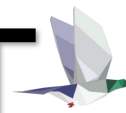


Otatara Landcare Group



PIGEON POST



*Newsletter of the
Otatara Landcare Group*



Issue 60, Spring 2020



The Otatara Landcare Group is delighted to bring you this Spring edition in collaboration with Bush Haven to celebrate the wonders that make Otatara so unique.

September is a busy time for both Bush Haven and OLG. It is a time when many nesting kererū are around and run the risk of impact with windows of houses that aren't part of their natural habit. Great fliers though they are, a kererū's eyesight is so keen it sees through to the bush on the other side or the reflection of the bush behind in great landscape windows unaware that a clear solid barrier impedes their path. Let's help Bush Haven reduce their workload by being mindful of how we can help prevent bird-strike and knowing what to do when it happens.

The OLG Annual Planting Day is coming up, as is the Great Kererū Count, mark them in your calendar and join the fun. Also in this issue we take a look into the past at the forest Otatara once was and discuss why it is so important to protect this unique landscape of national significance for generations to come. Enjoy!

Editor

ONLINE CLICK EASY NAVIGATION:

Click on the titles in "In This Issue" to go to a particular article or simply scroll through the pages. The silhouetted kererū in the top right of each page will bring you back to this page so you can easily navigate your way around. Simply click any underlined web link, page or email address to go there, such as our [website: otataralandcaregroup.org.nz](http://otataralandcaregroup.org.nz)

Inside this issue:

Chairspeak	2
Bushy Point Planting Day—12 Sept	4
Otatara's Magnificent Totara Forests	6
Your Property and Trees	8
On the Beach	10
Memories of 244 Oreti Road	11
Attracting Birds to your Garden	12
Great Kereru Count—18-27 Sept	13
The Tale of a Rabbit and a Tree	14
A Spring Rat is a Very Good Rat to Catch	16
Kereru Activities for Kids	17
Help Secure Future of Education Centre	18
Kahikatea—Did You Know?	19
Please Release Trees—Let Them Grow	20
Restoration Work Needed for Reserve	22
Otatara Students Lead the Way	23
Vegetation Monitoring at Oreti Forest	24
Otatara Landcare Group Membership	26



A message from our Chairperson—Barry Smith

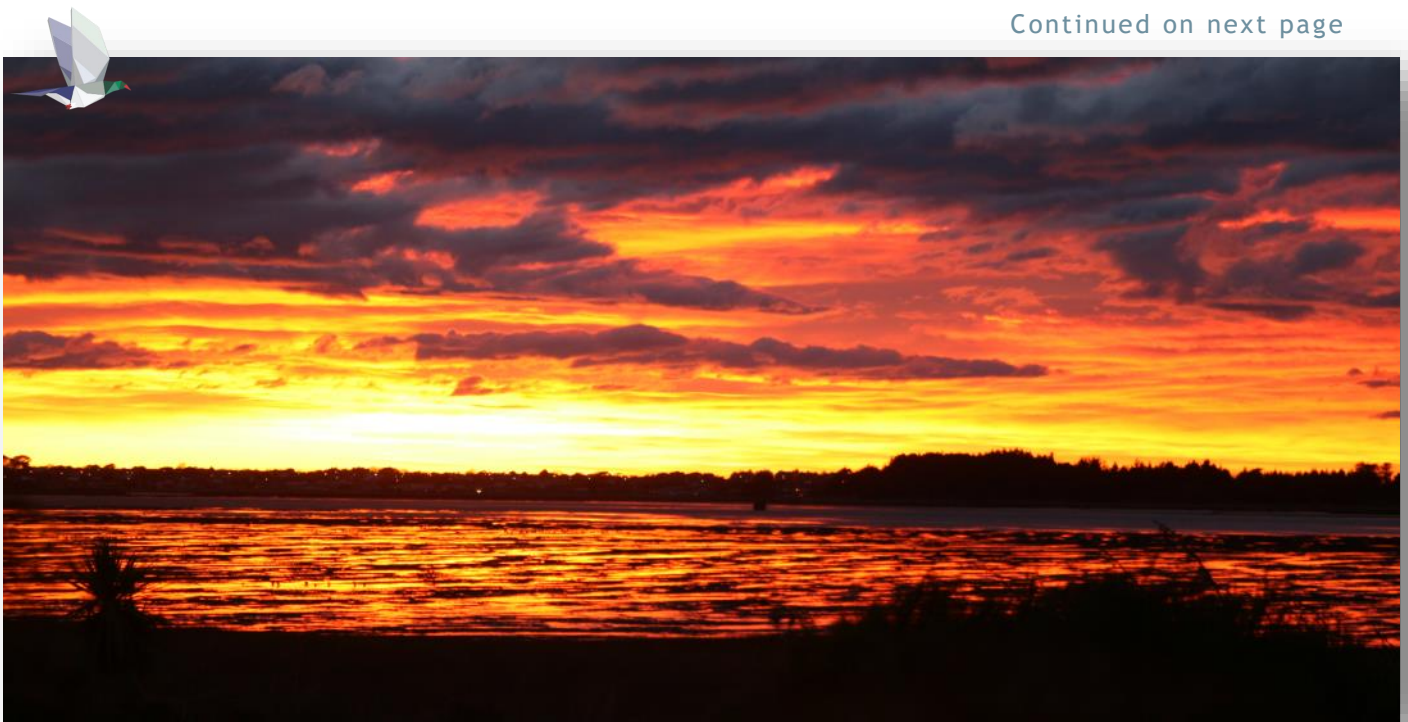
This issue of Pigeon Post has taken on the focus of: ***“Sustainability and the importance of protecting what we already have, in particular our areas of national significance.”*** The statement in itself is quite important in this time, especially with what is going on with Covid-19.

With this being election year, people look at me and my background and say I’m more than likely a member of this party or I will vote for that representative, but that would almost certainly be incorrect. I never have been a member of any political party, nor seen myself as someone who supports a particular candidate. I look at all parties and I see some policies I like and some I dislike. That said, I believe the current Government has done an exceptional job of keeping New Zealanders safe during this pandemic compared with countries like Brazil, Belgium, Sweden, the UK and the USA. As a bubble of 5 million we need to focus on our nation’s economic recovery and the continued sustainability of resources within our country.

