

Otatara
Landcare Group

PIGEON POST

*Newsletter of the
Otatara Landcare Group*

Issue 63, Autumn 2022

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The full colour version of this publication is available on www.otataralandcare.org.nz under 'publications'.



An inviting stairway to bush and forest walks

More and more people are exploring the walks, forests, history and views of the Ōreti Tōtara Dune Forest, the nationally significant protected area on our door step. Extremely well done and informative interpretative panels tell the story of the forest. Native plant establishment, both assisted and natural, and weed and pest control continue to make good progress, thanks to the volunteers who have done the work and the businesses that have supported that work and the protection of the area.

CHAIRSPEAK



A message from our Chairperson—Barry Smith

What a summer it has been with Omicron delaying or cancelling a number of events I was either attending or organizing, however Bushy Point has remained open and is a great place for a walk, especially with the weather we have been having.

This will almost certainly be my last article as Chairman of the Otatara Landcare Group, I have been mulling over what is going on in my own life and the amount of time I am spending on committees etc. Currently I am Chairman of three committees and on the committee of a fourth and I am finding it is just too much to deal with. I am starting to get mixed up a little with everything as on occasions I am dealing with two or three different issues from two or three committees, so after 23 years I feel that the time is right to step down.

New leadership will bring new ideas and a new focus to the organization and hopefully give me

some of my life back. I will be still continuing on with the Caretaker role of Bushy Point as there is a number of things I would like to see happen before age indicates that it would be wise to pass those reins on too.

The last 23 years have been very interesting, our committee has seen the development of the OLG from something that people looked sideways at with questioning looks of: “Who are you?”, “Landcare Group!!! What’s that?” “What do you do?”, “I’ve never heard of you”, “You’re a bit ambitious aren’t you?”, “So you want some funding do you? Well where is your credibility?” Funding was cautious from the start, we used what we had and we didn’t own anything. As time passed that credibility grew and with the credibility came more and more support. We took over management of a piece of Conservation land that had cattle and sheep grazing on it and we have turned it into a place where people can come to relax with a family walk or take the dog for a daily stretch. We

The Pump Switch Mystery

With the lack of any substantial rain lately and the need to keep an eye on our water tanks, I was reminded of a story from one of our Otaara locals. She turned an inside tap on one day recently and there appeared to be no water. Out she went to climb a ladder and check the tank and was mystified to find there was plenty of water. A phone call to her plumber assured her that as a fairly new pump, it should not have broken down but the switch must have been turned off. Though sceptical, she checked the switch on the floor of the pump shed and it had indeed been turned off.

Over the following couple of weeks this happened several more times and she couldn't understand how it was being turned off until one day it became clear! As she went out to switch it back on, she found several of her hens waiting to be fed and sheltering in the pump shed from the sun. The mystery had been solved, the culprits had been found and since the switch has been blocked off, no more hens have been walking over the switch!

Disclaimer

As with any community newsletter, the articles contained herein represent the views of the contributor and are not representative of the Otatara Landcare Group as a Society.

It is the diversity of views and opinions that make a community so interesting. So if you have something you'd like to share, email it to otataralg@gmail.com, attention **Editor of Pigeon Post**, and watch out for it in our next edition.



have done a large amount of pest control and inadvertently, in doing so we have allowed the rabbit population to go a little unchecked so we have been working on them guys too.

In trying to work towards Predator Free New Zealand we have created a small pocket of land where

Below, rare downtime for Barry as he awaits the arrival of a team of volunteers from the community to help with planting at Bushy Point.



pests have been minimized, but not eliminated, along with many other similar groups in New Zealand, now we just need to link them up and get that birdsong back again.

Personally I was well aware that the Bushy Point Habitat Restoration programme was going to be a project that would far exceed my lifetime and it will be descendants I will never meet face to face who will be able to enjoy the work we have started. The fact that anyone starting any project will not be able to see the full fruits of their labour should not be a deterrent to starting such a project as they would miss out on so much.

As such it has been a real privilege working with people, each with their own areas of expertise and each pulling in the same direction with the same common broad goals in mind and probably what I'm looking forward to the most is seeing a continuation of this work into the future as I gradually, over time, step back. One thing is certain, as long as I am able I will be returning to see a forest that is up to speed and regenerating of its own accord.

This year is the Queen's 70th year as Reigning Monarch and in the more than 1000 years of having a Monarch this is the longest term of any of them and we have all been alive to witness it. Her Majesty's request for everyone to celebrate her longevity is for people to plant a tree. We, along with many other groups had already planned on our annual planting so this year it will be even more memorable.

So what have I got planned for the future? Robyn and I are both double vaccinated plus booster and we are very lucky to have our eldest daughter getting married at Easter. Unfortunately the Southland tramping Club 75th Jubilee Celebrations are a victim of Covid and we have postponed those celebrations for a year. The New Zealand Masters Games in Dunedin timed for the first week in February this year were can-

Chairspeak continued

celled and the NZ Masters Track and Field in Wellington were also cancelled and will (probably) be re-programmed for March 2023. There are a lot of things we would like to be doing whilst we still have fine and warm weather and good health but essentially Covid has put a significant stopper to many of our plans.

