



Friends of Oakley Creek

Te Auaunga

September Update, 2010

Vol. 3, Issue 3

Time to engage your brain ... your local government vote and SH20 submission are needed!

Supercity elections - take up the challenge to consider the environment when you vote. Think sustainability, improved stormwater treatment and ecological corridors networked across the city. WWF - New Zealand (World Wildlife Fund for Nature) has analysed the leading mayoral candidates' policies at http://www.wwf.org.nz/take_action/auckland_mayor/ and Len Brown appears to be the most environmentally conscious. Please examine the policies of your local council and community board candidates in a similar way. After the elections it will also be important to remind the new representatives of the importance of our environment and the need for sustainability as council priorities are determined.

SH20 Submissions are due before 5.00 pm, 15 October

- Go to <http://www.waterviewapplication.nzta.govt.nz/>
The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) has now lodged applications with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) for the proposed Waterview Connection Proposal. Submissions need to be related to specific resource consents or notices of requirement to be considered. A full paper copy of the application is available at the Auckland Central Library and the Assessment of Environmental Effects is available at the Pt Chevalier, Avondale and Mt Albert branches.

Some of the main concerns for Friends of Oakley Creek include:

- the impacts on the creek during the construction period
- the loss of green space during construction and permanently
- the loss of permeable surface
- and the ensuing loss of valuable stormwater storage.

Further details and help for writing submissions will be available on our website, www.oakleycreek.org.nz soon.

The 'Tunnel or Nothing' group will soon be covering wider issues as well on their website, www.tunnelornothing.co.nz



An Oakley Creek tributary is being put into a 372 m long culvert at the Maoro Rd Interchange on SH20 behind the Stoddard Rd shops - and there's much more of this type of work to come (see left). There were 145 short fin eels captured from here and released downstream into Oakley Creek at Alan Wood Reserve. Was there any research to determine the impact of this translocation? What other fauna and flora was left behind or destroyed? The high sediment load which can be seen in the photo was attributed by NZTA contractors to other housing developments upstream.

Photo: W. John.

Last Oakley Creek headwater wetland to be destroyed for Monte Cecilia?



The controversial Council proposal to move Monte Cecilia School to allow for the extension of Monte Cecilia Park, Hillsborough, will cost more than just money (an estimated \$25 - 30 million). While increasing the area of publicly owned park land is generally beneficial, the new site chosen for the school at St John / Vianney is unacceptable. The last remaining swamp /wetland in the Oakley Creek upper catchment and a reach of open waterway will be destroyed with 13,000 tonnes of soil being brought to the site to level it out, together with other earthworks. Wetlands store water during heavy rain and slowly release it into the catchment, whilst at the same time filtering pollutants and sediment from the surrounding land. If a new school is built on this site it will mean we will lose yet another crucial part of our catchment, with subsequent detrimental effects downstream, including increased flooding and erosion.

This land has the potential for restoration to an even better state as a functional wetland ecosystem.

Photos: W. John.

And now good news, WWF has approved our funding application



WWF-New Zealand (World Wildlife Fund for Nature) has funding available to support community conservation groups and this year Friends

of Oakley Creek is lucky enough to be one of those groups. This partnership will enable more work towards our goal to restore a natural ecosystem to Oakley Creek Te Auaunga and its environs, guided by our management plan.

Dates for your diary ...

Hedgehog and Mustelid Monitoring

Sunday 10th and Wednesday 13th October, 2010 - 9.00 am

Oakley Creek Walkway Reserve. Assemble at the Unitec Residence carpark, near the path leading down to the walkway. Access from Great North Road, Waterview (opp Alverston St) or through Unitec Mt Albert Campus (via Gate 4). Wear sturdy footwear and bring a waterbottle.

Plant Releasing

Sunday 5th November, 2010 - 10.00 am until noon

Oakley Creek Walkway, east of the Unitec Residence Bridge - along the path leading up to the Unitec Campus.

See www.oakleycreek.org.nz for more information.

Monitoring and Pest Control Update

Bird Surveys



On June 12th, Environmental Studies students from Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiarangi undertook a bird survey on Oakley Creek Te Auaunga as part of their fieldwork. They came, they saw, they learnt and they enjoyed!

Photos: W. John.

Have you seen this? <http://www.janetemarshall.co.nz/kids/>
Children may enjoy this website which features information, stories, art and useful links - all about New Zealand birds.

