



Annual Report 2016 - 2017

RIMUTAKA
FOREST PARK TRUST

Regenerating
our natural
habitat

Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc.

Annual Report 2017

Presented by the President on behalf of the Executive Committee

This Annual Report is presented to the 29th Annual General Meeting of the Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc. to be held in Petone, Lower Hutt on 26th October 2017.

Special features of the Year

This has been another busy year for the Trust. Although our Newsletter “Rimutalker” and the regular information coming from our new CMS have reduced the need for this Report, I want to comment on some highlights from my perspective:

1. We completed the installation of the Bird Interpretation panels, and arranged the unveiling and blessing in association with the US Embassy (the main sponsor), DOC and local Iwi. A lovely gesture from the Payne Family saw a memorial plaque placed on the base of 1 of the panels.
2. We undertook another year of Operation Nest Egg (ONE) and successfully released 15 second-generation kiwi chicks into the Park. As I mentioned last year, the work of a group of skilled and committed volunteers to make this happen is appreciated.
3. We were nominated for and won the Heritage and Environment Category of the Hutt City -Wellington Airport Regional Community Awards for 2017, a significant reflection of the very capable work carried out by our volunteers.
4. We (accidentally) hosted the first visit of a Minister of Conservation to the forest park, when a new trapping project was launched in mid-January. We took the opportunity to show Minister Maggie Barry other aspects of our Trust’s work.
5. The second year of acoustic bird monitoring was completed, and the results publicised. Our guest speaker will be talking about other aspects of formal monitoring in the Park, but this effort is worthy of mention because it demonstrates just how our volunteer members, over a number of years, have used their skills and knowledge to gather robust scientific data.
6. There was continued work on the second stage of the Community Fund project that we know as JtD2. Melody McLaughlin completed the Financial Year as the part-time Project Coordinator, but has since found full-time employment elsewhere. Her skills in driving this project, with all its intertwining features, will be very hard to replace.
7. TbFree finally started a major possum control operation in the park using 1080 pellets, traps and other pest control toxins. The aim of that job is to eradicate Bovine Tb in the region, but they have co-ordinated with DOC to enhance desirable environmental outcomes.
8. Our trappers continue to do amazing stuff. This year, a funding boost saw DOC, MOA and our Trust purchase about 900 A24 traps, and our volunteers have assisted with their deployment outside our traditional protection zone as well as within the zone. We have also installed a number of A24 self-resetting traps in our eco hotspot to make sure that our DOC 200 traps don’t get “clogged” and reduce their effectiveness.
9. Our Health & Safety policy and procedures are being implemented. I am very pleased to report that we had no Serious Harm incidents during the past year.

Several near-miss incidents were reported at Committee meetings, & actions have been taken around those.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met regularly during the year and acted in a governance role for the various activities undertaken by groups within the Trust. These included the management of the JtD2 project, the trapping programme, the Kiwi Translocation Project, (which now includes the Dawn Chorus Project under the JtD umbrella project) the Catchpool Restoration Project and funding-raising. We also have Health & safety as a standing agenda item.

The 2016/17 Committee elected at the last AGM was:

President	Geoff Cameron
Vice President	Rosemary Thompson
Secretary	Grant Watt
Treasurer	John Cranefield.
Committee members	Ian Armitage, Penny Evans, Kelly Anso, Pierre Tellier and Peter Cooper.

During the year, Penny and Kelly resigned from the Committee, but Penny continued her trapping and fund-raising work. Alan Thompson was seconded to the Committee, but will not be available this coming year.

The Committee members continue to offer a wide range of skills to the task of running this Trust. They provided valuable support to me as President, for which I am very grateful. We need more Committee members and I hope that you will volunteer your services.

Ian Armitage is not seeking re-election to the Committee this year, ending a nine-year period of serving this Trust. His guidance and mentorship has been invaluable to me over the last 2 years that I have been in this role, and I wish to publicly thank him for that and acknowledge the tremendous input he has made to the running of this Society.

Rosemary Thompson is standing for re-election to the Committee, but is not seeking the Vice President position. That position therefore needs to be filled. Rosemary has been an absolute rock on the Committee and has shouldered an incredible amount of work in the fundraising and kiwi aversion training areas – as well as keeping me on track!

