



Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga

SUMMER 2022

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Taking up trapping on the awa p3
- Award winning pollution research p4
- Volunteering in the nursery p5
- Lava flows p7
- Mānuka p8
- More creek 'fernature' p9

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- News 1-3
- Volunteer spotlight 3-6
- Features 7-9
- Seasonal gallery 10
- Notices 11

Editorial

It's lovely to enjoy the long days of summer on the creek again. In this edition we tell you about how we've been really busy catching up on all the work we couldn't do during lockdown, especially planting, weeding, tree maintenance and rubbish removal. We share some great stories from our fantastic volunteers about how working to restore the creek has been personally rewarding, and we learn about some of the critters found in the creek during water monitoring. One of our local high school students shares her award winning research about pollution on the creek. We have

a lovely feature on mānuka – don't you think the flowers look like a sprinkle of snow too? As well as pieces on common ferns around the creek, and lava flows that dominate the geology in places. There's the usual seasonal gallery, plus info about opportunities to help out, in the notices section.

Enjoy!

Cate Ryan, Editor

Tree planting - a last minute scramble

By Wendy John

We came out of lockdown just in time to do some last-minute planting on the creek. The last of our planting for the year included another floodplain area opposite Harbutt Reserve, which was done with the help of some of our new Cradock Street neighbours and friends. Plants from our nursery were gifted to a number of other Oakley Creek neighbours who are doing restoration work on their land on



Photo (above): Opposite Harbutt Reserve Floodplain Planting – left to right - Sylvia Burgers, Nick Blazey, Sophie Blazey, Chris Brown, Dan Kelly, Alex Guthrie.



Photo (above): Duncan Smith, opposite Phyllis Reserve.

the creek - opposite Phyllis Reserve, Harbutt Reserve and Alan Wood Reserve. And, up towards the top of the catchment, Mt Roskill Intermediate students undertook another planting. They also mulched the trees – thanks to Aaron Blackbourn for supplying the mulch. This planting was an extension of the planting the school has been doing over the past 10+ years, which is now be-

coming a wonderful native bush corridor.

We are also working at further enhancing the diversity of the plantings along the creek with some more unusual plants such as the beautiful *Pennantia corimbosa* / kaikomako.

All up, a total of 5080 plants were dug in along the creek during this year's planting season.

Protecting our young plants, continued...

By Wendy John

Unfortunately, the weeds don't take any notice of lockdown. They just keep on growing. So, post lockdown we've had lots of catching up to do. We have recommenced our Friday morning working bees – with a short break over the holidays, and we managed to squeeze in one of our monthly (1st Sunday of the month) working bees in December. There was a good turnout for the December working bee – obviously, people were keen to be getting out and lending a helping hand.

Two of our local groups also held a weeding session each in December, clearing a heap of weeds from the areas they are involved in restoring – Oakley



Photo (above): Friday Working Bee – Paul Macguire, Prue Cruickshank, Ka Meechan and Chris Calvert.

Loop Group [see separate article] and A Rocha.

There's much more to do, so mark your calendars in case you are free on a Friday morning

or two (9.00am-12.00noon) or a Sunday (1st of each month) – 9.30am-11.30am during the summer months, and 10.00am-12.00noon for the rest of the year.

Two men and a chainsaw, continued...

By Wendy John

A Treescape team was back with us just prior to Christmas. This time it was 'two men and two chainsaws'. They did a wonderful job of tidying up some old, felled wattle, and removing the next lot of medium-sized tree privet. This clearance means there is now room to plant a heap of native plants this winter.



Photo (above): Ryan Lewis & Mitterpal Singh on a wood stack.

Rubbish removal and more...

By Wendy John

While some people have been hanging out at the beach, sailing, or tramping in the bush, some others have been busy down the creek, removing weeds and yet more old rubbish. Two of our regulars, Allan Woolf and Chris Brown, teamed up recently, to do a clean-up around the culvert under the railway up along the Shared Path. They did an amazing job of clearing out old tyres and a conglomeration of other flotsam and jetsam that had been there for decades. Great work, guys!



