



February 2021 Newsletter

President: Gary Beecroft gary.beecroft@xtra.co.nz

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:
acfhiley@gmail.com



1. FOTBR achievements in 2020

Welcome to 2021! In looking back on 2020, some of the major activities included:

- continuing our education programme that included an informative talk on ecological restoration of Wellington from our Patron, Mayor Andy Foster
- regular newsletters and guided community bush walks
- construction of two new shade-houses and a greenhouse for the propagation of native trees
- propagation of native trees and planting out over 1,700 seedlings in the Tawa bush reserves
- partnering with the Willowbank Reserve Care Group to enable the restoration of this reserve
- setting up a liaison programme with Tawa schools so students can be involved in local ecology
- continuing the programme to eradicate invasive cherry trees from Tawa's native bush areas
- continuing to eradicate invasive pest animals from Tawa's bush reserves.

It is important to note that securing grant funding has supplemented income received from subscriptions and donations and therefore enabled some of the above tasks to be undertaken.

2. Did you see this? A yellow flowered pohutukawa tree in Tawa

December brings a greater awareness of pohutukawa trees (*Metrosideros excelsa*) due to the bright red-coloured flowers. However, a tree near 300 Main Road, Tawa had distinctly yellow flowers.

Some trees can have white, pink or yellow-coloured flowers. However, apart from the flower colour, the other features of the tree are typically the same as the usual pohutukawa.

Remember to look out for this tree in December 2021.

Yellow flowered pohutukawa tree, on Main Road, (December 2020).



3. Annual General Meeting of FOTBR 2021

This is scheduled for Wednesday 10 March in the Tawa Union Church Lounge at 7.30pm. After the business of the meeting we will be privileged to have a presentation entitled:

The future development in Upper Stebbings and Glenside West

This presentation will provide an overview of the development concept produced by Wellington City Council for Upper Stebbings and part of Glenside West. It will include a summary of the site features which guide the pattern of development and other considerations, such as stream and ridgetop protection.

We will have three presenters:

Lucie Desrosiers, Principal Advisor, City Design and Planning, WCC

Bec Ramsay, Open Space and Recreation Planning Manager, WCC

Stu Farrant, Water Sensitive Design Lead, Morpium Environmental Ltd.

At the conclusion of the presentation, supper will be served.

4. Volunteer Positions available or 'Situations Vacant'

We are seeking assistance for the following positions, with the intention that these can be finalised for the Annual General Meeting.

a. Secretary

- Our Secretary is moving on to a new challenge after the AGM in March 2021, and we're looking for a person to fill this pivotal role.
- The Secretary is part of the committee and works closely with the President to coordinate and take the minutes of the monthly committee meetings. There is also close liaison with the Treasurer on the annual subscription process (according to FOTBR policy), and end-of-year reporting. The Secretary also manages communications with members, maintains records of activities, and manages FOTBR records.

If you're interested or would like to hear more about this role, please contact the current Secretary, Carol Andrews secretary@fotbr.org.nz

b. Membership Coordinator

The FOTBR Membership Coordinator is key to keeping the membership engaged and informed. This person is part of the committee that meets monthly. The role coordinates all aspects of membership to ensure that we:

- tap into membership experience and skills for projects and activities
- promote FOTBR with the Tawa community
- increase FOTBR capacity to undertake projects
- increase membership numbers.

The person works closely with the President, Secretary, Treasurer and the Newsletter Editor.

If you're interested or would like to hear more about this role, please contact Gary Beecroft, President gary.beecroft@xtra.co.nz

c. Grant Administrator

A Grant Administrator is a key role for securing funding with third parties and administering grant applications from concept through to completion.

FOTBR delivers a wide range of projects following successful grant applications. Our President leads on grant applications but as we have a number of projects at conceptual stage, we are looking for someone to assist him with grant administration.

We're looking for a person to write grant applications within agreed time frames for review by the FOTBR Committee, as well as manage existing grants processes including ensuring that the accountability reports with their respective funding providers is submitted. There is a *Policy and Procedure for the Application and Administration of Grants* that outlines FOTBR grants process.

If you're interested or would like to hear more about this role, please contact Gary Beecroft, President gary.beecroft@xtra.co.nz

d. Project managers

A project manager is a key role in the delivery of project outcomes for FOTBR.

FOTBR delivers a range of projects following successful grant applications. We have a number of projects concepts at early stages and subject to funding, we will have projects requiring project management processes to deliver.

We're looking for suitable people who can take ownership and deliver project/s using FOTBR volunteers and/or external contractors within agreed time frames and budgets.

If you're interested or would like to hear more about this role, please email the Secretary in the first instance secretary@fotbr.org.nz

5. Finished framework of the greenhouse, December 2020

The new propagation facilities are well advanced, and once in use, will add more space to the existing facilities at Tawa College.

