



Friends of Oakley Creek

Te Auaunga

March Update, 2010

Vol. 3, Issue 1

Mean Team Cleans Stream!

At our annual clean-up in February, about thirty keen helpers came together to collect rubbish from the Oakley Creek streambed and banks. Around fifty bags of rubbish, a wheelbarrow, tyres, an old stove door and a miscellany of other old metal and debris were hauled out for more appropriate disposal. We would like to say a special thank you to everyone who contributed - including the young man who picked up some rubbish in his own time because he was unable to come on the clean-up day and David Bowden of Auckland City for supporting this event.



Above: Alan and a young helper load the wheelbarrow while Dorothy models the latest in fashion.



Left: Sarah and Heather tackle the slopes as Ross and Rosemary try a different kind of fishing.

Below: Eric finds another bag to fill and Alan, David and Rosemary survey the total haul after all the hard work.

Photos: W. John.



State Highway 20 is coming to a stream near you...

Friends of Oakley Creek committee met with representatives from the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) on February 25th to receive more detailed information about the planned route of the SH 20 motorway extension, construction parameters and the consent process. (This information was also presented to the wider community at a series of workshops held in the following fortnight.)

NZTA are aiming to lodge a 'Notice of Requirement' for the designation of the motorway with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) by June this year. It is expected that this may go through the new national consenting 'call in' process of the Resource Management Act, which was introduced by Government last year to streamline the decision-making process on matters of 'national significance'.

This would allow the consent process to be shortened and controlled nationally rather than having to go through the local government and the Environment Court. There will be only approximately twenty working days from this notification date for the public to make submissions on the plan, which at this stage is still short on detail. So be on the alert!

The NZTA representatives gave assurances that their intention was to improve the ecology of Oakley Creek through rehabilitation measures, and that great effort is being put into noise wall, landscaping and urban design. However, the committee felt that it was difficult to assess these efforts and intentions until further details are available and is still concerned at the considerable loss of green space along the creek.

The committee also met with Auckland City Council staff to hear about the Council's response to the NZTA plans, and to ensure it represents the community's best interests through the approval process, with regards to mitigation.

Dates for your diary...

Community Tree Plantings

Sunday May 2nd 10.00 am - 12 midday. Meet at Waterview Glades.

Sunday June 13th 10.00 - 12 midday. Meet at Waterview Downs Bridge.

See www.oakleycreek.org for more information

Friends of Oakley Creek AGM Monday 21st June 2010, Oakridge House, Unitec (Gate 4).



Oakley Creek mouth - where it flows into the Motu Manawa / Pollen Island Marine Reserve. Photo: W. John.

You're invited! Find Friends of Oakley Creek on Facebook.

We now have our own facebook page which you can find at -

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?v=wall&gid=300424166687>. You are most welcome to upload your own photos of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga here for us all to enjoy. Thank you Heather for setting this up.

Monitoring and Pest Control Update



Oakley Creek Possum - eats leaves, especially new shoots, fruit, seeds, invertebrates, bird eggs and chicks, ferns, fungi, bark...our native forest ecosystem has no defence against this introduced pest animal which has such a broad diet.

A volunteer puts out a wax tag to monitor possum abundance.



Monitoring of possum numbers in the pest control area (at the lower end of the Walkway), has shown that numbers are as high or higher in March 2010 as they were in March 2009. Possum numbers in the pest control area are also still higher than possum numbers in the no pest control area - which was established to check on the effectiveness of any pest control undertaken. So far, the possum trapping (approximately 50 possums since November 2009) does not appear to have made a significant difference between the two areas. Possums are probably growing up or moving into the pest control area about as fast as trapping is removing them. However, the good news is that an additional trapline has been set up by Mt Albert

St Judes Venturer Scouts on the west stream bank of the pest control area. Two types of trap have been laid, Timms traps to catch possums and DOC 200 traps for mustelids, hedgehogs and rodents. The Venturers will monitor the traps regularly, clearing and baiting them as required. Monitoring of possum abundance will be carried out again in August.

