



Newsletter 6 ♦ May 2010

From the Chair

Autumn is proving to be a busy time for the Society, with a new pest control programme being started in Hammond Bush and arrangements for the AGM.

HCC and EW, who have joint responsibility for the Bush, have contracted an Otorohanga company, EcoFX, to lay bait stations for rats. The Society is working closely with the contractor and local authorities.

The impending release of new birds into the bush makes rat control particularly important. Volunteers from the Society will be checking the public areas of Hammond Park for any poisoned rats to ensure they are not eaten by cats or dogs. The Society will be responsible for restocking of the bait stations, especially during the nesting season. As always, please remember to restrict dogs to the boardwalk.

The Society's AGM this month will be addressed by Professor Bruce Clarkson of the University of Waikato. He is an esteemed scientist and we keenly anticipate his talk.

*Until the AGM,
Stephen Hamilton, Chair*

Invitation to our Annual General Meeting

All RES supporters are cordially invited to attend our AGM on 26 May. This year we are excited to announce that restoration ecologist Professor Bruce Clarkson will speak to us. Prof Clarkson is Director of the Centre for Biodiversity and Ecology Research. He is an authority on the ecology of Hammond Bush and wrote its restoration plan, which is being followed as the bush is planted and improved. He is passionate about Hammond Bush's plant and animal diversity and its significance to Hamilton.

Prof Clarkson will give us the latest news on ecological restoration projects going on around the city.

In addition, committee member Geoff Pooch will open his treasure chest of old maps and aerial photographs of the Riverlea area. Spot the Hamilton Gardens as a

rubbish dump, your property as paddock and historic pa sites.

The meeting will take place at 7.30pm at 46 Chesterman Road. A light supper will be provided.

Bellbirds in Hammond Bush

A monumental venture will soon take place. Fifty bellbirds are to be released at the Hamilton Gardens, and they are expected to make use of Hammond Bush. Bellbirds have not been seen in Hamilton for more than a century.

The birds will come from Tiritiri Matangi Island near Auckland and its close mainland neighbour Tawharanui Open Sanctuary.

In order to persuade the birds that Hamilton is their new home, they will be 'acoustically anchored'. This means that bellbird calls will be regularly broadcast from two sites, one of which is the home of one of our supporters on Silva Crescent, whose property adjoins Hammond Bush. The other is in Fitzroy Park.

The introduction is being managed by the University of Waikato and Landcare Research. The release is open to the public and planned for 8am on Sunday 9th May at the Hamilton Gardens in Te Parapara (the Maori Garden). The date is subject to change: for confirmation, check www.ew.govt.nz/hamiltonhalo on 7th May.



Bellbird: image courtesy of ZEALANDIA: The Karori Sanctuary Experience. (See www.visitzealandia.com)

Pest control: averting tragedy

In addition to having bellbirds in our neighbourhood, tui have arrived about a month earlier than normal for their annual winter feeding sojourn. This is possibly due to their food choices being affected by the drought.

The presence of these two iconic honeyeater species is a fantastic reason to get rid of their predators: rats and possums.

According to bird scientist John Inness of Landcare Research, three-quarters of nesting attempts by every native bird in New Zealand ends in predation. "It's a tragedy of enormous proportions," he says.

For example, tui began to nest last season at the Taitua arboretum. A ship rat took the first egg before the mother even began to incubate it.

If we want tui and bellbird song ringing through here for the long term, we all need to back up the predator control initiated by our local councils by placing a rat and a possum trap or bait station on our properties.

Some RES supporters recently attended a talk by Ben Paris of EW and John Innes of Landcare Research which taught us about backyard predator control. To receive an instruction sheet summarising their advice, email andrea.graves@slingshot.co.nz.

Owners of properties that border Hammond Park are being offered the free use of possum traps (call EcoFX on 07 873 8130 about this).

Did you know? Maori used to keep tui in cages and teach them to 'talk' (repeat human words).

Source: Hamilton Zoo website.

Bat monitors

The Society has applied to HCC for an envirofund grant to purchase two bat monitors. These small hand-held devices detect the bats' echolocation and provide a magnified clicking sound when bats are present. If we are successful, the easy-to-use monitors will be available for loan by local residents.

The rare long-tailed bats live in old trees, both native and exotic. In the last two years some tall exotic trees that were important bat habitats have been felled. We hope that anyone planning to fell a tree will firstly borrow a monitor to check whether bats live there.

Darren LeRoux, a Phd student at the University of Waikato who is studying long-tailed bat movements around Hammond Park, informs us that we will also be able to use the University's more advanced bat monitoring devices to confirm if bats are in the area. These can be fixed to a tree and continuously record bat calls to give more definitive information on bats' presence.

Loss of founding member

A strong RES supporter died suddenly on 12th March this year. Alex Petcu of Olympia Place helped with the printing of our first newsletter with great cheer and enthusiasm. Alex, who was 41, leaves behind his wife Mira, young son Victor, mother and mother-in-law. The Society extends its condolences to the family. In acknowledgement of Alex's love of Hammond Bush, we plan to plant a tree in his memory.

Bamboo or bamboozled

Hamilton City Council is continuing to control weeds in the area of Hammond Park adjacent to the boardwalk that was first cleared during our monthly working bees. Planting is planned for late autumn 2011. HCC community planting co-ordinator Gerard Kelly advises us that the site's problem weeds, bamboo and blue spur flower, require persistent knock-back before successful planting can take place.

Our working bees continue as usual, with the next one being devoted to more planting. Meet at the Balfour Crescent end of the boardwalk at 1pm on Saturday 22nd May.

Conservation volunteering

There are some fantastic opportunities for volunteering on conservation projects around the Waikato: for example at Maungatautiri, Waiwhakareke and Yarndley's Bush.

To volunteer, go to <http://cvops.cva.org.au/book/search> and choose 'Hamilton office' under 'Where would you like to volunteer'. Bookings can be made online.

I would like to renew/add my financial support to the Riverlea Environment Society Inc.

Name(s)

Address

Phone

email (for notices and updates)

signature

Donation per household: \$20 []
 \$40 []
 \$___ []

Receipt required []

Thank you for your support