Membership

Financial Membership stands at 124 (63 individual members, 7 associate members, 52 Family members), up slightly from last year. We have 2 Life members.

The class of Volunteer Member introduced last year has attracted 45 new members into the "Volunteer class. Note that we have 158 volunteers.

We are pleased to welcome new members who have joined during the year and we thank all members for their support to the ongoing work of the society. Financial

members are the heart & soul of any Society, and it is vital that we remain relevant to our existing members. Without you we could not exist.

Grant continues to carry out job of Committee Secretary and ensures the administration of the Trust runs smoothly. He has completed the task of implementing a Contact Management System to handle the Trust's interactions and relationships with its members, volunteers, sponsors and other partner organisations. He has also trained committee members & some other key volunteers to use it.

Finances

John Cranefield has set out the Financial Statements for the year ended 30th June 2017. You will see from these Accounts and the Statement of Service Performance just how complex the Trust accounts have become. The skill and dedication of John to this work continue to be appreciated by all the Committee, and by me in particular. Our thanks to John.

We have had to change auditor again. We wish to thank Daniel McIlroy for his work and welcome Karen Baker as the new auditor.

The executive Committee has proposed three resolutions around the audit process, to reflect our needs and current Best Practice. We seek your support for these.

Our financial position continues to be sound. As in past years our funds have been used effectively to implement various conservation-related activities. Donations, 'Sponsor a Kiwi', 'Sponsor a Trap' and 'Sponsor an Egg' schemes continue to provide valuable financial support for kiwi translocation activities.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of grant sponsorship during the year from:

- Department of Conservation,
- Wellington Community Trust,
- Pharazyn Trust,
- Nikau Foundation,
- Hutt City Council (Kiwi Project and through the Wainuiomata Community Board)
- Four Winds Foundation,
- Scripting IT Ltd,
- Opus International.

Kiwi naming rights were purchased by:

- Village Accommodation (as part of a three-year sponsorship deal);
- Sunday Social Riders;
- Image Childcare;
- Kokiri Marae;
- The Baker Family;
- The Drew Family

Other companies, agencies and individuals have provided a range of services and support to us. All have helped to advance the society's goals of achieving improved conservation of Rimutaka forest ecosystems and wider public enjoyment of the forest park.

Joining the Dots, Stage 2

This year, Melody and her team of volunteers completed the 5 key elements of the Project. Investigations showed that large-scale habitat monitoring was not feasible for us, and the Eco hotspot was reduced in size to a more logical 130 ha at this stage.

The acoustic recording of forest birds, across 75 call sites, is now into its 3rd year. This would not have been possible without Susan Ellis focusing her energies on ensuring the accuracy and consistency of the data, spending many an evening listening to call records and analysing results, in between the deployment and collecting of the kiwi call data. Thank you to Susan for her amazing commitment to this time-consuming activity.

Melody McLaughlin has almost completed her contractual obligations to the Trust for this project, which was a big success for us, and so I would like to thank Melody once again for her leadership in this important task.

Kiwi Translocation Project

The Kiwi Translocation Project, introducing and maintaining a North Island brown kiwi population into the Rimutaka Forest Park, continues to be a flagship programme of the Trust and gives us a national profile. As discussed last year, we used the ONE technique to remove 18 eggs from kiwi nests during the last breeding season and used both Pukaha/Mt Bruce and Rainbow Springs to hatch and raise the chicks. We engaged the local Iwi & community to bless and release the chicks on their return. Melody continued to manage this whole process.

We continued the kiwi avoidance training for dogs, but we deferred the most recent training course because the 1080 operation in the Park made planning for this difficult.

Catchpool Restoration Project

Once again, we wish to thank Peter Cooper for the considerable personal effort he has put into planning, leading and coordinating this important programme.

The Catchpool has now been refined to a 130 hectare “Eco hotspot” where pest control efforts have now been intensified and the ecosystem response monitored.

Peter continues to work closely with the QEII Trust in the re-establishment of Yellow, Red, white and Green Mistletoe, all of which have been absent from the Park for many years, but in the absence of possums can now grow again.

