



Waitakere Ranges
Protection Society Inc

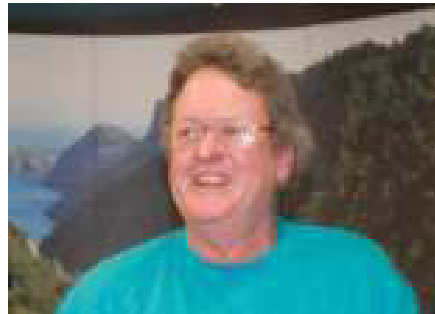
news

PO Box 15-668, New Lynn, Waitakere City 0640

www.waitakereranges.org.nz

Issue 142 August 2009

Your President's Report



With the Select Committee hearings on the governance of Auckland complete, the region waits with some trepidation for the recommendations to Parliament. The submissions of many Aucklanders asking for real democratic representation were very inspiring and we can only hope that the message has been well-received. Local government is now, to some degree, in a state of suspended animation, with politicians and officers across the region under considerable pressure to deliver their policies in a prevailing atmosphere of uncertainty.

The Society made detailed submissions to the select committee, and I know many members made personal submissions. What the future holds for the governance of the Waitakere Ranges and the regional park network is anyone's guess, but we will find out soon enough with elections to be held under the new structure in October next year.

We were very pleased to coopt Kirstin Howard onto the committee since the AGM. Kirstin is a lawyer, and has already made a contribution by helping Greg Presland with the drafting of the proposed changes to our constitution to bring the Society into line with the Charities Act requirements. Kirstin will be profiled in the next newsletter.

Our Heritage Area Coordinator and committee secretary Mels Barton, has been active on many issues and having someone that has the time to write submissions and coordinate our various advocacy programs has been a great help to the committee. The funding from ASB Community Trust to pay Mels should last us into the new year, when we will need to apply for a new grant.

This is the second newsletter that our treasurer Sandra Jones is editing and producing, and once again we ask for someone to put their name forward to take over this quarterly task from her. This is a contribution to the Society's work which we hope one of our friends or members will want to volunteer for.

I am about to depart for Edinburgh to attend the opening of my sculpture exhibition "Ballast" at the National Museum of Scotland. The New Zealand High Commission are holding a reception on the 19th August at the museum, and it is an honour to be part of the Edinburgh Art Festival in the Homecoming Year.

John Edgar
President

Option to receive your copy of the WRPS Newsletter by Email Attachment

An increasing number of our members have been asking to receive their copy of the newsletter by email attachment. We suspect the numbers of those interested are now high enough to make this a cost effective option.

So if you would like to receive your copy of the newsletter by email in the future, please advise the secretary, mels@waitakereranges.org.nz, stating your name and email address.

The history of the water catchments of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland

A talk by John La Roche

at 7.30 pm, Saturday 5 September
at the Piha Surf Club

Organised by Protect Piha Heritage

Free/Koha.

Bar/kitchen open 6.30 pm. Fish & Chip pack \$10.

Come and join us, eat a meal of fish, chips & snarlers, sip a glass of wine, and listen to the fascinating story of the way Auckland provided for its need for clean water from the pristine Waitakere Ranges. See and hear about the schemes that could have dramatically altered the Piha and Anawhata catchments. John is an engineer & historian who worked on Auckland's water supply in the Waitakeres & Hunuas, focusing on water treatment systems. With Lucy Cranwell, he wrote *Hut and Headland*, a history of the University Field Club at White's Beach. He is a founder of Engineers for Social Responsibility and Water for Survival, which earned him a NZ Order of Merit. He actively works on recording engineering heritage.

Ted Scott's 2010 Calendars

Advance information for those of you who like to send Calendars overseas as Christmas gifts

Ted Scott and Bob Harvey are producing a new pictorial book, called "Spirit of the West", promoting the Heritage Area; it will include 200 of Ted's images. It will be launched at the end of September and promoted at the Literary Festival.

