



December 2020 Newsletter

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Secretary: Carol Andrews secretary@tawabush.org.nz

Monthly working bees: 2nd Sunday and 4th Tuesday

- Coordinator Sunday: Richard Herbert: herbert.r@xtra.co.nz
- Coordinator Tuesday: Andrew Liley: acfhilley@gmail.com

1. Seniors Expo display Friday 13 November 2020



Thanks to **Doug Miller** a FOTBR display stand was set up at the Seniors Expo in the Tawa Community Centre. This display, together with about 14 other community organisations, provided seniors with an opportunity to learn about these groups and what they have to offer.

Doug and **Richard Herbert** were on hand to share about the work of FOTBR and gave away brochures with membership forms and also walking track booklets about the Tawa native bush reserves.

2. Guided bush walk, for the community, Sunday 15 November

Led by FOTBR members **Richard Herbert**, **Andrew Liley** and **Gil Roper**, the guided walk through Redwood Bush and Larsen Crescent Reserve saw 15 new people participate in this event.

Many of those present, indicated that this was the first time that they had walked in these reserves and were appreciative of a detailed look at the native flora and fauna as well as some background about when these reserves were named, developed and opened.



Some background of Redwood Bush outlined.



How to recognise a mamaku.

Photos: Richard Herbert



Part of the group towards the end of the walk.

Photo: David Wratt

On emerging from the lower part of Larsen Crescent Reserve into Peterhouse Street, a large kererū alighted on a tree just a few metres away. *An admirable conclusion to the afternoon! How did you arrange for that to happen?* quipped one member of the group. According to the immediate residents, there are several of these birds that frequent this reserve and are even in greater numbers when the matai are fruiting in summer.



3. Kererū in record numbers in Wellington in 2020

i. Wellington numbers top New Zealand

The 'Dominion Post' 7 October 2020 reported that Wellingtonians taking part in this year's Great Kererū Count, identified more birds than any other region in the country. The annual count took place between 18 and 27 September, 2020 and keen watchers spotted 5,619, or 26 percent of the national count. In comparison, Auckland reported 3,580 birds.

However, it is not only Wellington City that is seeing an increase in numbers. Greater Wellington reported that kererū numbers in the Kaitoke Regional Park north of Upper Hutt, have increased from 71 to 107 over the last year.



ii. Special features of kererū

Although quiet and reclusive, kererū have earned a reputation as the drunkest bird in New Zealand, and have been known to fall from trees after tucking into rotten fruit left lying on the ground, Forest and Bird said at the time. Kererū play a vital role in dispersing native seeds of species such as karaka, miro, tawa and taraire, because they are one of the few birds large enough to swallow whole fruit.

Whether you love their classic white singlets, their whooping wing-beats, or their awesome aerial acrobatics, kererū are especially unique, mused Tony Stoddard, the Great Kererū Count coordinator.

iii. Mental well-being

The benefits of counting kererū go beyond just the joy of seeing birds. The count coincided with Mental Health Awareness Week, and Associate Professor Stephen Hartley, Director of the Centre for Biodiversity and Restoration Ecology at Victoria University of Wellington, said: *it was an appropriate time for people to get out and count kererū. There is good evidence that spending time outdoors and re-connecting with nature is good for your health, and in particular mental well-being.*

Council urban ecology manager Daniela Biaggio said: *as well as enhancing our knowledge, the Great Kererū Count provides an opportunity for Wellingtonians to connect with nature and explore their*

surroundings. Since 2011, the council has also recorded a rise in tūī, fantail (piwakawaka), kākā, kakariki and tīeke (North Island saddleback) making Wellington their home.



iv. Reasons for the increased numbers

Daniela attributed the increase in numbers to the work done throughout the city to control pests such as rats and possums as well as work done by community groups planting and restoring native habitats providing a greater food source for the birds.

4. Wayne Pincott's outstanding service to FOTBR



Co-opted onto the committee about 2003, Wayne has given significant service to FOTBR. As President from 2016 to 2018, he was instrumental in making the Tawa community aware of the potential sale of the Forest of Tawa for possible housing development. His drive, eventually resulted in the WCC purchasing the land that is today known as Te Ngahere-o-Tawa/Forest of Tawa where there is active restoration of the bush by WCC in conjunction with FOTBR and the Tawa community.