Photo (above): Allan Woolf and rubbish

Taking up trapping with Friends of Oakley Creek - a great experience

By Megan Lee

My partner, Chris and I became Waterview locals nearly five years ago. Since then, our connection to our neighbourhood and in particular Te Auaunga, has become a distinguishing part of our identity. We are also both avid hikers and nature enthusiasts; having learnt on many tramping journeys the devastation of pests to our native landscape.

After putting down roots in Waterview and fuelled by our experiences in Aotearoa's National Parks, we decided to start attending various pest monitoring events along Te Auaunga - led by Friends of Oakley Creek. These proved to be an invaluable experience in seeing the collective effort required from volunteers to monitor and trap pests along the creek.

Following this, Chris and I decided to take a gamble with a Goodnature possum trap - because we liked the idea of a self-setting trap. A trip to Mitre 10 and \$180 later, we were ready to wander to the creek with local legend Wendy John. After about one year of monitoring and no possums, we decided to go rogue

and change the location of our trap to Heron Park. Several weeks later there were still no hits, which left us a bit disheartened with our trap and we wondered what we were doing wrong. Without giving up hope, we changed tack and acquired a Timms trap from a family friend. We decided to do a little test, and installed the Timms trap on a wooden bracket, in the same location as our Goodnature trap. Within about one week of doing so we had our first possum, after over a year of no hits! We continued to re-bait and monitor this same trap - and since then, we have caught 14 possums from our single trap over an 8 month period.

Our success with this single Timms trap was reported to Wendy who suggested that we set up a trap line with another Oakley Creek hero, David Bowden. David, having worked for both Auckland Council and Forest & Bird, was incredibly knowledgeable about pest trapping and conservation. We met up on a sunny Saturday morning, and David guided us on how to set up our trap line. Several traps were installed in Heron Park (with permission



Photo (above): Chris and Megan assemble their new trap.

from Council), including Flipping Timmys and Trapinators. As we have an active border collie puppy, walking through the park to check and re-bait our traps has easily become part of our routine. Hits are then loaded onto the trap.nz website, a satisfying way of monitoring the progress of our traps and seeing other local trap networks. Thanks very much to Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga for fueling our conservation experience and creating a rewarding lockdown hobby.

Creek critters

By Helen Mellsop

Regular water testing by the Cradock Street Bridge in December turned up some exciting finds. When netting for macroinvertebrates at this site we have always seen the usual suspects of amphipods, rounded snails and sandfly larvae, with the occasional damselfly larva. Our uneducated guess has been that the resident tuna (eels) below the bridge may be cleaning up the invertebrates.

However, fishing amongst the bryophytes (aquatic plants) upstream of the bridge, this time yielded lots of damselfly larvae, water boatmen, freshwater shrimps and two unexpected catches – one a large and quite scary-looking dragonfly larva that we have not seen before, and the other, a juvenile banded kōkopu.

While, as mentioned in the Spring 2021 newsletter article - eDNA sampling reveals more native fish species, and DNA of banded kōkopu was found above the waterfall, where they have never been sighted before.



Photo (above): Dragonfly larva (Helen Mellsop)



Photo (above): Banded kōkopu (Helen Mellsop)

While our native banded kōkopu are known to be 'climbers', it was previously thought that they were unable to climb the waterfall into the upper creek. But, to our delight, they have proved us wrong.

High school student wins science prizes for research on pollution at Oakley Creek

By Genevieve Cartmell

Over the months April to June 2021, Genevieve Cartmell, a year 10 EGGs student, carried out weekly water testing (weather dependent) at three sites of the Oakley creek. Genevieve used the WaiCare kit and extended the testing to include e.coli, using a self-built e.coli incubator (referenced in Autumn 2021 edition) for her Science Fair and Bronze CREST project entitled "Blame it on the Rain". The aim of the research was to assess the impact of rainfall on water quality.