Well, what are those resources? We have a country which produces more food than our population needs so we are not going to go hungry any time soon. Our water quality is generally quite safe, so we are never going to go thirsty. We (generally) all have access to housing, a place that is warm and dry although there are some short falls in this area, perhaps some people’s expectations are greater than they need to be in this area.

Here I think back to a time my mother told me about when she was aged up to about 10 years she slept in a bed with 2 of her sisters, yea, 3 of them in the bed. Would that be acceptable today? I guess it really depends on the circumstances.

Continued on next page



Sunrise over Bushy Point and Invercargill on 17 June 2020 © BJ Smith



I recall many a Tramping Hut in the back blocks in which there were bunk platforms at one end of the hut with 6 mattresses top and six bottom, room for 12 people. However, trampers are a sociable lot and we recognise the need for shelter in a storm and we have seen 20 or 30 people crowded into these huts—10~12 each top and bottom (depending on individual trumper sizing) and the rest on the floor or under the bottom bunk, or in one case sleeping in the wood box on the porch. Whilst perhaps not ideal, everyone was dry and warm which was the most important (safety) part with 24 hour rain levels of 300+ mm resulting in high river levels and no real suitable place to set up the tent. So needs and requirements were all balanced out. These places at times can become crowded simply because of what they are, an area of National Significance, our National Parks and Reserves.

If this is not really your thing, so be it. However, here in New Zealand we produce our own beers and wines of good quality (certainly much different and much improved from that “Cold Duck” stuff that was produced in the early 1970’s) and, apart from machinery and a number of manufactured items that we have to import, we have it all right here.

At the moment, (although Donald Trump would never say it) we are probably the safest country in the world and we need to protect that lifestyle and the special places that we have, not just for the short term, but forever.

Come and join us and Russell the Kererū on Saturday, September 12 for the annual planting day and be a part of creating our area of National Significance—Bushy Point.

Barry Smith, Chairperson
email: bjsrdms@gmail.com



REVERSING WITH A TRAILER – Sunday 22nd November 2020

The Otatara Landcare Group and the Southland Tramping Club are running a combined event on how to reverse with a trailer.

This course covers the basics and the principles of reversing. We will be using ride-on lawn tractor(s) and small trailers. This is because we can keep speed down, reduce the likelihood of any possible damage during the reversing process and allow the instructor to more easily communicate with the driver.

The course will run for about 1½ hours and can accommodate a maximum of 6 persons. If more people want to come a second or third course will be run.

Date: Sunday 22nd November 1:00pm. Possible second course: 3:15

Cost: \$10 pp – to cover cost of running machines with excess funds going into the Bushy Point Habitat Restoration Project

Contact: Barry Smith—email: bjsrdms@gmail.com for bookings.

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.

BUSHY POINT PLANTING DAY



Saturday, 12 September 2020

The Otatara Landcare Group invites you to join us on Saturday 12 September for our annual planting day.

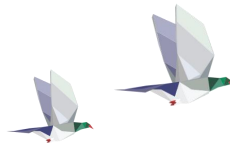
Where: Entrance off Bryson Road, where you can scan in and be directed to the planting area.

Start Time: 9:50am for a 10:00 am start. Should finish around noon.

The plants potted up about this time last year are now ready to plant out and the Otatara Landcare Group is going to go ahead with its annual, Conservation Week Planting Day, albeit with some changes to make the committee happier that we are doing our utmost to keep people safe, help save the environment, enhance Bushy Point and have fun doing it.

The first of these changes is that this year we will not be running a barbeque, the social distancing thing was just going to be too difficult for us to manage. However we would like you to hang around for a general social time afterwards (distancing, of course) and if you would like to bring your own food for a picnic, that would be great. We will try and arrange a nice day for the event, but in the event that there is some precipitation, a raincoat and solid footwear or gumboots is recommended. We do appreciate the rain because that is what makes this area grow trees really well, just not always the timing.

The Logistics for the Day



The planting area itself has been designed so that we have a number of small groups working within a number of designated areas, each with an appointed team leader.

Because we want to ensure everyone has a good day, please...

If you have a cough, a cold, a snuffle or any other ailment that could put yourself or others at risk... please stay at home...

KEEP YOURSELF AND OTHERS SAFE!

On site we will have hand washing facilities (cold water), with flowing soap and hand sanitizer. Also, courtesy of the ICC Parks division, a port-a-loo will be available.

Part of the day's events will be the construction of a Park bench to honour our late life member, Russell Evans. It is mostly assembled by the factory so even a bunch of semi-professionals like us should manage the rest easily enough.

Here are the ground rules for attending:

1. Please stay away if unwell, or if you have been unwell in the 48 hours prior to the event
2. Sign in and out of the event, providing your phone number and email address or (preferably) scan our QR code at the main gate or at the gathering place
3. Upon arrival, please use hand sanitiser provided
4. Bring your own gloves, gardening ones are best, and your own food and drink as necessary

Continued on next page

OLG Planting Day at Bushy Point, continued



5. Bring your own spade, narrow ones are best (ie about 150mm wide), they make it easier to dig holes and the holes are about the right size
6. Leave your personal belongings in your car but keep appropriate clothing (raincoat) and footwear (gumboots) with you
7. Maintain a 2 metre physical distance between yourself and others unless they are part of your family/friend bubble. This should be easy enough to do as the plants are spaced 1.5 metres apart so just make sure there is a plant between you and another group.
8. Please advise us if you become unwell after attending via email to bjsrdms@gmail.com or to otataralg@gmail.com
9. Remember to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds rubbing between your fingers and up to the wrist before you eat, or use the hand sanitiser provided.

Remember, if you keep yourselves safe then you will keep everyone else safe too.

This is a family event so **Russell the Kererū** will be present for photo ops with any mask wearing children (see details on [Page 17](#)).



Most of all, we need YOU! Be part of Bushy Point's forest-in-the-making!

