

PIGEON POST

*Newsletter of the
Otatara Landcare Group*

Issue 65, Winter 2022

In This Issue

Sandy Point plan	2
Otatara School	3
Helping hawks	5
Rachel Jones	6
Estuary project	7
In the garden	8
Forest restoration	10
Growing from seed	13
Mice on the loose	14
Roof tank tips	17
Lloyd's latest books	18

The full colour version of this publication is available on www.otataralandcare.org.nz under 'publications'.



Otatara School plants out the pump track

Otatara School pupils planted an astonishing 1 400 native plants in one day in May, to beautify the new Gostelow Park pump track. The plants were provided by the Invercargill City Council's Parks and Reserves department. From left, Liam Shannon, Elise Charlton, Freya Gilmour, Caleb Ward, Aliana Taylor, Sophie Harvey, Grace Nyhof and Lucy Aurik learn about plants from Nancy Zhao and Shona Tomlins. Photograph courtesy *The Southland Express*. Turn to page 3 for more on the school's ecological programmes.

SANDY POINT



Planning for the next 50 years

The Otatara Landcare Group was one of many organisations invited to a meeting at the Invercargill City Council on June 30 as part of a consultation process for a Sandy Point Master Plan, for the next 30 to 50 years. All the groups and organisations attending had some connection with Sandy Point – sporting, recreational, boating, botanical, cultural and historical, forestry, and mana whenua.



Barry Smith stepped down in May as chairperson of the Otatara Landcare Group, after 23 years—the founding chairperson of the OLG. He is pictured with a gift from the OLG, Helen Stewart's original A3 water colour illustration of Bushy Point, created for the reserve's brochure. Barry has been caretaker of Bushy Point for many years, and will continue so, and also remains on the committee of the Otatara Landcare Group. Barry steered the OLG from its birth in 1999, and his contribution has and continues to be huge. "I only became chair because no one else wanted to," he jokes. The truth is he was the right person!

With Sandy Point being our neighbouring playground in Otatara, it is important that our voices and suggestions are heard, and there will be an opportunity later in the year to have our say as a community.

The introductory document from the ICC says that Sandy Point is highly valued by the local community and by visitors to the city of Invercargill but also has significant cultural, biodiversity, historic and amenity values.

"The domain is facing some challenges including remaining relevant to future population and recreational trends, the quality and appropriateness of existing assets, facilities and land uses, and the potential impact of climate change and sea level rise on assets and infrastructure from inundation and erosion.

"The Sandy Point Master Plan will establish a long-term plan for future park use, asset renewal and development, and help guide future funding decisions, while maintaining its highly regarded status and role as the main recreation hub for people of Invercargill and Southland. "

I was very happy to attend on behalf of the Otatara Landcare Group and to help represent Otatara in this first step and was impressed by the energy of the conversations and suggestions in break-out groups after the main presentation.

A drop-in centre will be open towards the end of August or early September for people to make suggestions, and this will be well advertised. A survey will also be going out with the rates, and will also be available online.

Richard Johnson

BUSHY POINT ANNUAL PLANTING DAY AND BBQ

Come along at 10am on Sunday September 11 for the annual Bushy Point planting day, and then relax after helping plant 1000 trees with a BBQ provided by the Otatara Landcare Group. The entrance is at 5 Bryson Rd.

OTATARA SCHOOL



Knowing and loving the natural environment

The new pump track along Dunns Road on May 18 was a scene of intense activity with the entire Otatara School out in high-vis vests planting out 1 400 native plants with help from teachers and parents and staff from the Invercargill City Council Parks and Reserves.

‘There was a real sense of whanaungatanga (working together as a family) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) with older students supporting younger students and we really appreciated the fabulous parental support we had throughout the day. It was wonderful for our students to be involved in this project and to contribute in such a significant way to our community’, said a report in the school’s newsletter the next day.

A story in the Otago Daily Times quoted Council parks and recreation manager Caroline Rain saying council staff talked with the pupils about how to continue looking after the plants they had worked so hard to plant. "Hopefully, it means that the kids will become kaitiaki and care for this

Below, pupils replanting the damaged areas in the Otatara Reserve, following the digging of bike tracks during the first lockdown.



Above, Otatara School pupils marking out areas at Noki Kaik beach at Sandy Point in the coastal litter project from NIWA.

space for a long time," said Caroline.

Acting deputy principal Carla Werder said the project fitted beautifully within the school’s localised curriculum and localised values, particularly kaitiakitanga, looking after the space and the Gostelow legacy.

"The product is a celebration of the planting, but the whole process from designing and getting ideas, right through to planting - looking at native plants and what plants fit best here, it’s been a huge part of not only our school community, but the wider community," she said.

Caring for the natural environment is a core value of Otatara School, and kaitiakitanga is one of the four values the school upholds. Sharon Livingstone, the principal, says the school promotes ‘ecological identity’, knowing and loving the place where the students stand.

“It is important that the students understand and care for the unique and very special ecological area where they live, with its significant and rare Totara dune forest, bird and wildlife and waterways”.

Over the years, the school has worked closely with the Otatara Community Nursery, the Inver-



Continued on next page



cargill City Council and Environment Southland, helping plant at Fosbender Park and Bushy Point. This year the senior classes are working with Gateway Murihiku, the New River estuary restoration group.

