



PIGEON POST May 2012

AGM Date and speaker –

Wednesday 23 May 2012 - Otatara Hall Dunns Road, start 7.30pm - **Alpine Gems of the South Island**. Otatara's Dave Toole takes us on a fantastic trip around the mountains.

Friday 18 May Night walk at Bushy Point. Meet at 7pm at the Bryson Road entrance. Bring a torch and a snack. We will see what happens in the reserve after the lights go out. We will include a visit to the pond and a bush walk. Suitable for a family excursion. All welcome.

Subs and Memberships

Subscriptions help to pay for the Bushy Point restoration project, Otatara Pestbusters and publications such as Natural Otatara and the Otatara Pigeon Post. At \$10 per year, \$50 for 10 years or \$100 for life you can support the ongoing work to improve the natural features of Otatara. Encourage anyone you know who may be interested to contact Chris 2131161 or email rances@ihug.co.nz to join.

Otatara Welcome Pack

The Otatara Landcare Group welcomes new Otatara Residents with a welcome pack of information about the features and facilities of the area. If you have a new neighbour please let us know and we will drop a pack off into their mailbox.

Natural Otatara

Your guide to the special features of Otatara – plants, birds, insects, shells, fungi – all illustrated by Lloyd Esler. The OLG is subsidising this publication so it is only \$5.

Emailing the Pigeon Post

As a cost and tree saving measure we are moving to sending the Pigeon Post out on email. If you still want to receive your Pigeon Post as a hard copy please phone secretary Chris 2131161 evenings.

Bees and wasps.

There are hundreds of native wasps and dozens of bees. Here are two of the most impressive of the wasps. Have you spotted these guys? Actually they are both gals. The one with the long ovipositor is our largest wasp, *Megarhyssa nortoni*, introduced from North America in 1964. It is a parasite of the other wasp, the Steel-blue horntail borer, whose larvae damage pine trees. Despite its scary appearance and impressive length – up to 14cm including



the ovipositor – it doesn't sting and should not be harmed.

These wasps are not particularly uncommon in Otatara and they are certainly impressive. Mrs Megarhyssa pushes her ovipositor through wood and lays an egg on a grub. The egg hatches, devours the grub and eventually an adult wasp it chews its way out. The Steel-blue horntail borer was accidentally introduced to New Zealand and it's a pine forest pest because the grubs bore into wood. The male is a little smaller with a broad orange abdomen.

Both species are solitary wasps. Megarhyssa is part of a huge group of ichneumons. These all have a very narrow waist and a thin body and they parasitise the larvae and pupae of moths and butterflies, beetles and other wasps. Most are very specific to a particular host.

Invasion of the bees

Wild bees will be a thing of the past in a few years as the varroa mite has now reached Southland. There will still be swarms of bees, however these are the domesticated ones that have made a bolt for freedom following a disruption to the hive. Swarms are alarming but not a hazard if handled correctly. Rance's had their chimney and lounge invaded in November last and a friendly local bee-keeper was summoned to collect the swarm. This means brushing them into a box and returning them to a hive environment. The killer bee variety that originated in South America from a cross-breeding programme gone bad aren't in New Zealand and ours are relatively docile. Interestingly there is a local link with killer bees. The artificial insemination of bees was pioneered in Southland in the 1970s. The trial started because Canadian beekeepers were keen to import fertilised New Zealand bees to avoid the chance of 'Africanised killer bees' reaching Canada from Mexico and breeding with local queens. Locally made instruments were used to transfer semen to anaesthetised queens which were exported to Canada.

Queen bees are the only livestock you can post live but there have been plenty of other attempts to send livestock by mail. The most unusual posted item was a pet white rabbit posted in Invercargill in 1909. The tin box containing rabbit, a carrot and a parsnip made the journey by train and steamer and arrived with the rabbit confused but intact for its new owner in Wellington.

When Mrs Gorm (Aunt Eloise)

Was stung to death by angry bees

Her husband (Prebendary Gorm)

Put on his veil and took the swarm

He's publishing a book next May

Called 'How to make Beekeeping Pay'

Cob Oven workshop Chris Rance

On 15 April 2012, ten of us got together to make a cob oven at Bronwyn and Russel Graham's in Otatara. Basically it's an outside pizza oven made of local clay.

