

November Update, 2010

Vol. 3, Issue 4

A giving time of year!

Oakley Creek, its resident flora and fauna and those who visit, will all benefit from recent news. Friends of Oakley Creek has been granted assistance from the ASB Community Trust, the Community Organisations Grant Scheme and the Eden Albert Community Board, in addition to the WWF funding outlined in our last newsletter. These exciting developments are described in more detail below.

We are also pleased to be able to offer you a new opportunity to support the Oakley Creek restoration effort - give your family and friends a tree to plant on Oakley Creek - see the inset box (right) for details.

SH20 Waterview Connection Update

After many days work by several committee members, Friends of Oakley Creek put in a submission on the New Zealand Transport Agency's (NZTA) Waterview Connection proposal. Volumes of information detailing the project were provided by NZTA.

A huge group effort was made to digest the most crucial aspects of NZTA's application, and make comment on the areas that are of most concern to the Friends - which was no mean feat with only 20 working days to do this. These matters included the levels of stormwater and sediment entering the Creek, the loss of open green space, the increase in impermeable surface area, and the overall impact of the project on the catchment, environment and the stream - both during and post construction.



Members of the Environmental Protection Agency Board of Enquiry visited the Oakley Creek Walkway in late October. Photo: W. John.

Need an inspiring gift idea?

Give a tree to plant on Oakley Creek



Just \$20 gives you:

- a native tree (choice of cabbage tree, manuka, pigeonwood or mahoe) to be planted on your behalf (or by you!) at Oakley Creek Te Auaunga (on Sunday 12th June 2011)
- · an attractive commemorative card with the details of your gift
- · 2011 Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga Membership

To order your tree(s), please send the following details to info@oakleycreek.org.nz or post to 4/65 Woodward Rd, Mt Albert, Auckland 1025:

- a) The number of tree(s) you would like to give for Oakley Creek for yourself /as a gift (select one).
- b) The commemorative $\operatorname{card}(s)$ to be sent to you / the recipient by post / email (select choices).
- c) Your name, address and email and the name, address and email of the recipient (if applicable).
- d) Tree Choice(s) (can be selected by recipient at a later date), and
- e) Further donation? \$____

Pay to 'Friends of Oakley Creek' - Kiwibank - A/c 38-9003-0978224-00 with emailed payment advice, or send a cheque to the address above.

The next phase of the process is now underway. We are collaborating with a number of other local community organisations to get the best outcome we can, under the guidance of a lawyer who is giving his time for free and we are currently liaising with a number of expert witnesses who may act on our behalf. We have until the 17th of December to prepare expert evidence and build a case against some aspects of NZTA's proposal. The provisional starting date for the Board of Inquiry hearing is February 7th, 2011. A decision by the Board regarding this matter is anticipated by June next year. To view our submission, as well as other public submissions put forward, go to http://epa.govt.nz/applications/waterview/submissions/index.html

4800 holes have been dug!

As summer approaches we can celebrate the end of another successful planting season. A fantastic effort by volunteers has resulted in another 4800 plants going into the ground this year! A special thank you to all involved.

Good news, ASB has also approved our funding application

The ASB Community Trust grant, together with the WWF - New Zealand grant, will allow the continuation of our efforts to get more community involvement in the restoration of Oakley Creek. This significant contribution is greatly appreciated and we look forward to working together to the benefit the stream ecosystem, including the associated human community - local, national and international visitors.



Kaipatiki Nature for Neighbourhoods Project is coming to Oakley Creek

The Kaipatiki Environmental Project has been awarded funding to provide their Nature for Neighbourhoods package to three wards in Auckland City, including the Oakley Creek catchment. The assistance on offer is for the owners of private properties that back on to reserves or have streams on or nearby their properties and comprises:

- a visit by a restoration expert who will advise residents on their weeds and native plants with any issues noted
- up to 25 free native plants to retain erosion areas, replace weeds or encourage birdlife
- 2 greenfingers bags free of charge if the residents are wanting to have a cleanup
- a comprehensive report detailing: the plants present on their properties, both weed and native species; relevant methods of weed control; information on planting and wildlife; further contacts; and a list of the plants allocated to them with information on where to plant them.

