

Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves Inc.



February 2024 FOTBR Newsletter

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

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

acfhliley@gmail.com;



Gary Beecroft



Geoff Mills



Richard Herbert



Andrew Liley

An Absolutely Fabulous Guest Speaker At The Friends of the Tawa Bush Reserves AGM 13th of March at 7.30 p.m. - Tawa Community Centre.

Dr. Bradley Schroder

This man is a legend. He's the newly appointed WCC Open Spaces and Parks Manager and has managed Reserves and National Parks in South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana, Australia, and New Zealand.

His view: "The same old is no longer good enough, a radical paradigm shift in application and implementation of environmental and conservation strategies is required".

His Topic for us

"From Africa to Antarctica, - from Rhino's to Kiwi's – A Conservation Story".

He has a passion for conservation and a great story to tell.

Using his wildlife and animal management skills he has been saving African Wild Dogs from disease, supplying food to starving wild elephants, and battling poaching

to save the White and Black African Rhino. He has come to New Zealand to use his expertise to help us save our Kiwi.



[Great Wall of] China, Australia, Marakele (South Africa), Rio, Canada, and Antarctica, **wearing a Rhino Suit.**

“One of the greatest rewards we received was the understanding of how little the world knows about the plight of rhinos, or any threatened wildlife species, and for us to create an awareness throughout the world, was a privilege”. **Bradley Schroder**



Left – The Antarctic Marathon
Above – South Africa

Come and hear his amazing story at the FOTBR AGM on the 13th of March at 7.30 p.m., at the Tawa Community Centre.

AGM Elections

The constitution requires an executive committee of eight members, consisting of a President, (two-year term, max. period 6 years) Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and a further four people. All nominations are expected to be with the secretary by the 12th of March.

A final word from this Presidency Gary Beecroft



Six short years, and obviously a successful stress-free role as President.

My first meeting with the Friends of the Tawa Bush Reserves was at the March 2017 AGM, six years ago. I only knew three people in the AGM but got elected President.

My vision was to create ecological corridors linking the existing Tawa Basin reserves. I wanted the reserves connected to enable our unique flora and fauna to expand and flourish.

This vision evolved politically through group and personal submissions to the Wellington City Council (WCC) including the Outer Green Belt Management Plan (OGBMP), Stebbings Valley urban development, The DOC Conservancy, Porirua Adventure Park, The Open Space and Recreation Strategy, The Spatial Plan, and Dog Bylaws.

It evolved physically by planning large scale funded projects. The first was the development of our own Nursery with automatic irrigation, then the Revegetation and Pest Control of parts of Woodburn Reserve, followed by the Forest of Tawa Revegetation and Pest Control project, the Ecological and Aquatic Restoration of the Porirua Stream project, the Willowbank Reserve Invasive Weed Control projects, the projects to Manage and Control Predators in the Tawa Basin, the Cherry Tree Control projects in the OGBMP areas, and latterly the Caribbean Drive Reserve Revegetation and Pest Control Project.

The FOTBR must thank the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC), WCC, and Hutt Mana Trust (HMT) for approximately \$100,000 in funding over these six years, and the faith they showed in supporting the plans presented.

Our many successes have only occurred through the passionate hard work of a very dedicated group of conservation associates in the FOTBR. For me these people were, Wayne Pincott the past President who got me involved, John Burnet our Vice President, Carol Andrews and Geoff Mills our secretaries, and Chris Paice our treasurer (these last three people, Carol, Chris, and Geoff, also built the nursery), Richard Herbert our organizer of working bees and many other things, Peter Saxton and Andrew Liley maintaining tracks and weed control, Helen Roper, Joanne Youthed and James Wright who have propagated thousands of trees and maintained the irrigation, Denis Rogerson and Martin Glaeser on animal pest control, Damian Hewitt's community liaison, Gil Roper's books and newsletters, Doug Miller's track booklets, maps and photographic records and Fiona Drummond's leadership of the Willowbank Reserve Care Group. I greatly appreciated the help and support all these people gave me; I really feel we all made a difference.