The results were eye opening. Genevieve found that when the rainfall increased (short term or long term), water clarity (sediment) and pH decreased, and air temperature, dissolved oxygen and both e.coli in the sediment and water column increased. These results further proved:

- The "48 or 72 hour rule" of avoiding swimming after rainfall, since it was found that many pollutants increase as rainfall increases, which can pose a serious health and safety risk.
- Councils should factor in rainfall when determining the health of a waterway. According to LAWA (Land Air Water Aotearoa), "some councils factor the influence of rainfall into their monitoring results by limiting sampling to dry weather conditions when people are more likely to be swimming. Other councils remove rainfall-related bacteria results prior to calculating the 95th percentile."
- By taking samples in dry weather conditions, they are not recording these scenarios:
- Peak rainfall causes the overburdened infrastructure to overflow into Oakley Creek (Unitec Bridge and Cradock St sites) via engineered overflows. This releases pollutants into the water, lowering the water quality. Aging sewer pipes are more likely to rupture during peak rainfall. Stormwater drainage from roads and driveways discharge into Oakley Creek.
- From her weekly and fortnightly results, it is evident that water quality fluctuates frequently. Currently, Auckland Council tests the region's waterways on a monthly basis, whilst it would be beneficial to test more frequently (e.g. weekly or fortnightly), to catch unusual events, and find the cause early before it makes a major impact on the waterway.
- Finally, these results also support adding e.coli testing to the WaiCare kit, as it is a key bacterial



Photo (above): Genevieve collects samples on the creek (Nigel Cartmell)

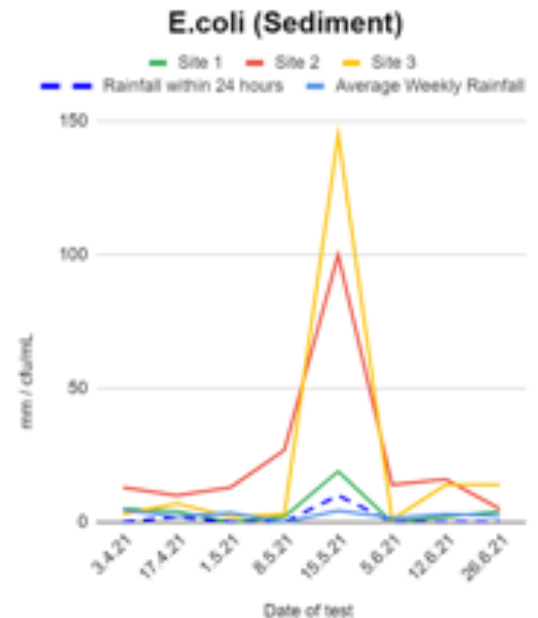


Photo (above): E.coli spike after rain at Oakley Creek (Genevieve Cartmell)

pollutant that is becoming increasingly relevant due to the growth of agriculture, urbanisation, and presence of sewer pipes and engineered outflow pipes in many urban areas. Certain strains of e.coli can pose a major health risk to both humans and animals, such as an increased chance of colorectal (bowel) cancer and kidney failure. This needs to be monitored as it could possibly save people's lives if they were aware of it.

Genevieve's project achieved: 1st Place in Year 9 & 10 Planet Earth and Beyond category, and the NIWA Auckland Platinum Prize for Best Exhibit in Atmospheric and Water Science, at the NIWA Auckland Science Fair; a Bronze CREST award; and it contributed toward her Bronze Duke of Edinburgh award completion. The testing also enabled Genevieve to complete 300+ hours field testing of the e.coli incubator she designed and built. Genevieve would highly recommend students get involved in protecting our environment for the future. "It was a great experience, and I am looking forward to continuing testing. I'd like to extend my thanks to Cate Ryan for her mentorship during this process, Wendy John for her training in water testing and support throughout, and Bianca Lilley of Waicare for supplying the Waicare Kit".

Watercare water monitoring

By Wendy John

As part of its Network Discharge Consent (NDC) requirements, Watercare recently installed a 'continuous water quality monitor' on Te Auaunga, which is one of a number of sites where this is taking place across the region.