This is a fantastic programme which will be of tremendous assistance in further enhancing Oakley Creek. To check if you qualify for Nature For Neighbourhoods or to arrange your free consultation contact Kaipatiki Project's Natural Heritage Co-ordinator, Jackie Knight, restoration@kaipatiki.org.nz and copy your email to info@oakleycreek.org.nz.

A limited number of consultations are available on a first come first served basis from 17 January 2011.

Dates for your diary ...

End of Year Picnic - Sunday 12th December, 12.00 noon - 3.00 pm, Harbutt Reserve Bring your picnic rug and a plate of food to share.

The Creek Abides – Oakley Creek Te Auaunga Photo Exhibition On at Cosset Café, 1087 New North Rd until 16th December.

Hedgehog Monitoring - Sunday 23rd and Wednesday 26th January, 2011.

Plant Releasing - Sunday 5th February, 2011, 10.00 am until noon Waterview Glades, west of Unitec Residence Bridge.

See www.oakleycreek.org.nz or phone Wendy John on 815 3101 or 027 232 6454 for more information.



duckling for lunch?
Or eel for dinner?
Unfortunately, there have been reports of illegal fishing for eels taking place at Oakley Creek recently.
Please keep a watch out and contact the Auckland Council ph 301 0101 if you see anyone fishing, so we can all have the chance to see exciting scenes like this one.

A close encounter -

Photo: W. John.

Kaipatiki Project Inc. is a North Shore community based organisation established 12 years ago to carry out ecological restoration and environmental education with communities across the North Shore and further afield. It is supported with core funding from ASB Community Fund, North Shore City Council and the Ministry for the Environment.

Friends of Oakley Creek is also grateful to the Eden Albert Community Board and the Community Organisations Grant Scheme whose funding grants will be assisting with some administration costs and volunteer training over the coming year.

What is missing from this picture? You!



Harbutt Reserve - ready and waiting.

Photo: A. Stanton.

Join us for the Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga End of Year Picnic at midday on December 12th and help celebrate the year's achievements.

Ministry for the Environment visits Oakley Creek

Further to a successful year on Oakley Creek with funding from the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) Sustainable Management Fund, a group of MfE personnel from Wellington came to Auckland in early October to visit the projects they had supported - including Oakley Creek. From MfE Funds Management Analyst, Emma Bonner - Thank you so much for taking time to show us around at Oakley Creek. It was definitely one of the highlights of our trip to Auckland. You have definitely achieved a lot and it's a wonderful area, especially considering how urban it is.



Sustainable Management Fund

Wendy John, Friends of Oakley Creek Chairperson, and the group from the Ministry for the Environment enjoyed a sunny day at





the waterfall and were delighted to



Photos: left and centre, Ministry for the Environment; right, W. John.

Monitoring and Pest Control Update





We love the warm weather - so do the weeds!

A reminder to everyone to keep noxious weeds out of your gardens over the summer months to prevent their spread to our wild places – especially woolly nightshade, *Tradescantia* (wandering jew), hemlock, moth plant, honeysuckle, privet seedlings and the Convolvulus family – morning glory and bindweed.

Kodesh Christian Community team possum trapping (left) and the rodent monitoring team setting off (right). Photos: W. John

Volunteers needed for possum trapping!

Would you like to help with the pest control programme by checking traps along Oakley Creek? The job takes just over an hour once a fortnight to clear and reset the traps with fresh apple bait. Training is given and all equipment is provided, including gloves!

Koi carp The Department of Conservation (DOC) has contacted Friends of Oakley Creek offering to loan us some fyke nets for removing koi carp from Oakley Creek. These nets, which are held open by hoops, are set overnight and have a large mesh size to target the koi carp, but not small native fish. The aim is to



These Oakley Creek koi carp were at least 25 cm in length. Photo: D. Maddock

reduce the abundance of this pest species, which dislodges aquatic plants and stirs up mud while feeding on a wide range of plants and animals. If you are interested in assisting, please contact Wendy John, ph 815 3101 or email info@oakleycreek.org.nz.