The 2010 Calendars, which will contain images from the book, won't be available until mid September, so we don't yet have the cost or other details. But if you are interested please let me know (contact details below) so that I can forward the information on to you as soon as I have it, which will hopefully be in good time to meet overseas Christmas post deadlines.

Ted has kindly agreed to make both the book and calendar available for our Society to sell as a fund raiser, so if you decide to purchase copies of either or both the calendar and book, please consider placing your order through WRPS.

Sandra Jones

Ph: 817 2788 Email: kemsdale@ihug.co.nz

What can be done to save our kauri trees from death by PTA?

Press Release issued by WRPS in July:

“Tramping shown to spread kauri killer

New research indicates trampers using walking tracks in the Waitakere Ranges are responsible for the spread of the water-mould, PTA (*Phytophthora* taxon *Agathis*), that causes the collar rot fatal to kauri. The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society is calling on the Regional Council to close some tracks to protect areas free from the disease.

"The results of aerial mapping and tree testing show a massive overlap between tramping tracks and dead or dying trees," says John Edgar, President of the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society. "The water-mould that spreads the disease is carried on boots and can stay dormant for months. This strain of mould is brand new to science and so far there's no cure. It kills kauri of all ages and sizes. We could be looking at extinction of kauri in the Ranges."

Some areas of the Ranges where less well used tramping tracks run seem free of the disease so far [see map below for tracks where the disease has been identified]. The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society has this week written to the Chair of Regional Parks in Auckland, Councillor Sandra Coney, to ask Council to close tracks into the areas not yet affected.

"If we can protect the healthy kauri by isolating them, there's a chance we might save them until a cure is found," says Edgar. "Asking people to clean their boots, like Council has been doing, is just too much of a risk in the unaffected areas, and has not proven to be effective. Kauri are both iconic and essential to the Ranges ecosystems. We need a more precautionary approach."

Kauri are dying from the collar rot in much of the Auckland region and the Waipoua forest in Northland. A Joint Agency, including DOC, MAF, the ARC and other local authorities have mapped the disease spread and applied to the Government for money to find a cure."

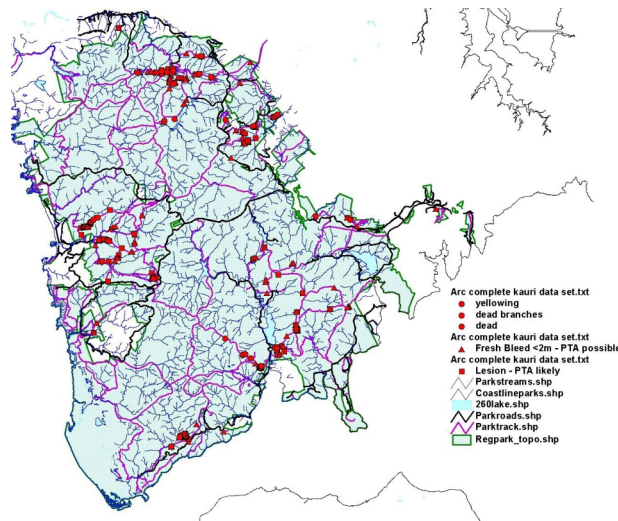
Responses:

On 21 July, in response to our press release, an article ("Call to close tracks to save dying kauri") by Wayne Thompson appeared in the *New Zealand Herald*. The article begins by summarising WPRS's position and continues with comment from David Yard, a spokesman for the joint agency that was formed to respond to the disease (including ARC, DoC, MAF Biosecurity and local authorities). "Mr Yard said closing parks and reserves was an option: 'But it's pretty drastic ... to shut tracks would affect the ability of people to enjoy the forest.' The agency had no proof that the disease was spreading out of control from forest to forest. 'We will continue to raise awareness to the public and trampers to be responsible.' Mr Yard said a long-term plan to manage the disease was being formed and there was a lot more to find out about how the disease was spread.... A report to the ARC parks committee said the joint agency was given information on costs for managing the disease, including track upgrades and killing feral pigs in the ranges."

