



Friends of Oakley Creek

Te Auaunga

December Update, 2009

Vol. 2, Issue 4

A special 'thank you' to all of you who have supported us throughout the past year, best wishes for the holiday season and may your New Year be a green and sustainable one.

Hot off the Press - Motorway update - The NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) have just announced the final route for the Waterview Connection of SH20. This will include a much more extensive level of underground tunnelling, which will greatly reduce the impact on the environment and community along the northern section through Waterview. However, there will still be a considerable length of 'at ground' motorway through Owairaka/Mt Albert. If the motorway must go ahead, Friends of Oakley Creek would still like to see the tunnel fully bored for its entire length, to prevent the major impact the 'at ground' section will have on Oakley Creek and its adjoining reserves, Alan Wood and Hendon. NZTA will be coming back to the community for further consultation in February.

Oakley Creek featured in the Auckland Heritage Festival

On Sunday 20th September, Wendy John and Dorothy Maddock led a guided tour of Te Auaunga Oakley Creek Walkway Reserve as part of the Auckland Heritage Festival. There were around 20 participants who found the walk to be of great interest. One comment received was that *'this is the best guided walk I've ever done'*.



Wendy John explains some of the history and the proposed plans for an upgrade of the Waterfall area.

Photos: Andrew McWilliam

Dates for your Diary for 2010:

Annual Clean-Up - Sunday 14th February, 2010 - 10.00am-12.00 noon - meet at Phyllis Reserve, end of Springleigh Ave, Mt Albert.

Regular Planting/Weeding/Plant Releasing Sunday 7th March - 10.00 am - 12.00 midday and every first Sunday of the month thereafter.

Oakley Creek Monitoring & Pest Control Programme: There is much to be done over the coming year. If you would like to be involved, please contact us.

Please check our website www.oakleycreek.org.nz for more details as they become available.

Fire at Oakley Creek

On the night of Friday November 27th, a fire was deliberately lit at Oakley Creek, killing a group of pine trees and leaving a steep slope open to erosion and weed infestation. Fire fighters worked hard to stop the fire from spreading further into the vegetation and to houses nearby.

Grass was sown almost immediately to try to prevent erosion. The area will be given priority for planting with native seedlings in the coming autumn.

*Top right: Fire fighters monitor the site for hot spots which could reignite.
Photo: W. John.*



*Above: First view of the effects of the fire when walking west.
Photo: A. Stanton.*

Left: A green tinge can now be seen as new bracken shoots emerge. Photo: A. Stanton.



Thanks to Norma de Langen

Norma de Langen has recently stepped down from our committee. Norma's contribution to our organisation and project has been greatly valued. We would like to particularly acknowledge her expertise and assistance with the submission process around the proposed motorway extension.

Conservation Volunteers New Zealand help out on the creek



Founded in 2006, Conservation Volunteers New Zealand (CVNZ) is a not-for-profit trust, which works with local communities, the business sector and government agencies. It provides opportunities for volunteers from around the world (and locally) to contribute to conservation projects throughout New Zealand. The trust aims to enable people to become more active and informed while also ensuring that there will be more of our native bush

protected for all to enjoy. Their website, <http://www.conservationvolunteers.co.nz/about-us/>, notes that hundreds of volunteers each year are involved in conservation projects in New Zealand through the trust.

Oakley Creek benefits on a regular basis and the wonderful efforts of CVNZ teams are greatly appreciated.
Photos: W. John



Monitoring and Pest Control Update

Possum control

Possum control has now begun within the pest control study area at Oakley Creek, with the setting of 13 possum traps. It had been planned that possum poisoning would begin in spring 2009, however, this was cancelled due to concern about the risk to dogs. Dogs are supposed to be on a lead on the Oakley Creek walkway but dogs without leads are common. While we were sure that it was possible to prevent dogs getting access to sufficient baits or carcasses for poisoning to occur, at the time, dog deaths due to poisoning on beaches was a major topic.

David Bowden (Auckland City Council) shows Buchanan Rehabilitation Centre volunteers André, Simon and Karen how to set the possum traps. Photo: W, John.



Hedgehog and mustelid monitoring



Simon and Margaret bait the tracking tunnels. Photo: W. John.

