



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

A reminder that FOTBR is hosting a guided bush walk in Redwood Bush and Larsen Crescent Reserve which is open to all members of the community.



Please meet at the Brasenose Place entrance of Redwood Bush at 2pm. The walk will take approximately 2 hours and conclude in Peterhouse Street and then return to Brasenose Place by footpath.

The walk is open to anyone, but to determine actual numbers participating, please email FOTBR Secretary, **Carol Andrews** by 8 November if you plan to come.
secretary@tawabush.org.nz



2. Have you purchased a copy of: *Tawa, its recreational parks and reserves*?

Monday 12 October, 2020 saw the launch of a new book: *Tawa, its recreational parks and reserves*, written by **Gil Roper**. The occasion was well supported by the community, including members of FOTBR. Published through the Tawa Historical Society, FOTBR contributed to the cost of printing this full-colour book that includes geography, history and botanical information pertaining to Tawa's many parks and reserves.

Copies have sold quickly, but there are some still available, either from *Takenote* or the Tawa Library cost of \$35 cash per copy.

A possible Christmas gift?



3. Why do tūi have their heads dowsed with an orange colour in early summer?

a. Tūi are nectar feeders



Tūi use their long tongues to penetrate deep into the base of nectar-bearing flowers such as flax in spring and summer. As they secure nectar, the plumage on top of the heads of tūi become dowsed with orange-coloured pollen.

b. Pollen

This is produced in the anthers (male structures) that are exposed at the top of the open flowers.



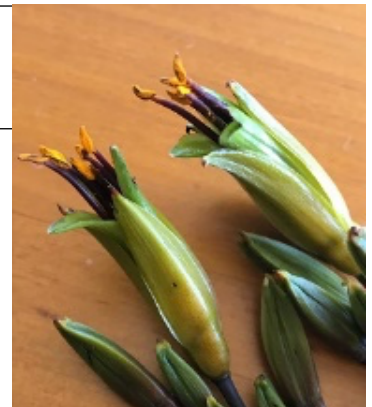
flax flowers

Photo source: Wikipedia

c. Cross pollination

As tūi visit the flowers of other flax plants, the pollen is randomly transferred from the heads of tūi to the stigmas (female part) of other flowers, which enables cross pollination. The pollen then sends down tubes from the stigma to the ovary, that carry sperm to enable fertilisation with eggs in the ovary.

anthers
covered with
pollen →



d. Importance

This process is important for all plants to increase the genetic diversity of the resulting seed and the subsequent plants that grow.

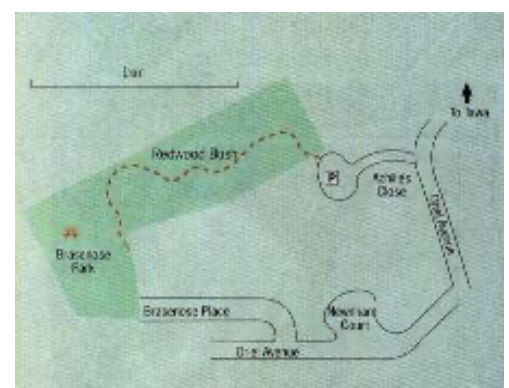
4. Praiseworthy history about FOTBR from 2005 – a good read!

“Redwood Bush ideal walk for small kids” from ‘Walkabout’ by Dave Hansford

Most Wellingtonians can look out the window and see greenery somewhere: we tend to take it for granted. But those trees are only there because somebody made it their business to look after them. The WCC takes care of the Town and Outer Belts, and many more parks and reserves, said Dave Hansford.

In all corners of the city, groups of volunteers give time to plant trees and pull weeds, pick up rubbish, set possum and rat traps and clean up streams. The ‘Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves’ is one such taskforce. They’ve adopted Larsen Crescent and Wilf Mexted Reserves, and the 10ha patch you’re about to walk through – Redwood Bush.

Since 2000, they’ve been nursing these precious remnants back to health after decades of possum damage, tree clearance and rubbish dumping.



Last November, they built this track, (with WCC putting in the steps, borders and bridges) so people could come and enjoy some of Wellington's rarest forest – the last few mature tawa and kohekohe. It's a short easy jaunt, about an hour return at the most and ideal for small kids.

This type of forest once covered much of the region, but more than 99 per cent of it fell to the axe and the match. The cloak is now threadbare, scattered in tiny pockets left open to the wind and invasive weeds that sprout from dumped garden rubbish. So Redwood Bush is a shady, priceless relic. Initially, the bush floor is open – lanky kawakawa reach up to the light on trunks that look like the bony fingers of a skeleton amid ferns. But the deeper you go, the more diverse the forest becomes.

The kohekohe have rewarded their Friends' kindness with a lush canopy of fresh glossy leaves, and legions of little seedlings below. Kohekohe is top of the possums' menu, and without a network of traps and bait stations, they'd be in a sorry plight by now.

Large purple-black berries lie on the ground, looking a bit like olives. These have fallen from the tawa overhead. They're big: so big that there are few forest birds capable of swallowing them. But one still lives here. You may hear the woosh of its wings, or find an iridescent green wing feather on the forest door. It's the kereru, or native pigeon and without its appetite and alimentary tract the tawa would be lost. It's a simple but beautifully elegant system. The pigeon gobbles up the tawa berry, gets the benefit of its nutritious flesh, yet leaves the seed unharmed, primed in fact, for deposit far from the parent tree, often in its own little jump start of fertiliser.

