

RIVERLEA ENVIRONMENT SOCIETY INCORPORATED



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From the Chair

Thank you to all those who have been coming to our monthly working bees. It is truly encouraging to see new faces appearing. Last month we had a young scout join us to do community service for one of her badges. A few months ago we had a birthday party's worth of girls, who combined an hour or so of weed removal with the rest of the day's celebrations!

One thing I've discovered in the last year or so is how doing voluntary work makes people flourish. I could only agree with a Listener article I came across recently. It explained that research has shown that volunteering to help others is a force for personal well-being. Part of humans' core nature is to connect. Certainly I have found my months as Chair of this society very rewarding, and I look forward to doing it for at least another year.

My sincere thanks to my supportive committee, and to several people who have newly stepped up to distinctive roles: Terry Hume reloads the bait stations in Hammond Bush and helps edit this newsletter, Robert Welch lends out our bat monitors, Susan Thomason co-ordinates the working bees, Colin Telford organizes newsletter delivery, and a whole team of people deliver it. Many hands make light work!

Our AGM is to be held early next month (see below for further details). We hope to welcome new people to our committee, but you will be welcomed even if you just want to enjoy our interesting speaker.

Andrea Graves, Chairperson

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be held on Thursday 7th June, 7.30pm at 27 Hudson Street. We are delighted to announce that Hamilton Gardens mastermind Peter Sergel will be our speaker. Peter has been Director of the Gardens for the last 14 years. He guided the transformation of the former rubbish dump to the beautiful resource we have today. He also founded

the Hamilton Gardens Summer Festival. Come and hear this creative thinker!

A light supper will be provided. We will also be reviewing our committee positions. New committee members are welcome: please email nominations or indications of interest to riverlea.soc@gmail.com, or telephone the number below. Committee meetings take place roughly every six weeks and usually last around 90 minutes.



The van Haren family incorporated weeding around young planted trees into a birthday party. Photo: Gerry Kelly.

Walking with the Mayor

In early March, Mayor Julie Hardaker was taken on an evening bat walk through Hammond Bush to promote the presence of long-tailed bats in Hamilton. The evening was organised and conducted by Salina Ghazally (Waikato Museum's science communicator) and Gerry Kelly of Hamilton City Council, along with Andrea Graves. All the city's Councillors were also invited, with Daphne Bell and Margaret Forsyth attending.

Project Echo

Our society is an official part of Project Echo, a bat-focused initiative similar to the Hamilton Halo project that promotes tui. Project Echo's launch day was a Bat Fun Day in Hammond Park in March. The society held a stall selling bat-shaped cookies that sold like hotcakes.

If you want to borrow a bat monitor to check for bats on your property or anywhere else, ours are free to borrow. Contact Robert Welch on 858 2314;

decnz3@clear.net.nz. The best time to find bats is on warm evenings at sunset when they emerge from their daily sleep to hunt for flying insects. The Waikato Museum runs excellent nocturnal tours for those who would like guidance.

Hamilton City Council cost cutting

As you will be aware, HCC has formed a draft 10-year plan aimed at significantly cutting expenditure to deal with its debt crisis. Fortunately this includes no change to the planting and maintenance of native forest on publicly owned land. However, the gully restoration programme for private landowners is likely to be abolished.

The society lobbied the council directly last year when Andrea Graves spoke in the council chambers about the value of HCC's assistance in Hammond Bush. The society made a written submission last month about the value of restored privately owned gullies to Hammond Bush and native biodiversity in Hamilton. Council will vote on the plan in June.

The Big Planting Day – mark your calendar!

Following last year's enormously fun and successful planting day, please come down to Hammond Bush on 23rd June to help plant out 625 trees and shrubs. These have been expertly selected by Hamilton City Council's Gerry Kelly. All we need from you is a spade with some force behind it! Families most welcome, and sturdy footwear is advised. Meet at the Malcolm Street end of the boardwalk at 1pm.

Protecting the Birdlife

To protect bird life in Hammond Bush, possum and rat numbers are being controlled by a baiting programme that began in 2010. The poison used is brodifacoum in the form of green pellets placed in 22 bait boxes hidden in off-trail locations. The boxes secure the baits from dogs, cats and birds.

Brodifacoum is very toxic to possum and rats but less so to humans. Signage at the entrance to the bush advises when the bait was laid and who to contact for information or in the case of medical emergency (the antidote is vitamin K). Baits were last renewed on 2nd May.

The Society is seeking specialist advice on predator control with a view to changing to more environmentally friendly bait, and scheduling baiting to maximise impact at key times of the year, such spring when native birds are nesting.

In the near future we also plan to tidy up the signage, which is getting tatty.

Getting rid of leaves

Our suburban Riverlea area shines in autumn as the street trees glow orange, gold and red. But the price we pay is clearing away the leaves. What do you do with them? Sending them to the dump in plastic

bags on Monday morning is definitely the worst choice for the environment! Slightly better would be putting them out in paper rubbish bags (available cheaply from all supermarkets).

A preferable method is to let them stew for a few weeks in a sealed plastic bag (this makes them pulpier so they won't blow away), and use them as lovely mulch on your garden.

Alternatively, it's fantastic to put them in your compost bin, but there will probably be too many to add all at once. They can be stored in plastic bags or an empty bin and gradually used as valuable 'brown waste' layers in amongst your food scraps and weeds. This produces superb, free, non-smelly compost for spring and summer planting.

Leaves, weeds and food scraps also decompose at the dump, but they putrify anaerobically (without oxygen). Along with a bad smell, this produces methane, a greenhouse gas 20 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. (It can be used as fuel if it's captured, but that doesn't happen in Hamilton.) Composting, in contrast, is aerobic – particularly with plenty of old leaves in the mix – and produces carbon dioxide.

If you don't want to mulch or compost bin, perhaps you have neighbours who would like your bagged leaves?

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

Name(s)

Address

Phone

email

Signature

Donation per household: \$20 []
 \$40 []
 \$___ []
Receipt required? []

Thank you for your support