



## Annual Report from the Waikato Biodiversity Forum 2017/18

### Introduction

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum has been operating for 14 years and has a current membership of approximately 500. The Forum's membership is comprised of research and management agencies, iwi groups, private landowners, community groups and individuals who work towards improving indigenous biodiversity in the Waikato region. The Forum believes that the combined synergies of people working together provide a valuable contribution to improving biodiversity across the region. The Forum speaks on behalf of biodiversity. However, it does not necessarily reflect the views of all Forum members on every biodiversity issue.

The Forum operates independently of its constituent organisations. It is run by two part-time coordinators with a Waikato and a Coromandel focus who receive support and guidance from a Focus Group. The Forum's work includes:

- encouraging agencies and groups to network, share ideas and work together to protect and enhance biodiversity
- advocating for the development of sound policy to enhance biodiversity protection at national, regional and local levels
- organising forums to discuss biodiversity issues, and offering support and recommendations in relation to local projects
- organising workshops for community groups on a variety of topics such as pest management
- raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity through the media, the Forum's website, and Facebook and presentations to groups
- acting as a referral agency for biodiversity information
- providing support to community initiatives which protect and enhance biodiversity.

### Acknowledgements

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum would like to acknowledge and thank the following organisations for their financial support: Waikato Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Waikato District Council, Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council and South Waikato District Council.

The Forum would also like to thank the Focus Group members for their support and contribution to the work of the coordinator's roles. Their advice and guidance provides a valuable contribution to the success of the Forum.

Finally, the Forum would like to thank the staff from Forum member organisations and community groups for their contribution and expertise during Forum events, workshops, and the on-going exchange of information with the public and other Forum members. This collective expertise makes the operation of the Forum a success and is valued by Forum members and the public.

### Waikato Biodiversity Forum events

The first Forum was held on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December in Kinleith Forest, Tokoroa and was focused on the many possibilities for biodiversity enhancement and protection in plantation forest. The day was entirely field based and was led by Robin Black and Sally Strang of Hancock Forestry Management, as well as Anaru Begbie of the Raukawa Charitable Trust.

The day began at a recently harvested sight which lay adjacent to a stand of protected Indigenous forest, within the Poikaiwhenua Catchment. Here both Robin and Sally explained to us how and why the stand was protected and what techniques were employed to ensure a minimal level of erosion post-harvest. Indigenous forest within Kinleith is offered multiple layers of protection as both a [SNA \(significant natural area\)](#) and as part of the 10% reserve area which is required to gain [FSC \(Forest Stewardship Council\)](#) certification. Further protection to native forest stands over 5Ha is also

offered in plantation forest zones through the New Zealand [Forest Accord \(1991\)](#). Improvements to harvesting techniques, driven by environmental and health and safety regulation, have led to significant reductions in erosion. This is achieved by setting up large cable towers to pluck trees from steep banks and place them on skid sites, rather than the traditional method of dragging logs on the ground.

Robin also spoke about the important work done within the Kinleith forest, researching the NZ bush falcon and long-tailed bat in plantation forests. Alongside these projects, crews on the ground are trained to identify threatened species and to record their presence. By developing their skills in this area, it is possible to collect much larger data sets than would otherwise be possible. It also provides the opportunity for workers to gain valuable ecology skills and have a more varied work day while developing a deeper understanding of their environment.

The next site visited was Urewera Pā Anaru and Robin spoke about the partnership between Raukawa Charitable Trust, Hancock Forestry and forestry crews on the ground, which help identify historic sites within the forest. Anaru then went into detail about how the renaming of the site took place, which changed from Kangaroo Pā to its rightful name of Urewera Pā. The partnership between Hancock Forestry Raukawa also extended to the Totara plantation site which was also visited. The project is aimed at providing Raukawa with long-term cultural resilience. Costs of the project will be shared equally by HFM and the Raukawa Charitable Trust, with management of the plantations to be undertaken by HFM forest expertise. Crown forest research agency SCION has also been involved in project planning and sourcing and growing the totara seedlings. This small plantation will provide research opportunities that will be of benefit to other groups that wish to embark on similar ventures.

