



## PIGEON POST October 2012

Hello folks, welcome to Pigeon Post, the newsletter of the Otatara Landcare Group. In this newsletter we bring you news of the latest happenings in our area and snippets of information about our past and ideas about improving our environment

### Chairspeak – a message from the Chairperson

I guess the biggie to happen to the Otatara Landcare group since the last bulletin has been the second planting day organized by the 'Living Legends' team. This year we had 2,500 plants to put in the ground and for those of us who were there it was another great planting day with about 80 school students assisting on Friday the 31<sup>st</sup> August and the main event was packed by another 170 odd people on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September. Those at the event you could see the amount of effort that went in to the actual planting on the day but I would also like everyone to know about the great effort that went in before the event by the OLG volunteers to get us to this point. It began back in April when the area was sprayed by a commercial sprayer (a much more effective and cost effective method and also used less spray than we would have). Although this was a commercial venture we had to have people on site organising a tractor to pull him out when he got stuck. Then getting the plants to the site required the efforts of at least six vehicles and trailers and there were probably about 10 of us there unloading and placing them out in positions appropriate to the species. A week or so later a few teams of people with post hole borers dug the holes to put the plants in. All in all there was over 100 hours of time went into this project before the planting day.

The Friday planting with small and older children and adults was an interesting affair – one cannot fault their enthusiasm for putting plants in the ground – with younger people it is all about getting the most plants in the ground that you possibly can, their objective.... 'Quantity, not Quality!' even though we tried to drum in that it is the other way around. But in spite of that we believe that the overall effect of involving the next generations has a huge amount of value. It will take about 8 to 10 years before we have nice little forest there. These young people will grow through their teenage years, some will forget what they have done until one day they bring their children back and tell them they helped plant these trees was back in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Then when in 60 or 70 years time they show their

grandchildren what they have done, they will be held in awe.... 'How did grandma/ grandad get those big trees in the ground?' If you want to know what the forest will look like that far in the future then next time you are at the outlook over the estuary with its panel of sea birds and photo of the estuary, then turn around and you will see a forest that is about that age, Totara trees 12m tall with a life expectancy of another 1000 ~ 1500 years.

Next year (2013) there will be the last of the 3 programmed 'Living Legends' planting days. At the present time it is programmed for about mid-August and we have been allocated 3.600 plants to put in the ground. At this stage there is some thought we may add a few extra funded from our own sources and have another planting day in May, but we will keep you informed of what we are going to do in the next Pigeon Post.

The Otatara Landcare Group would like to issue a big thank you to the Living Legends sponsors, Meridian Energy, Department of Conservation, The Tindall Foundation and Project Crimson. Also a special thank you to everyone who gave up a morning to come and assist in what we think is a well worthwhile project

**Barry Smith, Chairperson**

### **BONFIRE NIGHT RISK IN OTATARA**

In a past survey, Otatara residents overwhelmingly cited the native bush and birdlife as a key attraction of the area, yet the use of fireworks in November poses serious risks to local kereru, tui and bellbird populations, as well as to the bush itself.

Bonfire Night remembers the English Gunpowder Plot, where Guy Fawkes attempted to blow up Parliament with a keg of gunpowder on November 5<sup>th</sup> 1605. As 5<sup>th</sup> November is the northern hemisphere winter, fireworks and bonfires do not typically cause much disturbance to fauna, yet in the southern hemisphere, Bonfire Night falls squarely in the predominant breeding season for most birds and animals.

Otatara Landcare Group Committee member and Bush Haven bird sanctuary owner Russell Evans is concerned that as the human population of Otatara increases, the risk to native birds from fireworks also increases. Nesting birds can be scared away from eggs, fledglings may be abandoned, and even adult birds can be scared into an injury situation by fireworks.

Despite the recent wet weather, many bush areas are still dry enough to be set alight by an errant firework or windblown bonfire spark, causing destruction of bush and with the associated risk of fire spreading to houses and sheds.