I did wonder what we would be doing from 9.30am-3.30pm but all was soon revealed! Peter Aalders came from Riverton with a trailer of lumpy clay and soon most of us were at work hammering, sieving, building sandcastles and then the good bit - taking shoes and socks off and mixing the clay, water and



later straw with our bare feet (see photo!). Then making clay balls, and when Peter was satisfied we had the correct consistency, building up layers of clay around the sand dome. In between to keep us going Bronwyn kept supplying yummy food, then lunch and of course Liam and Abby were there helping (!) and almost on the dot of 3.30pm we had the clay oven

built. It needs to be covered from rain to dry, then a door cut out, the sand removed from inside and we'll be ready for the pizza party!!

It's a really fun thing to do as a group - we made new friends and it's another way of building resilience into our local community.

Thanks to Peter Aalders, the Riverton Environment Centre and Bronwyn for organising the event - I'm sure there will be more to come!

Sheep wanted Two old sheep needed for lawn-mowing purposes, preferably ex-pets and from the Otatara area. Can you help? Phone Lloyd Esler 2130404



Crake spotting

A recent crake-spotting evening around Bushy Point and the Oreti Ponds failed to stir up any of the birds. There are two sorts – the Marsh crake and the Spotless crake. Both are around but very elusive. A dead Marsh crake was found recently at the Roger Sutton Lagoon walkway. The team used a call-tape or more accurately a CD with the calls of both crakes. These normally get an excited or angry response but nothing stirred alas. Increased

rat and stoat control can only be good for crakes and any number of other species of ground feeding birds, lizards and invertebrates.

Flax stories wanted. Lloyd is doing a booklet on the story of flax and flaxmilling in Southland. Do you have story you want to contribute? Picture shows Royd's mill on the Oreti River just across the Dunns Road bridge.



Dead and buried in Southland. Next year Lloyd hopes to produce a booklet on unusual deaths, strange burials, lonely graves and people who went missing. The title is 'Dead and Buried in Southland'. Any good ideas?

Update on Old Man's Beard in Otatara

It has been a busy season for OMB in Otatara! A student was hired to do a door to door check for OMB on properties near known sites of OMB. This survey found three new sites. This is a great find.

All the known sites were checked at the same time to ensure any live plants were found and controlled. Only a few were still going!

Lastly, the large site found late last year near Bushy Point was sprayed by DOC. This site will take a few seasons to control completely, but here's hoping it will be much smaller next year!

If you think you have Old Man's Beard on your property please call me, I am only too happy to come and check it out! Amy Lagerstedt at Environment Southland 2115115



Forests dying as kereru numbers fall KIRAN CHUG

A rapid drop in the kereru population is affecting the regeneration of native trees that rely on kereru to disperse seeds.

Our already silent forests are dying. Scientists have proved for the first time the alarming rates of decline in regeneration of native tree species that rely on kereru, or native pigeons, to disperse seeds. In two forests, they have found regeneration has fallen by up to 84 per cent over two years. However, they fear the problem could be far worse in other areas in which bird populations are much lower.

Canterbury university plant ecology professor Dave Kelly said researchers were taken aback by their findings. "It was a surprise for us how big the effect was and how long it was lasting for."

At one extreme, the researchers said regeneration of trees could fail completely, leaving forests full of dying adult trees and eventually lead to the collapse of mature forests.

Dr Kelly, with Landcare Research ecologist Debra Wotton, studied native taraire and karaka trees in two forests less than 100 hectares in size. Taraire rely exclusively, and karaka almost exclusively, on kereru to disperse their fruit, which are too big for other smaller birds to eat.

Although it was already believed that falling populations of kereru were having an impact on seed dispersal, it was the first time the link has been proved and assessed.

Dr Kelly said both forests – one was Wenderholm Regional Park near Auckland and the other private land near Whangarei – still had kereru living amongst them.

"Kereru haven't disappeared. They are still there, we still see them, but they're less common.

"The decrease in kereru numbers is big enough to make a difference." He feared the situation could be worse in other forests in which predator control work was not undertaken.

"This is a better than average piece of New Zealand where people have tried to keep things working better and it's still not working particularly well."

The lifespan of karaka and taraire trees was thought to be hundreds of years.

"It's not a short-term crisis. It's one that we have got more notice on," Dr Kelly said.

The research highlighted the importance of protecting native bird species. "It's not that we think these plants are going to disappear overnight, but it shows the impact on protected birds."

Conservation Department scientist Hugh Robertson said the research added weight to DOC's

"integrated pest management approach" of targeting pests on conservation land.

"You just can't protect a forest by putting a fence around them and stopping the cattle and goats coming in."