For further information please go to our website for full details. We look forward to seeing you on the day.



Preparing for Planting Day—volunteers putting out the plants.

OTATARA'S MAGNIFICENT TŌTARA FORESTS



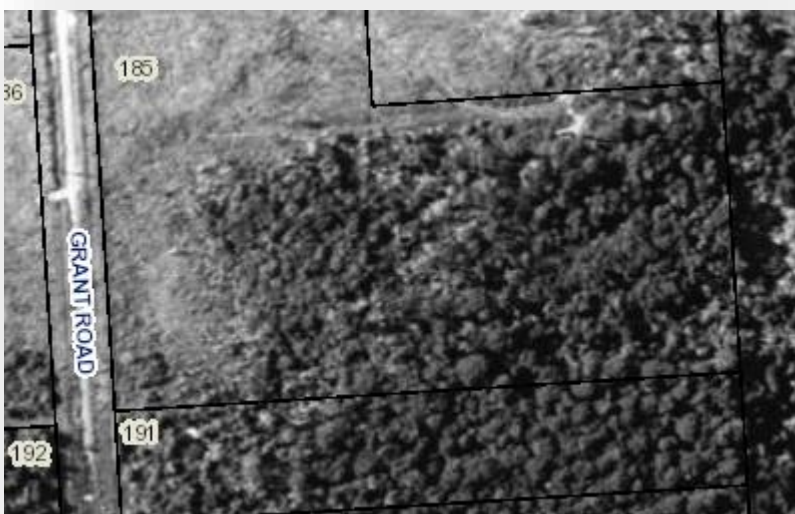
By Brian Rance

If you live in Otatara, you know it's a very special place. Where else in New Zealand can you have your own piece of ancient bush, wide open spaces, reserves to visit and the beach all within 5 minutes drive of your nearest airport and City!

Naturally, Otatara's bush remnants are very special too. Tōtara forests on sand dunes are classified as a nationally rare ecosystem. That means in the whole of New Zealand they are extremely rare and therefore valuable. As a result of that if you have tōtara forest on your property you are amongst the most privileged in New Zealand. Because of their rarity there are rules that help protect remnants from damaging activities, be they accidental or intentional. The Otatara Landcare Group actually came about because of the wish to help protect the bush and help residents who were interested in saving and improving such remnants. That was over 20 years ago and at that time there were limited Council rules to help with that protection. While most of us don't like rules, they are usually there for good reason.

Tōtara is a very tough tree and it often survives despite us rather than because of us. You can do your part by loving what you have on your property and protecting it from harm. That means not chopping down any established trees, not affecting the roots with building structures, not "tidying" the bush edge that protects the mature trees and helping to improve the health of the bush by removing weeds and pests. Learn about the native species that live in your bush—the plants, birds, insects—and enjoy the health-giving benefits that being in the bush gives. It doesn't mean you can't remove some vegetation, but you need to check if the area is mapped as a significant natural area (it should be on your LIM report and ICC maps) and if it is get someone from ICC (03-211-1777) to check first, to minimise any damage that may occur.

As well as tōtara forest there are also areas of kahikatea, matai and mixed podocarp forest that are also important as these types have suffered a large extent of loss. Alongside the mature forest any younger regenerating stage containing manuka, kohuhu etc are an important stage to sustaining the bush until it turns into mature bush.



Continued on next page

Magnificent Totara Forests, *continued*



The regenerating bush areas are also very important bird feeding and nesting areas and contain habitat for birds, insects, lizards and other native species.

We know from experience that protecting what is already there is much easier than trying to re-create it. On our own place in the 1950's bush covered much of the paddock we have been restoring for the last 20 years (see photographs on page 6). I hasten to say it was not us who cut it down, but at that time there were no rules protecting it and now thankfully it shouldn't happen, and that is a good thing. The 1950's black and white photograph is available on the ICC Maps website and you can see what has happened to your own place in the same way <https://gis.icc.govt.nz/ICCMapsGallery/>

If you don't have any significant bush but want to make some for the future, we can help – it's a very satisfying endeavour for your family and your children to leave a lasting legacy in Otatara – lets be the generation that makes more rather than less bush!!

The ICC is helping to protect what we have in Otatara, and the OLG is also here to help so please ask for support if you want to know more about your special place. Environment Southland also offer High Value Area ecological surveys for residents – these are free and you get a written report – email Mark Oster Biodiversity Officer to arrange your survey - mark.oster@es.govt.nz

Chris MacMillan “the Tree Wrangler” is also someone who can help you out with tree identification and dealing with troublesome weedy trees. Chris lives in Otatara and knows our natives and weedy trees well – call 021 241 6236 or treewranglernz@outlook.com if you want him to quote for a tree job.

Brian Rance—Phone: 03 213 1161, or email: rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz



YOUR PROPERTY AND TREES



Kia ora koutou,
Ko Mia Morgan tōku ingoa,

I work at the Invercargill City Council as a Resource Management Act Monitoring and Plan Effectiveness Officer. My mahi involves working in the Environmental Planning team to make sure that work relating to the RMA and Council's District Plan, continues to support Invercargill ratepayers and of course that includes Otatara!

As residents of Otatara you all know what a special place it is—here in Invercargill City Council, we also recognise Otatara in relation to its wealth of areas of “significant indigenous vegetation”. In the District Plan, we aim to protect and enhance the Otatara area by protecting native habitats and recognising the significant values of the ancient sand dune landscapes. This means that there are some rules around what you can and cant do in relation to trees and native plants on your properties. We've developed specific mapped areas that these rules apply to and our staff are always happy to answer any questions you might have.

We've worked recently with quite a few property owners in Otatara to talk about these rules. Some people simply weren't aware of them, and others can find the rules a bit tricky to understand. I've answered some questions below which, hopefully, will simplify matters for you, but the one thing I hope you can take away from this is: **if in doubt, check it out—just give us a call**. We'd love to assist you in understanding how you can better develop and manage vegetation on your property, so just sing out if there's anything we can do to help. If we can't answer your questions straight away, we'll find someone who can, or point you in the right direction. After all, we all want Otatara to continue being the special place it is for all who live here and for those who visit for generations to come.