'The data collected will help determine the changes (if any) caused in the receiving environment as a result of wastewater overflows. The overarching objective is to confirm that Watercare's methodology for the assessment of effects of wet weather wastewater overflows, results in an appropriate assessment of recreational, public health and ecological effects.' Emma Baker, Watercare



Photo (above): Watercare monitoring – installing the monitor: Alana Chester and Emma Baker

One day I met a woodland nymph

By Gina Hefferan as told to Marin Adams

In Grey Lynn, a decade or two ago, everyone knew that Oakley Creek was not somewhere you would ever visit. It was an eyesore; overgrown, full of rubbish, weeds and also unsafe. Before moving to the UK my "go to" place for a walk had always been the Waitakere Ranges. When I returned home last year, Kauri dieback meant going to the Waitakere Ranges was not an option.

I bought an apartment near Pak'nSave, and one day, cycled along the bike path to explore my new neighbourhood. You can imagine my surprise when I found a shady walkway that meandered through native forest beside a creek. Not only did I discover a magical space, I also discovered a Woodland Nymph. She was smallish, elemental and intent on writing things down in a notebook. Being a curious person, I gestured to the trees and asked, "are you a part of this?" She replied in the affirmative, explaining that Friends of Oakley Creek have volunteers that look after the creek. She said her name was Wendy. I knew I wanted to be involved and offered my contact details, which were duly recorded in the little notebook.

This discovery was the beginning of becoming an FoOC volunteer. I now look forward to Wednesdays. Working with a small team in the Nursery has proved a great joy. The other volunteers are an interesting bunch and I have learned a lot about how to look after native seedlings. I still miss my old hobbies of sailing and scuba diving - but the arthritis in my hands has put those activities out of reach. Instead, I have found an equally satisfying pas-



Photo (above): Wendy and Gina at the plant nursery (Marin Adams).

time and a community of people with shared values and vision.

So now I know it is not magic, but ongoing, hard work that is restoring Te Auaunga. As a

returning kiwi, I am very aware of how unique and precious our native bush is. It is indeed a taonga and that Woodland Nymph was a real find.

Keeping in the loop

By **Marin Adams**

It had been raining all afternoon but Clare texts “We’re a hardy bunch! We normally keep going unless rain is totally torrential.” I met the hardy bunch over a cup of tea, after the weeding, to find out why they worked together, even in the rain. I noticed the hardy bunch were all ages. The slope down to the creek was steep and mulching is hard on the back, but that did not worry Dorothy and Colin, who were the seniors in the group. The children nicknamed Colin “the planting machine” because of the rapidity with which he works. Clare’s children (Christopher, David, Lizzie, Anna and Esther) enjoyed working and being down by the creek, even without the promise of treats. The parents in the group had their own careers and large sections to care for, but were all smiling, laughing and relaxed, at the working bee. So, all ages were in the loop and no one complained about anything.

So how did the Oakley Loop Group form? “It’s because the people in Methuen Road are friendly” and it helped that Jane was a great networker, bringing like-minded people together. Members, Nick and Dorothy first met on the street and talked because Dorothy was carrying a French horn and Nick used to be a French horn player. (They were still talking about French horns over the cup of tea.) Clare, Helen and Jane were “friends” but not at first, before that they were “neighbours”, who happened to live on the street next to the Oakley Creek, where the awa looped.



Photo (above): Austin and Loretta - safe and dry while the hardy bunch work.

Those in the Loop Group had different roles. Helen and Jane had the idea of planting up the creek



Photo (above): An early shot of the group amongst their newly planted trees.

side. Jane and more recently Clare, were the people who said “OK. Let’s do it!” and sent out emails. Sophie was an ecologist and landscaper who wanted to put her skills and a little of her time into “caring for my part of the creek.” Colin and Dorothy had a long awa history doing water monitoring, attending community planting days and advocating for a Tunnel or Nothing, when there were plans for a motorway to supplant the awa. Helen had studied botany and permaculture in the past. Nick liked gardening and had experience trapping possums and rats. The group were ready for a long term and serious commitment to their local stretch of Te Auaunga, and they have been active now for four years.