As part of our pest control programme, two lines of 10 tracking tunnels were set out for hedgehogs and mustelids, such as stoats, in November 2008. These tunnels were baited with rabbit paste and checked after three fine nights in each of January, April and October 2009.

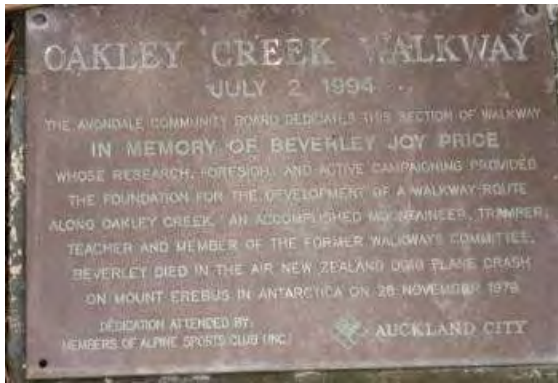
We did not detect any hedgehogs, mustelids or cats in January or April, but in October we detected cat sign in one tracking tunnel in the pest control area. We also detected hedgehog sign in one tunnel in the no-pest-control area. This low incidence is good news and means that our hedgehog / mustelid traps are not needed, at least for now. However, if cat sign occurs regularly in the pest control area in future we will need to work out a plan for removing any stray or feral cats.

Early Advocate for Oakley Creek Remembered

As commemorations are held for those who were lost in the plane crash on Mt Erebus, Antarctica, thirty years ago, it is fitting for us to remember Beverley Price from our community. Beverley was a key person in promoting the establishment of the Oakley Creek Walkway, and a section of the path is dedicated to her memory. Her friend, Margaret O'Connor, tells of riding bikes to explore the length of the stream from Mt Roskill and then of writing numerous letters to Councils and other bodies to lobby for the protection of the stream and to promote the idea of a walkway.

Having majored in French and Latin at university, Beverley taught at Huntly College and at Westlake Girls. A keen climber and trapper, Beverley was a member of the NZ Alpine Club and climbed many peaks, including Mt Cook. She was a member of the NZ Indian Women's Expedition to the Indian Himalayas.

As is apparent from her efforts at Oakley Creek, Beverley was a strong advocate for improving access to the outdoors for everyone. She was a member of the Alpine Club's scenic trails committee which made recommendations to the NZ Walkways Commission. The Beverley Price memorial track near Puhoehoe was also named in commemoration of her work.



This plaque commemorating Beverley Price can be found at the Oakley Creek Walkway access from Great North Rd, opposite Heron Park. Another can be found by the bridge near the Unitec Residence.

Photos: A. Stanton.

Gallery - Oakley Creek Art past and present



A changing canvas at the Creek ...

Photos: W. John.



Bridge on the Oakley Creek by Mina Cox, painted around 1883, oil on canvas, (h x w) 385 x 589mm. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, gift of Mr I J Whyte, 1992. The bridge was at the Waterview end of Great North Road and has been replaced by a culvert.



Telecom box art in Mt Albert - on New North Rd, by Rocket Park and again by Pak'n'Save opposite Hendon Ave.
 Photos: Lisa Truttman.

Weed Watch

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

Tradescantia fluminensis, Commelinaceae – wandering willie, wandering jew

Un-affectionately known as 'Trad' in weed control circles, this plant is very difficult to eliminate. It is a serious threat to natural native regeneration because it forms dense mats. Originating from subtropical Brazil and Argentina, this species prefers damp shady locations but can easily tolerate full sun, drought and flooding. It is less tolerant of frost.

'Trad' is a perennial herb which has long, fast growing, succulent stems. The leaves (3-6 cm long) are broadly elliptical with parallel veins and are arranged alternately on the stems with a short sheath. Shaded leaves are dark green, glossy and smooth. When in contact with the ground, each leaf node will produce roots, allowing the plant to readily reproduce vegetatively from stem fragments. The small white three petalled flowers (1-2 cm diameter) do not produce fruit or seed in New Zealand.

The genus *Tradescantia* is named after John Tradescant the Elder (c. 1570s - 15-16 April 1638), gardener to Charles I and famous for the introduction of many garden plants to England, including the horse-chestnut tree.