The next day there was a follow-up item ("Tracks shifted to save trees") in the *New Zealand Herald*, again by Wayne Thompson, reporting the ARC's response to WPRS's call for some track closures.

"The Auckland Regional Council has begun diverting highly used walking tracks around kauri stands in the Waitakere Ranges in an attempt to prevent the spread of dieback disease. ARC parks deputy chairwoman Christine Rose said: 'We will continue to look at whether tracks need to be closed or rerouted if evidence shows this to be an effective way of controlling the disease.'

The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society said new aerial mapping and tree testing showed kauri on popular walking tracks were more likely to be dead or dying than those on less well used tracks. Mrs Rose said people could spread the disease by tracking soil on their shoes but if they followed regional park guidelines they were unlikely to. Cleaning equipment was available and signs alerted visitors to the disease. Society president John Edgar wanted the council to take more precautions than just asking people to clean mud off their boots - he wanted some tracks closed. But Mrs Rose said closing tracks was not a decision to be taken lightly. 'Our over-riding concern is protecting kauri but as stewards of the park, we need to balance this against giving the public access to the Waitakere Ranges.' Council measures include upgrading tracks and killing 100 feral pigs. 'The ARC has so far spent nearly \$300,000 on external costs for kauri dieback and much more than that in staff time,' said Mrs Rose. A task force of government departments and four regional councils is planning prevention measures and seeking money from Government."



Update (19 August):

ARC recently held a meeting at Arataki to update the public on the spread of Kauri PTA and the actions being taken to avoid the spread and understand the nature of the disease.

ARC are installing disinfection and boot scrubbing stations at the entrance to and at major junctions of key tracks now. They are also considering re-routing tracks away from kauri and even possibly closing some tracks following pressure from WRPS to quarantine unaffected areas.

The surveys done to date have identified the tracks most at risk with kauri already stressed by having roots exposed or compacted or by other physical damage. These trees are top priority for protective measures since they may succumb to infection more readily. No survey of trees off-track has yet been done but reports have been received of trees that are affected away from tracks.

No tree has survived being infected yet, all trees with the disease die and no resistance has yet been seen, therefore the need to prevent the spread of infection is paramount while research on understanding the disease and how to treat or prevent it is done. A funding bid from the joint agency task force headed by MAF is going to Cabinet shortly seeking over \$4 million for research and actions (like the scrubbing stations, track upgrading and re-routing work, signage and PR to raise awareness). However a major bid to fund essential research on the disease itself has just been rejected and this could slow progress towards a cure considerably while alternative funding options are explored.

Pigs are believed to be a major vector of the disease & ARC has increased licensed hunters in the Waitakere Ranges to 16 and they have caught 340 pigs in 2008-9, which is a huge increase. However hunting cannot eradicate pigs on its own since they breed fast and illegal hunters are known to release pigs, so a poison is being trialled in the Hunuas currently.

In the meantime WRPS continues to stress that preventing further spread of the disease is the only thing that can save our kauri in the short term, so with the weather improving and people starting to go tramping again **we would like to suggest that if you love kauri trees please stay away from them!** Why not walk on the beach instead of the bush this summer and spread this message to everyone you know. The message about how serious this disease is does not seem to be getting through and we could lose all our kauri in no time.

Titirangi Ratepayers & Residents Association are planning to hold a public meeting on saving trees from the RMA blanket ban on tree felling being lifted by the Government as well as the kauri disease very soon, so please attend that and give your support to this very important campaign, we'll let you have the date as soon as we know it. We almost lost the kauri once through logging, we really don't want to lose them all again. Contact Mels at mels@waitakereranges.org.nz to check out the date/ place of the meeting. All welcome.

Release of two new books

Castles in the Sand: What's happening to the New Zealand coast?