Jane moved to Havelock North, so I did not meet her in person. She confirmed she was a good networker and “would collect phone numbers of people who smiled at me.” She has found that if people gather together regularly for an activity that is enjoyable, worthwhile and productive, it will cement friendships in a way that having coffee together, will not. It was a big step forward to name the “Oakley Loop Group” (required by funders) and thus create a tangible identity. They were no longer just an informal group of neighbours.

She also said people might share a common goal, like restoration of a piece of land, but because of the busyness of their lives, they may not maintain the necessary momentum. She said how important it was for Wendy to give them all a nudge that it was time for an-

other working bee. Another key to success was only doing what was manageable at any one time. This meant they were never overwhelmed by the task ahead. She liked the way her children Tamsin, Austin and Loretta could play with the other children amongst the trees and be safe and free to explore on their own.

The Loop Group found an important local asset; Friends of Oakley Creek. Wendy supplied planting know-how, tools, prompts and suggestions for possible sources of finance for the restoration work. Ecomatters and the Whau Community Board provided funding, despite the fact that the land was not in public ownership. (Odyssey House owned the strip of land running along behind their properties, next to the creek).

I was left with the question “do we need a lot more Loop-like groups along the creek?” Looking at the group’s achievement and knowing how much work there is still to be done along the awa, I would say “Yes, yes!”



Photo (above): Anna - it’s not only the adults that know how to plant trees.

Upper Oakley Creek lava flows

By Hugh R. Grenfell

We know that 120,000 years ago lava flows to the south and south-west of Mount Albert Volcano were channelled down an ancestral Oakley Creek valley, along the west side of the Wairaka Precinct / Unitec grounds and out to finish at the north-western motorway Waterview interchange area. There was no Waitemata Harbour at this time but rather a large, forested valley. It is less clear what's happening in the upper part of Oakley Creek, in and beyond the area of Underwood Park.

As always in Auckland you have to be a little careful as to what is in situ and what is not. Just like the large logs and kauri roots used during the recent naturalisation and landscaping of the creek in this area some of the basalt blocks are not in situ. However, plenty of in situ lava can easily be seen from the end of Wainwright Avenue down to the Richardson Road bridge, where the lava has been cut through to create straight drainage channels. Originally the lava flows dammed Oakley Creek and created swamps and wetlands all the way back to the area around Mt Roskill Grammar and Keith Hay Park.



Photo (above): Figure 1: 1940 airphoto of the Mt Albert/Mt Roskill area. 1) intersection of Richardson and Stoddard Roads, 2) Richardson Road bridge today over Oakley Creek, 3) drainage cut through lavas, 4) Mt Albert lava flow lobes, 5) Beagle Avenue bridge today, 6) current track of motorway, 7) Mt Albert Road.

Since Hochstetter's time (1865-66), it has been thought that lava flowing north-westward from Mount Roskill Volcano (105,000 years ago) reached the slightly older Mount Albert Volcano material in the area of Underwood Park (e.g. Hochstetter & Petermann 1865, Searle 1964, Kermodé 1992, Hayward 2019 and others). Oakley Creek was considered to flow along this boundary. Lava from each volcano is shown to "touch" near the Richardson Road bridge in these publications. Lava downstream of the bridge clearly belongs to Mt Albert Volcano. But does Mount Roskill lava really reach this far west?

Looking at the 1940 airphoto series gives you a good idea of the land before it was covered by housing (Figure 1). In the area marked 4 on Figure 1 the geomorphology appears to be composed of lobate fingers going east and southeast. These are most likely to be fingers of lava. These lobes are going away from and not towards



Photo (above): In situ lava flows at Underwood Reserve

Mt Albert as you would expect if the lava was indeed coming from Mt Roskill to the southeast. Based on the geomorphology I consider all the lava in the Underwood Park area and downstream to have come from Mt Albert and not from Mt Roskill. If geochemistry of the lavas is done maybe this can be confirmed.



