



# Otatara Landcare Group

# PIGEON POST

*Newsletter of the  
Otatara Landcare Group*

## Issue 61, Summer 2020-21

Once again we bring you a Christmas edition of Pigeon Post albeit a rather sober one, in keeping with the times.

It's been a strange year not the least because of the pandemic, but also because we are facing an environmental crisis that no nation seems to be taking seriously and a changing world order that could have ramifications for years to come. All this of course is outside the circle of influence of we humble Southlanders, or is it?

This issue tells tales of what small groups of individuals can achieve by working together often in seemingly overwhelming circumstances—whether it is saving a forest, releasing thousands of tree seedlings from strangling grasses, or protecting the birdlife of NZ from creatures that prey on them. The decisions we make on a daily basis have a roll on effect for the future and if enough of us make the right ones then there is hope for the generations that follow.

Getting involved with the Landcare Group, volunteering at the Nursery, donating to the Education Centre or taking up pest-busting on your property, could make all the difference to what that future looks like for us all.

*Editor-at-large*

### 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 kereru 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)

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# CHAIRSPEAK



## A message from our Chairperson—Barry Smith

Thank you to the many people who turned up on our planting day in September. We got about 850 plants in the ground on that day which is another boost to the habitat of Bushy Point.

Most of the planting was around our pond—the one we created, not the Poo pond! We also invited our life member, Kevin Laidlaw, to plant a tōtara tree in honour of his wife, Maymie, who passed away earlier this year.

To complete the proceedings, we attempted, eventually with success... (thank goodness) to assemble a park bench in honour of Russell Evans. This now sits on the eastern side overlooking our pond, along with a picnic table and overlooks a plantation of red tussock and carex secta. It is a great view on a good day and will be even better in about 2 or 3 years when these plants grow.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> November, I ran a reversing with a trailer course, teaching the basics to two ladies who, through recent circumstances, now find themselves the lead of the household and will be required to tow and back a trailer from time to time. They made mistakes, as I expected (if they had already been perfect, they wouldn't have needed to come), anyway I think I managed to get them to think a bit about what they were trying to achieve.

During the clean-up on the way back home, we stopped and had a look at the pond. There, on our mowed area, a mother duck with 8 ducklings came wandering along—down the mowed path towards us and then into the pond where the 8 ducklings went in 8 different directions. I thought this might have been a bit of a oncer but the next day, about the same time, there they were, taking another walk into the back of our section.

Continued on next page



Kevin Laidlaw—Living Legend © BJ Smith



May Evans sitting on Russell's bench overlooking the pond © BJ Smith





The horrendous amount of rain we had a couple of months ago coupled with the construction of houses to the north of us has meant that now the drain that once quietly drained the area now overflows tanks, roofs and paved areas, flows down the local storm water pipe and empties into a sump on the section to the north of us. The sump then overflows and keeps our lawn soggy for a couple of months. I dug a trench across our lawn to divert the water and I had a bit of a calculation that we were channelling about 10 ltrs of water a minute, 600 ltrs an hour, 14,400 ltrs a day, 100,000 ltrs a week. This water flowed down the trench I'd dug for the best part of a month. Thankfully things have dried out a bit and the swamp land has now turned back into reasonably firm lawn once more.



Planting Day at Bushy Point © BJ Smith

2020 has turned out to be a year of challenges, a year of surprises, a year of resilience, a year with all the emotions possible and thankfully a year in which SS New Zealand has sailed reasonably safely through the Covid Seas. The Otatara Landcare Group wishes every one of you a safe Christmas and a safe and healthy New Year. Please be careful. New Zealand may have lost 25 people to Covid-19 this year but worse still, as of 22 November we have also lost 283 people on our roads. In 2019, it was 353, in 2018—377 for the full year. Whilst it is great that the number is reducing, just remember, to date this year we have lost more than 11 times more people on the roads, than through Covid-19.

Speaking of loss, it is with great sadness that I report the loss of our Treasurer, Glenda Graham. Glenda passed away in October and I would like to publicly acknowledge the work she did as treasurer over a number of years. (In the 21 years the OLG has been operating we have only had 3 Treasurers). Glenda's contribution to the Group and to the community will be sorely missed. Lloyd Esler has agreed to take over the role of treasurer in the meantime.

Finally, our Pigeon Post editor has flown the coup. Lesley Catterall and husband Martin have sold up and moved to the Kapiti Coast to a property they have purchased there. Lesley has agreed to continue with this edition of publishing the Pigeon Post, so thank you for that Lesley. Lesley, in her time here, was also responsible for getting advertisers and articles and publishing the last Otatara Booklet. Her skills in this area are going to be sadly missed and if there are others out there who have these skills and would like a job.... Contact us, we'll be very happy to talk to you.

*Barry Smith, Chairperson*  
email: [bjsrdms@gmail.com](mailto:bjsrdms@gmail.com)

### 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](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com), attention **Editor of Pigeon Post**, and watch out for it in our next edition.

# SOME REFLECTIONS



**...on the creation of the Oreti Totara Dune Forest**

By Cathy Macfie

The weather could hardly have been worse but it didn't deter several dozen hardy souls, young and old. What shone through, for me, was a sense of continuity, community and commitment.

Three generations of the Erskine family were present, providing a link to the earliest European farming on the land. Great, great, great (I think?) grandson Tim is still actively involved.

Family members of the most recent owner, the late Peter Knight, were there and it became clear how much they wanted to recognise Peter's love of this land by finding a legacy through protection rather than development.

