

Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc.



President's Annual Report 2011

Presented on behalf of the Executive Committee

This Annual Report is presented to members on behalf of the Executive Committee to the 23rd Annual General Meeting of the Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc. to be held in Wainuiomata, Lower Hutt on 26th October 2011.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met on seven occasions through the year and considered governance issues, funding raising, pest control trapping, the Kiwi Translocation Project, the Catchpool Restoration Project, the Dawn Chorus Project, long-term planning and public relations.

The 2010/11 Committee comprises:

President	Ian Armitage
Vice President	Peter Cooper
Secretary	Tiffany Krall
Treasurer	no appointment at the 2010 AGM. John Cranefield was coopted to the committee during 2011 to fill the vacancy of Treasurer.
Committee members	Kelly Anso, Nikki McArthur, Melody McLaughlin, Mike White, Rosemary Thompson and Kirby McLeod. Peter Blaxter of the Department of Conservation also serves on the committee.

Membership

Membership stands at 70 (as at 21 September 2011), down from last year mainly as a result of culling the names of people who have not paid subscriptions. At the same time we are pleased to welcome several new members who have joined during the year and we thank you all for your support to the ongoing work of the Trust. The Committee is pleased to advise that the membership subscription fee will remain unchanged for the next year, \$15 for individuals and \$35 for clubs.

Governance

I reported last year that although the Rules of the Trust have served us well for many years the committee has formed the view that they are now in need of comprehensive revision. A review has proceeded supported by voluntary legal assistance. It is proposed that the Trust will continue to be governed as a Charitable Incorporated Society. The revised Rules that are presented to the membership for approval at the 2011 AGM will subsequently require acceptance by Government authorities (Ministry of Economic Development and the Charities Commission).

We wish to thank Sam Perry of Wellington, a partner in the legal firm Brandons, for his generous legal assistance in guiding the revision of the Rules of the Trust.

Memorial Seat at Catchpool Carpark

A seat built at the Catchpool Carpark Information Kiosk was dedicated to our late President, Bill McCabe QSM, in December 2010 and we feel is an appropriate memorial to Bill. The Catchpool Valley is a part of the forest park that was well known to Bill and the seat will, we hope, be an enduring monument to his enthusiasm for forest conservation. The plaque reads: *A keen advocate for forest conservation in the Rimutaka Forest Park.*

Programme Coordinator

Melody McLaughlin has, once again, held the role of Programme Coordinator for part of the year and it has proved to be very effective for leading, facilitating and coordinating the various Trust projects, in particular the busy and demanding Kiwi Project. Melody's coordinator role was once again supported for a part of the year with funding provided by the Bank of New Zealand. On behalf of the membership I would like to thank Melody for the very considerable assistance she has provided as Programme Coordinator.

Finances

John Cranefield has set out the financial position of the Trust in the Financial Statements for the year ended 30th June 2011. Our financial position is sound and the resources have been used effectively to implement the various Trust activities. A Statement of Financial Performance shows that we have a small excess of income over expenditure. Our accumulated funds are sound and provide us with a comfortable level of reserve finance that is a little higher than in 2010.

Donations, 'Sponsor a Trap' and 'Sponsor an Egg' schemes continue to provide valuable financial support for kiwi translocation efforts and were higher compared with 2009/2010. Income from 'Sponsor a kiwi' is less than last year and income from membership subscriptions is comparable. Expenditure in the Catchpool Restoration Project is less than in 2010 and reflects a reduction of operational activity in this important project.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of grant sponsorship during the year, namely, from the BNZ Save the Kiwi Fund, Department of Conservation, Pub Charity, Wellington Community Trust, Hutt City Council together with several generous private donations, including from John Kilpatrick of Kadine Stamps for postage stamps. We are also grateful for and wish to thank numerous companies, Trusts and other agencies for a range of services provided during the year. All have helped to advance the goals of achieving improved conservation of ecosystems and public enjoyment of the forest park.

We wish to thank our Honorary Auditor, Phil Rundle of Lower Hutt, for his continuing help in auditing of Trust accounts.

Pest Control Trapping

Pest control trapping focuses on the control of small animals with the enthusiastic support of a more than 60 volunteer trappers. A range of planning, coordination and operational improvements have been rolled out during the year by trapping coordinator, Kirby McLeod. We are pleased to record that Kirby is confident that within the initial-trapped area best practice activities for operating a stoat-trapping network continue to be met, or have been exceeded. Trap repair and testing continues to be led by Mike White who ensures that trap operations are maintained to a very high standard. Ferrett traps have been deployed in the Catchpool Valley adding to the traps already placed here.

On behalf of the membership can I thank Kirby and Mike for the dedication and effort they provide to this critically important and long-standing programme that is vital to achieving long-term protection of a large area of native forest in the southern Rimutaka Range. Without a consistent volunteer-supported pest trapping effort there would be no brown kiwi translocation programme and the presence and diversity of forest birds would probably be less than it now is.

We were pleased to acquire a significant collection of traps from Phil Waddington of Lower Hutt during the year that is now being deployed to expand and reinforce the trapping programme.

The Committee continues to follow progress with trials of self-resetting stoat and possum kill traps. These new and novel designs have the potential to change the way stoats, rats and possums are trapped and to increase the efficiency of trapping efforts.