Each class is named after a tree connected to the Otatara Scenic Reserve, next to the school, and the children learn about that particular tree. The manuka class worked with a University of Otago research project on the differences between North Island and South Island manuka, including pollen dispersal and healing properties.

The senior classes are also working with the Litter Intelligence Education Programme run by NIWA, described by NIWA as ‘a flexible programme for teachers and students changing hearts, minds and behaviours around litter pollution’.

NIWA says LIEP develops individual skills and capabilities ‘in creative leadership, problem-solving, presentation delivery, storytelling, influencing techniques, community engagement, citi-

zen science and more”.

NIWA provides an interactive website, a data entry app, and access to real-world data for classroom use; a Citizen Science training workshop and kit to enable beach litter monitoring; access to support and resources from NIWA’s Sustainable Coastlines team, education resource packs, and certificates of completion for teachers and students.

The classes from Otatara School go to Noki Kaik beach at Sandy Point twice a year, where each child has a four by six metre area to closely examine, and from which to collect litter. Yvonne Green, one of the Year 6 teachers, says that 97 percent of the litter is plastics. The data is sent to NIWA for its national database on coastal litter and to help work on solutions.

Back in the classroom, their collections of litter are discussed, categorised and analysed, giving the students an idea of the extent of the issue.

Otatara School has a close relationship with the neighbouring Otatara Scenic Reserve, and the children are often in it, as an extension of the school. Hence their dismay after the first Covid lockdown when they found bike tracks had been dug, causing considerable damage. With the help of the ICC head ranger, the students helped restore the areas and design and install signage.

Visiting the school for this story, and hearing about the extraordinarily wide range of environmental activities and education at the school, including art in the classrooms, was inspiring. This is just a glimpse into the school’s environmental programme, and the school is to be commended for forming young people into future custodians of our environment, in Otatara and nationally.

Left, pupils experience hands-on learning in a touch tank from the University of Otago’s Aqua Van outreach, early in July.



FROM BUSH HAVEN



Where to find help for hawks, owls and others



One of the delightful aspects of caring for injured birds is responding to the people who notice and seek help for the birds in the first place.

Because someone who is travelling along the road in a 100km zone, notices, slows down even with someone tailgating her, and turns and goes back to check out a kereru she noticed on the roadside, the injured bird can receive the help it needs to either die peacefully or be looked after and fed while it recuperates.

This last few months we have received more than 30 phone calls from people who have found injured hawks, properly known as the swamp harrier, in paddocks and along roadsides

Although we have no facilities ourselves to house and care for these beautiful birds we are lucky to know of sisters in Riversdale who have a wonderful setup and real affinity with hawks.

There is nothing worse than having people go to the trouble of rescuing any injured bird and having nowhere to offer as a sanctuary and place of real care for them.

One lady rang from her car having a “discussion” with her husband about going back along the road to check a hawk that had been standing limply on the verge.

They do that sometimes waiting for cars to go past so they can continue with the roadkill they might be eating.

Anyway she persuaded her husband to go back and check the bird. She hopped out and very carefully approached it with gloves on and a thick jacket because their talons are lethal.

She reported that it just eyed her and from her photo the hawk did not look to have any wing or feet injuries so we agreed that she take the animal carcass off the roadside and throw it over the nearby fence to check the bird’s reaction.

It was wonderful to be part of the situation and hear the joy the lady felt when the hawk lifted up and over the fence too, now safely well away from cars.

So here’s to everyone who takes the time and care to look out for our birdlife in all its shapes and sizes. We are heart-warmed and more than happy to hear from and meet so many lovely people as well as so many beautiful birds.

Although we are licensed and really only have the facilities as carers for kereru, tuis, bellbirds and other land-based native birds it does not mean that we don’t care about other birds.

Gloria, 027 616 4496, has rescued and cared for owls for 30 years or more.

Samantha, 03 2156819, offers care when she can to thrushes, blackbirds, sparrows etc.

Bonnie Smith, 03 2025678, in Riversdale loves hawks.

Kathy Morrison

RACHEL JONES



Invasive plants detective

Biosecurity officer for pest plants, Rachel Jones, is enjoying her role with Environment Southland and values getting the opportunity to meet locals from across Southland, including residents of Otatara.

As a biosecurity officer, her work is a mix of engaging with the community to inform about invasive plants to look out for, and controlling some of the species that could pose an environmental and/or economic risk.

“Southland is a unique and important area we need to look after for now and the future,” Rachel says. “In biosecurity, we have to prioritise what we can effectively control. There’s an element of landowner responsibility, so education is a vital tool.

“We need the community to be able to identify pest plants and report them to us if they feel it is one of the weeds that we are targeting as part of our Regional Pest Management Plan.”

“The more ‘knowledgeable eyes’ the better. It’s what slows the movement of pest plants throughout Murihiku/Southland and helps prevent them spreading further. Biosecurity is a team effort to succeed long term.

“Recognition of certain target species is a vital part of this and we would be grateful for feedback as to how we can best get this information out to property owners, from the inner city areas, lifestyle blocks, and out to farms. The Pigeon Post is a wonderful tool to engage with locals!”

“If you’re rural, look out for species like ragwort and nodding thistle. “Do you know about the good neighbour rule for these plants? See our pest hub for more information.

“If you’re in town or rural, what could escape from the garden into the back gully? What seeds could the birds feed on and take to the neighbours?”

Rachel and her colleague Walter Fieldes also carry out garden nursery inspections to ensure species identified in Environment Southland’s Regional Pest Management Plan and the national list

of unwanted plants are not being passed on.

