



Friends of Oakley Creek

Te Auaunga

June Update, 2010

Vol. 3, Issue 2

It was a dark and stormy night ...

The dry summer and autumn definitely came to an end on the 20th of May when around 100 mm of rain fell in just 24 hours. Then on June 1st even more rain fell, leading to two spectacular flooding events at Oakley Creek. The roar of the waterfall was terrific and the stream banks were well awash, with the walkway footpath being more of a duck bath in some places.



Above: The Plane Tree Bridge during the first rainfall event. The stream flowed over the bridge in the second flood. When a stream reaches the top of its banks this is known as bank full discharge.

Photo: A. Stanton.



The waterfall, short, wide and wild - water full of sediment, eroded from the catchment upstream.

Photos: above, W. John; below, A. Stanton.

Below: This photo series shows how the steep, fast running Wairaka Stream water from Unitec is slowed by the wetland planting - trapping sediment and rubbish.

The lower Wairaka wetland also traps sediment and rubbish from Oakley Creek during flooding and when the tide is in.

Photos: Left and centre, A. Stanton; right, W. John.



The aftermath - The litter trap at the lower end of the creek was choked with debris and rubbish from the storm. As the flood receded, a lot of rubbish was also left behind on the banks, strewn amongst the vegetation. Next time you walk along the creek, please take a rubbish bag to help clean up after winter storms - it would be greatly appreciated.

Photo: W. John.



"Newsflash" - Donations to Friends of Oakley Creek are Tax Deductible

Friends of Oakley Creek is now registered with the Charities Commission so any donations over \$5 may be deducted from your income tax. Donations to the society are used to further our aim to protect and enhance the health of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga and its surrounding open spaces. Achievements to date include extensive planting of native plants, annual clean-ups, and regular monitoring and pest control. 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.

Dates for your diary...

Community Tree Planting

Sunday 1st August - 10.00 am - 12.00 midday. Meet above the waterfall, Unitec side of stream, upstream from Unitec Residence Bridge.

Sunday 4th September - Community planting / plant releasing - details to come.

Pest Monitoring

Saturday 14th August - Possum Monitoring - putting out 'wax tags' - meet at Unitec Carpark - 9.00am

Saturday 21st August - Possum Monitoring - bringing in 'wax tags' - meet at Unitec Residence Carpark - 9.00am

Saturday 11th & Sunday 12th September - Rodent Monitoring with tracking cards - meet at Unitec Carpark - 9.00am

See www.oakleycreek.org for more information.



Dewdrop on kahikatea. Photo: W. John.

Have you read this?

Auckland Botanical Society has now published the results of their visit last year: *Field Trip Report: Oakley Creek Te Auaunga, Waterview Saturday, 16 May 2009* by Kristy Hall, Mike Wilcox and Wendy John. This interesting account, which includes information on the rare plants that were found, can be viewed by following the link from our website www.oakleycreek.org

Did you know ... that as recently as in the mid 1980s to early 1990s, horses used to graze the Oakley Creek stream bank below Great North Rd at Waterview, where the BP station is now? Thanks to Chris Kiwi for sharing this memory.

AGM - New committee and reports

Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga held its AGM on Monday 21st June. Wendy John was re-elected as Chairperson, Alicia Warren as Treasurer and Richard Nightingale was elected as Secretary. Other committee members elected were Heather Docherty, Ross Ihaka, Helen Mellsoy and Adrienne Stanton. Dorothy Maddock and Sarah Ross were co-opted. It was noted that the current constitution no longer meets the requirements of the society, including the prescribed size of the committee (7) being inadequate with growing levels of activity and budget - this will need to be addressed in due course.

