They were yet another excellent team, and made a very good impression on the rest of us for their sense of fun, organisation (they were all in 'teams') and the way they got into the planting.

These Saturday 'mass planting' efforts were matched with the very important midweek plantings from schools and our expert planters, generally lead by Graham with his dedicated team of international students and mature planters.



**Hayley Lane:** The Hayley Lane track extension from under the Mangemangeroa Bridge is happening, even if a bit slower than we hoped. Members along with the parks project leader, consultant archaeologist, arborist and Iwi representative, have walked the track to help determine the exact route. A \$200K funding grant from Manukau City Council approved in the Long Term Plan (LTCCP) for the Hayley Lane will be used for the development of this track. New committee member



Winston (Chummy) Cooper is our local representative in Hayley Lane discussions.



**Car Park upgrade:** The wet weather just before our planting caused delays in this work. A separate entry and exit are provided and the parking area has been enlarged and nicely fenced. Gate access, a track behind the barn and replacement of the signage will complete the work here. It is felt that the number of people using the tracks warrants toilet facilities.



**Auckland Council:** We expect that the new 'super city' structure will still allow the level of support we have enjoyed since the formation of the Friends. Manukau City and the Parks team, local councillors and community board members have been most supportive. Best wishes to our committee members Lyn Murphy and John Spiller, who are standing for the Local Board. We hope to again have their support and, that of local councillors elected to represent Howick Ward on the Auckland Council.



**Manukau Parks:** While it is not possible to thank everyone by name, I do want to acknowledge the support of the Manukau Parks team. Shona Fisher, just prior to her maternity leave approved the supply of the excellent specimen trees and flax from their past commercial nursery, Naturally Native. These enabled us to infill areas which were earlier planted. Trudy McNie, our Parks Ranger -Passive, who is on our committee as an ex-officio member is a pleasure to work with, and facilitated the Parks team input. Johan Feirera who now leads the Parks team They and other Parks staff have greatly contributed to the work undertaken in the reserve.



These past months have been busy for your committee and FOM members who have been able to assist on planting days, pricking-out seedlings, removing weeds and growing plants.



**Newsletter farewell:** This is the final newsletter which Sally Barclay will be producing. This has been a very happy collaboration with Sally. So thank you very much Sally for putting your editorial expertise to work for the Friends. We are pleased we can still use your experience and enthusiasm on our committee.



**If you know of someone out there who may like to take over this role please contact me at [allan.r@ihug.co.nz](mailto:allan.r@ihug.co.nz)**

or phone to 534 4067 (H)

Thank you one and all for your support again this year.

**Best regards to you all,**

**Allan Riley, Chairman**

The photo strip to the left shows the students from Bucklands Beach Intermediate planting below the barn

## FOM Committee:

Manukau City Council put on a very nice afternoon tea at the Howick Bowling Club to thank volunteers from throughout the community. FOM was delighted to be part of this gathering. Members present were (from left back row) Brian Hanlon (retired 2010) Bruce Keeley, Sally Barclay, Allan Riley, Graham Falla, Warrick Kitchen. Front row Deborah Grant, Mayor Len Brown, Jim Duckworth, Austen Gate (although not actively on the committee Austen is liaising the Hayley Lane extension), James Lee (our new treasurer). Absent from photo were Trudy McNie our Parks Liaison officer, Lynne Murphy and John Spiller



## New Committee Members:



Chummy from South Africa lives in Hayley Lane. He and Jenny have two adult children, a son living with his family in Dannemora, and a daughter living with her family in Brisbane. He has been a member of the Friends of the Mangemangeroa since 2004 and is thrilled to be involved with the Friends group. His interest in conservation provides another dimension to the issues which we face in the planning of the Hayley Lane extension to the walkway. Ken is a long time resident of Howick, an active forest and bird member and a keen horticulturalist. His years of teaching experience are most welcome particularly with the schools planting program.



Chummy Cooper

Ken Bond

## Special Recognition:

Graham Falla's initiative and leadership was recognised by the Auckland Regional Council at their Ecocare Function held recently. Graham organised and mentored Auckland University of Technology students who



Graham Falla and Rogan (centre) with ARCCouncillors Jan Sinclair and Bill Burrill taken at the Ecocare Function

undertook weed eradication in the reserve. As well, he transported these students to and from the train

Rogan (Graham's wife) needs special thanks for the morning tea, including cake, which she has provided each week for this work party.

## Sign Vandalism:

Unfortunately all the tree identification signs organised and put in by Alan La Roche have been vandalised. The complete metal plaque has been removed and all that is left is the post to which they were attached. The original three larger MCC erected signs remain intact if somewhat dented. If you see anything suspicious will in the reserve please contact the Manukau City help line on **262 5104**

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[www.acrolink.co.nz/mangemangeroa/main.html](http://www.acrolink.co.nz/mangemangeroa/main.html)

Link to other conservation groups in  
the Auckland Region:  
[www.ecoevents.org.nz](http://www.ecoevents.org.nz)

## Nikau (*Rhopalostylis sapida*) by Sally Barclay



Many young nikau are now emerging through the undergrowth. An indication that the possum control has been successful within the reserve.

