

Otatara
Landcare Group



PIGEON POST

*Newsletter of the
Otatara Landcare Group*



Issue 59, Winter 2020

Welcome to the winter edition of Pigeon Post. What a special edition we have for you this time round. Besides all the usual news from Bushy Point, Bush Haven, Southland Community Nursery and Pestbusters, we have an update on the exciting new project at the Oreti Road Tōtara Reserve, a bit of history about the property, a look into ways you can revegetate the land and protect areas of national significance, and a peek at what's happening in your backyard.

We want to thank ICC for their support in assisting us with the printing of this and future editions, as well as their ongoing support for the work we are doing to protect this very special part of Invercargill.

We want to make Pigeon Post a regular feature in our community, so become a member and we'll email you a full colour copy in advance of the printed version. Share it with friends and family and help us protect everything we love about living in Otatara.

Editor

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Click on the titles in "In This Issue" to go to a particular article or simply scroll through the pages. The silhouetted kereru in the top right of each page will bring you back to this page so you can easily navigate your way around. Simply click any underlined weblink to go there, like our [website](http://otataralandcaregroup.org.nz):
otataralandcaregroup.org.nz

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CHAIRSPEAK



A message from our Chairperson—Barry Smith

Welcome back to the land of “*being free once again to do (almost) what we want to*”. These last few months have been a rough ride for everyone across the world and in many places it will continue to get worse. The most unfortunate situations are in those third world countries where there are huge populations in close confinement and little funds to do what we achieved here in New Zealand. In these places the true impact of Covid-19 may never be known. And then there are those countries that just bewilder me, countries that should know better, and here also the true impact of Covid-19 may never be known. It is a time for reflection and appreciation on just how lucky we are to live where we do.

Saturday mornings see Robyn and myself off to do Parkrun. It is a free, timed 5 km event that can be sprinted, jogged, shuffled, walked or dawdled. At the end of March all Parkruns across the 22 countries and 1800+ sites that participate were cancelled pending a time when it would be deemed safe to resume again. A true measure of how well our country has done is reflected in the fact that the World Body gave New Zealand permission to re-start Parkrun events on July 4th. It is the only country in the world that has been allowed to do so. Only one place in the country couldn't, and that was Hobsonville in Auckland, because the Council were tearing up the park for some maintenance. All other 29 sites are up and running.

Lockdown was a great opportunity to do some things around home. It personally allowed me to get on and do a project that had been planned and sort of started about 10 years ago... and now it is done. That leaves only 5 or 6 other projects that should have been done years ago! With lockdown I was fortunate to be able to continue working (in the primary industry). It was quite interesting being on our roads with very little traffic, quite weird really. Anyway, with working during level 4 and 3 we had to practice this social distancing thing and this was readily achieved working in a different area to my brother and his wife and also taking my own lunch and sitting in the great sunny days we had at the time eating it.

Our eldest daughter was with us for 11 weeks during lockdown. She set up her work computer in one corner of our office and worked from there. Since she normally flats with another family and the internet connection is a bit cruddy there, home was a good option. Having fibre in Otatara has been great. I don't normally publically pat companies on the back but I think our internet provider, Slingshot, deserves some kudos.



Wind beaten totara - taken during a post-lockdown walk around the new Oreti Road
Totara Reserve 14 June 2020

Continued on next page



As lockdown hit us we got an email from them saying that our data cap has been removed and that we now had unlimited and no extra cost, so that was really appreciated. Whilst this whole thing was an experience it is one I hope we never have to repeat again for the sake of everyone.

Robyn, unfortunately, got made redundant from her job as an Accountant in early February (which had nothing to do with Covid-19). Unfortunately Covid-19 has meant that it is more difficult for her to get another job. If any business out there needs an accountant 1, 2, 3 or 4 days a week then give her a call, our email address is at the bottom of the article.

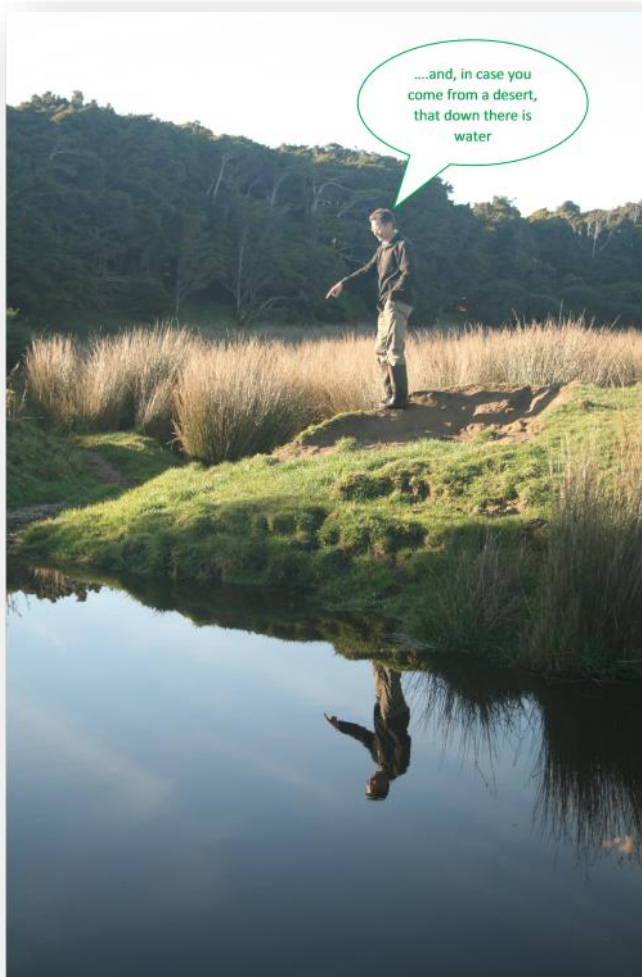
The 12th September (Saturday) is our annual planting day at Bushy Point. This year we are going to operate with more caution considering what has happened and oddly enough the planting project, this year, is perfectly designed for this. We will be planting in the general area of our pond (not the Poo Pond) and whilst we have one larger area to be planted we also have a number of smaller areas as well so we will be able to break up the planters into smaller groups and operate that way. We are also hopeful (and confident) that we will be able to run a bar-b-q again this year (don't tell anyone, but it's the only reason I turn up).

Take care everyone, be safe, be well, be there at the end.

Barry Smith, Chairperson
email: bjsrdms@gmail.com



More of my candid shots—Barry Smith



Disclaimer

As with any community newsletter, the articles contained herein represent the views of the contributor and are not representative of the Otatara Landcare Group as a Society.