EDS (Environmental Defence Society) has recently released a new book titled *Castles in the Sand: What's happening to the New Zealand coast?* The book, authored by EDS policy analyst Raewyn Peart, tells the story of the NZ coast - the history of the coast, what it means to New Zealanders, and what we need to do to care for it for future generations. The book is a great read and is richly illustrated with historical and contemporary photographs including many taken by notable photographer Craig Potton. Copies of the book can be purchased from EDS <http://www.eds.org.nz>

***West, The History of Waitakere* Finlay MacDonald & Ruth Kerr (eds.)**

Published by Waitakere City Council, this is a handsome volume concentrating on the history of Waitakere City and the area known sometimes as "West Auckland". Contributions by a large number of well qualified authors cover a range of topics from the history of our lovely coastal villages to the economic and political history of the area, and the arts and crafts of the vibrant communities which have grown up here. An outstanding feature of all the articles is the wonderful photographs from the earliest days of settlement of all aspects of life in the west. Comparison will undoubtedly be made between this book and WRPS "Waitakere Ranges" published a few years ago. "West" has a slightly different vision, covering more of the human activity, although there is reference to the natural environment in several articles notably Simon Grant's chapter entitled "Call of the Wild". Historically the writing is full of lively and interesting facts and stories that are easy to read. It is a large book, one that can be savoured chapter by chapter over a long time, and is well worth a place on any bookshelf in the west. As an epitaph, possibly, for the Waitakere City that we have known it is a worthy effort and underlines what westies have always known, that we live in a special and wonderful part of the conurbation known as Auckland.

Heritage Area Coordinator's Report, June - August 2009

Submissions / Advocacy

Auckland Governance Select Committee I compiled a detailed written submission on the proposed Auckland Council bill on behalf of the Society and presented it verbally. Issues we highlighted included the security of public assets, particularly parks and water in perpetuity, as well as effective representation, including a specific second tier entity (local board or council) for the whole Waitakere Ranges area, that should not be split. We also commented that the Hunua water reservoirs should not be managed separately from the rest of the region if all water assets were to be combined. We also supported all ward councillors (not election "at large"), guaranteed Maori representation, Mayoral powers that were the same as those of current Mayors and a properly resourced and funded second tier.

Economic Development in Foothills (LAPs) I have attended recent Council committee meetings at which the outcome of the public consultation in Oratia and Waiatarua has been discussed. It is clear that the community wants a future for the area that leaves it basically unchanged, with some small improvements in services, and that Waiatarua is treated as a separate entity. It has been pleasing to hear Council staff and the Deputy Mayor emphasise that LAPs are not like structure plans and that there will be no further subdivision and development in the foothills as a result of the Heritage Area Act. Council staff are looking to integrate the principles of the Act into relevant planning documents, including the District Plan, and enable "appropriate" economic activities, such as the Oratia Farmers Market, to continue.

Foundation Groups Research I have been putting together a draft list of groups and individuals that may be interested in working together to form a Foundation for the Ranges, as suggested by Morgan Williams.

New Website I have taken over the maintenance of the current WRPS website from Mike Nixon and scoped the work required to populate the new website with information. We have a basic structure and design already but there is a lot of work needed to write the content.

Whatipu Weeds I have made contact with appropriate staff at the ARC regarding weed management at Whatipu and requested a presentation of work done on this project in the near future. Other groups, such as the Friends of Whatipu,

may also be interested in attending.

Consultation

Kauri PTA I have been keeping an eye on developments from the teams working on the disease, but there seems to be little progress. The Society is very concerned that we could lose all the kauri in the Ranges to this disease if those currently unaffected are not quarantined while a cure is sought. Kath Dewar wrote an excellent press release on this issue that was well publicised [see separate item in this newsletter].

Possums I met with WCC, ARC and others from the executive to discuss how the Society could help with possum control in the foothills. WCC staff are very keen to work with us and local ratepayer groups, so we will be moving this initiative forward as soon as possible.

Local WCC Reserves WCC have flagged that they will be reviewing local reserves and their management in the near future so I wrote to them requesting that we are involved in the preparation of this plan and stating that adequate local consultation needs to take place before any decisions are taken.

