



# News

*PO Box 15-668, New Lynn*

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*[www.waitakereranges.org.nz](http://www.waitakereranges.org.nz)*

## **Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc**

**Issue 141      May 2009**

### **Your President's Report**



You will notice that the format of the newsletter has changed slightly. The changes are thanks to our new editor, Sandra (our multitasking treasurer) who has taken over from Anna. Anna did a great job over the past two years to build the newsletter up, but is unable to continue and Sandra has offered to help. If there are any members who feel they could help Sandra with the newsletter it would be much appreciated.

The Society has been busy over the past months preparing and presenting submissions on a range of issues including Waitakere City Annual and Long Term Plan, ARC Regional Park Management Plan, Emission Trading Scheme and the Resource Management Act Amendments. Various committee members helped but special thanks go to Greg and Mels.

Like many citizens, the Society is concerned with the great

uncertainty surrounding the future governance of Auckland, and we are keeping a close watch on matters as they unfold. The Society will be making a detailed submission to the select committee when the time comes, and meanwhile we are working with the councils to ensure the Ranges legislation is well established in the relevant plans.

Thanks to those of you who attended the AGM in March. This newsletter has both the Annual and Financial Reports of the executive committee. Our speaker Dr Philip Simpson gave an informative if somewhat concerning address on the loss of some of New Zealand's most iconic trees, and Kath has written a report in this newsletter.

The Society was successful in a grant application to Waitakere City Creative Communities, and we received \$3183.24 towards the Waitakere Ranges mural in the Henderson CBD. We need to raise at least another \$20,000 before we can proceed, and we will be making applications to other funding bodies very soon.

I would like to thank the new committee for putting their names forward. Volunteers are always hard to find, especially ones who give so much. They need your support over the next year so that the Society can continue to achieve the very best outcomes for the conservation and protection of the Waitakere Ranges. If there are any members who feel they have something to offer in time or expertise, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

John Edgar  
President



Shining cuckoo (Mark Hauber)

# Annual Report of the Executive Committee

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
Arataki Visitors Centre  
Monday 30 March, 2009**

I am pleased to present the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Executive Committee of The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Incorporated.

Four days ago, on Friday 27 March, the much-anticipated report on the governance of Auckland was released. Some of you will have analysed the report in more detail than I have, and our executive have not yet had the opportunity to discuss it. The Society will need to take some expert advice on what the implications for the Ranges and the Heritage Area might be under the proposed structure. Should the Government proceed to implement the recommendations of the report, there will be huge changes for the whole of Auckland and we are now entering a time of environmental and political uncertainty. We will keep our membership informed as the implications for the Ranges become clear.

It is now nearly a year since the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act was passed by Parliament. We are pleased with the ownership that the three Councils have shown, and the increased public awareness of the Heritage Area. Waitakere City is now proceeding with implementation of the first of the Local Area Plans provided for by the Act. Oratia Valley including Waiatarua has been chosen as the test case, and meetings are presently being held where locals can tell Council their vision for the valley. As well as attending these meetings, the Society is meeting regularly with Council officers for updates on progress of the LAPS.

It is about thirteen years since the Swanson Structure Plan was first mooted by landowners in the area wanting subdivision, seven years since Variation 88 was notified, six years since we appealed Council's decision to allow 137 new lots to the Environment Court, and it is still not concluded, but is certainly nearing the end. The Environment Court Decision in January to allow only 52 new lots is a significant victory for the Society, the Preserve the Swanson Foothills Society, the ARC and those individuals who opposed the

Structure Plan proposed by Waitakere City and the 198 lots proposed by the developers. As the Court said, "we consider that the existing fine balance between rural and urban in the Swanson foothills is in real danger of being upset to its detriment by further subdivision and development". The 350-page decision has not been appealed, and Waitakere City is instructed by the Court to make the appropriate changes to the District Plan by August. We thank Douglas Allan and Gary Taylor for representing the Society at numerous hearings over the past eight years, and the support of the ARC and their expert witness Stephen Brown who gave landscape evidence that was preferred by the court.

The Society has prepared a detailed submission on the proposed amendments to the RMA which is due 3 April. It is worth noting that under the proposed "streamlining" changes to the Act the right of the Society to make legal submissions on many matters of concern would be considerably restricted. For example, the Society would not have been able to appeal the Swanson SP decision to the Environment Court.