Many corporate and school volunteers continue to take part in various planting, releasing, trapping, monitoring and pest plant removal activities as part of the restoration programme, whilst also being engaged in educational workshops that had a 'hands-on' conservation nature. It is really pleasing to know that the community continues to realise the range of benefits that an indigenous forest ecosystem can provide – hence the catch-line in our new brand.

Peter has also led the Trust's involvement with DOC in the fight against Myrtle Rust. This wind-borne fungal disease of South American origin has infected the Pohutukawa forests on Raoul Island and has been identified at 120 sites in NZ, mostly in Northland, Waikato and Taranaki. *Lophomyrtus bullata* (Ramarama) has been the most commonly affected species but manuka and kanuka are vulnerable. Fortunately, the rust fungus has not been detected in Rimutaka Forest Park.

The Trapping Programme

Pest control trapping is a continuous and critically important task that is enthusiastically carried out by a volunteer team of trappers throughout the year. Our sincere thanks go to all trappers who put such a lot of effort into the effective servicing of the traps during the year.

Penny Evans continued to lead the planning, coordination and operational arrangements for this task, with assistance from Melody & Rosemary. Penny keeps very good records of animal kills by trap and trap line, and this data is used to detect pest hotspots. We used this data to increase trap density in areas with high pest populations. Winifred Long continues to carry out the data analysis identifying the pest hotspots and producing graphs and map trap data.

Trap repair and testing continues to be led by Mike White who ensures that traps are maintained to a very high standard. New stainless-steel square drive screws are being used for the lids of the DOC 200 traps across our network, using square head screw drivers graciously supplied by Placemakers, Lower Hutt.

Grant Watt leads a group that checks the operation of all traps in the network. We hope that the gradual introduction of new, A24 self-re-setting traps will reduce the workload of these teams, but there is still a definite place for the older traps and they do still need to be checked.

I wish to thank Penny, Winifred, Mike and Grant for the dedication and effort they provide to the trapping programme. As reported last year, without a consistent volunteer-supported pest trapping effort there would be no brown kiwi translocation programme at all, and the population and the distribution of other birds and the health of the forests would not be what they are today.

Fund Raising

The Fund Raising sub-committee has continued to consider, apply for and arrange initiatives for raising funds for the Trust. These have been successful in supporting our goals. Much of the credit for this essential aspect of our work goes to Rosemary Thompson. Fund raising is a skilled task and we are continually looking for long-term options. We hope you can help.

Public Relations

Our website, www.rimutakatrust.org.nz continues to be popular with visitors in New Zealand and overseas and is the major point of access for information about us. Peter Cooper, our webmaster, has taken the time to review our site and will present the new format to this meeting.

Our Facebook page has more than 300 followers, and our Twitter site is also active. I think it fair to say that social media are not well understood by most of your Committee, so we are grateful to Peter for his leadership in this.

The re-named “Rimu-Talker” has been distributed and email traffic to volunteers has been enhanced and personalised by the use of our CMS during the year. Both of these traditional methods of communication have been important for the Trust.

Cooperation with the Department of Conservation

We continue to enjoy a good relationship with our dedicated DOC staff liaison person Angus Hulme-Moir. Angus was instrumental in gaining the extra 900 traps for the Park and has led the effort to install them. He has also been helpful in starting a dialogue on capturing the revenue from harvesting the remaining pine trees in the Catchpool Valley.

Appreciation

On behalf of the Committee I want to give a big Thank You to all who have helped the Society operate successfully as a voluntary environmental organisation during the year. Members and non-member volunteers have contributed enormously to the full range of pest control trapping, kiwi population maintenance, Catchpool Valley restoration, fund raising, public relations and other activities. A big thank you to you all.

I would also like to acknowledge the assistance and friendly cooperation from the staff of the Department of Conservation. We do appreciate your support and we look forward to cooperating again in the future. Staff of the Greater Wellington Regional Council and the Hutt City Council have also been very helpful.

Last, but by no means least, I wish to thank the members of the Executive Committee for the thought and considerable effort they have contributed towards the effective running of the Trust during the past year. An organisation such as this Trust does not run itself, and the membership at large should be very proud of the efforts your Committee put in on a voluntary basis

Geoff Cameron
President
October 2017