Photo (above): Non in situ lava flows at Underwood Reserve

References:

- Hayward, B.W. 2019: Volcanoes of Auckland, a field guide. Auckland University Press.
- Hochstetter, F and Petermann, A. 1865: Geological and topographical atlas of New Zealand: six maps of the provinces of Auckland and Nelson.
- Kermodé, L. 1992: Geology of the Auckland urban area: sheet R11. Scale 1:50 000. Lower Hutt: Institute of Geological & Nuclear Sciences.
- Searle, E.J. 1964: City of volcanoes: a geology of Auckland. Longman Paul, Wellington.

Seven years old. It's almost Christmas. I run to the window ...
 "It's snowing!"
 "Mum, Dad. It's snowing!"

Mānuka

by Ngaio Balfour

Leptospermum scoparium

"Snowing" in spring

I'm not sure why this struck me so suddenly; trees do not burst into flower overnight. Nevertheless, that early morning, the extensive stand of mānuka outside my window seemed to erupt into snowy white blossoms. My parents kindly corrected me that it did not snow in the middle of summer in the coastal lowlands of Aotearoa. Mānuka is a native tree in Aotearoa and holds immense cultural, economic, and ecological value.

Arrival and spread

Mānuka arrived relatively recently, 2-3 million years ago. The trees' ancestors of ancestors travelled across the Tasman from Australia. Reflecting this history mānuka is adapted to fire. For instance, seed capsules are resistant to heat and can germinate in the charred soil following a burn. Such fire-loving traits likely promoted the plant's spread during the extensive burning of native forest by Māori and Pakeha. Mānuka is now widely distributed across Te Ika-a-Māui, and Te Waipounamu (the North and South Island, respectively).



Photo (above): The bush in bloom with lowering mānuka "snow" (Auckland West).

History and humans

Mānuka is of great value to Māori and has a rich history of use. In warfare, branches were shaped into spears, taiaha and palisades for pā. The readily available timber also formed the foundations for temporary whare, rakes for mussel collection, and needles for ear piecing. The tree is also significant in rongoā (healing) practices. For instance, infusions from the leaves can treat fever, stomach pains, and urinary issues. Decoctions from the bark can also alleviate fever and form sedatives. These are only a few examples; see the Māori plant-use database for details.

The relationship between early European colonists and mānuka was complex. Taking warmly to the tree, Europeans used mānuka leaves for tea, naming the plant 'Tea-tree'. James Cook apparently found the brew 'exceedingly palatable', comparing it to champagne. The tree's aromatic properties also added flavour when smoking meat. Furthermore, mānuka was used as a timber for construction. However, farmers and forestry workers felt less warmly towards the shrubby plant which posed an obstacle to grazing and land clearance. My father remembers being viciously attacked by the skeletal remains of mānuka following a burn-off as he planted *Pinus radiata* for the forestry. He now uses his skills at planting with Oakley Creek (thank you Dad), often nurturing mānuka.



Photo (above): Mānuka flower close up.

Mānuka's medicinal value is now recognised in remedies world-wide. These properties are believed to enhance mānuka honey, which is now a billion-dollar industry in Aotearoa.

Ecological properties

Mānuka's ecological value is now well recognised. The tough species embraces harsh conditions of low soil fertility, high light, and wind exposure. Following a disturbance (such as fire), the plants provide a 'nursery' for less tolerant species, initiating a pathway towards mature forests. In turn the trees are permanent forest cover in harsh stable environments, such as coastal cliffs. They also provide food sources for numerous insects and birds. The plant's tough and nursing nature is now highly valued by restoration projects.

Oakley Creek

On your early summer wanders down Oakley Creek, did you see the scrubby trees, snowy topped by the community gardens? Make sure not to miss the early December season next year. Just be sure to keep your matches tucked away - the snow is surprisingly flammable.

