



## August 2021 Newsletter

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Secretary: Geoff Mills [secretary@tawabush.org.nz](mailto:secretary@tawabush.org.nz)

Monthly working bees: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday

- Coordinator Sunday: Richard Herbert: [herbert.r@xtra.co.nz](mailto:herbert.r@xtra.co.nz)
- Coordinator Tuesday: Andrew Liley: [acfhilley@gmail.com](mailto:acfhilley@gmail.com)

Website: <https://tawabush.org.nz>



### 1. Featuring Willowbank Reserve



Aerial image, showing the expanse of the reserve (green), the course of the Takapu and Porirua streams (purple) and their confluence towards the southern end, as well as the origin of Ara Tawa walkway that heads north (red).



Thanks to FOTBR member,  
Paul Langham for producing  
the above image.



Paul



### a. Source of the name 'Willowbank'

The origin of the name 'Willowbank Reserve' is unclear. The area once included an orchard of the original owner, **William Earp**. It is likely that the name came from the tall willow trees aligning the banks of the stream. Willows (*Salix* species) are deciduous and are naturally found in the northern hemisphere. Early settlers who were predominantly from the northern hemisphere probably planted these.

### b. Facilities

A popular amenity reserve with a variety of facilities, it has a creative children's playground, grassed and picnic areas, walking tracks through bush (some native and some exotic trees), a dog exercise area and toilets. It is also of historical importance with heritage fruit trees, the iconic bucket tree and a Norfolk Island pine and some memorials.

### c. Willowbank Reserve Care Group

This group works with FOTBR and WCC and undertakes regular maintenance and restoration of the reserve. It holds twice monthly working bees and recent weed clearing and tree planting in July are shown below. Work was concentrated towards the southern end, with the planting of grasses and shrubs over two days. Thanks to **Helen Challands** and **Gretchen Woudt** for photos of the working bees.



**Towering willow trees dominate the reserve in autumn.**

The reserve has been significantly enhanced through the ongoing work of the dedicated people in this group. For anyone else interested in being involved, the email contact is:

[willowbankreserve.caregroup@gmail.com](mailto:willowbankreserve.caregroup@gmail.com)



**Note with recent heavy rain, some plantings have been washed out.**





#### d. Proposed mural for Willowbank Reserve

Following negotiations with KiwiRail and artist, **Leon Hohepa**, in August this year, a mural will feature near the Bucket Tree Lodge entrance to the reserve below the Metlink railway. The proposal is to have a native bush theme and feature a weka. This bird was historically present in the Tawa Basin prior to the area being developed. Leon's draft image is depicted alongside.

Appreciation for this creative project is given to: Leon Hohepa, KiwiRail, Paula Warren from DOC, Resene Paints, Keep Hutt Valley Beautiful, and the Willowbank Reserve Care Group.



#### 2. What do kererū eat in winter?

With minimal seed and fruit available from native trees in winter, kererū frequently supplement their diet by consuming tree lucerne and young kowhai leaves which are both high in protein.

Also when these plants are flowering, kererū take nectar from flowers. These birds are vital for dispersing the seed of large fruiting trees such as tawa, as they are the only native birds that can ingest such large fruit. Kererū subsequently disperse the seed in summer when defaecating, after the fleshy fruit has been digested.



Kererū actively eating young shoots of tree lucerne.



#### 3. Kohekohe trees in winter



This is sometimes called 'the funkiest tree' in our native bush, with its white flowers in winter that grow directly from the trunk. The flowers provide a nectar source for tūi and korimako (bellbirds) at a time when other food is not as abundant.

In some years, a strong sweet aroma is evident in the Tawa bush reserves. This is produced from the abundant white kohekohe flowers. These develop into large green, then black, golf-ball-like fruit in the





Flowering in June 2018.

following year. They enclose fleshy orange jelly that surround the seeds. Kererū digest the orange jelly and release undigested seeds in their faeces.

Kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*) are one of the dominant trees in our Tawa native bush reserves.

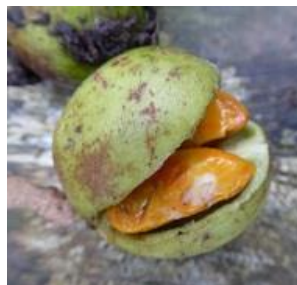
There is currently, prolific regeneration of kohekohe seedlings due to the absence of browsing animals such as possums – a tribute to the pest control undertaken by FOTBR over many years.



