

A network of volunteers prepared to help maintain
the historic and indigenous natural features of the reserve and adjoining slopes
Website: <http://www.waiwhetu.org>

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



**Hayward
Scenic
Reserve**



Newsletter No 6

Social Activities: The BBQ held on the evening of 24 March at my home another highly successful get-together with 16 people present. Notwithstanding that daylight saving had ended the previous weekend & darkness descended sooner than we would have liked, mild weather provided pleasant conditions for outdoor socialising and the enjoyment of some nice wines. A new topic that was discussed at length was the scope to augment the indigenous forest content of our reserve by the culling of unwanted exotics and planting out desirable young native tree species during the winter/early spring period. In this regard, two publications which members were encouraged to refer to as a guide were:

- Greater Wellington's booklet "*Restoration Planting: A guide to planning restoration planting in the Wellington Region*".
- A VIKING publication titled "*The Quickfind Guide to Growing Native Plants*" by Andrew Crowe - ISBN 0-670-87642-9

I have a copy of both of these publications which group members are welcome to borrow.

Snakefeather Spraying: During our recent summer, in an area bounded by the Tyndall Ridge, Tyndall Link, Hayward and Mawson Ridge Tracks, three workers from Green Day Horticulture Services from Wainuiomata sprayed the heavier infestations of snakefeather, their spray mixture incorporating a dye to clearly show the extent of their spray cover. Also, to minimise damage to host trees while maximising absorption of the herbicide, they unwound and/or pulled down the climbing vines before spraying. At this stage a 90% brown-off appears to have been achieved. The \$5,000 funding for this work was provided by GWRC from its Waiwhetu Stream Catchment Project. Hopefully, a similar attack on bad infestations can be mounted next spring/summer.

Snakefeather Pulling Working Bees: On Saturdays 10 March and 7 April groups of volunteers, coordinated by Alison Sinclair and working under the direction of Rosie Doole, spent the mornings in the Reserve pulling out young snakefeather plants. It was decided to trial this method of control in areas that had been previously sprayed. It is hoped that, by preventing or minimising regrowth in this manner, these areas will not need respraying. Thus the resources available for the next spraying season can be directed at new and more heavily infested ground. The two areas worked on were the Tyndall Stream and the sides of the track to the goldmine tunnel. On both days large numbers of small plants were removed and a few large clumps successfully tackled as well. Many thanks to those who were able to participate, and who enjoyed the social side of these endeavours. Similar working bees will be arranged in the coming months, so watch out for the dates. Thanks also to Rosie for morning tea with hot cross buns and Easter eggs on the Easter Saturday!

Barbara's Native Plant Nursery: As reported in Newsletter 5, Barbara de ste Croix has been raising an impressive number and range of potted native plants in her backyard at 18 Jutland Street, Waterloo. Many are approaching the size suitable for planting out in the Reserve. Currently, ground conditions in the Reserve are far too dry for the successful transplanting of young natives. We have little option but to wait until the winter rains and colder temperatures result in the return of adequate moisture to the subsoil. However, volunteers walking or doing track maintenance work in the Reserve can now prepare for later planting out by identifying suitable places where this can take place. From now on is a good time to pull or cut out unwanted exotics such as gorse, pines, wattle species, holly and hawthorn, thereby creating some modest sized spaces for desirable young natives to grow. Later, when ground conditions do become suitable for planting out, encourage children in your

extended family to participate – they invariably develop an abiding interest in the well-being of young trees they have personally planted. Meantime, don't hesitate to contact Barbara de ste Croix, phone 566-1055, email barbed@paradise.net.nz to see what she can make available.

You Too Can Help: Raising native plants from small seedlings, even on a very small scale, can be a very satisfying pastime. Those of you who, like me, reside close to native bush, will encounter in your garden little native seedlings that have germinated from bird droppings or wind-blown seed. Instead of treating them as weeds, why not carefully lift them and place them in suitably sized containers full of potting mix? I have been doing this for years. Plants originating from local seed are genetically best suited to the growing conditions in the Reserve. I find that “*Fresh n Fruity*” 1kg yoghurt containers (with 5 holes drilled in the base) make an ideal size and shape of plastic pot for raising seedlings to the planting out stage. The black plastic pots containing “*potted colour*” purchases from garden centres are also suitable. I can make both types available to anyone interested.

Native Birdlife: Great news – bellbirds (*Korimako*) are reported to be breeding in the Naenae area. So be on the lookout for the sight and sound of bellbirds in our Reserve and record any sightings in the group's website. Hopefully, we will once again have females taking up residence and in due course breeding there. A native falcon (*Karearea*) has been sighted in or flying above the Reserve several times in the past. In mid-April one revisited the Mawson St area, no doubt attracted by the prospect of preying upon Brian Shearer's homing pigeons seen to have been released to exercise their wings. I witnessed one high-speed but brief mid-air chase which ended with the pigeon successfully gaining sanctuary in a young beech tree, the dense foliage of which the falcon could not penetrate. Fantails (*Piwakawaka*) appear to be more numerous this year, perhaps the result of recent intensive animal pest management along the eastern hills.

Animal Pest Control: Intensive possum control in the Reserve and adjoining slopes started in December-January Greater. Baiting was used in around half of the target area, with trapping being the only control measure used in the rest. GWRC operates 3 rat monitoring lines in the Reserve, one of which is located in the baited area. In both the January and April monitor, this latter line recorded a very low tracking index of 10%. By comparison, the two lines in the trapped only area recorded a tracking index of 80 and 90%. Clearly, baiting for possums has the added environmental benefit of greatly reducing rat numbers.

So far, no stoats have been caught in either of the two stoat trap tunnels deployed. Our group has now been entrusted with 12 rat traps, also in wooden tunnels. The traps are baited with peanut butter. All 12 tunnels are currently set out in the Reserve or adjoining bush covered private land. Catch rates to date are surprisingly low, again I believe a reflection of GWRC's baiting activities. Relocating some of the tunnels may well lift the catch rate significantly.

All the residents I have spoken to who border the Reserve report no recent sight or sound of possums in the vicinity. This is good news for the health of our bush and its indigenous inhabitants.

In past winter months I have caught in Timms possum traps (baited with dried bread crust) several feral or stray cats well up in the Reserve. Predation by these is another significant threat to native birdlife. We now have a wire cage trap that any of our members are welcome to deploy nearer to the Reserve boundaries. Being a non-kill trap, should a neighbour's pet moggy be caught, it can be safely returned to its owner. Let me know if you could use this device.

My Practical Input Limited: As many of our group already know, in recent months I have suffered from a health condition (stenosis) which makes walking difficult. Scheduled lumbar spinal decompression surgery, the recommended procedure to resolve or lessen this problem, has now had to be postponed due to another health complication only just discovered, and which must be dealt with first. My usefulness in leading our group, let alone doing any work in the Reserve, seems likely to be very limited for some considerable time yet.