



August Update, 2009

Vol. 2, Issue 3

Ministry for the Environment Funding for Oakley Creek

Friends of Oakley Creek is extremely fortunate to be one of thirty-one recipients from across New Zealand which have been approved funding for the 2009-2010 year from the Ministry for the Environment's Sustainable Management Fund.

The funding objectives include:

- * progressing the development and restoration of Oakley Creek as a sustainable waterway feature in the urban fabric of Auckland City;
- * identifying and prioritising opportunities, on-site planning, management and implementation in partnership with the community and key stakeholders.

- * further working towards having Oakley Creek established as a place of major ecological, social and cultural value.

The Ministry funds projects that aim to improve and raise the awareness of the environment in areas of climate change, land and water management and household sustainability.



*Wairaka Waterfall - where the Wairaka Stream comes from the Wairaka Spring in Unitec through the Mason Clinic into the Oakley Creek Walkway Reserve.
Photo: W. John.*

SH20 Motorway Waterview Connection Proposal

Much effort is going into working alongside the 'Tunnel or Nothing' coalition in lobbying our local representatives, with presentations made to the Eden/Albert and Avondale Community Boards, to the ACC Transport Committee and Auckland Regional Council over the past few months. The final presentation, involved speaking to our submission at the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) Board Meeting at the end of August. The Board has reserved its decision to enable it to fully consider the submissions and presentations but is due to make an announcement soon. The future of our green corridor is in their hands!

Annual General Meeting

The Friends of Oakley Creek Annual General Meeting was held on Monday 15th June at Oakridge House, Unitec. Reports received were the annual report by Wendy John, an update on the 'monitoring and pest control' programme by Alicia Warren, and on the proposed motorway extension by Ross Ihaka and Norma de Langen.

Officers elected for the coming year are Wendy John - Chairperson, Norma de Langen - Secretary and Alicia Warren - Treasurer. The committee members are Ross Ihaka, Adrienne Stanton

(Newsletter Editor) and new this year, Heather Docherty and Richard Nightingale.

The meeting concluded with an excellent and timely presentation by Norma de Langen - *A community-driven vision for Hendon Park**, an alternative to a motorway and residential development.

* Hendon Park is in the alignment for the above-ground section of the proposed motorway, along with Alan Wood Reserve.

Dates for your Diary:

Oakley Creek Monitoring & Pest Control Programme:

Please check our website www.oakleycreek.org.nz for these dates.

Conservation Week 13th-20th September, 2009

Conservation Week is another opportunity to participate in improving your environment - either with a local community organisation or undertaking an activity with your friends/family. Check www.conservationweek.org.nz for some suggestions.

Or, join us on our 'guided walk' - below:

Auckland Heritage Festival Guided Walk

Sunday 20th September, 2009 - 1.00-4.00pm

Meet at the Phyllis Reserve car park, end of Springleigh Ave, Mt Albert (off Woodward Rd).

There's more to do than 'meets the eye'

We have been involved in putting forward a number of submissions, in addition to the one on the proposed motorway. We have joined forces with our neighbouring local stream care group - STEPS* to submit our view on the 'National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management' and on the

continued quarrying and 'clean-filling' of the 'Three Kings Quarry', which feeds into both the Oakley and Meola aquifers.

(* STEPS is the St Lukes Environmental Protection Society, which looks after the upper Meola Creek and Roy Clements Walkway Reserve.)

Oakley Creek - a 'significant archaeological area'

Due to the archaeological and historical significance of some parts of the Oakley Creek Walkway Reserve area, the Historic Places Trust has requested that Auckland City Council apply for an 'authority to modify' before any more plantings take place. This could take some time - so to keep the momentum up, and to provide ongoing

opportunities for the community to be involved in improving their local environment and the restoration of Oakley Creek, we moved 'upstream' a little with the last of our plantings for the season - to Alan Wood Reserve. These plantings have taken place in areas of the reserve that are well away from the proposed motorway corridor.

Planting Season Comes to an End



Plantings - Before (2008) and after (2009) - MU6 Above the Waterfall.



2009 has seen another successful and rewarding year of planting for Friends of Oakley Creek, with a total of approximately 4200 plants going into the ground, and over 250 volunteers participating in the plantings. These included members of the local - and wider community, the Sustainable Business Network's Green Fleet Programme, the Buchanan Rehabilitation Centre 'garden group', students from the Auckland International College, school students undertaking their 'community hours', Scout groups, Mt Roskill Intermediate students, Te Ngahere, and Mason Clinic 'Tane Whakapiripiri' Unit clients.

A special thanks to all of those who took part - and to David Bowden, Auckland City Parks Volunteer Co-ordinator for all of his wonderful support.



Waikowhai Scouts help out.

Bryan Parris and son Jonathon -the end of a hard morning's work.



'Kai time' for the hard workers - Mark McLean, Alan Kent and David Bowden.

Photos: W. John.