Having worked in similar roles in the United Kingdom and Australia, Rachel says just because something had always been there in your garden, doesn’t mean it can’t become a problem plant in the future. “Plants native to the UK brought to New Zealand thrive here, and get out of control quickly, taking over our New Zealand natives.”

For more information on pest plants contact the biosecurity team at services@es.govt.nz or 03-211 5115. Or check www.pesthub.es.govt.nz.

Here is a list of a few of the plants that need reporting so that control methods can be put in place or the landowner advised:

Old man’s beard
Purple loosestrife
Reed sweet grass

Below, Rachel Jones.



TURNING TO FACE THE WATER



By Geoff Dembo

Otatara is bounded on three sides by the New River Estuary and the lower reaches of the Oreti River. In pre-European times this area of water was important to Maori, providing kai, raw materials and transport routes. In the early days of Invercargill it gave access for sea-going vessels to the city, and also recreational opportunities for the townsfolk.



However, it has changed much since then for the worse, with municipal waste dumped on its city-side edge, land reclamation stopping the natural scouring action of tidal currents, and silt flowing down the rivers.

As a result, the ship channels became blocked, the sandy floor of the estuary has largely been covered with mud and the attractive Pleasure Bay has disappeared beneath town waste which leaks pollutants into the estuary.

The New River Estuary Forum is an informal group of local people who want to see the estuary become once again a precious asset to the city. It meets in Otatara two or three times a year and is headed by Richard Kyte, Jane Kitson and Liz Craig, supported by a part-time paid coordinator. They liaise with the many local bodies who

have responsibility for the estuary and the rivers that empty into it, and to make sure that the momentum for change is kept up.

He Waka Tuia, the museum/art gallery on Kelvin Street, will open an exhibition on 29 July which will showcase the New River Estuary – its past, present and future. The Forum will put out a survey to the general public to go with the exhibition, seeking information on what the estuary means to people, how it's been used now and in the past, and how it could be changed for the better. The survey will be available on paper and online.

If you'd like to get involved in the Forum, you can email newriverestuaryforum@gmail.com to receive notice of future meetings.

Otatara Welcome Pack

The Otatara Landcare Group has packs of information for new residents including the booklets 'Natural Otatara' and 'Otatara a Hidden Treasure'. If you have new neighbours or know new residents who would like a pack, email otataralg@gmail.com and we will deliver a pack.

To Join the Otatara Landcare Group

For just \$50 for life membership you can help with all the projects we are involved with from Bushy Point restoration project, Ōreti Tōtara Dune Forest, Pestbusters, publishing the Otatara Pigeon Post, to advice and information on native bush. To join go to https://www.otataralandcare.org.nz/site/assets/files/1090/otatara_landcare_group_membership_form_2021_a4_12_07_2021.docx or use the form at the back of this issue.

The bank account details are on the form. We value your support.

GARDEN DIARY



By Linda

Mid-Winter, Otatara.

I've started a diary about my garden, mostly to keep track of seasonal tasks but also to record what is happening according to our weather. Last summer was hotter and drier than I planned for. So much watering but wonderful pumpkins and courgettes ripening into autumn. I intend to try planting outdoor tomatoes & onions next spring along with a wide range of the usual veges, but no brassicas unless I can exclude the pests. 40 white butterflies with evening squash-raquet cull, and dozens of green caterpillars even the chickens disdain.

All the garden advice I source is helpful, but as every gardener does it their way on their site, I am too. My latest 'must have' is a worm farm. First seen on a lent dish, made with a donated bath, free local horse-poo, advice, a demerol dolomite lime at a friend's garden, my own garden compost, and birthday worms from my wonderful neighbour. Another recent achievement is three 'borrowed' bamboo stakes poked into the lawn outside my kitchen window with quartered apples threaded on. Wax-eyes alighted within hours, 6-8 at a time, causing the bamboo to sway, making a kinetic sculpture that fits perfectly into a natural landscape. The green plastic clothes pegs securing the apples from sliding down the stakes need a re-think but everything is a work in progress.

With different aspirations and challenges to create the environment we desire, learning and sharing with each other seems to achieve the best outcomes. And hopefully the relocated worms are happy, and unlike most pets can fend for themselves with just a little input from myself. Perfect.

L. June 2022

TIPS FOR PRUNING ROSES



By Sue Johnson

There is no great mystery to rose pruning, it is simply a good cut-back to encourage new growth. The key thing to think about when pruning is the age of the wood. Rose stems grow extremely quickly and they mature and go woody quickly too.

As a result, the wood ages fairly soon, the 'vessels 'inside' become narrow and clogged, so sap does not easily move up. This slowing down occurs in wood that is three to four years old. You will notice that the older wood is putting out only small twiggy stems.

Fortunately, roses have the ability to replace shoots all the time. You will notice strong shoots coming up from the base of the bush. These usually flower strongly at the tip. After that, new shoots come away from the stem.

Don't be afraid to get rid of the old gnarly stems. Clear them right down at the base. Don't leave short stumps at the base, these clutter up the space for new shoots. I have been known to take a chisel to old stumps to clear them out!

