



Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga

SPRING 2020

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Weeds and walkways research (p4)
- Girl Guides planting day (p5)
- Epiphyte transplant (p6)
- Powell St. restoration project (p7)
- A Rocha partnership (p8)
- Gift a tree (p10)

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Editorial

By Wendy John

Time marches by – as they say. Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga is now in its 16th year. On looking back over the years, and on strolling along the awa (creek), it's wonderful to see how much has been achieved in such a short period, all thanks to the amazing efforts of our local community and a wide range of community, educational and corporate organisations.

To date, we have put in around 90,000 native plants. A picture is worth a thousand words (see photos below!) but there's still lots more planting to be done, and a whole heap of weed trees to be removed. So we can't put our feet up yet!

The extensive monitoring and pest control programme that we started in 2009 has expanded over the years. Pest control is now taking place from Howlett Reserve (Waterview), along the

walkway - through Phyllis Reserve and Harbutt Reserve, and is about to commence in Alan Wood Reserve (thanks to Pest Free Owairaka).

These recent months, during 'lockdown' have seen our local green spaces being very much in demand, acting as magnets for people to relax and reconnect with nature – including all of the parks along Te Auaunga. It's been wonderful seeing so many people enjoying our precious taonga, and reaping the benefits of our efforts.

2020 is also the start of a new era for our organisation. At this year's AGM, I stepped down from the position of chairperson, so that I can be freed up to dedicate more of my time to managing the project. The role of chairperson has been taken over by long-time supporter David Bowden, who played a key role as an Auckland City Council Park Vol-

unteer Co-ordinator, in helping the organisation to get established.

Our committee members are now – David Bowden (Chair), Marin Adams (Secretary), Sarah Woodfield (Treasurer), Adrienne Stanton, John Stevenson, Cate Ryan, Ngaio Balfour and Wendy John.

With the addition of new committee members, who bring added energy and skills to the organisation, we are in a strong position to continue and grow the project.

Together with our network of long term and committed volunteers that lend their time and energy - and this edition of the newsletter has many stories demonstrating that, I look forward to seeing our beautiful awa and surrounds thrive and flourish over the coming years.



Photos (above) These two Google Maps images compare an area behind Unitec in 2006 (left) and in 2020 (right). Since we started in 2004, we've put around 90,000 native plants in the ground. It's so much more lovely and leafy in 2020!

Planting in a pandemic

By Wendy John

Despite Covid-19, we've had a successful year of activities in 2019-2020. We've carried out four successful community planting days and put 6235 plants in the ground. Volunteers have contributed 5325 hours (that we know of!) in planting, weed control, mulching and rubbish removal etc, with support from Auckland Council and contractors Te Ngahere, Treescape, Downer and Latham Construction.

Key sites we've been working to restore this year are:

Waterview Glades - 500 plants were planted by volunteers as soon as was possible, after the first lock-down period.

Harbutt Reserve – volunteers put a further 1000 plants in the ground over two planting days, post the second lock-down.

Cradock Street Bridge - 300 plants were planted by our partners A Rocha and the Cradock St Sustainable Neighbourhood, and some further initial weed control carried out on a new area of esplanade reserve land.

Howlett Esplanade Reserve – As part of a plan to further restore this area, 2320 plants were planted, along with the control and/or removal of over 50 good-sized privet trees.

Oakley Loop – our local Methuen Road / Oakley Loop Group undertook further weed control at their site (opposite Alan Wood Reserve) and put in another 60 plants.

Contractors Treescape have been working on sites in Phyllis Reserve and a steep slope behind Unitec – where Auckland Council has undertaken

some serious historical rubbish removal.

Additionally, we've carried out infill planting in a number of sites where necessary with plants from our nursery. As we move into the next phase of restoration of the creek, wherever possible, we're expanding the diversity of species that we're planting with advice from our friendly, local ecologist Robyn Simcock.

Photo (below) - a socially distanced community working bee in Level 2.5 - staking 1000 newly planted native plants



David Bowden and son Archie lay out plants for a community planting day



1550 Great North Road

While people have been able to see all of the action around the new building happening at 1550 Great North Road, there's also been plenty happening behind the scenes. We've been contracted to co-ordinate the restoration of the SEA (Significant Ecological Area) section at the back of the development where it connects with the Oakley Creek reserve.