Monitoring and Pest Control Update

Annual Bird Survey

With the support of a number of volunteers we participated in the Landcare Research 'annual bird survey' - monitoring at 11 sites, as per last year. Bird numbers appeared to be down slightly. This may have had something to do with the weather -

with some birds, such as pheasants and grey warblers that we know live along the creek, deciding to 'stay in bed'. A total of 264 birds were spotted during the 'hour of observation'.

Rodent Control



Unitec Biodiversity students, Lynne Langiono-Lahina & John Dwyer, putting baited rodent stations in place. Photo: W. John.

In July, Friends of Oakley Creek started making a difference to the large number of pests we have detected in our first year of monitoring. Rodents

are the first pest to be tackled. Volunteers put out Protecta Sidekick bait stations and secured them to trees. These bait stations require a key to open them to prevent access by children and pets. The baits (Ditrac blocks containing the anticoagulant diphacinone) are secured in the bait station by a rod through a central hole, to prevent rats from removing them. This bait has to be eaten by a rat several times within a week to be effective, so it is important that we keep the bait stations filled. The baits have been disappearing rapidly from most of the bait stations so we expect we are making a big difference to the rodent numbers. The proof will be in the next tracking tunnel monitoring and the number of birds in the spring.

We would love to hear from anybody who would like to help with any monitoring and pest control work.

Oakley Creek Fun Fitness Challenge!

With spring around the corner, it's time for some exercise out in the fresh air, down by the stream. You can do this challenge over as much of the walkway as suits you and you can start and finish from any of the entrances - and you can do it alone, or with family and friends.

Here are the rules:

- Make your way along the path by *Scout's Pace*, that is, alternately run 20 paces then walk briskly for 20 paces, then run another 20, and walk 20 ...
- See a duck - do 5 knee bends (yes, 5 for each and every duck).
- At the waterfall - as the water plunges, do 8 lunges.
- Spot a white-faced heron - touch your toes 5 times.
- See some rapids - run rapidly on the spot while counting to 100.
- Find a karaka tree (big shiny leaves) - do 5 star jumps.
- At each bridge, stamp across with knees lifted high (look out for taniwha and trolls!).
- Spot a duck in a karaka tree - take a 5 minute rest and enjoy the spectacle!



Please take care as you go and be considerate of other people on the walkway - obviously we can take no responsibility for any injury or for too many ducks...

Mt Albert St Judes Scout Group says "Thanks"

The Mt Albert St Judes Scout Committee says that words cannot express the gratitude that the group feels towards the people who have helped transform 'their' section of Oakley Creek: Wendy John and Friends of Oakley Creek, Melissa Marler and Wai Care, Auckland Regional Council, Oratia Native Plant Nursery, Metrowater and the Roskill Rovers. Fifty volunteers, including venturers, scouts, cubs, keas and their families, turned out in force in July to plant the stream bank next to the Scout den.



Chairperson Eileen Witt reports that the process started more than a year ago. "We got a letter from the Council saying there was a lot of rubbish in the creek, and perhaps some of it had originated from our group. It was a very polite letter, but it made us feel really bad. We often go on trips to the Waitakeres to learn about caring for the environment, but here at our den, there was this huge wall of weeds. You wouldn't have even known there was a creek down there."



Photos: A. Stanton.

Now, three working bees later, the whole area is planted with native trees and grasses. Four trailer loads of rubbish have gone to the tip, and a mountain of green waste has been mulched or composted.

"The council was certainly right that there was rubbish there, although who knows where some of it came from. We found a tricycle, and loads of empty quart beer bottles. We even found a wood burning stove which could easily date from before our group bought this property in 1956."

1st Mt Albert St Judes Scouts runs Keas, Cubs, Scouts and Venturer groups and welcomes boys and girls from 6-18 years. To join the adventure contact Eileen on ph 629 5091.

Weed Watch

This section of the newsletter features details about weeds that threaten Oakley Creek. You can help by tackling these at the stream and in your garden, if present. In this issue:

Conium maculatum, Apiaceae – Hemlock **Poisonous.**



Hemlock is reputed to be the plant responsible for the death of Socrates and the whole of the plant is poisonous, even when it is dead and dry. The toxic volatile alkaloids cause birth defects, blindness, gradual muscle weakening, paralysis and death.

Originating from Europe, hemlock has spread widely, including throughout New Zealand.

With finely divided leaves, this biennial herb resembles wild carrot and it belongs to the same family. Hemlock can be distinguished, however, by the stems which are smooth with reddish purple blotches or streaks - wild carrot stems are green and hairy. Growing up to 3 m tall, hemlock has 50 cm long finely divided leaves and a white fleshy taproot resembling parsnip. If the leaves or root are crushed there is an unpleasant smell. From September to January, hemlock produces small white flowers grouped in an umbrella shaped collection (umbel). The seeds are readily spread by agents such as water, animals and people.

Control: For this weed there is a biocontrol agent available to assist, the hemlock moth *Agonopterix alstromeriana*. The caterpillars eat the leaves and flowers, reducing the plant's ability to set seed. Infested plants have rolled leaves bound into tubes with fine webbing and are well browsed. Wearing gloves, collect hemlock leaves with hundreds of caterpillars to spread to an unaffected area of hemlock. See http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biocons/weeds/book/documents/Hemlock_Moth.pdf for more details. Alternatively, plants can be dug out or sprayed.