The minutes of the meeting, including the Chairperson's report, the financial report and the report on the Monitoring and Pest Control Programme are available on our website www.oakleycreek.org

The meeting was treated to a fascinating and stimulating address entitled: *'Landscape as Therapy: The Importance of Green and Flowing Spaces for Community Wellbeing'*, by Robin Kearns. Professor of Geography, School of Environment University of Auckland. Prof. Kearns spoke of a hierarchy of needs that people have that can be met by having access to green space in cities. He noted the importance of the small neighbourhood parks as being just as important as that of large iconic parks. He observed that people were much more likely to make contact with each other with a nod, greeting or comment in a park than on the street, meeting social needs and providing a sense of belonging and community. Shared guardianship or kaitiakitanga by a community provides people with a sense of belonging and safety at that place, thus enhancing their well being. People also need an element of 'the wild' in their parks. The importance of place in triggering intergenerational memories was described. Prof. Kearns strongly stressed how we must all advocate for children to ensure their needs are met and so safeguard the future.

Monitoring and Pest Control Update

Possum control There is a new possum trapping arrangement on the east side of the creek. Buchanan Rehabilitation team, Andre and Mark, are clearing and resetting the traps on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, local volunteers, John Maskell and Melanie Libeau, are doing them on alternate Saturdays while Ron Lang and Geoff Stevens from Kodesh Christian Community take care of the other Saturdays. Thank you very much! More frequent trap checking and baiting means fewer possums to eat our tasty baby seedlings which have just been planted.

Rodent monitoring and control

(From the *Annual Monitoring and Pest Control Report* by Alicia Warren.)

Rodent control began in July 2009 with 51 bait stations placed on both sides of the creek from Great North Rd, Waterview to just above the waterfall. Monthly bait replenishment has been undertaken by Unitec biodiversity students. The amount of rodent bait which disappears each month is a useful indicator of the changing abundance of rodents. In the first month of control, 90% of the available bait was consumed followed by 68% in the second month. From September to February, between 34% and 52% of the available bait was consumed. This period includes the vital months when birds need protection against egg and chick predation. Bait consumption started to climb again in March to 53%.

Rodent abundance was also monitored using inked and baited tracking tunnels to record footprints in two areas of the creek - with and without pest control - to allow a comparison. The November 2009 monitoring showed that the rodent control had a strong effect on rats in the pest control area. There was an average 6.7% tracking rate over the three sets of tracking tunnels in the pest control area compared to 56.7% in the no-pest-control area. So, we very nearly achieved our aim of a 5% tracking rate during the bird breeding season for 2009.

Signs of improvement!

What's this we see popping up all over? Signs for our times - and to show the entrances to the Oakley Creek Walkway at Great North Rd, Cradock St, Harbutt Reserve, Phyllis Reserve and the Unitec Residence. The signs acknowledge the Auckland City Council's partnership with Friends of Oakley Creek - using our signature (sign/nature!). The signs were funded by the Avondale and Eden/Albert Community Boards - a project proposed by Friends of Oakley Creek.



Rodent monitoring team - John, Tom and Rowena - taking a well earned break in the "bush hut".
Photo: W. John

Mouse control is more difficult than rat control - when the rats are away the mice will play! Mice numbers were low in November 2008 and high in April 2009 in the pest control area before any control started. The same pattern occurred the following year after rodent control had commenced. The mice numbers in the no-pest-control area were actually lower than in the pest control area in 2009-10, unlike the previous year. This may well be because the rats in this uncontrolled area kept mouse numbers down.

Additional bait stations have been purchased for deployment this winter which will hopefully improve the control of rats and mice in the coming spring. Thanks to all the volunteers involved - this couldn't be done without you.



Monarch butterflies on manuka and steely blue ladybirds 'sunning themselves' on a winter's day at Oakley Creek.
Photos: top, H. Docherty; bottom, W. John.

Guarding our stream - submissions to the planning process

SH20 Extension

Progress with SH20 moves on at a pace. NZTA now plan to lodge for consent with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) in August / September. Friends of Oakley Creek have been researching and planning a group submission, in preparation for when NZTA lodge their application. The government has also recently opened up the tendering process - somewhat premature and pre-empting the EPA process.

Once the EPA have accepted the application, they will then call for submissions. There will be only 20 working days after public notification for people to get their submissions in - so be ready. For more information, go to <http://www.epa.govt.nz/>

We arranged a meeting with representatives of Auckland City Council to start to get a sense of how the Council intends to manage the impact of this project on Oakley Creek and surrounding public land.