However, DOC could manage only a "relatively small fraction" of the total conservation area in New Zealand, and gave priority to areas that were ecologically representative.

Private landowners, regional councils and the Animal Health Board also carried out valuable pest control work each year, he said.

Monica Awasthy, the co-ordinator of Wellington's Kereru Discovery Project, which focuses on conservation of the native wood pigeon, said the research was particularly timely as the United

Nations had marked 2011 as The Year of the Forest.

"It's really driving home the message of how important kereru conservation is. We finally have the science to back it up."

Cabbage tree experiment. Barry dug in some sawn-off chunks of Cabbage tree trunk and these have begun to send out shoots. If this proves successful we could have an easy way of propagating them.

Southland Community Nursery

Autumn is seed collecting time, planting time and a time for planning what you are going to grow and plant next season.

Seeds in a fruit – Coprosma, Fuchsia, totara, wineberry, broadleaf, cabbage tree.





Prepare by removing the fruit – putting through a sieve and shaking onto kitchen paper. Store dry seed until ready to sow.

Dry Seed – manuka, hebe, ribbonwood, tussock, Carex – collect on a dry sunny day and keep in a paper bag until ready to sow.

Hard seed – such as kowhai require soaking before sowing to break the hard seed coat. Naturally kowhai are a tree of riverbanks so seed drops into the water, softens and eventually breaks down, lands on a riverbank where it germinates.

Sow seeds on seed raising mix (free from weed seeds) and cover with either a thin layer of mix or a covering of pebbles. I leave all seeds outside for winter enclosed in a frame covered in shade cloth, that way the seeds get all the water they need, are protected from rats or mice and get a natural chilling. Seeds should germinate about September.

If you miss the seed collecting time (and it hasn't been a very good seed year in Southland), you can come along to the nursery in June and take part in the "cuttings" workshops where we will propagate a range of plants from cuttings. Once learned the technique of growing plants from cuttings can be applied to many other plants from ornamentals to fruit bushes, so it is a good skill to learn.

We will also have the usual pruning and grafting workshops for fruit trees – pruning in July and grafting in October.

NATIVE PLANT SALE TIME

At the Nursery we are fundraising to help improve nursery facilities by providing an all weather facility for visiting schoolchildren and for holding workshops. We have a range of shelter, forest and wetland plants in PB3 size for \$5 a plant. All you need to do is give Chris a call 2131161 or email rances@ihug.co.nz to arrange a time to visit and choose some plants. We specialise in native plants that are fast growing, hardy to the Southland climate and are locally sourced. We also have a selection of plants for attracting native birds and bees to your garden.

2012 Living Legends at Bushy Point

There will be another Living Legends planting at Bushy Point in 2012. The date has been set for 31 August 2012 for a schools planting followed by a public planting on Saturday 1 September 2012. Please put those dates in your diary and keep a look out on the Living Legends website for details and to book your place at this event www.livinglegends.org.nz

Have you visited last year's planting? After the plants were "drowned" for two weeks following last September's planting they endured six weeks of drought in one of the driest Southland summers on record and yet the majority are looking great. A release spray was undertaken in December and



nearly all of the 5000 plants are looking good. On 25 April the plants were inspected again and have stood up well to the second drought of the year. Cabbage trees in particular are looking well. There is some dieback of tender growth on such species as *Pittosporum tenuifolium* and totara.

According to Living Legends national coordinator Gordon Hosking, the Bushy Point site had one of the best survival rates in the Country.

This year the planting site has already been cleared, the 3,000 plants have been grown, and the site will be ready for planting in August/September.

It will be another great event – come and join us and our Living Legend Kevin Laidlaw.

Silver Lagoon The lagoon almost dried up in the drought. The water level seems to be on a permanent decline anyway but a prolonged drought can mean no water in the lagoon at all. On 22 April there was a single stilt and two Paradise ducks left. Typically the lagoon – the largest body of water on Sandy Point – has 100 or more ducks plus stilts, herons, pukekos and the odd swan.

Blackberry season Another excellent blackberry season has just passed. Little can be said in praise of the blackberry but in a good year it can produce a heavy crop of berries. 2012 was not quite as good as 2011 but the pickers were out in force. The first berries were ripe at the end of February and they lasted until the end of April.