Work completed by contractors Te Ngahere so far includes extensive weed clearance, rubbish removal and planting of 1300 native plants, and the teams have done a great job! Funding includes five years of follow-up maintenance, which will help enormously to get the plants established by the end of that period. *Photo (right) - new plantings include ti kouka, mahoe and koromiko*



Significant Ecological Area restoration

Pest control at Oakley Creek

Our monitoring and pest control programme has now been running since 2009 – thanks to the dedication of our volunteers. Rodents, hedgehogs, mustelids and possums are now being maintained at low numbers, with rat numbers showing a significant decrease. However, there was a slight rise in catches immediately following the first lockdown period, since trappers were unable to inspect traps.

Contractors have recently finished a 3-night cull of rabbits throughout the reserve. This is just the start of

an ongoing programme and control of rabbits on the adjacent Wairaka Precinct (Unitec) is also planned.

Because Te Auaunga is so close to residential areas, it's typical for new pests to invade as soon as we create any gaps, so it's really hard to get to zero numbers. However, something that works in other places that we'd like to try, is to set up a 'halo' of small reserves with pest control around Te Auaunga. That way we can minimise the numbers of new pests invading. We're starting with Heron Park in

Waterview, so if you're keen to volunteer to be part of the halo effect there, get in touch with

David.bowden@gmail.com



Photo (above) new trapping team member Chris Brown

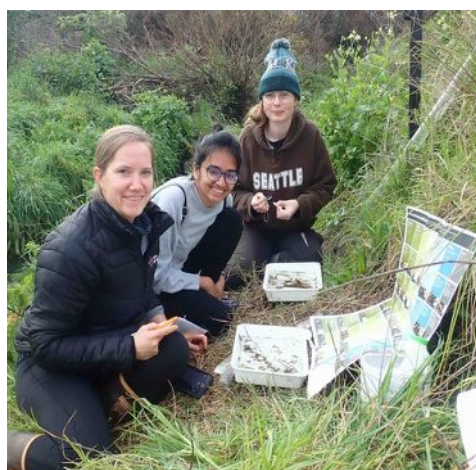
Two new water monitoring stations

By Ruvya Jani

Under the Wai Care Programme, two new water monitoring sites have been added to the current four already in the monitoring programme. Winter season samples were collected for all sites in July, measuring physical and chemical parameters such as such as dissolved oxygen, water clarity, pH, nitrate and phosphate and macroinvertebrates. Results indicate Te Auaunga is a relatively healthy stream, with a range of macroinvertebrates living in the awa. All other parameters were

within healthy boundaries although pH results varied with rainfall patterns. However, changes are likely to occur instantly, if any drainage or dumping happen. If you see or smell anything unusual about the creek call the Auckland Council hotline on 09 377 -3107.

Photo (right) volunteers Sara (left), Rutu (middle) and Dani (right) carry out macroinvertebrate analysis at Oakley Creek.



Bird monitoring

Friends of Oakley Creek carries out bird surveys every year to see if and how well our birdlife is returning to the awa. Typically we ask volunteers to take part in an hour long survey but this year we'd like to try something different. To align with DoC and other science based protocols we're going to use the '[five minute bird count](#)' method in November and then again in April next year. If you'd like

to be part of the survey, get in touch with

David.bowden@gmail.com

Whilst you're here..you might also be interested in this webinar from Manaaki Whenua about their [Garden Bird Survey](#), which you can carry out in your own back yard.



Photo: Judi Laps

Have you seen kereru at Oakley Creek?

Exotic plants and Te Auaunga walkway

By Sarah Kapuhealani Bishop

In May, regular volunteer and AUT student Sarah Kapuhealani Bishop led a vegetation survey along Te Auaunga walkway. Sarah measured the occurrence of exotic and native plants on three transect lines placed at four different distances from the walkway; 1m, 11m, 21m and 31m. She found that proximity to walkways predicts significantly greater numbers of exotic species, suggesting walkways act as conduits for dispersal.

Some studies show that native species planting programmes near trails can promote greater resilience to exotic species invasion. Sarah's research links this idea with the importance of our restoration work since it follows that if walkways are conduits for dispersal, planting natives will encourage dispersal of natives.

Sarah's research was a project for her Scientific Research Techniques course at AUT. Sarah thanks



Image: Sarah K. Bishop

Wendy John and Te Auaunga volunteer Kseniia Goluban for their help with data gathering and plant identification. For more info on this study please email: sarahkbishop@gmail.com.

Image (left): location of Sarah's three transect lines

Photo (below) - Kseniia (left) and Sarah (right) examine vegetation 1m from the walkway



Wairaka precinct development

Part of a massive housing development will be fast-tracked under the Covid-19 recovery bill, on part of the Wairaka Precinct in Mt Albert. Potentially the country's biggest urban housing development, up to 4000 high and low density homes have been planned to be built over the next 10 to 15 years.

