



Newsletter #5 ♦ December 2009

Hammond Bush Working Bees

Our working bees in Hammond Bush continue to take place on the last Saturday of each month. These are conducted under the supervision of HCC Community planting coordinator Gerard Kelly. Again, we take this opportunity to give a big thank you to Gerard and the Hamilton City Council for their assistance and support of our efforts.

The ecological significance of Hammond Bush is no better captured than in a paper delivered by Bruce Clarkson and Joanna McQueen to a conference of the Society for Ecological Restoration in Canada in 2004.

Another important remnant is Hammond Bush, floristically the richest of the Hamilton indigenous remnants. Despite its small size (1 hectare), it supports an impressive 145 native plant species (de Lange 1996) and is regularly visited by Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae (kereru). Recently, native Chalinolobus tuberculatus (long-tailed bats) have also been recorded in the area (E. Ganley pers. comm. 2001). However, the widespread native nectar-feeding bird, Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae (tui) is only a rare visitor to Hamilton City (Source: <http://cber.bio.waikato.ac.nz/> accessed 5/11/09).

In fact, tui sightings have increased greatly in the last few months, with many tui remaining long after their feeding on local flowering kowhai has ended, indicating they may be nesting in the area. Please report all sightings to the Hamilton Halo website, www.ew.govt.nz/Projects/Hamilton-Halo/. Sightings are mapped and areas where tui appear to be concentrating can be made the focus for the trapping of rats and other predators. The Hamilton Halo website also contains information about tui-friendly plants for your garden.

Cats Threaten Native Species



Sadly, one of the most significant threats against the tui and other native birds, are domestic and feral cats. Domestic cats allowed to roam free at night prey on nesting birds. They also pose a serious threat to long-tailed bats (source: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/>).

The efforts of the Society to increase the size and integrity of the bush beside the Waikato River near Hammond Bush are noted on the Waikato Biodiversity Forum website, <http://www.waikatobiodiversity.org.nz/>

Support for the Society continues to be widespread throughout the Riverlea community and beyond. Over \$2000 was donated in our most recent fundraising drive, for which the Society is very grateful. This money will allow us to continue our work protecting and improving the local environment. All donations are tax deductible, as the Society is a registered charity.

Variation 21 has proved to be one of the more contentious recent variations proposed to the District Plan. If it is passed in its present form, Variation 21 will work to protect the Riverlea Road Industrial Zone from 'big box' commercial development, something the Committee agreed was desirable. Our hope is that Riverlea Road will continue to develop as mixed residential and light industrial zone with no more environmental effect than at present. For this reason we have decided to write a submission in support of the Variation.

It is worth remembering that there is still a considerable amount of vacant industrial land on Riverlea Road, and the Society must continue to be vigilant, aware as we are that under the present zoning rules it remains possible that a dirty industry might apply for resource consent to establish there.

Review of the HCC District Plan

In light of the continuing possibility of dirty industry setting up in Riverlea Road, the Society will be engaging with the proposed Review of the HCC District Plan. This is intended to bring the Proposed and Operative District Plans into one coherent document. Originally set down for mid 2009, we understand that preliminary work is being undertaken by independent consultants. When their report is made public and submissions called for we will be taking the opportunity to argue for a zone change for Riverlea Road. Our hope is that the present industrial zone will become what the HCC has elsewhere described as an 'employment zone', a place where people go to work in offices and other small businesses, but which does not attract the high traffic volumes associated with developments such as The Base or the amount of heavy traffic required by larger industrial operations.

Bats in Hammond Bush

The research of Auckland University PhD student Andrea DeKroun into the survival of threatened long-tailed bats in Hammond Bush and elsewhere was supported by an Environment Waikato grant. As one of only two native New Zealand mammals, long-tailed bats (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*) are rare throughout the country. Andrea's research was designed to help develop methods to restore bats to areas where native habitat has been lost. The research focused on the distribution of the bats and their habitat range and activity. Bats were captured at Hammond Bush and were fitted with 0.5g transmitters and released so their travel distance and preferred roosting sites could be recorded. Work is also being undertaken to study sex ratios, and reproduction and stress through the examination of bat droppings, which are also used to identify individual bats through their DNA.



Long-tailed bat, hand held showing detail of head and wing (source: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/>).

Andrea's work is being extended by Waikato University biology student Darren Le Roux. Unfortunately vandals stole expensive equipment being used by Darren to track the movements of the bats. The equipment was lodged high in trees at the southern end of the boardwalk. If anyone has any information on the loss of this equipment, please contact the Society. (Sources: 'Report to the Environment Committee of the Waikato Regional Council', 11/5/09; *Hamilton Press*, 21/10/09; *Gully Guide Newsletter*, 03/09).

Notes from the Chair

Thank you to those who were able to attend the AGM in July. Bruce Winders was confirmed as Treasurer and myself as Chairperson. There were no nominations for the position of Secretary, but Andrea Graves has kindly agreed to once again take up the role. Geoff Pooch, Martin Thrupp, Howard Johnston, Giselle Byrnes, and Joy Wright were elected Committee members. Martin has again taken responsibility for coordinating the working bees in Hammond Bush, and Andrea has again agreed to be newsletter editor.

At our last committee meeting on 22 October Linda Fells and Christine Priestley were co-opted to the committee. Thank you to everyone for their support of the Society and its work.

In my Chairperson's address to the AGM I was pleased to report that our monthly working bees have continued to be a great success. Large numbers of pest plants have been removed from Hammond Bush and hundreds of trees and shrubs have been planted both in Hammond Bush and in adjacent gullies. These plants were paid for by the Society, using its own funds and the Enviro Fund grant of \$2000.

We continue to keep a watching brief on HCC's proposed review of the District Plan, especially with regard to zoning. On 12 May Martin Thrupp and I addressed the Council hearing on Variation 13: Peacock Structure Plan. Our earlier written submission appears to have been taken into account in the revised Structure Plan, especially with regard to moving the development further back from the river bank.

– Stephen Hamilton, Chairperson