What's all this about rules for cutting down trees? It's my property, can't I do what I like?

The Resource Management Act requires protection for areas of “significant indigenous vegetation” and “significant habitats of indigenous fauna”. The Otatara Zone, as defined in the Invercargill District Plan, has both types of areas. The District Plan applies to all land in the area, whether publicly or privately owned, By protecting the vegetation and the ecosystems, we can protect and enhance the habitats of our native birds and other indigenous wildlife.

Alright, so how do I know if the trees on my property are “significant”?

Areas of significance are identified on ICC's District Plan Maps, which you can access on our website <https://icc.govt.nz/>.

Does this mean I can't remove any trees on my property?

No, not at all. It just means you may need to get a resource consent. There's lots of information on our website about how you can apply and we're happy to talk you through the process if need be.

I just want to trim my trees, they're blocking light. Can I do that?

You will need to double check with us first (**if in doubt, check it out—give us a call!**) Depending on the scope of the work, you might need to apply for a resource consent.



Continued on next page

Your Property and Trees, continued



Surely I can remove trees that are dangerous, damaged or diseased and pose a health and safety risk?

Absolutely! Just make sure you talk to us first though! We will ask for any evidence that the tree needs to be removed so that we can make sure any work you need to undertake is compliant with the Act and the District Plan.

Okay so it seems like I might need a resource consent. How do I go about getting one and how much does it cost?

You can lodge a resource consent application online through our website: <https://icc.govt.nz/online-services/> and select Resource Management Applications .

Or by emailing resourceconsents@icc.govt.nz.

You can find the Resource Management fees at <https://icc.govt.nz/fees-finder/>

I still have a few questions, where can I get more information?

Our website has a lot of information available in relation to the Resource Management Act, Resource Consents, the District Plan, and the Otatara Zone.

A good place to start would be <https://icc.govt.nz/planning-resource-management> .

If you have more questions, feel free to phone us on (03) 211 1777 and ask to speak with the Duty Planner or email duty.planner@icc.govt.nz.

“Mo tātou, ā, mō ka uri ā muri ake nei”

“For us and our children after us”

This whakatauki encapsulates the importance of protecting our taonga (natural resources) to ensure they remain for all of us and our future generations. Otatara is a taonga to our people and culturally significant to Ngāi Tāhu whanui.

Ngā mihi maioha,
Mia Morgan





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ON THE BEACH



By Geoff Dembo

Once a week, I join a friend on her early morning dog walk along Oreti Beach. We usually head towards Riverton for forty minutes or so, the surf roaring and surging to our left, a long wall of sand dunes and marram grass lying silent to our right ... and then we turn around and walk back ...

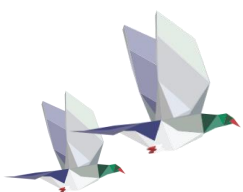
Each day is different. If it's still and warm, the occasional four wheel drive vehicle may stop and out get a father and son who poke around in the sand and at the edge of the surf. Other days, when the wind blows in cold and hard from the sea, we could imagine we are the only people in the world.

Sometimes there are many birds: black backed gulls, red billed gulls and oystercatchers down by the water's edge, picking away amongst the piles of seaweed; maybe a flock of spur-winged plovers or a pair of paradise shelducks making a racket as they fly overhead. Finches fly out from the dunes to forage on the beach. Larks trill from their perches in the sky overhead.

We keep our eyes open for anything unusual or beautiful, like pretty shells or a particularly gnarly tree stump.

The sand underfoot can sometimes be almost hard as concrete, making excellent going. If we walk far enough, the beach changes. Areas of pebble appear, the wall of sand dunes becomes lower and the ripply patterns the sea has made on the surface of the sand are different.

As we go along we pick up any litter, washed in from the sea or left behind by people partying on the beach: nylon rope, fish oil droppers, empty drinks containers and odd bits of plastic. We know that next time there will be more, but it's good to keep the beach clean for people to enjoy.



MEMORIES OF 244 ORETI ROAD



By Cathy Macfie

Sustainability is also about our stories – passing them on so future generations can remember and learn from past experience.

The last Pigeon Post talked about Jack Galbraith's ownership in the 1950s of what was (most recently) Peter Knight's block of land between Oreti Road and the Oreti River. This land has been bought by NZ Native Forest Restoration Trust and, with a lot of community support and the OLG, will become a precious natural and historic asset for Otatara and beyond. But its fascinating human history must also be captured and remembered.

Thanks to the Crawford family, we know that Jack Galbraith's hut was taken over in the 1970s by the DX Club and developed to accommodate enthusiasts who tuned in to radio stations around the world. They set up wire aerials and carried in to the hut bunk beds and a coal range... who remembers? Do you have photos? Please let us know! We should love to bring the past to life through interpretation displays.

If you have information or photos we could copy, contact Cathy Macfie: cathymacfie@extra.co.nz



Jack Galbraith's hut (2020) has seen better days! If you have photos or stories that capture a different time, please let us know!

ATTRACTING BIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN



by Chris Rance—www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz

In Otatara the birds we see are many and varied. You can attract some of those special natives by putting out sugar water which attracts tui, bellbirds and waxeyes but a much more sustainable way of encouraging all sorts birds is to plant trees and shrubs around your place that give them sustenance all year long. It's also worth remembering that they don't just need food but also places to nest, bathe, and places safe from cats and dogs (not to mention rats, stoats and possums).

A great plan for tui bellbird and waxeyes is to plant our national plant the kowhai – these birds seek out kowhai flowers and seem to go from garden to garden searching for the bright yellow flowers in spring. As a legume (or nitrogen fixer) the leaves are also greatly sought after by kererū. I once had someone ring to complain that a kereru was destroying his kowhai – my solution was to plant more kowhai and be very happy for the kereru! – you can't have too many of either! Other great nectar feeding plants are flaxes and native fuchsias – there's nothing more satisfying than watching a bellbird carefully extract nectar from a fuchsia flower – often whilst hanging on upside down!

