Friends of Oakley Creek
Te Auaunga

December Update, 2013 Vol. 6, Issue 4

Spying spiders – in the leaf litter by David Court

Photo: W. John

Searching for spiders in the leaf litter under an area of the Oakley Creek mahoe rock forest and under mature karaka has resulted in some interesting observations. The spider fauna in each litter type is rather similar, but I have the impression that mahoe litter has a greater spider biomass. This may be because mahoe leaves are more easily broken down than those of karaka and there may be a greater amount of prey (including arthropods that thrive on breaking down and consuming the mahoe leaf litter). With the possible exception of *Cryptachaea,* the sampled spider fauna appears to be entirely native!

Disturbed habitats that have had some time to recover may be surprisingly rich if there is a diversity of microhabitats, as there is at Oakley Creek. A yield of 9 spider species from the amount of sampling we carried out (3 people for 2½ hours) is quite good, but I would expect more species to be present - especially some of the very small ones that I was seeking. Microhabitat, sampling intensity and season (showery spring morning) would have determined the result.

The fact that Oakley Creek leaf litter has 9 spider, 4 other arachnid, 1 carabid beetle and 1 centipede species (at least) means that the litter, if you are another kind of arthropod (e.g. non predator), is a very dangerous place. It will even be dangerous for the various predators, especially when juvenile! Blackbirds also come into the picture as an 'exotic' predator of litter-dwelling spiders and other arthropods. From the number of arthropod predators we have noted here (15+), we can infer that there might be over 100 species of non-predatory arthropod species in the Oakley Creek litter. This is another realm available for future study.

Photos of the leaf litter spiders are presented later in this newsletter. Information and photos of all the spider species noted at Oakley Creek so far will be loaded onto our website soon.

Thank you Heather!

We would like to wish Heather Wilkins all the very best for the future and extend a huge vote of thanks. Sadly, she has had to resign from our committee. Heather has made an enormous contribution to Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga, particularly with the SH 20 extension submission and hearing, and ongoing liaison with the Well Connected Alliance, but also in many other areas - from weeding to website work, from planting to poster publication.

Fruit in the Oakley Creek forest: pigeonwood, Hedycarya arborea.
Photo: W. John

And, **more volunteers are now needed for our committee**, which meets on each third Monday of the month at Unitec. If you are feel you have something to contribute, in even a very small way, we would love to hear from you. Involvement in our project is rewarding and interesting, and new ideas are most welcome.

Need an inspiring gift idea?

Give a tree to plant on Oakley Creek ...

Just $20 gives:

- **a native tree** to be planted at Oakley Creek Te Auaunga on your behalf (or by your recipient or you)
- **an attractive commemorative card** with the details of your gift
- **Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga Membership** for one year

Email your order to info@oakleycreek.org.nz or ph 815 3101, Payment details are listed at the bottom of this newsletter.

Dates for your diary

Bring your family and friends – and spread the word about:

Sunday 2nd February, 10.00 am – 12.00 noon: Community Working Bee

Sunday 2nd March, 10.00 am – 12.00 noon: Annual Clean Up

Monitoring and pest control dates will be advised by email – please get in touch if you would like to help and do not usually receive these email notices.

See www.oakleycreek.org.nz or contact Wendy John, by emailing info@oakleycreek.org.nz or phone 815 3101 for more information.

New life on Oakley Creek. *Photo: W. John*

Buchanan Rehabilitation Garden Group

The Buchanan Rehabilitation Garden Group, under the guidance of Horticulture Therapist, Karen Mann, has done a great job over the past year, helping with a range of activities. The Wairaka Wetland, the area the group planted back in 2005-2006, has become a flagship area for the restoration on Oakley Creek. It now needs little attention, but the group continues to assist with planting, plant propagation, plant releasing and weed removal, as well as water quality monitoring in the lower reaches of the Wairaka Stream, on a regular basis.

Photo: W. John

Collectively Kids turns 20!