The Society will be making submissions on the scope of the review of the Regional Park Management Plan that are due 13 April, and the ARC will release a draft Plan for public discussion in October. We are also working with the ARC to resolve the application by Watercare Services to vary the dam consents that were granted in 2005. The variations are apparently necessitated by unforeseen construction problems and will delay the release of compensation flows by some years. With regard to WC Plan Change 22, which seeks to create a Whenuapai Airport Special Area in the District Plan, the scheduled hearing of public submissions in February was postponed pending a decision by the Government on the future use of the base by the Air Force.

After some initial concerns at the ARC/DOC proposal to introduce grass carp into Lake Wainamu in order to manage *Egaria* infestation, we decided against opposing but our comments on the proposal led to some changes in the monitoring and the containment methods. We will be keeping a close eye on this project to ensure that all safeguards are in place. We continue to support the proposed marine mammal sanctuary on the west coast, and we continue to oppose the granting of exploration licences for seabed iron sand mining on the west coast.

In April we were pleased to be able to gift the Big Muddy reserve to the ARC for inclusion in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. These two titles totalling 11 hectares were purchased by the Society in 1996 with help from ARC, ASB, Forest and Bird, and Parks and Wilderness Trust to save them from residential development. At the time of transfer, the capital value of the land was \$700,000. The land will now be protected in perpetuity.

In June we celebrated our 35<sup>th</sup> birthday party at the Waitakere Hall where the Society held some of its first meetings in 1973. Over 120 people attended and it was a most enjoyable afternoon. We presented Honour Awards to Bob Harvey, Bob Happy, Mary Woodward, Jack Colmar, Graeme Campbell, John Staniland, Bruce and Trixie Harvey.



The greatest potential threat to the ranges at present is the microscopic pathogen *Phytophthora* taxon Agathis (PTA). It is likely to be an introduced organism, but this is not certain. PTA is associated with kauri collar rot and kills the living tissue of the trunk by slowly ring barking it at ground level. The affected tissue shows excessive gum bleeding as the tree 'fights back'. Collar rot disease was first reported in the 1970s from Gt Barrier Island but as only a small area was affected, no particular concern was raised. Recent work shows that it is present in patches throughout the Waitakeres, and is also in Trounson and Waipoua forests. It affects trees of all ages, including some of the giants in the Cascades, and seems to spread slowly through the soil. Pathology experiments confirm PTA is indeed a kauri killer but other tree species seem unaffected. PTA poses a real threat to kauri, both at the ecosystem level as the present small infestations expand, and to individual iconic trees. The disease is being closely studied and monitored by MAF Biosecurity NZ, DOC, ARC, NRC, EW and EBoP. Much more research is needed to clarify the full nature of the threat and ways to combat it. In the meantime, we advocate that those who

tramp through the Waitakeres minimise moving soil between different areas, and ensure that boots and equipment are cleaned before entering and after leaving an area. More information is in our latest newsletter.

Our Oral History project was given a boost by a successful grant application to Lotteries that allowed us to purchase a professional digital recorder. Our committee member Carole Shone is about to begin stage three of the project and will be interviewing Geoff Scholes, Mary Woodward, Dave McKay, John Lewis, and Tony Randerson. All recordings and transcripts are archived in the Waitakere and Turnbull Libraries.

We have recently made a grant application to Creative Communities for funds to initiate a painted mural in the Henderson CBD. We want to gift this mural to the people of Waitakere City to celebrate the passing of the WRHA Act, and to bring a bit of the Ranges into the CBD. We have identified an appropriate wall on the corner of Great North Road and Alderman Drive. If fund raising is successful we will ask artist Ben Tippet to prepare a concept design for the wall. We envisage a scene of the Waitakere Ranges showing the flora and fauna, the landscape and the people who live in and enjoy the Ranges.

Sales of *Waitakere Ranges* books have slowed, but considering that we have sold nearly 2800 from a print run of 3000 in three years, we are at the point where the last 200

copies gain rarity value. We are proposing to take a number of the remaining books and have them signed by as many of the authors as possible, and then perhaps auction those as a fundraiser. We have quotes for a reprint and certainly sufficient money from the sale of the books to do this at some time.

We received a grant from the ASB of \$20,000 which allowed us to employ a part time Heritage Area Coordinator for a year from October 2008. Mels Barton has been averaging 20 hours a month writing submissions, letters and reports, consulting with communities, networking and planning, arranging educational events, fundraising and keeping our membership informed. This has taken a huge workload off other members of the executive, and we are very pleased with the increased activity that we can achieve in this way.