With restrictions on numbers it has meant that Invercargill's Parkrun has had to be cancelled as our average participation was about 107 plus a dozen or so volunteers. However after being delayed for two years because of floods, track wash-outs and Covid, Gore's Hamilton Park Parkrun

started in early February and as it is a small centre it was allowed to start and has been just 47. So, we, like many others are going to hunker down and take a measured, risk related response to what we do in the near future.

Thank you everyone for your support over the years. Apart from one or two low lives (who will no doubt get their dues soon) Otatara is truly a great place to live and bring up a family. Kia ora na mihi.

Barry Smith, Chairperson
e: bjsrdms@gmail.com

BUSHY POINT UPDATE



By Barry Smith

This is a bit of an update on what we have been up to at Bushy Point in the last few months.

Over the summer we have continued to maintain the walking tracks, mowing the grass and trimming back the blackberry although in recent times I have been a little reluctant to operate machinery in the area as it has become extremely dry.

Those of you who regularly walk the area would have noticed that we have begun clearing the blackberry and muehlenbeckia from the area under the trig station, it is hoped that this area will be part of the planting programme in the spring of 2023 with the area further round and to the south of the totara block (hopefully) being planted this year along with a small area beside the garden seat and interpretive sign overlooking the estuary in September.

In the same area we have been working on the track. In our regular Health and Safety check we looked at the track as it ran by the fence line just under the trig station. The gradient reached a maximum of 21° and specifications for our mower

indicated a maximum of 18° up and down (not sideways). We were also aware that a few elderly people who walk the track were finding the steepness a bit of an issue. It therefore made a lot of sense to put a bench track in to reduce the gradient to about 6° which we did. There is still a bit of work to be done to finish it off to the standard we want.

Over the next few months we will put a retaining wall against the sandy bank to stop erosion and then, when the airport straight opens up to two way traffic, we will gravel the track with packed dunnite to stop sand movement and make walking easier. Further modifications to the track system in the area will be made in the coming months just before we begin our planting programme in the area.

Although we do a lot of spray releasing, Douglas Black and his team of February/Wednesday evening weeders have been in the area releasing plants and removing combiguards from the

Continued on next page



plants large enough to survive without them. These plastic covers will be reused and for some of them this will be their third use. I am hoping that we may get 10 or more usages out of them and when we are finally finished with them they can be recycled locally through Southland Disability Enterprises' Recycling Depot.

As you walk around Bushy Point you will have noticed that at the SE corner area of our plantings, near the Pooh Ponds we have 'plantationed' the trees. This is the area the ICC used to deposit the fill they created when digging out the pooh pond. The area's soil quality is very poor, plants grow slowly, gorse grows quickly and spraying wasn't very effective at controlling the gorse. Hence the plantation style of planting, rows and columns of plants two metres apart.

Once a year we mow the area controlling the gorse (hopefully) allowing the native plants access to sunlight in the hope they will grow and shade out the weeds. The two images show the effects of before and after moving late last year

As always we can do with any assistance offered. If you are part of a group who would like to spend a couple of hours contributing to the Bushy Point Environment, let us know in plenty of time (many of us still work and may not be available at short notice) and we will organise a job or two that needs to be done.

Barry Smith – Caretaker – Bushy Point

Above—before mowing. Below, after mowing.



NO PLACE FOR RATS



By Dallas Bradley

Become an Otatara Pestbuster and join almost 300 other Otatara landowners that are currently controlling rats and mice on their properties. Free membership entitles you to low cost rat bait (poison), bait stations and traps (both pet proof), plus as much advice as you want!

Otatara Pestbusters was established in 2010 by Russell and May Evans in conjunction with the Otatara Landcare Group. The goal is to increase bird numbers by reducing the number of rats, stoats and possums that were munching on the birds, their eggs and their habitat.

To that end, Otatara Pestbusters sells traps, trap boxes, bait stations and poison bait to Otatara residents at less than wholesale rates. For \$20 - \$30 you will be well on the way to successful pestbusting.

Landowners efforts at home complement work done by volunteer pestbusters in all the ICC Reserves in Otatara – and it's working! Many residents have noticed more tuis, kereru, fantails, indeed all birds, around their properties. In addition kakariki (red crowned parakeets) are regularly seen and there is even the odd sighting of kaka.

The day to day running of Pestbusters is now coordinated by Dallas Bradley. You can contact Dallas on 2130234 or 021 784962 for pest control supplies or advice on traps, bait etc.

Dallas says "it's great to see residents enthusiastic about removing rats and mice from their property. No one likes rodents in the family home, sheds, gardens or bush and everyone gets a kick

out of having birds flitting, swooping or roosting around the property – better still if they nest but they will only be successful in that department if the rats are removed". Aim for a predator free

backyard – collective predator free back yards make a safe habitat for birds.