Later on in June, our Annual Bird Survey was undertaken as part of the Landcare Research Annual Garden Bird Survey. (You can see the national results at <http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biocons/gardenbird/>.)

Volunteers watched for an hour from ten sites along the creek, covering 2.5 kilometres, half in each of the pest control and no-pest control areas. The rain just held off but the weather kept many of the birds tucked away in their nests.

Try the Oakley Creek Bird Match Challenge and find out more about the results of the survey.



Oakley Creek Bird Monitoring 2010

An Oakley Creek Mystery

By Dorothy Maddock

About forty metres upstream of Plane Tree Bridge, on the east stream bank, are four wooden bollards (probably totara), almost lost in the long grass. Erosion, since they were first put there, reveals that they were dug in fairly deeply, as though they were intended to withstand the downstream pull of some sort of load.



A few metres further upstream are the remains of a bridge, which we know was for stock, from the nearby farm of the mental asylum, to cross to pastures on the west bank. There is the vague possibility that the bollards were part of some sort of holding pen for the cattle, but, given their height, it seems rather unlikely - and possibly there would have been some other signs of post and rail fencing.

John Thomas, who ran the Star Mill, in the early 1860s, down near the mouth of Oakley Creek, also had an interest in brickmaking as an income in the off season. He had a contract to supply bricks for the new mental asylum, but this ran into trouble when his staff left to fight in the Waikato wars and we do not know where the brickmaking took place.

John Thomas had a dam to supply water to drive his water wheel, downstream near the present culvert under Great North Road and so he was able to back the water up the creek. Were the bollards a part of his operations? Were they a part of an even earlier attempt by Edwin Oakley to get a flax mill going? We simply don't know. One day, someone may come up with some evidence to solve this mystery. If you have any clues we would welcome hearing from you.

Photos: D. Maddock



The creek abides



It's Kennedy Warne's 'latest - and longest project' - of capturing the many moods of Oakley Creek, from the shortest to the longest day of the year. Follow his journey by adding <http://thecreekabides.co.nz/> to your favourite websites. For those of you who don't know Kennedy, he was co-founder of the NZ Geographic Magazine - and he is a member of Friends of Oakley Creek! *Photos: K. Warne*



Also, you might like to listen to 'Off the Beaten Track with Kennedy Warne', a regular programme on Nine to Noon, Radio New Zealand, alternate Mondays at 11.45am. Of particular note, on 20 September, Kennedy featured Oakley Creek! Thanks Kennedy, it was very exciting to hear about our special place broadcast nationally. Download his interview from http://podcast.radionz.co.nz/ntn/ntn-20100920-1149-Off_the_Beaten_Track_with_Kennedy_Warne-048.mp3

Cuckoos herald spring!



The shining cuckoos have arrived back at Oakley Creek from their winter sojourn in the tropics. Birds can be very difficult to photograph - they keep flying away! Can you do even better than this? Send your best efforts to us at

info@oakleycreek.org.nz and we will publish them in the next newsletter.

Photos: W. John



What on earth?

Pictured above is a ponga koru but what is on the right? Find the solution at the end of the newsletter.



Where do our plants come from?

After such a busy planting season at Oakley Creek, you might be wondering who provides all the young plants. Auckland City Council provides the majority of the plants for our monthly Sunday community plantings, but students from Mt Roskill Intermediate School and Buchanan Rehabilitation Centre clients also grow a considerable number. Here are their inspiring stories of fantastic teamwork and effort.

Revegetation of the upper Oakley Stream programme by Sean Carroll, Science Teacher, Mt Roskill Intermediate.

For three years now, students of Mt Roskill Intermediate School have been active in planting native plant species along the stream that bounds the school and Keith Hay Park. We are recreating a green corridor along the stream's boundaries in order to improve the water quality of the stream and promote the return of native insect, bird and aquatic species.

The students planted 1,000 plants over three days in July and August this year. The plants were grown from seed in our horticultural unit, and during the last three years, over 2,000 have been planted. The species grown and planted include flax (harakeke and wharariki), karaka, ti kouka (cabbage tree), porokaiwhiri (pigeonwood) and taraire, as well as various native grasses. Seeds have been collected from Waikowhai Bay and the Waitakere Ranges.

