

RIVERLEA ENVIRONMENT SOCIETY INCORPORATED



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FROM THE CHAIR

They say good fortune attracts more good fortune, and in the case of the Riverlea Environment Society we've been blessed with something of an embarrassment of riches. Our hard work in Hammond Bush and the wider Riverlea area has been acknowledged by two major unsolicited funding boosts. In both cases, the funds come from now defunct groups who see RESI as something like a successor. The HEIRS group, active for many years in the suburb, has passed their remaining funds to us. The RAFT group, also now closed, has given some of its remaining funds to us to further work on the Waikato River. The HEIRS money will be spent on signage in Hammond Bush, and we are still discussing ways to spend the RAFT funds. More on these matters can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Your support for the continuing work of the Society is greatly appreciated. As a volunteer organisation, we operate with minimal expenses. However, projects do cost money to undertake. Tax deductible donations can be made using the form below. Thank you.

Stephen Hamilton, Chairperson

OUR SOCIETY INTO THE FUTURE

Our Annual General Meeting is approaching, and we hope to welcome some new committee members. Only a handful of people shoulder the load at present, and fresh faces would be of great help. Benefits include more awareness of what's happening in the area, and a great sense of community connectedness. Plus we have fun!

The AGM will take place at the home of Stephen Hamilton and Giselle Byrnes (46 Chesterman Road) at 7pm on 19 May. We are pleased to announce that Wiremu Puke (Ngati Wairere) of Nga Mana Toopu has kindly agreed to talk to us about the traditional Maori garden Te Parapara in the Hamilton Gardens. A light supper will be served after the meeting.

Nominations are called for Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary and committee members. Nominations should be proposed and seconded in writing to the Secretary, Linda Fell, 40 Chesterman Rd, Riverlea, or by email to riverlea.soc@gmail.com by 5pm on 12 May. Committee meetings are held every six to eight weeks, and members might, for example, take responsibility for coordinating the newsletter or monthly working bees.



Hamilton City Council staff Tim Newton (left) and Gerard Kelly install a bat box in Hammond Park (see overleaf).

Photo: Ben Paris.

FUNDS PASSED TO RIVERLEA

The HEIRS group (Hamilton Environmental Improvement in Riverlea Suburb), set up by Geoff Pooch and other residents in April 1998 and now closed down, has passed RESI its remaining funds. Originally from a Hamilton City Council (HCC) grant, these are tagged for educational purposes.

With Geoff's support, the committee decided to use the money for the design and mounting of interpretive signage in Hammond Bush. HCC sees value in this project, and is to match the funding and assist with wording and design. Signs will be placed at the three entrances to the boardwalk. If funds allow, other signs will be positioned in the bush describing significant trees and native wildlife.

The Society has also received funding from the now defunct River Action Focus Team, or RAFT. This group worked to improve the ecological health of the Waikato River and its margins. Its closing committee decided that RESI's work warranted their support.

As Chairperson of RESI, Stephen Hamilton was

delighted to accept the \$4379.09 cheque. He sees it as a strong validation of the environmental work undertaken by the Society on behalf of Riverlea and the wider Hamilton community. Waikato Environment Centre coordinator and former RAFT committee member Katherine Hay said that RAFT hoped “that these funds will ... be used for a project to do with improving water quality or biodiversity”. Some \$760 of the RAFT funding derives from a grant by Mighty River Power, which will be duly acknowledged in any project derived from this funding. The committee is currently considering how best to use the money in accordance with the Society’s objectives.

BAT ACTION

About 20 RESI supporters took up the offer of an evening last month with bat expert Darren le Roux. Darren is an engaging speaker who taught us about bats then took us down to Hammond Park where we were fortunate to have a superb view of a pekapeka (native long-tailed bat) flying overhead. He showed us the wooden bat boxes that have been placed near the bottom of the Balfour Crescent accessway to provide predator-proof roosting (sleeping and resting) spots for our resident bats.

Darren would like the Riverlea community to help him discover if the boxes are being used by bats. If you are walking near the boxes at dusk, please look up to see if little bats are flying in and out of them. Binoculars help but are not necessary. Please report sightings at www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/projects/Project-Echo/.

Three RESI committee members attended a March bat workshop organised by the Department of Conservation. We learnt how pekapeka echolocate to find their insect prey. Bat monitors (free for anyone to borrow from RESI) translate bats’ echolocation signals into sounds people can hear. We learnt to listen for the trill sound that indicates a bat narrowing in on a flying insect.

Auckland University’s Dr Stuart Parsons explained that pekapeka like the edges of forest, and follow roads or paths. They sleep in holes in trees, and in summer, when females are pregnant, they cluster together in large groups for warmth. They produce one baby a year, and can live for up to 40 years.

The best time to find bats is during the first three hours after sunset in warm weather, particularly following cold or rain, which leaves them hungry and actively hunting. Stand under large old trees – native or exotic – and look up towards the open sky next to the trees. The small handed bat monitors that can be borrowed from the Society are simple to use and very helpful for finding bats. It’s a particularly lovely project for families to do with their children.

WANTED: DEAD RATS

Scientists are concerned that rats are becoming resistant to one of our major weapons against them: poison. In

order to help discover whether poison resistance has a genetic basis, the Society is cooperating with John Innes of Landcare Research to obtain tissue samples from rats trapped in this area. The rats can be caught in snap traps (best baited with peanut butter) or by cats, even if part-eaten. He does not want mice or poisoned rats. If you catch a rat, please contact John at 859 3714 (day) or at InnesJ@landcareresearch.co.nz. Handle the rat with gloves to avoid contaminating its DNA, and refrigerate but do not freeze it. John is happy to collect the rats.

HAMMOND BUSH RAT POISONING

The 24 bait stations placed in Hammond Bush in May last year are being restocked with bait. This should ensure that the population of rats, mice and possums is reduced by the start of the bird nesting season in spring. The poison being used is Brodifacoum. It is unlikely any dead pest animals will be seen, but be aware that dogs and children should not be allowed to touch the bait stations or dead animals. The stations are designed so that it is difficult for domestic animals to access the poison bait, but as always please keep dogs on leads within the park. Should a disaster occur, a vet can administer a vitamin K injection to stop the poison’s action.

HAMMOND BUSH WORKING BEES

The Society continues to hold working bees in Hammond Bush on the last Saturday of the month, 1pm to 3pm. These are always great fun and make a big difference to the ecological restoration of the bush. They are conducted under the supervision of Gerard Kelly, the HCC Community Planting Coordinator. We always welcome new helpers.

GLOW WORMS

Did you know that there is a wonderful display of glow worms in Hammond Bush? Creep quietly along the path between the boardwalk and the dip in Hudson Street after dark and enjoy nature’s spectacle!

— I would like to renew/add my financial support to the Riverlea Environment Society Inc. by a tax-deductible donation.

Name(s)

Address

Phone

email

Signature

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

Receipt required []

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT