

# Ecocare News

## Your update on care in the Auckland region

Issue 4

February 2006

**Ecocare** is a project to help the ARC develop, co-ordinate, resource and deliver community funding, support and consultation to environmentally focused community groups throughout the Auckland region.

### Zooperkids / Wazzup @ the Zoo

Mike Harre

In December the Heritage and Biosecurity teams participated in Zooperkids/Wazzup @ The Zoo, at Auckland Zoo. The event was aimed at raising conservation awareness in school children, years 4 to 10. The event was held over a week and also included displays by MAF, DOC, the World Wildlife Fund, Kiwi Conservation Club, SPCA and the Auckland Zoo breeding program.

Displays were set up at stations around the zoo, and children were given a trail to follow, and questions to answer at each display. The visitors entered the zoo through a mock-up airport Biosecurity Entry Point complete with imitation x-ray machine (but without a beagle). Other displays featured the Maui dolphin, pets are 4 life, CITES, kiwi and other endangered species breeding programmes.



ARC Zoo Display

The ARC team had a display based on Treasures and Troubles of the region, nicely situated by the Orangutan enclosure (which provided entertainment for both the staff and Orang's). The display featured native plants and animals as well as pests and weeds.

The event was popular, with over 3000 school children attending over the week, the zoo and participants are keen to hold it again next year, with a slight change in format, and if successful make it a regular event.

### Chinese Conservation Education Trust Ambury Regional Park Replanting Project

Ngaire Tyson

The Chinese Conservation Education Trust (CCET) began a replanting project on the foreshore of Ambury Regional Park in May 2004. The project is fairly experimental, as this is the first community revegetation project to be attempted on a coastal lava flow in the Auckland region.



2004 Planting Day

In 2005, the CCET returned to interplant where trees had been lost, and to thicken the nearby shelterbelts.

Inter-planting was required as only about 70% of plants survived in the first year. However, this is a good survival rate considering the difficult planting site (i.e. hard to dig perfect holes on a lava flow!) and the subsequent conditions that the plants are exposed to, such as strong coastal winds.

This year the successful plants from 2004 are more noticeable now that many have grown above the surrounding exotic grasses. There also appears to have a better survival rate of this years plants, which may be due to the revised selection of plant species.

## Native Forest Health Monitoring & FORMAK

Native forests are important reservoirs of plant and animal biodiversity. However, our native forests are under threat from human development, weeds, changes in climate and browsing and predation by introduced animals. We need to know how forests are changing so we can manage them to retain their values. In short – we need to monitor them!

Setting up monitoring allows us to look at trends in different parts of the forest ecosystem and see if they are changing in a way that could affect the value of the forest. For example, are possum numbers increasing to a level where damage is being done to the forest canopy? This allows sensible management decisions to be made about when we should, for example, undertake animal control.

It is also often important to show what is happening in a forest area to others. People who are helping with management of the forest, such as organisations providing funding or volunteers providing their labour, need to see the value of their contribution.

Through monitoring the trends in a managed forest ecosystem, we can show what is happening in relation to the time and resources put in. For example, we can track improvements in the forest under storey with fencing, or downward trends in possum and rat numbers following poisoning operations.

FORMAK (Forest Monitoring Assessment Kit) has been designed to provide a simple monitoring kit for immediate use by land owners, Landcare groups, community groups and other “hands on” users interested in assessing the condition of native forest ecosystems. The aim is to provide a relatively easy set of measurements that will require around 5 days per year for 1-2 people.

FORMAK comprises a toolkit and a website. The toolkit includes four modules - Site Assessment, Vegetation Plot, Bird Count and Pest Animal Transect. Together these modules indicate the health of forest areas through measuring aspects such as canopy condition, under storey, weeds, animal pests, bird numbers etc. Measurements are made using simple and practical techniques. You can choose to do as few or as many modules as you wish, and you can tailor the monitoring frequency to the amount of time you have available.

The website [www.formak.co.nz](http://www.formak.co.nz) provides information and assistance, communication with other users, technical support and simple data analysis routines.

The Auckland Regional Council supports FORMAK via training workshops and assisting landowners and community groups to use the kits.