These slow growing palms (the only palm native to New Zealand) take about 40-50 years to form a trunk and about 200 years to reach maturity. It is from the rings left when the frond falls that the nikau can be aged. Each nikau loses about two fronds a year. The ground litter under the nikau shows the bulbous nature of the base of the frond; this was used as utensils by the Maori. The actual fronds were also used for weaving and thatching of shelters. The purple flowers of the nikau occur throughout the year and produce a hard “nut”. The pigeon seems to be the only bird able to digest this.

In the northern section, the walkway goes through a mature grove of nikau.

## Fantail (*Piwakawaka*) by Bruce Keeley

Of all the birds in the Reserve the fantail surely needs the least introduction. Yet, for all its familiarity, it has the unerring knack of stopping even the most purposeful walkers in their tracks. Its cheek and charm are irresistible! We assume the bird is just plain friendly or at least inquisitive; the fact is our approach is likely to have stirred up insects from the foliage, and it is these, rather than us, which are the object of the fantail's attention.

The NZ Fantail is closely related to the Grey Fantail of Australia, where it is but one of five different fantail species. What we have, however, which the Aussies do not, is a sooty black form of the bird which comprises up to a quarter of the population in the South Island, but less than 0.1 per cent in the North. The two forms interbreed, and offspring are either pied or black. Interestingly, a black specimen was reported recently, in July, from a garden in Chisbury Terrace, on the edge of the Reserve.



The fantail is essentially a bird of the forest edge -often seen capturing insects in clearings or over scrub – and therefore it has benefited somewhat from forest clearance and the creation of marginal scrub. It has coped with urbanisation, where there is sufficient vegetation, and routinely appears around houses in search of insects, especially in autumn and winter.

Life expectancy is short for the Fantail (3 years appears to be the maximum) and it is very vulnerable in severe cold and stormy weather. This is fortunately offset by a high ‘birth-rate’, with up to five broods per season. Egg-laying can continue from late August to February, and noisy family groups are a common and delightful sight during a summer bush walk.

In the Reserve you can expect to see a fantail almost anywhere: in the darkest mature forest, in scrubland, in mangroves, and even low over open grassland amongst the grazing cattle. The cheerful chatter and aerobatic skill of the Piwakawaka are sure to bring a smile to your face.

# A Volunteer Day at Te Rere Reserve in the Catlins

**John Spiller -May 2010**

“Hoiho, Hoiho, it’s off to work we go” could well have been the call as I joined Fergus Sutherland and his friend Alan for a day’s volunteering at Te Rere, the Forest and Bird managed Yellow Eyed Penguin sanctuary in the mid-Catlins.

In mid January this year I took Moira down into the Deep South for a break and we stayed at a charming crib at Papatowai in the Catlins owned by Fergus and his wife Mary. When informed of my interest in conserving NZ’s birdlife Fergus, the



part-time caretaker at Te Rere, offered me a chance that I jumped at to spend a day helping out amongst the rare and endangered Yellow Eyed Penguins down the coast.

Te Rere is on an extremely rugged and wave battered coastline but it gives the penguins’ access to a rich oceanic feeding area. A small sheltered inlet and sloping rock shelf provide landing places for the birds which surf in on the swells and once they gain a foothold on the slippery rocks they can scramble to the safety of the bush.

A 45 minute drive saw us arrive at the locked gate hidden overland on a farm that led into the protected penguin sanctuary. We unloaded a variety of equipment including scrub-cutter, secateurs, petrol tank, weed sprayer and rat bait, and headed down across overgrown pasture towards the rugged coastline.



Several stoat traps along the way yielded corpses and were expertly re-set by Fergus. The traps used here are substantially more powerful than those I’ve been used to in the Hunuas so I let Fergus do the honours.

A lock-up garden shed by the forest margin serves as a storage area for supplies and we shed our packs here and prepared for a foray into the coastal bush that was the habitat of the Hoiho (*Megadyptes antipodes*). Unique among penguins, the yellow-eyes prefer to live and breed in the cool shelter of forest and live more than 20 years consistently raising an annual brood of two chicks with their long-term partners.

A devastating fire swept through this isolated coastal area in 1995 and wiped out about two-thirds of the 100 or so birds that lived there at the time. Intensive work by enthusiastic volunteers has seen the reserve replanted with thousands of flaxes in exposed places and a variety of native shrubs in sheltered locations.