I must thank WCC Parks and Reserves Ranger Denise Clement for her very strong support and good advice, the many plants and materials she supplied to us which allowed us to follow our ideas and activities, and, following her promotion, the now Ranger Frank Williams; and, equally as important, Jo Fagan, GWRC Senior Biodiversity Advisor, who has been a marvelous supporter and advocate helping us gain significant funding for many of our projects.

The constitution defines a Presidents consecutive term as three elections, i.e. six years. So, thanks for this opportunity, I have really appreciated every moment of our time together.

Let's Make New Zealand the Exception to Supercomputer Predictions

European Commission's scientists modelled humans' effect on climate and land use changes, and how these changes impact plant and animal species, have predicted that 10 percent of all plant and animal species will disappear by 2050, ***that's in your lifetime***. And worse, 27 percent of vertebrate diversity will vanish by 2100. Over a quarter of our animals will be gone in about 75 years.

The simulations, repeated to represent monthly intervals between 2020 and 2100 show a quick decline in diversity between 2020 and 2050, suggesting the next three decades hold special importance on the future of biodiversity on this planet. ***That's during the next 26 years of your life, - you -, can to do something meaningful to preserve for our unique ecology – or not.***

Let's make New Zealand the Exception

<http://popularmechanics.com>

At the FOTBR Nursery - Joanne Youthed and James Wright

The nursery continues to thrive, with a constant flow of plants popping up in seed trays, quickly outgrowing their small pots and then being ready to go out into the world. We are constantly amazed by the differences in each species, from plants that pop up just a couple of weeks after being sown, to some that take over 2 years to germinate. We have a good group of volunteers, with between 3 and 12 folks turning up to working bees. If you are interested in being notified of working bees, please contact the committee.

The Impact of Working Bees Version Two – At the Nursery

The area between the shade houses and the railway line has become a "show garden" since cleared of all the gorse, blackberry, broom and pampas grass in **August 2021** (Joanne with the spade).



And in **September 2023**
- what a change!

Kids Enhancing Tawa Ecosystems (KETE) - Growing environmental leaders and protectors and coordinating with community groups.

"KETE is an opportunity for ākonga (students) associated with Tawa Kāhui Ako (group to learn and study) to be involved and show leadership in environmental activities, e.g. riparian planting, pest control, litter awareness and improving stream health," says retired Tawa College principal, Murray Lucas, programme lead for the past two years. The concept for KETE began in 2021 when Wellington City Council education lead Elspeth McMillan responded to observed climate anxiety in rangatahi (young children).

Community and School Connections

In conjunction with local charitable trust Growing Places, KETE began a collaborative community project which was allocated an area at the top of Takapū Valley, owned by Transpower and the Department of Conservation. "This is a significant area for the local iwi, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, as it was a key source historically of both food and water," Murray said.

More than 1,500 students, 10 community and stakeholder organizations and over 800 community volunteers and whānau support hours have contributed to the planting project with more than 12,000 trees planted over two years.

Tawa School and Redwood School also benefit from the programme. Zac Mills, Principal of Redwood School has enjoyed watching their younger students step into a leadership space because of their passion for KETE.

Widespread community relationships have been strongly forged through KETE. **Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves** have partnered with KETE in their planting mahi whilst a Pest-free Tawa committee meeting involved discussion and support of student-led pest trapping programs in schools and the importance of correct process and equipment.

KETE's focus this year is on helping to restore the mauri of Te Kenepuru (Porirua) Stream. Murray, and all involved, look forward to seeing the fruits of their labour flourish in 2024 and beyond.



Students planting trees in their own school.



KETE programme coordinator Sue Lum and a student.

The Importance of Insects

Insects create the biological foundation for all terrestrial ecosystems. They cycle nutrients, pollinate plants, disperse seeds, maintain soil structure and fertility, control populations of other organisms, and provide a major food source for other taxa, including us.