Dog Control Bylaws We were alerted to a proposed change in these bylaws by WCC that had only involved consultation with dog owners and not any other groups. No conservation issues had been taken into consideration. Thanks to swift intervention by Kath Dewar we made an informal submission and have ensured that a more comprehensive consultation process will take place before decisions are made.

Consents

Rotondo Development, Titirangi Following a robust discussion on this issue at committee the decision was made not to make a submission at this stage. However since the local ratepayer group has opposed the development it is likely that the Society will join as a section 274 party at a later stage. There are concerns over the scale of the development and the precedent it sets for future development in the village.

Karekare Surf Club I have reviewed the available information and taken advice from EDS and we await notification of this consent by WCC.

Piha Post Office We are awaiting notification of this consent by WCC.

Waitakere Dams consents – Watercare / ARC We have continued to state the Society's view that Watercare should be paying compensation to environmental groups working in the dams catchments as mitigation for the considerable delays (2 years plus) to the release of compensation flows from the dams. To date ARC have taken no action and have not yet decided whether to notify the application for variation of the consents (to allow for the later dates). I have written to the ARC again requesting the consents to be notified and for action to be taken against Watercare.

Maxwell – Grendon Rd / Landing Rd Walkway I wrote to WCC requesting an update on the outcome of this consent hearing that had been adjourned. This week we have received a letter informing us that the applicant has withdrawn the application to vary the consent conditions. The walkway will therefore be built and the reserve land allocated as originally specified by the Environment Court. I look forward to being able to walk between South Titirangi and Laingholm soon!

Letters

EcoMatters Trust I wrote to the ASB Community Trust to support the application by the EcoMatters Trust for funding for the Sustainable Living Centre in New Lynn.

MPs re Enviroschools I wrote to Paula Bennett, Anne Tolley, Nick Smith, John Key and the Blue Greens to protest at the Government's cuts to environmental education in schools and to urge them to reconsider their decision. We have received no reply.

Education

Harbours DVD – ARC I received and watched a new educational DVD produced by the ARC on sedimentation in our harbours. It is an excellent production and well worth seeing. However it does miss an opportunity to educate people on not polluting via stormwater drains, which is a shame. If anyone would like to borrow the DVD then please get in touch.

EDS Conference I attended the recent EDS conference "Reform in Paradise: Threat or Opportunity" for 2 days in Auckland. It was an excellent programme that considered how all the recent legislative reforms will affect our environment and how we regulate and manage it.

Fundraising

ARC Environmental Initiatives Fund I have applied to the ARC for \$5000 to fund researching and writing the content for the new WRPS website. Should we be successful the Society will match the funding awarded by the ARC. The aim of the project is to produce the definitive online guide to the Waitakere Ranges and a site where people can engage with others and take action to promote conservation in the area.

Mels Barton
August 2009

Operation Possum Blitz

THE DESTROYER



**Possums are
Eating our Forests**



**Our Birds
and our Gardens**



Let's do something about it!
**We are distributing traps in your area,
and offering back-up support and advice**



Phone June 817 8315 or Linda 817 4338



This is a community project supported
by Auckland Regional Council and
Waitakere City Council.



WRPS and the Titirangi Ratepayers and Residents Association are keen to work with individuals and groups who want to control possums in the Waitakere Ranges foothills. We have met with ARC and WCC staff and are looking for local coordinators in the Laingholm, Oratia and Green Bay areas who can hand out traps to individuals and record the results of the trapping.

June Henderson and Linda Graham have been working together to kick off the project following a meeting of the Friends of Arataki in February. They are coordinating the distribution of traps in Titirangi and have around 60 traps available for loan. If you would like a trap then please contact June directly on 817 8315 or Linda on 817 4338.

If there are possums on your property you should catch them within 10 days. If you have no success then please return your trap so it can be given to someone else. The best bait is an apple. Carcasses should be buried on your property or wrapped in newspaper and put out in your Council rubbish bag.