The Trust relies on volunteers for servicing traps so we are always keen to recruit more fit and enthusiastic people who can contribute to this important aspect of forest protection. I wish to thank all volunteer trappers for the dedicated and effective efforts you have made over the past year.

Kiwi Translocation Project

The Kiwi Translocation Project that is introducing a North Island brown kiwi population into the Rimutaka Forest Park, mainly in the Turere Valley, continues to be a highlight of the Trust's activities and is based on the release of captive-bred birds and kiwi transferred from Hauturu/Little Barrier Island. It is our judgement that more than 60 brown kiwi are now established in the Rimutaka Forest Park and on adjoining land, based on 49 birds being monitored presently, eight birds who have dropped transmitters and several chicks which were not caught at the nest following hatching.

As reported last year the practice of leaving some eggs in nests and allowing chicks to hatch naturally will continue and is step towards the establishment a brown kiwi population that can live with minimal human intervention, other than pest control and monitoring. During the year we again implemented the BNZ Operation Nest Egg (removing eggs from burrows, incubating and hatching chicks in captivity and later returning young kiwi to the forest park) and we also captured chicks to be monitored at the nest. During the coming summer intervention will be reduced further and will focus on the capture and monitoring of wild hatched chicks only. Over the next six months we will enter a new phase that involves the removal of transmitters from some kiwi. A sample of the population (chicks, juveniles, sub-adults and adults) will be monitored but on a reduced scale.

Heavy snow in late August affected breeding, in particular of two male kiwi who appear to have abandoned their nests. Chicks and juvenile kiwi that were health checked after the snowy weather showed slower the usual weight increases and in one case a weight reduction. The snow was knee deep for two weeks and understandably these conditions made field work cold, slow and difficult.

Population modelling has been tackled by Robin Toy, Susan Ellis, Nikki McArthur and Melody McLaughlin and is providing a better understanding of the factors that are and will continue to influence the changing brown kiwi population. A presentation on the topic was made by Robin Toy to the 2011 Conference of the Ornithological Society of NZ in Lower Hutt.

The brown kiwi programme is a credit to the dedication of the team of volunteers led by Melody McLaughlin who continue to implement a detailed operational programme. They can all take pride in its achievement and on behalf of all members we thank you for your time and commitment.

Dawn Chorus Project and Monitoring of Birds

The Dawn Chorus Project, one of the longest running projects of the Trust, continues to control animal pests that are threatening forest ecosystems, including forest birds. It has been reinvigorated during the year by Janet Lawson and her efforts build on the pest control efforts of others over many years. Thank you Janet for your support.

Bird conspicuousness was measured in and near the Catchpool Valley in 2009/2010 using a five-minute count method. Monitoring was paused in 2010/2011 but may be resumed in 2012.

Catchpool Restoration Project

The Catchpool Restoration Project that commenced in 2009 has continued with grant funding from the Community Conservation Fund to support revegetation of parts of the gorse/bracken covered

slopes of the lower Catchpool Valley. The aim of improving the amenity value of the lower slopes near the car park and camping ground is being achieved and gradually these sites will become more visually appealing to visitors. Equally important, the project aims to widen plant biodiversity and provide more shelter for birds. Good progress has been achieved using assistance from the staff of several companies and schools who have now planted in excess of 20,000 eco-sourced native plants. Plant survival and growth is satisfactory.

On behalf of the membership I would like to thank Peter Cooper for the very considerable time and effort he has put into planning and coordination of this important programme; it is a credit to him and to the many volunteers for the success achieved so far. We continue to be pleased to be working closely with the Department of Conservation in implementing this project.

Public Relations

Publicity about the Trust to the wider community has, once again, been promoted during the year. Our website, www.rimutakatrust.org.nz is popular with visitors and is the major point of access for information about the Trust. Again, can I thank Peter Cooper for his significant technical skill and enthusiasm in maintaining and developing the website.

The information and sponsorship brochures are proving to be effective for widening the 'reach' of our public relations efforts. Press releases were issued during the year on various topics, but mostly concerning the Kiwi Project. Talks to school groups by Trust members further advanced our public relations and two issues of our informative newsletter, 'The Rag', were printed and distributed. Several compliments have been received for the design and content of 'The Rag', a tribute to Kevin Alekna and Lianne Beckett. Our sincere thanks go to Kelly Anso, Lianne Beckett and Kerry Swadling for their helpful contributions towards various public relations efforts over the past year.

A popular and enjoyable Stoat Trappers' Ball, a fund-raiser for the Trust, was held in 2010. The Christmas barbeque, a fun event for all, was held once again at the Catchpool Centre in December. Our sincere thanks go to the organisers for this event, an important part of the Trust's social calendar.

Appreciation

On behalf of the Committee I wish to thank all who have helped the Trust to operate successfully as a voluntary community organisation during 2010/2011. The trappers, the kiwi project team, the Catchpool restoration team and others who have contributed to public relations, fund raising and the numerous small issues that always come up, a big thank you to you all.

I would like to acknowledge the generous and friendly support of the staff of the Department of Conservation for helping with the implementation of Trust activities; we are most grateful for your support. May I also acknowledge the friendly cooperation offered during the year by the staff of the Greater Wellington Regional Council.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Executive Committee for their significant contribution to the effective running of the Trust during the year.



Ian Armitage
President

26 October 2011