



Newsletter 14 ♦ October 2014 ♦ ISSN 1178-4393

### From the Chair

*It's a great time to celebrate living here. Not only have we managed to protect the local environment from heavy, noisy and offensive industry, but our gardens and gullies are seething with tuis.*

*Their songs and beauty should remind us that we have something precious to protect. It would be fitting for the area to become home to tui chicks. Tuis 'imprint' on the area they hatch in, so Riverlea would always be their home.*

*It is likely that some of them are nesting in the area. Sadly, most nesting attempts by forest birds in New Zealand end in the eggs or chicks being eaten by rats and possums.*

*According to John Innes of Landcare Research, who has been enormously involved in protecting threatened native bird species, the best thing we can do for these birds is to trap or poison rats and possums. He questions whether cats are a huge problem; they kill rats, so on balance may be helpful.*

*Read on for how to control the nasty rodents as simply as possible.*

*Andrea Graves, Chairperson*

### New rules for the Riverlea Industrial Area

*"The Riverlea Industrial Area... provides for a range of light and service industrial activities. Its location within close proximity to sensitive land uses means that the establishment of heavy industry and noxious or offensive activities is not considered to be desirable or appropriate."*

This is now officially written in the Hamilton City Council district plan, which also contains significantly tighter rules for Riverlea. No longer can just 'any' new industrial activity operate. Revised rules provide sufficient power of veto to limit new industry to low-impact businesses.

This was achieved with strong community support, much of it financial and in the form of submissions; thank you to everyone who played a part. We were able to pay professional planners and a lawyer, Joan Forett, although Joan did much work pro bono. Recognition must also go to the Council planners, who recommended that these changes be made.



A tui nest from above. Photo: Neil Fitzgerald, Landcare Research.

### Nesting tui

Please keep an eye out for tui nests this spring and summer! They are twiggy and dinner-plate sized.

The behaviour of adult birds is the best clue to nest whereabouts. Tui parents will repeatedly come and go from a single tree, entering it low down and working their way up to a nest, but leaving directly from the nest. They may arrive with insects in their beaks to feed their chicks.

Listening can also help. The mother may sing from the nest, and chicks make a high-pitched begging call.

Successful nest-spotters should contact this Society or Waikato Regional Council. The latter hope to focus cameras on nests to monitor progress, and place intensive predator control around them.

### Home predator control

If you are keen to help reduce rat numbers in the area we have some tips for you.

An easy way is to place a tunnel containing a trap or poison next to a fence or wall. Rats like to enter tunnels and to run along the edges of structures.

Poison blocks should be on a nail or similar so that rats have to nibble them, rather than siezing the whole block and hoarding it. Some blocks come with a hole in them for this purpose. **Ditrac** poison may be best if you or your neighbours have a cat that is likely eat poisoned rats, or **Pestoff** if you don't.

Victor traps baited with peanut butter are a proven, poison-free alternative.

*If you would like to be notified about our working bees and other news and are not on our email list, please email us.*

Local supplier [www.philproof.co.nz](http://www.philproof.co.nz) sells necessary items, or they are at farm supply shops (e.g. RD1).

To protect nesting birds these control measures should be put in place as soon as possible and kept baited until the end of January.

Please also remember that open compost heaps can attract rats; closed bins are a better alternative.

### **New traps in Hammond**

The Society's poisoning programme continues in Hammond bush in the form of bait stations for rats and possums. Due to significant possum sign, the Society recently purchased two humane kill traps (Timms traps). These have been baited and strategically placed to try to control these damaging animals. At the time of going to print two possums had been caught.

### **Fragrant but terrible weed**

Jasmine has been smothering areas of Hammond bush. We have had some challenging working bees to remove it, and it left behind a virtual desert. If possible, please kill it if you have it on your property: cut it away and swab the stump with Yates woody weedkiller. Dispose of cuttings at the dump or bury deeply, or they may take root.



*Jasmine in flower. Source: [www.weedbusters.org.nz](http://www.weedbusters.org.nz)*

### **Local Christmas shopping**

A fun community event is happening on 22<sup>nd</sup> October in the Hillcrest Normal School Hall. It is a market featuring locally made art and design gifts, and culinary items. These will be Home and Garden magazine-style offerings, rather than flea market wares.

The Society will sell tomato plants ready for Labour Weekend planting, and bat cookies. A stuffed long-tailed bat will be at our stall so everyone can see and feel what these secretive creatures are really like.

The \$10 entry ticket supports the Cambridge Road Kindergarten, and includes supper. The first 50 people

to arrive will receive a goodie bag. There is a plethora of high quality spot prizes.

Come along and nail your Christmas shopping! Tickets are available from the kindergarten, by phoning 856 3333, or at the door.

### **Surprising insects**

Our AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> July featured Bryce McQuillan, who showed us his close-up photographs of invertebrates in Hammond bush. They were a window into a stunning, surprising and secret slice of life in the bush.

We were reminded that this mainly unseen wildlife forms an important part of the ecosystem. It is needed for pollination, and directly feeds birds and bats.

All types of invertebrates (insects, spiders, snails etc) need vegetation to shelter in, so blanket destruction of weeds is unhelpful for them. The society's patch-by-patch restoration approach, under the guidance of Hamilton City Council's Gerry Kelly, leaves those plant refuges intact.

Rodents also eat a lot of insects – another good reason to use traps and poison to get rid of these mischief-makers.

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

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Name(s)

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Address

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email

Suggested donation per household: \$20 per year, or another amount of your choosing.

*For online donations, our bank account number is 03 1559 0110053 000. Please use your surname as the reference, and email us stating the amount, your name and address so we can issue a receipt. Thank you for your support.*

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