It is the diversity of views and opinions that make a community so interesting. So if you have something you'd like to share, email it to otataralg@gmail.com, attention **Editor of Pigeon Post**, and watch out for it in our next edition.

REVEGETATION TIPS



By **Brian Rance**

I have recently been developing some revegetation guidelines for the new Otatara Oreti Road Reserve. I hope these guidelines may have wider applicability and be useful for you also. The first and most important tip is, **get to know your site or project area**. What are the ecological stresses present? Is it the exposure to wind and frost, salt laden winds, sand dunes with summer drought or hollows which flood in winter or others? Also, if you have just moved to your site then follow it through the year. In our wet paddocks I dug a small pit down to the water table and monitored the change through the year – it has up to 50cm variation between winter and summer in a typical year. Also study the soils and topography (the shape and features of the land). These are the two primary factors that will determine the vegetation that would originally have grown on the site.



Plan your project: What do you want to achieve? What type of vegetation do you want? Forest, a pond or tussockland or plantings to attract birds and insects or shelter for other plants? Have you got a vision for what you want it to look like? It would be good to have a close look at areas similar to what you want your area to look like. These are called ***reference sites***. The best reference sites will be close to your site and similar in the landform etc. What sites do you want to plant and in which sequence? Think about existing shelter present or shelter requirements. Ideally utilise any existing native vegetation (esp. shrubs and forest). If possible build on the existing vegetation or forest to expand its size, importance and ecological viability. Possibly preferentially plant on the exposed site as this will have the maximum benefit to the existing forest.

Which species do you want to use? Which will do best on the site? Think about the vegetation that would have originally grown on the site. Think about the species you should use and the appropriate plant mix and proportions of these plants and the sequence of plantings that will achieve your aim. Where are you going to get the plants from? Are the plants eco-sourced, ie was the plant stock derived from Otatara or the planting area.

Continued on next page



Using eco-source plants will likely mean you have the plants that are best adapted to the site conditions and so likely to grow faster and have a higher survival rate. It also helps preserve the special vegetation that is native to Otatara. Totara Forest on sand dunes in Otatara is a *nationally significant* vegetation type. There are a few northern native plants that present problems to plants native here and it would be good not to plant more of them and increase the problem – these are *Hoheria sexstylosa* (lacebark), *Coprosma robusta* (karamu) and *Pseudopanax laetum* (northern five finger). Google them if you are not familiar with the names.

Plan ahead – think about your site conditions and suitable plants. Put in any shelter required in advance and allow this shelter to have established, actively growing and providing shelter before planting. Order your plants a year or two ahead of needing them. Think about site preparation and undertake this with sufficient lead-in time (i.e. weed or pest control and preparation spraying etc.).



The [Southland Community Nursery website](http://southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz) has lots of useful information to support revegetation planting and planning. Check it out or come along to the nursery and check out our restoration planting aged from 3 months to over 20 years old. Last year the largest of our kahikatea trees fruited for the first time so we know we are winning. If you need advice, please ask, restoring a site is very satisfying but does take time and effort.

Brian Rance: Phone: 03 213 1161, or email : rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz

Just How High Are We?

According to David Whelan, the GIS Coordinator at ICC, the highest spot in Otatara at 22 metres is between Black Rd and Grant Rd on the top of a sand dune at 97 Black Road—Mr Gostelow's old place.

There are several spots at 21 metres: 1) behind Otatara Community Centre on Dunns Rd, 2) Either side of Black Rd at nos. 110 and 113 and 3) East of Huruhuru Rd at no 19.

The high point on the new Oreti Road Totara Reserve doesn't quite break the 21 mark.

SHAGS



By Geoff Dembo

The local estuaries, rivers and ocean beaches around Otatara and Sandy Point are good places to see shags (aka *kawau* or cormorants). The variety of habitats—saltwater, tidal brackish and freshwater—supports five species that can commonly be seen: little pied shag, black shag, pied shag, Stewart Island shag and spotted shag.

The lower reaches of the Oreti River offer many good viewing points for seeing pied shags fairly close up. They perch on old timber pilings or branches of trees that have been washed down the river.



Pied Shag—photo by Geoff Dembo

The very end of Sandy Point Road, looking out across the entrance of the New River Estuary to Omaui and Mokomoko Inlet, is a great spot for viewing shags using binoculars or a small telescope. I went out there at the end of lockdown with a friend to do a bird count. It was a fine but chilly winter's day, and only a few other hardy souls were there.

While a man and his two grandchildren waded in the water collecting mussels, a young family went for a gentle stroll and an older couple pushed their bicycles along the beach, we saw many birds out on the water, including large numbers of little pied, spotted and Stewart Island shags.

Continued on next page



Photo by Geoff Dembo

You could also try the New River Estuary from Bushy Point, either from the estuary-side fenceline or the trig point bench. Along with hundreds of wading birds on the mudflats you're likely to see shags hanging out on pilings and platforms in the middle of the estuary.



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an invasive pest plant in Otatara,

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LIVING WITH KERERU...



...in our Backyards by Kathy Morrison

First of all—aren't we lucky in Otatara to have so many of these gentle, stunning birds watching over us?

Sometimes when I'm quietly weeding or just sitting with a book under the trees I hear a soft "coo", a kereru "Hello", and know I have a friend nearby. At the moment there are four regular kereru who come and go, sometimes sitting in the large cabbage tree at our back door catching the early sun or on the native beech where they can see us through a really small window as we eat breakfast. One kereru, who our grandson, Skye, called Peanut, visits any recovering birds we have in the small outside aviary and hangs upside down on the nearby kowhais scoffing the leaves before heading off for a bit. He was handed in to Russell and May Evans as a very young bird found on the ground at the golf course when the big macrocarpas were cut down.

Kereru in the South generally have one chick hatch between October and March.

Chicks stay in their nests for up to 8 weeks and then their parents often continue to support and help them for another 2 years, teaching them about the best food and where to find it.

Peanut has had to work out these things by himself since he was released here last September. We are the closest he has to parents so he visits regularly, knowing we would feed him if he was hungry.

Waikiwi, another rescued kereru, stayed around after his release and began to come for food when I fed the others in the cage he'd been in. We gave him his own bowl and he began waiting for us at our front door then swooping down on the patio cage, scattering most of the opportunistic sparrows hoping to snatch a few grains of rice before he arrived. One in particular hung around knowing that he was a messy eater.