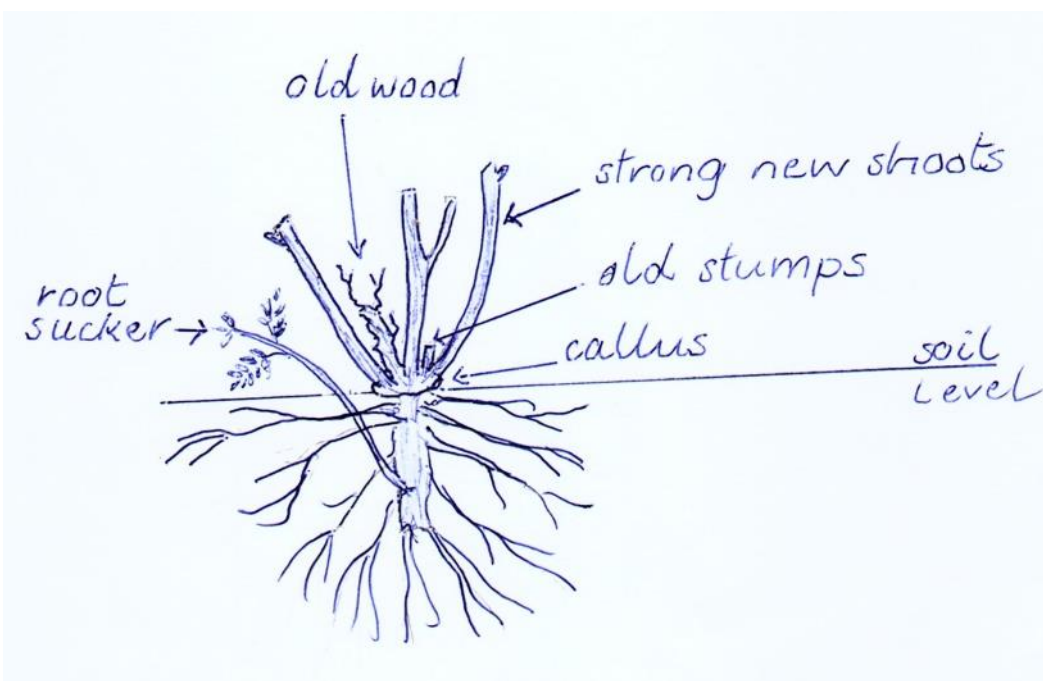
The new shoots come out of the callus, which is the area where the rose and rootstock meet. The callus is rough and needs to be kept clear of dead wood. Giving in a gentle scrub with a wire brush can help to keep it clear.

I should mention that bright green shoots coming from below the bud union will be suckers from the roots and not wanted at all. These are usually thornless and have seven leaflets on each leaf. Dig down and follow these shoots right to their base and pull them out. Cutting often leaves a small amount of stem, for the sucker to shoot away again.

Banksia roses (the climbing roses that flower in the early spring with small yellow or white flowers) should not be pruned in winter as they flower on older wood. If they need pruning, do it in the early summer.

If you have had problems with disease in the summer, it may be a good to spray with lime sulphur. This is a good fungicide and insecticide to use on dormant plants. You can spray surrounding soil but watch you don't get it on a painted surface as it may stain.

Keep an eye on the roses when they shoot away – they will need feeding. I have found Novatec very good. Start with small amounts, and as the leaf cover increases, apply more. Roses are greedy feeders and to get good results they need frequent fertilising during the summer.



A helpful drawing from Sue to show the various parts of a rose—some you do want, some you don't!

RESTORING NATIVE FOREST



By Brian Rance

As an ecologist and advisor to both Bushy Point and Oreti Totara Dune Forest, it is interesting to look at the comparisons and contrasts between the two sites from a forest restoration viewpoint.

Bushy Point - A Forest in the Making – 20 years on!

Over 20 years ago the Otatara Landcare Group had a vision of planting paddocks to join two significant bush remnants – totara and kahikatea. The technique of intensive planting to get from paddock to bush is known as ‘active restoration’.

Ideally this involves the planting of locally sourced fast growing ‘first responders’ or ‘nursery species’ of native plants at 1-1/2 metre spacings. By 2021 over 30,000 plants had been planted by community volunteers. Active restoration by a community of people is a very satisfying and rewarding experience and one which can influence generations.

The species chosen are called ‘nursery species’ because of their ability to grow quickly and shelter

ter slower growing long-lived species (such as rimu, totara, kahikatea). The nursery species would naturally colonise bare sites being the most hardy and fast growing species.

At Bushy Point they comprise of harakeke or NZ flax (*Phormium tenax*), kohuhu or black mapou (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*), tarata or lemonwood (*Pittosporum eugenoides*), ti kouka or cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*), koromiko (*Hebe salifolia*), manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*), shining karamu (*Coprosma lucida*), mingimingi (*Coprosma propinqua*).

The main reason to use these species at such dense rate is to shade out the exotic grasses to enable native seed dropped by birds to germinate, survive and thrive. The plant mix usually involves trees and shrubs where the shrubs serve as ‘fillers’ to increase the spacing of the trees and so reduce future competition.

Although we are in it for the long game, after around 20 years we can see the signs of natural regeneration happening on its own – with seedlings appearing under the shade, ferns starting to appear and the landscape being transformed

The pond at Bushy Point, dug in 2006, and now providing a vital habitat for waterfowl, kingfishers and herons.





from a bio-desert to one thriving with birds.

Nursery species are those prolific with flowers for nectar and later seeds – all vital for sustaining birds through the seasons. It also provides nesting areas, places for insects sustaining birds like fantails, grey warblers and rare fernbirds.

