



December 2021 Newsletter

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

Secretary: Geoff Mills 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

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



1. Passing of Fraser Jackson – founding Chairman of FOTBR

A longstanding Tawa resident of 55 years, Fraser and his wife Effie, moved to Auckland a year ago to be close to family. Fraser, the initial FOTBR Chairman from 2002, was instrumental with other local residents in ultimately saving what is today, Larsen Crescent Reserve, at a time of housing expansion in that area.



This event led to the founding of FOTBR which subsequently expanded its work to Redwood Bush and eventually, other native bush reserves in Tawa. FOTBR thankfully acknowledge his selfless community service, especially in his role in the preservation of the native bush reserves that we are now privileged to have.

Peter Saxton, Wayne Pincott, Fraser Jackson and Richard Herbert at the official opening of what is today, Te Ngahere-o-Tawa/Forest of Tawa in 2017.



2. Recognising Tawa trees from a distance in late Spring

In Spring, when tawa trees have new bronze-coloured leaf growth, this contrasts with the green of mature leaves. This enables recognition from afar alongside kohekohe and mahoe trees. The photo is from Oriel Ave on 5 November, looking towards Redwood Bush. Tawa trees are obvious.



3. Wellington tops the Great Kererū Count in 2021

After 8 successive years, this year was the final count to be undertaken and took place between 18-27 September. An amazing number of 21,509 kererū were counted around New Zealand that was up on last year's count of 14,248. In Wellington, 5,619 birds (or 26 percent of the total national count) were seen, the highest figure from any region, with Auckland runners up with 3,580 and Otago 3,475. The nation-wide focus on pest control, native tree planting and the presence of protected sanctuaries have enhanced the expansion of these numbers. Their more common presence in Tawa reserves is very evident on a daily basis.

The Great Kererū Count coordinator Tony Stoddard, said that there's a lot to admire about these special birds. *Whether you love their classic white singlets, their whooping wing-beats, or their awesome aerial acrobatics, kererū are especially unique to us.*



4. Community tree planting along the Porirua Stream

A joint planting project between WWF, Ngati Toa, PCC, GWRC and WCC on part of the riparian corridor along the Porirua Stream was undertaken on Wednesday 6 October.

A good turnout of people planted seedlings at Kenepuru Reserve, near the Kapi-Mana Darts Association, above the stream, with the intention of ultimately improving water quality and restoring the mana of the Porirua Harbour.



Porirua Stream with seedlings planted on west bank in protection of grass.



5. Community guided walk led by FOTBR

On a clear, sunny and still Sunday afternoon on 7 November, 15 people participated in a guided walk along the newly completed track in Te Ngahere-o-Tawa/Forest of Tawa.

The group walked the gradually sloped and well-formed zig-zag track to the top, reaching the 'viewing gallery' and were rewarded with a magnificent, clear view of Tawa.



A highlight of the walk was first hearing, and then seeing a karearea (native falcon) in flight in front of us. Thanks to **John Burnet, Richard Herbert, Andrew Liley and Gil Roper** for leading this community walk – a real must do for those who have not yet done this walk.



6. Pest control in Tawa reserves in 2021



Denis Rogerson reports that as for 2020, Covid-19 restrictions meant that there were fewer checks undertaken than they would have liked. However, a significant advancement in 2021 was completing the task of transferring manual records as far back as 2016 to an online data base called Trap.NZ. This has the advantage of increased visibility of data. (WCC's overview of predator activity across the city) and the ability for data analysis.

Overall, from the bait stations in the reserves in 2021, 75 kg of bait was taken, compared with 72kg in 2020. For trapping, 34 hedgehogs were captured, compared with 35 in 2020, and 59 rats, compared with 58 in 2020. This data indicates that in general, pests in the Tawa reserves are being suppressed rather than eliminated.

In 2022, in conjunction with WCC, FOTBR are looking to significantly increase the number of traps, and that should increase the potential for greater reduction of pests.

7. When is a bat a bird?

The 'Bird of the Year 2021' was clearly voted by people as the long-tailed bat (pekapeka-tou-roa) that is actually a mammal. It was most likely selected as it is our only native land mammal and it is endangered.

The long-tailed bats live throughout NZ, roost in mature trees, (at times in caves) and at dusk, fly along forest edges and use echolocation to source insects as their food. They are important pollinators of forest species. Tiny, they are as small as a human thumb, with a wingspan of a human hand and have a weight of a \$2 coin. They are now endangered as a result of habitat loss and are being preyed on, especially by rats, stoats and feral cats.



Image source:
Wikipedia.

