



We Care with Wai Care

Wai Care is an Auckland Council organisation, which aims 'to work together with individuals, schools, groups, families, communities and organisations to make a difference to stream and catchment health across the Auckland Region.'

Friends of Oakley Creek works in close collaboration with Wai Care, which provides stream care education programmes to school groups visiting the creek, and water monitoring training and resources to volunteers from the wider Oakley Creek community. Water monitoring volunteers are trained in the following areas: visual assessment and habitat assessment; physical tests e.g. pH, dissolved oxygen (DO), water clarity, temperature; chemical tests: nitrogen and phosphorous; biological: invertebrate identification and classification; entering monitoring data onto the Wai Care website; and data interpretation e.g. for reporting or comparative studies. A site is then chosen where they monitor the stream's health on a regular basis.



Above: Eileen Witt monitors the stream at the Mt Albert St Judes Scout Group site. Photos: W. John



Left: Kath Reid - our local Wai Care co-ordinator - with Guntaas and Jagjeeta Kaur. They were excited to find these banded kokopu, *Galaxias fasciatus*, at Jagjeeta's site under the Unitec Bridge.



Jeff Lang, from the Kodesh Community checks for invertebrates at the Cradock St bridge site. Aha! A damselfly larva - and there were another 11 that day.

SH 20 Update - by Wendy John

Realignment of the three sections of Oakley Creek, is well underway, with Section C and Section A diversions already completed. The diversions are being treated independently, to suit the different geological environments through which the stream flows. These differences will provide a variety of habitats - including soft bottom meanders in some places and rocky, basalt channels where the stream flows through sections of lava flow from Owairaka, Mt Albert. The photo, below, shows some of the basalt columns as they were, and we should end up with something similar, where construction allows.



World Wetlands Day. 2nd February

It has been very dry lately, but you may like to visit Oakley Creek Te Auaunga wetlands, such as at Molley Green Reserve and the Wairaka wetland on the Walkway below Unitec, and also see www.wetlandtrust.org.nz/wwday for more information about wetlands, World Wetland Day and associated activities.

Dates for your diary

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

Saturday, 2nd & Tuesday, 5th February, 9.00am: Predator monitoring. Meet at Unitec Residence carpark.

Sunday, 3rd February, 10.00am - noon: Weed Warriors Wanted! Meet at Phyllis Reserve, end of Springleigh Avenue, Mt Albert.

Saturdays, 9th & 16th February, 9.00am: Possum monitoring. Meet at Unitec Residence carpark.

Saturday, 23rd February, 9.00am: Rodent baiting. Meet at Unitec Residence carpark.

Sunday, 3rd March, 10.00am - noon: Annual Clean-up. Meet at Phyllis Reserve, end of Springleigh Avenue, Mt Albert.

Sundays, 10th & 24th March, 1.00 - 4.00pm: EcoWest Festival Guided walks. Meet at Phyllis Reserve, end of Springleigh Avenue, Mt Albert.

There are community working bees at Oakley Creek on the first Sunday of each month, including **7th April & 5th May** - details to be advised.

For more information, see our website, www.oakleycreek.org.nz or our facebook page, www.facebook.com/OakleyCreek or contact Wendy John, by emailing info@oakleycreek.org.nz or ph 815 3101.

Pest Control begins in Eric Armishaw Reserve

Eric Armishaw Reserve, Pt Chevalier, is located at the northern edge of the Oakley Creek mouth (albeit with a motorway causeway in between) and adjacent to the Motu Manawa Marine Reserve. The Auckland branch of Forest and Bird has now started a pest control programme there, with support from Auckland Council. Rodents, possums and mustelids are being targeted. The particular aim is to protect native shore and marsh birds, such as oystercatchers, pied stilts, dotterels and banded rails. If you would like to help, contact Jane Ferguson, by email j.ferguson@forestandbird.org or ph 302 3902.



Deadline: Moth plant

It's that time of year when, to stop their spread, we must kill as many **moth plants** as we can find and destroy the seed pods - the pods will keep ripening even if the vine is dead. Can you add to these statistics from Wendy?

'Last year, a number of us (not just Friends of Oakley Creek) did some serious moth pod removal on the creek and around the general area. One person took out approximately 13,700 pods (across the city), and the rest of us, combined, probably collected up to around twice that many. According to my rough estimate, of 500 seeds per pod, that's 20,550,000 fewer seedlings this year!!'

