



econews

Connecting people with the environment

Summer 2009

Greening the Waiheke Way

Community groups on Waiheke are joining forces to fight a noxious invasion that is threatening to take over the island.

More than 60 locals from 20 community groups met at the Surfdale Hall during the autumn to talk about eradicating deadly weeds such as woolly nightshade, and ways to restore the island's natural environment.

Organised by Waiheke Weedbusters, the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) and the Auckland City Council (ACC), 'Greening Waiheke' brought together everyone involved in replanting projects to share ideas and resources, and provide support for each other.

Weedbusters co-ordinator Jenness Reeve says although things can be quite fiery on Waiheke when community groups get together, the meeting was a huge success.

"Most groups had no idea others existed or that there were so many of them, so it was great for them to realise they weren't alone," she says.

"There are differing viewpoints on how to deal with weeds and a vision for replanting, but there is also a lot of goodwill and willingness to listen and learn."

Many people, organisations and projects are already active on Waiheke:



Greening Waiheke Participants

- The Hauraki Gulf Charitable Trust is an umbrella group that seeks funding for island projects, particularly for small community groups without charitable status.
- Auckland City Council and 'friends' of local parks groups sign agreements outlining their expectations of each other. ACC is also developing templates for management plans and interpretation signs, so each group doesn't have to re-invent the wheel.
- ARC park ranger Andy Spence has worked with the neighbours of Whakanewha Regional Park to keep weeds at bay on both sides of the fence. The ARC supplies herbicide to people and groups that are part of Weedbusters and these residents provide the weed busting labour.
- In Awaawaroa Valley, families live

co-operatively with a shared vision of self-sufficiency using organic methods. They beat the weeds using hard work and letting nature be their ally, like using kikuyu to keep native plantings moist.

The overwhelming outcome of the day was a renewed sense of solidarity from people realising they are not working alone. Suggestions for enhanced cooperation included email discussion groups, a collective parks and reserves trust to fundraise, and a public database of community projects so each can see the bigger picture and find others to share ideas with.

By working collectively, the agencies, community groups, and individual landowners can strengthen their defences and help nature re-green Waiheke Island to its full biodiversity potential.



Sustainable Paremoro: harnessing community enthusiasm

Roger Grace highlights Whangateau Harbour



Tena Koutou Katoa,

As the old adage goes 'two heads are better than one' when it comes to solving a problem. As the stories in this edition of Eco Care illustrate, there are so many people in the Auckland region who are achieving major feats because they are working together to solve a problem or improve the community in which they live.

The success of the groups we feature here is built on their ability to look for opportunities to work with other groups or organisations and to leverage more resources and expertise for their cause or project. A fantastic example of this is Greening Waiheke, a group of twenty community groups, who have united to battle weeds on Waiheke Island.

Another inspiring group are the people behind Sustainable Paremoro, who by working together have started their own Neighbourhood Watch, rid local streets of noxious weeds and possums, and created an organic garden at the local school.

In the next edition of Eco Care we celebrate the winners of the ARC's Sustainable Environment Awards, which acknowledge those individuals, groups, schools and businesses in our community who care for our environment.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Thei Mauri Ora
Richelle Kahui-McConnell



Friends of Oakley Creek

Rat numbers are expected to be down at Oakley Creek (Te Auaunga) this summer when volunteers track pests at the urban reserve.

Volunteer group Friends of Oakley Creek has spent the past five years working to restore the stream, which flows through Mt Roskill, Owairaka, Mt Albert and Waterview, to a natural ecosystem for native species and people to enjoy.

This year, the group started tracking rodents, hedgehogs and possums as part of a long-term pest monitoring and control programme aimed at helping birds, lizards and invertebrates flourish as the waterway is restored.

Friends of Oakley Creek spokeswoman Wendy John says the tracking programme will benefit the overall creek restoration project as it will allow the group to see how wildlife are responding to improvements.