We would like to congratulate Marina, John and the team from Collectively Kids (ex Montessori Khyber Pass) on their 20th Birthday. The children are regular visitors and helpers on Oakley Creek, as part of their focus on sustainability and protecting the natural environment. We love having you as part of our wider Oakley Creek community.

New social housing in Trent St, Avondale

The government has announced that 28 units are to be built on Auckland Council land, bordering Oakley Creek in Trent St. Designed for low-income tenants, the development will begin next year with completion in 2015. There are plans for an esplanade reserve along the stream and for some of the existing mature trees to be protected. Friends of Oakley Creek will request input into the esplanade plan and maintain a watching brief.

If we build it, they will come …

Why are we so keen to restore Oakley Creek Te Auaunga as an indigenous ecosystem in the middle of a city, to be our 'field of dreams'? Part of the reason is to do with a phenomenon known as the **halo effect**. When the ecological sanctuaries of Ark in the Park and Rangitoto / Motutapu become crowded, native birds, in particular, will spread out into adjacent areas in a halo. They will need areas of diverse native vegetation with low pest densities, such as we are aiming for at Oakley Creek. When that happens, we want to be ready.

So, special thanks to Ron Lang, from the Haven / Kodesh Community, for all the great work he has done with the possum and predator trapping over the past three years. And, welcome Per Neilsen, who has joined the team. Also, thanks to John Maskell, Jane Shand, the Mt Albert St Jude's Venturers and John Dwyer and the rodent control team for all their hard work too.

From top right: Jane showing Per how it's done;

new member and volunteer Ahmad Barghach refilling a rodent bait station;

and, John Stephenson and Janet Wade rodent baiting in the Lizard Management Area.

Photos: W. John

Clean up by Kuoni Group Travel

Miki Giordani writes: *Photo: W. John*

" … We all very much appreciated you for taking us around the right spots on the creek where rubbish ends up. Most of us could not believe how much rubbish ends up in areas where people usually do not walk … - 10 [bags] general rubbish + 4 recyclable. Again, thank you very much for your help and advice for today!! P.S. I loved your ginger chocolate & discovered a natural bee hive!!!"

A big thank you to Kuoni Group Travel from us too! Note that there will be a community clean up on 2nd March next year – no doubt there will be lots more rubbish again by then, unfortunately.

Ecological awareness and energy consumption

Concern for the ecological health of the Oakley Creek catchment, and of the wider environment, is at the heart of our goals at Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga. Some examples of how we put this into practice are:

- we use eco-sourced seeds and plant material - endeavouring to use only plants that are endemic to lowland riparian habitats on the Auckland isthmus;
- we leave exotic trees that provide stream bank stability and shade over the stream in place until new plantings are semi-mature, and have a well established root system;
- we leave some privet in place that provides habitat to the puriri grub, until new plantings provide alternative habitat;
- we leave some of the tall exotic trees in place, such as pines and tree privet, that provide nesting and roosting habitat for birds, such as the white faced heron, until new plantings start to mature;
- we maintain annual and perennial grasses in restoration planting areas as invertebrate and lizard habitat, to maintain ground cover and soil moisture over the summer months, to provide food for seed eating birds, and to reduce silt run-off to the stream;
- we compost weeds on site where possible, instead of disposing to landfill, and use them as mulch around young natives, where appropriate;
- we walk and cycle to meetings and restoration activities where possible, rather than using vehicles;
- we re-use plant bags and pots, paper and envelopes; and,
- we use electronic means of communication instead of hard copies of documents, where possible.

If you have any other ideas on how we can further improve our practices to meet our goals, please let us know.

Simple clues to identifying pest Argentine ants

Argentine ants (*Linepithema humilee*) are a pest species which have been classified as one of the top 100 most invasive worldwide. They have been present in Auckland since 1990 and much effort has gone into keeping them off our off-shore island sanctuaries.