Around December-January, you might also spot titoki berries on the track. A fleshy scarlet fruit holds a glossy black seed in a woody capsule. Maori lore mentions a drink distilled from these berries that "captured the intensity and glow of the earth's hidden fires. Maori also pressed the seeds for oil, which was used as a hair groomer".

Soon, the interior becomes a snarl of supplejack, hangehange with its exquisite, musky scent and lush beds of ferns. Even the common trees are noteworthy here, because there are some very old mahoe, a huge griselinia and some tree fuchsia (rusty-coloured bark hanging off in papery strips) and heketara, or tree daisies (they're flowering right now in myriad white clusters). The track continues to climb gently to a small open knoll where you get a view across the houses to the stark stucco ramparts of Grenada North. From here, the track dips down to a small footbridge under much smaller, regenerating scrub till you can see down to Brasenose Park and the playground.

You can walk back along the streets if you wish, but it would be a shame when you've got such a delightful alternative back the way you came.

Source: Dominion Post, 5 January 2005

5. Completed shade-houses

Geoff Mills reports that the two shade-houses are now completed. The sourcing and placing of the required benches is well underway and when in place, this will enable practical work to proceed.

Work is about to commence on the construction of the greenhouse that will be positioned alongside the shade-houses.



6. Gecko sightings in Tawa bush reserves

Stephen Challands reports that New Zealand has over forty species of native geckos, at least two of which are present in Redwood Bush Reserve, Wilf Mexted Reserve, and also some Tawa gardens.



Ngahere gecko near Redwood Bush

The Ngahere gecko can be active during both day and at night. It is usually found on trees and shrubs (both native and exotic), where it sun basks on warm days. It is patterned and grey or brown in appearance.

The Barking gecko is active during the day. It is usually found amongst foliage, but this species is very difficult to observe. It is bright green in colour.

Both species are secretive, well camouflaged animals and feed on insects, fruits and nectar. They are thought to be declining on mainland New Zealand, due to predation by introduced mammals, habitat destruction, and even illegal collection by humans. Their predators include rats, cats, mice, mustelids and a variety of native and introduced birds.



Barking gecko in Wilf Mexted Reserve

Article by Stephen Challands. Photos by Helen and Stephen Challands.

7. FOTBR stall at 'Spring into Tawa'



Despite persistent drizzle during Saturday morning, 17 October, the annual Spring into Tawa festival continued. The occasion saw the opportunity to give people, information on FOTBR, with brochures, tracks handouts and recent newsletters given away. Interest was such that some people signed up for membership.

Thanks to **Doug Miller, Carol Andrews, Helen Roper** and **Andrew Liley** who braved the inclement weather to set up and maintain the informative display, that had to be periodically taken down to avoid it becoming saturated. In light of the conditions experienced, the use of a gazebo is planned for future occasions.

8. Have you observed lemonwood trees recently?

a. Aromatic smell

Lemonwood or tarata (*Pittosporum eugenioides*) is common throughout the margins of the Tawa bush reserves. However, it is also growing in the community itself, (eg adjacent to the Tawa Squash Courts). Tarata is conspicuous at this time of year because of the aromatic, cream-coloured flowers.



These flowers, as well as the crushed leaves, provide a distinctive citrus smell, hence the name 'lemonwood'. This is due to the plant tissues having glands that contain an aromatic oil.



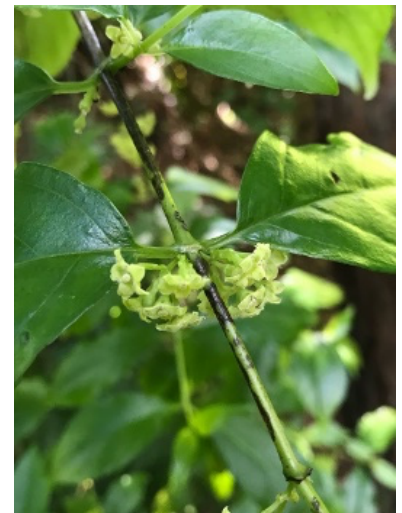
b. Use by Māori

In the past, Māori traditionally used the gum and crushed flowers for scent, usually mixed with oils from the tītoki tree. Gum from the bark was also used chewed as a breath freshener, while leaves were boiled and drunk as a remedy for sore throats.

9. What about the musky smell of hangehange flowers?

a. Features

Another small tree flowering in the bush reserves at the moment is Hangehange (*Geniostoma ligustrifolium*). The oval, soft and shiny green leaves are elongated at the end, to form a 'drip tip'. The cream-green flowers that develop at this time of year, have a musky smell.



b. Uses by Māori

Leaves were used as a flavouring in Māori cuisine. The roots of kumara and tī kōuka (cabbage tree) were wrapped in the hangehange leaves and cooked in a hāngī, where the leaves gave the food more flavour. The bark of the tree was beaten to produce a black dye, while the sap was used to treat itchy skin.

Gil Roper (FOTBR Committee)