Waikiwi basically lived on the Westside of our house and Peanut ruled the East. Sometimes they jostled and fought a bit across the back before retiring to their own sides again.

Recently we released Matua. She and Peanut have banded together and sit on the power lines outside our gate from where they, at times, freak us out low flying up our longish drive.

And now we have Sunny— a young female who had been found in the middle of town taking up residence. Two or three days after we let her go, she landed with Waikiwi in the tree beside the bird feeder. I put out his bowl which he picked at before hopping back onto the branch and looking at Sunny. She looked at the bowl and back at him as he leant right down towards it and looked across at her again. This went on for a few minutes until Sunny got the idea, jumping down onto the feeder and polishing off the bowl of food. Now they fly together, swoop and play and take turns coming for a good feed of rice, peas, corn, pear and when they're lucky, pineapple.

Kereru can fly 60 or 70 kms a day and can cross Foveaux Strait.

The four birds have reached a happy place paired up it seems and all coexisting at times in our backyard and probably many others over the day.

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Some locals have told me of large flocks of kereru flying across the strait to Otatara at certain seasons.

Kereru are the excuse we have for not washing our windows. The dust, the spiders' webs, the dream-catchers and decals hopefully will be deterrent enough. We think that kereru take the bush reflections in the windows as the real thing. Thanks to Douglas, I did like looking out our big clean windows though.

A sad fact is that the life span of kereru has dropped from 20- 25 years down to just 5- 6 years over the last hundred or so years because of collisions with cars and windows; predators, such as cats, rats, stoats and possums; and the massive loss of their forest habitat.

An encouraging fact is that all of these issues are within our power to do something about: we can plant more trees such as kowhai, tawa, hohere, puriri and tree lucerne in our gardens and in local reserves. We can join Pestbusters for help with effective predator control, and place decorations and decals in our windows to prevent bird strike. Thanks to Russell and May Evans we already have good signage on the Otatara roads and very little car strike.

If you find a kereru on the ground, pick it up gently with a cloth and put it in a soft padded, ventilated box with a bowl of water, overnight. If it shows no sign of flying away in the morning, **phone or text Bush Haven** on **027 786 5365**. It is not a good idea to leave a kereru on the ground, as some people have been advised, because of pets and predators.

Most of our local backyards are potentially visited by these beautiful birds. Let's consciously make them safer and food friendlier for kereru and other birds. The whum whum of a kereru's wingbeat is one of the loveliest of sounds that has us lifting our heads, like the chittering of the kakariki, the dripping purity of the bellbird or the incredible variety of notes produced by the tui.

The AGM for Bush Haven Native Bird Rehabilitation Trust will be held at:

**53 Martin Street, Invercargill
2pm on Sunday, 26 July 2020**

Anyone interested is welcome to attend.



Waikiwi with her opportunistic sparrow friend.

OTATARA PESTBUSTERS



Are You a Member?



Become an Otatara Pestbuster and join almost 300 other Otatara landowners that are currently controlling rats and mice on their properties. **FREE** membership entitles you to low cost rat bait (poison), bait stations and traps (both pet proof), plus as much advice as you want!

We would also like to hear from Otatara residents that are undertaking pest control on their own properties without formal connection to, or membership of Otatara Pestbusters. This will enable us to get a much better idea of the degree of community involvement in pest control in Otatara.

Otatara Pestbusters was established in 2010 by Russell and May Evans in conjunction with the Otatara Landcare Group. The goal is to increase bird numbers by reducing the number of rats, stoats and possums that are munching on the birds, their eggs and their habitat. To that end, Otatara Pestbusters sells traps, trap boxes, bait stations and poison bait to Otatara residents at less than wholesale rates. For \$20 - \$30 you will be well on the way to successful pestbusting.

Landowners' efforts at home complement work done by volunteer pestbusters in all the ICC Reserves in Otatara – and it's working! Many residents have noticed more tuis, kereru, fantails, indeed all types of birds, around their properties. In addition kakariki (red crowned parakeets) are regularly seen and there is even the odd sighting of kaka.

The day to day running of Pestbusters is now coordinated by Dallas Bradley. You can contact Dallas on **213 0234** or **021 794 962** for pest control supplies or advice on traps, bait or how to get started.

Dallas says, *"It's great to see residents enthusiastic about removing rats and mice from their own property. No one likes rodents in the family home, sheds, gardens or bush and everyone gets a kick out of having birds flitting, swooping or roosting around the property – better still if they nest but they will only be successful in that department if the rats are removed."* Aim for a predator-free backyard – collective predator-free back yards make for a safer habitat for birds.

"There's a lot more rats around than most people realise," says Dallas, *"Just because you don't see them, doesn't mean you haven't got rats. I've trapped heaps but I've never seen a live one – they're mainly nocturnal so the chance is slim. Having said that, I've spoken to plenty locals who have!"*

Rat control benefits your home as well as the birds – you will have a lot less rats and mice scuttling in the ceiling and under the house. Past building fires in Otatara have been attributed to rats chewing on the wiring.

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Victor Rat Trap and its pet and bird proof box



Rat bait pipe and poison



The Otatara Pestbusters falls under the umbrella of the Otatara Landcare Group. Some of the pestbusters put a considerable amount of time and effort into controlling pests in local reserves as well as their own properties. Over the years they have noticed a significant drop in pest numbers and a corresponding increase in seedling growth and bird numbers. However, there is always a certain amount of “reinvansion” by mobile pests so pestbusting has to be an ongoing activity.

Persistence pays off, as they say, so if any of you existing pestbusters are getting short of supplies, give Dallas a ring. If you haven’t changed the bait in your bait stations for a while, it would pay to do so because the rats prefer the fresh stuff. They don’t like mouldy bait.

If you currently rely solely on bait stations, you may also like to try a trap as well. It is more effective to have a mix of methods. Our new pet proof trap boxes complete with trap are locally produced by builder and pestbuster, Wayne Robertson. They are very effective - \$30 for box and trap, you won’t buy cheaper and they’ll last forever.

TREE FROGS IN THE TUNNEL HOUSE

By Penelope Gillette

When I was growing up in Los Angeles County, a rural suburb on the edge of the city, there were frogs everywhere, in the swimming pool! Over time, as the area became more built up, there were fewer and fewer frogs, and then there were none.

Frogs have permeable skin and are very sensitive to their surroundings—they don't like dryness or pollution. Although the frogs here in Otatara are not native to New Zealand, they are indicators that our environment is relatively unpolluted and it is certainly damp enough for them.

Here is a frog I found in the tunnel house.