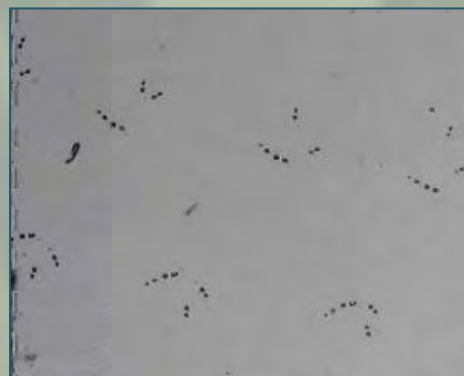


Alicia briefs the Mt Albert St Judes Venturers.

Setting the traps.



Other monitoring and pest control activities over the past three months have included regular, weekly possum trapping by the Buchanan Rehabilitation Centre team, hedgehog / mustelid monitoring, and checking the lizard and weta homes for monitoring later in the year.



Not only rodents and hedgehogs enter the tracking tunnels - this is the trail left by a weta.

Photos: W. John.

Regular volunteers check weta and lizard homes.

2010 - United Nations International Year of Biodiversity

The United Nations has declared this year to be the International Year of Biodiversity, with the goal of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss. As an island nation with many species which are found nowhere else yet are threatened through loss of habitat and the effect of introduced species, this goal is very important for New Zealand.

Our project at Oakley Creek provides an opportunity for people to become involved as part of their contribution to this year. Indeed, at Oakley Creek, we are taking the next step - to increase the biodiversity of our local area through improving the health of the ecosystem, providing more niches for different forms of life and so enhancing the richness of the community. This is done by removing exotic weeds, planting native flora, improving water quality and stream bank habitats, monitoring species abundance and controlling pests. All of these activities require the help of volunteers.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) observes that: 'We all live in this unique environment and how we live has an impact. Protecting and investing in our natural living space is everyone's responsibility.'

Check out the DOC website for more information at the national level: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/events-and-awards/international-year-of-biodiversity/protecting-nzs-biodiversity/>

Other international websites which have some useful information are:

<http://www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/>

<http://www.biodiversityinternational.org/scientific-information/themes/forests-and-trees/forest-and-trees-overview.htm>

!

<http://www.conservation.org/learn/freshwater/Pages/overview.aspx>

Willow windfall reveals trash or treasure...?

The uprooting of a large willow during a summer storm revealed rubbish from the old Oakley / Carrington Hospital 'pharmacy dump', from days past when there were fewer or no rules for waste disposal. A local bottle collector was thrilled to be able to search the site which had previously been inaccessible. In the mid 1990s the surrounding area had been well dug over and searched during the tree planting that was undertaken by Taskforce Green workers. Contractors will be removing this willow and two others which have fallen across the stream as they have the potential to trap debris and cause flooding.



The fallen willow (left) quickly sprouted new growth (right) - this resilience is a feature which explains why willows flourish and can be regarded as weeds in some areas, including Oakley Creek .



Photos: A. Stanton.

End of Year Party Fun!

On Sunday, December 13th, a wonderful picnic was shared at Harbutt Reserve to celebrate the year's achievements and to thank everyone who has contributed to the ongoing restoration of Te Auaunga Oakley Creek. The picnic was a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and to meet others who also care for our stream. Children blew bubbles, coloured decorations, enjoyed the playground and rose to the challenge of a Scavenger Hunt. Finally, an energetic game of softball was played, with many older 'children' joining in.



Francesca, Daniel and Archie.



Rob, Margi and Tess.



Gina and Fabienne.



Unitec monitoring and pest control team.



Mary and Catherine watch Batsman John.



Photos: W.John.

More Te Auaunga Treasure



Which way? - studying the GPS.

'I was at my cousin's house with my brother when somebody had an idea, I can't remember who. Why don't we go geocaching? We've got a GPS and there's one in Oakley Creek! Good idea, everyone said, so we set off. Initially there was a slight confusion with the GPS, but soon we got down to Oakley Creek. We had to cross some soccer fields and bits of bush to get to the place, and as it was raining, it was very muddy. We got to the place, me, my brother Alex and my cousin, Edwin, but now there was a new dilemma, we couldn't find the geocache! Even with the clues. Someone thought that they'd found it but it was actually a rat trap. Then Edwin called out "I think I've found it!" Indeed, under the xxxxx was the geocache! We wrote our names in the little log book and then swapped something with a clip from the cache. Inside it was also some cookie cutters but we left these and headed home triumphant, eating our m&ms, our raincoats soaking wet.' By Tessa Boyd.

Success!

Photos: A. Stanton.

A geocache is ...