Single kohekohe flower.



Flowering in June 2021.



Kohekohe fruit with seeds enclosed in orange fleshy jelly.



Two seeds germinating with the young root (radicle) emerging.

#### 4. Tree planting in Woodburn Reserve

Sunday afternoon, 13 June saw members of FOTBR, a contingent from the Port Nicholson Rotary Club and a group from Interact (Youth Rotary group) combine to plant nearly 400 trees in Woodburn Reserve. These trees were provided from the WCC nursery. This effective work was a sequel to that done by this group in July 2020. Photo: **Richard Herbert**.

Thanks to **Richard Herbert** and **Andrew Liley** who spent considerable time prior to the planting, transferring the many young trees to the planting site near 66 Bing Lucas Drive.



Group gathers for Afternoon Tea. Evidence of previous plantings is visible in the background.



## 5. Tawa community work together in local conservation!



Elizabeth

Thanks to the initiation by FOTBR member, **Elizabeth Werner**, invasive jasmine (*Jasminum polyanthum*) was removed from native bush in the Redwood area in a working bee on 10 July. This event brought together youth, Pest Free Tawa, Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves and the Willowbank Reserve Care Group,. They filled over 10 large bags with compacted jasmine.



Everyone was treated with yummy food and Elizabeth reported that many native birds were heard and seen throughout the day. These included tūī, kāhu (Australasian harrier), riroriro (grey warbler), pīwakawaka (fantail), tahou (silvereye), korimako (bellbird) and karoro (southern black-backed gull).

Such restoration work is important in protecting our natural environment and the combined efforts of all those who assisted is appreciated and valued.

## 6. Knowing the native trees in the Tawa Reserves

### *Piper excelsum* (Kawakawa)

*Piper* = pepper and *excelsum* = tall. Kawa = bitter.

A few metres high in lowland bush, kawakawa is endemic to NZ.

#### a. Recognition features of kawakawa:

- heart-shaped leaves with a palmate vein pattern
- leaf petiole is flattened at the base
- leaves often have holes, caused by a nocturnal looper caterpillar
- male and female flowers are on different plants (dioecious)
- flowers produced on erect spikes are compacted around the spike
- after pollination, female spikes form fleshy orange berry-like fruits that are eaten by birds including tūī and kererū. The tiny black seeds are hot to taste!



Leaves showing flattened and curved base of the petiole.



Erect spikes of male flowers which are white with pollen at maturity.



Female flower spikes are shorter and thicker than male spikes.



**b. What causes the holes in the kawakawa leaves?**



Orange fruit, with tiny hot black seeds on the fertilised female spikes.

These are the result of feeding by a nocturnal, larval stage of an endemic moth *Cleora scriptaria*. The two photos of this insect below were taken by photographer, **Phil Bendle** and are acknowledged.



Larval stage of looper caterpillar.



Insect photos: Phil Bendle.



Adult moth.

**c. Kawakawa tea**

A pleasant winter drink, this can be made from grated ginger root, plus a few washed kawakawa leaves added to boiling water. Left to stand and liquid decanted off, add lemon juice and honey to sweeten.

**d. Uses of Kawakawa by Māori**

These trees have had multiple uses and full details can found in the following link:

<https://maoriplantuse.landcareresearch.co.nz/WebForms/PeoplePlantsDetails.aspx?firstcome=firstcome&PKey=DF6C4669-4A57-4473-8B3F-CE49593273A2>

**7. Completed lower track in the Forest of Tawa/Te Ngahere-o-Tawa**

During June and July, WCC contractors undertook significant work, developing a new track, finally compacting the surface to enable stability of the surface. During this work, some windfall pine trees were cut, while native tree seedlings were repositioned near the track. Throughout the process, **John Burnet** and **Andrew Liley** maintained a watchful eye on proceedings and relocated native seedlings that were in the path of the new track.



Windfall pine trees cut through to enable the track development.





The well-formed compacted track gives access through the lower area of Forest of Tawa alongside mature pines and natives.



Appreciation is given to the work undertaken by WCC contractors in forming this track. Work is now underway developing the upper section of the track towards the Spicer Forest access road.

Thanks to **Andrew Liley** who on behalf of FOTBR, monitored the work and provided the above photos.

**Gil Roper, Editor  
FOTBR Committee**