Photos: A. Stanton.



A Little Piece of Ireland in Oakley Creek?

This stone can be found by the Plane Tree Bridge on the Unitec side of the creek, just up below the bamboo patch and it forms the subject of this issue's puzzle challenge. Firstly, how many words of three letters or more can you make from the letters B L A R N Y? Solution on p. 10. Scoring: 10 words super, 15 words superb, 19 words supreme!

While you work on that, get creative for the second challenge. Send in your ideas about how this stone and its message came to be on Oakley Creek and we will publish the best ones in the next issue - email to adrienne@stanton.net.nz



Oakley Creek's 'Blarney' stone - there is an 'ey' tucked around the side...
Photo: W. John

The **Blarney Stone** (Irish: *cloch na Blárnan*) is a block of bluestone built into the battlements of Blarney Castle, Blarney about 5 miles (8 km) from Cork, Ireland. According to legend, kissing the stone endows the kisser with *the gift of gab* (great eloquence or skill at flattery). The stone was set into a tower of the castle in 1446. The castle is a popular tourist site in Ireland, attracting visitors from all over the world to kiss the Stone and tour the castle and its gardens.

The word *blarney* has come to mean clever, flattering, or coaxing talk.

Blarney Stone. (2009, August 28). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved August 28, 2009, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blarney_Stone

Out and About - in brief



Photo: W. John.

Shining Karamu, *Coprosma lucida*, is in flower down at the creek, looking wonderful. This young specimen was only planted last year. The *Coprosma* genus is in the coffee family.

Buchanan Rehabilitation Centre garden group has 'painted up a storm' around the stormwater drain in their grounds.



Photo: W. John.

Auckland Botanical Society Field Trip

The plant list from the Botanical Society 'field trip' earlier in the year is almost completed. There have been some interesting finds. Two 'not-so-common' ferns found are the bladder fern, *Cystopteris fragilis* and *Doodia squarrosa*, which is in gradual decline. Oakley Creek is the northern limit for the liverwort, *Zoopsis macrophylla*, while a sample of another liverwort, *Triandrophyllum subtrifidum*, was collected as the first voucher specimen for the Auckland Ecological Region. The moss, *Fissidens berteroi*, was also found, which is very pleasing because it is nationally endangered.

Endangered moss, *Fissidens berteroi*.
Photo: Andrew Townsend.



Puriri Moth caterpillars are now taking up residence in good numbers in the young putaputaweta in the Wairaka Wetland - very exciting! The trees in this area were planted just 4 years ago by the Garden Group from the Buchanan Rehabilitation Centre. The puriri moth (*Aenetus virescens*) or 'ghost moth' is New Zealand's largest (100+ mm wingspan) and most spectacular native moth. Found only in the North Island, it lives as a moth for just one day when it mates and lays its eggs - which are scattered over the forest floor. The young caterpillars live at first in the leaf litter on fungus and rotten wood, then climb a tree (often puriri, *Vitex lucens*, or putaputaweta, *Carpodetus serratus* - or mature tree privet, *Ligustrum lucidum*) and bore into the trunk. They live for up to 7 years in their tree trunk tunnel, feeding on callous tissue that the tree is induced to produce around the wound. The caterpillar protects the tunnel entrance with a tough silken cover.

And, when the caterpillars have magically 'morphed' into beautiful moths and flown away -VOILA - we have ready-made homes for our native weta.



Puriri moth. Photo: Thomas Wilding, Mangakotukutuku Stream Care Group.



Puriri moth caterpillar holes in a putaputaweta tree trunk at Oakley Creek. Photo: W. John.



Before (2007) ...



Mt Roskill Intermediate planting - students hard at work.

...and after (2009).



Planting makes all the difference!

Photos: W.John.



Mason Clinic car park planting by Tane Whakapiripiri Unit, Regional Forensic Psychiatry Services - before and after.



'BLARNEY' Puzzle Solution - from p.7

Words that can be made from the letters B L A R N Y include:

ably, alb, any, ban, bar, barn, bay, bra, bran, bray, lab, larn, lay, nab, nary, nay, ran, ray, yarn.

Next Newsletter

News, articles, contributions and comments for the next newsletter are welcome and can be sent to the editor at adrienne@stanton.net.nz

New Members Welcome, Donations Too!

We would welcome more members (\$10.00) and/or donations towards the work we are doing to protect and restore our wonderful urban 'taonga' - Oakley Creek Te Auaunga.

Contributions can be made directly into our bank account:

Friends of Oakley Creek - Kiwibank - A/c 38-9003-0978224-00

or cheques, made out to 'Friends of Oakley Creek', can be sent to:

4/65 Woodward Road, Mt Albert, Auckland 1025.



Chairperson: Wendy John Treasurer: Alicia Warren Secretary: Norma de Langen
 Committee members: Ross Ihaka, Heather Docherty, Richard Nightingale.
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