Thanks to **Geoff Mills** and his team for the hours given in the construction and appreciation to **Joanne Youthed** and **James Wright** who will have oversight of the new area once it is in operation.



6. Pest control in Tawa bush reserves

- a. **Denis Rogerson**, from the FOTBR committee, reports on the monitoring and maintenance of approximately 100 bait stations and 25 traps in the Tawa reserves. These are used to control possums, rats, mustelids and hedgehogs and are important for the health and vitality of native flora and fauna.



Although possum numbers are well down, historically speaking, ongoing bait station maintenance is needed to ensure this remains like this. Today, it is primarily rats and mustelids that are the main pests targeted. **Denis reports that: around 2-3 stoats and weasels are caught annually in the Tawa area.**

b. Recent stoat capture in Tawa

A stoat was trapped in the Willowbank Reserve in December 2020. They are ferocious predators and the number one killer of many of New Zealand's endangered native species. They live in any habitat where they can find prey and tolerate extreme weather conditions.



Stoats are also efficient breeders and juvenile females are usually pregnant before they become independent and have a litter size of 8-10. They disperse up to 65 km and can swim 1.5 km plus, therefore putting predator-free islands at risk.

Hunt for an island-hopping stoat cost \$86,000

On 16 January 2021, the Dominion Post reported that a seven-month hunt to trap an island-hopping stoat in Auckland's Hauraki Gulf cost Auckland Council and DOC \$86,000. Eventually trapped on Rangitoto Island in September 2020, the stoat had killed kererū, kākāriki and pūkeko on neighbouring islands, and the pest had reached these by swimming.

c. Documented damage caused by stoats

Stoats were introduced into NZ in 1879 to control rabbits that were destroying sheep pasture. Stoats are implicated in the extinction of South Island bush wren and the laughing owl. Even a 3kg takahe or 2kg kakapo can be killed by a stoat. They also have a strategy of killing everything in sight and storing the surplus for later consumption. **It is not surprising when Denis says: *We are very happy when we trap a stoat.***

7. Myrtle rust disease has arrived in Tawa

Doug Miller reports that myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) is a fungal disease that affects plants in the myrtle family. It originated in South America and has spread to North America, Hawaii, New Caledonia, South Africa, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. It is spread by tiny spores carried by wind and believed to have arrived in New Zealand by spores blown across the Tasman Sea.

First detection in New Zealand

The first detected case was in Northland in May 2017. Since then, it has been located in Taranaki, Waikato, Auckland and Wellington.

Myrtle family trees that can be potentially infected

New Zealand has 37 native myrtles, including pōhutukawa and rātā, mānuka and kānuka, ramarama, rōhutu, and swamp maire. There are also many non-native myrtle species including eucalypts, feijoa, bottlebrushes, guava, lillypilly (monkey apple) and willow myrtle.

Symptoms of myrtle rust:

- bright yellow powdery eruptions on the underside of young leaves
- these eruptions appearing on both sides of the leaves
- brown/grey rust pustules (older spores) on older lesions
- grey, 'fuzzy' spore growth on the undersides of leaves.

To date in Tawa, myrtle rust is primarily affecting ramarama (*Lophomyrtus* species) and cases observed in some home gardens.



Myrtle rust on young leaves of ramarama.



Spores of myrtle rust on the underside of a ramarama leaf.

What to do about myrtle rust disease when sighted

As myrtle rust is an unwanted fungus disease, we must take care not to deliberately spread it. If you decide to remove myrtle rust-infected plant material, you must comply with the MPI's conditions for the transport and disposal of infected plant material. See the link below:

[How-to-remove-infected-myrtle-plants-and-safely-dispose-of-the-waste.pdf \(myrtlerust.org.nz\)](https://www.mylterrust.org.nz/how-to-remove-infected-myrtle-plants-and-safely-dispose-of-the-waste.pdf)

For further information see the following links:

www.myrtlerust.org.nz

[Myrtle Rust | Greater Wellington Regional Council \(gw.govt.nz\)](http://www.gw.govt.nz/myrtle-rust)

[Protect plants from myrtle rust \(aucklandcouncil.govt.nz\)](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/myrtle-rust)

Thanks to Doug Miller for his research on myrtle rust

8. Tawa College Community Education Course

A 6-week course entitled 'Flora and fauna of our local native bush reserves' is commencing on Tuesday evening 9 February. The full details of the coverage and how to enrol for this course can be obtained through the following link.

<https://www.tawacommed.co.nz/Course,FLORA-and-FAUNA-OF-OUR-LOCAL-NATIVE-BUSH-RESERVES,5127>

Gil Roper, Editor
FOTBR Committee