She says the group has been busy getting Unitec students involved in the project as well as working with David Bowden, Auckland City Council's Parks volunteer coordinator, to bring in volunteers from across the city.

"It's just wonderful."

Fellow 'friend' Alicia Warren, who has been leading the monitoring project, says volunteers started laying poison to control the rat population in July and have been refilling bait stations once a month.

She says rat tracking will start again in

December and a significant decrease in numbers is expected.

Ms Warren says that by reducing the number of pests, more birds such as tui, kereru and moreporks will return, and lizards and weta will be able to survive and thrive at the reserve.

"Without pest control we probably won't have any of these native animals returning, despite any replanting. We want to give them the chance to raise their young here."

"We really want to make a difference for the wildlife."

For more information see www.oakleycreek.org.nz

Arapito Track

The glow worms on Titirangi's Arapito Track are shining brighter thanks to a dedicated group of people who are clearing the weeds away.

Allan Dragojevic and his wife Cathy moved into a house that borders the track four years ago and have been weeding ever since, keeping the track neater, protecting their own garden and making the glow worms easier to see.

"There were tradescantia, blue morning glory, convolvulus vine and nasturtium blocking the path, choking trees and hiding the glow worms," says Allan.

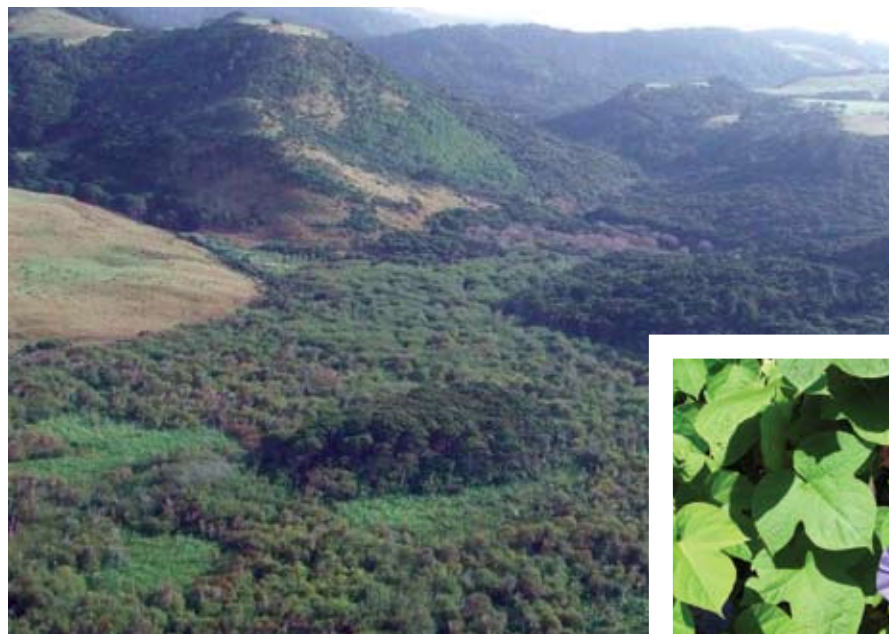
This year the couple called on reinforcements to boost their efforts. They got in touch with Neil Henderson from Weed Free Waitakere to provide them with weed bins. They also joined



Barry Green, ARC Senior Conservation Ranger

I help maintain the historic homesteads and control plant and animal pests in the Northern Parks. I'm also involved with native tree planting programmes. We plant 35,000 natives a year now and I've enjoyed watching the trees mature into forests.

For any further questions please contact me on (09) 426 1200 or barry.green@arc.govt.nz



Bryan and Johnathan Parris, Oakley Creek

Mokoroa Arm: from mountains to the sea

Blue morning glory found on the Arapito Track



the Auckland Weedbusters network, to have access to weed-fighting tools, including herbicide.

They used these in a recent working bee and with 30 people turning up to that event they are now planning more activities to harness the energy of a willing workforce. Allan and Cathy hope to eventually get the track clear enough to plant some native species.