If you want to attract fantails you need to know that they are predominantly insect eaters – therefore not cleaning your windows and letting the spider-webs accumulate does wonders for fantails. As you move around your bush they often follow you. It seems like they are just being friendly but mostly they are getting a feed from the insects you dislodge on your way round. Having an insect-friendly garden does wonders for all sorts of birds as well as fantails. Tui and bellbird also eat insects when they have young to feed – so keep an eye out for them doing so and you will know there's a nest full of chicks somewhere nearby. Other suggestions of native plants for fruit eaters are listed on the Community Nursery website at <https://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/restoring-your-patch/planning-your-project/attracting-birds/>.

Did you know... that the only native bird with a big enough gape (mouth) to eat and distribute a miro seed is a kereru? This explains why bird and plant interactions are so important – if the kereru were gone (as they are in some parts of NZ), the miro tree would be unable to colonise new areas.

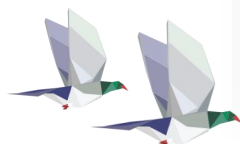
Often people put out fat balls or seed balls – they are attractive mostly to introduced finches – native birds are less attracted to them. Observing what birds are eating is an interesting occupation and there are many exotic plants in our gardens that they like to eat too. A favourite kererū food in our garden is our cherry tree – I think we have had it for about 20 years and have not eaten a single cherry from it – but the kereru seems to love it – evidence below!

This year to keep birds off my fruit trees I invested in a “sky crow” - it had limited success but looked great !

Finally, remember to participate in the Great Kererū Count 2020 from 18-27 September:

<https://greatkererucount.nz/>.

Let's record when we see them and make Otatara the Kererū Capital of New Zealand.





JOIN THE FUN & HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE



THE GREAT KERERŪ COUNT

18-SEPTEMBER TO 27-SEPTEMBER 2020

GREATKERERUCOUNT.NZ

Join us this year in the Great Kererū Count! It is NZ's biggest citizen science project—a project that depends on as many people as possible getting out and about gathering data on kererū.

Otatara has a burgeoning population of kererū as evidenced by the increased numbers of bird-strike with many pairs nesting in trees close to residential properties, so chances are you have kererū near to or in your own back yard.

The project has made it easy for people to get involved with three different options for tracking your observations which you can find out about here: <https://www.greatkererucount.nz/how-to-count/>

For more information on adding your count please go to the “[FAQs for the Great Kererū Count 2020](#)” page or click on the poster above to go to the official website.



The Tale of the UNHAPPY-HAPPY TREE AND THE HAPPY-UNHAPPY RABBIT

It all began, one tree planting day when they started pulling my hair out by the leaves and ripping off my trendy black shorts.



Some keen bean dug a hole as deep as a rabbit burrow and slung me in.
Oh! the dent to my pride.
(‘Easy nibblings here’ thought the rabbit).



Then they set me up on a pedestal - not happy for all and sundry to see my ugly root-bound roots.



Back at ground level, they left a moat the size of the Kermadec Trench around my knees. My feet were freezing.





Some kind person came along and showed them how to tuck me in - happy me and happy rabbit.



Time to get some clothes on but the rabbit was in paradise.



They tucked me in but left me looking drunk. The rabbit did its best to help.



Talk about a messy hair day....



Finally, the message got through.
HAPPY TREE! UNHAPPY RABBIT!





A SPRING RAT IS A VERY GOOD RAT TO CATCH!

By Dallas Bradley

Spring marks the start of the bird breeding season. Nesting time is when birds, their eggs and nestlings are most vulnerable to predation from various pests, rats in particular.

Unfortunately, Spring also marks the start of the rat breeding season. It coincides with a time when all rats are mature enough to breed and consequently get hungry.

The situation could be viewed as a perfect storm from a native bird conservation perspective!

As such there are huge benefits in controlling rats at this time of the year, especially when you consider that each female rat can potentially have 5 litters of anywhere between 3-10 young between now and April. On top of that, it only takes 3 months before a rat is sexually mature, so the early litters will be breeding themselves in late Summer/early Autumn.

It makes a lot of sense to nip this breeding in the bud and give the native birds the best possible chance of breeding and raising their young - even better if they do it outside your kitchen window.

If you haven't already done so, it's a good time make sure your bait stations and traps are ready to go with fresh mould free bait and lure. Strike now while the rats are at their hungriest.

If you're not already doing pest control on your property, do yourself and the birds a favour and give it a go. Remember everyone has rats from time to time and they can be equally destructive to your home, car and possessions as they can the birds!

Otatara Pestbusters supplies, traps, bait stations at bait at very reasonable prices – contact **Dallas Bradley** on **021 784962** for assistance. For more information, check out the Otatara Pestbusters Facebook page or the Otatara Landcare Group website.



Norway rat with bird (Photo from Predator Free NZ)



Ship rat (*ratus rattus*) with snail (photo Predator Free NZ)



Rat bait pipe and poison



Victor Rat Trap and its pet and bird proof box



A CALL FOR VOLUNTEER PEST CONTROLLERS



By Dallas Bradley

If you're keen to help out with animal pest control in various Otatara reserves, the Otatara Landcare Group would like to hear from you.

We are calling for "Registrations of Interest" so we have a list of people to call upon when vacancies arise, rather than having to scramble around and find replacements.

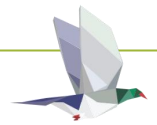
Within the DoC reserves at Bushy Point, Otatara South and elsewhere, and the Otatara Reserve and several smaller reserves managed by the ICC, there is a wide variety of pest control lines. Some are short, some long, some are off trail and require a reasonable degree of fitness but many are along some form of track and easily negotiable, family friendly even.

Generally pest control lines need to be checked fortnightly, sometimes more frequently, sometimes less depending on the level of pest activity and time of the year. Pest lines include a mixture of traps and bait stations.

If you would like to help keep animal pest numbers low and sustain the birds and bush, please email us at otataralg@gmail.com.



KERERŪ ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS



by Bronwyn Graham, KCC Coordinator Southland

One way to help our kids understand the link between the well-being of our indigenous birds in their natural habitat and the well-being of the people who live amongst them is to get involved in fun activities that highlight this interdependence.