"There's a lot more rats around than most people realise" says Dallas, "Just because you don't see them, doesn't mean you haven't got rats. I've trapped heaps but I've never seen a live one – they're mainly nocturnal so the chance is slim. Having

said that, I've spoken to plenty locals who have!"

Rat control benefits your home as well as the birds – you will have a lot less rats and mice scuttling in the ceiling and under the house. Past building fires in Otatara have been attributed to rats chewing on the wiring.

The Otatara Pestbusters falls under the umbrella of the Otatara Landcare Group. Some of the pestbusters put a considerable amount of time and effort into controlling pests in local reserves as well as their own properties. Over the years they have noticed a significant drop in pest numbers and a corresponding increase in seedling growth and bird numbers.

However, there is always a certain amount of "reinvansion" by mobile pests so pestbusting has to be an ongoing activity – "persistence pays off" as they say, so if any of you existing pestbusters are getting short of supplies, give Dallas a ring. If you haven't changed the bait in your bait stations for a while, it would pay to, because the rats prefer the fresh stuff. They don't like mouldy bait.



WILD NIGHTS IN OTATARA



By Sally Duston

Thanks to all you ‘pestbusters’, this poem depicts an earlier time! If you’re not a pest-buster, sign up now with Dallas and make sure this is not your experience!

‘Twas the night after shifting when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse
(Well, that’s what they thought!)
But deep in the bush all the creatures were scheming
What mischief they’d make while the family was dreaming.
From trees possums leapt to land with a bump
Which made our new neighbours wake up with a jump.
They listened in fear as the possums cavorted
Over the roof. They did have it sorted,
With hissing and coughing and blowing of noses,
In their possumly way, they headed for roses.
They slid and they rushed about, chasing each other.
The noise sent the family diving for cover.
Meanwhile, the rats and the mice headed out.
They shimmied up drainpipes and trellis, no doubt,
Then into the roof through a miniscule vent,
Leaving deposits wherever they went!
They headed for cables, electric were best,

Avoiding the wire – too hard to digest.
Tom cats emerged from the edge of the lawn
Leaping and racing in excellent form.
Rustles and scratching kept neighbours awake,
Shivering and wondering just what was at stake.
Ruru called eerily all through the night. (We wish)
Stoats feeling bored engaged in a fight.
Mysterious squeaks and scritchings were rife
Keeping friends trembling and fearing for life.
But just when they thought that enough was enough,
Grumbling and grumpy and all in a huff,
Dawn slid in gently to start a new day
And a lone bellbird sang, in its own special way.
Kereru, blackbirds and thrushes joined in.
Fantails and tui – a glorious din!
The crescendo of chortles with a trill and a cheep
Made happy those mortals, deprived of their sleep.
The rumblings of possums, the bangs and the clatter
Were pushed from their minds by this uplifting chatter.
The noisy old possums and grumpy old cats
Slipped back to their homes, along with the rats,
To sleep off their pranks and prepare a new set
For the next nightly concert – the noisiest yet!

Otatara Welcome Pack

The Otatara Landcare Group has packs of information for new residents including the booklets ‘Natural Otatara’ and ‘Otatara a Hidden Treasure’. If you have new neighbours or know new residents who would like a pack, email otataralg@gmail.com and we will deliver a pack or feel free to pick one up at the Southland Community Nursery Education Centre – driveway just past 185 Grant Road rapid number.

To Join the Otatara Landcare Group

For just \$50 for life membership you can help with all the projects we are involved with from Bushy Point restoration project, Ōreti Tōtara Dune Forest, Pestbusters, publishing the Otatara Pigeon Post, to advice and information on native bush. To join go to https://www.otataralandcare.org.nz/site/assets/files/1090/otatara_landcare_group_membership_form_2021_a4_12_07_2021.docx or use the form at the back of this issue.

BUSH HAVEN NEWS



by Kathy Morrison

Baby tuis deliberately killed at Bush Haven by daytime intruders.

Does anyone out there know of a person or persons who would deliberately kill little birds?

Have you heard anyone talking or boasting of doing such an act?

If so please report them to the SPCA and Police.

This kind of cruelty seems to be an escalation from the thieving and petty, stupid acts of harassment that have been going on in Otatara for some time now.

Whoever has done this needs to face up to their senseless cruel behaviour.

Let me tell you a story about a baby tui brought to us on Saturday, February 12 by Ilona and Molly who had found it on their doorstep. They thought it could possibly have been attacked by a cat and I tended to agree, given the state of its tail. Only four feathers were left hanging in by a whisker. They fell out over the next two days. We give all the birds that come in a name and called this wee one Rahoroi, Saturday.

She made the tiniest squeaks and opened her beak for her 'parents' to feed her but soon learnt to sip the mix of Complan and sugar we gave her. Although every time I picked her up or talked to her she opened her beak hopefully.

She hopped around happily and was snuggled up for the nights on a heat pad with a nice soft towel to settle into. I took her for walks outside so that she could hear other tuis and birds and we made her a safe setup in an outside cage in the sun. But even as I texted Ilona to say that she was



Rahoroi and Rahina.

thriving I knew that she was lonely and getting sadder. I was trying to think if we could fashion something to enable her to be back where she came from so that the parent birds could access her without her being able to get out and be vulnerable to predators, when another baby tui was brought to us on the Monday. We called him Rahina, Monday.