Wayne has also served as Secretary to the committee from 2009 to 2012 and Vice-President from 2018/2019. As part of his work, he has helped with submissions to the WCC, development and planning, editor of the newsletter, coordinating membership, liaison with community and schools groups as well as organisation of Spring into Tawa displays.

As Wayne concludes his service on the FOTBR committee, it is pertinent to acknowledge his longstanding work for the group and his recognition shown in the ongoing development and conservation of the native bush reserves in Tawa. We salute you Wayne for your untiring service!

5. Wind damage to historical trees in Willowbank Reserve

Recent strong blustery southerlies caused two of the heritage apple trees to be blown over at the western end of the reserve. The historical significance of these trees dates back 150 years, when they were part of an orchard established by settler, William Earp as part of the Boscobel farm in the mid-1850s.

WCC is aware of this damage, with some strategic pruning already being done. Future preservation and restoration by arborists will be a 'wait and see' process.



6. Tawa College Year 10 Community Service, 4 December and involvement with FOTBR

Groups of students were involved in two ways on this day. One was at the Tawa College Horticulture Block, and the other at Willowbank Reserve.

Gil and Helen Roper worked with **Brian Sturman** (HOD Science) and 5 students in the current site of FOTBR native plant propagation area. Garden beds were cleared and then dug over.

Weeds were also cleared from paths and the compost bins emptied, with the compost bagged for use when planting out native seedlings in the College grounds in the future.

As in previous years, the Willowbank Reserve Care Group under **Fiona Drummond's** leadership, worked over two days with students, removing invasive weeds, particularly *Tradescantia* that inhibits the growth of native trees along the bank of the Takapu Stream. This clearance will enable these areas to be replanted.



Horticulture Block tidy up.



FOTBR acknowledge with thanks, the help and service from Tawa College students in enabling this restoration work.

Clean-up in Willowbank Reserve.

7. Mamaku or Ponga?

Two of our most common NZ tree ferns, are both prevalent in the Tawa native bush reserves.

Our tallest tree fern, reaching up to 20m, **mamaku (black tree fern/*Cyathea medullaris*)** has distinctively black, scale-covered koru as the fronds unfurl.



The fronds extend up to 5m and can be as thick as a human arm at maturity.

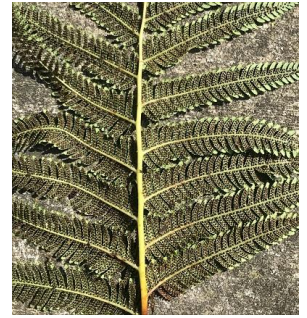
Mature trunks are distinctive with their oval to hexagonal scar marks left when fronds have fallen off.





Examples of mamaku are obvious at the side of the ascending track in the Te Ngahere-o-Tawa/Forest of Tawa.

Ponga (silver tree fern/*Cyathea dealbata*) is an iconic symbol of New Zealand. With its distinctive silvery underside of the fronds being replicated as an emblem for our national sports teams. Names relating to this fern have also been adopted, including the 'Silver ferns' (netball) and the 'White ferns' (women's cricket). Also, for Air New Zealand, our national airline, aircraft have the silver fern replicated on the fuselage of their planes.



Reaching up to 10m in height, the silvery underside to the fronds appears after plants are about 4 years old. The mature trunks have their surface covered with 'peg-like stumps', where the fronds were once attached.

Many specimens are visible near the tracks in Redwood Bush.

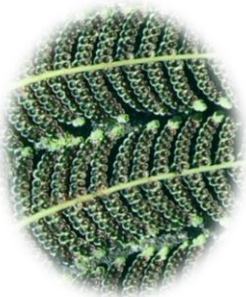
Which fern is which when I see them in the bush?

View the underside of the fronds and examine the nature of the trunk where fronds have fallen off.



Mamaku (black tree fern)

Ponga (silver tree fern)



Green underside of a frond showing tiny black sori that produce spores.



Trunk with oval scar marks.



Silver underside of a frond showing tiny brown sori that produce spores.



Trunk with peg-like stumps.

The FOTBR committee thanks all members for their involvement in the many and varied activities associated with the Tawa native bush reserves over 2020.

Gil Roper, Editor
FOTBR Committee