Sources

Battersby, P. F., Wilmshurst, J. M., Curran, T. J., McGlone, M. S., & Perry, G. L. (2017). Exploring fire adaptation in a land with little fire: Serotiny in *Leptospermum scoparium* (Myrtaceae). *Journal of Biogeography*, 44(6), 1306-1318.

Department of Conservation, NZ. (2021). *Mānuka/kahikātoa and kanuka*.

Department of Conservation. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-plants/mānuka-kahikātoa-and-kanuka/>

Douglas, M. H., van Klink, J. W., Smallfield, B. M., Pery, N. B., Anderson, R. E., Johnstone, P., & Weavers, R. T. (2004). Essential oils from New Zealand mānuka: triketone and other chemotypes of *Leptospermum scoparium*. *Phytochemistry*, 65(9), 1255-1264.

Landcare Research, Manaaki Whenua. (2021). Māori plant use database. Landcare Research, Manaaki Whenua. <https://maoriplantuse.landcareresearch.co.nz>

Stephens, J. M. C., Molan, P. C., & Clarkson, B. D. (2005). A review of *Leptospermum scoparium* (Myrtaceae) in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany*, 43(2), 431-449.

Vennell, R. (2019). *The meaning of trees*. HarperCollins.



Photo (above): Mānuka seed pods and flowers (Massey University).

More creek ‘fernature’

By Chris Brown

I now see ferns everywhere, in all shapes and sizes and in many locations around Te Auaunga / Oakley Creek. There seem to be ferns that can grow and thrive in all of the varied areas that make up the stream profile. The diagram in Figure 1 shows the main types of habitats within Te Auaunga.

Just above the water level, clinging to the damp bank, are the bright, delicate fronds of the delicate maidenhair fern (*Adiantum aethiopicum*). You may have one at home. Note the characteristic pattern of sori around the frond edges. The pattern of sori on the underside of fern fronds is a key way to identify the different species (see the Winter 2021 issue for more info).



Photo (above): Maidenhair fern (Chris Brown)



Photo (above): Maidenhair fern sori (Jeremy Wolfe, 2007, CC BY)

Climbing over rocks or tree trunks, the leather-leaf fern (*Pyrrhosia eleagnifolia*) doesn't look like a fern at all. It has thick fleshy lobes and the longer leaves are fertile with sori dotted along the



Photo (above): Leather-leaf fern (Chris Brown)



Photo (above): Leather-leaf fern (Phil Bendle)

undersides. This example is growing along the old wastewater pipe across the creek at the Avondale end of the shared pathway.

There are ferns that grow with and over other ferns ... here the leather-leaf fern shares the rock with the larger leaved kōwaowao or hounds tongue fern (*Zealandia pustulata*).



Photo (above): Kōwaowao and leather-leaf fern (Chris Brown)



Photo (above): Kōwaowao sori (John Barkla CC BY)

There are ferns that grow on trunks of other ferns, like this drooping spleenwort (*Asplenium flaccidum*). I think we have all had days feeling like this guy during the long lockdown.



Photo (above): Drooping spleenwort (Chris Brown)



Photo (above): Drooping spleenwort sori (John Barkla, CC BY)

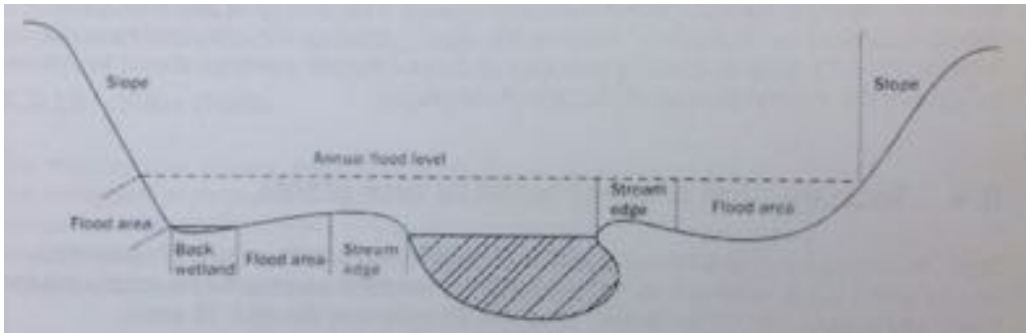


Figure 1: Diagram showing stream habitats (Oakley Creek restoration plan, Auckland Council, 2015-2025).