He had also lost some tail feathers and had a sore foot but was otherwise very bright and the two little birds instantly snuggled together taking turns sipping juice and squeaking at each other with open beaks for more. They had two lovely days together hopping along the perches, eating, snuggling, lifting their heads to tui calls and sleeping completely entwined on the towel and heatpad.

Attacks on baby tuis continued



After we had walked our dogs on Wednesday morning we were shocked to return and find that Rahina was lying beside the perch bleeding from his mouth, dead with a broken neck. It didn't make sense at all because he could only have toppled off the perch onto a soft base a couple of inches below. We wondered if they had fought but he was much bigger... and so we were bewildered and sad but taken up with a busy day.

On Sunday morning I lifted Rahoroi out of her bed cage just as Howard Morrison came on the radio singing 'How Great Thou Art'. She hopped on to my shoulder as I sang along with him and danced her around the room. She cocked her head and gazed at me like I was almost a bird - but not quite.

The memory of this moment helps me live with the horror of finding her injured and dying when we returned from our walk that morning. We are extremely sad that we had not considered the possibility of human predators after Rahina's death and taken precautions to prevent these dear little tuis suffering as they did.

Please take these acts seriously and take action if you know who has watched and waited and inflicted horrible injuries on baby birds who were

already injured and recuperating, believing that they were safe and well cared for.

Kathy Morrison

Editor's note:

Kathy and Douglas are now locking the bird cages and aviaries during the day and are bringing birds inside at night. They have also invested in security cameras.

Found an injured sea bird or a bird that is not a New Zealand native species?

Bush Haven is for the rehabilitation of injured native species, but Kathy says to call Samantha on 215 6819 for injured non-native small birds such as blackbirds, thrushes, sparrows etc.

Gloria, on 217 8364, takes owls and call DOC about sea birds.

"If a bird is badly injured, take it to Lisa, at Vet South, and she will decide if it can be saved or needs to be euthanised".

Please change your tune, tui!

Tuis are described as being 'very vocal, with a complicated mix of tuneful notes interspersed with coughs, grunts and wheezes' (*Birds Online*). I am very happy with their tuneful notes, but during January and February one of our resident tuis slowly drove us crazy with a monotonous 'clunk' call that began about 4.30am and was still going at 10pm. Sometimes there was blissful silence when we woke, but that merely gave us false hope! This tui was also very aggressive, chasing all other birds away, so we assumed it was all about breeding.

I went online to see if this was a national issue, and it seems it is! People report tuis wrecking their neighbourhoods by endlessly mimicking car alarms from dawn to dusk, another person being driven to despair by a tui incessantly making the same raucous squawk from 5am to well after dusk. "Is there something we can do or play to get them to pick up something different before we pull out all of our remaining hair", asks one desperate person! And much more along the same line. I am happy to say the tuis in our garden are back to their 'tuneful notes'. *Editor.*

PROFILE: JESSE BYTHELL



Our QEII representative

Is your piece of Otarara's native forest protected by a QEII National Trust Covenant? If so, you are one of 20 properties in Otarara with native forest, registered with the QEII National Trust, protecting them in perpetuity. One property, the stunning forest in Bowman's Bush, between Ruru Avenue and Spencer Avenue, is owned by the Trust.

Jesse Bythell, regional representative for Southland for the QEII National Trust, says every two years she gets in touch with landowners to see how they are doing, and to offer help with any issues such as management of the forest, invasive species, weeds they are struggling to control, or weeds they don't know about. "It's mostly a formality, they do a wonderful job," she says.

Most of the QEII covenants in Otarara predate the Invercargill City Council District Plan, which now protects native forest across the whole area. Most of the QEII covenants are no longer owned by the original owners, and Jesse finds the new owners are keen to learn about the trees, plants and birds for which they are now guardians.

Previously, Jesse has assisted Environment Southland with its Biological Control of Weeds

Programme and has carried out threatened plant surveys and monitoring work for the Department of Conservation.

Jesse has been with the QEII National Trust for nearly seven years, and it is her dream job! "It's so diverse - helping people register new covenant areas, maintaining existing protected areas, helping ensure compliance, advisory work, visits to communities and landowners, and helping create new protected areas".

There is extremely high interest in establishing QEII Covenants in Southland, she says. "I'm a bit overwhelmed by the interest, which ramped up since Covid. I think the lockdowns left people with time to better appreciate there is still a lot of biodiversity in Southland that is not protected.

During the lockdowns, slowing down and having more time seems to have brought plans to fruition, with a greater appreciation of our natural world and a desire to leave legacies to future generations".

She now has 57 enquiries on her books, some of which are approved but not yet finally signed off and fully protected. There are a total of 203 registered covenants in her area, which does not include the Waiiau Catchment, which has 190 covenanted areas. Mark Sutton is the regional representative there.