The development also includes parkland, cycle and walkways, and the reuse of heritage buildings and is to be developed in a partnership between the Crown and Mana Whenua.

Friends of Oakley Creek are attending consultation workshops such as how stormwater design could affect Te Auaunga restoration. We'll keep you posted on what we find out!



Image: stuff.co.nz-stock photos

Image (above): A mix of park and apartments rising to eight storeys are proposed on the northern end of the Unitec site

Pt. Chev Girl Guides plant and clean up



A proud Pt. Chev planter!

refilled. The refillers (adults) filled up the buckets with mulch and the deliverers got them back to the spreaders to spread around the trees.

Finally, after planting the trees, mulching and putting the sticks in, we did a small clean up. In the short space of time we found

so many big and small pieces of rubbish including a lolly wrappers, wheel hubcaps, tarpaulins and general plastic. We even found an electric toothbrush, a mouthguard and a piece of a toy car. We need to STOP polluting!

Tree planting was fun and tiring. Filling buckets with mulch hurts your back but helps the trees survive the summer.

“Tree planting was fun and tiring. Filling buckets with mulch hurts your back but helps the trees survive the summer.”

By Sarah Hangartner

On Sunday 28th June, the Point Chevalier Girl Guides and Manawani Brownies helped introduce more plants to the earth. We helped the ecosystem of Oakley Creek grow by planting native trees. Wendy and her wonderful colleagues from Friends of Oakley Creek helped us.

We enjoyed planting trees as it brought us all together as a group. It rained a lot, which made the ground softer so we could plant the trees.

First we planted the trees and then we tied plastic bands to sticks and jammed them in the places we had planted the trees. After that we mulched all of them which will help them survive drought. There was the refill team – they took the buckets we put on the grass to be



Photo: Sarah Hangartner

Photo (above) - Pt Chevalier Girl Guides June 2020 planting day

Buffer zone weed control

Under Auckland Council's new Weed Management Plan, property owners within a 500-metre buffer zone of 'high value reserves' are required to control specific weeds to prevent them from spreading into the reserves. Many of the reserves along the lower-mid reaches of Te Auaunga are classified as 'high value reserves'. The new programme will take a number of years to roll, however, the Albert Eden Local Board funded a trial in

2019 whereby contractors visited properties directly adjacent to the lower reaches of the creek and removed two weed species – woolly nightshade and moth plant. We're thrilled that the Board has recently approved funding to expand the programme in 2020-2021 with additional properties and weed species.

You can find more information about this programme [here](#)



Image: Stuff.co.nz stock images

Photo: Moth plant (*Araujia sericifera*)



Photo: Ngaio Balfour

**Ngaio and Derryn
prepare an epiphyte
for transfer**

**Poipoa te Kakano
Nurture the seed, and it will**

blossom

Home finding,

Old leaves turn young,

Old roots entwining,

Wrapping, tentatively,

Carefully, creeping, binding.

Ancient, newcomers.

Great and green,

Bring neighbourly wonders,

Crafting nestles for new creatures

Soft shelters in harsh summers.

kia mau ki te tokanganui a noho

There is no place like home

Ngaio Balfour

Epiphyte transplant

In 2018, old friends find a new home in Te Auaunga Oakley Creek, a project by Ngaio Balfour and Derryn Jakobi, University of Auckland

By Ngaio Balfour

The newcomers are epiphytes, plants which live above the ground by embracing tree hosts with intertwining roots. These living islands enrich ecosystem biodiversity, both as beings to themselves and as habitat formers for others. Our korero today concerns the glass-like [‘tank epiphytes’](#), who provide food and housing for native birds, lizards and insects and craft a comfy ‘humid’ mini-climate, protecting and promoting the growth of neighbouring greenery. Usually, these epiphytes reside only in elderly ‘remnant’ forests and are absent from urban restorations such as Te Auaunga. That is, until recently!

In 2017, ecologist Robyn Simcock suggested introducing tank epiphytes to Te Auaunga. The idea took root and formed a team, led by University of Auckland students Derryn Yakobi and Ngaio Balfour and guided by the invaluable Wendy John; ecologists Bruce Burns, André Bellvé and Robyn Simcock; and a team of epiphyte scientists and enthusiasts from around New Zealand. In 2018, after a long mahi of planning and korero, we ‘rescued’ several tank epiphytes of the species [Astelia hastata](#) who had fallen to the ground from their lofty homes in the trees of the forest fragment ‘Smiths Bush’. We welcomed the great, green, battered and bruised, beings into Te Auaunga.