The season for blackberries! Linda Jackson

I have 6 jars of blackberry syrup on my window sill, cooled sufficiently to let me know I'm not going to be spreading luscious thick berry jam on fresh scones or pikelets made by my own stained hands from this particular batch of berries. Having heard for weeks about this year's bountiful crop from several sources, predictably all my usual 'secret' spots were well grazed by the time I felt compelled to pick berries in the rain last week. Linking seasons with specific activities is ingrained in our culture, and Autumn is harvest time, so while making chutney and jam, juicing apples and preserving more produce than we'll probably get through is not strictly essential for survival, it feels very satisfying. Blackberry syrup on ice-cream or pancakes anyone?

Seed gathering for growing the eco-sourced native trees available through the Community Nursery is another autumn pleasure. Exploring the bush with resident tree expert Chris Rance to identify local native plants, then finding and preparing their amazingly diverse seeds is a fascinating process, with every species having distinctive reproductive methods. Looking forward to potting up trays of densely sprouted seedlings, knowing the thousands of plants produced through the efforts of Nursery volunteers are going to enhance our environment now and into the future is a life enhancing experience.

If you feel that "hunter gatherer" Autumn urge, feel free to join us at the Nursery on Friday mornings.

Bushy Point News

Some changes are happening to the Bushy Point Track. Quite a bit of re-routing of the track has been done over summer. There will be a new self-guided brochure out soon and some new interpretation posts in place. Apologies if the track has been a bit confusing this summer. Because of the drought and the fear of sparks from the mower causing a fire, there was minimal mowing this summer.

We are also creating a new nature trail which will be formed after the pond with activities for children at guided posts.



Southland Girls High School held their “Break out days” at Bushy Point in March. Approximately 200 girls enjoyed different activities learning about the Bushy Point project – potting native seedlings, collecting seed, weeding, nature studies, pest studies and a games session – as well as rubbish collecting at Oreti Beach.



Pest Control over 90 hectares of land around Bushy Point has continued this year thanks to volunteers Len Diack, Chris Rance and Ian Gamble. While possums are largely under control with over 200 having been caught, stoats and rats are a

continuing problem. Most people never see a stoat or a rat, but their impact on native birds, particularly killing chicks on the nest is well documented and after dark these creatures are very active in killing native birds. That is why it is so important to keep up the pest control not only around Bushy Point but on your own property. The added bonus is the absence of rats in your compost or in your roof!

If you haven't already, join the Otatara Pestbusters and do your bit for the very special native birdlife of Otatara.

We are looking for another volunteer to check the traps in the Totara Block, near the Bryson Road entrance to Bushy Point. It's good exercise and only needs to be done once every two weeks – checking traps and replacing poison in tunnels. Please contact Chris if you can help out. No experience required, we will train you up to be an ace pest trapper!

Fluffy

Well, after many weeks of feeding, a leg operation and much aftercare, Fluffy did a runner! Or rather he, she, it, took off out of the cage when being fed. It was a windy day and though never having flown before Fluffy lifted off effortlessly into a stiff southerly wind! Amazingly the bird did return briefly to the cage site but then has not been seen since. So.... If you see a white faced heron with a strange looking knobby leg, we would be interested to hear its whereabouts.

Southland's first heritage forum Cathy Macfie

Since the idea of a forum was put forward in the middle of 2011, it has gained support across a broad spectrum of heritage interests – from historic buildings and museums/collections to traditional skills and cultural activities.

Months of planning came to fruition at Southland Boys' High School from 21-22 April with over 100 participants from all over Southland. It was a rare opportunity to come together, share ideas and work collectively towards the bigger picture of heritage in Southland. Fifteen different workshop options reflected the needs and interests expressed by local heritage groups. Of especial value was

access to a range of heritage professionals with expertise not readily available in Southland. Speakers included a mix of outside guests, bringing inspirational ideas from other parts of the country – plus some of our own, home-grown heritage champions. Sunday afternoon's business session asked the question 'where from here?' Six priorities emerged from the previous day's workshops:

1. Develop a heritage strategy for Southland, including tourism, economic opportunities etc
2. Small museums use *The Story of Southland* to position themselves in Southland's wider heritage picture
3. Advocate to ICC that Donovan Park remain the premium site for heritage events
4. Establish and maintain an accessible heritage database with appropriate links to other sites e.g. local government, Department of Conservation
5. Engage volunteers and young people
6. Advocate for heritage in Southland, e.g. Long Term Council Plans

A new group has been elected to work on the priorities - and to plan the next forum in 2014. The inclusive definition of 'heritage' as *those things inherited from the past that we wish to pass on to future generations and which define the culture and character of Southland, its communities and people* is reflected in the make-up of the group. It includes Jenny Campbell and Rebecca Amundsen who represent environmental and sustainability interests. If you are interested and would like to be on the heritage database to receive updates, please send your contact details to Cathy Macfie: cathymacfie@xtra.co.nz

Here is an article in the Southland Times 8 April 1889 describing what is now the small bay where the monument is at Whalers Bay. This was the Rask home in the early days. The trees acted as a windbreak and deflected the moving sand then overwhelming Sandy Point into the arms that then formed the bay...