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an invasive pest plant in Otarara,**

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Covenants are mostly forest or wetland, but also include other values such as scientific, geological, wildlife, historic or scenic. The most recent QEII covenant in this area is over the Ōreti Tōtara Dune Forest, which is close to being finally legally registered. The Ōreti Tōtara Dune Forest is the largest remaining unprotected remnant of this forest type in Otatara. Otatara is a national 'hotspot' for this rare forest type which is only found in New Zealand. "It is very significant for Southland and very exciting to have such a large restoration project coming under the protection of

a QEII covenant". The Ōreti Tōtara Dune Forest was among the Environmental Champions recognised at the 25th Environment Southland Community Awards in Invercargill in November. Jesse is a member of the Forest's advisory committee.

If you are interested in finding out more about the work of the QEII National Trust, or have a project in mind, Jesse would be very happy to hear from you. "If you need any help, give me a call," she says. Jesse's contact details are 020 4003 2109 or jbythell@qeii.org.nz

Learn about your bush by Brian Rance

Otatara is unique in having nationally significant totara forest on sand dunes, and kahikatea swamp forest. If you are fortunate enough to be a guardian of some native bush there are some ways you can secure its health. We can help with any of the suggestions below just email me at rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz for any advice or information.

Be aware that because of its importance, almost all areas of native bush in Otatara are protected under the ICC District Plan rules. A resource consent is required to clear any significant bush and you should check with ICC planning staff before undertaking any clearance of native trees.

Some tips to restore the health of your bush:

Fence off bush from stock and undertake pest control – as well as eating native birds and chicks, possums and rats eat a lot of vegetation and seeds.

Learn about the species that live in your bush – the more you learn, the more you will appreciate it – from its forest giants to tiny orchids and all the other creatures that depend on the bush. Plant ID helps you identify the important native plants and the pest plants you might want to control such as elderberry, Darwin's barberry, old man's beard, as well as a few northern natives.

Identify your climbing plants – most are valued natives such as native clematis and jasmine – they climb so their flowers can get the sun (not to smother your plants) and most do no harm. Even the sometimes troublesome muehlenbeckia is host to many native moths. It is often confused with old man's beard an exotic clematis that does smother. That plant generally flowers in February (the native clematis flowers in November) and is a total control plant – report any plants you find to Environment Southland.

Avoid the temptation to "tidy" your bush – fallen leaves and branches build up the soil and nutrients the trees need.

Plant natives that are naturally local to the area – the Community Nursery can help – volunteer on Friday mornings or buy your natives from there.

If you want to be sure your bush is safe from development when you leave the property consider putting a QEII Covenant over the Bush thus protecting it in perpetuity - <https://qeii-nationaltrust.org.nz/>

CARING FOR OUR FORESTS



Celebrating community projects



Congratulations to a team from the Vintage Car Club (Southland Branch) who have tackled the problem of invasive sycamore trees in the club's area of bush at the corner of Arika Avenue and Rakiura Parade.

Olly Olsson, a member of the club's executive and a groundsman, told Pigeon Post he and his members took action after they discovered just one small area at the edge of the bush contained 40 to 50 sycamore seedlings.

He looked further into the bush, to see where they were coming from, and discovered 30 to 40 large sycamores and hundreds and hundreds more seedlings.

Along with Steve Randell, his fellow groundsman, the issue was discussed with the club's executive and a decision was made to get rid of the sycamores, large and small, before they completely

took over the area of native bush. "Our treasurer, Sheryn, did a search online and found that one mature sycamore can produce 20 000 seeds a year, and if you multiply that by 40 trees, that's a huge problem. So, we organised working bees, with three already and one more to come", said Olly.

"The large trees have gone but it will take 10 to 15 years to remove all the seedlings as they come up." Olly's neighbour took down a mature sycamore five years ago but Olly said he is still removing seedlings from his property.

Above, from left: Olly Olsson, Barry Hayman, Angus Petrie, Gerry Pethick, Errol Sherman, Elaine Petrie, Stu Russell, and Dave Birss standing behind Steve Randle.



St Luke's—the chapel in the bush

In the last year, the bush surrounding the little Anglican church of St Luke has been transformed from a weed infested eye-sore, in a community restoration project. Dot Muir, warden of the church, said that for some time neighbours around the church had been quietly working in the bush to clear weeds, and this ramped up last year to include members of the congregation.

‘We had a vision of creating a chapel in the bush, but first we had to do a lot of work around the church and in the bush,’ said Dot. Weeds were cleared, exotic and invasive trees, including willows and sycamores, were removed, and natives planted. A parking area behind the church was cleared and spread with dunnite. A large cleared area in the bush was covered with wood chip to form a space which can be used for play groups or outdoor meetings. This is an ongoing project, says Dot, who expressed the congregation’s deep appreciation to the wider Otatara community for so much assistance, including time, energy, plants, woodchip, and machinery.

Top, Aaron and Francis Douglas and Dot Muir, from St Luke’s. Top right, a monthly children and family’s service used the forest last month for a ‘caring for creation’ theme.