- Argentine ants are all the **same colour, dull honey – brown**, but if their abdomen is full of tucker it may look slightly striped;
- apart from the queen, which you may never see, all Argentine ants are the **same size**: 2- 3mm;
- their body is **uneven in shape** e.g. their head is larger than the thorax, which is comparatively very thin - the thorax is the segment between the head and the abdomen;
- if crushed, they give off a **subtle oily scent**, very different to the sharp formic acid released by other ant species;
- they will often **readily climb onto a person's hand** when it is placed in their trail - many other ant species won't;
- they move quite **fast** (not ponderous) and walk in **defined continuous trails**, two to three wide either direction (not erratic 'crazy' behaviour of running about in circles).

Thanks to John Neilson and, for more information, see http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/argentine-ant

Spring growth - clockwise: taurepo, Rhabdothamnus solandri, *kumerahou,* Pomaderris kumeraho *and* Doodia australis. *Photos: W. John*

Titoki, Alectryon excelsus, is Auckland's most popular street tree - Mike Wilcox.

Photo: A. Stanton

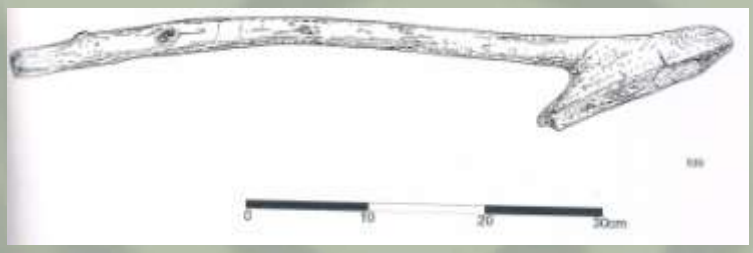
Occasional Musings in History, Archaeology and Oakley Creek
Part 2: Titoki

by Brent Druskovich: Consultant Archaeologist B.Com. M.A. (Hons)

On the planting day when I was asked for this contribution, I did mention my general dislike of **TITOKI** and the threat was made that, if the editor didn't like what I wrote about it, it would be edited out. I find titoki to be one of the ugliest of the native trees, and probably only dislike most (but not all) members of the *Pittosporum* family more. However, as much as I find the titoki ugly, I cannot deny that it was historically useful.

The first major hint is in its name. **Ti** is the Maori word for tree, which it undeniably is; **toki** is the word for adze. An adze is a tool used for cutting and/or shaping wood, where the blade of the tool is hafted at right angles to the handle. Maori had a full tool kit of them - some adzes were large and used for cutting down trees; others were small and delicate and used much like a chisel, for carving. The ti toki was, in other words, the adze tree, the tree that was preferred to be used for making adze handles. Dawson and Lucas (2011.138) also record that the wood was used for coach wheels and tool handles as well. Therefore, the wood was used historically, as well as by Maori, for use as tool handles. The property that made it desirable to the tool makers, as well as the wagon makers, is that the wood is both strong and flexible. It therefore would have taken out some of the stresses of percussion when used as a tool, and the bumps in the road for the wagons, giving more comfortable tool use and ride qualities for the transport.

Dawson and Lucas (ibid) also record that the fruits of the titoki were eaten by Maori and crushed seeds were used to get oil, which was anointed on their bodies and in their hair, as well as for medicinal purposes. Crowe (1983:54) states that the fruit was not an important supply, but was definitely eaten in times of shortage and also by Maori children. I presume the perception being that children did not always get the best food, or alternatively, had to fend for themselves and berries were an easy picking. Crowe (ibid) records that Reverend Taylor (in the mid 19th century) recorded the fruit as being "*more agreeable to the eye than to the taste*" and that the fruit is "*sweet, but has a very rough taste.*" Andrew Crowe, whom tried all that he wrote about (or at least that is my observation without having read every entry in his book) commented that he personally found them "*too astringent to be worth eating, though the native pigeons appear to relish them*" (ibid). Williams (1996:71) records that the oil from the seed was applied to painful breasts and sore eyes, and also used for earache, especially in children. The flesh of the berry was pulped and used in an infusion to cure blood spitting in people suffering from tuberculosis, and was also wrapped in flax or soft cloth and used on a new born baby if their navel was inflamed. The fruit were also targeted by birds (Dawson and Lucas (2011.138), particularly tui. Maori therefore were also likely to utilise the tree for setting snares and traps during the fruit season to catch the feasting birdlife.