In order to retain our charitable status the Society registered with the Charities Commission as required by the Act. We have been informed that our current constitution will not allow us charitable status, and we have therefore asked Greg Presland to draft a new constitution that will be acceptable to the Society and the Commission. Our constitution is 36 years old, and is definitely in need of revision in a number of areas. These have been identified and Greg is currently completing a draft, and we envisage circulating this to all members in the next few months and then calling a special meeting to discuss the proposed changes.

Throughout the year the Society relies on professional consultants to prepare submissions and evidence for us on a range of matters. The *pro bono* contribution of our legal counsel Douglas Allan and resource management consultant Gary Taylor is invaluable. We acknowledge the work that James Hook has done for us on various resource consent matters. We thank McGregor Bailey Ltd who have been our honorary auditors for the past four years, but who are now unable to continue the *pro bono* audit owing to changes to the law, and the Society is now faced with having to pay for our annual audit from a registered auditor. Thanks also to Jenny Taylor who has maintained our membership database and coordinated mail outs for many years.

The outgoing committee have worked hard over the past year to ensure the objectives of the Society are realised to the highest standards. Our monthly executive meetings are well attended, and the contribution from all committee members is much appreciated. We have experts in many fields on the committee, and consequently we function well considering the diverse nature of our activities. Two members of our current committee are not standing again. Jacquie Reed who has been on the committee for the past two years has moved to Whangarei to work for the Northern Regional Council. And Carole Shone who has been on the committee for three years will not be seeking re-election, but will continue to work on our Oral History project. Thanks to both of them for the contribution they have made. Members of the Society are welcome to attend our monthly meetings and we encourage feedback on matters of concern in your communities. I would like to ask the outgoing committee to stand up. These people are your elected executive who have given the Society so much of their time over the past year. It has been a pleasure and an honour to work with you all and I would like this meeting to join with me in showing our appreciation for your efforts on our behalf.



Special thanks go to our vice-president Anna Fomison, treasurer Sandra Jones, and secretary Mels Barton. Anna is editor of our quarterly newsletter which contributes greatly to our advocacy and together with Mels Barton she coordinates our presence at events and festivals. Our website continues to be maintained by Mike Nixon. I was honoured to be made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to art in the New Years list and I appreciated the letters of congratulations from members of the Society. It has been my pleasure to be President and chair of the executive committee for the past eleven years, and I have enjoyed it very much. I want to thank committee members and my family and friends for their support which has enabled me to better serve the Society. However, I must add that in these times of recession, the expectation that volunteers can continue to commit hours a week is unrealistic, and I am sure that I speak for most of the committee when I say that the past level of service that we have delivered is increasingly unsustainable. This means that we need to better prioritise our projects and be more efficient in our allocation of time.

We chose not to raise our membership subscription rate again this year, and this was recognised by many members who paid their subscription and added a donation. When Sandra Jones gives the financial report this evening, you will note that the Society is in a strong financial position. A large proportion of this is the money that we have received on the sale of the Waitakere Ranges book. This is being accumulated to cover the costs of a reprint in the next few years. The remainder of the reserves are in operating or in tagged funds for items such as land acquisition. The executive considers that it is very important in the current global recession that the Society runs larger than usual surpluses to ensure that our objectives are not compromised by lack of available funds, since funding bodies who have supported us in the past have recently signalled that their financial situation has changed considerably, and that it may be some time before normal funding activity is resumed.

The Society extends its condolences to the families of Geoff Moon and Geoff Park, who died in the past few weeks. Geoff Moon was an ardent supporter of the Society. As a photographer of our native birds and bush he was unsurpassed. His cheerful enthusiasm was most infectious, and one always felt enlivened in his company. Those of you at our AGM in 2007 will recall that Geoff was there, and it was his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday, and that was typical of Geoff, to be out at a meeting on his birthday. We will miss him greatly, and he will always be remembered for his good humour, those wonderful bird books and the painstaking patience necessary to observe and photograph wildlife as he did.