This year's efforts reflect an increased access to plants due to our successful growing programme. Our nursery was built by the Onehunga High School Building Skills students and consists of a shadehouse, greenhouse, equipment shed, potting bench and concreted paths and hardening-off areas. Typically, 20 students work together germinating seeds, putting seedlings into root-trainers and potting up of seedlings into growing bags. This class is held on Friday afternoons and depends on the enthusiasm of our year 7 students. *Photos: S. Carroll*



They very much enjoy the relaxed, hands-on work, which is often their first experience of working with plants. The students are proud to be improving their local environment. We are grateful to David Bowden of Auckland City and Wendy John of Friends of Oakley Creek, in particular, for their great support of the programme.

Buchanan Rehabilitation Centre and the Waiaraka Wetland project by Karen Mann.



Over the last year or so Buchanan Rehabilitation Centre has been involved in increasing the production of native plants for the use on Oakley Creek. The seed collecting and seed sowing has been carried out by the gardening group at Buchanan. Seedlings have been raised in our hothouse at BRC and when big enough have been transferred to the Unitec nursery for growing on.

A couple of clients have been working consistently each week in the nursery at Unitec, pricking out and bagging up seedlings; weeding the nursery and stock taking. This work has been funded by WINZ as part of the Task Force Green Project.

The clients involved in this project have gained a sense of responsibility and guardianship of the nursery and have learnt valuable skills in regards to eco-sourcing and the importance of this, along with the knowledge and firsthand experience that the Waiaraka Wetland is now providing us with seed for future plant generations.

We are also planting on Oakley Creek on an ongoing basis with the plants that had been sown and grown on by us.

What a rewarding experience for all involved!



Gladstone Primary School in Mt Albert carried on previous years' good work this month, at nearby Oakley Creek. The school's senior classes teamed up with Auckland City Wai Care and Friends of Oakley Creek to undertake a morning of riparian planting along the creek and became 'Stream Scientists' monitoring water quality and sampling for invertebrates just downstream of the waterfall.



An interesting find of the day was a spotty stonefly nymph. This was a first for Auckland City Wai Care Coordinators Taryn Pearce and Justine Coup at Oakley Creek. Stoneflies are generally found in high quality streams since they prefer cooler water temperatures. It just goes to show the value of all that riparian planting along the creek!

Riparian planting not only helps to stabilise stream banks, prevent erosion and help reduce sediment runoff into streams. Planting beside streams also helps to provide shade and lower water temperature which encourages some of those more temperature sensitive bugs. *Photos: above, T. Pearce; below W. John.*



The flowers that bloom in the spring tra la ... are, from top left, kowhai, karo, mingimingi, manuka and from bottom left, whau, flax, (*Phormium cookianum*) and the native iris (*Libertia*).



Three Kings to Oakley Creek Te Auaunga to Adelaide - *Solanum aviculare* var *latifolium*



Adelaide Botanic Gardens scientist, David Symon, is working on the odours and flavours of *Archaesolanum* fruit and has requested seed of the Three Kings *Solanum aviculare* var *latifolium* from the Department of Conservation. This seed has been collected from specimens growing at Oakley Creek - it is not known how this variety came to be growing here!

A 'forest' of the close relative, poroporo, *Solanum laciniatum*, is also springing up along the creek (far right), colonising where willows have been poisoned, are dying off and letting the light in - natural processes at work.

Poroporo flower.



Photos: above left, M. Wilcox; others, W. John.



Oakley Creek Bird Match Challenge

The following native birds were recorded at Oakley Creek during the 2010 Annual Bird Survey - black backed gull, black shag fantail, grey warbler, kereru, kingfisher, paradise shelduck, pukeko, red billed gull, silvereye / waxeye, spur wing plover, tui and white faced heron. Can you match these birds to the tabulated data? Note the amazing difference between birds 11 and 13! No wonder the status of bird 13 is 'threatened'. The solution to this challenge can be found on the last page.

Bird	Length (cm)	Weight (g)	Lifespan (yrs)	Breeding period	No. of Clutches	Clutch size (no. of eggs)	Incubation (days)	Fledging (days)
1	12	13	12 ok*	Sept-Feb	2-3	2-5	11	10
2	30	90 f* 120 m	12 ok	Sept-Jan		3-4		
3	88	2200				3-4		
4	67	550		Jun-Oct		2+	26	
5	63	1400 f 1700 m	2.3 av* 23 ok	Aug-Dec		5-15	30-35	56
6	10	6.5	5+	Aug-Jan	2	2-5	17-21	15-19
7	24	65		Oct-Jan		4-5	18	24
8	51	1050	3-6 9 ok	Aug-Mar		4-6	23-27	
9	38	350 f 370 m		Jul-Dec		4	28	
10	60	850 f 1050 m	14 av 20+ ok	Oct-Jan		2-3	23-30	50
11	16	8	<3	Aug-Feb	Up to 5	2-5	14	13
12	37	250 f 300 m	9 f 6 m 28 ok	Oct - Dec		2+	24-27	37
13	51	650	10?	Sept-Feb		1	30	30-45

Table of size, age and breeding characteristics (where known) of native birds recorded at Oakley Creek, June, 2010.