Several are still living underneath the seedling trays. They are quite small and well camouflaged, so I recommend keeping an eye out when moving seedling trays. The species is *Litoria ewingii* -- the southern brown tree frog (native to Australia).

I wonder if anyone else in Otatara has tree frogs living in their glass house... I wonder if these frogs would be affected by common garden inputs, such as fertilizers and weed spray... I wonder where they breed and where their babies (tadpoles) grow up...?

Nonetheless, finding these frogs has reminded me how grateful I am to be in Otatara, such a beautiful place with clean air and water.

EUROPEAN FARMING HISTORY ON THE NEW ORETI TOTARA RESERVE



By Cathy McFie

Lichen-covered totara fence posts, rusting relics of ploughs and farm implements ... a walk through the newly reserved NZ Forest Restoration Trust land at 344 Oreti Road is as rich in human stories as it is in natural history.

The original Crown Grant map of 1860 reflects a mix of riverside ownership with some well-known names. In 1856 Lewis Acker was appointed pilot for the New River. He bought land upstream of Oreti Road and was involved with both farming and sawmilling. The Erskine family was one of the earliest farming families in the Oreti Road area. James and William Erskine were both landowners, followed by Harold; father of Russell Erskine. Russell's death earlier this year brought to an end the Erskine name although the strong family association with this land lives on through his daughter's family. Alf Tapper and Lawrence Rhodes are others whose names appear on early ownership certificates.

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Crown Grant Map, 1860



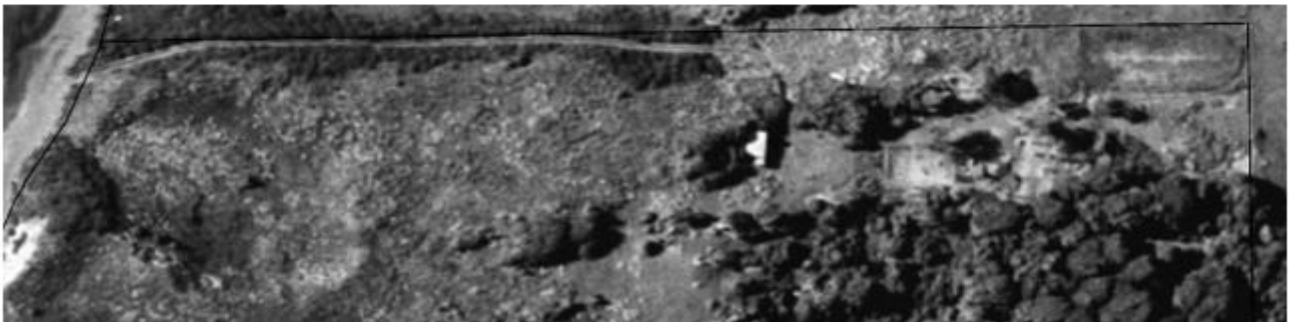
In 1952 Harold Erskine sold the block to Jack Galbraith who built a dwelling in the north east corner. He grazed up to 30 race horses on the land and Warren Burns remembers his two older brothers riding them around the property. Warren was not allowed to go with them but would follow them along the river flats from his Rakiura Parade home and watch unseen. As a 10 year old, Warren also remembers stock car racing on a circuit, using the flat land off lower Oreti Road. It attracted cars, including American coupes from as far away as Gore. Spectators would watch from a sand dune ridge.

North boundary (1947)|



1952 (from ICC website)

North boundary



Aerial photo showing North boundary and Jack Galbraith's dwelling in 1952

During the 1960s, Neil McCallum took ownership of the land and is fondly remembered by Otatara residents who had permission to ride their horses over his property. That kindness was also extended by the last owner Peter Knight who was another Otatara character.

Over the next few months, we want to collect as many stories as we can of those who have farmed this land and left a legacy of memories. We plan to develop a permanent display including photos and other memorabilia.

Do you have stories to share?

Please contact Cathy Macfie: cathymacfie@xtra.co.nz or 0274 534055

CARING FOR OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



Join the Otatara Landcare Group and make a lasting difference

Otatara is a special place to live. It meets all the criteria of “*location, location, location*” resting as it does between the beach and the city with an outdoor playground right next door. And that very location makes Otatara quite unique.

The bush blocks many of the homes are nestled amongst are remnants of a much larger totara-on-sand-dune forest with low-lying wetland pockets that once covered the whole of the area. Walks through Otatara Scenic Reserve on Dunns Road, Otatara South Reserve at the end of Huruhuru Road and the new Oreti Road Totara Reserve give an idea of what the whole of Otatara may once have looked like.

In 1999, the Otatara Landcare Group was established as an Incorporated Society with the aim of protecting these forest remnants and wherever possible promoting the restoration of bush indigenous to the area. The Bushy Point Restoration Project is one area where the Group has had a significant impact in meeting this aim—growing native plants, organising public planting days (e.g. Living Legends), maintaining a walkway with interpretation panels and managing animal and weed pests.

But that’s not all the Group does. We are active in advocating for the natural values of Otatara (to Council and other government agencies) and organising events to highlight the natural areas of Otatara. We are the umbrella organisation for Otatara Pestbusters and inform residents of the natural values of Otatara—its special birds and plants—through our workshops, open days, and publications such as our regular newsletter the **Pigeon Post** and booklets such as **Natural Otatara** and **Otatara - A Hidden Treasure** (2019) as well as the series of activity-based resources for children that the Group produces.

The Otatara Landcare Group also supports the new NZFRT Oreti Totara Forest Reserve with many of our committee actively involved with the Trust. And we fund raise for all these activities through the application for government and local body grants.

Our current Society membership is around 200 households, many of whom live in Otatara. If you are new to Otatara or have not yet got around to doing so, why join us and support the work we do, please take a moment to complete our **Membership Form**.

Together, we can make a lasting difference to the environment of Otatara.

You can support our work by taking out a life membership for ONLY \$50, joining our activities or by making a donation.



Bushy Point Totara Block—Photo by Graeme Childs

Otatara Landcare Group Membership



If you are not already a member and would like to help support the work of the Otatara Landcare Group, just fill in the form below and come join us. We appreciate all our members both for their contributions of time and financial support. We can't do it without you.

Membership Form

Please complete form for membership or if you require a receipt for any donation and email to otataralg@gmail.com.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Numbers: (Hm) _____

(Mobile): _____

Email: (for newsletters and events) _____

☐ I give permission for my contact details to be retained exclusively for the purposes of communication in relation to the activities of Otatara Landcare Group.