**Here are two great local examples.
from Doug Miller.**

The Buddleia Weevil

This small weevil (*Cleopus japonicas*) was released in 2006 as a biocontrol agent in the battle against wild Buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*) in New Zealand. In the Wellington area it was introduced in 2008, 2012, & 2013.

Buddleja davidii is a weed of plantation forest and natural areas. It can flower in its first year and can attain 4m in 2 years.

It reduces the growth of plantation species, was the major weed of the central North Island, and cannot be controlled with FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) approved herbicides.

https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/62494/Toni_Withers_Buddleia_leaf_weevil.pdf



The weevil larva



the pupa stage



the adult weevil

These specimens above were observed on the Buddleia growing beside Ngatitoa Street.

Gorse Seed Weevil and Gorse Spider Mite

These two species were introduced as biological controls to attack gorse.

Gorse Seed Weevil (*Exapion ulicis*)



This weevil was seen on a gorse bush on the Te Ara Tawa shared path opposite Outlet City.

Gorse Spider Mite (*Tetranychus lintearius*)



Small red mites in a web. The web forms a long cylindrical tube along the gorse branches. This mite was seen in some gorse on the corner of Redwood Avenue and McKeefry Grove, and in the southern part of Willowbank Reserve.

Five Bee-Friendly Native Plants – That you can plant.

John Burnet

There are many reasons for introducing bee-friendly native trees and shrubs into your garden, especially those loved by the bee.

Regardless of the size of your property or your motivation, planning bee-friendly native trees and shrubs in your garden will have your place looking great as well as providing shelter and food for bees and insects.

Native plants are low maintenance. You'll not only have a beautiful garden buzzing with happy bees, but you'll be helping support your local Tawa environment and native eco- systems.

A diversity of flower shapes and sizes is important; colour less so - red flowers tend to be more attractive to pollinating birds; flies and bees like yellow, orange, and white varieties. Bees prefer flowers that are single with open, simple, flat shapes or clusters of any flowers rather than ruffled, frilly double flowers. These are the easiest for bees to get into and feed.

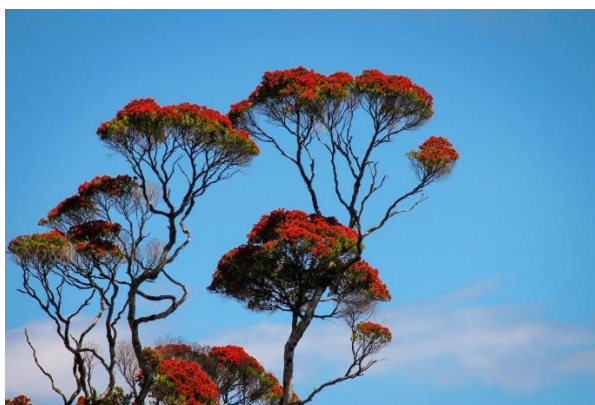
NZ Flax



NZ flax, also called harakeke, grows a mass of brightly coloured flowers from September through to January and is a smorgasbord of pollen for bees. While flax honey has a poor flavour and coarse grain, the high protein count in flax pollen means the pollen is an excellent source of food and energy for our hard-working honeybees and native bees.

An excellent choice for attracting bees to your garden, NZ flax has been used over the years in traditional weaving as well as creating shelter from the elements. With strong wide roots, flax has the added benefit of stabilising land that is prone to erosion and instability.

Pōhutukawa



Having a pōhutukawa is sure to attract foraging bees with its bright red brush-like flowers that cover the tree during summer months. Not only will this add colour to your garden, but you'll also enjoy visits from nectar-loving native birds like tui and bellbird, silvereye and maybe even the occasional kaka.

Generally suited to our coastal areas where the temperatures are warm and sunshine hours plentiful, the pōhutukawa thrives in other areas too. Trees respond well to an annual trim, meaning they can thrive in large gardens particularly in sunny well-drained sites. Furthermore, the northern rātā is an ecologically appropriate species for the Wellington area. Rich in nectar, honey from pōhutukawa and rātā is white or light in colour, smooth in texture and has a slightly salty taste.

