

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](mailto:r.mcstay@hyper.net.nz)



## Hayward Scenic Reserve



### Newsletter No 8

**Social Activities:** On Saturday 2 May Alison Sinclair and Leon Ramakers hosted a very successful pot-luck dinner attended by 14 from our Friends Group. Once again the quality and variety of the dishes contributed by those attending was exceptional, a factor which makes this type of social get-together all the more enjoyable. The evening was also a celebration of my 79<sup>th</sup> birthday. This aspect was greatly enhanced by Rosie Doole providing a birthday cake depicting a fallen log appropriately decorated (including replica possums and possum poo!!) to reflect my long possum trapping association with our reserve. My thanks to all who helped to make the evening a very memorable occasion for me.

I had hoped that our next get-together would be a lunchtime BBQ in mid to late June. I now find that the only outdoor venues available this month receive just a very short period of sunshine in mid-winter!! On balance, it seems such an event is best not scheduled until the sun is once again somewhat higher in the sky. We trust that having a middle of the day social gathering will facilitate participation by members with young families.

**Working Bees:** On 4 April eight scholarship students, together with Barbara de st Croix and Rosie Doole, planted out 21 young beech trees that Barbara had raised from seedlings. The site chosen was by the remnant mature beech forest above the south side of Whites Line East. As is typical in remnant mature beech forests, the old trees on the edge are very slowly failing one by one, and over time it seems that much of this remnant forest will gradually collapse. Given the mysterious absence of naturally seeded young beech trees around the fringe, it is hoped that the planting by students will help to maintain the presence of beech trees in this part of the reserve.

Over a 2 hour period on the afternoon of 11 April Alison Sinclair, Leon Ramakers, Pam Mayston, Barbara de st Croix, Brian Shearer and myself succeeded in manually removing an infestation of *Tradescantia fluminensis* (Wandering Jew) a short distance up from the Mawson St entrance to the Hayward Track. We carried out 18 tightly packed bags of this pest plant material for subsequent collection and safe disposal by HCC's contractor.

Mid morning on 9 May Annette Beattie, Don Millward, Pam Mayston, Leon Ramakers and I gathered at Mawson St and went up the Hayward Track to the big pine stump on Mawson Ridge. Our task was to weed and generally prepare that area for winter planting out of natives. Rosie Doole joined us later in the morning. After over 2 hours solid work our mission was accomplished. As expected where there is a ground covering of rotted pine needles, we encountered and carefully removed a lot of young snakefeather. Unexpected however was the large number of banana passionfruit seedlings that had germinated under brighter light resulting from the felling of the big pine tree. Numerous Prickly Moses wattle seedlings were also quite easily pulled out. On the way back down to Mawson St I led the group off track to look at a comparatively open, west-facing site where a cluster of wattle trees had been cut down and left lying where they fell. With some tidying up of the fallen trees and the removal of unwanted regrowth of young wattles and gorse, this area too could be made ready for replanting with rata and other suitable natives this winter. Further down the Hayward Track some of the group explored a little-known historic benched sidle track, somewhat overgrown in places, to see if it might offer a better route between the Tyndall and Mawson St catchments than the present narrow zigzag climb over Mawson Ridge. Unfortunately, it was found to descend into what is now private property.

A “Planning Committee”, comprising Annette Beattie, Alison Sinclair, Leon Ramakers and myself, has been formed to determine the tasks and set the priorities for future working bees. We look forward to receiving from the wider membership information on tasks beyond the capability of one or two people to satisfactorily deal with on their own.

**Future Working Bee Dates:** Please note these dates on your calendar or in your diary:

- Sat 06 June, 10.00am-12noon – planting out young natives, meet at Mawson St entrance
- Sun 21 June, 10.00am-12noon - clearing another area for planting, meet at Mawson St entrance
- Sun 28 June, 10.00am-12noon - planting out Northern Rata, meet at Mawson St entrance
- Sat 11 July, 2-4.00pm - recutting entrance to Mawson Ridge Track, meet at Mawson St entrance
- Sun 19 July, 10.00am-3.00pm - rerouting top section of Mawson Ridge Track, bring lunch,  
meet at Mawson St entrance
- Sun 02 August, 10.00am-1.00pm - steps installation, Dry Creek Zigzag, meet at Whites Line  
East Entrance
- Sat 29 August, 1-4.00pm - maintenance Dry Creek Zigzag Track, meet at TOP entrance to Dry  
Creek Zigzag Track
- Sun 20 September\*\*
- Sat 17 October\*\*
- Sun 08 November\*\*

\*\*Details to be advised later.

**Meeting with Hutt City Council Officers:** Facilitated by Rosie Doole, Alison Sinclair, Annette Beattie, Barbara de st Croix and I, together with Pedro Jensen, Biosecurity Officer with GWRC, had a most useful hour long meeting with HCC’s Craig Cottrill and Kelly Crandle. Craig is Reserves Assets Manager, Parks & Gardens, while Kelly is Reserves Planner. Matters discussed included:

*Snakefeather control:* It was recognised that, unless adequately controlled, snakefeather has the long term potential to interrupt the reforestation and catchment protection along the Eastern Hills. There is provision to shortly respray the area of our reserve treated last year, thus effectively dealing with this season’s new seedlings and any older growth still surviving previous treatment there. Pedro said the most effective control is stump treatment with Roundup and Escort. Because the seeds are dispersed mainly by birds eating the ripe berries, it would be desirable in future seasons to undertake the spray program before berries develop. The need to scope and then tackle the massive infestation on Griffins Ridge and across the steep terrain of the upper Mawson Catchment was accepted. In order to facilitate this, Pedro and Craig are to sort out installing a water supply on a site above Griffins Ridge. In mid June, Barbara is getting the Global Volunteers Network to assess the extent of the infestation above the Rewarewa Track.