John and Melanie attaching possum traps to trees (left) and United Biodiversity students - Jett and Rowena (centre) and John, Prabhir and Lynne (right) - check the distance markers. Photos: W. John.

Lizard and Weta Survey Results by Alicia Warren

Our 40 lizard refuges (made of Onduline tiles with pebbles for spacers between) were set out in February 2009 - half of the refuges were in the pest-control area and half in the no-pest-control area. We know that two lizard species are present at our site: the native copper skink and the introduced rainbow skink. The refuges were first checked for lizards in June 2009, and checked for the second time in July 2010 - the following table shows the results. In 2010, 36 of the 40 lizard refuges were judged to be in a condition to offer refuge to lizards and 3 of these had lizards in them. All of the lizards were in the no-pest-control area. In 2009, with the same number of refuges in good condition, 2 refuges in the pest-control area and 2 refuges in the no-pest-control area were found to have lizards. The sample size is very small so it would be rash to say this means lizard numbers have gone down in the pest-control area, or up in the no-pest-control area.

In July 2010, 2 refuges were not found, another had been flooded and silted up, another was disturbed, (i.e. the tiles were no longer stacked), and many of them needed clearing of debris, spacers replaced and restacking. The state of some of our lizard refuges suggests that we might get better results if we checked and maintained them more often, made sure they are high enough to never get flooded, and found each one a heavier rock to place on the top tile, making dislodgement less likely.





NZ native copper skink (left) and Australian rainbow skink (right) taking refuge in artificial lizard homes at Oakley Creek. Rainbow skinks are slender and have long toes while copper skinks are more robust and have shorter toes. However, the key defining feature is the scale or scales between the eyes. The rainbow skink has one diamond shaped scale in the middle of the forehead. Native skinks have a division into 2 scales down the centre line. Rainbow skinks have been declared an Unwanted Organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993. This means they are no longer given the same level of protection as native skinks under the Wildlife Act.

Photos: W. John.

Survey Date / Pest control status	No. of lizard homes available	No. of homes occupied by lizards	% occupied
June 2009 /			
Pest-control area	18	2	11.1
No-pest-control area	18.5	2	10.8
July 2010 /			
Pest-control area	18.5	0	0.0
No-pest-control area	18	3	16.7

One thing that could be bad for lizards in the pest-control area is that this is also the area where weed control and replanting is occurring. Lizards are often found when dense weeds thickly covering the ground are removed (such as kikuyu, jasmine and wandering jew). This is probably because they get protection from rats, hedgehogs and cats when they live in such places. We could consider planting native species that provide similar protection (such as *Muehlenbeckia*) to ensure lizards have cover nearby when we remove undesirable vegetation.



Our weta homes are bamboo tubes fastened to tree trunks using 2 staples and a cable tie. The entrance faces downwards for protection from the weather. The internal diameter of the entrance is 16-18 mm to protect weta from adult mice and rats. We have 8 groups of 5 weta homes in the pest-control area and the same number in the no-pest-control area.

Survey Date / Pest control status	No. of weta homes available	No. of homes occupied by weta	% occupied
Winter 2009 /			
Pest-control area	36	8	22.5
No-pest-control area	40	3	7.5
Winter 2010 /			
Pest-control area	39	15	38.5
No-pest-control area	40	5	12.5

Photo: W.John.

We established the homes in the autumn of 2009 and we have checked them in the winter of 2009 and again in the winter of 2010 - the table (right) shows the results. The pest-control area had more weta

than the no-pest-control area even before we began pest control. More weta moved into homes in the pest-control area than in the no-pest-control area, but the percentage of occupied homes almost doubled in both areas. This is only one site without replicates but it has been a good year for weta both in the pest-control area and the no-pest-control area. Most of this is likely to be due to factors beyond our control (like the climate and food supply) while a portion of the improvement in the pest-control area might be due to pest control. If we keep monitoring annually and maintain pest control we will get a better idea of how our pest control is affecting weta.

Featuring Fauna and Flora by Sarah Ross

Auckland Tree Weta - Hemideina spp.



Male Auckland tree weta. Photo: Chris Green

Chances are that at some stage of your life, you will have encountered a weta. If you are an Auckland local, this is most likely to be the Auckland tree weta.