A free two-day training workshop is planned for the 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> March 2006. To register please contact Sam Hill at the ARC on 09-366-2000 ext. 8317 or via email: [sam.hill@arc.govt.nz](mailto:sam.hill@arc.govt.nz)

## SOUTH KAIPARA LANDCARE 2006 WETLANDS DAY



On Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February we are having our annual wetlands day at Hedleys marine flats. Our guest speaker will be John Walsby, a well known marine ecologist. Many of you will remember that he led our wetlands day in 2002 down at Waionui Inlet (the lagoon). John will give us an introductory talk about the significance of marine flats and their importance to our biodiversity. He will point out many interesting and special features including the rare and secretive fernbird. After the talk we will follow John and members of the ornithological society out onto the marine flats to see some more interesting features first hand.

**When:** 10.00am Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February.

**Where:** Hedley's Flats, Parking 2km past South Head Golf Course Clubhouse in a paddock on the left hand side. Approximately 20 kms north of Parakai on the South Head Road. Sign posted on the day.

**What to bring:** Appropriate sun / wet weather gear, water to drink, sturdy footwear, and personal medicines. The site is exposed, so sun protection is a must. Sun umbrellas could be an advantage.

As usual we will provide a BBO and refreshments afterwards. As the area is next to the road all children must be supervised and care must be taken. For catering please ring Neil 09-4202-532 or Debbie 09-4202-527.

## Japanese Volunteer Day - 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005

Ngairie Tyson

A tour agency looking for something different to do with a Japanese tour group approached ARC to organise a volunteer day. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, 57 Japanese



tourists took part in a working bee for the Waitakere RiverCare Group, releasing native plants from weeds.

It was a beautiful sunny day on the banks of the Waitakere River, and the volunteers were impressed with their incredibly scenic working conditions! Despite a limited grasp of English, language was not a problem once a translator explained all the instructions, and the volunteers were soon carefully weeding around each plant. Luckily the Waitakere Rivercare group had anticipated that weed growth would be rampant, and had staked each native plant, making finding the plants much easier!

We divided into four teams, each with a supervisor to ensure that only weeds were removed and no native plants! We had expected to work from 9am- 12 noon, but by 10.30am the enthusiastic volunteers had finished! So we progressed on to the BBQ picnic a little earlier than planned, impressed at how much work a large group can achieve in a relatively short time.

The volunteers thoroughly enjoyed the experience and appreciated the opportunity to "give something back". I was impressed to



learn that they were on a one week tour of NZ, and yet so enthusiastic to donate half a day to conservation volunteer work. They told us that they were very grateful to be able to contribute to such a worthy community conservation project. They also promised to plant more native trees in Japan on their return home, and get more involved in local environmental projects – which for me was an absolute highlight of the day.

## ARC grants \$500,000 towards environmental projects

The Auckland Regional Council has awarded more than half a million dollars of environmental grants for community projects.

The ARC's Environmental Initiatives Fund (EIF) allocated \$512,381 to 135 applicants to carry out practical projects that benefit the environment.

Since the EIF was established in 1999, 480 grants worth \$1.107 million have been made to community projects helping the environment.

The purpose of the fund is to encourage and assist communities to care for their local environment.

Among the projects funded this year are fencing to protect wetlands, native tree planting, a conservation plan for a heritage building, a range of school environmental education projects and an environmental awareness programme for new migrants.

This year's funding is up from \$117,479 granted in the 2004 funding round. The average grant was \$3795, compared to \$1895 in 2004.

Amongst the funding was \$122,606 from the Honda Tree Fund, which allocates funding to provide 10 native trees for every new Honda sold. For more information see [www.honda.co.nz](http://www.honda.co.nz).

Transpower provided \$49,790 to build the capacity of community groups involved in environmental enhancement projects. See [www.transpower.co.nz](http://www.transpower.co.nz) for more information.

## Weedbusters Awards

Congratulations to Karekare Landcare who were among the big winners in the inaugural Auckland Regional Weedbusters Awards held in November 2005.

Karekare Landcare won the *Excellence - Group* category for the weed work they undertook in the area and will now go forward to the National Awards in July 2006.