... a box of small items that someone has hidden in a public place. If you are looking for a geocache, then go on WWW.GEOCACHING.COM and press the first GO button in the 'search for geocaches' box. Then click on the link to Google Maps and go to wherever you are, and find a geocache nearby you. Click on this for information. You may want to decipher any clues on the website if it is your first time. The website will give you GPS coordinates. Enter these into your GPS. By Edwin Stanton.



GPS stands for Global Positioning System. A handheld GPS unit can tell you, in degrees, hours, minutes and second (or latitude and longitude) where you are or you can tell it to direct you to something you know the latitude and longitude of. GPSs are used for in-car navigation systems, for emergency location, to find your way back to places you have been and, of course, geocaching. A GPS can be used almost anywhere in the world because they contact straight to satellites, not via the cell phone network or the internet. By Alex Boyd.

Is it a bird, is it a crane...?

No, this unusual visitor to Oakley Creek is not Superman in disguise either. It was a small drilling rig surveying the local geology ahead of the SH 20 tunnelling. At least they are not going to open mine here...



Photos: A. Stanton.

Weed Watch

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

Ipomoea indica, Convolvulaceae - blue morning glory

Unfortunately, this beautiful plant is a real problem for our regenerating natives. It is even bad news for other weeds as it will densely smother any plant in its path, outgrowing other vines to reach high into the canopy. Blue morning glory has been declared a Regional Surveillance Pest Plant in the Auckland region which means that it can no longer be commercially propagated, distributed, displayed or sold. In the past it has been promoted as a garden ornamental.



At Oakley Creek, morning glory is a huge problem, particularly in Phyllis and Harbutt Reserves.

Photos: Top and bottom left, A.Stanton; bottom right, W. John.

The *Ipomoea* genus also includes the kumara, and the name means worm, presumably in reference to its growth habit of draping over plants. Morning glory is widespread throughout the tropics and is limited in New Zealand by frost to lowland areas - its range extends south to the top of the South Island only.

Morning glory has leaves with three lobes (up to 18 x 16 cm, l x w), hairy stems which may have a pink or purple hue and fibrous roots. The blue/purple flowers have fused petals forming a funnel and may last only a day, turning pink as they age. Fortunately, seed is produced very rarely in New Zealand.

Control: For small areas - as for other vines, dig out the roots and remove the whole plant from the site to avoid regrowth from stem fragments. Check for regrowth and reinvasion regularly. For severe cases - if trying to preserve any surviving natives under the morning glory, cut the vines' stems and dip the end which is still attached to the roots into an appropriate herbicide for 10 - 15 minutes (thicker stems can be painted rather than dipped). Otherwise, repeated blanket spraying is probably the only realistic option. Auckland Regional Council has produced a detailed information sheet on this weed which can be downloaded from http://www.rnzih.org.nz/pages/j14577_2.pdf

Fruit of the Forest

In spite of the dry weather, many species at Oakley Creek are bearing lots of fruit as summer turns to autumn.



Karo, *Pittosporum crassifolium*



Cabbage tree, *Cordyline australis*



Pate, *Schefflera digitata*



Karamu, *Coprosma robusta*



Mahoe, *Melicytus ramiflorus*



Poroporo, *Solanum laciniatum*

Tarata, lemonwood, *Pittosporum eugenioides*.



Display posters have a busy life...

Wonderful new posters describing Oakley Creek Te Auanga, the restoration work and promoting Friends of Oakley Creek have been created. The posters have been made possible through funding by the Ministry for the Environment's Sustainable Management Fund and of course through lots of hard work, particularly by Heather and Wendy.



The posters' first outing was at the Wesley Xmas Market on a stall shared with Waicare and Auckland City Council.



Next, they were displayed at Unitec for Auckland Orienteering Club's Summer Series event which saw the orienteers scrambling around over and, if lost, through Oakley Creek.

Photos: W. John.



Most recently the posters were displayed at the Pt Chevalier Library for World Water Day on 22nd March

*Owairaka te maunga
Ko Auaunga te awa....*

Te Auaunga

A late spring morning;
Oakley creek is today a stream, Te Auaunga
the bottom visible for the first time since winter,
exposed sandstone a roost for a preening drake
at the lip of the waterfall, and still. Only the water moves,
and I with it.