The Kiwi Conservation Club <https://kcc.org.nz/> is a great way for kids to learn about the importance of caring for the environment that is home to us all.

The following are links to a number of cool activities that kids of all ages can engage with in support of the Great Kererū Count, Kererū safety and our annual Planting Day.

Play the Board Game – Poo Power - <https://kcc.org.nz/portfolio/game-poo-power/>

Make your own Origami Kererū - <https://kcc.org.nz/portfolio/origami-kereru/>

Or make a Kererū protector - <https://kcc.org.nz/portfolio/make-a-kereru-protector/>

And download from the DoC website this amazing **KERERŪ MASK**: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/349d7914ed944acfb5e16da437dc8703/face-mask-wood-pigeon.jpg> (or use the one on the back page).

Colour it in, cut it out, try it on, and bring it along to our **Planting Day** on Saturday, 12 September.

Wear it alongside **Russell the Kererū**, the official mascot of the Otatara Landcare Group, and have your photo taken. We'll create a Guess Who! page in the next Pigeon Post for you to share with family and friends.

HELP US SECURE THE FUTURE OF THE SCN EDUCATION CENTRE



By Chris Rance

The Southland Community Nursery has been running as a volunteer project for over 25 years and all advice on growing NZ native plants, restoring and creating habitats is freely given. A few years ago we built an amazing Education Centre on our property to provide for environmental education opportunities for all schools in Southland.

For the last 2 years Lotteries have funded a part-time education role here and this has allowed many more Southland schools to access outside the classroom activities here. We get over 1000 visitors each year, and that is increasing each year. In our own area of Otatara every schoolchild from Otatara School visited here last year, with the visits providing a diverse range of learning opportunities for students about their local place.

School visits for all schools across Southland have always been free because we want schools to have the opportunity to visit here and the students to experience nature. As with most charitable trusts funding is hand to mouth which makes planning and long term projects and activities impossible. From 2021 there is no funding secured, so... we are seeking your help.

If you think we are doing a good job help us raise the funds to be able to continue to provide outside the classroom education, connect children to nature and sustain all our futures, please contact **Chris** at rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz or by phone: **021 660 361**

Alternatively if you'd like to make a donation, please see the following link:

<https://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/education-centre/facilities/>



Please help us secure the future of the Southland Community Nursery Education Centre so we can continue to provide valuable experiences for future generations of Southland children.





KAHIKATEA



Did You Know?

Kahikatea swamp forest once covered the wet, low lying areas of Otatara. Remnant kahikatea swamp forest exists at the Rances' property where the Southland Community Nursery is located.

Origins:

Kahikatea is a coniferous tree endemic to New Zealand (this species doesn't grow in any other country). It is in the Genus name *Podocarp*, along with rimu, mataī, miro and tōtara. The scientific name for Kahikatea is *Dacrycarpus* (tear shaped fruit) *dacrydiodes* (like a dacrydium). The genus *dacrydium* is the yellow-wood family—Kahikatea has bright yellow heartwood. It is called the NZ “white pine” because of its creamy white sap wood.

What do Kahikatea look like?

As New Zealand's tallest tree, it can grow 50-60 metres high with a trunk exceeding 1 metre in diameter. It has a buttressed base which enables it to stand tall in wet swamp areas and it can live up to 600 years.

It grows best in a dark shady wet forest and has separate male and female trees.

It produces black seeds which sit on red fleshy bases.

Birds such as kererū, tui, korimako(bellbird), kākā, kākārīki and tauhou (silveryeye) feed on the berries.

Its wood has no smell so was used for butter boxes by early settlers.



Māori Uses (Rob Tipa)

Kahikatea is rangatira: “a chiefly tree”—its red fruits were eaten raw and have a slightly resinous taste—its gum-like resin was eaten too—its resinous heartwood was used for weapons (spears) and tools (for digging or combs) - soot used for black paint

Medicinal uses: wood chips in boiling water used as a tonic, decoction of leaves for urinary or other internal complaints. A recipe made from bark used to treat bruising.



E tū kahikatea
Hei whakapae ururoa
Awahi mai awahi atu
Tātou tātou e

Stand like the kahikatea tree
To brave the storms
Embrace and receive each other
We are one together



Canopy of kahikatea surrounded by restorative planting at 185 Grant Road.

PLEASE RELEASE TREES, LET THEM GROW...



By Douglas Black

Planting trees is fun and a great thing to do – according to a major study published last year, if we plant a trillion trees globally, we can make a real impact on the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

But just planting the trees is not the whole story. As soon as they are planted, they are often under attack – at Bushy Point, mainly from grasses. If the trees win, they will shade out grasses and other ground cover plants, so these plants are in a real sense fighting for their lives. This means they are adapted to have features which tend to kill trees. When trees are small, grasses can grow taller than them and in autumn, fall on the tree seedlings and drag them down, damaging their growth pattern and often denying them access to light essential for photosynthesis. Densely seeded grass near the tree seedling can produce serious, possibly fatal, competition for water and nutrients when seedling roots are still shallow. These effects can compound over several years, with tree seedlings becoming progressively weaker, stunted and eventually dying.

In addition, tender tree seedlings are susceptible to damage from pests such as rabbits and rodents, but they can be protected from these pests by installing plastic guards around them when planting.

Without help, large numbers of young trees can die if left untended, as happened in the UK last year when hundreds of thousands of young trees planted on railway land died, wasting the huge effort involved in raising the seedlings and planting them out.

Planting trees with grass/weed suppressing mats, on ground where weeds have been killed, and surrounding seedlings in protective plastic sleeves, can do much to protect young trees, but in many cases this is not enough, particularly if the seedlings are left unchecked for one or two years.



A seedling tree overgrown with grasses...



Continued on next page

The density of the grass at ground level is strangling and starving the tree...

Please Release Trees, continued



Often, tree seedlings will benefit from being released from the competing vegetation, and later their protective sleeves, to give them the best chance of survival. This of course is what everyone planting the trees wants, so it is really important to give them the best start by protecting seedlings as described above when planting, **and also releasing them** from competing vegetation encroachment at appropriate stages, typically in late summer/early autumn, to remove grass growth around the trees.