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Glenda Graham – 33 Rakiura Parade.

Otatara Landcare Group:

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PP editor, Lesley Catterall: 021 916 124

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Additional Contributors:

Penelope Gillette

Please contact the Otatara Landcare Group if you have any questions, suggestions or problems relating to the Otatara and Sandy Point areas: otataralg@gmail.com



Improving Our Habitat - Beginning At Home.

IDEAS FROM 'NATURE'S BEST HOPE' by DOUGLAS W. TALLAMY



① Shrink the lawn.

Restrict the mown areas to wide paths for walking or to define special areas. Avoid mowing at dusk & munching the nocturnal species emerging.

② Remove invasive species.

Look around. See sycamores, agapanthus, pampas, cotoneaster, aluminium weed, heather or wattles? Introduced plants with a history of spreading don't belong in our shrinking native ecosystems. Remove & replace the invaders, using local natives.

③ Plant keystone species.

Local natives are essential for providing habitat & food for the birds and insects that belong here. Landscapes not containing key species cannot provide a successful ecosystem.

④ Increase the abundance & diversity of plants.

Planting groves at the same density at which they occur naturally allows the roots to interlock & support each other in high winds. They will supply the cover many insect & bird species need to survive & thrive.



⑤ Plant for specialist pollinators.

Growing the plants our native bees need, honey bees & bumblebees will also benefit. Encouraging birds & insects into our gardens ensures pollination.



⑥ Enhance, Encourage & Enjoy.

Place a water feature where birds feel safe to drink. Build small bug hotels & disperse them through the garden. Allow some rotting logs & leaf piles to decay, then enjoy the fungi & wildlife moving in.



for more info - www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz



A TIME FOR REFLECTION!



by Chris Rance

Covid-19 has certainly made us all think about things. We had time during lockdown to re-assess our lives, certainly to slow down and many of our friends and colleagues found solace in our gardens and wild spaces. Of course the Nursery was closed to volunteers so I did a lot of the hands-on work myself and enjoyed the time getting my hands dirty (I don't do enough of it!) with not having all the other usual time-consuming things to do. Though I did post a number of stories on the Nursery website at <https://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/news-and-events/>.

It reads a bit like a Covid Diary: from *Sorry, we are closed!* on 23 March 2020, to *Some ideas for family Home Time* on 27 March, *It's seed collecting time!!* on 6 April *Seed Saving and Not Wasting Anything!* on 20 April, *Native Seed Sowing 2020* on 2 May, *Seed cleaning* on 11 May, *Nursery still closed for volunteers but opening soon!* on 14 May, *Nursery Opening for Workshops on Fridays* on 2 June, *National Volunteer Week 2020* on 24 June, *Litter Intelligence Programme* on 30 June, and back to normal *Community Nursery Workshops and Break-up Friday* on 30 June 2020.

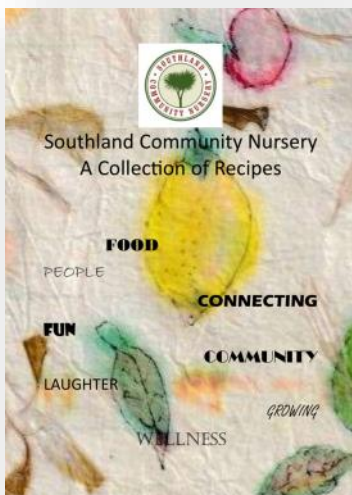
We have had a lot of post-Covid native plant sales – everyone was either planning or preparing for planting over lockdown. Our workshops on growing plants from cuttings, vegetable growing, forest gardens and setting up a community nursery have all been popular subjects as people strive for a more sustainable lifestyle that includes plants and gardens and food. There is an interesting article on how nature could be the best medicine which you can find here:

<https://thespinoff.co.nz/science/30-06-2020/could-nature-really-be-the-best-medicine/>

Bronwyn has been preparing lots of activities for school groups come Spring as well as a very cool map of Otatara and Sandy Point on the Education Centre floor – watch this space for exciting activities relating to “our place” soon. Meanwhile, the Nursery will be taking a winter break – coming back in September when I expect seedlings will be germinating and cuttings will be rooting and there will be lots of volunteer jobs to be done on Friday mornings. Winter is a good time to assess and plan your garden/property and we are happy to give advice on plants native to the area or weed issues you might have so email me with any questions at:

rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz

ORDER YOUR RECIPE BOOK



To celebrate the legendary morning teas on volunteer Fridays at the Southland Community Nursery and other food related events held at the Southland Community Nursery we have compiled a recipe book. Thank you for your support.

Recipe Books are \$10 each

Pop down to the Southland Community Nursery on Friday mornings to get your copy. Or contact Chris at: rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz to arrange a pick up.



ORETI ROAD TOTARA RESERVE

By Maurice Rodway, Honorary Ranger

SIT students have visited the reserve and will commence some work on July 25. They propose setting up a trapline, doing water samples and drone mapping.

Dallas Bradley has been working with Tim Simpson to build bait stations and monitoring tunnels and to set out lines to lay these out for pest control. Seventy bait stations have been laid out, each with two blocks of Contrac in the first instance. Twenty two monitoring stations on two 500-metre lines have also been laid out. Formal monitoring on these lines won't occur until ES does its next round of monitoring in the beginning of August. Five DoC 200s and a DoC 250 have also been deployed along with seven Possum Masters and about seven rat traps. All these traps have been borrowed from the OLG or OPB. To date three ferrets, eight possums, seven rats, two mice and one hedgehog have been caught and 70 baits replaced.

Tim Simpson and his father Peter will continue to hunt rabbits as required to keep these animals at low levels. The carbon monoxide poisoning method used at Bushy Point has been trialled with a device built by Peter Simpson based on a weed blower.

An application has been made to ES for support from its Environmental Enhancement fund to help with pest control equipment and provision of plants, and a letter has been written to the chairman requesting an opportunity to present to the council to make councillors and senior staff aware of the reserve and what we hope to achieve there.

A meeting with Michele Frey and Kate Gough of the ICC parks division was held. They will supply 1000 plants and assist with car park and shelter design. A plant list developed by the advisory committee has been supplied to them. In addition flaxes from the Otatara area will be brought in by for planting around wetlands and in wetter areas.

Eight 1 ha sections along Oreti Road are being surveyed by True South. The sections are designed to allow sensitive building sites that don't compromise the open space values of the area and covenants will be placed on the sections to ensure inappropriate trees are not planted.