Drawing of an adze handle found at Kohika (Bay of Plenty) preserved in a swamp. This one was made from rimu. Image from Irwin 2004:111.

However, not everything that Dawson and Lucas state can be seen to be factual - they (2011:136) describe titoki as "*an attractive, small tree*", something I can simply not agree on!

Thanks for reading, hope you enjoyed it,

Bibliography:

Crowe, A. 1983. *A Field Guide To The Native Edible Plants Of New Zealand.* Published by William Collins Publishers, Auckland.

Dawson, D. and R. Lucas, 2011. *New Zealand's Native Trees.* Published by Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson.

Irwin, G. (editor), 2004. *Kohika.* Published by Auckland University Press, Auckland.

Williams, P.M.E. 2007. *Te Rongoa Maori: Maori Medicine.*

And a pukeko in a ponga tree ...

Kingi M. Ihaka cleverly adapted *The twelve days of Christmas* to a New Zealand setting in his *A pukeko in a ponga tree*, but how about an Oakley Creek Te Auaunga version? Eels a swimming and the pukeko and ponga tree are highly appropriate – what else should our song include? Ideas will come as you walk, run or cycle along the creek. How many bridges are there? How many warblers warbling, trapdoor spiders hiding, toitoi rustling? Send your ideas, for an entire song, or for a line or two, to info@oakleycreek.org.nz or mention them to us at the next working bee.

And, this provides a great opportunity to re-publish Wendy's wonderful photo once more - proof that pukeko do indeed perch in ponga trees ...

Photo: W. John

This stunning mural is located at Waterview Primary School and was made by the students, with sponsorship by the Well Connected Alliance. It features Oakley Creek Te Auaunga and other local Waterview scenes. Replicas have been placed on sound walls by the motorway construction in the area.
Photo: W. John

Living in the leaf litter … by David Court

Habitats: **C** = Karaka *Corynocarpus laevigatus* litter; **M** = Mahoe *Melicytus ramiflorus* litter.

PHYLUM ARACHNIDA, Order Araneae (Spiders)

Cryptachaea blattea, Family Theridiidae (Comb-footed spiders). Female. Small. Cosmopolitan and doubtfully native. Habitat **C.**

***Hypodrassodes* sp.**, Family Gnaphosidae. Adult female with bright white egg sac spun on dead leaf, guarded by female which contained at least 70 eggs. Medium-sized. NZ native. Habitat **C, M.**

***Laetesia* sp** (possibly *L. trispathulata*), Family Linyphiidae. 1 mature male, many females - mature and immature. Small - 2.5mm in length. NZ native. Habitat **C.**

Unidentified species. Dark, with whitish patches on sides of abdomen. Four pale chevrons dorsally. Small - less than 2 mm in length. NZ native. Habitat **M.**

Sidymella angularis, Family Thomisidae. Immature females. Medium. NZ native. Habitat **C, M.**

***Trite* sp.** (*T. auricoma* or a related species), Family Salticidae (Jumping spiders) 2 females and immatures. Medium. NZ native. Habitat **C, M.**

***Uliodon* sp.** (possibly *Uliodon frenatus*), Family Zoropsidae. Immature female. Large. NZ native. Habitat **M.**

Paradictyna rufoflava, Family Dictynidae. 1 male. Small. NZ native. Habitat **M.** (Note: this is not a true leaf litter species, it is usually on living foliage; it was probably dislodged by our sampling activity.)