Release work doesn't have the same initial appeal as tree planting, but it is no less important – so this year Otatara Landcare Group is promoting an integrated approach to tree planting by offering everyone some brief initial training on tree release methods on the main Planting Day on September 12, with an invitation to return in February to release this year's plantings, and also seedlings from previous years which need help.

And actually, finding and saving little trees from being overwhelmed is a most rewarding experience – possibly even more fun than planting them in the first place!



Once the grass has been removed from around the tree...



It can be supported by the protector, free to grow



ORDER YOUR RECIPE BOOK



To celebrate the legendary morning teas on volunteer Fridays at the Southland Community Nursery and other food related events held at the Education Centre we have compiled a recipe book. Thank you for your support.

Recipe Books are \$10 each

Pop down to the Southland Community Nursery on Friday mornings to get your copy. Or contact Chris at:

rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz to arrange a pick up.



RESTORATION WORK NEEDED FOR OTATARA SCENIC RESERVE



By ICC Parks Performance Manager, Zealan Simpkins

Otatara Scenic Reserve is a native forest with a mixture of tōtara and podocarp forestry, together with Manuka shrub land. Covering just over 40 hectares of land, this reserve is used for walking and recreational activities. Its walking tracks are also used as a thoroughfare by nearby residents and school children.

This reserve has been left to self-develop and regenerate over time, with protection alone believed to preserve the reserve.

Otatara Scenic Reserve is categorised as an Environmental Reserve; these are areas of land held in Council ownership for the purpose of environmental protection and passive recreation.

It has been brought to our attention by members of public that there has been significant damage and littering to parts of the Otatara Scenic Reserve. Some of this damage is from vegetation being cut down and removed to form extra wide bike tracks as well as large dug outs where tree roots have been compromised.

We believe that this damage is not malicious but merely children/teenagers seeking fun by creating areas for jumps and hide outs in the form of creating dug outs while eating fish n chips and socialising together.

We take pride in the beautiful greenery/reserves/play spaces that Invercargill has to offer and we recognise the importance of community and the custodians of the land (ICC) working together to ensure these places remain intact. The area's classification as a scenic reserve means it has more protections than a traditional reserve and there are higher ecology responsibilities for it. Under the Reserves Act 1977 it is an offence to remove and cut vegetation from a reserve without the permission of the land manager, which is ICC.



Otatara School students are proactively working with the Invercargill City Council and other members of the community to try and stop this damage in the Otatara Scenic Reserve. Some heart felt feelings have been shared on the damage that is happening in the Otatara Scenic Reserve by Otatara Primary School:

Continued on next page



- *My dream is that these vandals who are breaking the law will appreciate it enough to stop and realise how precious the bush really is.*
- *Every time I go for a walk in the bush, I see and learn new plants. My dream for the bush is there would be no jumps and no rubbish, and we would plant new plants.*
- *I love bush because it is a calm and peaceful place. It is somewhere people can relax, express themselves and just be them. When I think about the damage that has been done to this beautiful place, I feel upset, annoyed, and most of all, shocked.*
- *I love to have adventures and use my imagination in the bush. My dream is that the bush will still be there for generations to come.*

Working with Otatara Primary School we have planned planting days where we will together undertake restoration plantings in the damaged areas which requires approximately 350 plants.

This will feed into our current 'Plant our Population' initiative which is a goal to plant a tree or shrub for every resident in the Invercargill area.

OTATARA STUDENTS LEAD THE WAY...

Part 2 by Bronwyn Graham

Following on from the damage shown in the last issue of Pigeon Post, Otatara School students continue to display **kaitiaki** (guardianship of an environmental area) for Otatara Bush.

As showcased in the school newsletter 27 August 2020 Otatara School Year 6 students have worked with rangers from the Invercargill City Council Parks and Reserves to erect signs they had designed in an attempt to alleviate damage being done to the Scenic Reserve. Well done Otatara School.

As further reported by Sharon Livingstone, Principal, in mid-August, the Police Education Officer informed Otatara School that further damage had been done.

Mrs Livingstone stated: *"This is so disappointing as this reserve is an area of national significance with tōtara growing on sand dunes"*.

If you notice anything suspicious in the area, please contact the Police or the Parks and Reserves and share what you have seen.

This reserve is a **taonga** (natural resource that is highly prized) that we all need to look out for and look after, and now more than ever, it needs our goodwill as a community!

Otatara School students lead the way, but we need everyone involved to protect what belongs to us all.



VEGETATION MONITORING AT ORETI FOREST



A novice's view by Chris Rance

The highly significant totara forest at Oreti Forest has had a bit of a hard time over the years. If you walk through it after walking through Otatara South Scenic Reserve you will observe very sparse (to put it kindly), understorey and in some areas virtually none! Forest understorey contains the ferns, herbaceous plants, tree seedlings and saplings that make up the forest floor layer. The lack of it is a legacy of cattle grazing over many years – as soon as a seedling pops up it is eaten off. To add to the stock impact possums, rats and rabbits will also have had an effect. Totara is particularly tough and so it has survived but not thrived under its past regime. It will be exciting to see it recover over time now that stock has been removed.

In order to monitor what happens over the next 20 years and more a group of keen vegetation folk spent three days setting up some “20x20 plots” under various vegetation types. As a veg plot “novice”, I was interested to see the methods employed but also to alert you to the types of markings, pegs and poles you might encounter in the bush (like those pictured on the right) and to ask please do not remove them. They permanently mark places and features that will enable re-measurement at intervals and tell the story of the reserves recovery over time.

We were excited to have some of the Department of Conservation Tier 1 monitoring team with us to help set up the plots – a very time consuming and thorough process. First the plots were chosen to represent different vegetation types – totara forest, matai forest, manuka and *Coprosma* shrubland. Then 20x20 metre plots were laid out with tapes on a pre-determined orientation. The corners of these were permanently marked with aluminium angle iron and a permolat (thin strips of aluminium) marker nailed to the nearest tree. That all sounds easy but negotiating a tape through the various shrubby, blackberry laden plots, in mud on a frosty cold day was quite challenging.