There’s a place for you on the Otatara Landcare group committee!

Love living in Otatara? Appreciating the amazing forest and birdlife? Interested in protecting this treasure for all? Thinking about serving your community?

If so, you’d be warmly welcomed to monthly meetings of the Otatara Landcare Group, which does all the above on half of our community. You’ll be among outstanding and like-minded people with a passion for our amazing bio-diversity.

If you’d like to find out more please get in touch with Chris Rance, the OLCG secretary, on otataralg@gmail.com or call 213 1161.

Fungi finding quiz!

By Chris Rance

The closer you look, the more you find! With autumn approaching, fungi will start appearing. All these fungi except one were found in Otatarā – Can you name them and pick the one not found in Otatarā (clue - it happens to be on a \$50 note!). The Southland Community Nursery will give away 20 native plants to the person who names the most – email rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz by 30 March 2022 – the answers will be put onto the News and Events section <https://www.otataralandcare.org.nz/news-events/>

(Lloyd Esler and Pen Gilette are not allowed to enter!)

Colour pictures on the website,
www.otataralandcare.org.nz/publications/





THREE OTATARA GARDENS



By the gardeners!

Three lovely and very different gardens in Otatara were included in a recent garden tour fundraiser for the Invercargill Rock n Roll Club. The gardeners agreed to have photographs taken for Pigeon Post, so thank you—and thank you for opening your gardens for the fundraiser.

Right, Suzi in her peaceful garden, created over many years from a bare paddock.



Left, Malcolm and Karen are still developing their garden, with its varied plantings on the slope, running down to a recently built and substantial pond.

Below, Mary's garden is a joyous mixture of flowers, plants, landscaping and numerous items of 'garden art' from ploughs and boats to urns! The pond and garden on the left, below left, was built by Mary during the first lockdown.



LOVING OUR PIECE OF PARADISE



by Les Ladbrook

My wife Mary and I have lived in Taiepa Road Otatara since 1990, we are encircled by bush and we love it. It is great to have Kereru, Tui, Bellbirds, Grey Warblers, Silver Eyes, Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Fantails outside your window to view on a daily basis as well as Blackbirds, Starlings, Thrushes and pesky Sparrows. We often hear the Kakariki fly overhead and sometimes sit high up in the trees.



In the early years we had a couple of occasions where we had mice and possibly a rat in the ceiling of our house during the winter. Because some lovely rhododendrons grow very close to the house I realised early on I needed to keep them trimmed back from the spouting by a good 400-500mm and do my best to keep them under control.

About five or six years ago I decided I could do more and purchased my first three bait tunnels and bait from Otatara Pestbusters, coordinated by Russell Evans at that time – Russell was the founder of Otatara Pestbusters. Since then I have purchased more bait stations from Dallas Bradley and have 10 of them surrounding our house.



Some of the best locations I have found for them are against walls or under cover like a tussock. Since having these bait stations out we have not had any issues with vermin in our ceilings and the real bonus for us has been the increase of bird life around our property.

Last year in early spring the bait stations were looking very sad with the baits having been out all winter so they were replaced. Within 2 weeks nine of the stations were empty and refilled. Two more weeks went by and then same thing, eight or nine stations empty, I refilled them and wondered why so much bait was going so I put out a couple of rat traps and consequently trapped a couple of rats, that explains where the bait was going. A couple more weeks went by and only five or six stations needed refilling, the frequency dropped off somewhat but you do need to keep on top of them.

We feed the birds from autumn through to spring, and see the benefit of doing it as well as trapping and baiting. Photography is my hobby and relaxation; the images here have been taken in our section.

Top, Tui; left, Bellbird. These photographs are outstanding in colour, and can be seen on 'www.otataralandcare.org.nz', under 'publications'.

BOOK REVIEWS



New books from Kathy Morrison and Lloyd Esler

Seaswept

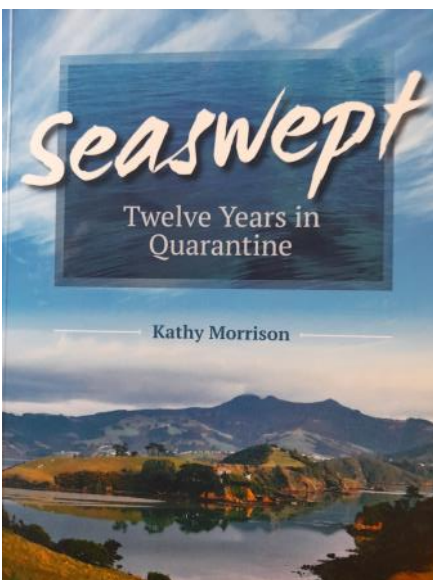
Twelve years in Quarantine

Kathy Morrison, of Bush Haven, has written an absorbing and beautiful account of her and husband Douglas and daughter Bryony's years on Quarantine Island in Otago Harbour, where Kathy was custodian.

In her own words, inside the front cover: "I know nothing about sheep or boats, which I imagine would be pretty essential skills for an island keeper..." "You'll soon learn", was the disarming reply.