Weta have been around for 200 million years. There are over 70 endemic New Zealand species, some of which have only recently been discovered. Like our bird species, weta have evolved in the absence of predatory mammals, resulting in gigantism and flightlessness. Weta fill the niche usually occupied by mice or other small ground-dwelling mammals.

Tree weta largely feed on plant material but also scavenge and eat the occasional insect. The large palps around the jaw that have startled many a gardener help the weta taste food before taking a bite.

Weta are nocturnal. Nights are spent foraging or defending territory, while day is spent in a cavity or crevice, such as in a tree, post or shoe. They enter the hole headfirst and leave their spiny back legs blocking the entrance. Male tree weta have larger heads than females. They are aggressive toward other males but allow females into their territory - male weta keep harems of females. Female weta can be identified by the long ovipositor or egg layer (it is not a sting!) used to lay eggs in the

soil. A female can lay as many as 300 eggs over a few weeks. Weta threaten other animals by raising their back legs and making rasping noises, scratching the hindlegs against the abdomen. You may have heard the 'tsit tsit' sound in your garden.

An interesting relationship exists between puriri moths, *Aenetus virescens*, the native tree *Carpodetus serratus* (marble leaf or putaputaweta) and tree weta. The puriri moth lays its eggs in leaf litter at the base of the

Putaputaweta tree. The caterpillars hatch and crawl up the tree boring into the wood to form a distinctive 7-shaped cavity. They will live here for several years. When the adult moth emerges and vacates the hole, tree weta often take up residency in it. Putaputaweta means many, many weta. Along Oakley Creek you will notice the scarred notches on the trunks of the putaputaweta, and you can also see the same thing on the trunks of privet trees, left in a grove near the Mason Clinic precisely to preserve puriri moth and weta habitat.

The morepork is a natural predator of weta, but the introduction of rodents, mustelids (stoats and weasels) and cats has been catastrophic for weta. Weta habitat has also been destroyed in many areas of New Zealand.



Puriri grub home and potential future weta refuge on a Chinese privet, Ligustrum sinense, at Oakley Creek. Photo: W John

The giant weta, or wetapunga, can weigh up to 80 grams and is thought to be the heaviest insect in the world. These days, giant weta and tusked weta can only be found living in predator- free sanctuaries. The Mahoenui giant weta has only survived as a species because it was living protected in a patch of gorse in the King Country. Fortunately captive breeding, the removal of pests and the replanting of native plants, some with specially built weta hotels attached, is having a positive impact on some weta populations.

Not all weta live in trees. The mountain rock weta is a tree weta that doesn't live in trees. It can be frozen and remain alive, a useful adaptation for living in high mountains. Ground weta live, as their name suggests, on the ground and cave weta live in the entrances of cave. These weta are agile jumpers, with long back legs, and in the cave weta's case, very long antennae.

Next time you find a tree weta, look at it with 'unprejudiced eyes' (Ruth Dallas). Notice the ears that they have on the inside of their front legs. Observe the fine pattern on the upper side of the weta's thorax. And keep your cat in at night!

<u>WWW.KIDSCHOICEWALKS.CO.NZ</u> - add this website to your favourites!

Created as part of a school project, the nine year old Gladstone Primary student author rates walks from a kid's perspective. His idea is to help children whose parents 'inflict' walks on them. The walks are rated with smiley faces for their level of interest and enjoyment plus, most usefully, how much ice cream you will need at the end! Each walk has a description which is brief but with great pointers – for example, the Exhibition Drive track is good for talking because the terrain is easy while the Swanson Pipeline Track has lots of insect holes.

The walks covered so far are all in the Waitakere Ranges, but watch out for the Oakley Creek Walkway entry which will be coming soon. How many ice creams will be needed?! The author has created a link to the Friends of Oakley Creek website on his supporters' page - thanks!

Weta Morphology Mix-up

The following weta body parts are all in a muddle. Sort them out and decide where they belong - on the head, thorax, abdomen or legs.

Head	Thorax	Leg	Abdomen
_	-		

Weta body parts: tarsus, antenna, pads, labium, palp, notal plates, coxa, tibia, trochanter, ocellus, femur, spiricles, claws, maxilla, mandible, cerci.