The pond, dug in 2006, provides additional habitat for waterfowl, kingfishers, shags and herons – all in proximity to their feeding grounds in the estuary.

Active restoration is labour intensive and expensive and requires a lot of organising and maintenance, but it provides the community with an important connection to the site and for generations to come.

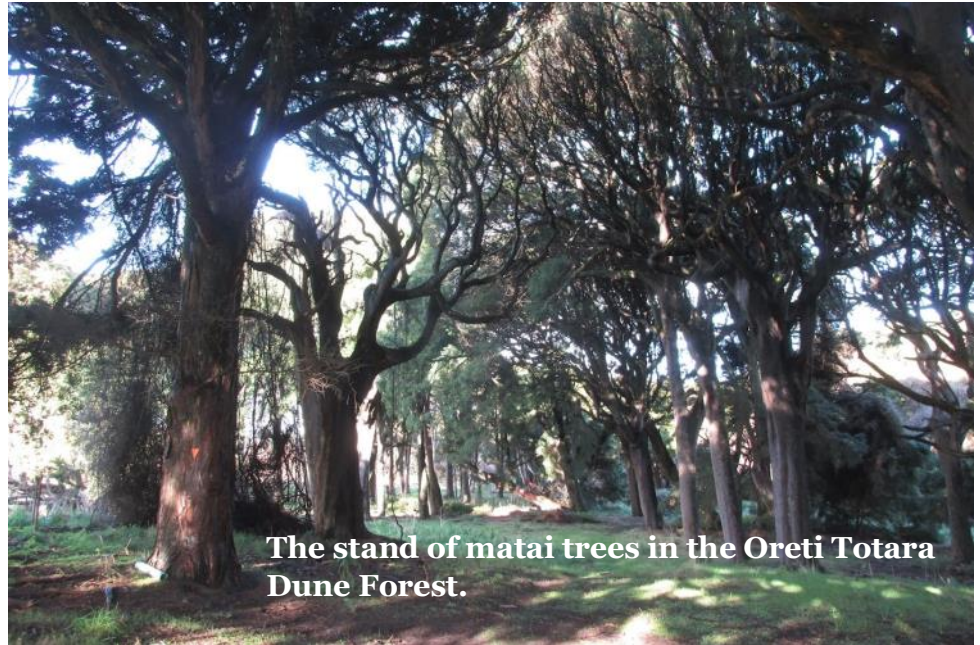
Oreti Totara Dune Forest - A Forest being rescued!

When the New Zealand Native Forest Restoration Trust purchased the Oreti forest, they did so with the intention of restoring the forest more through ‘passive restoration’.

Contrasting with the ‘active restoration’ of intensive mass planting being carried out at the Bushy Point Restoration Project ‘passive restoration’ is less labour intensive and allows nature to take more of its own course. The first action however was removing the grazing regime that had stopped the forest regenerating.

Passive restoration is less labour intensive and expensive as plants do not need to be grown, planted and maintained. But it doesn’t mean that no action is taken – weed and animal pest control and targeted planting (such as seed source trees) are key components of passive restoration.

The removal of pests will enhance birdlife (the



The stand of matai trees in the Oreti Totara Dune Forest.

seed spreaders), enable seeds to germinate and grow and produce a healthier forest canopy which will produce more seed.

Another difference is that often species classed elsewhere as weeds to be controlled are used as a pathway to the required result (ie the vegetation aimed for). Particularly for native forest, gorse is a proven successional pathway for attaining native forest.

Gorse provides a place for birds to drop native seeds where they can germinate in a way they cannot through exotic grass. However, isolated gorse is still controlled to prevent its spread.

Muehlenbeckia vine is another plant (native this time) that has its good and bad points. It is naturally an edge plant, protecting the exposed forest, but it is also host for many insects, particularly native moths, and provides nesting areas and food for birds.

As a vine it can smother vegetation in certain circumstances but here at the Oreti Forest we have taken the view that its usefulness outweighs the effort required to control it, when there are many other demands on our time.

The Oreti forest also utilises ‘assisted passive restoration’ – the planting of clumps of nursery species in scattered sites to provide seed sources

Continued on next page

Forest restoration continued



to speed up natural restoration. There are local areas of 'active restoration' in high profile sites including around the lagoon/pond lookout and in the north-eastern matai stand.

At the start of the Oreti project in 2020, monitoring plots were put in place to measure over time the changes that occur. Restoration both active and passive takes time and patience.

The Bushy Point project off Bryson Road is at its 20 year stage so is a good comparison with this project which is in its early stages. Both sites have intensive pest control in place and that can only be good for the plants and the birds and insects.

Both places, with their tracks and interpretation provide excellent opportunities to enjoy the wildness of Otatara.

Find out more about Bushy Point at <https://www.otataralandcare.org.nz/bushy-point-restoration/> and more about the Oreti Totara Dune Forest at <https://www.nfrt.org.nz/reserves/oreti-totara-dune-forest/> or email

Maurice Rodway, the honorary ranger, on maurice.rodway@gmail.com for more information.

Or better still, go for a walk!

Below, the Invercargill City Council delivered about half of this year's consignment (500 plants) for the Oreti Totara Forest Reserve and most of these have been distributed to areas where they will be planted. The plants are mainly wineberries and pittosporums, with broadleaf, manuka, karamu, and totara plants too. Generally the plants are about 80 cm to 1 m high and well grown. If these plants had to be purchased they would have cost several thousand dollars so the donation from the ICC is very much appreciated. In the picture, Dallas Bradley and Barry Smith are loading plants into trailers, especially designed by Barry for the purpose, for distribution around the reserve.