Was it luck or vision that motivated Brian Rance to reach out to contacts in the NZ Forest Restoration Trust and spark their interest? Perhaps a bit of both! But it takes more than luck to fan that spark into a flame; and it took many long hours and lots of hard work by both Brian and Maurice Rodway to persuade the Trust that this was an investment worth making...their effort paid off. The purchase was made on the cusp of the Covid lockdown, a time when the Trust could have backed out, recognising uncertain times ahead, but they didn't.

So in the wild weather on November 21, there was a true sense of celebration and relief that Oreti Totara Dune Forest will ensure protection of both the past and future of this corner of Otatara. The community contribution - time, materials and money - that the project has already attracted is another special feature of a remarkable and continuing story.



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# ORETI TŌTARA DUNE FOREST



## OPENING 21 NOV 2020

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By Maurice Rodway

The opening of the Forest Reserve was held in the most atrocious weather imaginable, but we got through it and we thank the 40-odd people who braved the elements to participate in this event. Attendees were those who had made a special contribution by way of a donation or by volunteering their skills and enthusiasm to help manage this forest.

The Otatara community is indebted to the Native Forest Restoration Trust for having the vision and the courage to support this project. It is a significant investment for the Trust and was a bit of a gamble as it's a long way from their base and the places their trustees are familiar with. There are many locals who are very grateful to the Trust and have put in many hours of work to help look after this land since the Trust purchased it.

Local people have been aware of the special features of this property and have long thought it would be good to have it restored to maybe what it was like 150 years ago. Cathy Macfie has researched the history of the property and Brian Rance and Jesse Bythell have studied, and are knowledgeable about, its special ecological features. Dallas Bradley has been organising the pest control programmes. Tim Simpson, a local who is the grandson of one of our most significant donors, Russel Erskine and his family, is doing work on the forest on a contract basis. Tim worked for Peter Knight, the previous owner, and knows the property better than anyone. Tim does the pest control work, track mowing and other jobs as required. Tim's dad, Peter, also knows the land very well, has been doing pest control work there for many years and continues to use his skills to keep the rabbit numbers down.

While we have removed cattle and sheep from the forested area of the land and will have it QEII trust covenanted, we recognise that Peter Knight, the previous owner, was a gentle farmer and while he was managing it there was forest regeneration occurring. Some totara trees were regenerating and mingi mingi trees have expanded over the past several years. However, now that the cattle have gone there are many small native trees and understory plants growing under the main totara forest canopy. There are quite a few weeds as well. Tim, and Emily Jagoutz, an Otago University student, who lives just round the road, are busy controlling these. Emily is also doing bird counts and using her computing and tech skills to develop a detailed database that we will be able to add to in the future to see how bird abundance and diversity changes over time.

We have an agreement with Rory Baker, a young local farmer, to graze the southern part of the property over the next few years in a way that protects the existing trees on that area and allows the Trust to eventually restore this area into forest, while controlling the weeds that would otherwise take over. Rory has also smoothed out the car park and road verge and planted new grass there as well as building the fences along the side of the road and around the car park. Rory has also removed many exotic trees around the house which is part of the process to restore the majority of the land to a native forest.

Visitors who explore the forested area will come across bridges and boardwalks along with seats to use when looking out over the pond and the Oreti River in the north of the property. These have been made by Alan Ledington, and his helpers; his wife June, son Stephen and fellow Otatara local Graeme Childs.

Continued on next page



## Otreti Dune Forest Opening, *continued*



Alan and Graeme have restored Neil's hut—Neil McCallum was a previous resident on the land—which Rory moved into its current location. This hut will be used to display information about the history of the site that Cathy is preparing. Another neighbour, Angela Agnew, has helped with tree planting and carting things around the property on her side by side farm vehicle.

We have been grateful for the support the ICC, in particular the parks and reserves manager Michele Frey, has given us. This has included 1000 well grown native plants we have planted to provide seed sources for the forest regeneration programme. Environment Southland has given us \$5000 to fund our pest control programme and we have had their expert staff visit the property to discuss pest plant control, and sustainable farming for the area that is currently being grazed. Mark Oster has been of particular assistance in getting the pest control grant organised for us.

Brian Rance and Jesse Bythell have organised botanists to set up monitoring plots in the forest to measure native plant abundance and diversity as the forest regenerates over time. SIT students have studied the pond, measured pest abundance and generated an aerial photograph of the site so we can begin to monitor the change in proportion of forest cover over time. They also came out one day and planted some of the ICC trees. Sally and Gordon Duston, from the OLG also helped with tree planting and that made this big job easier.

Local artist and graphic designer, Helen Stewart, and Cathy Macfie have been responsible for the design of the entrance sign and the interpretation panel along with brochures that will sit in a container on Neil's hut for visitors to take with them. Helen has designed the directional signs which are placed around the reserve to help visitors get around and not get lost. We ask visitors to keep to the marked tracks in the forested areas to protect seedlings and also because there is quite a bit of blackberry in places and Tim is only clearing it along the tracks. Colin Lawrence has marked the tracks with a GPS and these are shown on the map that is in the brochure as well as being on the main sign.



We are grateful to Steve McGregor and Dave Manson of True South who have done the surveying and consent application for subdivision of the house and 7 one hectare lots along Oreti Road that the Trust plans to sell to help recoup some of the cost of purchasing the property so we will have resources to continue to look after it. This will help the Trust reactivate other projects that had to be put on hold and look to purchase other properties to restore. Much of the work Dave and Steve have done has been complimentary. Rikki Shuttleworth from Creation Signs has also been generous in helping to get the signs that Helen and Cathy designed made at a very reasonable cost.