Finally the group viewed an area of regenerating native forest, which was regarded as being too steep to farm after being sold as a dairy conversion. There has been no management of the site to achieve this regeneration and after 6 years it is well underway. This demonstrated that plantation forests which contain healthy understorey's of native vegetation, such as in Kinleith are ideal sites for regeneration of indigenous forest. Sally also talked about what influence carbon credit schemes have had on forest management. Carbon prices

have continued to fluctuate greatly, resulting in conversions being profitable or unprofitable depending on carbon prices at that time. This has demonstrated that market based strategies are not always reliable as interventions for biodiversity protection in the long-term. For a more detailed report click [here](#).



Regenerating indigenous forest. Photo: Katherine Hay

The second event took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May in Whaingaroa/Raglan. The kaupapa of the day was focused on the question of “how do we enhance biodiversity in a growing town”? Like many parts of the Waikato Region, Whaingaroa is experiencing significant growth in its permanent and transient population. This can of course put pressure on the natural environment and community who call it home.

The field trip format moved between several locations. Appropriately the day started out at the Kokiri Centre with Angeline Greensill. Her korero grounded the group in the history of her people and the importance of their connection with the whenua and moana of Whaingaroa.

Angeline also took the group onto Wainamu beach, directly in front of the Kokiri Centre to view the Beachcare mahi of Angeline and whanau. Angeline explained the work is guided by observing the natural cycles of Tangaroa and working within these. Overall this degraded and modified dune system has recovered a great deal through a combination of planting native dune species and

building manuka fascines (a rough bundle of brushwood) where erosion has been particularly severe. Since 2004 the Waikato Regional Council's Beachcare program has supported their work greatly by supplementing the plants they already propagate in their own nursery and providing other resources such as signage, technical advice and building materials.

We then moved on to the Golf club for a run-down from Rangitahi Peninsula's David Peacock and ecologist Jacqui Bell, on the effects of their 500 house development on local biodiversity. Both David and Jacqui explained that the environmental impacts will be minimal and there may in fact be some enhancement of the environment. Tipping his hat to the influence of Whaingaroa Harbour Care, David said they will continue to plant a huge number of native trees on the formerly pastured land, as well as creating a number of vegetated wetlands on the site. In terms of environmental impacts during the initial development stages, the sediment controls put in place are state of the art and the protection of the peninsula's remnant vegetated margins are a big priority. As far as the direct impacts of the development on the "feel" of the town, David spoke of creating a layout for the development which is an extension of the Whaingaroa community's eclectic culture and lifestyle.

Our next destination was Ngarunui Beach where both Fiona Edwards of Whaingaroa Harbour Care and Bexie Towle of the Karioi Project spoke about how their highly successful projects got started and how they have enhanced local biodiversity so far. Fiona explained that after setting up a nursery and planting team in the mid-90's, the expectation was that farmers would be knocking at the door to give up riparian land for the free fencing materials and planting services offered. This was not the case, until the Waikato District Council was successfully lobbied into letting Harbour Care use their council owned farm, at Ngarunui Beach as a sustainable farming demonstration site. The transformation of the farm involved the fencing off all steep slopes, stream sides and wetlands and planting these areas with suitable native species. The farm then quickly became more productive due to a big drop in stock losses and a marked improvement in pasture growth rates. From this point, the local farming community began to come on-board to the point that now over 70 farmers within the catchment take on yearly riparian restoration works as part of their yearly farming plans, and 30% of the

catchment is protected by a vegetated riparian buffer.