Photo: Ngaio Balfour

With anticipation and caring concern, we watched the newcomers through their first winter and watered them through the summer. This winter, new green growth exceeded our expectations - as we carefully rebound the epiphytes base we discovered the *Astelia* embarking on even more permanent renovations. Roots! The newcomers, welcoming their home.

Today you can meet these old new friends along the Te Auaunga walkway. The first will greet you over the bridge closest to the [Unitec Sanctuary Mahi Whenua community](#)

[gardens](#). The other beings, I will leave for you to find on your great green spring wanderings.

Photo (above) - a newly transplanted epiphyte still wrapped in hessian and sphagnum cloth to protect it from the elements whilst it adjusts to its new home

Photo (left) - mature Astelia hastata looks like giants birds nests in the forest canopy.

For more information about the epiphyte transplant project, please contact Ngaio Balfour ngaioalfour@gmail.com



Image: INaturalist

Powell Street Sustainability Group restoration

By Marin Adams

Committee member Marin Adams and her family had a vision to restore part of Te Auaunga that backs on to their property in Powell Street. Together with a committed team of volunteers from the Powell Street Sustainability Group, neighbours, friends, Friends of Oakley Creek, some WOOFers and paid workers, they tamed a previously impenetrable jungle of ginger, blackberries and gorse (photo right), into the terraced bankside of native vegetation it is today (photo right, bottom). The project shows how a weed infested rubbish dump can become a place of beauty.

Over three years the volunteers cleared the site of weeds and rubbish, built retaining walls, put in new soil and planted hundreds of native trees. The photo to the right and in the middle shows three volunteers bagging the rubbish that had been buried by successive slips at the site. In the foreground you can see old bits of pink batts insulation, reinforcing steel, lino, bricks and an old car body. There were thousands of pieces of household rubbish, gardening and construction materials, as well as vehicle parts.

Once the rubbish was removed, the next job was to cover the site, which still contained contaminants, with clean soil. A concrete and brick wall was built from recycled building materials on site to contain the clean fill. A second wooden retaining wall at a lower level was also built by the Powell St. group. Contractors moved clean soil from retaining wall drillings on the construction site into position behind the creekside retaining walls.

Planting started by the creek, at the bottom of the slope and moved upwards. Old willow logs from the creek provided support and cover for the newly planted natives. Around 200 native plants were provided by self funding alongside contributions from Friends of Oakley Creek and the Auckland Council Sustainable Neighbourhood Fund. Plants include riparian loving trees and shrubs such as hoheria, mahoe, kohukohu, manuka, hebe, kowhai, karaka, totara, puriri, flax, karamu, *Carex virgata*, ti kouka, pigeonwood, ponga, *Carex upokotangata*, hangehange, rewarewa, kawakawa, whauwhaupaku, *Comprosmo arborea* and *Com-*

prosmo macrocarpa.

To keep the new plantings alive through summer, the group placed cardboard on the soil around the plants and then covered the soil with a mulch of privet cut down at the site. Only one of the 200 plants were lost to drought over the summer.

The restored land by the creek is now an Auckland Council Esplanade Reserve.



Photo (above) - in 2012, the site was an impenetrable jungle of ginger, blackberries and gorse

Photo (below)- clearing out rubbish at the site in 2013



“a weed infested rubbish dump has become a place of beauty”



Photo: Marin Adams

Photo (above) - the bankside is terraced and planted in natives in 2015. Photo (right) - five years on in 2020, the plantings have grown.



Photo: Marin Adams

Partners in restoration: A Rocha

By Beulah Wood

Signs of a Good Fit

[A Rocha](#) members have joined with Friends of Oakley Creek for over 10 years now. And it's a good fit.

The Place

It's a rather special place - watched over by FoOC for the benefit of future generations and saved from the destruction a motorway would cause. It's been raining on the day I visit. The creek rushes industriously past the lawns and playground of Phyllis Reserve, under the bridge and on towards Great North Road. The valley is becoming again a tiny patch of forest, *ngahere*. And that, surprisingly, in the middle of the Auckland isthmus. It's a refuge with its *piwakawaka* (fantails), mallard ducks, a rare shining cuckoo, *tuna* (eels), and skinks.

The Plants

Wander down the steps at the end of Cradock Street any day you choose. You'll see *harakeke* (flax), coprosmas, *titoki*, a few ferns, *ti kouka* (cabbage trees), *totara*, *manuka*, and more. Many still bear a stick with a pink ribbon tag - proof of the latest planting in July. Others are several years into growth with no care to remind us they were planted and watched. They adorn the stream bank, they protect it from erosion and they reclaim it for native species. It's something to be proud of.