[Continued on next page](#)



North Eastern open area of reserve where flax, toi toi and mingimingi will be planted but where natural regeneration will be the main method of revegetation.



Old fences have been removed and new fences erected to facilitate managed grazing of sheep in the future. Some calves and some older cattle will be present until later in the year. Sheep will be brought on in the springtime. Removal of gorse by mulching on the flatter areas of the permanent grazing area is being undertaken. Small clumps of gorse and blackberry along tracks will be removed. Lupins and larger areas of gorse will be used as nursery crops to allow native plants to grow in sheltered situations.

Becky Goodsell, Biosecurity Officer, Pest Plants ES, visited the site and provided advice on the control of weeds. In addition to blackberry and gorse control, removal of other weeds such as elderberry and flame creeper will need to be undertaken. There are not many of these plants at present but with the removal of grazing there is potential for them to expand.



A system of tracks for public access is being developed and a car parking area has been identified as part of the surveying of the sections for sale. Signage and interpretation panels are being developed for these areas. However there is still no date yet for opening the reserve to public access, but the Advisory Committee hopes this will be before the end of the year.

Zane Moss from Fish & Game has visited the site and wetland enhancement proposals have been developed. Three areas which used to flood and retain water for varying periods are being restored. It is anticipated these will be ephemeral wetlands, with water remaining depending on how wet the seasons have been. It is expected that wetland birds, plants and native fish will benefit from this.

The advisory committee has been developing planting and monitoring programmes. These will be incorporated into the Management Plan which, when complete, will be available on the OLG website.

SIT students and tutor sampling water from the main reserve pond.

OTATARA—A SPECIAL PLACE TO LIVE

By Bronwyn Graham

Otatara School students show their love of
Otatara Bush Reserves and are concerned about the damage that has
been happening

The Otatara Scenic Reserve is a popular area and the Otatara School has been learning all about and enjoying this special place. Sadly though, inappropriate use of forested areas has also been noticed by the students: clearing of forest floor vegetation, cutting down of sizeable native trees and littering...

Otatara School students are proactively working with the Invercargill City Council and other community contacts to stop this inappropriate use of Otatara Bush. These school students have established a plan of action to work alongside Invercargill City Council staff so that the students can grow as kaitiaki of their surrounding environment. Great work Otatara School students!!

Below are a collection of some of the responses that children had to what they feel about the Otatara Scenic Reserve (next door to their school) and their thoughts about the damage to the bush.

Children's feelings:

"The native, birds, the mighty Tōtara, have lived in their peaceful habitat, all just to see it get destroyed by teenagers." *Emma Rudel*

"I was revolted by the way it all started, then Mrs Green came back from the bush saying axes and spades had been found." *Fynn Robson*

"The year 6 group love to go exploring in our bush and seeing all the species of birds, insects and plants in our backyard." *Hannah Forsyth*

"As kids we would go into the reserve for a walk with family or friends." *Jayde Tither*

"My dream is that these vandals who are breaking the law will appreciate it enough to stop and realise how precious the bush really is." *Lyla Carstensen*

"We love to go out into the Otatara bush exploring and getting all the pests out, such as Chilean Flame Creeper." *Ocean Healey*

"One day I was running through the bush and saw a hole on the side of the track, inside I was disgusted by what I saw; trees had been stood on and destroyed and there were big holes." *Deegan Hedges*

"We have contacted the council AGAIN, we hope that we stick together and can fix this! We can be kaitiaki." *Fynn Robson*

"This has been going on for ages, it's only getting worse and we have been offering to help." *Nate Hansen*

"So the bush can be outstanding and beautiful forever." *Alex Borrie*



Continued on next page

Otatara—A Special Place, continued



“I dream of families coming to school to fundraise and learn about the bush.” *Hamish Moss*

“Mā whero mā pango, ka oti ai te mahi, we all have important roles in this work.” *Tarata Students*

“Every time I go for a walk in the bush, I see and learn new plants. My dream for the bush is there would be no jumps and no rubbish, and we would plant new plants.” *Georgia Horgan*

“I love bush because it is a calm and peaceful place. It is somewhere people can relax, express themselves and just be them. When I think about the damage that has been done to this beautiful place, I feel upset, annoyed, and most of all, shocked.” *Natalia Smellie*

“The things I love about the bush are going walking and playing at Bush Kindy. My dream for the bush is to plant new trees. I would also like there to be more areas for kids to play, like more swings and tunnels to crawl through.” *Tegan McKay*

“I love that our class is able to go into the Otatara Scenic Reserve and find incredible creatures or things. We are so lucky. I would love for the kids that are doing the damage to the bush to get found, and we end up teaching them how to plant trees and we can all be friends.” *Ruby Goodall*

“I love to have adventures and use my imagination in the bush. My dream is that the bush will still be there for generations to come.” *Hannah Woodcock*

“I feel disgusted that people think it is fun to use axes, chainsaws and spades to cut through the peace and beauty of the bush.” *Riley Batt*

“Otatara is a very special place to live. The bush of Otatara is one of the amazing treasures of this place. Otatara is nationally significant in being the largest and best remaining example of lowland totara forest on sand dunes—this means that areas in Otatara are the best remaining example of this type of forest in New Zealand—now that is special!”

Also special, is the way in which Otatara School have responded proactively to the damage found, to highlight the great aspects of Otatara Bush and how it should be treated and protected.”
Bronwyn Graham

To whom it may concern,
We are deeply concerned. People are cutting down trees, digging holes and using axes to cut through the roots of beautiful old Tōtara trees. They are riding their bikes over the tracks and jumps they have made in the Otatara Reserve. We notice they have pulled out ferns, *Astelia flaxes* and cleared wide strips of the native reserve. Since last year, there are more bike tracks, the holes have become bigger and the situation looks much worse.
We are asking for your urgent attention to stop this destruction happening. We really want to stop this and would like to work with you to help restore the bush that has been destroyed. The bike tracks are becoming so established that many other children in the neighbourhood are thinking it is okay to bike through the bush now.
Joint letter from Alex King, Findley Mitchell and Jamie Oosterbroek: Passionate Bush Ramblers

BUSHY POINT



A Look Back (and Forward) by Chris Rance

During lockdown many people “discovered” local Otatara places, including the Bushy Point Restoration Project – accessed from the end of Bryson Road. It’s a great place to walk – with views and ponds and planting areas and children’s activities. On 12 September 2020 we will have another big planting day. It will be our 21st year of planting on that site and it takes some of us back to the beginning of the project.