"Calling at the house of a most hospitable fisherman (Mr C. Rask) we made another discovery – an oasis in the desert. Whilst the guidwife was frying the flounders, Mr Rask took us round to see the trees. There were blue gums, a little blighted on the top by the wind, but otherwise healthy, also several kinds of pines and cypress, all doing well and showing what might be made of Sandy Point, for the soil is not soil at all, but simply sand of different shades of colour. The secret of Mr Rask's success is hard work. He levelled down the hillocks, put up fences and scrub shelter, sowed grass and planted trees. Now he has, under the shelter of the trees, magnificent potatoes and other crops, and what surprised us even more, some apple trees in full bearing, the trees free of blight and healthy. A 'Hawthorden' was a perfect picture, the apples closely set along each branch. Mr Rask evidently never prunes his trees, for the shape of them are not very symmetrical, but the result in the shape of fruit is very satisfactory. He informed us that he was always earlier with his potatoes than anybody in town, owing to the absence of spring frosts, and he believes also that his apple blossom escaped this spring for the same reason, namely, that the frost is never severe at Sandy Point. We met an old identity New River settler at Mr Rask's, who informed us that the best manure for apple trees is mosquitos and that he had frequently in the early days had to take a barrow to clear them out of the house that they would be clinging in a solid mass six inches in thickness to the ceiling, and that he would get some manuka branches and burn them down every morning and collect them for his apple trees".

Here is an article from the Southland Times of 22 March 1870 written by an affable reporter who inadvertently records an important slice of daily life. The party had been rowed across the estuary from the wharf to a landing at the end of Bryson Road – well before Stead Street had been built. Mr Fraser was the proprietor of a large business processing both flax and timber cut from Otatara Bush, and powering both his industries with the help of one of Invercargill's retired locomotives, known as 'the elephant'.

"The first building entered was an open shed, about 60 feet long, and half as broad. In the centre of this stands a powerful engine – one of the old locomotives – at one end two circular saw tables and two flax machines, and at the other end planing, and tonguing and grooving machines, and two more flax machines. The flax machines occupy the centre of the building longitudinally, and the timber-dressing machinery is placed at the sides. The machines in use are two of Wilson's (Dunedin), one of Price's (Auckland), and one patented in Wellington. Mr Fraser gives the preference to the Auckland machine. Only two of them were running at the time of our visit, but the rapidity with which, they whipped the green blades from the hands of the feeding boys, showed that the pile of 'raw material' lying outside would not last long. The machines are well raised so that a boy can stand easily underneath to take the fibre as it comes through. Each of these catcher boys or whatever they are called hangs the flax over a bar at his side, and from thence another lad carries it off in handy hanks to the washer. Alongside of this building stands another of smaller dimensions, in which are the vertical saws, driven by the same engine, and facing the open end of both sheds is a crane for lifting the logs from one position to another. Passing the planing apparatus at the south end of the shed, the scutching and packing room is entered. This compartment is about 30 x 15, and contains one double and one single scutcher and hydraulic press. The scutchers appear very simple contrivances. They are merely strong discs of wood, about three feet six in diameter with a couple of firmly fixed slots, the beaters, crossing each other at right angles on each side. The disc is then mounted on an axle, and the whole enclosed with a strong stationary wooden casing, open at the top. Driven by belts from the engine, these discs revolve at a tremendous rate, and the dry fibre, in goodsized handfuls, is then submitted to their action by being hung in over the top of the casing, rather in front, first one end of the hank and then the other, the feeder holding on to the same with all big might. A man and a boy attend each scutcher, and as the handfuls of fibre are finished they are again hung on a bar of wood beside the packer. This functionary puts two or three of these small hanks into one big one, gives it a few screws in the middle, doubles it up and lays it in the press, with the twisted bights out.