Livestock and pets are also at risk. As Otatara is a rural area, there are many properties with animals such as sheep, horses, cattle and goats, not to mention a large number of pet cats, dogs and caged birds. We would like to encourage residents to contact their neighbours before celebrating Bonfire Night with fireworks or bonfires. Not only is this a great opportunity to meet your neighbours, it's also a chance to check that they are able to keep their pets inside, or possibly shift livestock to another paddock before an accident happens.

Please be considerate this Bonfire Night. You can attend public gatherings or let fireworks off in large clear areas, well away from all animals and bush habitat, which keeps all the neighbours, whether human, hoofed, feathered or furred happy!

**Russell Evans "Bush Haven" 49 Bryson Rd Otatara**  
**Ph 213 0530 Email [bush\\_haven@slingshot.co.nz](mailto:bush_haven@slingshot.co.nz)**

Environmental achievement: The recent Environment Southland and the Department of Conservation combined awards night saw mention for Otatara in two of the nine categories. Alice Casey from

Otatara School was highly commended in the Schools Award section and the Otatara Landcare Group was highly commended in the Environmental Achiever section. The full results are here. You will recognise some of the names::

**Schools Award: Fiordland Kindergarten's for its Nature Discovery Programme**

**Highly Commended:** Alice Casey, Otatara School

**Community Groups Award: Hokonui Tramping Club for 45 years of commitment to maintaining the Grant's Bush Reserve**

**Highly Commended:** Mataura Community Garden

**Conservation Award: Ascot Park Hotel for its support of the historic restoration project underway on Dog Island / Motu Piu**

**Highly Commended:** Wattyl Paints

**Individual Award: "Tracker" Eric Black, of Bluff for his commitment to the environment**

**Highly Commended:** Estelle Leask of Bluff

**Highly Commended:** Martin Sliva of Te Anau

**Farming Award: Warrick and Wendy Day of South Hillend, for their enhanced landscaping and environmentally sustainable farming operation**

**Highly Commended:** Lincoln Moffat of Eastern Bush

**Commercial Award: Downers NZ Ltd, for the Cleddau River flood protection scheme and associated infrastructure development**

**Highly Commended:** Automotive Solutions, Invercargill

**Highly Commended:** Westpac Bank

**Environmental Innovator: Dancing Star Foundation for the Stewart Island pest-proof fence**

**Highly Commended:** Frank Wells of Invercargill

**Environmental Achiever: Fiordland Marine Guardians for their success in balancing environmental, community and commercial needs**

**Highly Commended:** Otatara Landcare Group

**Councillors' Special Award: Kari Beaven, of Stewart Island, for commitment to environmental causes.**

## **Second planting day**

### **BUSHY POINT LIVING LEGENDS PROJECT**

2012 planting at Bushy Point was a great success thanks to all the volunteers and organisers who took part planting 2500 trees over two days near the Bryson Rd entrance to the reserve.

Approximately 90 mainly school age volunteers attended on Friday 31/08/12 with another 200 people arriving on Saturday 01/09/12. Families, groups representing the Warehouse, ANZ and Environment Southland, DOC, members of various voluntary conservation groups including the OLG, the Lions Club (great job with the BBQ thank-you) joined enthusiasts from Invercargill and further afield to put in time and effort to enhance this special place.

Hopefully we all return in the future to enjoy an evolving forest rich in birdlife, biodiversity and life-enhancing qualities.

The first 2 years of Living Legends can be seen on Youtube at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPxBKwuCMAk&feature=plcp>

Planting day went very well but there was a suggestion that a brass band would have added to the atmosphere. A quick whip around produced some good ideas for tunes of a suitable ecological and botanical nature – *Run Rabbit Run*, for example; it's easier to find less suitable ones: *edelweiss* (too warm) *Yes we have no bananas – yet* (too cold) *The Holly and the Ivy* and *Sheep may safely graze* (no thanks) and *Tiptoe through the tulips* (This is where we get the ukulele group next year)

Actually we don't want *Run Rabbit Run* either. We want *Sit there in the cross-hairs Rabbit*.