GROWING FROM SEED



By Chris Rance

At the Community Nursery we have been growing local native plants from seed for many years. Our guiding principle has always been to follow nature's patterns. We don't 'force' seeds to germinate over winter as we don't have the facilities to look after them if they do germinate (heated glasshouses) and as profit isn't our driving factor we can use the natural seasonal cycle to guide us.

Though we do sell plants, the funds go to our Charitable Trust for the running costs of the nursery and to fund our education project.

Since Christmas our volunteers have been collecting seeds on our property, cleaning them and in June sowing them. The native species we grow are listed at

<https://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/restoring-your-patch/get-growing/seeds/> along with the timing of seed collection in Southland; what the seed looks like when it is ready to collect and the cleaning or preparation the seeds need before sowing. This process basically takes until June – the sowing is the easy part!

We specialise in native plants that grow naturally in Southland as we mainly supply restoration projects – often wetlands or forest restoration. These local plants are hardy to the Southland climate and can tolerate frosts, strong winds and often boggy ground and it usually means a high success rate once they are planted into those conditions. We feel that using naturally occurring species in these situations also preserves the special connections and associations that the original vegetation cover has.

We do also grow other NZ natives for gardens but plants like kaka beak (which naturally grows in Hawkes Bay) or Chatham Island forget-me-not need a bit of care in their placement to avoid frosts.

As of 13th June we had sown around 100 trays of seed. They are placed in frames under



shade cloth and sit there all winter. In the propagation books this is called 'cold stratification' to break seed dormancy, and seeds are usually put in a fridge. We figure that we don't need to simulate winter, we actually get a real one!

The shade cloth covered frames are essential, they let rain through and keep cats out – nothing worse than finding the neighbours cat has found a new litter tray!! I do not recommend using a tunnel house for native seeds unless you want to water the seeds at least every week.

Almost without fail, the seeds germinate at the end of September, despite the weather. Day length is probably more important than temperature. The seeds 'know' when to come up and we leave them to it!

If you are interested in plant propagation and have other questions please email, ask for a specific workshop or come along to the Nursery on a Friday morning. We have held a number of specific workshops to assist other new groups with seed collecting and cleaning throughout the season (eg with Jana and Te Tapu o Tāne and with Estelle and Te Korowai Whakahou Native Plant Nursery Bluff).

The next job will be propagating plants from cuttings and this is a useful technique to learn for all manner of plants from natives to fruit bushes and shrubs. Email rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz if interested in this or in apple pruning or grafting.

RAMPANT RATS & MICE



By Dallas Bradley

How time travels quickly especially as you get older. It doesn't seem that long ago that we were enjoying one of our best Summers, now we have ticked off the shortest day, Matariki has arrived, winter has bedded in and Spring isn't too far away.

If you thought Summer was good, the rodents must have thought it was a real bonza judging by the number of mice (and rats) Otatara Residents have been reporting. The hot dry conditions coupled with ample food resulted in a mini explosion of rodents. They seem to have found their way into ceilings earlier and for a longer period than normal. Pest control products have been in high demand as homeowners attempt to silent the incessantly peeing and pooing critters!

Rodent numbers always peak in late Autumn, the end of the breeding season during which females have multiple litters and the early litters have time to breed themselves. The only way to get on top of the problem is persistent pest control. If persistence isn't your forte, do it often enough to keep numbers down to tolerable levels.

I'm speaking somewhat selfishly here, focusing on the nuisance rodents present to my home and family – don't forget about the poor birds, the main reason Otatara Pestbusters was set up in the first place (2010 actually).



Spring marks the start of the bird breeding season. Nesting time is when birds, their eggs and nestlings are most vulnerable to predation from various pests, rats in particular. Unfortunately, Spring also marks the start of the rat breeding season. It coincides with a time when all rats are mature enough to breed and food is most scarce.

There are huge benefits in having rodent numbers as low as possible before breeding resumes in Spring. It makes a lot of sense to nip this breeding in the bud and give the native birds the best possible chance of breeding and raising their young - even better if they do it outside your window. It's a good time to make sure you have bait stations and traps ready to go with fresh, mould-free bait. Strike while the rodents are at their hungriest to minimise their numbers later in the year.

If you're not already doing pest control on your property, do yourself and the birds a favour and give it a go. Remember everyone has rats from time to time and they can be equally destructive to your home, car and possessions, as to the birds! Otatara Pestbusters supplies, traps, bait stations at bait at very reasonable prices – contact Dallas Bradley on 021 784962 for assistance. For more information, check out the Otatara Pestbusters Facebook page or the Otatara Landcare Group website.



How the mice nearly won



Sue and I have had an incursion of very smart mice. The first indication something was going on was a mouse perched up on the kitchen bench, like he/she owned the place. With a bit of encouragement it scampered away, and I put out the sturdy rat trap supplied by Dallas Bradly, our Pestbuster, set, as he suggests, on the sensitive setting to make sure the light touch of a mouse triggers the trap.

Now, I have to confess that those traps are very powerful. I discovered that while trying to set it on 'sensitive', which meant it was, well very sensitive. I got hit twice when it went off in my hands. It made me wonder how ED would react if I turned up with a broken finger and explained it got stuck in a mouse trap. Polite laughter, probably. So, off to Dallas for another lesson on how to do this safely and without serious injury. The mice were still running the house.