WRPS will develop a “library card” system to be issued with each trap that will record how many times it was set, how many possums were caught and your address so we can monitor the success of the operation.

Possums cause a great deal of damage to recovering bush and a single animal can destroy large amounts of vegetation every night as well as eating baby birds and eggs. They have no natural predators in New Zealand, breed twice a year in our favourable conditions and are a major threat to the health of the Ranges.

The ARC's Operation Forest Save has been very successful in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and possum numbers are still low and under control here. However this is not the case for the foothills where they are increasing and where it is difficult to use poison.

You can make a difference by trapping the possums on your property and encouraging your neighbours to do the same. WRPS has reports of an individual in Green Bay with 2 traps who has caught over 70 possums in 3 months.

If you'd like to be a coordinator for your area please contact Mels Barton on 816 8337 or mels@waitakereranges.org.nz

Praying Mantids

Graeme Ramsay

There are two species of praying mantid established in New Zealand and both are present in Titirangi and the Waitakeres. The word “established” is used because one has been in New Zealand only for about 40 years and it is

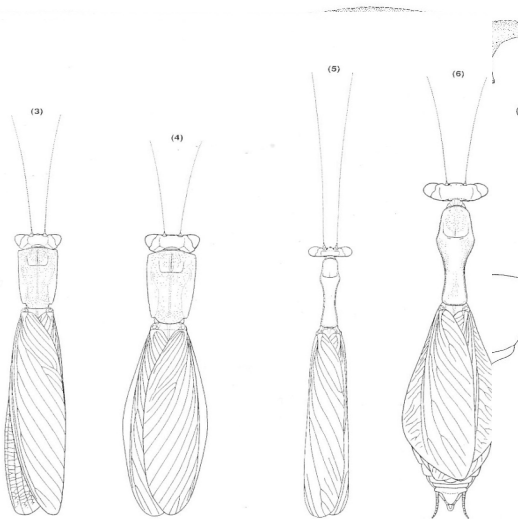
controversial whether or not the other is a true native. The latter, the “New Zealand mantid” *Orthodera novaezealandiae* (see illustration) is very similar to a common Australian species and certainly originated there but whether or not it reached here by some natural means or by human intervention is unknown. It may have been here before European settlement as it has some involvement in Maori tradition. The first actual record is of an eggcase collected by Dr Andrew Sinclair in the Bay of Islands or Great Barrier Island in 1841. Thereafter it seems to have dispersed rapidly and widely as it occurred in Napier and the Otago goldfields in the 1870s and 80s. The destruction of forests and development of shrubland –its favoured habitat - may have aided its spread. One early entomologist suggested that the Auckland population may have originated in Sydney and the Otago goldfield population from Victoria or Tasmania whence large quantities of hay were imported.

The second species, *Miomantis caffra* (see illustration) suddenly appeared in Highland Avenue in 1978. It was well established when discovered but how it got here is unknown. It probably came in as an eggcase which would not necessarily be easy to detect, or it may have been on illegally imported plant material. However it got here it seemed to remain in the North for a decade or so before beginning to disperse south into the Waikato and beyond. It is now widespread in the North Island and is probably established in the South Island as well. It is known as the Springbok mantid.

The New Zealand mantid, the smaller of the two, is bright green and a rather docile species. All praying mantids are predators able to catch flies and other insects with ease with their front legs which are specially modified for this purpose. The New Zealand species skilfully stalk their prey and suddenly snatch and capture it with their large spined front legs. They can have voracious appetites when fed living flies in captivity. All mantids produce egg masses termed oothecae which are characteristically shaped for each species (see illustrations). These are laid in the autumn and survive the winter, the young emerging in the following spring. The young nymphs grow and mature during the summer and mate and produce their egg cases during the autumn. In Auckland a few adults occasionally survive through to the next spring. A New Zealand mantid ootheca (egg case) most often contains only 20 - 40 eggs whereas that of the springbok mantid mostly contains 160 - 200 eggs. With the New Zealand mantid, hatching is synchronized and usually takes place over a period of several days which makes the emerging nymphs easy prey for predators. The Springbok nymphs emerge over a period of several months or even over two seasons. These factors give them considerable survival advantages over their New Zealand mantid rivals which may partly explain why the New Zealand mantid is now rare and seems to have been displaced by the larger more aggressive Springbok species.