Geoff Park who died two weeks ago was New Zealand's leading ecological historian. In his seminal book *Nga Uru Ora*, he showed us a new way of looking for Aotearoa, of excavating the past through a detailed study of our ecology, and of predicting the dire consequences of the slash and burn mentality that has reduced the native forest of New Zealand to a tiny fraction of its once magnificence. Geoff was a good friend of the Society and a strong supporter of our work towards permanent protection, and some of you will remember the address he gave at our AGM in 2003 entitled "The Auspicious, Wild West – The Waitakere Ranges in the

Scenic Paradise of the World" where he charted the scenic preservation movement in New Zealand and the role that the Ranges played in that. At 62, his passing is a great loss to New Zealand.

At the AGM last year we were asked if, with the passing of the WRHA Act, the work of the Society would be complete. I wish that the answer was yes and that the Ranges were truly saved in perpetuity, but unfortunately the unrelenting workload of the executive over the past year is evidence that our task is far from over, and that there are and will continue to be new and recurring threats that will demand a strong and resilient opposition, and a strong vision for the future. I am confident that after 36 years, the Society is up to the challenge ahead, that new members and passionate volunteers will continue to come forward as we work to ensure the long-term wellbeing of the Waitakere Ranges and its communities.

John Edgar,  
President

*You will have noticed the change to a more simplistic format in this issue of the newsletter, for which we apologise. Our previous editor, Anna Fomison, is handing over the reins to a new editor (yet to be appointed) who will, we hope, be able to develop the level of skills required to produce the newsletter to the high standard that Anna has set.*

## Dr Philip Simpson *The Flight of Icons*

WRPS AGM March 2009



The Society was honoured to welcome Dr Philip Simpson as guest speaker to our AGM this year. The Montana award winning writer of *Pohutukawa and Rata: New Zealand's Iron-hearted trees* and *Dancing Leaves: the story of New Zealand's cabbage tree, ti kouka*, is a botanist who worked for the Department of Conservation for twenty years. He is a founding trustee of Project Crimson and now works as an ecological consultant and wine grower in Golden Bay.

In his talk to the Society, Philip tracked and compared the decline of three iconic native tree species; ti kouka (cabbage tree), rata and totara. Populations of each species have been decimated by a different agent – the totara logged for timber,

the rata mostly affected by possums and the cabbage tree killed in huge numbers by disease. Although as Philip demonstrated, a common thread for them all is the impact of human, especially pakeha, settlement.

For the cabbage tree, the clearing of forests ironically led to an expansion of sunlit habitats and the species extended its distribution, from wetlands and forest margins, into farmland. Where Maori generally esteemed swamps and marshes as food baskets, however, pakeha settlers drained them. Over time, the new farmland habitats proved unhealthy for cabbage trees. Stock graze away at the trunks, killing the trees slowly as they prevent new growth.

The Sudden Decline of the 1980s, in which thousands of cabbage trees died, was the outcome of this ecological illhealth. Studies by Landcare Research revealed Sudden Decline was caused by a parasitic bacterium carried by a native leafhopper. The spread of the ancient native disease had been kept in check in the natural ecosystems. Wetlands, for example, are flushed and cleansed by periodic flooding. But in the new, human-altered landscapes of colonial settlement, the host leafhopper and parasite thrived, reaching a critical mass. This had a devastating effect on already stressed trees growing outside of their natural habitat. Sudden Decline persists, mainly affecting older trees, and there is little we can do to prevent it affecting individual specimens.

To restore the health of populations of all three iconic species, Dr Simpson recommends large-scale ecological restoration projects, where entire areas of habitat, on private and public land, are restored to good health. Much of his own consultant work is on large south island lots, where he works

with private landowners to help them understand the fragile interdependence of biodiversity and how they can improve the quality of the ecosystems in their care.

## NOTES:

### Bank accounts:

#### 00 Account – operating account.

The balance includes an instalment of \$10,000 from an ASB Community Trust grant to support our Heritage Area Coordinator. \$11,500 is also held in Short Term Deposits.

#### 01 Account – Reserves (land acquisition) fund.

\$42,000 is also held in Short Term Deposits.

#### 03 Account – Publications fund.

\$121,000 is also held in Short Term Deposits. This is being accumulated to cover the costs of a possible reprint (or second edition) in the next few years.

#### Fast Saver Account - the Neil & Jean Smith Fund.

The executive's intention is to retain the donation (\$20,000) as capital and employ the interest earned (currently \$2,849) for special projects.

#### Stock on hand – value \$7,184.

This consists primarily of residual copies of our book *Waitakere Ranges*.