"We have made a big difference so far. The weeds grow so fast, it's a constant battle but we have a lot of support. It has blown me away the people who've been willing to help," says Allan.

"The community spirit has been great."

Allan has collected signatures of support for the weeding work from 45 nearby residents, and met with Waitakere City Council, which has also done work re-gravelling the track.

Allan's next project is to build a compost bin to turn the weeds into something good and to trial laying old carpet down to suppress weeds.

"We want to live here for the next 20 years, so we want it to be a healthy and thriving ecosystem."

Community spirit at its best

By working together a small Auckland community has started its own Neighbourhood Watch, rid local streets of noxious weeds and possums, organised an extra bus service and created an organic garden at the local school.

The community is Paremoremo,

a small town of 2000 residents, 8km southwest of Albany. Sustainable Paremoremo, the community group behind all these projects, was started two years ago by local woman Barb Cooper.

Barb, a local real estate agent with a keen interest in the environment, started the community group to get to know her neighbours.

"I grew up in the country and I like the real sense of community rural areas have but here I didn't know any of my neighbours."

Barb approached Kate Jackson, an environmental coordinator with North Shore City Council (NSCC) with her idea of starting a community group to focus on environmental projects.

"The council couldn't give us any funding but they did give us Kate. She is the best resource that they could have ever given us," says Barb.

Sustainable Paremoremo, which has about 200 members, holds monthly meetings in the local hall. At the meetings guest speakers talk on subjects such as composting, being prepared for emergencies, and home insulation. Everyone from the Paremoremo community is welcome. Barb also started up a monthly newsletter, the Pare Publisher, to keep the community up-to-date on the group's latest projects and news.

Because of Sustainable Paremoremo, community spirit and community projects have flourished.

Kate says one of the community's many successes was a working bee

where 50 Paremoremo households spent a weekend removing noxious plants and replanting native species.

Following workshops in June, Sustainable Paremoremo created an organic garden at RidgeView School. The primary school children and their parents made raised vegetable beds and compost and planted fruit trees. Since then the students have been taking home the vegetables they have grown at their school.

"It just shows you what people can do when they work together," says Kate.

They didn't have a Neighbourhood Watch in the area so Sustainable Paremoremo decided at one of its monthly meetings to start their own. During another meeting after concerns were raised about a lack of bus services for local high school students, two Paremoremo parents offered to look into it and were successful in getting an extra bus service.

Their latest project was a clothes swap held at the local hall.

Although NSCC's involvement in the project ends in December, Barb says there is a desire amongst the community for the monthly meetings, the newsletter and the development of new projects to continue.

As well as support from NSCC, other organisations that have been involved with Sustainable Paremoremo are Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand, the Department of Conservation, the Albany Community Board, the University of Auckland, the Kaipatiki Project and the ARC.



Vanessa Tanner, Archaeologist in the Cultural Heritage Team

There are 894 archaeological sites recorded in our regional parks. I love working with communities to help identify, preserve and manage sites of cultural and spiritual significance such as burial grounds, historic churches and pa. Propagating heirloom fruit trees from historic sites is also an exciting project of mine.

For any further questions please contact me on (09) 366 2000 ext 8031 or vanessa.tanner@arc.govt.nz



George Flavell from Ngati te ata

Kaitiaki, guardians of the land

The Awhitu Peninsula in Franklin is one of the most exciting areas of cultural heritage in the country, with well-preserved evidence of centuries of continuous human occupation says Auckland Regional Council archaeologist Vanessa Tanner.

“Rich in the natural food resources of the Manukau Harbour and Waikato River, the peninsula was heavily populated by Maori.”

“Their archaeological legacy includes pa, gardens, storage pits, moa bones, hangi stones, shell middens, stone tools and cemeteries.”