## **Could a rabbit do this????**

In September our veggie bed was covered with pea straw in readiness for planting on Labour Weekend. But then a huge pile of soil was seen on top of the pea straw and a big rabbit burrow had been dug into that bed. We didn't see a rabbit but the excavations continued to get bigger over the next few nights. Then just when we were thinking a rabbit was going to move in, it was all covered over again – with the pea straw back in place! Could a rabbit do this – and how!

I had seen a programme on UK TV where a rabbit dug a burrow, had its young and then covered over the burrow every night! Has anyone got any idea of whether this is possible? The only other explanation is that some friend of ours covered over the burrow and put the pea straw back without telling us?! **Chris Rance**

### **Are rabbits predators?**

Landcare Group members had to correct someone recently who said that rabbits were predators. Rabbits don't predate plants so they are not predators! She replied "If you have lavished the care on my vegetable garden the way I have, then they are predators and nothing less!"



## **Southland Community Nursery**

The nursery has been open all winter (despite my absence!) due to Linda and Ray Jackson and a band of loyal volunteers.

Now that spring has arrived the Nursery will get busier and hopefully people will have thought, over winter, about the plants they will need for their own restoration projects. The seeds have been sown, the cuttings grown and now the potting up begins in earnest.

The nursery will be open every Friday morning for volunteers to come and grow their own native plants for free. Come and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere with like minded people, learn a few new skills, have a chat, cuppa and awesome morning tea.

Have a look at the Community Nursery website "News and Events" for a run down on community events held recently in Otatara – "Apple Pressing", "Cobb Oven Building" and others.

**Chris Rance**

[www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz](http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz)



**St Johns trip to Daffodil Bay** Daffodil Bay is a great spot for a school fieldtrip. There are several tracks starting off from there, great bush and access to the estuary. There is a toilet and an open space for activities. The bay faces east and is this sheltered a little from the west wind. Lots of schools visit for an estuary fieldtrip.



**Flax flowering.** The first flax flower burst forth in Lloyd's garden on 29 September 2012 (previous page). Is this a world record? Admittedly the flax was overhanging a warm sealed road and the leaves had been trimmed back allowing for an unusual exposure to sunshine and heat. I am interested in recording the very last flower as well so keep a look out. I'm guessing March 2013

**The last lingering bits of *Spartina*** still show up at odd intervals. Extensive spraying by DoC has largely removed the extensive infestation of Cord grass or *Spartina x anglica* which threatened to take over all the exposed mudflat with its ability to trap silt and seaweed. Even a tiny scrap can take root and vigilance is needed to get the last of these. Graeme Miller from DoC says...Our planned programme is to eradicate spartina from all our estuaries in the next five years which is going to mean we will be spending a lot more time in our estuaries during the year searching for isolated plants so any reports of plants seen would be appreciated.” Graeme's contact details are Ph 03 2112439 Cell 0274 821 869 email [gmliller@doc.govt.nz](mailto:gmliller@doc.govt.nz)



The picture shows a healthy clump of Cord grass at Daffodil Bay about 1998. If it hadn't been dealt-to soon afterwards, Daffodil Bay would be Daffodil Paddock!

### **BUSHHAVEN AND BUBS UPDATE**

If you look on the [www.bushhaven.org](http://www.bushhaven.org) website, you can follow the journey we have made with the kereru [wood pigeon] Bubs since we reared her in 2002. She was released in 2005 with a bright new red 'jess' on her right leg and a yellow one on her left leg. These are still present, though a bit tattered now. However we will always know Bubs as she has distinctive fawn markings on her chest, below the brightly coloured line and melting into her white front.

This year she has been nesting on our own property, which is a blessing as she doesn't fly across the road so much – and as many drivers do not take any notice of our Caution Kereru signs and travel much faster than 50 kph, we have held our collective breath many times.