I got the trap set up, no damaged hands this time, and extremely carefully slid it into a cupboard under the sink. I knew that area was mouse central because I had discovered it was sprinkled with mouse droppings. I know, I know. I took every dish and bowl out and thoroughly cleaned them and then did the same to the shelves.

I listened, no bang. Next morning I inspected the trap to find that the dab of peanut butter had gone but the trap was still set, and on 'sensitive' too. The trap was reset by dropping it first so it went off without taking my fingers off, and very cautiously rebaited and reset. Back under the sink.

Same outcome the next day. I am convinced these mice were not fooled by this trap and had worked out a way of carefully stretching over the trap by extending their little front arms and licking the peanut butter off their fingers.

After three days of this, and feeding the mice, who were now arriving in larger numbers for a

free feed (assessed by droppings and sightings) I went off to a hardware store. I found a smaller trap called The Better Rodent Trap, a plastic job, which I happily took home, baited, set and slid back under the sink.

You've guessed it. Bait gone, trap still set. Mice sneering from corners.

After three days of further failure, I pulled the dishwasher out from its cosy space beside the sink, and wormed into the cavity and sprayed expanding foam into every hole I could see in the brickwork. Expanding foam is annoying to use. It also expanded on to my fingers and I found that only Sue's nail varnish remover could remove it. Mice still were running the show.

With failures mounting I went back to the hardware store to find a 'better Better Trap'. It was then I discovered I needed The Better

Mouse Trap, a much smaller model. And presumably, more 'sensitive'. I was getting sensitive about much, by then.

And our cat didn't help either. Apparently it didn't understand it is supposed to catch the mice, not befriend them.

To my astonishment and delight, the new trap

worked and a succession of mice were dispatched and buried in a quiet corner of the garden. And wait, there is more, as the TV commercials say. If I had expanding-foamed all the holes I could see, where was their front door?

Remembering I had seen a mouse dart from behind the range, I pulled it out and eureka, there was a mouse-sized hole right beside the face plate for the power connection. This was not a job for expanding foam, this called for duct tape, and so the hole was firmly and doubly duct-taped. And guess what, no more mice.

Well, so far....

Richard Johnson



Mouse vs man, the mice had the running for a while.

THANK YOU



Thousands of plants grown, time to relax a little!



The Otatara Community Nursery and the Otatara Landcare Group have acknowledged the massive contribution Linda and Ray Jackson have made to Bushy Point in growing all the native plants for the past 10 or so years. Bushy Point is now up to 30,000 plants in the ground and much of the credit goes to Linda and Ray's tireless work. The job now goes to the Community Nursery where Linda is a Trustee so they will continue to help with Bushy Point plants. Linda and Ray were officially thanked at a recent OLG meeting and presented with gifts, but when you are walking around Bushy Point spare a thought for all the work that has gone into growing the native plants that now dominate the site.

Pictured, Linda and Ray (centre left) and other members of the committee loading up some of the thousands of plants they have grown for Bushy Point.



While the sycamore tree is
an invasive pest plant in Otatara,

**SYCAMORE
PRINT**

is a valued supporter of Pigeon Post...

Call today with all your printing needs

**SYCAMORE
PRINT**

mfo
The logbook specialists

73 Eye Street, Invercargill phone: 03 218 4657 cell: 027 466 9932 www.sycamoreprint.co.nz



ROOF TANK TIPS (PART 1)



By Barry Smith

We have got through this year's dry spell and some of you may be rethinking your water storage needs. The reality is that it will always be cheaper to get the occasional tanker load than to put another tank in. However if you are one of those people who had to wait several days to get any water you may be rethinking your options.

One way to keep ahead of the game is that when there is a dry spell, check the level of the water in your tanks, also check out the long range weather and work out whether you might run out or not. Ordering in plenty of time will ensure you won't run out altogether.

Newer houses should be OK as there is now a requirement for a minimum level of water storage with one tank being dedicated to a \$1600 fire hydrant setup. Also having our own tanks and water supply means we aren't part of this Three Waters thing, unless you are into selling water.

However, we might be a part of the one or two waters thing if we have council owned sewage connections and council maintained drains in the area...

The bones of this article, however, is looking at your household water supply and some options for dealing with issues that may arise. Putting another tank in can be expensive, probably around \$3500 for the tank plus fittings and installation costs.

If you do put one in and the two or three tanks are self-levelling, ensure the top of your new tank is the same height as the top of your other ones, this way you achieve maximum storage. In talking about water systems I am going to use our own place as an example, simply because I know the dynamics of our system quite well and we have made a lot of modifications to it over the last 25 or more years.

Our system has 2 x 5000 gallon (22,500 litre) concrete tanks, buried into the ground about half their height (ie: about 1.2m). Plastic tanks, as a rule shouldn't be buried, the exception is the Bayleys tanks which look a bit like that corrugated

iron pattern. They are the only plastic tanks which stipulate under their warranty that they can be buried up to about one metre.

When burying any tank, be very careful. Although our concrete tanks weigh in at seven tonnes each when buried in the ground or to half way, a water table at or close to the surface will give these tanks 11.25 tonnes of lift and the tanks will float. So, if you do bury them ensure they have a lot of water in them before you fill the hole in around the base.