Continued on next page



Vegetation Monitoring at Oreti Forest, *continued*



The plot was then divided into subplots with tape and various measurements were taken in each subplot. A “recce” was undertaken (all species are recorded in height classes and a density assessed including canopy cover). In each subplot seedling types were recorded, saplings counted, trees tagged with numbers and diameter measured and recorded (one plot had 12 pages of measurements!). At the centre of each subplot were permanently marked tags, around which all seedlings were identified.

The reason for telling all this is that those tags can be left out for years to enable remeasurement in future and though the plots are all GPS'd it is much easier to refind them if the poles and markers are left in-situ. This was the method for each of the 6 plots established over three weekend days in August 2020. Some plots under tall totara or matai forest had such a bare understorey that they were relatively fast to do but in future years we hope that the understorey will have grown sufficiently that plots will take a lot longer to re-monitor and we expect a flush of seedlings to show themselves as early as this spring. Thanks to all the volunteers – Anna Harris, Pen Gillette, Jordan and Katie (from the DoC Tier 1 team), Carol West, Jesse Bythell, Brian Rance, Chris Rance and Geoff Dembo.

In case you are wondering “Tier 1” is the description of the teams doing vegetation and carbon monitoring throughout New Zealand and the plot data goes into a National Database called the National Vegetation Survey (NVS) which has been going for more than 50 years and which is administered by Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research - <https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/resources/data/national-vegetation-survey-nvs>



Various members of the team at work, an earthstar fungi, tree tags and pegs marking the plots (on previous page) and a welcome cuppa at the end of the day.

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

Glenda Graham – 33 Rakiura Parade.

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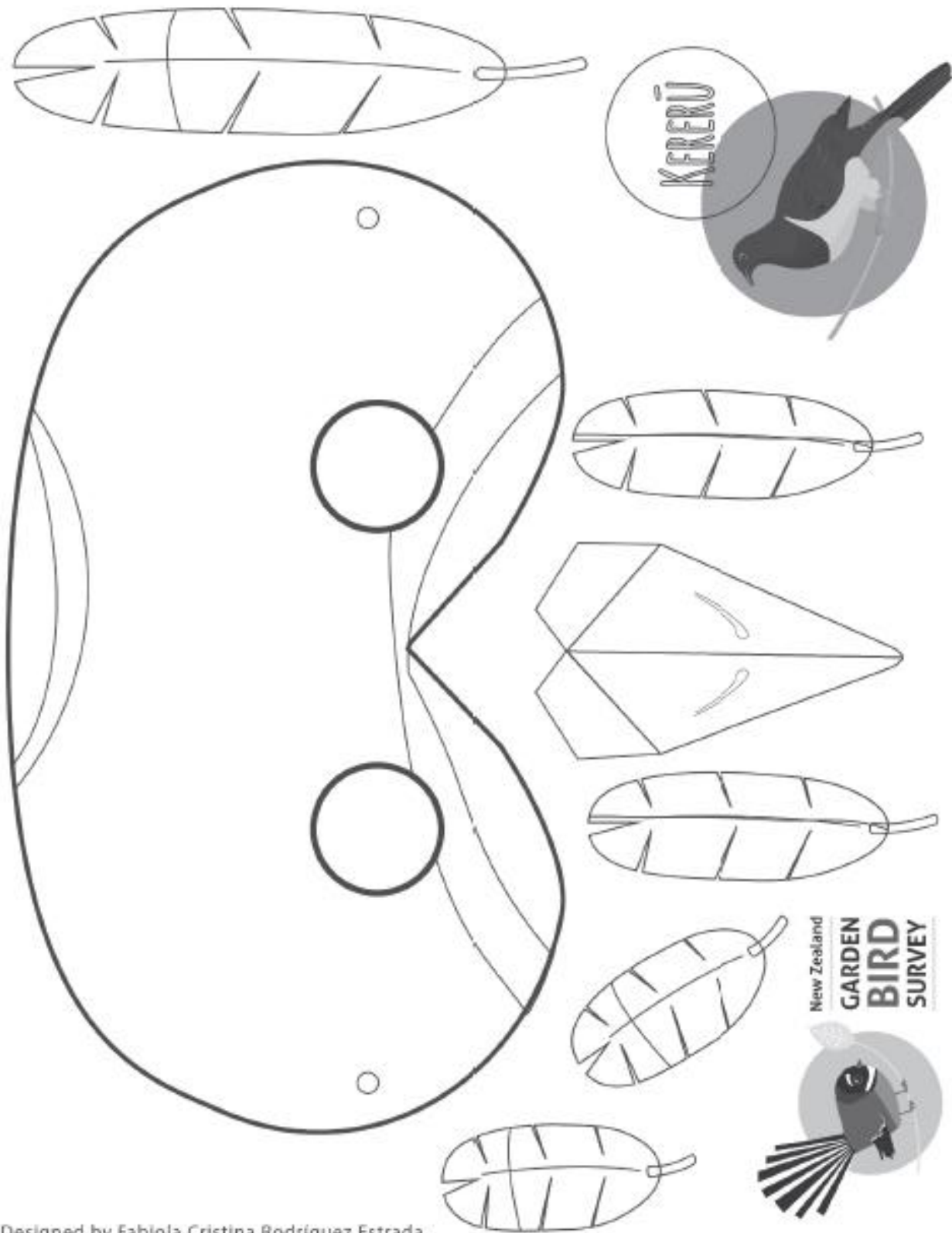
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Please contact the Otatara Landcare Group if you have any questions, suggestions or problems relating to the Otatara and Sandy Point areas: otataralg@gmail.com

KERERU MASK TO COLOUR



From Landcare Research



Designed by Fabiola Cristina Rodríguez Estrada

Colour it in, cut it out, tie it on, and bring it along to our [Planting Day](#) on **12 September**.

Wear it alongside **Russell the Kereru**, the official mascot of the Otatara Landcare Group, and have your photo taken. We'll create a Guess Who! page in the next Pigeon Post for you to share with family and friends.



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