The Karioi Project has been operating for a comparatively short time to Harbour Care but, since initiating in 2009, the project has already had a big impact on biodiversity in Whaingaroa. The Karioi team alongside partners like the Ahu Whenua Trust, DOC and Waikato Regional Council have worked hard to grow the outreach of the project, which now traps pest mammals on a large portion of the Whaingaroa side of the Maunga. Mentoring from more experienced groups like Harbour Care has really helped to accelerate this growth, but the passion of the community and their willingness to put their time into servicing trap lines has given it the biggest boost. There are now more than 50 regular volunteers and 150 casuals, as well as an ever expanding backyard trapping program. Outdoor biodiversity education for Whaingaroa Rangitahi is now also an important aspect of the project. This is offered to 8-12 year olds through the Karioi Ranges program and to year 12 and 13 students via an NCEA approved Earthcare course at Raglan Area School.

The final two speakers were Rick Thorpe from Xtreme Zero Waste, followed by Phil McCabe from Solscape Eco-Resort. Rick began by describing how "Xtreme" came out of an ecological crisis, when it became apparent that toxic leachate from the town landfill was making its way into the Wainui stream, turning it from pristine to lifeless. As a result of this discovery, it was decided that the landfill must be filled in, and that all the waste would be shipped up to Hampton Downs. But luckily Rick and fellow community members saw an opportunity to do something special and successfully fought to create a community run refuse station in 1998, which would focus on turning Raglan's waste to resources. Since its initiation, Xtreme has moved closer and closer to its goal of Raglan becoming zero waste. The recently launched household food waste collection service and industrial hot composting facility has given them a recent boost, with over 80% of waste now diverted from landfill. Another exciting development is the "plastic bag free Raglan" campaign which has had huge support from retailers and community. Alongside this, a further reduction in single use plastics has also been gained from takeaway food outlets in Raglan converting from plastic to biodegradable packaging.

Tourism in Aotearoa is booming and Phil described how Raglan has become a hotspot on the map. The

story of popular destinations becoming overcrowded, over commercialised and eventually losing the essence of what made them special, is an all too common tale which responsible tourist operators like Phil (Solscape Eco-lodge) are very conscious of. Phil put forward two examples of ideas which community members are currently developing, to help visitors contribute positively to Whaingaroa's natural environment and community. The first of these is creating a set of suggested "Raglan Rules" to be issued to visitors by tourism operators. These rules would state expected behaviour in a range of areas ranging from zero waste practices to etiquette at surfing breaks. The second is a programme which would give visitors the opportunity to engage themselves in one of the many local biodiversity projects in Raglan. Tourist operators could refer interested visitors on to a bridging organisation, such as the Whaingaroa Environment Centre, who would then be able link them up with a project of the visitors' choice. For a more detailed report click [here](#).

Forum members can act as "Biodiversity Champions" on particula.

The Forum coordinators operated the 0800 BIODIV line and responds or refers enquiries to an appropriate person. Seventy three enquiries were responded to over 2017/18, mainly from Forum members, through the 0800 line and the website. The enquiries continue to range from funding, weed and animal pest management, details of community group projects, volunteering on projects and planting information.

## Presentations to Councils

The Forum coordinator, accompanied by members of the Project Echo, presented to the Hamilton City Council. The presentations included details on biodiversity in Hamilton the importance of bats as an indicator of overall health of local ecosystems.

## Community Group Database

The Forum's database and map of community group projects was maintained which continues to highlight the contribution that these groups make to biodiversity protection and enhancement across the region. The Nature Space website has been updated on a regular basis in line with the Forum's database.

## Workshops

The Forum coordinators organized two workshops. The first was a pest management workshop held in March at Go Eco in Hamilton and was a feature of the "Eco Fest". The workshop focused on the logistical aspects of pest management operations, to follow up on a workshop focused on technical aspects of servicing a trap line run by Predator Free Hamilton. . Dave Byers of WRC began by presenting information on how to access information, support and funding through council and other supporting organisations. Dion Patterson from DOC then gave the audience a run-down of "Predator Free 2050" from DOC's perspective. Dion largely focused on what support DOC was able to offer community groups engaging in pest management in terms of funding and advice. Finitely we then heard from Bex Towle and Kristel Van Houte from the Karioi Maunga project. They



Wainamu Beachcare tour with Angeline Greensil

Photo:Landcare trust

## Networking and 0800BIODIV

The Forum members received four newsletters to inform them of biodiversity related information. The Forum network continues to provide a link for community group members and management agencies through dissemination of information and communication, with individual members to answer queries or refer them to other sources of information. A resource person register is maintained so that Forum members can be put in touch with the right person for advice and assistance. The Forum coordinator has a list of

have been remarkably successful in engaging a large number of volunteers (appx.150) to service trap lines on the mountain and participate in their backyard trapping program. Their story was not only inspiring but very informative in terms of identifying potential pitfalls and opportunities while initiating such a project.