The advisory committee of Chris and Brian Rance, Cathy Macfie, Jesse Bythell, Dallas Bradley and myself have had regular meetings to develop a management plan and make sure everything we do there is coordinated and based on good science. It has been a community project and this has been one of the things that gave the Trust confidence to invest in it. We hope locals and visitors will enjoy the site and its wonderful environment as it is restored over the coming years.



# Bookbinding with Jo Ogier 2020

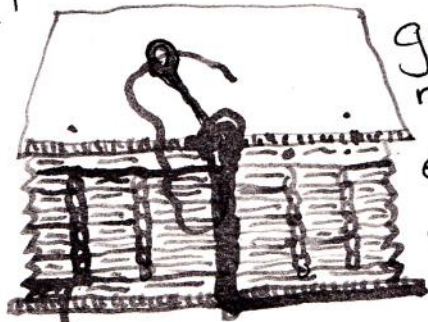
## Making a Journal 17-18 October

### Southland Community Nursery, Otatara

- attended & written by Linda Jackson -

I came, I watched, I tried, & tried some more.

Jo brought samples of the beautiful Nature Journals she has created & filled with records of her travels. Filled with sketches that bring to life particular birds, plants & places better than any bought keepsake, she inspired our own personal group to begin our notebooks.



Printmaking,  
inks, collage,  
papers, textiles,

experimenting with  
ripping beautiful  
cords & threads

& generally getting to try out a variety of methods, tools & equipment meant everyone came up with a unique result - some which are possibly never to be repeated! But all surpassed our own expectations.

Jo's unfailing patience & humour whilst we asked questions, advice & for "HELP ME NOW PLEASE" for 2 full days without ever looking harassed is a truly special gift.

I'm not sure what the weather was like except for not getting wet while we collected plant material to make our botanic prints - my concentration was kept fully occupied with the dramas happening under my nose. The Education Centre delivered great light, comfortable working spaces, yummy shared food & inspiring company. Thanks Chris & Jo for encouragement & opportunity. L





# YES, WE DO SELL PLANTS!



By Chris Rance

It's been a strange year to say the least but from the Southland Community Nursery's point of view we sold a lot of plants after lockdown. This meant we have been building up stock for spring and are now in a position to have plants for sale again.

Contact Chris at [rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz](mailto:rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz) to place your order or to arrange pick up.

## Why buy plants from the Southland Community Nursery?

- We grow locally sourced, weather-hardened stock (i.e. suitable and adapted to local weather and ground conditions).
- Our plants are good value at \$5 each in PB3 size bag.
- You are contributing to our Charitable Trust work (not our private profits)
- If you have a child at Otatara School then it's almost guaranteed they have benefitted from our educator and our education centre (free for schools - sale of plants helps to fund that aspect of what we do).
- We grow Southland natives (i.e. plants that grow naturally in Southland, not hybrids or cultivars more often grown in other nurseries).
- Our plants are sourced from seeds of local wild plants and are genetically diverse – this helps them survive if there is any future pressure like disease or extreme climate events.
- We have a lot of experience growing Southland indigenous plants and are more than happy to share that knowledge.

It's good to get to know your bush and to enhance it with the plants that occur naturally. These plants have evolved in this area and support a whole range of other creatures, some of which we know very little, if anything, about. It is also good to celebrate local Southland species – some only grow here, so instead of planting pohutukawa (lovely though it is) why not celebrate our own Southern rata, plant the mighty tōtara rather than kauri, or lowland ribbonwood, rather than lacebark. If you are starting from scratch then follow the principles of natural succession and plant faster growing tough natives first – <https://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/how-forests-work/>

You can find out more about Southland's special plants on our website or arrange a visit. <https://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/restoring-your-patch/>

We are always available to give advice and the Nursery is open to volunteers every Friday morning, so come along, lend a hand and learn a bit more about our special flora (and if that's not enough there is always the networking and good morning teas!).





## VOLUNTEER



# BREAK-UP MORNING AND SOAP-MAKING WORKSHOP

Friday 18 December 2020

This will be our last event for 2020! Fun and activities for children and adults – please bring some food to share! And park in our 183 Grant Road, Otatara car park.

Followed in the afternoon by:



### “Soap Making with Honorlea”

Details are available at our website:

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

Workshop cost is \$60 which includes the materials for the soaps that you can take home—ideal Christmas presents—or just to indulge yourself!

This is an extremely popular workshop so booking is essential. Book your place by emailing Chris at [rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz](mailto:rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz).

### Have you ideas for Workshops in 2021?

We are open to suggestions for workshops to be held in 2021 so if you have a good idea please email Chris at the address above and we will see if we can arrange something.



While the sycamore tree is  
an invasive pest plant in Otatara,

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# TIME TO REINVIGORATE YOUR PESTBUSTING



By Dallas Bradley, Otatara Pestbusters Coordinator

The days are getting warmer, and more importantly, the birds are nesting, a time when their eggs and chicks are particularly vulnerable to rats and possums.

What better time to reinvigorate or begin your pest control efforts.

