

# Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves Inc.



## December 2023 FOTBR Xmas Newsletter

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Monthly working bees: 2nd Sunday and 4th Tuesday

• Coordinator Sunday: Richard Herbert

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The people for the email above.



Gary Beecroft



Geoff Mills



Richard Herbert



Andrew Liley

To all the members of the Friends of the Tawa Bush Reserves, your committee send you all our very best wishes for Christmas 2023 and the New Year in 2024.

This year I will be lucky enough to spend the Christmas and New Year with all my family members. That doesn't happen every year so this year I'm particularly pleased we will all be together. But whoever you are with over Christmas and New Year, we all hope you have a very pleasant festive season.

I have always felt that we all share in our organisation's considerable success. We started in June 2002 and from that very first incorporation there has been a great collection of people working to preserve the ecology surrounding Tawa. We all contribute to the organisation and the community in many ways, but most of all it's our passion to preserve the native ecology of New Zealand that motivates our many hours of hard work. The many ecological successes that surround Tawa are the result of the efforts of us all, and we all share in that success.

Best wishes to you all and I look forward to seeing you in the New Year.  
Gary Beecroft



## **The impact of our Monthly Working Bees**

Each year since 2017 the FOTBR has planted approximately 2000 trees and shrubs in the Forest of Tawa along the tracks and beside the Meridian Road.

## **FOTBR Planting - the Forest of Tawa (Te Ngahere O Tawa)**

### **Forest of Tawa – Community Working Bee Planting - Tuesday 13 August 2017**



### **Forest of Tawa - Same Community Working Bee Site - Saturday 09 December 2023**



To be involved, contact working Bee organizer Richard Herbert [herbert.r@extra.co.nz](mailto:herbert.r@extra.co.nz), or Andrew Liley [acfhliley@gmail.com](mailto:acfhliley@gmail.com);



## Working bee Update – Tawa Station Park'n'Ride restoration area.

One of the projects that Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves has been involved over the past couple years is an area adjacent to the Porirua Stream and besides the Tawa rail station “park’n’ride” area off Melville Street. For many years this area has appeared as a bit of a wasteland overgrown with blackberry and other weeds.

FOTBR members saw this as an opportunity to beautify the area and at the same time enhance the ecology of a portion of the Porirua Stream side. Help and approvals were sought from landowners GWRC and WCC. GW cleared the site and between own nursery and WCC supplies, about 350 trees / shrubs were planted by FOTBR with the grateful assistance of a corporate volunteer group from ESR at Kenepuru Drive. Since planting FOTBR has scheduled a couple work bees a year to help keep the more serious weeds at bay, and WCC have contributed with supplies of mulch when requested over the summers.

Now the trees are starting to overtop the weeds and will become more obvious. Some species: manuka, and rengarenga, are already seeing their first flowering season this summer. Many more weeding hours will still be required to keep the site from reverting back to an overgrown wasteland, but already the sign of a remarkable transformation is evident.

If you know of another area of streamside or roadside in Tawa that could benefit for some love and planting, please let us know.



Shortly after planting August 2022.



Site signage courtesy of Imagine That



December 2023

## Weed control – Essential in all Reserves.

**An example.**

**Prunus Avium - AKA The Flowering Cherry – a prolific noxious weed**

The flowering cherry tree is beautiful, it feeds birds, possums, and rats, and they carry and distribute the cherry tree seed stones into the native parks and reserves. It is widespread in Tawa and Wellington, and very fast growing by NZ native tree standards, quickly emerging from the forest canopy. Growing up to 12 meters it shades and suffocates native plants. Most of all it produces thousands of berries each year. All can grow into cherry trees.

The Wild Cherry is an attractive tree with beautiful blossoms and colourful Autumn foliage, but if left unchecked the trees will swamp neighbouring plants and form dense stands of cherry trees where nothing else can grow, destroying all native plants.

Fruiting is in late spring or early summer. The branch displayed below (middle picture) has half the fruit stripped by Kereru, Tui and other birds like Black Birds and Thrush.



**Late Spring**



**Early Summer**



**Next Spring**

The seeds are widely distributed with large numbers of seedlings germinating and developing quickly the following spring.

FOTBR and WCC are trying to control the cherry tree population in Tawa Bush Reserves by uprooting seedlings, cutting down larger trees and pasting the stumps with a wood weedkiller to prevent regrowth. During 2023 volunteers frequently eliminate up to 2500 samplings a month. Larger trees are eliminated using WCC contractors.