Other Arachnida Orders

Mites, Oder Acari. Mature and immature. Extremely small. Habitat **C, M.**

Laniatorid harvestman species, Order Opiliones. NZ native. Habitat **C, M.**

Pseudoscorpion species, Order Pseudoscorpionida. Chelae very fine, like watchmakers' forceps. Small. Habitat **M.**

Pseudoscorpion species, Order Pseudoscorpionida. Small. Habitat **M.**

Weed watch

This section of the newsletter features details about weeds that threaten the native plants along Oakley Creek. You can help by tackling them at the stream and in your garden, if present. In this issue:

Prunus spp., Rosaceae - wild cherry

- small, deciduous, long-lived tree
- forms dense thickets, preventing native seedling establishment
- toothed elliptical leaves
- flowers are white or pink to red blossom
- fruit is a cherry, but weed varieties are usually sour
- seed is poisonous
- spreads vegetatively from root suckers as well as from seed dispersed by birds
- from same family as plum, peach, apricot and almond, which, along with cherry, are grown for their fruit and as ornamentals

Leaf form and flower colour, shape and arrangement vary for different Prunus *species, but their environmental impact is the same.*

Control: Pull or dig out seedlings. Make bore holes or frill cuts to tree trunks at their base and apply an appropriate herbicide. Try to locate the source of spread and check for seedlings and suckering regularly.

Photos: top left foliage and bottom right seedling, WeedFree Trust; above trunk and below left ripe fruit, W. John; and remainder, A Stanton

Wherever you are …

If you have a few spare moments over the summer break, you might like to dig out some weeds, wherever you are – every little bit helps to reduce the number of weed seeds produced and reduce the smothering! A reminder of the worst weeds, at least around Oakley Creek and Auckland generally: woolly nightshade, wandering jew, moth plant, honeysuckle, morning glory, climbing asparagus, ivy, mignonette vine, climbing dock, kikuyu … plus many more.

Which weeds do you think are the worst? – cast your vote on the NZ Plant Conservation Network site http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/ More positively, you can also nominate your favourite plant!

Corokia cotoneaster *in flower (left) and artwork by Odyssey House youth (above).* *Photos: W. John.*

Not just trees in the ground ...

Community ecological restoration groups are generally focused on the environmental benefits which their communities experience as a result of their initiatives. However experience indicates that unexpected and significant social and economic benefits may also be achieved as a result of ecological restoration projects. A review of the involvement of community and interest groups in environmental restoration activities in Wellington's regional parks (Buchan, 2001) found that the benefits gained by volunteers included:

- *a sense of achievement / pride to see the project's aims realised*
- *pride in creating an asset for others and for future generations*
- *mental stimulation*
- *chance to learn new skills and increase knowledge and experience*
- *increased respect from others (the council, other organisations and users of the reserve) as a result of what has been achieved*
- *increased self-confidence and leadership*
- *companionship (with other volunteers) and a sense of group identity.*

Excerpt from Buchan, D. 2007. Not Just Trees in the Ground: The Social and Economic Benefits of Community-led Conservation Projects. WWF-New Zealand, Wellington.

Out and about ...

Photos: W. John (unless otherwise stated)

An impromptu picnic was held after the October Working Bee to **welcome back pipiwharauroa, the shining cuckoo** once more. Kennedy Warne (above left) played his ukelele and Tess Black (above) wrote a message of welcome.

Stacey Lockie, **Auckland Council**, **monitored water quality** and biofilm at the litter trap (left) and amongst the weeds (right), **Brent Druskovich** carried out the **Archaeological Assessment**, checking the 2014 planting sites.

Beside Wairaka's spring

Thanks to you
they built a madhouse here
and tapped your source
in deep volcanic cores and
drank your health.

Thanks to you
they planted groves of
oak and sycamore
so lunatics could
shuffle shaded paths
and soothe their souls
beside a waterfall

Thanks to you
they all were saved
(except for one named Fortune)
when mad Miss Morrow
set the place alight.
Panic crazed the inmates,
scared the staff,
who tied them to a fence and
fought the flames.

Thanks to you
the therapy goes on
unheralded:
to joggers,
dog walkers,
Sunday strollers,
a trombonist who
lifts his horn to the
fluttering leaves
and plays Aida.

I cup my hands
and drink to your bold stand:
"Whaka tane!"
"Make me a man."
I pick the cress that crowds
around the pool.
The pepper pricks my tongue
with each small leaf—
and thanks to you this
madman finds relief.