#### Fixed Assets - value \$7,944.

Equipment purchased from NZ Lottery Grants Board and ASB Community Trust grants (laptop computer, data projector and screen, digital recorder, mobile display unit).

**Total Trustees Funds** combines \$184,241 carried forward from previous years with \$44,220 excess income over expenditure in the current year. As noted in the President's Annual Report, the executive considers that it is very important in the current global recession that the Society runs larger than usual surpluses to ensure that our objectives are not compromised by lack of available funds, since funding bodies who have supported us in the past have recently signalled that their financial situation has changed considerably, and that it may be some time before normal funding activity is resumed.



### Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc.

#### Statement of Financial Position

As at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2009

2008		2009
\$		\$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
3,516	ASB Bank – 00 Account	14,151
143	ASB Bank – 01 Account	143
6,201	ASB Bank – 03 Account	1,793
21,173	ASB Bank – Fast Saver	22,849
153,751	ASB Bank – Short Term Deposit	176,101
-	GST Refund Due	292
-	Accounts Receivable	405
-	Stock on Hand – Finished Goods	7,184
184,784	<b>Total Current Assets</b>	222,918
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
-	Fixed Assets as per Schedule	7,944
184,784	<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	230,862
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
543	GST Due for Payment	-
-	Accounts Payable	2,401
543	<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	2,401
543	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	2,401
184,241	<b>NET ASSETS</b>	228,461
<b>Represented by:</b>		
<b>TRUSTEES FUNDS</b>		
184,241	Retained Earnings	228,461
184,241	<b>TOTAL TRUSTEES FUNDS</b>	228,461

## Heritage Area Coordinator's Report, April - May 2009

## Submissions / Advocacy

### Waitakere City Council Annual Plan – WCC

I compiled a detailed written submission on the LTCCP for the Society and presented it verbally. Items we highlighted included concerns over the proposed disposal of land, the use of the Heritage Area Act, the lack of reference to biosecurity in the light of PTA (kauri disease). We suggested that ecoburials on private land could be considered as an alternative to cemeteries in future.

### Resource Management Act Changes – Select Committee

I attended the excellent submission presented by Greg Presland and Douglas Allan on the proposed changes to the legislation, which will have huge impacts on the way the Society works in future if passed unchanged.

### Regional Parks Management Plan Review – ARC

WRPS was consulted on the scope for this review and I made a submission.

## Consents

### 151 Marine Parade N, Piha - WCC

On further investigation of the details proposed for this site WRPS has minimal concerns and will not pursue notification.

### Karekare Surf Lifesaving Club – ARC/WCC

The Society has been consulted and EDS are considering the details of the proposals on our behalf.

### Watercare Dams - ARC

The Society continues to request notification for the consent variations applied for.

## Consultation

### Morgan Williams

The former Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment reported back on his think piece for the future of the Heritage Area. His proposal for an independent Foundation to act as guardian and fundraise for monitoring and research in the Ranges was enthusiastically received by the audience. WRPS will be actively supporting this initiative.

### Kauri PTA

WRPS continues to receive worrying updates on the continued spread of this disease, which keeps getting worse. We have grave concerns as winter commences that the spread will accelerate in the wet weather and will be actively pursuing options to minimise this with the appropriate agencies.

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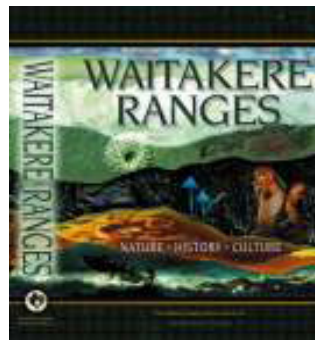
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## “WAITAKERE RANGES”

**Cost to members:  
\$85.00 incl p&p**

**First edition almost sold out.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of books (specify):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone number or email address (in case of queries):** \_\_\_\_\_

## PAY BY CHEQUE

Please send your order and cheque to:  
Waitakere Ranges Protection Society

## Your Committee

**Committee meetings are held on the  
second Wednesday of the month**

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Vice-President: Anna Fomison 838 9665

PO Box 15668, Waitakere City, 0640.

***OR***

**PAY ONLINE**

- (1) Email your order information to the Treasurer at  
kemsdale@ihug.co.nz
- (2) Make on line payment to ASB New Lynn  
account number **12-3034-0702207-03**

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