The current focus this November and December has been on larger trees in Willowbank Reserve to reduce the seeds distributed. Great care is needed to avoid damaging memorial trees such as the Rimu pictured below.





**The hope is that public education of the impact of this menace will stop people planting more of these trees and slowly replace existing ones with native species.**

## **Topical - Citizen Ruru**

For years WCC have been doing forest bird monitoring, yet ruru (Morepork), being nocturnal, avoid detection, meaning their distribution, abundance and other population information is a mystery. Yet we know that ruru are frequently heard in our Tawa backyards and neighbouring bush areas. To solve this mystery WCC has joined forces with Victoria University of Wellington and Greater Wellington Regional Council to come up with a creative solution through a Summer Scholar Programme. But to make observations they need the help of citizen scientists like us over the summer period until the end of February. Observations are recorded using the iNaturalist app, so if you're an existing iNaturalist user then it's even easier.

Go to <https://www.avianz.net/index.php/resources/citizen-ruru> to learn more and how to make observations, or to just to listen to recordings of the variety of calls that our local owl makes – it's not just morepork did you know. Help us get ruru on the map.



## **Liaison - Combined Christmas Drinks FOTBR & Pest Free Tawa**

On 3 December, members of the Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves and Pest Free Tawa held their inaugural combined Christmas function, at the Spring and Fern. Although the weather was wet we had a great turnout from both groups. It was awesome to share trapping stories over a few drinks and chat about Tawa's awesome native reserves.



## **Funding Success for Caribbean Avenue Reserve**

A great new partnership sharing \$28,500 worth of funding over three years with Greater Wellington and Wellington Council.

The new funding allows the restoration of the main track, weed and animal pest control, and extensive planting of native species. Preliminary planting started in winter 2023. The project is now funded until 2026.

**The plan is simple – turn this:**



**Into this !! plus birds, insects, and lizards**



## Partnerships

### Tawa College Students & Willowbank Reserve Care Grp Dec. 2023

For five years Tawa College Students have helped the Willowbank group weed the Reserve during the College's annual Service Week. This year 7 year 10 students made a considerable contribution to our aim of reducing invasive and noxious weeds within the reserve. The college has concentrated their work on one area and has managed to plant a significant number of native plants and trees. We all are very grateful for the consistent support that Tawa College has offered to our group.

### Willowbank Reserve Care Group and WCC Rangers

For three years WRCG has used the black Eco Composting bags to dispose of the soft leafed plants and weeds such as *Tradescantia convolvulus*. The WCC Parks and Reserve Ranger provides these bags. They are very effective at composting weeds which is used around the Willowbank plants. It has saved time and money the weeds no longer go to the Green waste in Porirua.

### Willowbank Reserve Care Group and Water Monitoring

Members of WRCG are participating in the water monitoring programme being carried out by Porirua City Council over the next 20 years. The members will be measuring every three months for phosphate, nitrate and E. coli and monitoring specific aspects of Takapu Stream health as it flows through Willowbank Reserve. This information will help decide what ongoing measures need to be taken to improve the quality of the water and the freshwater environment throughout the Greater Wellington Region.

The Willowbank Care Group thanks all those that have helped us especially Tawa College, the FOTBR, and our own volunteers and wishes everybody a Merry Xmas.





Members Water Monitoring



Tawa College planting results

## **FOTBR Environmental Excellence Awards to Senior Tawa College Students, December 2023**

The FOTBR has created an environmental award for senior College Students who have made an outstanding commitment to environmental issues in their final year at College. The award was a recognition certificate, a monetary award, and two years complementary membership to the FOTBR. Recipients this year were Cambell Anderson, Xavier Koenigsberger, and William Werner. The 2023 Tawa College Senior Students awards ceremony, held in December, was an impressive and exiting evening with many students receiving outstanding awards.

The awards purpose is to recognize student achievement, but it will also increase FOTBR connectivity to the College, and this year it happened immediately with the three recipients attending the FOTBR combined social function with Pest Free Tawa.



From the left Gary Beecroft President, Luke Harkness, award winners Cambell Anderson, Xavier Koenigsberger, William Werner, and committee member Damian Hewett



## Thanks

The committee wishes to thank the many people associated with FOTBR for their help and ongoing service given in so many different ways over 2023. Your contributions are valued and appreciated. And the editor wishes to thank all those committee members who contributed to this Newsletter.



Gary Beecroft, Editor