It started when, shortly after the OLG was established (1999), Colin Pemberton who worked at DOC asked the group if they would like to “adopt” the Bushy Point area. At that stage it was a “grazing lease” – an area of land inherited by DOC but of low ecological value. It was leased for grazing to keep the area tidy and generate some income. Colin’s proposal was for the OLG to take over the management of the area, with the aim of restoring it back to native forest for the rent of one dollar. Thus the project began and from then we have called it “A forest in the making”!

The following year, Barry Smith came up with the idea he called “2000 in 2000” appealing to every Otatara resident to plant a native grass, shrub or tree at Bushy Point. In 2011 we were fortunate to be chosen as the Regional Living Legends site in association with the Rugby World Cup then being held in NZ. Each region had an “All Black” as their Living Legend and ours is Kevin Laidlaw. Kevin has supported each annual event since then and 10,000 plants were planted over the three years of that project.

Continued on next page



Bushy Point, continued



Last year we celebrated 20 years of work, 15,000 volunteer hours and 30,000 plants in the ground. These are great milestones in a project that will continue beyond all our lifetimes. By planting the native species ('nursery species') we are just preparing the ground for the longer lived species to come in (via bird droppings) – the totara, kahikatea, rimu, matai and miro.

Maybe we don't need to plant at all—but planting is a human activity and there is nothing better than putting a tree in the ground for that sense of satisfaction and community; doing something that will make a lasting difference to the place in which we live. Not only for the trees themselves but the birds and insects and all fauna that is supported by these plants.

The photo of the interpretation panel, created by Helen Duston last year, shows many of those helpers over the years. In September you can become part of this living legacy, helping improve the place that we all call home.

And of course planting is just the beginning: join the Group—there's a membership form on the next page; come help us out if you can during the year—with weeding, plant clearing or other jobs, spread the word and enlist as many of your friends and whanau as you can. Any offer of assistance is a massive help to the project as a whole—get involved. . Email otataralg@gmail.com with any offers of help.

Bushy Point Project
GROWING FORESTS AND COMMUNITIES

It was the year 2000 when Otatara Landcare Group volunteers started planting at Bushy Point.

In 2019 we shall celebrate the milestone of **30,000 native plants!**

Our website explains how you can help: otataralandcare.org.nz

ARE YOU ON HERE?
Let us know!

You can help! Find out how at www.otataralandcare.org.nz

Otatara Landcare Group

BUSHY POINT BEFORE & AFTER

Photos by: Dawn Eastman, Chris Rogers, Joanne Harding

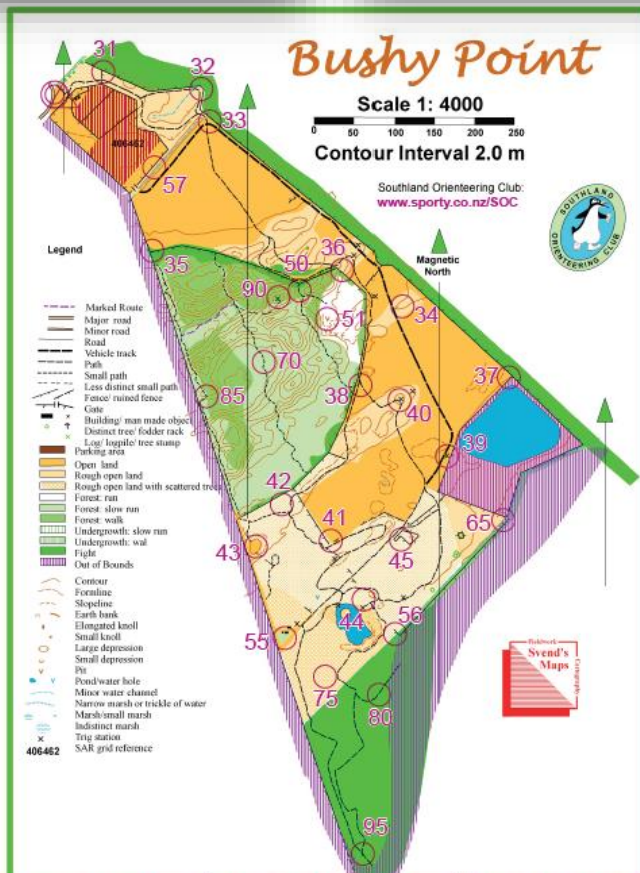
Otatara Landcare 2019

HAVE YOU TRIED ORIENTEERING?

By Sally Duston, Southland Orienteering Club



On Sunday 16 August, the Southland Orienteering Club is once more holding an event at Bushy Point. This is an opportunity to try out a great family sport and explore one of your local reserves in much more detail than the usual walk with your dog or reluctant children! If you don't know what Orienteering is all about, head for our website www.southlandorienteeringclub.co.nz or our Facebook page. Whilst local orienteer, Helen Stewart, is still at the planning stage, the map below from the event held a couple of years ago, gives you a bit of an idea. It will cost you \$13 per map and one map is enough for several people to share. Just turn up any time between 11.30am and 1pm at the Bryson Road entrance and give it a go. No special equipment is needed and help will be given if you need it.



Bushy Point Score, 10 June 2018			
27 controls			
Control	Found	Score	Notes
31	✓	✓	Penetration
32	✓	✓	Penetration
33	✓	✓	Penetration
34	✓	✓	Penetration
35	✓	✓	Penetration
36	✓	✓	Penetration
37	✓	✓	Penetration
38	✓	✓	Penetration
39	✓	✓	Penetration
40	✓	✓	Penetration
41	✓	✓	Penetration
42	✓	✓	Penetration
43	✓	✓	Penetration
44	✓	✓	Penetration
45	✓	✓	Penetration
50	✓	✓	Penetration
51	✓	✓	Penetration
55	✓	✓	Penetration
56	✓	✓	Penetration
57	✓	✓	Penetration
65	✓	✓	Penetration
70	✓	✓	Penetration
75	✓	✓	Penetration
80	✓	✓	Penetration
85	✓	✓	Penetration
90	✓	✓	Penetration
95	✓	✓	Penetration

'Just to let you know that the Club will be holding a "winter series" this year on the range.

The shoots are scheduled for the first Sunday of each month at 1.00pm, commencing 5th July 2020. If the weather is inclement the shoot may be transferred to the following Sunday. Normal Saturday shooting will resume in September.

Foster Price

Invercargill Rifle Club



TŌTARA



Did You Know?