Check your traps and bait stations regularly, particularly after any period of rain. Make sure you have fresh, not mouldy, bait in your bait stations—you want these to be the first port of call for rats and mice and they'll only go there if the bait is fresh. Be sure to set your traps with fresh bait or lure and try some different lures for those traps that aren't going off regularly or move them to a new location. Sometimes moving a trap a few metres from the old location is enough to get it active again.

While you may already have pest numbers down to low numbers, persistence is absolutely necessary to keep it that way.



Pest photos courtesy of Nga Manu images



And persistence pays off—bird numbers are definitely on the rise, tuis and kereru galore, plenty bellbirds, grey warblers and fantails, and quite a few kakariki in certain areas. Recently while having the rare experience of being out and about at the crack of dawn, I was amazed by the “dawn chorus” – the birds were going gangbusters and there was quite a racket. I should do that more often!

If you are new to Otatara, and judging by the number of properties changing hands, there must be a few of you, you may not be familiar with Otatara Pestbusters. Otatara Pestbusters consists of about 300 householders undertaking pest control on their own properties and volunteers who control rats and possums in all the ICC Reserves in Otatara.

Membership is free – all you have to do is to buy some traps, trap boxes, bait or bait stations from Pestbusters and hey presto, you are a member - you will have purchased your supplies at bargain basement prices too. In addition you receive a pretty little decal to add to your letterbox or fence should you wish.

Contact me on my mobile: **021-784-962**, landline: **03-213-0234** or email : [amberg2@gmail.com](mailto:amberg2@gmail.com) if you want to join Otatara Pestbusters, or wish to top up your supplies.

Predator Free NZ might be a big ask but we should be able to give Predator Free Otatara a good nudge – think nationally, act locally!



From the top: Kakariki and grey warbler—Bird photos courtesy of DoC and NZ Birds Online



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# BUSHY POINT PLANTING DAY

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By Chris Rance

The Bushy Point planting day went ahead on Saturday, 12 September 2020, despite the uncertainties of Covid. We arranged for group sizes to be smaller, each with a leader and the plants were placed in position prior to the event. Around 60 people attended and the plants were planted in good time with combi-guards for protection from rabbits.

Although there was no BBQ this year, there was lots of chatter and good humour and two more milestones for the group – a special planting of a tōtara for Maimee Laidlaw by Kevin and other members of their family, and the construction and placing of a special seat in memory of Russell Evans. The seat has been positioned by the Bushy Point pond so is a lovely place to sit and reflect or have a picnic over summer.

## Help Us Release Plants Already Planted

A special plant releasing day will be held around February 2021 to weed some of the 31,000 plants that have been planted at Bushy Point over the years – so if you have helped with the planting in the past, please come and help us maintain the young trees, shrubs and grasses so all your effort was not in vain.

There is also a Bushy Point work day held most months so if you want to help out then or any other time please email [otataralg@gmail.com](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com) and we will happily give you a task to do – many hands make light work!



Loading up the plants for laying out



Volunteers at our planting day

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## GIVE SOMETHING SUSTAINABLE THIS CHRISTMAS

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Some ideas for sustainable Christmas presents – give a native plant, a Community Nursery recipe book, a voucher for a Community Nursery workshop (e.g Soap Making 18 December), buy some natural body products from Kakariki Natural Beauty (Honorlea will have these available at the Nursery on Friday morning 18 December).

# FORAGING—A WAY TO FEED A FAMILY

By Lesley Catterall (editor-at-large)

There hasn't always been a supermarket in every town, or a dairy on every corner. Once, not that long ago, the first New Zealanders had to learn to live off the land. Many of those living here in Murihiku did so alongside the local Maori and so knowledge of the land and its bounty was learned through that association.

My mother was a young child during the Depression and she told me wonderful stories of how their family of seven survived off the land at Lora Gorge. My grandfather, who was half Maori, had to teach my very Scottish city-bred grandmother the foraging ways of his grandmother's people – a role reversal both of them were quite uncomfortable with given the times. But the family never went hungry and often my grandmother had surplus to share with others less fortunate in the community. And it was a skill my grandmother never stopped using. I can remember her use of wild herbs in preserves that added so much more flavour and we were often sent out as children with a basket in hand to collect the produce she needed from the wild garden of the native bush up the back of the property.

The upheaval of the last year brought to mind those days foraging in the hills and the empowerment that comes from being self-sufficient and able to sustain one's family through hardship for however long that may be. There is nothing like being prepared for an eventuality we hope will never come and foraging is an easy and accessible way to start.

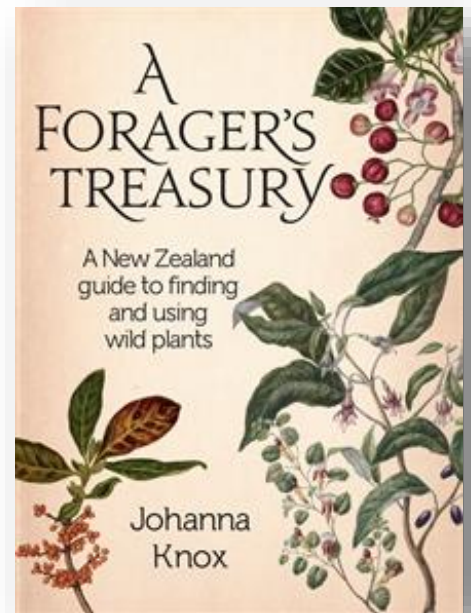
Foraging—to search widely for food or provisions—is the skill used to find, identify and safely use local herbs, weeds and native plants.