Our concerns centre on maintaining connectivity along the entire length of Oakley Creek, to enable it to function and realise its full potential as an ecological corridor, while ensuring public access for passive recreation and a place to 'escape' from the hustle and bustle of urban life. Oakley Creek and its environs are a wonderful, natural, cultural and historical resource - and a 'hidden gem' in the centre of Auckland that deserves protection for the enjoyment of generations to come.

We also attended the two recent ACC public consultation events, to ensure Oakley Creek was well represented.

SH20 Maioro Road Interchange

It has recently been brought to our attention that, with the construction of the next section of SH20 - between Sandringham Rd and Maioro Rd, 372 metres of the Oakley Creek tributary behind Stoddard Road will be culverted. Friends of Oakley Creek see this as a tragic loss of natural, open waterway, but are unable to stop it from happening. We will be working hard to ensure the best mitigation possible occurs to compensate for this loss.

Oakley Creek Puzzles

Who is this character down by the stream?



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Oakley Creek Te Auaunga, Our Place!

Solve this Sudoku by placing all the letters and exclamation mark found in the phrase 'our place!' into each line down and across and in each 9 x 9 coloured square.

Check your results at the end of the newsletter.

Sadly, pollution still happens



Photo: W. John.

In order to reduce flooding, contractors recently cleared a blockage and removed a culvert - but it was done without appropriate silt management! This resulted in a major silt pollution incident in the Wairaka Stream (an Oakley Creek tributary) in Unitec. The Wairaka Stream, which is fed from a 'sacred' spring - Te Wai Unuroa o Wairaka - would, under normal circumstances, be the cleanest freshwater stream in Auckland City.

This is no way to treat a pristine stream!

Magic at Oakley Creek?



Pink coral fungi found by CVNZ volunteers.
Photo: Tim Steven.

Kodesh Christian Community and A Rocha make a difference ...



A wonderful effort by the Kodesh Christian Community & A Rocha Auckland, in Harbutt Reserve near the Cradock Street Bridge, has resulted in another area along Oakley Creek being replanted with natives. During one of the working bees, an exciting find by two young 'conservationists' was a native copper skink, *Cyclodina aenea* - thanks to Melinda Rixon, Te Ngahere, for confirming this identification.



The area was planted with a selection of shade loving plants, including a number of native ferns, all sponsored by Metrowater and Wai Care.

Recently, members of the Kodesh Community have also become a local Wai Care team, carrying out regular water monitoring in Oakley Creek adjacent to the newly planted site.



'Before' and 'after' - the site was 99% weeds, including a lot of Tradescantia.
Photos: W.John.



Taryn Pierce from Wai Care shows Geoff Stevens, Kodesh Christian Community / A Rocha all about water quality monitoring on Oakley Creek.



Christopher and Benjamin Drury with the native copper skink which Ben found.

Weed Watch

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

***Setaria palmifolia*, Poaceae - palm grass, bristlegrass**

Palm grass is a problem weed at Oakley Creek and nationally because it occurs as dense clumps over potentially large areas, excluding native species from establishing. It is on the noxious weeds list and is banned from sale at garden centres.



A native of India, palm grass is named because the large (up to 50 cm long), distinctively pleated, elliptical leaves resemble palm leaves with their parallel veins. The alternative name, bristlegrass, derives from the bristle form of the inflorescence or flower head. This perennial grass can grow 2 m tall and prefers wet soils, but can survive in dry shade as well. The seeds are spread by wind and birds.

Control: Small clumps can be dug out, but protective clothing should be worn to guard against the prickly, irritating hairs which grow on the sheaths. The roots are very strong so extraction is difficult. Any remaining rhizomes will resprout quickly and vigorously so regular checking is required. In addition, there will be re-infestation from the seedbank for some time. Plant material should be disposed of at a refuse transfer station or burnt. During active growth, herbicide spray can be used or stem injections applied every 15 cm.



*Beware of the hairs which can irritate; and keep checking weeded areas for regrowth.
Photos: A. Stanton.*

Planting Season 2010

Checking out the archaeology ...