How much water are you collecting? If you know the area of roof you are collecting water off, it makes the process very easy. For every square metre of roof, 1mm of rain will give you 1 litre of water, so 150 sq m of roof will give you 150 litres for 1mm of rain

Our roofs collect many things here in Otatara, seeds from pooping birds, leaves from nearby trees and that fine grain sand that seems to be a permanent Otatara fixture. Anything that is dropped onto your roof will end up in your tank resulting in your tank filling up with debris and the need for cleaning.

Cleaning can be achieved in two ways, empty your tank and water blast it, scooping out all the rubbish or call in the tank vacuum service, they will vacuum clean the bottom of your tank and suck out about 3000~4000 litres of water in the process.

To reduce this challenge we have installed leaf guards in our downpipes. These have multiple advantages, they will remove the larger particles that come from the roof, they are at a height that any blockages to the gauze are quite visible, they will stop dead birds from getting into your water supply (dead birds make your water taste horrible) and during a heavy downpour (we have six downpipes feeding into a single pipe to the tanks) the water overflows the leaf-guards instead of overflowing the spouting.

Continued on next page



Leaf-guards are available in various types from your favourite plumbing merchant. Like anything, these need maintenance, a good cleaning when required will ensure maximum water flow into your tanks.

Before the water gets to our tanks system we have two sediment chambers, the water flows into these quite quickly from the downpipe, then slows down as it flows across them both dropping out any of the finer particles before flowing into the tank.

One of the best ones I have seen was an adaption of a couple of those old concrete wash-house tubs. These sediment chambers should be

drained of gunge occasionally, by checking a few times after installation you will work out how often this needs done.

The more rubbish you take out of your water before it goes into the tank the more storage capacity you will keep and the less often you will have to clean out your tanks.

If in any doubt what so ever get professional advice.

Barry Smith e: bjsrdms@gmail.com

Part two of Barry's article will be published in the next issue of Pigeon Post.

Lloyd Esler working on seven more books

Pigeon Post popped in to ask Lloyd Esler if he has any more books in the pipeline. And the answer is yes, and not one but seven other books!

The previous issue of *Pigeon Post* reviewed Lloyd's then latest book, *Jack the Whaleboy*. Lloyd has written one sequel and has almost completed a third, both continuing with the fictional story of 10-year-old Jack Fletcher, whom we left at New Zealand's first whaling station, established in Preservation Inlet.

The sequels tell the story of the Jack's adventures after Preservation – and like the first book, are based on historical fact.

Lloyd has been commissioned to write a biography of Dr Eric Elder, who was the doctor in Tuatapere for 50 years. The *Southland Times* earlier this year quoted the Dr Elder book project committee chairperson Edwin Lewis as saying the stories of Dr Elder were legendary.

They covered a pioneering time in the history of the western Southland district, when life was hard but rich, and the stories of past patients and people of the area should be recorded and passed on before they were lost forever.

"Many stories are well known; collectively they represent everything that is good about human-kind and the western Southland community during that 50-year period."

Another family history Lloyd is working on is the story of his father's mother's family in the Pleasant Point area.

However, the largest project, definitely in land area as well as research topics, is the story of the Waiau Valley, from sea to source. It's the fourth largest catchment area in New Zealand, says Lloyd, and no books have yet been written on this extensive area, rich in natural and human history.

Lloyd is focusing on the area south from the Mararoa Weir downstream from Lake Manapouri including Lake Hauroko and the Mavora area.

"There is a very rich history with timber milling, the early runs, Fiordland National Park, limeworks, cement, railways, the Monowai power project, Borland Lodge, railways and roads, gold and platinum mining, shale and coal, bridges, punts and the dredge," he said.

He is researching from published material available online, as well as from the writings of author and researcher James Herries Beattie who recorded much local history in the late 1800s, writing about 28 books.

Jack the Whaleboy was Lloyd's 12th book, and so he is well on his way to producing books 13 to 19.

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.

Subs:

☐ **Subscription for Life Membership \$50**

Donations: also welcome! *NON-PROFIT CHARITABLE ORG. INC— CC47928*

All donations of \$5 and over are tax deductible within allowable limits.

☐ Donation: \$ _____

OLG bank account **03 1355 0805312 00**

Please use your **surname** and “**olg subs**” or “**olg don**” in reference boxes.

Alternatively, send completed form with cash or cheque payment to our treasurer

Lloyd Esler – 15 Mahuri Road, Otatara

Otatara Landcare Group:

Chairman, Richard Johnson 021 124 2746; Secretary, Chris Rance: 03 213 1161 ; Treasurer, Lloyd Esler: 03 213 0404, Pigeon Post editor, Richard Johnson 021 124 2746 , richardsueinvercargill@gmail.com

Committee Members:

Brian Rance, Chris Bowen, Sally Duston, Graeme Childs, Linda Jackson, Ray Jackson, Geoff Dembo, Cathy MacFie, Dallas Bradley, Lloyd Esler, Bronwyn Graham , Maurice Rodway, Kathy Morrison, Lois Caldwell.

Additional Contributors:

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



Published for the community by Otatarā Landcare Group © 2020

With the support of Invercargill City Council Neighbourhood Fund

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

Unless otherwise stated photos are copyright to the Otatarā Landcare Group
or the group responsible for the article.

The articles contained herein represent the views of the contributor
and are not representative of the Otatarā Landcare Group as a Society.

Printing by Sycamore Print: www.sycamoreprint.co.nz