Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves Inc.

August 2022 Newsletter

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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: acfhliley@gmail.com

FOTBR website: https://tawabush.org.nz

1. Special meeting on Pest Control

FOTBR hosted a special meeting on 8 June with a focus on Pest Control in the greater Wellington area. We were privileged to have **Henk Louw**, Biosecurity Specialist from WCC who gave us an informative visual presentation of the expansive work being done in the region to control pests. Henk presented maps and data and had samples on display and answered many questions. With the intention of increasing the number of traps for pest control in the Tawa reserves, FOTBR is thankful for further offers to do this task. Please contact **Denis Rogerson**, our pest control coordinator, if you are interested in participating in this very important work. denisrogerson@gmail.com

2. North Island Kōkako on the increase

Although not naturally located in the Wellington area, it is gratifying to see that this endemic bird species is on the increase in the Auckland Hunua Ranges. With 229 pairs recently being counted, it makes it the second-to-largest mainland population of this species in the country, the largest being in the Pureora Forest in the Waikato. This figure is more than double the number of adult breeding pairs of 106 counted in 2018 and a huge increase from the species' initial count of 25 birds in 1994. This population resurgence has been enabled through targeting pests such as possums, rats and mustelids using traps, bait stations and aerial poison drops.

This effective pest control has also helped in the increase of kākā populations, the numbers of long-tailed bats and Hochstetter's frogs in this area.

3. Possum damage in NZ is still horrendous

It has been estimated that over its lifetime, a single possum will eat 20,000 tonnes of vegetation*. That's more than the weight of over 3000 elephants. Originally introduced to NZ in the 1850s to start a fur industry, with so much food available and no competitors or predators, possums thrived. Trees such as the northern rātā and kōtukutuku (tree fuchsia) were virtually eliminated from much of the native bush with the voracious feeding by possums. In turn, birds dependent on these trees for food were also significantly reduced. Possums also consume insects, birds' eggs and chicks, and other small vertebrates – further eliminating key native fauna.

*Forest & Bird newsletter 4 July 2022.

Since 2000, intensive trapping and use of bait stations in Tawa's reserves by FOTBR, have meant possums have been significantly reduced and eliminated in some areas. However, intensive work is still needed to rid all the local reserves, and in fact the whole country, of this destructive pest.

4. Recognising native trees from their trunks and bark

The following photos of tree trunks are from Larsen Crescent Reserve. Studying these trunks and the bark closely, shows how different these are in colour, shape and texture. Such differences can be used as a way of recognising different species. Which tree is which?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5. Tree planting at the top of Wilf Mexted Reserve

Sunday afternoon, 19 June saw a group from the Port Nicholson Rotary Club and Interact (Youth Rotary Group) plant 250 trees near the top entrance from Bing Lucas Drive to Wilf Mexted Reserve. FOTBR recognises and warmly thanks this group for their commitment as this is the third successive year that they have undertaken winter planting in Tawa reserves. Trees were provided from the WCC nursery. Thanks to **Richard Herbert, Andrew Liley**, **John Burnet** and **Wayne Pincott** as members of FOTBR who worked alongside the group. The group will plant a further 250 trees later in the year.

Port Nicholson Rotary and Interact members continue their winter planting services at the top of Wilf Mexted Reserve.

6. Redwood School enlarges its native tree area

As part of the Kids Enhancing Tawa Ecosystem (KETE) project, on Thursday 23 June, WCC staff, FOTBR members, as well as Redwood School teachers and students spent a fine and still winter morning extending the tree numbers to their southern and eastern boundaries. FOTBR nursery

provided 220 young native trees and once holes were dug by the adults, a range of younger and older school children did the planting.

Students participate in planting out the native tree seedlings.

In time, these trees will fill in the gaps to give a greater protection of the grounds from the southerly winds.

Also, the site will give an opportunity for the children to become more familiar with the features of the native trees that grow in their Tawa location.