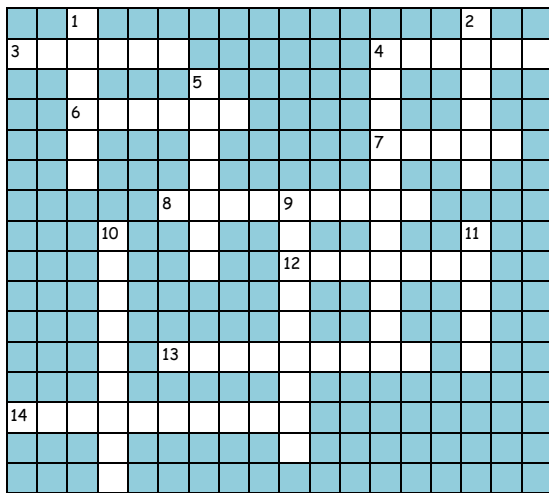
Photos: A. Stanton.

Control: *Tradescantia* can be raked and rolled up in bulk as a mat, but it is difficult to collect every stem fragment and the stems break very easily. Regular vigilance is required. To prevent further spread, care needs to be taken with disposal. The Weedfree Trust in Waitakere has found that *Tradescantia* can be composted over six months inside black plastic rubbish bags or bags made from weedmatting. Alternatively, it can be covered with water inside closed plastic drums to decompose in two months. The resulting compost is safe to use because no seed is present. See the Weedfree Trust website for more useful information: http://www.ecomatters.org.nz/04_WWT/WWT_01.htm. As is the case for many weeds, the establishment of a dense canopy to reduce light levels will aid control in the long term. It may be necessary to spray with a herbicide. If so, it is best to apply the spray during drought conditions and during spring. Again, regular checking is needed for re-growth and reinvasion.

Oakley Creek Crossword – solution on p. 9

Scientists aim to give all known types of organisms a distinct Latin name in order to avoid confusion. Each name is constructed in two parts, a system known as binomial nomenclature - the first part describes the genus, while the second part defines the species. It is a useful convention that scientific names are distinguished from surrounding text by the use of italics or underlining. Likewise, the first letter of the genus is capitalised while the species name is written entirely in lower case.

This crossword has a botanical twist. Scientific names of plants form the clues while the solutions are English words which share the same derivation. Knowing the meanings of scientific names can provide useful clues to species identification. Here is an example: hangehange, *Geniostoma ligustrifolium* - derivations are *genio* from the Greek *generon*, meaning chin or beard, *stoma* meaning opening or mouth - together referring to the hairy flower tube; *ligustri* referring to the privet genus *Ligustrum*, *folium* from the Latin meaning leaf - together referring to the privet shaped leaves. An English word derived from *folium*, for example, could be *folio*, meaning page or 'leaf' of paper. To make the crossword easier, however, only the derivation of the relevant part of each plant name is given. Some solutions are very similar to the plant name, others less so.



Across:

3. Mahoe, *Meliccytus ramiflorus* - *florus* means flower.
4. Ngaio, *Myoporum laetum* - *porum* from the Greek *poros* meaning hole or passage.
6. Whau, *Entelea arborescens* - *arborescens* means becoming tree-like.
7. Karo, *Pittosporum crassifolium* - *crassi* means thick or coarse.
8. Flax, *Phormium tenax* - *tenax* means holding fast or clinging.
12. Hound's tongue, *Microsorium pustulatum* - *pustulatum* means pimple or blister.
13. Pohutukawa, *Metrosideros excelsa* - *excelsa* means tall, eminent, superior.
14. Totara, *Podocarpus totara* - *podos* means foot.

Down:

1. Poroporo, *Solanum aviculare* - from the Latin *solamen* meaning to give comfort (some plants in the genus have narcotic effects).
2. Karamu, *Coprosma robusta* - from the Latin *robustus* meaning strong, sturdy, woody.
4. *Sphenodon punctatis* - from the Latin *punctum* meaning point or spot.
5. Three square, *Schoenoplectus pungens* - *pungens* means piercing, sharply pointed, acrid.
9. Taupata, *Coprosma repens* - *Coprosma* from the Greek *kopros* meaning dung.
10. Putaputaweta, *Carpodetus serratus* - *serratus* means like a saw, notched.
11. Ribbonwood, *Plagianthus regius* - *regius* means splendid, kingly.