Seasonal gallery



Photo (above): Taurepo
(*Rhabdothamnus solandri*)

Have you seen the small, bright yellow-orange-red coloured trumpet shaped flowers of native taurepo around the creek this summer? This species is threatened and in decline on the mainland in NZ, so it's fantastic to see it growing around the awa. Other flowers this season include a stunning show of pohutukawa, beautiful ti koraha (dwarf cabbage tree), and putaputawētā. You'll likely have also seen the large, bright yellow/ orange fruits of karaka - these are poisonous unless cooked in a certain way, so watch that dogs and children don't accidentally eat them!

From left to right: Pōhutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*), ti koraha (*Cordyline pumilio*), karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*), putaputawētā (*Carpodetus serratus*).



Recent sightings of wildlife on the creek

Huhu Beetle / *Prionoplus reticularis*:

Huhu beetles are native to Aotearoa New Zealand. They are common in both native and exotic forests, where their larvae feed on rotting wood. They are one of New Zealand's larger beetles, with a body length of 5 centimetres. Adults cannot eat and live for only two weeks. In this time, they mate and females seek out fallen logs or dead branches where they can deposit their eggs. This beetle (see image below), was found in the undergrowth down by the Te Piringa Bridge. Although huhu beetles aren't rare on the creek, we don't see them very often.

For more info, see this link from Landcare Research, Manaaki Whenua (2022). *Huhu beetle*, and this link from the Museum of New Zealand, Tongarewa. *Huhu beetle (Prionoplus reticularis) or tunga rere*.



Photo (above): Huhu beetle



Photo (above): Giant centipede

Giant Centipede / *Cormocephalus rubriceps* / Hura / Hura

This gorgeous native critter was spotted on the creek recently by Ngaio Balfour. Growing up to 25cm it is the largest centipede in Aotearoa and is one of the largest terrestrial invertebrate predators. It belongs to the Scolopendridae family of centipedes, known for its many-legged giants. It shelters under or in logs and amongst leaves on the ground and it's carnivorous, crushing and piercing prey with its fearsome jaws, or mandibles.

For more info, see [Many-legged giant predator stalks NZ forests](#).

Early settlers' cultivation

Signs of 'days gone by' continue to reveal themselves as we work along the creek. One of our volunteers recently dug up an old plough blade. We are guessing this was used during the farming days on the Carrington Hospital land adjacent to the creek (possibly as early as the 1840's). While it is too rusted to be able to see any reference numbers, so difficult to clarify its source and age, we will provide Auckland Council with photos and map to 'record the find'.



Photo (above): Old plough blade

Notices

Monthly Community Working Bees: With lockdown behind us we are now back to holding our regular, monthly working bees. As per normal, they are held on the first Sunday of each month. During the summer months – November-February time is 9.30am-11.30am, and for the rest of the year – 10.00am-12.00noon.

Friday Working Bees – Every Friday morning 9.00am to 12.00pm. If you're interested let us know and we'll include you in the Friday email list so that you can join us when you are free.

Volunteer trappers needed – We are needing more volunteers for our trapping and predator control programme. If you are keen to help, please contact us. We provide training and resources.

Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga

Chairperson:

David Bowden

Treasurer:

Sarah Woodfield

Secretary:

Marin Adams

Committee:

Wendy John, Adrienne Stanton, John Stevenson, Cate Ryan, Chris Brown

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 (Individuals - \$10.00, families - \$25.00) and/or donations towards the work we are doing to protect and restore our wonderful urban 'taonga' – Te Auaunga Oakley Creek. 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/> and <https://www.facebook.com/OakleyCreek>

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