Had the Hoiho recovered well since the fire? I was about to find out. At first the going was easy enough and rat bait stations were topped up and more stoat traps checked, with old hen eggs that had used as a lure being replaced with new. It was not long before a strong, almost malodorous aroma, wafted into my nostrils. Another dead stoat I presumed but Fergus disappeared up a bank for a brief moment before returning triumphantly to announce that there were two Hoiho chicks tucked in under an old tree stump. The smell was from the nesting site and was distinctly ‘fishy’ when further analysed. Following more trails, denoted by penguin poop and flattened undergrowth, led us to several more chicks



concealed within the coastal forest, and in some instances an adult was in attendance although the majority of these were out at sea finding sustenance for themselves and their young. Access to some nests necessitated sliding on our stomachs or crawling on all fours as the tunnel-like tracks were not intended for humans. Needless to say by the day’s end it would have been hard to distinguish between our group and the penguin colony on the basis of smell alone.

Penguins found and sites logged by GPS we returned to the shed for lunch. The afternoon session involved Fergus in the lead finding the track on the other side of the reserve, Alan in the middle wielding a large scrub-cutter and me at the rear with a backpack sprayer filled with weed-killer. Thus armed we did battle with the encroaching undergrowth and weeds along the Southern track until we reached a large area that had been planted recently with native shrubs

and trees. These were still in their protective windbreak enclosures but due to their considerable numbers, and dearth of potential volunteers in this remote part of the country, most were severely choked by encroaching weeds and grasses. The three of us spent a couple of hours releasing as many as possible from their torment but soon it was time to carry on for the final part of the day’s work. Before leaving this area, which was extremely well covered by flaxes, Fergus told me that as this was the predominant plant species to survive the fire they decided to thin them out and re-plant as many as possible to provide coverage and shelter for both the Hoiho and young native plants alike. It was decided that the easiest way to do this was to use dynamite to blow large clumps of flax out of the ground to make it easier to break them up into more manageable pieces for re-planting. It was a huge success and they are thriving. A final look for some more nests saw more chicks located and although I didn’t see all of them Fergus announced that he’d found around 21 chicks on the

day, a very satisfying result. Skirting low cliffs on the way back we were fortunate to see a couple of Sea Lions basking on the rocks not far below and I took a short diversion from my spraying chores to cautiously approach a couple of adult Yellow-Eyes that were strutting their stuff on large pebble-like boulders just above the kelp line. I felt like an intruder as I hid behind rocks and tried to get in position for a passable photo. This done I rejoined the others back at the shed for a wrap on the day's activities.

Fergus and Alan were confident of the future of these precious birds and their numbers are fast approaching those that were there pre 1995. There was no doubt in their minds that the efforts of all involved in creating and maintaining this wonderful reserve have been very fruitful in making it a major mainland penguin colony. Public access is generally restricted however the Southern Branch of Forest & Bird invites visitors to take part in the regular working bees. As a unique and satisfying experience I give it my full recommendation.

## Plant species either "lost" or in critical numbers in the Reserve: .



Broom (one bush) by the sea; seeds collected have been cultivated	Mangemange (trying to reestablish it)	Wineberry (gone – chopped out by the ecoterrorist)	Jointed fern one healthy specimen	Pukatea – male only now although 20 years ago there was a large female
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**A BIG thank you to:** Courtney Gallen at Auckland Regional Council (ARC) who has given us assistance with grants applications. We have received from ARC grants ranging from \$600-\$1000/year for the purchase of potting mix, root trainers, wind break, pruning saws and other weed fighting equipment. As well, for those of you who receive this newsletter in colour it is photocopied for you by ARC.

**Trudy McNie** from Manukau City Council has ensured that we have had ample stakes to mark the site of each plant and the use of spades on planting days. As well osmocote (fertiliser), and vigilant for weed eradication work, have both been supplied by MCC. They have also been generous with apples and water for school plantings as well as sausages, bread, and the essential tomato sauce for the BBQ's at the larger plantings.

**Howick Rotary** for their funding aid and, with the **Somerville – Howick Rotary**, for their practical support.

**Young Volunteers:** Most importantly has been the time given by volunteers. Included in this list are the younger students from BBI, Somerville Intermediate, Cockle Bay School, Star of the Sea and Guides and Brownies.

**Somerville Intermediate** students participated in a recent planting and timed this so their visiting Korean students could also be involved. Each planted a kohekohe or manuka and wrote a message on the stake. These have been planted on the edge of the bush where they will be sheltered from the frost.

**Buckland's Beach Intermediate** was able to complete two plantings for us. (See photos pg 2) Star of the Sea with help from Annetta their school caretaker, planted the plants they had grown for us in their shelter house. They have also pricked out about 1800 mahoe. Photos (right) show Cockle Bay students pricking out 800 mahoe seedlings for us.

**Star of the Sea** with help from Annetta their school caretaker, planted the plants they had grown for us in their shelter house. They have also pricked out about 1800 mahoe.

Photos (right) show **Cockle Bay** students pricking out 800 mahoe seedlings for us. There were about 3000 seedlings per tray. It is an ideal job for small hands!