In addition, I ask you to notice what you don't see much of - tradescantia, creepers, young wattle trees. The floor is not covered with rubbish but with healthy leaf litter turning to humus. Yes! This is the goal, jointly achieved on the area where Friends of Oakley Creek and A Rocha have worked together.



Photo (above) - A Rocha volunteers take a break from the hard work of clearing a weedy site

The People

Where Wendy and team have ranged this stream, protecting the creek-side environment for years, in 2007 the Auckland A Rocha group adopted part of the creek on which to work regularly. They were looking for a place to make a practical impact in addition to the education they encourage of caring for God's creation. Here was a team working on the ground right near where some lived in Cradock Street and nearby. They promote the annual planting and weeding days to their own network and people come to help from nearby and further afield.

They come for Friends of Oakley Creek's work plan, advice and bags or boxes of seedlings. They need a fine winter Saturday (or else work on through drizzle and downpour, as has happened at times). On go the gardening gloves, out come the spades or trowels or secateurs, the tarpaulin for the pile of weeds, the banter and discussion and appreciation.

And what's at the finish of the morning? Rice and *dal* (dahl) at organiser Sarah's house above the valley of the creek. Yeah! Feels like that's a reward and more community in response to the shared task. In its world-wide groups A Rocha espouses five C's - Conservation, Christian, Cross-Cultural, Community and Co-operation. Working with the community group at Oakley Creek fits their ethos, with a focus on caring for one's local area. We hope and plan for the camaraderie, conservation and cooperation to continue, and that the *mahi* done together will last for generations.



Piwakawaka are a common sight at Te Auaunga

"We hope and plan for the camaraderie, conservation and cooperation to continue, and that the mahi done together will last for generations."

Seasonal gallery

Late season fungi finds

Do you know the names of these fungi? If so, let us know and we'll add them to the Oakley Creek records.



Late winter is a good time to find different types of fungi



Spring shoots on kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*)

What's growing?

Spring is here and so are flowers and new growth. Possums love spring shoots, especially of kohekohe, so seeing them is proof our pest control is working!



Kūmarahou (*Pomaderris kumeraho*)

Male flowers of *Coprosma rhamnoides*



Female flowers of *Coprosma rhamnoides*



Whauwhaupaku / five finger



Notices

Friday morning working bees – we are back to ‘business as usual’ post lockdown. Contact Wendy on info@oakleycreek.org.nz if you want to be on the email list to receive notifications about these

Photo below: Friday weeding crew take a break



Community Working Bee – first Sunday of each month, the next one is Sunday 4th October, 10.00am-12.00 noon. Location - Oakley Creek Walkway behind the community gardens and bee-hives. Wear sturdy footwear and bring your own gloves and water. Refreshments will be provided.

For more information about any events, contact info@oakleycreek.org.nz or Wendy on 027 232 6454; or check out our Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/OakleyCreek>

Christmas is coming - gift a tree to plant at 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). You also get an attractive commemorative card with the details of your gift, and Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga Membership for one year. Email your order to info@oakleycreek.org.nz payment details are listed on the back page of this newsletter.

Wanted: We're keen to find a volunteer to help us keep abreast of our local board activities, particularly with regards to Te Auaunga. Meeting agendas and minutes are on council websites, so it would be really helpful if someone would like to monitor these and keep us informed of any issues we might need to be aware of. If you have some time to do this yourself, or you or someone you know has some clever coding skills and can write a programme to do it, we'd love to hear from you.

Lockdown bivouac

Te Auaunga seems to be a place for adventure in lockdown as people escape to the great (urban) outdoors. This lovely bivouac popped up one day and we don't know how or why.

Write a story or poem about it, or a photo caption and we'll publish it in the next newsletter!



Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga

Chairperson:

David Bowden

Treasurer:

Sarah Woodfield

Secretary:

Marin Adams

Committee:

Wendy John, Adrienne Stanton, John Stevenson,
Cate Ryan, Ngaio Balfour

Newsletter Editor: Cate Ryan

Newsletter Photos: Unless otherwise credited,
all photos are by Wendy John

Newsletter contributions and comments are
welcome – email info@oakleycreek.org.nz



We 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, our bank account number is 38-9003-0978224-00.

You can also find us at <http://oakleycreek.org.nz/>

We gratefully acknowledge the support of Foundation North, The Trusts Community Foundation, Auckland Council, Albert-Eden, Puketapapa and Whau Local Boards and the Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS).