Origins:

Tōtara are endemic to New Zealand (they don't grow in any other country)
Tōtara are conifers, they have been growing for millions of years. They are in the Genus name *Podocarp*, along with rimu, mataī, miro, and kahikatea.
Tōtara for Māori was rangatira – “chiefly tree”
Māori brought the name tōtara from Polynesia.
Tara means “sharply pointed”.

What do tōtara look like?

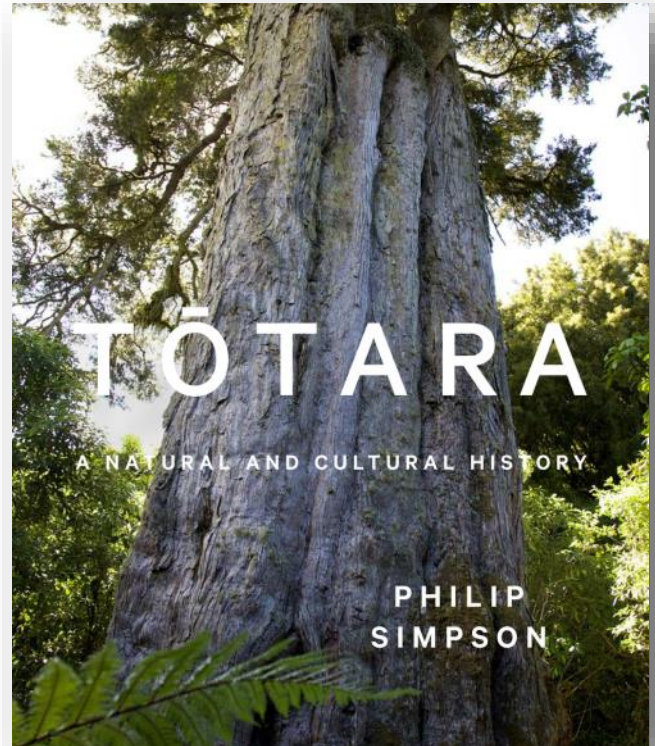
Tōtara can reach a height of 30-40 metres—needle leaves—shaggy thick bark—have cones and red fruit (to attract birds) with seed attached—different male and female trees

There are four species of tōtara in NZ: lowland tōtara (*Podocarpus tōtara* – the first time a Māori word had been used in a scientific name for a plant in 1829); Halls tōtara (*Podocarpus laetus* – main species found in Otatara); needle-leaved tōtara (found on the West Coast); and Snow tōtara (a shrub of the mountains)

TŌTARA by Philip Simpson:

Tells us the story of New Zealand from a tōtara's point of view.

We could tell the history of Otatara from the tōtara's point of view. Otatara has some of the best remaining stands of tōtara in New Zealand.



Tōtara was so significant to Māori and Europeans because of its strength.

Māori Uses:

Transport: used to make waka—Building—Household items—Storage of food—Preparation of food—Making of tools—Carving—Telling stories/history—Whakapapa (genealogy, family history) is recorded in the carving of tōtara Māori art.

European Uses:

Construction of houses, fences, bridges, telegraph poles, railways, roofs

Conservation:

New Zealand has lost most of its original lowland tōtara forests. We need to protect what is left. Otatara has some of the best nationally significance tōtara areas in New Zealand.



**Southland
New Zealand Riding for the Disabled**

**Needs Volunteers
Can you Help?**



- Become part of a caring team
- Help disabled children learn and grow
- No previous experience with horses needed
- Many and varied ways to support
- Full Training provided

If you think you can help make a difference in the lives of these children, contact us today!

admin@rdasouthland.org.nz
Be part of something special!



DO YOU USE ECOSIA?



By Douglas Black

Most of us in Otatara will be aware of the Otatara Landcare Group's wonderful work planting trees at Bushy Point, especially the Living Legends plantings to help offset the carbon emissions from the 2011 Rugby World Cup held in New Zealand. But I suspect that not too many of us know of an easier way to plant native trees—and on a much, much larger scale—from the comfort of your own home. Curious? What to know how? Read on.

Ecosia was launched on 7 December 2009 to coincide with UN climate talks in Copenhagen and is a search engine based in Berlin, Germany. Ecosia donates 80% or more of its profits to nonprofit organizations that focus on reforestation. It considers itself a social business, is CO₂-negative and claims to support full financial transparency and protect the privacy of its users.

Over time, Ecosia has supported various tree-planting programmes world wide. Until December 2010, Ecosia's funds went to a programme by WWF Germany that protected the Jurueña National Park in the Amazon basin. To protect this area, the organisers drew up and financed plans with timber companies and the local communities.

From July 2013 to September 2014, Ecosia donated to the Plant a Billion Trees program run by The Nature Conservancy, a program that aimed to restore the Brazilian Atlantic Forest by planting one million native trees by 2015. On July 9, 2020, Ecosia's tree counter reached 100 million trees, removing 1771 tonnes of CO₂ daily. It was reported in July 2020 that Ecosia, on average, is able to fund a tree every 0.8 seconds with the revenue it makes from advertising. Watch their video marking this milestone at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-iEZJ8uaxU>.

In 2018, Ecosia committed to becoming a privacy-friendly search engine. Searches are encrypted, not stored permanently, and data is not sold to third-party advertisers. The company states in its privacy policy that it does not create personal profiles based on search history, nor does it use external tracking tools like Google Analytics. Ecosia shows advertisements next to its search results and is paid by partners every time a user is directed to an advertiser via a sponsored link. A single search on Ecosia raises approximately half a Euro cent (0.005 EUR) on average, according to Ecosia's FAQ.

Ecosia uses 80% of its profits (47.1% of its income) from advertising revenue to support tree planting projects, the rest is put into backup reserves for unforeseen circumstances—if these reserves are not used they are channelled back into the company's tree planting fund. The company publishes monthly financial reports on its website.

The company works with multiple organizations, such as the Eden Reforestation Projects, Hommes et Terre, and various local partners, to plant trees in 16 countries throughout the world. Ecosia currently has one or more projects in the following countries: Peru, Nicaragua, Colombia, Haiti, Brazil, Morocco, Spain, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Madagascar, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Indonesia.

Isn't this the search engine you have always been looking for? Ditch your old one and start planting trees now!

Reference: Wikipedia, accessed 14 July 2020.

Logo acknowledgement: By Source, Fair use, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50323612>

WALKABOUT SUNDAY



Tour of Oreti Road Totara Reserve—14 June 2020



A guided walk through the new Oreti Road Totara Reserve and the stunning vistas taken on the day—Photos by Graeme Childs



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www.otataralandcare.org.nz, Email: otataralg@gmail.com

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