28 November, for Thanksgiving
Kennedy Warne

The **Oakley Creek realignment** (left). At the Well Connected Alliance Tunnel Open Day, Oakley Creek was 'on the map'!

TreeSafe removed more fallen willow by the creek in Phyllis Reserve (below).

Around 30 people enjoyed a guided walk along the creek as part of the annual **Auckland Heritage Festival** (above).

Photos: D. Maddock

Open Polytechnic tutor, Jim Antill (left) instructed students on weed identification and management (above left). These students (above right), from Leslie Haines' class, helped out at the Oakley Creek nursery - Stephanie, Toni and Ram.

John Dwyer showed Open Polytechnic student volunteers footprints from rodent monitoring – among them were Christina and Amanda (above). The black bar in the middle of the card is ink, which coats the animals' feet and leaves distinctive trails.

Conservation Volunteers at Phyllis Reserve for Conservation Week 2013

The **CVNZ** team enjoyed a Conservation Week BBQ, after their volunteer work, with Sarah Peters (Auckland Council Parks Volunteer and Biodiversity Co-ordinator – in orange) and Debbie Madden (CVNZ). In addition to the planting (above), volunteers, including Eva, Tanya, Eddie and John, helped in the nursery (left).

Wendy attended the unveiling ceremony of **Waterview Primary's** wonderful new mural (see closer view on p 5 above).

Manakau Institute of Technology Horticulture students lined up their wheelbarrows for this photo after mulching the area they had just planted.

Alf Fish, **Downer**, cleared rubbish from around the litter trap.

At the **Waterview Community Day**, Friends of Oakley Creek promoted our project with the information board and weed display – from left, Kim and Nigel, with Nigel's son Deacon helping out from his pushchair. We also had a display at the **2013 Unitec Volunteer Expo** – from left, Wendy and Jane.

Pete Pattinson, **NIWA**, installed a replacement water flow monitor.

The regular **community water monitoring with Wai Care** took place again reently: Jeff Lang (Haven/Kodesh Community) at the Cradock Street Bridge site (top); Jagjeeta Kaur and daughter, Guntaas, at Unitec Bridge with Kath Reid Wai Care (left); and Eileen Witt below Mt Albert St Jude's Scout Den (above).

Auckland International College students (above) were among the volunteers at the **October community working bee**, along with Gillian Warwick (top right) and Rob and Tess Black (left).

The rain kept away for the **November community working bee** (left) and it was satisfying to clear the weeds from around another patch of young native plants. However, at the **end-of-year picnic** (below), sunhats and a wind-proof layer were needed, with one light shower passing through; anyone for a picnic in February? The company and food was most enjoyable, and it was great to be able to thank all our wonderful volunteers.

Below left: Kowhai in flower, earlier in spring.

Photo: C. Casey

Even taniwha need a haircut sometimes! This local **Te Auaunga resident** (left) can usually be seen near the Cradock St bridge.

Fern treasures in Alan Wood Reserve (below).

We gratefully acknowledge the support of ASB Community Trust, Ministry for the Environment, WWF-New Zealand, The Tindall Foundation, Auckland Council, Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS), The Lion Foundation and Environmental Resource Management Foundation (ERM).

Next Newsletter

News, articles, contributions and comments for the next newsletter are welcome and can be sent to **info@oakleycreek.org.nz**

New Members Welcome, Donations Too!

We would welcome more members ($10.00) and/or donations towards the work we are doing to protect and restore our wonderful urban 'taonga' – Oakley Creek Te Auaunga. Donations over $5.00 are tax deductible.

Contributions and gift plant orders can be made directly into our bank account:
Friends of Oakley Creek - Kiwibank – A/c 38-9003-0978224-00
or cheques, made out to 'Friends of Oakley Creek', can be sent to: 4/65 Woodward Road, Mt Albert, Auckland 1025.

Friends of Oakley Creek
Te Auaunga

Chairperson: Wendy John Treasurer: Jane Shand Secretary: Nigel Mather
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