Many of the indigenous plants that grow in Southland offer nutritious and tasty alternatives to the Anglo-Saxon plant produce that was brought to the country by the settlers. Likewise, many of the introduced plants that have literally gone wild here, offer safe food fare the use of which helps to control the wide spread of these invasive plants – blackberry and elderberry in particular.

But as with anything foraging has its dark side, not all plants are safe to eat and knowing what to use, when to use it and how to prepare it can be a bit of an art. The forager's motto – “If in doubt, leave it out” is a useful one to apply. Luckily there are some great resources out there like Johanna Knox's book, ***“A Forager's Treasury - a Guide to finding and using wild plants”*** and the workshops run at the Southland Community Nursery by Maggie Elford and Chris Rance.

## So why forage?

Besides the obvious self-sustaining benefits, foraged food is free, it gets you and your family out into the wild and provides an opportunity to connect with the natural world: the curve of a leaf, the scent of a flower, the touch of the sun's rays on your back—all help to make the experience that much more enjoyable and memorable.



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And if that wasn't enough, foraged food is higher in nutritional value than the common fare picked, packed, shipped and stored that appears on the supermarket shelves. Including foraged food in your diet makes meals more interesting and diverse and provides an added satisfaction that you really did create this meal from scratch.

### Basic Rules of Foraging

The first rule is to know what wild food or its parts (plant, berry, flower, seed, or fungi) are safe and which ones are not. You must be able to identify edible plants and know when to harvest them for maximum benefit. Equally, you need to be wary of any poisonous plants or fungi especially those that might be good to eat at certain stages of their growth but toxic at others.

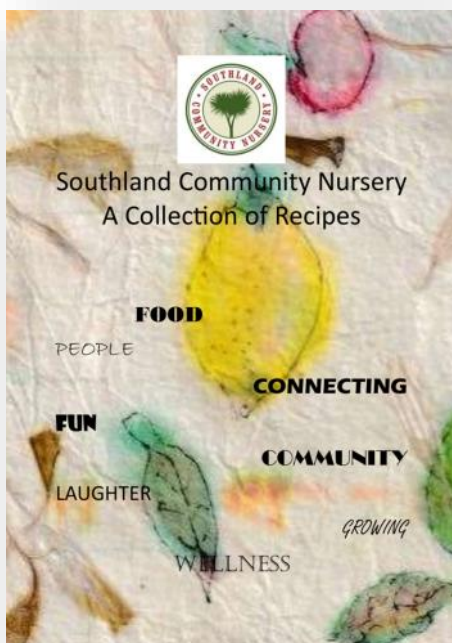
And you need to follow the sustainability rule and only take what you need so there'll always be more to go back to another time. This rule can be bent a little for those plants that are invasive weeds where harvesting more help reduce the spread of the plant in the future.

Finally enjoy the experience. There's great satisfaction and a pleasurable dopamine rush to be had whenever your foraging efforts result in a feast that feeds and delights your family. So what are you waiting for?

### Note from the Southland Community Nursery:

If there is demand we can run a foraging workshop in the new year – if anyone is interested please email Chris at [rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz](mailto:rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz) with your interest and contact details. She'll compile a list of interested people and will arrange the workshop(s) during the harvest season.

## DID YOU KNOW?



There's a foraging section in the Southland Community Nursery cookbook. It is packed with recipes donated by our volunteers .

You can find it at the following link:

<https://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/how-the-nursery-works/>

Or you can download it here:

[Southland Community Nursery Recipe Book](#)

Or pick up a copy for **\$10** from Chris at the Nursery. All proceeds go to support the work of the Education Centre.



# OTATARA BROWNIES FIND LOST TREES

by Douglas Black

On a blowy Wednesday evening in early December, the local Otatara Brownie pack did some valuable environmental work at Bushy Point. The Brownies were engaged to hunt for and tag small tree seedlings, which were being virtually smothered by grass, so they could later be found quickly and released from the encroaching grass at the Landcare Working Bee on Sunday 6 December.

The struggling seedlings and their protecting plastic sheaths supported by four canes were often hard to spot in the Spring grass growth, so all the ones found were marked with yellow tape, and those which needed urgent help also had a red band added, as shown in the picture.

This should save time at the working bee as the seedlings in the red-banded ones were often very easy to miss in the thick choking grass.

The nine girls really got stuck in and there was often an enthusiastic wee queue for the bits of tape they needed as they got the hang of spotting the seedlings, and about 50 sites were checked and tagged within half an hour or so.

A short sharp burst of unexpected rain did little to dampen the girls' spirits as they walked (and ran!) back to the car park for a little bonus visit to Bush Haven to see a young kereru, Oriori, and two fledgling tuis, which were being cared for at the time.

Happily, the girls had some fun out there and are keen to come back early next year to find more lost trees to save.