The second was held in Coromandel, where 29 people attended a workshop for Coromandel community groups and landowners in June 2018 at Kuaotunu. The focus of the workshop was animal and plant pests. Benson Lockhart from the Waikato Regional Council covered off the most common plant pest species on the Coromandel Peninsula, the control and management of the most common plant pests and the kauri dieback



**Pest Management Workshop Kuaotunu Hall**

protocols for working in the bush on the Coromandel. He had a selection of plant pests on hand which helped with the identification plus a very informative presentation on kauri dieback. Dave Byers from the Waikato Regional Council followed

up with animal pest control information for possum, rats and mustelids, animal pest management plans and monitoring for successful animal pest control. He had a variety of traps and bait stations for people to look at plus up to date information on the efficacy of traps and bait. There was a lot of interaction with the participants and people were pleased to have the opportunity to share their experiences and hear from others.

## Support for Community/Agency initiatives

The WBF Coromandel Coordinator has been a member of the working group to establish Predator Free Hauraki Coromandel Community Trust. The Trust's purpose is to work with the community to protect the natural environment and wildlife of the Coromandel. The area of interest ranges from Moehau at the tip of the Coromandel Peninsula to Te Aroha in the south. The Trust has now employed a project manager for 6 months to undertake a stocktake of what is happening on the ground throughout the Coromandel Peninsula. On behalf of the Trust the WBF coordinator Coromandel has supported and assisted the project manager carry out this work. Assistance was given to a Catchment Management Officer for reviewing the Guidelines to Planting in the Coromandel Ecological District. A draft submission was supplied to the Predator Free Hauraki Coromandel Community Trust on the Threatened Species Strategy.

## Media

Two articles were supplied to the Raglan Chronicle. One to promote the event held there and the other to report on the day. Another article was also supplied to the Hamilton Press on behalf of Tui 2000 Inc on the Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park. The Waikato coordinator was also interviewed on Free FM and Raglan Radio, where he promoted the forum and spoke about current projects. A further four articles were supplied to the Whitianga Informer newspaper on aspects of biodiversity including biodiversity and community groups on the Coromandel, Otama Reserves group and bittern, Mahakirau Forest Estate Society Inc. and the Coromandel striped gecko and Predator Free 2050 and backyard trapping.

## Events

The Forum coordinator assisted Go Eco on the Te Papanui stand at the 2018 Waikato Show as well as the DOC's Collaboration stand at the 2018 Fielddays event. Both instances provided opportunities to introduce members of the public to the Waikato Biodiversity Forums services and sign up new members. The coordinator also attended the 2017 Mangapiko Landcare Networking Day and

Source to Sea workshop in Putaruru. These were both fantastic networking and learning opportunities.

## Summary

The Forum has continued to involve itself in advocacy, networking and advice to organisations and groups across the region. It has worked with other organisations and groups to support biodiversity work and provide opportunities to add value to the work of member organisations and groups. Sam and Moira on behalf of the Forum would like to acknowledge and commend the work that agencies, community groups and individuals carry out to improve biodiversity. They would also like to thank the Focus Group members for their support and contribution to the Forum's work. Finally Sam would also like to thank Moira for her continued support of the forum, which she has built up over the last 14 years, as it moves into the future.

Sam Mcelwee (Waikato), Moira Cursey (Coromandel) Coordinators, Waikato Biodiversity Forum



Kids corner of DOC Field days stand Photo:DOC