Past the residence bridge through the whiff
of sewer gas where the path kinks around
the accidental oak in the dry-stone wall the newly planted
Kahikatea feel wetness below, forcing them skyward
while dooming the oak with its fellows to fungal death.

A cock pheasant crows somewhere on my right
near the derelict orchard, Riroriro suggests rain,
a pair of herons court high on a dying pine
and the first cuckoo of the year shines distantly. The privet
forest and the sometime path hints at bees beyond;

and the Clinic high wire fence at another inaccessible, *beyond*.
The made path ends at its locked gate. My detour tracks
through struggling flax and weeds to the dusty
slide at the boundary of the neglected field *o Whatua*
and on an oak, an old fence-line oak - a latchset:

Nailed fast to the tree ingrown by the bark,
a late Victorian Crown Patent lockable rim latch
matt black under hospital cream, layers flaking
from remnants of the brass escutcheon; maker,
date and place no longer legible. No handles.

Long ago this might have been the lock that closed in a jangle
of keys behind us in the dining hall while as a pastoral
duty we took a Sunday service, complete with hymns,
cringing at the stale smell of cabbage and the swaying folk
incarcerated behind handle-less cream painted doors.

Now it fastens nothing - enigmatic history nailed to a tree.
A meter away the chainmesh fence spells today's version:
Forensic Psychiatry for the worst, in place of ECT
and the rest in boarding houses,
or sleeping rough.

Harold Marshall
November 2009

Whatua Kaimarie Marae

Owairaka te maunga
Ko Auaunga te awa
Wai- o- te- mata te moana
Ko Whatua Kaimarie te whenua
Ko Manawanui te Whare Tupuna



Cabbage Tree Dancers



Photos: W. John

The mihi is for the Marae of the Maori Mental Health unit in the Mason Clinic.

Oakley Creek Te Auanga Scavenger Hunt

Your challenge for this issue is to find or make the following items on your next walk along the stream:

1. A heart shaped leaf.
2. An orange fruit.
3. A bark rubbing.
4. A smooth pebble.
5. A cicada case.
6. A bottle top (please put it in a rubbish bin later!).
7. A black seed.
8. A purple flower.
9. A white stone.
10. A leaf skeleton.
11. A daisy chain.
12. A dandelion 'clock'.
13. A berry.
14. A flag to wave.

Spying spiders...

Visiting arachnologist, David Court, was enthusiastic about the rehabilitation work being undertaken at Oakley Creek when he made a short visit to the Oakley Creek walkway at the end of last year. He was especially pleased to be able to find native trapdoor spiders - the presence of these spiders indicates that the forest ecosystem is in reasonably good shape.



Above left and centre: Tree-dwelling trapdoor spider, *Migas species*, (Family Migidae). Above right: The web of a native banded tunnelweb spider, *Hexathele hochstetteri*, (Family Hexathelidae).

Below: The native prowling or vagrant spider, *Uliodon species*, (Family Zoropsidae) - with its egg sac (left) and beetle dinner (right).



Left: Sombrero spider, *Stiphidion facetum*, (Family Stiphidiidae) - introduced from Australia.

For more information about our spiders, useful references are:

1. *Which New Zealand Spider?*, by Andrew Crowe (2007) Penguin.
2. *Insects and Spiders*, by John Early (2009) New Holland.
3. *Spiders of New Zealand*, by Ray Forster and Lyn Forster (1999) University of Otago Press.

Photos: D.J. Court.

Out and about...



Freshwater mussel researcher Rosemary Phillips reports that her survey has been made a little easier lately with mussel colonies being more accessible during the dry summer's low water levels - between measurements it looks relaxing too!



Conservation Volunteers NZ continue to support the restoration work on Oakley Creek - with the assistance of keen volunteers from a variety of different countries.



Kayakers enjoying the tranquillity of Oakley Creek - and boys enjoying this 'watery playground' (below Great Nth Rd at high tide) - New Year summer.



Unitec student Huanyu - the trombone player who came all the way from China to play his trombone on Oakley Creek!



Oakley Creek was the backdrop for pre-wedding photos for Waterview couple, Chris and Frances on their wedding day. Congratulations and all the best for the future!

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

We acknowledge the support of the Ministry for the Environment Sustainable Management Fund for 2009-2010.



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.



Chairperson: Wendy John Treasurer: Alicia Warren Secretary: Heather Docherty

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