



A network of volunteers prepared to help maintain and enhance the historic and indigenous natural features of the reserve and adjoining slopes.

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## Newsletter Number 11

It is more than 2 years since I sent out the last newsletter to members of our group. I do apologise for not having kept you all better informed concerning our reserve during this period. A great deal has happened in that time, most of it very pleasing to those of us who, many years ago now, earnestly believed that the features of the Hayward Scenic Reserve were very much underappreciated by both the Hutt City Council and the general public. What now gives me the greatest satisfaction is witnessing the vastly increased numbers people either entering or coming out of the Mawson Street entrance to the reserve. This is happening both mid-week as well as the weekends and public holidays. The frequent users I have seen range from individuals or pairs, obviously employed nearby, who keep fit in their lunch break by brisk walking or running, people exercising their dogs, walking or tramping groups, and most pleasing of all, many family groups with young children.

**Improved Signage:** HCC's erection of "Walkway" signs in Hayward Terrace and Mawson St, coupled with better signage at the bush entrance, has enabled the public to now easily find what was previously a rather obscure way to access to the reserve from Mawson St.

**Whites Line East Entrance:** You may have already noticed that the old timber barrier and stile at this entrance has been removed recently. Its original purpose was to prevent motorised trail bike riders from using this entrance as a point of access to the eastern hills. The removal is the first step being taken by HCC to upgrade this main entrance to the reserve. After drainage work is completed, some large rocks will be put in place to stop motorised trail bikers. Finally, a bench for people to have seat there will be erected, and information and map panels will be installed. I understand that similar panels are to be put in place at the Mawson St entrance.

**Track Maintenance & Improvements:** The re-routing of the Hayward Track, to make it sidle around rather than over the foot of Mawson Ridge, has made this main track between Whites line East and Mawson St much easier to follow and walk, hence the markedly increased use by family groups with young children. HCC's installation of vandal proof direction poles at track intersections is to be commended. Also to be commended is HCC's upgrading of the steps at the Te Whiti firebreak end of the Rewarewa Track, coupled with the decision to regard this as a "main track" to be maintained by HCC's contractor.

**Mr H M Hayward:** In 2010 HCC contracted local historian Warwick Johnston to research the life and background of Harry Miles Hayward, the benefactor who gifted to the Crown much of the land which today forms our reserve that bears his name. I have a digital copy of Warwick's comprehensive report on my computer. I shall be pleased to pass this information on to any members wishing to read it.

**Unwanted Exotic Trees:** Greater Wellington is to be congratulated for employing contractors to cut down wattles (3 species), hawthorns, holly and other unwanted exotic trees prevalent in the southern area of the reserve. Wattles in particular are prolific seeders. Sadly, their seeds seem to remain viable at ground level for quite a while. I would urge members to learn to recognise what wattle seedlings look like (especially the more prevalent Prickly Moses & long leaf Sydney wattles), so that you can pull them out whenever coming across them while walking in the reserve. Several people have expressed to me their concerns about the spread of seeds from mature wilding pine trees growing not only in our reserve, but also elsewhere along the eastern hills. I fully endorse the pulling out of seedlings or the cutting down of young pines in our reserve. However, to conform with HCC's current policy, I must advise against killing mature pines by ring barking, especially where a pine tree possibly poses a danger to track users because of its proximity and height when it eventually dies and falls. HCC is obliged by law to hire a contractor to undertake the controlled felling of any known dying or aging tree on public land that poses a possible threat to the public. The controlled felling of such large trees is expensive and diverts funding away from more desirable planned projects in the city's reserves. While travelling in the Marlborough Sounds recently, I inquired about the numerous dead pines that now look like ghost trees on many of the regenerating bush & gorse clad hillsides. I learnt that these had been deliberately poisoned by either the local authority or conservation minded citizens of the area. DoC is also doing this on Maud Island. I believe it would be beneficial to the long term regeneration of native bush along Hutt's eastern hills if our Council adopted a similar policy to actively kill mature wilding pines in places where there was no possibility of danger to the public from the eventual falling of dead trees.

**Snakefeather:** This pest plant poses by far the greatest threat in the long term to native bush in our reserve. It is a climbing vine capable of smothering areas of native vegetation through its scrambling habits, and is difficult to control once established. It particularly affects the forest floor and the bush's understorey up to a height of around 4 metres, thus preventing the growth and regeneration of indigenous species. Its tendency to wrap itself around trunks can strangle and eventually kill soft-barked shrubs and trees. Control is difficult because, in the summer, snakefeather is a prolific producer of berries which birds eat, then later disperse the seeds quite widely in their droppings. Volunteers can help to minimise the spread by manually removing seedlings and young plants, using a simple hand tool to carefully prise out the complete crown, placing this material in a plastic bag for safe disposal in the household refuse. Achieving effective crown removal of larger plants manually is both difficult and very time consuming, as a working bee involving a number of our group members discovered late last year. It is now generally acknowledged that herbicide spraying in the spring and early summer, before the berries form, is by far the most effective control measure. Engaging suitably qualified contractors to spray up in the reserve is expensive and understandably, in the current and immediately foreseeable

economic climate, ratepayer funding available for this is decidedly limited. I am pleased to report that a few months ago GWRC did provide funding for a contractor to undertake some snakefeather spraying above Mawson St, but this took place well after the berries had ripened.

The good news is that the law allows volunteers to undertake herbicide spraying on public land, but only if they hold current certification under the Growsafe Training programme. Five of our group members have now become so qualified, and I'm waiting on advice from a sixth, a new member, as to whether his certification is still current. Also, I know of one other member willing to participate in the next day long training course expected to be held before long. So our group will have an on-going capability of making a worthwhile contribution to the war against snakefeather. Kristan Robinson, HCC's Volunteer Co-ordinator, expects to meet with group representatives in the near future to work out a spraying programme for our qualified volunteers and their supporters to undertake during this coming spring/early summer period .

**Group Leadership:** I am acutely aware that, for some considerable time now, I have not been providing the proactive leadership that a group like ours deserves if it is to be fully effective. From 1991 until around 6 years ago, undertaking one day tramping trips most Wednesdays kept me physically fit despite the passing years. This enabled me to enjoy regularly walking, possum trapping, and from time to time working up in the reserve. Also, as Co-ordinator after our group was formed, I was able to make a point of periodically visiting each of the tracks to ascertain first hand any major maintenance needs. Suffice it to say, a couple of serious health setbacks requiring major surgery and adjuvant chemotherapy has resulted in the complete loss of this fitness. This, plus an on-going back problem and the aging process (I'm now 82) now greatly limits my walking ability. Consequently, it is some months since I last visited the reserve. I believe it is time for the group to find a younger, more active leader, with a greater energy level and far better information technology skills than I currently possess. I have tried in vain myself to find a successor. I do want to remain a member of our group and to help a new leader in any way I can. I trust there is a group member out there who cares enough about our reserve to now come forward and assume the leadership role. I look forward to your phone call and/or a visit to chat about what is involved.

Russ McStay

Current but soon to be ex-Group Co-ordinator