Andrew Liley oversees the practical procedures.

7. FOTBR nursery provides further natives to Papakowhai School

Late June saw the transfer of native seedlings from the FOTBR nursery to Papakowhai School. This is the second transfer of seedlings from FOTBR to the school and expands the area of native trees for the school to appreciate.

Students assist with planting out natives on the sloped bank at the school.

8. Tawa College students assist at the FOTBR nursery

On Wednesday 28 June a group of 5 students and a teacher from the Tawa College Enviro group came and helped pot-up some mākomako (wineberry) and māpou (red matipo) seedlings into bigger bags. Eight bags of potting mix later, there were 150 plants which will be ready to plant out into the reserves next year. This is a two-way process – a practical learning opportunity for the students and other sets of hands to increase the numbers of seedlings available for planting out in the reserves. It is hoped that this involvement would continue.

Members of the Tawa College Enviro Group learn the techniques of potting on seedlings at the nursery.

9. Visit to nursery by Tawa U3A Botany group

On Monday 11 July, this group had an informative visit to the nursery and then viewed the tree planting beside the Porirua Stream where there has been significant erosion of banks. Then they walked through Grasslees Reserve sighting key trees and learning some of the history of this reserve. Most people had not visited the nursery and valued the opportunity to see the propagation work being done. Thanks to **Joanne Youthed** and **James Wright** for their time in describing the work being done and helping people to identify the range of native tree seedlings propagated.

Kohekohe flowers.

10. Confetti in Redwood Bush?

No! At the end of June, the ground was strewn with abundant kohekohe flowers. This coincided with a reduction in the sound of tūī compared with earlier in the month, when large numbers of birds sourced nectar from the abundant flowers growing from the trunks and branches.

11. Knowing the native trees in the Tawa reserves

Aristotelia serrata, Mākomako, wineberry

A small fast growing shrub that is common in bush clearings and in regenerating bush. It can be semi-deciduous, losing a lot of leaves by the end of winter.

a. Source of names:

- Genus: = *Aristotelia* after the Greek philosopher 'Aristotle'
- species: = *serrata* after the serrated/toothed edges to leaves
- wineberry: = wine-coloured leaves on underside, wine-coloured fruit that can also be used for making wine.
- Māori name 'mākomako' = tooth-edged leaves (teeth of a mako shark).

b. Recognition features

- dioecious, has male and female flowers on separate plants
- thin, heart-shaped leaves pointed at tips and are deeply serrated.
- leaves are light or dark green on the upper side and pinkish green on the underside
- distinctive pink leaf veins form a net-like pattern on both sides of leaves.
- flowers are coloured various shades from cream to pink to red
- red fruit fleshy become black
- light brown bark has lenticels (raised pores that allow gas exchange).
- not long-lived – leaves palatable to stock and possums

Mākomako shrub at the edge of Brasenose Park, near Redwood Bush.

- nectar and fruit are a food for tūī and kererū.

c. Uses:

- boiled leaves used by Māori for burns, infected wounds, sore eyes and rheumatism
- bark was stripped and used to form water containers
- fruit was made into jam, jelly and wine by early European settlers
- burned wood used for charcoal to make gunpowder.

Upper-side of leaf.

Under-side of leaf.

Multi-coloured flowers of wineberry.

Close-up image of flowers.

Fleshy fruit at different stages of maturity.

Branch showing the white lenticels on the bark.

Which tree is which from the appearance of the trunk and bark?

1. **Tōtara (*Podocarpus totara*)** has furrowed, stringy, reddish-grey bark.
2. **Mataī (*Prumnopitys taxifolia*)** has a hammered appearance. Where chunks have come off, reddish-brown blotches appear.
3. **Tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa)*** has dark smooth bark that often has white lichen growth.
4. **Kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile)*** has light-coloured, knobbly bark due to the outgrowth of flowers and fruit directly from the trunk.

Gil Roper, Editor
FOTBR Committee