Seedling under pressure marked and ready for releasing



From left: Trixie, Sofia, Joelene Terry (leader), Niamh, Ava, Ciara & Teagan with some of their trees marked and ready for releasing





# Otatarā Landcare Group Events 2021

A calendar for OUR enjoyment

[www.otataralandcare.org.nz](http://www.otataralandcare.org.nz)

JANUARY	Monday 25	Chilean Flame Creeper Bowman Bush – meet Spence Avenue entrance 7pm Jesse Bythell
FEBRUARY	Friday 5, 12, 19, 26	Southland Community Nursery, 185 Grant Road – volunteer mornings – 9am-noon (ph Chris 2131161). <a href="http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz">www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz</a> (park at 183 Grant Road car park).
	Sunday 21	Bushy Point BIG RELEASING DAY 1pm-3pm ph Sally (2131403, 0273548209)
MARCH	Friday 5, 12, 19, 26	Southland Community Nursery, 185 Grant Road - volunteer mornings including seed collecting – 9am-noon (ph Chris 2131161). <a href="http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz">www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz</a> (park at 183 Grant Road car park)
	Tuesday 16	Heritage Month walk Oreti Totara Dune Forest – 344 Oreti Road – the plants, the birds, trapping, history – meet 6.30pm. Leader Cathy MacFie, Maurice Rodway.
	Sunday 21	Bushy Point work day – 1pm-3pm (ph Sally 2131403, 0273548209)
APRIL	Sunday 11	Bushy Point work day – 1pm-3pm (ph Sally 2131403, 0273548209)
	Friday 9, 16, 23, 30	Southland Community Nursery, 185 Grant Road - volunteer mornings – 9am-noon (ph Chris 2131161). <a href="http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz">www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz</a> (park at 183 Grant Road car park)
MAY	Friday 7, 14, 21, 28	Southland Community Nursery, 185 Grant Road - volunteer mornings – 9am-noon. (ph Chris 2131161) (park at 183 Grant Road car park) <a href="http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz">www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz</a>
	Sunday 2	Bushy Point Work Day 1pm-3pm (ph Sally 2131403, 0273548209)
	Wednesday 12	Otatarā Landcare Group AGM – Meeting 7-9pm. Venue TBA
JUNE	Friday 4, 11, 18, 25	Southland Community Nursery, 185 Grant Road - volunteer mornings – 9am-noon. (ph Chris 2131161). (park at 183 Grant Road car park)
	Sunday 13	Bushy Point Work Day 1pm-3pm ph Sally (2131403, 0273548209)
	Saturday 19	Matariki Night Celebration and BYO Supper to share at Community Nursery Education Centre 7pm-9pm - park 183 Grant Road (ph Chris 2131161). <a href="http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz">www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz</a> .
JULY	Fridays	Southland Community Nursery, Nursery closed for winter.
	Sunday 4	Bushy Point Work Day 1pm-3pm (ph Sally 2131403, 0273548209)
AUGUST	Sunday 29	Bushy Point Work Day 1pm-3pm ph Sally 2131403, 0273548209
	Fridays	Southland Community Nursery, Nursery closed for winter.
SEPTEMBER	Saturday 11	Conservation Week Activity - Big tree planting day for families at Bushy Point (ph Barry 2131500). Combined with Kiwi Conservation Club Bronwyn KCC 2130017 <a href="mailto:southland@kcc.org.nz">southland@kcc.org.nz</a>
	Friday 17, 24	Southland Community Nursery, 185 Grant Road - volunteer mornings – 9am-noon (ph Chris 2131161). <a href="http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz">www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz</a>
OCTOBER	Friday 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	Southland Community Nursery, 185 Grant Road - volunteer mornings – 9am-noon (ph Chris 2131161). <a href="http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz">www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz</a> (park at 183 Grant Road car park)
	Sunday 10	Bushy Point Work day 1pm-3pm (ph Sally 2131403, 0273548209)
NOVEMBER	Friday 5, 12, 19, 26	Southland Community Nursery, 185 Grant Road - volunteer mornings – 9am-noon (ph Chris 2131161). <a href="http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz">www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz</a> (park at 183 Grant Road car park).
	Sunday 7	Bushy Point Work day 1pm-3pm (ph Sally 2131403, 0273548209)
DECEMBER	Sunday 5	Bushy Point Work day 1pm-3pm (ph Sally 2131403, 0273548209)
	Friday 3, 10, 17	Southland Community Nursery, 185 Grant Road - volunteer mornings – 9am-noon (ph Chris 2131161). <a href="http://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz">www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz</a> (park at 183 Grant Road car park)

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# SO WHOSE GARDEN IS IT ANYWAY?

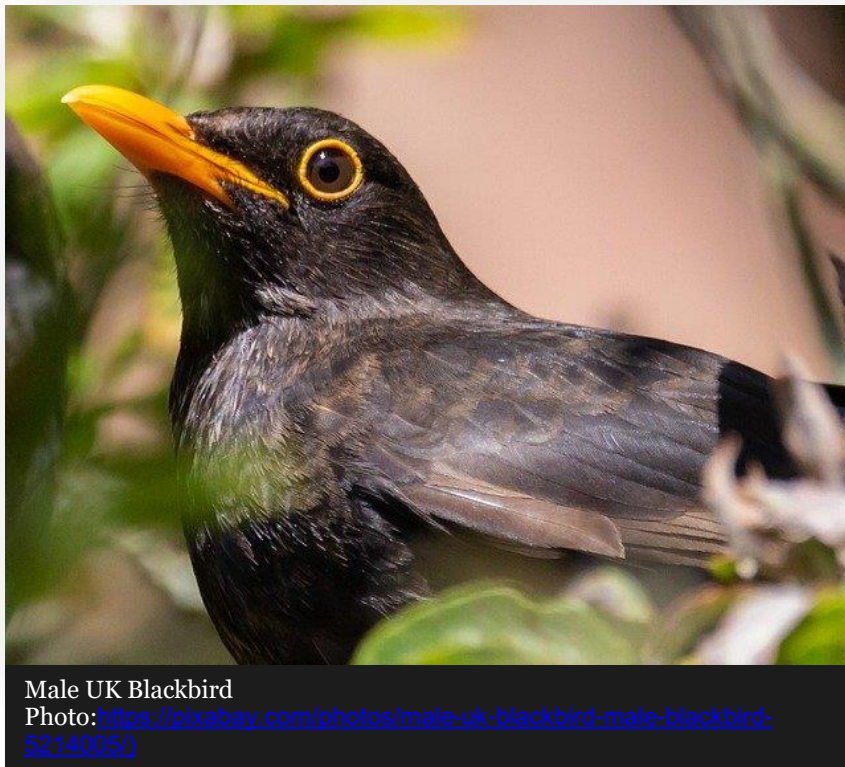
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By Geoff Dembo