Archaeologist, Brent Druskovich, checking our planting sites for any archaeological evidence..

At the start of the season, each planting site has needed to be approved for an 'Authority to Modify' under the Historic Places Act. Brent Druskovich, consultant archaeologist checked for evidence of archaeological significance. Finding old shells, bone or charcoal could indicate the location of an old Maori midden. In his guidelines for planters, *Archaeological Recognition*, Brent Druskovich notes that: "A number of midden have been found adjacent to Te Auaunga and it is likely that people were both living adjacent to the creek as well as bringing seafood resources for processing, before taking the meat back to the pa (most likely on Owairaka, Mt Albert). So far over twenty midden have been identified around the creek environs and this is the type of site most likely to be encountered during planting." Other artifacts to look out for include pre-1900 glass or crockery. More details are made available at Oakley Creek planting events. Planters are advised that if they find or suspect archaeological evidence whilst digging they should stop immediately and either approach the archaeologist, should one be on site, or the organisers to assess further.



David Bowden, Auckland City Council, delivers some seedlings to be laid out for planting.



Community Plantings - over 1000 native seedlings planted!



Left: David George and his daughter Anneka make a difference.



Above: Melanie and Doff, hard at work.



Eric found the mud ...

Mt Roskill Intermediate - 500 plants: ready, steady, grow!

Planting with the Mt Roskill Intermediate students, on a small tributary (some would call it a 'drain') of Oakley Creek in Keith Hay Park, where it borders with the Akarana Golf Club.



This was a wonderful event as most of the plants had been grown by the school.

Photos, above and left: W. John.

The Akarana Golf Club sponsored some specimen kowhai trees for the students to plant on the Golf Club side of the stream.

Photo: Jewel Byles.

Conservation New Zealand - plant 220 more ...

But first clear the planting site!



A fallen willow is removed from across the creek by crane - by Phil & Aaron Cookson and team. Alldrains, who were contractors to Metrowater. We would like to thank Alldrains for all their great work at Oakley Creek.



Wayne and Michelle..



CVNZ - planted the site with plants which were sponsored by Wai Care and Metrowater.

Te Ngahere - add another 385 plants



Left: Lucky and team, from Te Ngahere, native forest management contractors - planting the steep slope under the pine trees by the Plane Tree Bridge. A special thank you to them for providing the plants and their time for this job.

Photos: W. John.

What a fantastic effort from everyone - and the planting season isn't over yet!

Trolley trawling

At the Community Working bee in May, volunteers from St Peter's College found yet another old shopping trolley buried in the mud - the extraction was a major achievement!

Photos: W. John.



Oakley Creek, film set



Julian Pellizzaro filming *Spiders*, a community project as part of his Master of Theatre Arts in Directing from Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School and Victoria University of Wellington. Photo: W. John.

Helicopter Heavy lifting

June 16th was a very noisy day for the residents of Phyllis St. A helicopter was being used to airlift a drilling rig over the fence from Metro into the Oakley Creek walkway, to carry out more seismic work for the SH20 project.



Puzzle Solutions

Our 'character', spotted near the Wairaka wetland, is a specimen of *Gymnopilus junonius*, commonly known as 'laughing jim' - rather appropriate in this case. It is commonly found on pine and eucalyptus stumps as well as on kamahi, *Weinmannia racemosa*. While it causes butt rot in its hosts, this is not considered to be significant economically. Specimens have been recorded from Auckland south to mid-Canterbury. (From Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research, <http://nzfungi.landcareresearch.co.nz>)

Oakley Creek Te Auaunga, Our place!

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L	U	P	C	O	R	E	!	A
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Next Newsletter

News, articles, contributions and comments for the next newsletter are welcome and can be sent to info@oakleycreek.org.nz

We acknowledge the support of the Ministry for the Environment Sustainable Management Fund for 2009-2010.



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: Richard Nightingale
Committee: Heather Docherty, Ross Ihaka, Dorothy Maddock, Helen Mellsop, Sarah Ross.

Newsletter Editor: Adrienne Stanton

Ph. 09 - 815 - 3101

info@oakleycreek.org.nz

www.oakleycreek.org.nz