

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

Coordinator: Russ McStay, 37 Mawson Street, Waiwhetu  
Phone: 569-2915  
E-mail: r.mcstay@hyper.net.nz

## Newsletter No 2

**Logo:** As you can see, we now have an attractive logo, thanks to prompting from and arrangements made by Rosie Doole from the Hutt City Council. The Fantail (*Piwakawaka*) is the native bird most commonly **seen** by visitors to the Reserve. The Bellbird (*Korimako* or *Makomako*) hopefully will become heard and sighted more frequently in the future as the bush habitat in the Reserve diversifies and matures.



**Track Maintenance:** Over recent weeks Don Millward, working almost single-handedly, has cleared the encroaching vegetation, windfalls and other storm debris from the Whites Gully and Tyndall Ridge Tracks. These being (**in the**) mainly benched tracks, Don has also carried out some surface restoration to ensure that, wherever possible, users can adhere to the historic bench formation rather than form a new trail on the downhill side. Not satisfied with this achievement, Don has just spent a full day restoring a way through the massive vegetation blockage on the link between the Whites Gully and Mawson Ridge Tracks. While this route is now once again open for use by visitors, it does require considerable care in negotiating the upper reaches of the Tyndall Creek.

These track clearances now provide regular visitors to the Reserve with several worthwhile round trip walking options that have been more or less unavailable for quite some time. For those reasonably fit and experienced folk who want to start and finish their bush walk at Mawson Street, I can recommend using the Mawson Ridge/ Whites Gully/ Haywards Track combination. Note that currently there is need to scramble over the trunk of a large fallen wattle tree soon after the start of the Mawson Ridge Track below the end of the Mawson firebreak. For those who wish to start and finish at Whites Line East, the Lomaria/ Haywards/ Whites Gully/ Tyndall Ridge/ Haywards/ Lomaria Track combination will meet their needs.

Earlier this year Council **contractors** did an excellent job clearing and upgrading the Tyndall Stream Track. They did this believing they were still working on the route of the main Haywards Track, not realising that the February 2004 storm had gouged out the Haywards Track where it crossed the Tyndall Stream. For those of you who haven't yet ventured on to the Tyndall Stream Track, I can recommend that you now do so. However, for a while along its true left bank it does traverse a steep slope fairly high above the stream. This may be unnerving for those who are not surefooted and who do not like heights. Otherwise this is now a very pleasant track to follow.

**Other Track Information:** I have recently used the Homestead Loop, Nikau and Rewarewa Tracks. All are in good condition, as is the Gold Mine Track (not shown on the track map). In places where the Rewarewa Track passes through patches of scrub, there is need for regular clipping back of encroaching vegetation, particularly bracken and some overhanging gorse. This is a lovely track to use, but please take your secateurs and help keep it that way.

I would appreciate receiving information on the current condition of the Ngapunga, Konini Saddle and Dry Creek Zigzag Tracks which I have not used for a very long time.

**Weeds & Other Unwanted Exotics:** The ground surface in much of the reserve is now damp and soft in many places. In these conditions most young snakefeather plants (climbing asparagus) can be successfully pulled out and destroyed. Provided the crown is pulled out, any root remnants and water sacs (like little whitish tubers) that may be left in the ground will not regrow. Simply grasp the plants as close to the ground as you can, making sure your hand has gathered in ALL of the stems, and pull upwards. Plants removed in this way can either be draped in bush foliage above ground level and left to die, or taken home in a plastic bag and put out with the garbage. Through droppings from birds that have eaten the berries, snakefeather is spreading rapidly northwards through the reserve and beyond - there are bad infestations now visible alongside part of the Rewarewa Track. Once this nasty weed is allowed to take hold, it both climbs up and spreads outwards, forming a dense mat that stifles further native bush regeneration at ground level. While having volunteers spray mature snakefeather plants with a Roundup/Pulse mixture, killing them before annual berrying occurs, would seem to be an effective way of minimising its spread, it is now a requirement that spraying on public land be carried out only by persons holding a Growsafe Certificate. Hutt City Council would consider meeting the costs of obtaining this certificate by interested volunteers keen to undertake such work.

Damp ground also makes it easy to pull out young gorse, wattles and many other unwanted exotics growing on or alongside our bush tracks. Carrying leather or heavy duty gardening gloves in your day pack will guard against any discomfort from grasping young gorse plants.

If you are unsure about recognising which young plants to pull out, I am only too happy to accompany you into the Reserve to help you identify them.

**Website:** Work on having the Hutt City Council's website host information on voluntary organisations has been delayed due to the resignation of the staff member mainly responsible for implementing this project. Thanks to considerable input from John McKenzie, updated information about the Reserve and the "Friends" group has now been compiled, ready for loading on to the Council's website.

To facilitate exploration of the Reserve, I am attaching the website material "Named Track Descriptions" for use by you in conjunction with the track & trail map appended to the inaugural newsletter.

**Rodent Monitoring:** Over the past 3 years Sara Moylan from Greater Wellington has been undertaking rodent monitoring in the Reserve. Currently she is maintaining 3 rat lines there. Sara has agreed to prepare in due course an article about this project for inclusion in a future newsletter. This information is very pertinent, given that predation by rats is a key factor retarding the sought after recovery of native bird life in our Reserve.

E-mail or phone me with your thoughts on the betterment of our Reserve.  
Russ McStay