Rātā



Adored by bees and birds, the northern rātā is the southern North Island cousin to the pōhutukawa. Northern rātā often begins life high up in the forks of other trees, later sending roots down to engulf its dead or dying host.

Rātā and pōhutukawa tend to grow into very large trees, so careful planning is wise when planting in your backyard. Since their root systems tend to be invasive, avoid planting rātā or pōhutukawa near buildings and underground pipes.

Native Hebe



One of bees' favourite flowers is the native hebe – the largest family of native plants available in NZ. Hebes can be planted as ground cover, kept as small shrubs, or even nurtured into a hedge.

Bees are drawn like magnets to the hebe's mass of flowers, which provides a feast of nectar in one spot with a delicate flavour. Flowering for extended periods, hebe's are available in a range of shapes and colours – a strong garden shrub and fast growing.

Mānuka



Everybody has heard about mānuka honey; how great it tastes and the amazing anti-bacterial properties in each jar. Māori have used mānuka bark for its medicinal powers to aid in healing wounds.

Mānuka trees start life as small shrubs and end up growing into tall trees. As they mature, they provide shelter and canopy for other less hardy plants growing underneath, particularly when planted closely together on a hillside or the forest floor.

Highly attractive to bees, the mānuka's delicate white or pink flowers have a relatively short flowering season – usually between September and March and approximately six weeks in length. This scarcity contributes to the demand for mānuka honey around the world today. Mānuka honey varies greatly both in flavour and consistency being influenced by soil types, weather conditions and intensity of the honey flow.

Benefits of Planting Native Plants

Even though some native bee-friendly plants in NZ end up being large trees, many can be grown comfortably in your own backyard. Native plants are generally hardy and drought resistant and can grow pretty much anywhere and in any climate.

If you want to attract bees to your garden, then consider adding some bee-friendly plants. NZ has a wide range of natives that can provide a much-needed food source for our honey gatherers.

Adding NZ native plants will attract bees, which increases the yield of any fruit and vegetable plants in your garden as well as enjoying the scents and sights of our classic NZ flora.

- The Trapping-Baiting-Wasp Control Team Socializing -

Data Damian Hewitt



In 2023

- Trappers caught 664 pest species including rats, mice, hedgehogs, and the odd possum. The real figure is much higher when including the amount of bait that has been used.
- Service a network of traps in most reserves e.g. Redwood Bush, Forest of Tawa, Willowbank Park and many of the contributors of the Porirua stream.
- The trapping team worked 308 hours.
- The baiting team networking in only the native bush reserves, worked 187 hours.
- Wasp Control start-up team 12 hours.
- **TOTAL**, a staggering 507 hours on pest control.

The Heritage Orchard Trees at Willowbank Reserve Helen Challands

The heritage orchard trees in the picnic area at Willowbank Reserve are a remnant of Earp's Orchard, part of William and Elizabeth Earp's farm, circa 1870. The remaining trees are over 150 years old and consist of two apple trees, one pear tree, one walnut tree, and a fig tree, all of which still bear fruit.

The two apple trees fell over in stormy weather in December 2020, and now have wooden surrounds to protect them. As the sign says – "Please do not climb on the heritage fruit trees. These trees are delicate and are protected by Wellington City Council "

In 2006 cuttings were taken from some of the heritage trees to propagate them, and in 2008, 7 apple trees were planted, and a fig tree and a walnut tree, at the playground end of the park. These trees have grown considerably, and bear fruit.

When you visit the reserve, look at these trees, respect them, think of the story behind them, and their history, your history. There is further information about the orchard, the farm, and the reserve, in various excellent books about the area available at Tawa library.



The Pear tree with spring blossom in September 2023 and Pears in February 2024.



One of the propagated apple trees,
February 2024.

Thanks

The editor wishes to thank the many people who contributed to this Newsletter both those that presented articles and those that proofread the transcripts.



Gary Beecroft, Editor