*Exotic tree control:* The GWRC control program for our reserve includes hawthorn, holly and the 3 acacia (wattle) species, but at this juncture the program does not extend to pines in native bush reserves. The GWRC contractor is to go over the same areas (Mawson Ridge & nearby catchments) that were felled or otherwise dealt to last year. This is scheduled to be completed by the end of June. No felling of Prickly Moses on private land adjacent to the reserve is planned for this year, but could be tackled in 2010. It was noted that, for public safety reasons, dead or other potentially unstable trees within two tree heights of a walking track are required to be felled to avoid the creation of a future hazard. Because of this requirement, Craig stressed that HCC is totally opposed to volunteers ringbarking mature pines in our reserve. No matter how well-intentioned ringbarking a large wilding pine may be, the consequent need for HCC to then unexpectedly fund the felling of the dead tree diverts money from and thus delays completion of more desirable projects budgeted to be undertaken in reserves.

*HCC Tracks Review:* Kelly reported that 3 proposed new tracks may impact on our reserve:

- Te Whiti Riser – a long, gradual climbing track, mostly to the north of the reserve.
- A link from Te Whiti firebreak to the Ngapunga/Konini Saddle Track, following an easy contour round.

- Should land become available, a link from Griffins factory around to the Hayward Track above Mawson St.

HCC will now consider tracks across private land if negotiated with owners. HCC has adopted Standards NZ guidelines for track construction (SNZ HB 8630:2004). HCC will not promote tracks that are not in a regular maintenance agreement.

*Track maintenance:* Craig noted that parts of the Hayward Track need upgrading, especially the steep, narrow zigzag section ascending up to Mawson Ridge from the Tyndall catchment. Another problem area urgently in need of surface improvement is the upper section of the Konini Saddle Track. Here, on descent, unsuspecting visitors frequently lose their footing because fallen leaves under the Mahoe canopy hide slippery exposed tree roots.

**Native Birdlife:** Native falcons (*Karearea*) continue to be sighted from time to time by residents whose property includes native bush or borders the reserve area. The prospect of preying upon Brian Shearer's homing pigeons is probably one factor attracting them to Mawson St. One benefit arising from this has been their total cleaning out of a group of starlings that had set up home in the roof structure of Brian's next-door neighbour in No. 41!! For those of you who don't subscribe to "Forest & Bird" magazine, I recommend that you borrow a copy of the May 2009 edition (issue No. 332) which includes a section giving interesting, well illustrated information about this very special rare bird that we are privileged to have in our reserve. It is unique to New Zealand, numbering only about 5,000 in total. Not only does it have formidable eyesight for spotting likely prey, but also it is one of the world's fastest birds, capable of reaching speeds of over 200 kph, and can bring down prey 6 times its own weight. It certainly deserves our full respect.

**Animal Pest Control:** The intensive possum control in the Reserve and adjoining slopes undertaken by GWRC contractors in 2007 has been a huge success. Not until February this year did any of my neighbours report hearing any sound of possums at night in the Mawson catchment area, or find any fresh possum poo on their property. The sole report I have received was from Andrew Crane who on only one night did hear what he thought was a possum close to his place at No 34. Since then, I have set 4 traps in the area without success - my only possum-trap catches to date have been 1 hedgehog and 1 rat. Rats however are currently back in numbers as unwanted predators. After a few lean months earlier this year, they are now being regularly caught in rat-trap-tunnels up in the bush, and once again poison rat-bait-tunnels, also up there, generally need full replenishment at each visit.

While 1080 poison (sodium monofluoroacetate) has never been used as an animal pest control tool close to urban areas, some of you will have noted the controversial debate that has raged in the media between conservationists in favour of its on-going use and opponents led mainly by the deer hunting fraternity. The May-June 2009 edition of the "New Zealand Geographic" magazine (Issue No. 97) contains a well balanced main-feature article titled "1080" researched and written by Dave Hansford. His article includes 3 information panels headed "Beyond 1080". The first provides information on prospective replacement poisons, namely P-aminopropiophenone (PAPP) and diphacinone. PAPP is the first new candidate vertebrate pesticide for more than 30 years. Expected to be the platform for a new suite of tailor-made toxins, each specifically formulated to tackle a specific pest, PAPP kills humanely, selectively, without secondary poisoning. Sadly, it doesn't work well on rats. In our reserve we currently target rats with brodifacoum, a highly toxic anticoagulant that takes days to work and has been shown to persist in the food chain. Diphacinone, currently being used in the United States for aerial rodent-control operations, could well become a better option. The second information panel ("Scrambling the egg") deals with research into biological control of possums. But of much greater pertinence to volunteers in our reserve is the third panel which comments on trap developments, particularly the self-resetting "Goodnature" stoat and rat trap developed by a trio of young Wellington industrial designers. Since reading about it in "New Zealand Geographic" I have been told that the prototype is currently with a toolmaker and that manufacture will begin in June/July.

Russ McStay  
3 June 2009