Extra for experts: Which clue is not a plant?

For more about meanings, the following two books can be found at Auckland City Libraries:

Meanings and origins of botanical names of New Zealand plants by Marie Taylor, published by the Auckland Botanical Society, Bulletin 26, 2002.

Plant heritage New Zealand: Te whakapapa o nga rahau, Interpreting the special features of native plants by Tony Foster, Penguin, 2008.

Te Auaunga Spring



Ponga koru



Baby white faced herons...



Puriri moth and eggs



Shining spleenwort

...and the kawakawa below!



Mahoe in flower



Duck eggs...

...and ducklings



Toetoe



Flowering pukatea



Damselflies mating



Blackbird nest

Photos: W. John.

Out and About - in brief

Photos: W. John.

Fresh water mussel research



Rosemary Phillips, a post graduate student at AUT, is undertaking research on 'The current status and population dynamics of freshwater mussels (*Unionidae: Echyridella spp.*) throughout the Auckland Region'. She has been delighted to find some specimens above the waterfall at Oakley Creek, which was unexpected, as well as others further downstream - however, there appears to be a shortage of medium sized mussels, which is not a good sign, and the smaller ones are more difficult to find. We look forward to learning more about the outcomes from this research.

Landscape Architecture students

Unitec Landscape Architect students visit Oakley Creek as part of their course work of producing a management plan.



Local volunteers hard at work in the newly planted areas, weeding amongst the native grasses.

Yum - mulch for lunch!!

The new plants will really enjoy this load of mulch - it helps prevent the soil from drying out too much over the summer, helps to keep the weeds down and eventually, as the mulch breaks down it will improve the structure and fertility of the soil. Thanks to the Council for providing this mulch and to Mark from Envirotech for delivering it!



Water Monitoring on Oakley Creek:

Te Whare Wānanga Awanuiarangi ...



In August 2009, 'environmental studies' students from Te Whare Wānanga Awanuiarangi, carried out water testing at Oakley Creek with Waicare co-ordinator Melissa Marler. They found that the water quality, for an urban stream, is relatively healthy and there are a considerable number of native aquatic species living in the lower section of the stream. Te Whare Wānanga Awanuiarangi is a Mataatua based tribal university, situated in Whakatane, but also operating from the Unitec campus. Their programme aims to recognise and provide for the relationship of Māori with ancestral lands, waters, sites, wāhi tapu and other taonga.



... and A Rocha

A Rocha is an international Christian nature conservation organisation, the name coming from the Portuguese for "the Rock". The group has close ties with the Kodesh Christian Community (which is situated on the banks of Oakley Creek) and they are keen to be involved in the restoration of the stream and its surrounds. At their annual 'hui', and under the guidance of two of their group who work for NIWA (the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research), they carried out water monitoring on a section of the creek close by. Unlike further downstream, there was little in the way of native aquatic species - which may reflect the understanding that the Oakley Creek waterfall is a barrier for many native fish species and/or that that the stream is less healthy in this section.



Photo: W. John.

Crossword Solution - from p. 6.

Across: 3. Floral, 4. Porous, 6. Harbour, 7. Crass, 8. Tenacious, 12. Pustule, 13. Excellent, 14. Podiatrist.
Down: 1. Solace, 2. Robust, 4. Punctuation, 5. Pungent, 9. Coprolite, 10. Serration, 11. Regal.

Extra for experts: Congratulations if you correctly chose 4. Down, *Sphenodon punctatis*. Wouldn't it be great if we could see tuatara at Oakley Creek one day? Award yourself two pieces of chocolate (which can of course be classified as a vegetable - cocoa is derived from the seeds of the cacao tree, *Theobroma cacao* (*Theobroma* means food of the gods!)).

Fritjof Capra says:

"We need to teach our children and students the fundamental facts of life - that one species' waste is another species' food; that matter cycles continually through the web of life; that the energy driving the ecological cycles flows from the sun; that diversity assures resilience; that life, from its beginning more than three billion years ago, did not take over the planet by combat but by networking."

Next Newsletter

News, articles, contributions and comments for the next newsletter are welcome and can be sent to the editor at adrienne@stanton.net.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.

Contributions 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.



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