Please also target **woolly nightshade** and its fruit.



Top: *Waiuatua*, *Rhabdothamnus solandrii*; and above: *rengarenga lily*, *Arthropodium cirratum*
Photos: W. John

Superman visits Oakley Creek!



a.k.a. Lewis Milne

Photo: W. John

Te Auaunga Oakley Creek Acrostic Challenge

Writing acrostic poems can be a fun way of sparking your creativity - perhaps leading to less constrained poetry or prose. A simple acrostic poem is one where you choose a word or words as your subject, then think of another word or short phrase which begins with each letter of your subject word or words to form your poem. Here is an example for Te Auaunga, but we are sure that you can do much better, so send your poems to info@oakleycreek.org.nz by February 28th and go in the draw to win an eco-sourced nikau seedling.

Te Auaunga

Tumbling
Ennervated,
Acrobatic
Undulating,
Ambling
Umbrella'd
Narrows,
Glistening
A-mazing stream.



Singapore - singing a similar song ...

Over the last forty years, Singapore has worked towards being 'a Garden City', then, more recently, 'the City in a Garden'. Now, they are looking to increase urban native biodiversity - to be 'a City in the Nature Reserve'.

In Auckland, we share many of the same issues. The following excerpts are from *Urban Biodiversity* by Richard T. Corlett, which appears in *Singapore Biodiversity: An encyclopedia of the natural environment and sustainable development*, Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research, 2011.

'Urban areas are warmer, drier, noisier and more polluted than natural ecosystems [the 'urban heat island effect'] ... Both the contrast between urban and natural environments and the similarity with other cities favour non-native 'alien' species ...

... Cities are a relatively new habitat in Southeast Asia, but one that is expanding more rapidly than any other ... Cities are also, rather ironically, the place where most human-wildlife interactions now occur, so the enhancement of positive interactions (bird song, butterflies, squirrels, an eagle soaring overhead) and reduction of negative interactions (myna roosts, house crows, urban rats, mosquitoes, cockroaches) has the potential to influence public attitudes to wild species. Indeed, there is evidence that sensitivity to environment issues in general is improved by increasing exposure to urban wildlife.

... From an ecological point of view, the most important feature of urbanization is the replacement of surfaces covered by natural soil and vegetation by surfaces covered in impervious materials ... Where soil is present it is often highly compacted, poorly drained and aerated, low in nutrients, and full of concrete, brick, mortar, and other urban debris. Another important characteristic of most urban habitats is their continual state of change, as buildings are constructed and demolished, and roads and pavements dug up. This disturbance favours short-lived, quick growing, fast breeding species.

... What can be done to shift the balance in favour of native species in urban areas? ... three general approaches are currently being tried. First and most important is to reduce ... the huge contrast between the modern environment and the cool, damp shade of the rainforest interior to which most native species have become adapted over tens of millions of years. [Measures include] increased structural complexity of urban plantings ... dense, multi-level, ... [and the] development of a network of park connectors or green corridors linking open spaces. ... The second approach is the active control of alien species. With so many aliens, efforts need to be concentrated on the most troublesome species, although which these are, is not always obvious without dedicated research. ... The third approach ... is the active promotion of native species in urban areas. ... Whether or not the use of native plants will, by itself, attract additional native animals ... is currently unclear, but, if native seed sources are used, urban plantings can contribute directly to preserving local genetic variation in these species. Other approaches focus on reducing the barriers to native species establishing in urban areas ..., [the] best current example ... [being]... the provision of nest boxes ... to mitigate the shortage of natural tree cavities for the re-invading oriental pied hornbills. ... [The] active reintroduction of native species into urban areas is unlikely to be successful unless the reasons for their absence are known and mitigated.'

Sound familiar? Some of Singapore's impressive initiatives you can explore further online include:

EcoLink Bridge, which forms a forested wildlife corridor over a motorway between two reserves and is to be completed by 2014 - it is to be 50m wide with a meandering drainage swale through the middle: www.perfect-sense.net/default.aspx?uc=30

Gardens by the Bay, which has been established on 101 ha of reclaimed land - in particular, take a look at the Supertrees: www.gardensbythebay.com.sg

Active, Beautiful, Clean (ABC Waters) Programme, which aims to transform Singapore's drains, canals and reservoirs into beautiful streams, rivers and lakes, for example: www.pub.gov.sg/abcwaters/Publications/Pages/KallangRiver.aspx



Te Auaunga gold!