On 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012, Bubs came to our back door as usual for food and with her was another kereru, with a similar fawn upper chest mark to Bubs. This bird landed on my head at first and then flew into the open laundry, where Russell had to grab it so it didn't hurt itself. The bird was very calm and it then sat on Russell's arm and ate a little from the dish.

Since then it has been coming every day with Bubs or sometimes on its own. It is very definitely her baby as it is very calm when eating with its mother but not with two other kereru that we are still feeding – having been released over the winter after injuries. One of these birds, 'No.19'[red jess] has been named Lucy by Gabrielle and James Milne, and the other is 'Zero' [black jess] No. 0. Numbers 1 and 2, black jess are progressing well in the large aviary.

We do not mind feeding extra birds over the winter as they generally disperse once there are plenty of young shoots on the trees and they can then look further for their food and maybe head back to their own area, fully rehabilitated.

Just over the weekend of 24/25 August we have two new birds in, located on the ground. These birds are quite thin which leads me to realize there is not much food out there; one definitely hit a window and is bruised; not sure about the other but they will both be treated the same, for probable bruising and kept quiet and confined for a few days with fluids and gradually getting onto solid food.

Word is getting around, that if a kereru is on the ground and not moving very much it needs to be carefully picked up and brought to us – the sooner the better as they don't sit quietly on the ground unless they're hurt in some way. Phone us at 2130530 and we're at 49 Bryson Road.

The photo shows Russell feeding Bubs and her baby – Bubs is closer to Russell. *May Evans*



### **[www.Otatara-pestbusters.org](http://www.Otatara-pestbusters.org)**

Have you had a look at our website [above] yet?

A group of the Otatara Landcare Group (OLG) formed the committee of Otatara Pestbusters after a public meeting in June 2010, where about 30 people signed up. We are not a crazy sect –

merely concerned locals who want to help the birdlife in Otatara by getting rid of rats, possums and maybe even stoats on our own properties. The website has been in use since February 2012 and didn't cost us a cent as we did all the setting up with the help of our son Phil Evans when he was out here. Phil is an IT Communications Architect in the UK and was keen to do this for us.

One of the special features of living in Otatara is having healthy bird populations; especially tui, bellbirds and pigeon [kereru]. Lots of people are already helping to protect and enhance the native birds found in our back yards by fencing and protecting bush, controlling weeds and pests, putting out sugar water. Pests are probably having the greatest impact on native birds in Otatara. With pest control the more people that get involved the more successful it will be.

The number of people we know of, who are actually using some form of pest control on their properties is now 115. The only cost involved is for traps and/or poison. We are sure many people are already undertaking some sort of pest control on their own properties so we want to know who you are – we have a map with flags on attached to the [www.Otatara-pestbusters.org](http://www.Otatara-pestbusters.org) site and we would really like to add a flag to your address, plus we will give you a sign to attach to your letterbox to show you are caring for the birds.

See Russell at 49 Bryson Road, Wednesday afternoons 3- 6pm or Saturday mornings, 9.30am – 12.30 pm; or contact Randall Milne ([milnes@kinect.co.nz](mailto:milnes@kinect.co.nz) ph 2130851, Russell Evans [bush.haven@kinect.co.nz](mailto:bush.haven@kinect.co.nz) ph 2130530, Brian Rance ([rances@ihug.co.nz](mailto:rances@ihug.co.nz) ph 2131161 or Chris Morison at Environment Southland ([chris.morison@es.govt.nz](mailto:chris.morison@es.govt.nz) ph 2115115).

**Huhu grubs wanted** The museum's flock of tuataras needs food.

Keeper Lindsay Hazley says that the best food is huhu grubs. If you are chopping open a rotten log collect the grubs and put them in a container with a generous amount of the decayed wood they have been chewing through. This helps keep them moist and prevents them biting into each other. The picture shows a huhu pupa which is the stage between the grub and the beetle. Pupae are just as scrumptious!



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