8a. *Senecio glastifolius* (pink ragwort) – an invasive weed

Originally from South Africa, this weed is very evident during November in the Tawa area. An upright perennial with oval, coarsely toothed leaves, it has clusters of bright pink, purple, or mauve, daisy-like flowers with yellow centres. Like thistles, the seeds with parachute-like attachments mean that they spread rapidly in the wind and continue to invade large open areas.



It is considered that seeds were originally and inadvertently released in the lower North Island in the mid-1980s.



8b. Another persistent weed in the Tawa reserves

Tradescantia (wandering willie) is an exotic, creeping, mat-forming and invasive groundcover under trees in some reserves. Its low growing habit smothers the ground in both light and shade, preventing native species from becoming established.



Tradescantia will propagate from the smallest fragment of the fleshy plant. Regular manual removal requires the disposal of entire plants, plus all small pieces, otherwise regrowth is inevitable.



8. Knowing the native trees in the Tawa reserves

i. *Fuchsia excorticata*, tree fuchsia, kōtukutuku

a. Source of name

Reputed to be the largest fuchsia in the world, it grows up to 15m. The Genus name ***Fuchsia*** is from the German botanist **Leonhart Fuchs**, (1501-1566). The species name ***excorticata*** means 'loose barked' while **tukutuku** means 'letting go', so both names refer to the peeling bark.

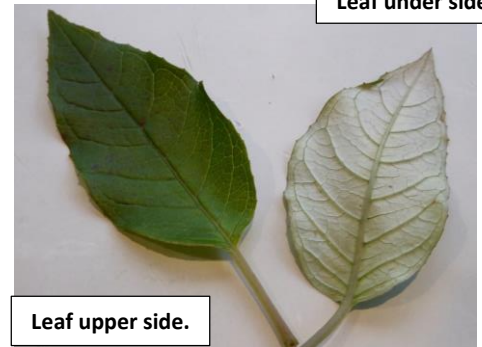
b. It is an 'oddball' NZ native tree because it:

- is deciduous, when growing in temperate to cold locations
- has orange-brown bark that peels off



Bark peeling from trunk.

- has dense and durable wood with high water storing capacity ('bucket-of-water' tree)
- bears purple flowers with blue pollen that form on woody branches (termed 'cauliflory')
- is 'gynodioecious' meaning it has separate hermaphrodite (male and female) parts in flowers and those with female parts. One tree will have female flowers while another, bisexual flowers.



c. Also, did you know?

- nectar from flowers is sought by tūi, kererū, korimako (bellbirds) and tauhou (silveryeyes). Tūi have their black heads covered in blue pollen when they have visited flowers
- dark purple sweet fruit, (kōnini) were eaten by Māori, and Europeans used the fruit for jam
- leaves are soft with a green upper side and a white lower side
- the bark contains tannins and was used as a natural agent in tanning leather as well as for dyes
- the introduction of possums to NZ resulted in a steep decline of this species as trees were killed by defoliation. With possum control in recent years, the kōtukutuku in Tawa bush Reserves are growing better.



Winter branches of a tree in Redwood Bush (left) with Spring branches of the same tree (right).

Kōtukutuku flowers and fruit

Green flowers (right) indicate to birds that nectar is available. Reddish flowers (left) indicate to birds that nectar is not available.



Red kōtukutuku flower with immature green fruit.



Kōnini (fruit) beginning to ripen.



Green kōtukutuku flower with unripe green fruit.

ii. *Hedycarya arborea*, pigeonwood, porokaiwhiri

a. Source of names

The *Genus* name *Hedycarya* means 'sweet seed' while the *species* name *arborea* means 'tree-like'. When ripe, the reddish-orange fruit are consumed by kererū/wood pigeons, hence the common name 'pigeonwood'. Further, *porokaiwhiri* means 'food for the bird with beating wings', so the fruit of the plant is the source of both its Māori and common name.

b. Main features

- endemic to NZ, it grows up to 15m, in lowland bush
- It has separate male and female trees
- hundreds of spent flowers carpet the ground beneath parent trees in early summer
- oval, dark green, leathery leaves have shallow-toothed margins
- lemon-scented flowers are produced in Spring
- clusters of shiny, green fruit form on female trees
- fruit ripen to orange in the summer of the following year.



Mature pigeonwood branch.



Spent male flowers carpet the ground under the parent tree.



Ripe (orange) and unripe (green) fruit.



Male flowers of porokaiwhiri.

c. Uses by Māori

Pigeonwood has versatile wood that was used for:

- sticks for the stick game, tī rākau
- rehu (flutes) and the mouthpiece of shell trumpets, 'it being very sonorous'
- loud-sounding drums or gongs called pahu as well as kororohu (whizzers).

Gil Roper, Editor
FOTBR Committee