Always something to see at the creek ...



New growth on the gabion wall. Photos: W. John

What is a swale?

Definition as written by pipstar:

A Swale is a ditch on the contour. It does not direct water, but holds it and allows it to gradually infiltrate the soil down-slope of it. Soil and water run-off are caught in the swale which becomes a fertile area. Gradual infiltration of water and nutrients and the dead roots of plants growing in the swale, slowly improve soil structure down-slope.

Definition as written by panicums:

Swale is a land form that is down instead of up. In landscape, it is distinguished from a ditch by being less distinct. A swale is a gradual depression, much wider than deep. The landscape use of swales is indeed to carry water as drainage, but not so as to erode its bottom and so not requiring any different materials.

The test for a swale is whether you could easily mow across its width, because there is no sharp change in slope angle from the rest of the surface, nor especially at the bottom.

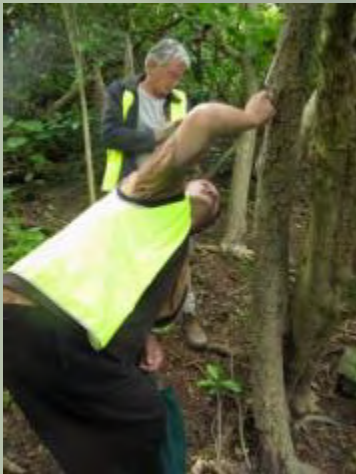
From <http://davesgarden.com>

An Auckland example is at the Council carpark in Henderson.

Monitoring and Pest Control



The **Rodent Baiting Team** - refilling rodent bait stations: John Maskell, in the Lizard Management Area, and, Fabio Cunha.



Weta monitoring - checking weta 'occupancy' in the artificial weta refuges: John Stevenson (back) and John Allen; Brazilian volunteer Fabio Cunha.



Photo: D. Maddock

Koi Carp, noxious fish - if you see these, please report them to Auckland Council - ph 301 0101



Possum monitoring: Marg McConnell & John Dwyer; John Allen.

Photos: W. John

Saving eels



In early December, the Amitabha Hospice, a Buddhist charity located close to Oakley Creek, rescued some eels from a certain 'fate' at the Auckland Fish Market and ceremonially released them into Oakley Creek Te Auaunga. The eels were short-fins, as none of the endangered long-fin eels were on sale that day.

Photo: Amitabha Hospice

Butterflies Conference

Sat/Sun, 16-17th March, Unitec

Practical ideas for practical people.

www.nzbutterflies.org.nz

Speakers include: renowned lepidopterist Brian Patrick, Auckland photographer John Chapman, who will provide tips on getting the best photographs of butterflies, insects and flowers; radio identity, Graeme Hill, who will share his experience on rearing beautiful New Zealand Admirals; talented horticulturist Joanne Alder, who will demonstrate how to get more of those special plants for free; Geoff Davidson, founder of Oratia Native Plant Nursery, will talk about native plants for NZ butterflies and moths.

Earlybird registration ends 31st January.

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:

Stachys sylvatica, Lamiaceae – hedge woundwort



This attractive weed has suddenly become abundant along the lower reaches of Oakley Creek, so we need to bring it under control quickly, before it spreads upstream and elsewhere. It is particularly a problem where it grows among the native grasses. Hedge woundwort became naturalised in New Zealand in the 1930s.

In this Eurasian plant, tall four-sided stems grow from fast growing, thick, creeping rhizomes. The oppositely arranged, heart-shaped leaves are toothed and hairy. Hedge woundwort flowers from September to May – small, two-lipped, purple, tubular flowers which have wavy white guide lines and stiff hairs to direct its insect pollinators. Spikes form of up to six flowers, which grow in whorls. Hedge woundwort has a strongly pungent smell when rubbed. It is said to be effective in wound care, helping to clot blood and reduce swelling,

It grows in temperate regions in fertile moist soil, tolerant of light shade and able to spread quickly into disturbed sites. It is dispersed by seed – which are propelled from the dry flower tubes when ripe – as well as vegetatively from its spreading rhizomes or by regrowth from rhizome fragments. www.terrain.net.nz/friends-of-te-henui-group/weeds has some excellent information on this and many other weeds.