On my evening stroll around the section, I yet again patiently pick up bark from the drive and sweep mulch off the carrot seedlings ... but oh no, someone's got into the strawberry bed and cleared it out!

## Who can the culprit be ?



Male UK Blackbird  
Photo: <https://pixabay.com/photos/male-uk-blackbird-male-blackbird-5214005/>

*Turdus merula*, the urasian blackbird, was introduced to this country in the 1860's and did very well - it's now pretty much everywhere. A pair have established their territory in my garden, and I've watched them seeing off other blackbirds who encroach on their patch.

Over the months they have gradually become bolder when I am weeding in the veggie beds, calmly eyeing up the possibilities of unearthed goodies from a couple of metres away. When I once unwittingly got too close to their nest, though, the female flew out screaming and momentarily landed on my head. I took the hint and backed off.

As to the question in the title, they clearly believe it's their garden and I'm a pesky human who seems fairly harmless and is occasionally useful.

For my part, it's sometimes nice to have their company when I'm working in the garden and I'll just have to beef up the protection on the strawberries.





By Kathy Morrison

Since the last issue of Pigeon Post with the Kereru Alert feature we have only had two injured kereru compared to twelve over the same time last year! We are not sure whether that is because people have left their windows dirty like us or put transfers and other deterrents up, or whether the kereru that survived from last year are now window savvy.

It would be good to know if people took precautions to avoid kereru window strike and/or found the colour supplement useful. It would be really helpful to us if we could receive a quick **text** to **027 786 5365** to let us know what if anything you did differently this Spring.

One of the two kereru was phoned in by a local man telling me that he had a bird in his bedroom. I wasn't sure I needed to know that until he said it had smashed through his window.

I went around with a box imagining a concussed bird, even more so as I walked up the hallway towards the break-in. The window glass had shattered leaving a large jagged hole and was scattered over everything in the bedroom and the kereru was tucked down behind a set of drawers. It was quite hard to work out how to get the bird without driving it further into the glass so I leant one arm on the bed and reached towards it.

Suddenly, there was a very strange animal noise, definitely not a bird sound even though it came from the same direction. I got such a fright and looked around for the house owner but he had gone to find something to pick up the glass. Did he have an old dog lying under the bed?

Once again I leant over the bed careful to avoid huge shards of glass and bent to retrieve the bird. This time the growling sound was louder and closer and the kereru stood watching me with its beak firmly shut. What the heck!

When the owner came back with the cleaning up gear he found me trying to look under the bed without getting onto my knees on the glass. He may have thought the kereru was under the bed until in the awkward position I was in I leant on the bed again and realised the noise came from under the blanket my elbow was on. While I was imagining even weirder options, he knew immediately what it was - bagpipes!

Meanwhile the kereru had positioned itself to face the hole it had made, looking very innocent, and then suddenly took off back through the window without touching any jagged edges and was gone into the trees.

A great outcome, and a bit of fun was had in the process.

A big thank you to the kind people who look out for our birdlife and bring them for help. We are delighted to see the care so many of you take. It is so worthwhile as warmth, safety from predators and food can make a huge difference while birds swing their natural healing power into action.

**Thank you!**



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# TREE RELEASING AT BUSHY POINT IN 2021

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By Douglas Black

We are currently starting to plan a series of working bees starting in February 2021, focusing on any of the trees planted at Bushy Point in September this year which may need releasing from competing grass growth, now well underway as shown on right.

If you were involved in our very successful Planting Day in September, this provides a great opportunity to see how the trees you planted are progressing, and give them a helping hand to ensure they can survive - and thrive!

About 1000 trees were planted that day, but not all will need to be released – tussock probably won't, and in other cases, the grass may take some time to re-establish after it was sprayed prior to tree planting in the area. However, there will definitely be some tree seedlings from previous years which will need help, and that may well be more challenging.

Appropriate methods for releasing the young trees will be demonstrated at the start of each working bee, so no previous experience is necessary. In some situations, sharp garden shears may be needed, so please bring a pair if you can. Safety or sun glasses are recommended, and garden gloves will probably be helpful. Sun protection will hopefully be essential!

Kids can play a valuable role in this too. Like the Brownies in the earlier article ([Otatarā Brownies Find Lost Trees](#)), kids can search in the grass for seedlings which need help, and mark them with coloured tape so adults can locate them quickly and release them. Hopefully local schools or other youth groups could help in this way on weekdays or evenings, by arrangement with the Landcare Group. This work is surprisingly rewarding, and kids (of all ages!) really enjoy the challenge of spotting little tree seedlings well-hidden by choking grass.