The correct answers are at the end of the newsletter.

Another fire started for 'fun'

Yet again there has been thoughtless firelighting at the creek, with an old tree stump on the west bank above the top of the waterfall being set alight in late October. The fire, of course, spread. Here's hoping this is the last time.





Rising from the ashes Knowing no bounds New life, Haiku and photos: W. John.

Oakley Creek wildlife encounters

In answer to our request for bird photos in the last newsletter, Dorothy Maddock has sent in these wonderful photos and their story. We would love to hear about your Oakley Creek wildlife encounters too - contributions can be emailed to info@oakleycreek.org.nz

A Bird in the Hand ... by Dorothy Maddock

Every now and then, especially in the spring and early summer, birds fly into the windows of our house, which is near Oakley Creek. We have a number of large trees very close by and the reflections in the glass seem to cause some confusion to the local birds.

In late October, 2009, there was a tell tale crash against a window of the back bedroom and Colin dashed out to see what state the poor victim was in. One of our cats, Molly, would have made short work of it had she been around at the time.

To Colin's surprise the victim was a shining cuckoo, Chrysococcyx lucidus. The bird was quite stunned so we were able to admire its colouring and markings as it lay in his hand. The iridescence on the back feathers was beautiful and ranged from yellowish to quite blue/green depending on the angle of the light.





We thought the bird was a female as another bird was calling at the time of this drama. It would have been a shame if this bird, which had flown to Vanuatu or the Solomon Islands and back, had met its death in its own back yard, so to speak. So we put her on the bike shed roof to recover, on a pile of soft dry leaves, but a cold wind was whistling through a gap in the hedge. Instead she was taken around to the front verandah and placed in a cardboard box where she would be both warm and safe.

Previous experience has shown us that birds recover quite quickly if they are left in peace and out of the cold for a few minutes and this cuckoo was no different. She soon recovered enough to clamber onto the edge of the box and, after having her photo taken several times -- the only opportunity we would have at such close range -- she flew off.

The cuckoo can be heard calling again this spring, somewhere around our and the neighbouring properties and we wonder if the one Colin had in his hand has come back again to leave her egg in a warbler's nest.



Garden escapes - fugitives spotted at Oakley Creek
Photos: A. Stanton.

















The Creek Abides - Kennedy Warne's photo exhibition at Cosset Café

An evening of fine food and friends opened Kennedy Warne's display of photographs from his project photographing Oakley Creek Te Auaunga from the shortest to the longest day. Helped by his friend from NZ Geographic, Arno Gasteiger, Kennedy has chosen a fascinating selection which challenge the viewer to see the creek in new ways. The exhibition runs until Thursday, 16th December, so visit Cosset Café, 1087 New North Rd (Woodward Rd/Richardson Rd intersection), Mt Albert and feast yourself – eyes, mind and body! (Editor's choice: a pot of ginger tea with a deliciously light strawberry and white chocolate muffin.)







Wendy John, Colin Maddock and many others join Kennedy Warne, resplendent as a pheasant in his green shirt (but less elusive), for the opening of 'The Creek Abides' photographic exhibition at Cosset Café on 16th November.

Photos: A. Stanton

What on earth?



Take a guess, then see if you are correct at the end of the newsletter. *Photo: W. John.*



Our flash new interpretive signs were funded by the Avondale and Eden/Albert Community Boards. Photo: A. Stanton.

Are you on the right side?

... of the stream, that is! If you stand on a river or stream bank and face downstream (to the sea, to the sea) then the bank on your right is known as the 'true right' and that on your left the 'true left'. This can be handy to know for avoiding confusion when communicating your location or giving directions, especially if you have left your compass at home.

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:

Lonicera japonica, Fabaceae - Japanese honeysuckle



This vine has beautiful sweet smelling flowers but it will smother everything in its path. With stems growing to 15 m in length, the weight of its tangled mass can cause the underlying tree canopy to collapse. It does not require a host for support, however, with the stems being tough and woody. As the name implies, this vigorous evergreen originates from temperate eastern Asia. It has spread throughout New Zealand, tolerating a wide range of soils and temperatures.