Control: The creeping rhizomes should be dug out and put into green bins or barrels of water and left to rot down,



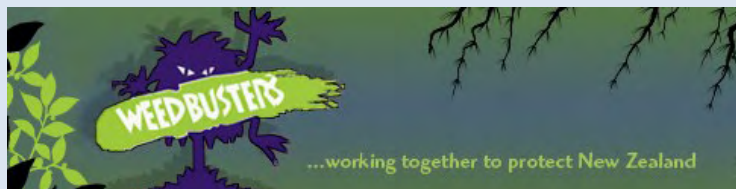
Photos: A. Stanton

Now you see it, now you don't ... woolly nightshade weeding action!

Photos: W. John



Friends of Oakley Creek are now registered with



and you can too!

Weedbusters are an interagency group promoting weed awareness, education and **action!** It works under the umbrella goals of the NZ Biodiversity Strategy and the NZ Biosecurity Strategy.

The group includes the Department of Conservation, biosecurity agencies, plant nurseries and Federated Farmers.

You can join in by registering as an individual to receive weed information, a newsletter, event details and promotional items – you could even win a prize! Go to www.weedbusters.org.nz/get_involved/index.asp

Wildlife encounters



Mother duck on her nest.



Make way for ducklings! - on their way to the creek.



Pukeko feeding chicks.



Picturesquely perched - damselfly on buttercup.



A short legged harvestman, spotted again



Tui - 'hanging out'.

Photos: W. John.

Out and about

Photos: W. John (unless otherwise stated).



During the **Heritage Festival** in September, a keen group listened avidly to Wendy speak about Oakley Creek Te Auaunga history and the current restoration effort, on the popular annual guided walk *Photo: H. Mellsop.*

Auckland Tree Council held its *Trees in the Urban Environment* course at Oakley Creek in October. Here, some of the participants are learning how to plant and prune rata.



Planning for 2013: left - David Bowden, **Auckland Council** & Michelle Dubion, **Te Ngahere**, met with Friends of Oakley Creek on a site visit to discuss plans for site preparation and planting for the 2013 planting season;

and, right - **Well Connected Alliance** representatives also met with Friends of Oakley Creek at Waterview Glades, to discuss their potential support of planting there (from left - our planting expert, Helen Mellsop, WCA reps Alisdair Rigby and Lesley Hopkins, and our SH20 expert, Heather Wilkins).



A Rocha held another working bee at their 'adopted' site by the Cradock Street Bridge in Harbutt Reserve in October.



Thanks, **Conservation Volunteers** and Auckland Council for the monthly visits.

A lone planter - and every little bit helps.



November **Community working bee** - clockwise: Margaret, Prue, Rose, Emily, Than and Thao.



"A sure cure for seasickness is to sit under a tree." - Spike Milligan

Mt Roskill Intermediate School students are regular contributors to the propagation of plants for Oakley Creek, and to the planting along the creek, adjacent to their school grounds. Thanks to science teacher, Sean Carroll, and the students.

Far right: Mt Roskill Intermediate science teacher, Sean Carroll, preparing for a special kauri planting.





The final community planting for the year at **Molley Green Reserve Wetland**, on the Oakley Creek headwaters, took place in October - thanks to the Puketapapa Local Board for funding this exciting project, where a section of the concrete channelling has been removed, and the stream re-naturalised.



Te Ngahere team, preparing to carry out plant releasing around young plants in early November.



Before, during and after ... **Repairs** were made in October to the Plane Tree Bridge boardwalk, which had been slowly sinking down towards the creek - thanks to **Auckland Council** for this great improvement.



ASB Community Trust
Te Kaitiaki Putea o Tamaki o Tai Tokerau
supported by **ASB**



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao



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) and The Lion Foundation.

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 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: Jane Shand Secretary: Nigel Mather
Committee: Ross Ihaka, Helen Mellsop, Alicia Warren, Heather Wilkins
Newsletter Editor: Adrienne Stanton

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