* f - female
m - male
ok - oldest known
av - average

References:

<http://www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz/birds.htm>, <http://nzbirds.com>

The introduced birds recorded in this year's survey were: blackbird, chaffinch, goldfinch, house sparrow, magpie, myna, rock pigeon, rosella, song thrush, starling, yellowhammer, mallard/grey duck cross, and spotted dove.

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:

Paraserianthes lophantha, Fabaceae – brush wattle, shrub wattle, *Acacia*



Brush wattle is a popular source of nectar for birds and butterflies - if you squint your eyes you can just see a silvereye in the centre of the photo on the left!

Brush wattle originates from Western Australia. A member of the pea family, this small (5-10 m) nitrogen fixing tree can grow in poor soils, in the wet and the dry, and can tolerate wind and salt but not shade. It grows very quickly, shading out low growing native vegetation of open habitats. However, native forest tree species can establish under brush wattle. For this reason and because it provides a winter nectar source for birds, wattle has been allowed to remain on the southern end of Tiritiri Matangi Island Sanctuary. Brush wattle is short lived but produces huge quantities of seed.

The leaves are frond-like with many divided leaflets whose undersides are silky. Likewise, the twigs and shoots are densely hairy. The yellow brush-like flowers produce long (8-15 cm) seed pods with hard coated black bad smelling seed. Flowering takes place from May to August and subsequent seedling growth is prolific. Seed can also remain ungerminated but viable in the seed bank for several years.



Control: Seedlings should be pulled out by hand. Care should be taken not to confuse this species with kowhai - remember that kowhai seedlings have round leaflets. Trees should be felled and the stumps painted with herbicide to prevent regrowth. Continuing checks for new seedlings is essential due to the long term viability of seed.



Photos: A. Stanton.



*Intriguing forms from nature - a fungus, *Trametes versicolor* (left) and a liverwort, *Marchantia polymorpha*.*

Photos: W. John

Featuring Fauna and Flora

Friends of Oakley Creek Committee member, Sarah Ross adds a new section to our newsletter, taking a closer look at native species found at Oakley Creek.

Tui - *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*

Oakley Creek, and backyards all over Auckland, are resonant with the liquid gurgles and the somewhat less melodious rasps of tui as they feed on nectar from spring flowers and forage for fruit and insects.

An endemic honeyeater, tui have been relatively successful in adapting to suburban garden habitat, feeding on nectar from exotic flowering trees in addition to kowhai, puriri, pohutukawa and harakeke (New Zealand flax). Tui are found on all three of New Zealand's main islands. They are noticeably absent however in Canterbury and Hamilton, where they once bred but were regionally extirpated by introduced predators such as stoats, rats and possums. Restoration efforts are underway to eliminate predators and reintroduce tui to the Hamilton area, while another honeyeater, the bellbird, has been reintroduced to the wider Auckland region. The third species of New Zealand honeyeater, the hihi or stitchbird, is now found only on predator-free offshore islands and mainland sanctuaries.



Tui in a coral pea tree.

Photos: T. Ross.

Tui, sometimes called parson birds, are readily identified by the two tufts of white feather on the throat, similar to a parson's collar. Juvenile birds do not have these throat feathers. Male and female look alike, though the male is larger. In dull light, their body feathers look black, but sunlight reveals iridescent green, purple, blue and even bronze. White shoulder patches are often visible during flight. Tui are highly adapted to their nectar-feeding niche. The curved beak helps them reach into long flowers like kowhai, while the long tongue itself ends in paintbrush-like bristles - ideal for wiping the nectar out of flowers.



Noisy, whirring flight is often the first clue that you have a tui in your yard. This sound is produced by a notch in the 8th primary feather of the wing and helps to deter unwitting avian intruders. Tui are highly territorial, aggressive birds. In summer, they will chase, attack and kill other birds who venture into their breeding territories. A Tui territory can cover 15 to 20 km. Small flocks of tui are seen when food is plentiful, or when juveniles are still with their parents. Tui breed from September to February, laying 3 or 4 pinkish-white spotted eggs in a bulky nest of twigs lined with leaves or moss. The female incubates the eggs, while both parents feed the young.