Representing local iwi Ngati-te-ata, the uncle and nephew team of George and Karl Flavell bring awareness to the district’s farmers of the special history their land contains, working in collaboration with the Auckland Regional Council to protect and manage the sites for the benefit of future generations.

“I wouldn’t want people to go to libraries to find out what a Maori pa looks like,” says George. “The Awhitu Peninsula is a natural encyclopaedia.”

The tribe’s Nga Tohu Kaitiaki Project is busy identifying, recording and documenting the sites, and then signposting them with tohu or rock markers.

Helping Te Henga wetland from top to bottom

At 140 hectares, Te Henga is the largest freshwater wetland on the Auckland mainland and home to a wealth of native plants and animals. Stretching across the lower Bethells Valley, the wetland is largely fed by the Waitakere River which flows from the kauri clad ranges of the Cascades to the iron sands of Bethells Beach. Along its entire journey many community organisations are helping

to improve the health of the river and the wetland.

In the Cascades Kauri Park at the top of the catchment, the Waitakere Reservoir is managed by Watercare to provide Auckland with drinking water. Last summer Watercare began a new system of releasing water into the river, creating more natural seasonal water levels downstream. Watercare is also trialling a fish ‘trap and haul’ initiative to transport native fish over the dam face. This helps juvenile fish reach the upper tributaries, and lifts mature eels safely down to continue their journey through the wetland to their breeding grounds at sea

In the surrounding native forest, the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) and Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand jointly control weeds and pests in the Ark in the Park, protecting the Ark while minimising weed and pest movement down into the wetland. Further along the catchment, more pest control is undertaken on private bush and farmland by members of the Buffer Zone and the Bethells Baiting Group.

Where the river crosses farmland, the Waitakere River Care group, assisted by the ARC and Watercare, helps landowners with weed control, fencing and planting natives along the river margins.

Within the wetland, weed and pest control work is undertaken by a range of agencies including Waitakere City Council, the ARC, the Department of Conservation, Rodney District Council, and Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand.

The river completes its journey after weaving through dunes looked after by Bethells Beach Care, rounding off a whole catchment’s-worth of conservation work.

Steps to a healthy harbour: working together

Whangateau Harbour, with its clear

waters, healthy sea grass and salt marsh habitats, offers a glimpse of how other estuaries in the Auckland region must have looked in days gone by.

The Whangateau Harbour Care Group is one of the groups who are working to keep the harbour and surrounding catchments pristine. They also have developed a ten-point harbour protection plan to ensure Whangateau will remain teeming with marine life.

The ARC is also developing a Whangateau Implementation Plan which has included input from the Whangateau Harbour Care Group, local iwi and landowners, recreational fishers, Rodney District Council, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Department of Conservation. The plan identifies priority actions for the next year. The Whangateau Forum, a collection of community groups and agencies is working together to protect the harbour.

ARC Councillor Christine Rose says the Whangateau Harbour is one of the region’s most valuable mainland estuaries.

“This is why it is important that we are proactive, and that we do work together to look at ways of protecting the harbour from environmental threats.”

Eco Events website proving a success

The Eco Events website where people can list their events and seek volunteers for environmental projects is proving a great hit in its first year.

The site has received more than 50,000 unique visits within its first year and more than 180 organisations have joined.

The site helps community groups to publicise events and training sessions, and seek volunteers.

The site was launched by the Auckland Regional Council, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand, Auckland, Waitakere and North Shore City councils and the Department of Conservation.

For more information and for free training on to use the site contact Richelle Kahui-McConnell on 366 2000 x7018 or email Richelle.kahui-mcconnell@arc.govt.nz

To visit the site go to www.ecoevents.org.nz



Lynda Fleming, South Auckland Representative of the QEII National Trust

I advise people about caring for the special natural and cultural features on their land including native forest, wetlands, threatened species’ habitats and archaeological sites. I also help people legally protect these from future development with QEII National Trust covenants.

For any further questions please contact me on 021 900 433 (09) 238 5739 or lfleming@openspace.org.nz