Weedbusters is an interagency weeds awareness programme supported by the Department of Conservation, Biosecurity New Zealand, Federated Farmers, Biodiversity New Zealand, NZ Landcare Trust, Nursery and Garden Industry Association, NZ Biosecurity Institute, NZ Plant Protection Society, and all unitary and regional councils in New Zealand (including the ARC).

Formed nationally two years ago, Weedbusters coordinates and adds value to existing weeds education, recognising people already carrying out the work and promoting new initiatives.

For more information about Weedbusters, contact Mike Harre at the ARC or check out

[www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)

Photo: C Shrubshall, Kaipatiki Project 2005.



## Nature for Neighbourhoods

Does your North Shore property have or back onto a stream, creek or native bush? If so you may qualify for special assistance from the Kaipatiki Project's Nature for Neighbourhoods scheme (formerly known as Backyard Biodiversity).

Depending on your situation you could receive free information and resources, a free home visit by one of our experienced advisors and/or free trees to plant in place of weeds. Talks and workshops on Auckland's native plants, animals and bush are also available, with the next being held at 17 Lauderdale Road, Birkdale on February 21 from 6.00 – 7.00pm.

Help bring back birds and nature to your neighbourhood while improving your property, increasing its value and protecting it from flooding.

To find out more, please call Caren Shrubshall at the Kaipatiki Project on 09-482-1172 or by email at [restoration@kaipatiki.org.nz](mailto:restoration@kaipatiki.org.nz)

This is a joint project between the Kaipatiki Project, the Biodiversity Advice Fund and North Shore City Council.

Garry Sheehan of Castor Bay received advice and free plants from the Kaipatiki Project towards his vision. After 20 years of living here, he wanted to restore his backyard stream to the bubbling brook it once was, nestled in a lush, green glade of ferns and nikau palms, a bush ringing with the song of native birds.

## Karekare Landcare Group February Gathering - ALL Welcome

**Date:** Sunday 12th February 2006

**Time:** 10am - 12pm followed by "tea & bikkies" - no cucumber sandwiches, sorry!

**Meeting Point:** Corner Watchman & Karekare Roads (by the letter boxes)

**Target:** Agapanthus. We are hoping to remove entire plants this time, but we'll be beheading the little buggers at the least. If you have knowledge of patches of Agapanthus let us know or bring the intelligence with you.

**Bring:** Secateurs, Gloves (Spades & grubbers if you have them).

**Contact:** David or Chris Sidwell 09-812-8039

Karekare Landcare group meets usually on the second Sunday of the month (this month is an exception) to weed or plant according to the month on public land in Karekare with the co-operation of the Waitakere Regional Park rangers.

**19 February:** Agapanthus de-heading and removal – David Sidwell 09-8128-039

**12 March:** Pampas - Mike Nixon 09-8128-420

**9 April:** Polygala – Caroline Grove 09-8128-760

**14 May:** Planting at Watchman's Road entrance – Robyn Binsley 09-8128-420

We are always looking for more volunteers to join us and help us care for our favourite bit of the wild west coast. If weeding is not your thing how about predator control -tramping bush tracks and setting bait stations for the Lone Kauri Forest Restoration Group – phone Mike 09-8128-420.

The exciting news recently from Karekare's end of the Waitakeres has been the sighting of a robin from the Ark in the Park's release and a kaka cavorting in a pohutukawa.

## "Wetlands are lifelines"

World Wetlands Day is an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands and to celebrate their infinitesimal capacity for sustaining life. The international focus for World Wetlands Day 2006 is the role of wetlands in supporting life and sustaining livelihoods, especially for the poor.

In numerous ways, wetlands are lifelines for our continuing existence on this earth, even though we don't always recognise or respect the vital role they play.

Various events will be happening around New Zealand on or around the 2nd of February to celebrate World Wetlands Day 2006.

For any information regarding content of this newsletter you can contact:-

**EcoCare Coordinator**

Auckland Regional Council

**09-366-2000 ext 8255**

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Missed credit from October issue, article 'Kaipatiki Project' two photo's by **Simon Fordham** / NaturePix.