Like many New Zealand birds, Tui have regional dialects, meaning the song of tui from one area of New Zealand varies from tui in other regions. They are capable of mimicking a variety of sounds, including human voices and dogs barking. In earlier times, Maori trained tui to speak and there are stories of tui that recited karakia (prayers). A fine orator was said to speak like a tui's throat, *me he korokoro tui*.

Out and about...

A student group from **Eastern Mennonite University**, Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, visited Oakley Creek in mid May as part of their Cross Cultural Programme. Wendy John gave a presentation on the work of Friends of Oakley Creek and led them



on a guided walk, which included some 'in-stream exploration'. The university is proud of the Programme which was established thirty years ago and all students are required to participate. The destinations for cultural visits range from native American communities to Bedouin Egypt to South African townships and this year, to New Zealand.

Photos: W. John.



The August **Community tree planting** was a great success with another 500 plants being planted above the waterfall. A large group from Shri Shirdi Saibaba Sansthan Temple in Sandringham, as well as many other volunteers worked hard on the steep site. Fortuitously, the rain stopped for the planting then started again in the late morning, so the plants got a good start in their new home.

Yolanda (top left), Kathy and Morgan (top) and Daniel (left).

Photos: W. John.



Unitec Bachelor of Applied Sciences students, Lynne Andrew and Jett Blake did a wonderful job at the **Unitec Volunteer Day**, on September 1st. They promoted the many opportunities for helping at Oakley Creek and signed up a number of new volunteers.

Thank you very much!



Photo: W. John.

The **Kodesh Christian Community & A Rocha Auckland** teamed up again to take their 'adopted' site on Oakley Creek to the next stage - planting it with native plants. This was another great 'team effort', with Kodesh, A Rocha, Metrowater, WaiCare and Friends of Oakley Creek working together to enhance the creek.'

We are lucky to have regular visits from **Conservation Volunteers New Zealand** (below). This group of international volunteers was in New Zealand to participate in a variety of conservation projects, including Oakley Creek.



Kodesh / A Rocha Planting - July 2010



Morning Glory weed control is being undertaken in Harbutt Reserve by the **Te Ngahere** team. This weed, which was featured in our March 2010 issue, is a vigorous climber which smothers other vegetation, including large trees. It is hoped that three sessions carried out at three monthly intervals will be enough to control the morning glory.

Thanks for your feedback

'The newsletter is wonderful! Good wishes to you and the all the committee.'

'A wonderful News Letter. What fantastic photos of the flood! And of the volunteers. I am so grateful to you and the team.'

'Many thanks for all this good news and information. We will circulate the Update to the Bot Soc Committee. Mmm -- a lot of water through there since our visit!'

'I can go to bed now I have delighted myself with your newsletter and all these wonderful photographs. The newsletter is a substantial feast.'

Puzzle Solutions:

What on earth? The photo is of the aerial roots of ti kouka, cabbage tree.

Oakley Creek Bird Match

Bird	Length (cm)	Weight (g)	Lifespan (yrs)	Breeding period	No. of Clutches	Clutch size (no. of eggs)	Incubation (days)	Fledging (days)
1 Silveryeye	12	13	12 ok*	Sept-Feb	2-3	2-5	11	10
2 Tui	30	90 f* 120 m	12 ok	Sept-Jan		3-4		
3 Black shag	88	2200				3-4		
4 White faced heron	67	550		Jun-Oct		2+	26	
5 Paradise shelduck	63	1400 f 1700 m	2.3 av* 23 ok	Aug-Dec		5-15	30-35	56
6 Grey warbler	10	6.5	5+	Aug-Jan	2	2-5	17-21	15-19
7 Kingfisher	24	65		Oct-Jan		4-5	18	24
8 Pukeko	51	1050	3-6 9 ok	Aug-Mar		4-6	23-27	
9 Spur wing plover	38	350 f 370 m		Jul-Dec		4	28	
10 Black backed gull	60	850 f 1050 m	14 av 20+ ok	Oct-Jan		2-3	23-30	50
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12 Red billed gull	37	250 f 300 m	9 f 6 m 28 ok	Oct - Dec		2+	24-27	37
13 Kereru	51	650	10?	Sept-Feb		1	30	30-45

Next Newsletter

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