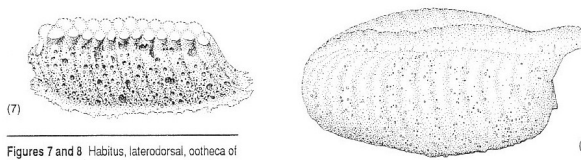
Both male and female New Zealand mantids are similar and bright green in colour, whereas with the Springbok counterpart the sexes are very different, the females being a dull green or brown or even straw coloured. The males are much smaller, thin and delicate, they are partly pale green and their wings are clear membranous and reticulate – almost gossamer-like. New Zealand mantid females rarely eat their mate after copulation whereas Springbok females usually do which is why few springbok males are present towards the end of autumn! A characteristic which distinguishes the New Zealand mantid from its Springbok competitor is the presence of a brightly coloured eyespot on the inner face of each of its folded enlarged capturing forelegs. This is often bright blue and is simply a patch of colour having nothing to do with vision. It is possibly associated with a vestigial defence habit.

A character which may also give the Springbok mantid increased chances of survival is the habit of its nymphs of preferring to remain on the lower sides of the twigs and leaves of its habitat and thus be less vulnerable to predators whereas the New Zealand mantid usually prefers the upper exposed surfaces.



Figures 3-6 Habitus, dorsal, adult male and female of (3, 4) *O. novaezealandiae*, (5, 6) *M. caffra* (x2.6).

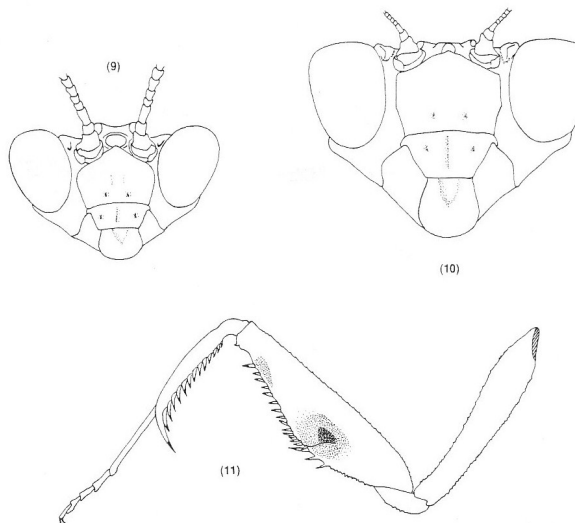
LtoR: Habitus, dorsal, adult male and female of *O. novaezealandiae* and habitus, dorsal, adult male and female of *M. caffra*



Figures 7 and 8 Habitus, laterodorsal, ootheca of (7) *O. novaezealandiae*, (8) *M. caffra* (x3.25).

Figures 9-43 Morphological features of life stages of *Orthodera novaezealandiae*.

Fig. 9 and 10 Head, frontal, male and female (x10). Fig. 11 Foreleg, female, inner aspect (x4.8).



Illustrations taken from *Fauna of New Zealand #19, Mantodea (Insecta)*, by GW Ramsay

Your Committee

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

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Clematis paniculata – female flowers & seed heads
(Sandra Jones)



“WAITAKERE RANGES”

First edition almost sold out.

Cost to members: \$85.00 incl p&p

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PO Box 15-668
New Lynn
Waitakere City 0640

PAY ONLINE:

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

OR

PAY BY CHEQUE:

Please send your order and cheque to:
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PO Box 15668, Waitakere City, 0640.