When the cage of the press is filled, the pump is set in motion, the bottom of the machine rises by a succession of jerks, and in a minute or so, what appeared a pretty solid pile of flax of some seven feet in height, is squeezed into about a third of that size at the top of the cage. The tap is turned to let the water escape, the bottom of the press sinks to its original position and the finished bale is rolled out and into the store-room to wait shipment. In this latter apartment, which is a spacious room of about 50 x 15 with a loft, we found about ten tons of flax baled up ready for putting on board, and about forty tons of the loose dry fibre waiting further manipulation. The loft, it might be mentioned, was full of this material, firmly trodden in which had lain there for five or six months without showing the slightest signs of heating. At the rear of this building is a large water tank, with a small stream running through it where the flax is washed as it comes from the mill and on the flat, all around, are the drying fences or hurdles, some upright, and some horizontal. On the flat hurdles the fibre takes longer to dry than on the upright ones, but gains a better color, being more exposed to bleaching influences. This department had been very noticeable on our approach by the water, from the extent of the fleecy-looking lines, and was found to afford drying accommodation for about four tons of flax at once, there being a mile and-a-half of

fencing altogether, in lengths of about six chains. From the saws, and also from the packing: room, a tramway runs down to the canal basin, and another runs off into the bush some miles for bringing down the timber. The scutchers can run through a ton and a-half per day, and it would take seven machines to keep them constantly going. The noise was perfectly deafening”

UPDATE ON PESTBUSTERS

If you haven't already looked, we now have a website www.otatara-pestbusters.org. Please have a look and you can see the properties that are covered by pest control. If yours is not included you need to get in touch with us Wednesday afternoon 3-6pm or Saturday, 9.30 am to 12.30 pm to discuss your requirements.

Remember Environment Southland have subsidized the poison and traps and you won't get them cheaper anywhere else. Russell makes the bait stations and always has some on hand.

There are now over 100 fairly active members on our list, but we know there are many people in Otatara doing 'their own thing' to combat pests. We want to know who and where you are to add your property to the map so please let us know. It doesn't cost anything to get your listing done and you may be able to get your product cheaper by coming to us if you need anything.

If you want to discuss pest control on your property all the members are listed on the website.

Also if you have any photos to add please email them to May for inclusion. Some old ones may have been lost due to computer layoff with our fire last year so if they're not on the website you may need to send them to me again on bush.haven@kinect.co.nz.

I'm sure you will agree there are many more tuis and bellbirds, and of course kereru around Otatara this year. Unfortunately for us that means more birds to care for at Bush Haven but we are still happy to see more native birds around.

UPDATE ON BUSH HAVEN

Yes, we also have a website – not interactive but quite picturesque and educational, we think. It is www.bushhaven.org – there are a lot of bush havens, don't go looking for the others!



You are welcome to comment on anything we are doing. We have some good photos of kereru releases and links to Pestbusters, Otatara Nursery, DoC bird identification etc, also photos of some of the injuries birds have come to us with.

The kereru released 2011 to mid April this year have a pink or red 'jess' on one leg for identification. Last year's have a yellow one, the year prior to that orange and from now to March 2013, black.

If you see a bird on the ground walking very slowly please let us know – some motorists drove past one in Marama Ave Sth last night before a caring one came and picked Russell up and they went back and retrieved the bird, which would have fallen prey to cats or dogs if left on the ground.

Likewise, if you see a bird with a coloured jess, flying, sitting in a tree or whatever, we would like to know where it is.

Bubs is still coming 'home' for regular feeds and has been nesting close to home as usual. We have seen several of her adult chicks around the area as well.

We welcome groups to view the parrot collection and rehabilitation facilities, at a small donation of gold coin per person, to help feed the birds.

We also have a charitable trust set up for this purpose and hope to receive a further grant from Community Trust of Southland, who have supported us in the past, also the ILT Foundation.

Pineforest fieldtrips

In the first term several schools had pineforest fieldtrips at Sandy Point. The best area is in the vicinity of the Mountainbike Track. There is a toilet there and numerous trails. The pines are mixed age. Activities include: huhu grub collecting for the tuataras and tasting them, pine forest insects, measuring the girth and height of trees, identifying ferns, looking for birds, identifying pine forest fungi, measuring growth rings and following a compass.

We are looking for someone to format Pigeon Post - we are moving into the digital age and would like someone to help knock it into shape.

We will be emailing Pigeon Post to people with an email address.

This saves time and postage cost. We will continue to print and post PP to people without an email address. If you get this as a printed copy and would prefer the convenience of email please contact the editor

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