Young Japanese honeysuckle stems are hairy and reddish-purple, age to woody and twine clockwise. The oppositely paired leaves are 3 to 12 cm long. The 2 to 5 cm white tubular flowers age to yellow and are produced from September to May. The oval berries are a glossy black and are dispersed by birds.

Landcare Research reports in *What's new in biological control of weeds?* (Issue 50, Nov 09) that the abundance of Japanese honeysuckle is about to 'explode' as there are now enough unrelated plants sufficiently close together for its bumblebee pollinators to fertilise - Japanese honeysuckle is an obligate outcrosser so it cannot self pollinate. Up until recently, few seed had been produced with dispersal mainly occurring through plant material being spread by people.





The solid wall created by the tangled thicket of Japanese honeysuckle growth is very obvious at Harbutt Reserve at present.

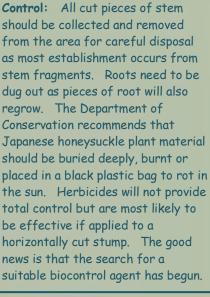
Photos: A. Stanton



Pukupuku, rasp fern, Doodia
australis in the pink at Oakley
Creek Te Auaunga with the
warm spring and summer
weather.

This is a hardy fern which can tolerate full sun and dry conditions. The red colouring protects the young fronds from sun damage.

Photo: W. John





Out and about

The Auckland Tree Council acts as a steward for the trees of the Auckland region. A long-standing non-profit organisation, established in 1986, it promotes and co-ordinates effective programmes and assistance for the protection, management and planting of trees in the urban environment. In late October, participants in the Council's 'Urban Environment' training course were given a guided walk of Oakley Creek by Wendy John. For more information, the Tree Council's website is www.thetreecouncil.org.nz



Auckland Tree Council 'Urban Environment' Course participants.



Jean Barton and Keith Ayton slay a woolly nightshade in the battle of weeds.

Photos: W. John.

Waikowhai scouts and members of the National Party were among those who helped out at the **November Community**plant releasing session - also known as weeding around the young native plants! Photos: A. Stanton



A bivouac, shack, play house or home? - spotted on the Oakley Creek tributary at Hendon Reserve.

Photo: W. John.







A mystery flax weaver has been busy, gracing Te Auaunga with their art.
Photos: A. Stanton



In October, a team from Anne Duncan Real Estate volunteered to collect rubbish for an afternoon from the Oakley Creek Walkway. They collected about a dozen bags, filled from the floodplain. Of particular interest was the number of balls - tennis, soccer and rugby! And, some multi tasking by mobile phone enabled one agent to seal a house sale as well as a rubbish bag. Anne Duncan said she and her team enjoyed the afternoon and were delighted to be able to make a difference in their local community. Photo: W. John.



Conservation Volunteers New Zealand has also helped with weeding last month - thanks again to this organisation which regularly provides volunteers for Oakley Creek.

Photos: W. John

Friends of Oakley Creek and Wai Care worked with pupils from Gladstone Primary School, in mid-November, teaching them about the care of young native plants and of stream life.

Photos: W. John.



















Theme? Green! - oaks along the Oakley Creek Walkway.

Photos: A Stanton.





We gratefully acknowledge the support of WWF-New Zealand and ASB Community Trust.

Puzzle Solutions:

Weta Morphology Mix-up

Head parts: ocellus (simple eye or photoreceptor), antenna, palp (mouthpart which senses/tastes the environment), mandible (jaw), maxilla (mouthpart), labium (lower lip).

Thorax (divided into three segments each of which bears a pair of legs): notal plates (protective plates on the weta's back - the largest is called the thoracic shield which is used to distinguish between different species).

 $\label{legparts} \textit{Leg parts (in order from the thorax): coxa, trochanter, femur, tibia, tarsus (four jointed foot), pads, claws.}$

Abdomen (eleven segments): spiricles (holes for gas exchange), cerci (sensory organs).











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.

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: Richard Nightingale Committee: Heather Docherty, Ross Ihaka, Dorothy Maddock, Helen Mellsop, Sarah Ross.

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