We propose to hold short working bees to release trees on Wednesday evenings from 6.30-7.30pm starting on 10 February, with a longer session as part of the Landcare Group Working Bee on Sunday 21 February from 1-3pm. It is likely that tree releasing will continue into March and beyond, for those that are keen! Finding and releasing a tree can take a wee while, and sometimes as few as only six trees can be released in an hour, depending on how overgrown a particular area has become. So the more people who come, the more successful our efforts will be, and more trees will be saved from the deadly clutches of their arch-rival, grass.

To find out more, or to register for a particular date in February, please text me on **022 104 8661**, or email [otataralg@gmail.com](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com) and mark it for my attention.



Spring grass growth at Bushy Point plantings beside the Totara Block



# IN REMEMBRANCE...



## GLENDA GRAHAM

The Otatara Landcare Group recently lost long-serving treasurer with the death of Glenda Graham who had battled serious illness for some time.

Glenda was an active person involved with music, tramping and conservation activities and a keen participant in Landcare Group and Fieldclub activities. With her electrically powered bike, she covered a lot of ground – legitimately – during the lockdown and she was always up for a musical soiree or a game of Trivial Pursuit.

Her contribution to conservation in Otatara will be greatly missed.



Glenda using a hollow grass straw to drink flax nectar

# FLAX FLOWERING

By Lloyd Esler

This summer is shaping up to be a poor one for flax flowering. There are always some flowers each year but there is a cycle of good and bad flowering years and other variables such as the quality of the ‘good’ years and how early the flowering starts.

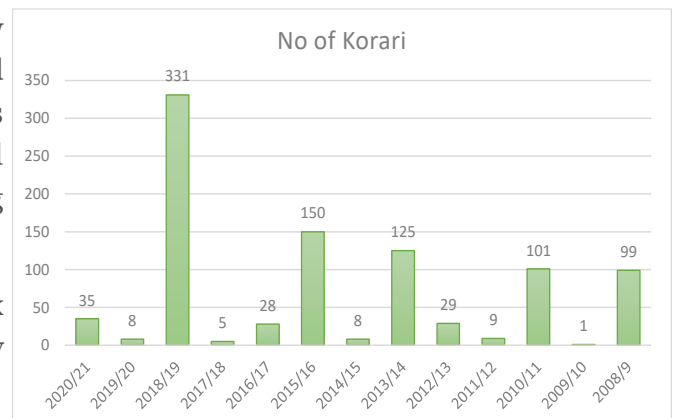
Following a good flowering there are one or two years where the plant puts its resources into vegetative growth to compensate as each fan or *ramet* which has flowered then dies with the new shoots developing at its base. There must also be a trigger early in the year which determines the quality of the flowering – perhaps a maximum temperature reached in March or a number of successive cool days.

Flowering quality follows a pattern throughout New Zealand but there are local variances. Around sealed car parks and in motorway islands the flowering is more intense, probably because of the reflected heat. There is no relationship between flax flowering and the quality of the summer weather.

For 13 years I have been counting the number of flax flowering stalks, called *korari* or claddies, on my property. The graph illustrates the pattern.



Young tui drinking flax nectar



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# OUT ON THE BEACH

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By Lloyd Esler

The beach was very quiet during lockdown and on a couple of occasions when I biked out there, there was not another soul in sight. Now it is back to its popular self with sandcastles, fishermen, flounder nets, toheroa digging, sliding down sandhills, picnics, Te Araroa walkers and the usual anti-social lot who drive irresponsibly and leave rubbish.

I'm out there every week doing a bit of a rubbish clean-up and recording the dead birds that have washed ashore, usually in the stretch between the Main and South entrances. This is a citizen science project that has been going for more than 60 years. We have recently finished digitising about 28,000 beach patrol reports from around New Zealand and adding about 400 each year. This shows seasonal movement of birds, mortality due to disease or disruption to the food chain. These records will be valuable as baseline data if global warming impacts seabird survival. Any keen naturalists visiting the beach might like to collect corpses for me or let me know of anything significant. Phone: 03 213 0404.

## Te Araroa Trail Hike

The lockdown brought an abrupt halt to hiking on the 3,000km Te Araroa Trail which extends from Cape Reinga to Bluff. Many of these interrupted journeys have resumed and a good number of Kiwis are doing the hike this summer. The second to last day is Riverton to Invercargill along the beach. Apart from stormy weather the only hindrance is the crossing of the Waimatuku mouth which can be dodgy if the river is swollen.

The final day is Invercargill to Bluff and at last, after a lot of delays, the formation of the Invercargill to Bluff cycle and walking trail is underway. Get out this summer and enjoy your beach and the numerous walking tracks around the city.

## Have you tried the new Omaui Hill Track yet?

It takes about 40 minutes from the Omaui carpark to the top of the hill. It is a great bush walk and fabulous view—well worth the effort!



A group of children in 1993 doing a beach patrol on Oreti Beach—anyone you recognise?



# 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](mailto: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.**

### Otatara Landcare Group:

Chairman, Barry Smith: 03 213 1500; Secretary, Chris Rance: 03 213 1161 ; Acting Treasurer, Lloyd Esler: 03 213 0404.

### Committee Members and Contributors:

Brian Rance, Chris Bowen, Sally Duston, Graeme Childs, Linda Jackson, Ray Jackson, Geoff Dembo, Cathy MacFie, Dallas Bradley, Lloyd Esler, Bronwyn Graham , Maurice Rodway, Kathy Morrison, Douglas Black

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](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com)



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[www.otataralandcare.org.nz](http://www.otataralandcare.org.nz), Email: [otataralg@gmail.com](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com)

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