'I very quickly found out that I had a lot more to learn than I had imagined. Luckily, I was surrounded by all kinds of teachers. These pages tell the stories of the fun, the pain and the embarrassment of learning new stuff I would otherwise have never touched upon, or could easily have avoided in another life. And it was worth every minute, taking me way beyond my wildest dreams'.

Kathy invites her readers into her life on a seaswept island, with its joys, dramas, tears, hopes, love, laughter and heart stopping incidents involving visitors, boats, storms, sea



lions and malfunctioning motors. I found it hard to put down.

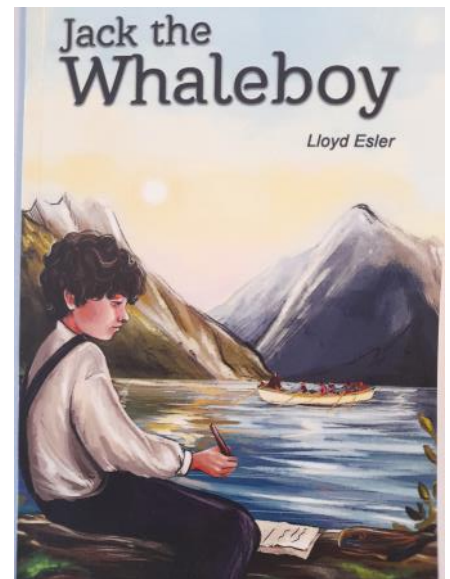
Kathy also has the gift of painting with words, and her descriptions of the island and its setting, birdlife, the wildlife, the

seascapes and the weather, are very moving. Douglas is very much a part of the story, although he was teaching in Dunedin and 'commuting' daily (itself often an adventure!).

Contact Kathy on grannyisland@yahoo.co.nz

Jack the Whaleboy

Lloyd Esler's latest book is a fictional/historical account of the life of a 10 year old boy on New Zealand's first whaling station in Preservation Inlet in Fiordland in the late 1820s.



Lloyd writes the story as Jack's own imagined journal, covering a year on the station. Lloyd writes that although fiction, the journal is based on actual events and is a realistic portrayal of conditions at the station, described in Jack's own words. "Jack Fletcher is a typical boy in many ways but he faces life with courage, humour and honesty".

This is a very good story, and Lloyd seems to have the rare ability to see life as portrayed through the eyes of a 10-year-old in very difficult and challenging circumstances. I learned a lot about the whaling industry and the lives of those engaged in that industry in extremely remote places.

Contact Lloyd on essler@southnet.co.nz

CHILEAN MYRTLE ALERT



By Jesse Bythell, QEII Trust

An emerging weed is *Luma apiculata*, Chilean myrtle, which is naturalising in Otatara. It was first picked up as having 'jumped the garden fence' in 2002 in the eastern part of Otatara in mature podocarp hardwood forest on Marama Ave South. I can confirm it is still present in the area and I have noted it elsewhere in Otatara this summer. I have also observed it in Oban, Rakiura and other naturalising populations have been detected up in the Nelson Tasman area and elsewhere.

The plant has creamy white flowers which appear in March so now is a good time to look out for it. From what I can determine it invades mature forest but is more dominant around the edges where there is more sunlight and disturbance.

From what I have observed it can tolerate shady and quite wet conditions growing in areas which are flooded partially in winter. It has a fleshy fruit which makes it easy for birds to spread. This plant will sucker easily if cut and seedlings seem to have no difficulty establishing in shade beneath parent trees.

Seedlings can easily be pulled out but saplings and mature trees should be either cut and immediately pasted with herbicide gel, or drilled and poisoned as without chemical treatment they will sucker enthusiastically. If sensitive species like kahikatea are growing nearby, I would recommend against using herbicides known to move about in the soil like Picloram ('Tordon') or Metsulfurin (e.g. 'Escort') and instead use Glyphosate

mixed up at double the recommended amount (e.g. 'Bamboo Buster' gel). The leaves look like they could repel herbicide without difficulty and also there is a risk on non-target effects if foliar spray is used in a forest situation.

The threat it poses to Otatara is it could become more dominant and spread into more forest understoreys, displacing the more diverse native selection of plants. This negatively affects all the birds and insects which rely on this diverse array of food resources - when one plant dominates you get a 'feast or famine' type pattern instead of 'little and often' which native plants offer with the different phases of flowering and fruiting. There is also a risk this plant could be a vector for the very serious fungal pathogen Myrtle Rust.



Leaves and flowers of the Chilean Myrtle. More pictures can be found on www.inaturalist.nz/observations/31204242

If you locate this Chilean Myrtle, it would be great if you could add your observation to iNaturalist NZ and perhaps consider contacting Environment Southland so this plant can be added to their list of plants to assess for weediness. Ideally, remove this plant, but it is important to check ID first.

Superficially the flowers are like manuka with white round petals and large stamens, but it flowers much later in early autumn and has very different leaves and bark. The bark is superficially similar to native tree fuchsia in colouring, but less papery and flakes with different a pale cream unlike native fuchsia which is orange or green beneath when dry bark flakes off.

OUR PLACE



By Chris Rance

Otatara has been home for us for over 25 years. When we moved here the norm was 10 acre sections, no sewerage, no reticulated water, no streetlights, no footpaths, no rubbish collection and not many 4WDs.

Although sections have become smaller, building is rife, and there are many more cars, Otatara is still a very desirable place to live with its rural lifestyle, native bush, the quiet, the darkness and yet only 10 minutes from all the necessities of city life (albeit a small city).



We still have our 10 acres but now rather than a house in 10 acres of paddock we have created a thriving ecosystem for the plants and birds and ourselves. Birdlife is definitely better than it was 20 years ago thanks to habitat enhancement and community pest control across Otatara and this has made it one of the noisiest birdsong areas I know (and I visit a lot of natural areas).

If you have a vision of turning your place into a beautiful native environment, we can help. The Southland Community Nursery was set up over

20 years ago for that very reason and it continues today with 'community volunteer Friday mornings' or local plant sales. Come and visit and see the difference you can make (the photos are photopoints on our property taken from the same spot in 2011 and 2018).

We are happy to help you with advice to plant out your paddocks to bush, restore your bush after removing weeds or planting native shelter, wetlands or plants to attract native birds. Plants are available for sale in PB3 size pots for \$5 each and we can advise on the best species for your location.

You can also join our Friday morning community volunteer sessions and get inspiration from all the people who attend. In March we will have seed collecting sessions and other workshops are planned (Covid notwithstanding!) if you want to learn how to propagate your own native plants, grow veggies or learn about foraging.

www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz



LOOKING ABOUT



By Linda

Otatara (place of loosening)
NZ Ministry for Culture & Heritage

'a scattered suburb'
WordSense Dictionary



I like looking about, especially outdoors, and living in Otatara delivers a wonderful habitat for gazing. This week in my garden red and yellow admiral butterflies, skinks, wetas, kakariki, kereru, fantails, spoonbills & herons have caught my attention, alongside roaming cats (not mine) and an abundance of white butterflies.

My patch includes a strip of regenerating bush, enough lawn for a game of badminton over the clothesline, vege gardens where pretty flowers grow in about a 30/70° ratio, quite a tidy driveway border where apple trees grow between the tussocks & flax, and my 'Garden of Contemplation' aka the Sulking Corner. Facing East with some protection from the Southerlies, Chatham Island species flourish.

The remaining 2 acres of wild grasses, reeds & weeds allow dreams of evolving landscaping plans. Our tools consist of a leg's driven standard lawnmower, handtools & wheelbarrow, so nothing is about to happen on a grand scale - or overnight.

I change my mind re what and where but foremost is acknowledging where I live, and enhancing this particular environment for the species that belonged here, before I came along to want to belong here too

(a) Latitude 46.4374°S 168.7931E



02/02/2022

TREES FOR OTATARA



By Chris Rance

Southland Community Nursery in Grant Road has been supplying locally grown native plants to the community for over 25 years.

We are happy to help you with advice to plant out your paddocks to bush, restore your bush after removing weeds or planting native shelter, wetlands or plants to attract native birds.

Plants are available for sale in PB3 size pots for \$5 each and we can advise on the best species for your location. We are also happy for you to come along to our property where you'll see a 'paddock to bush' restoration project of various ages – from 25 years ago to plantings done a few months ago.



You can also join our Friday morning community volunteer sessions and get inspiration from all the people who attend. In February and March we will have seed collecting sessions and other workshops are planned (covid notwithstanding!) if you want to learn how to propagate your own native plants, grow veggies or learn about foraging -

www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz

Below, the Southland Community Nursery in Grant Road, where you can buy native plants, shrubs and trees and get all the help and advice you need.



Otatara Landcare Group Membership



If you are not already a member and would like to help support the work of the Otatara Landcare Group, just fill in the form below and come join us. We appreciate all our members both for their contributions of time and financial support. We can't do it without you.

Membership Form

Please complete form for membership or if you require a receipt for any donation and email to otataralg@gmail.com.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Numbers: (Hm) _____

(Mobile): _____

Email: (for newsletters and events) _____

I give permission for my contact details to be retained exclusively for the purposes of communication in relation to the activities of Otatara Landcare Group.

Subs:

Subscription for Life Membership \$50

Donations: also welcome! *NON-PROFIT CHARITABLE ORG. INC— CC47928*

All donations of \$5 and over are tax deductible within allowable limits.

Donation: \$ _____

OLG bank account **03 1355 0805312 00**

Please use your surname and “olg subs” or “olg don” in reference boxes.

Alternatively, send completed form with cash or cheque payment to our treasurer

Lloyd Esler – 15 Mahuri Road, Otatara

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Please contact the Otatara Landcare Group if you have any questions, suggestions or problems relating to the Otatara and Sandy Point areas: otataralg@gmail.com



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www.otataralandcare.org.nz, Email: otataralg@gmail.com

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