



Newsletter 15 ♦ July 2015 ♦ ISSN 1178-4393

From the Chair

I'm stepping down as Chair this month, but remaining active as a committee member. It's been a hugely rewarding four years, and has proven to me that everything that's said about the benefits of voluntarily serving others is true. Thank you all for your support.

Having achieved tighter controls on development in the Riverlea industrial area, we are putting even more energy into the restoration of Hammond Park. I feel particularly passionate about pest control. I'm reading a NZ book called 'Vanishing Nature' which explains how, in spite of the odd good-news story, native species keep slipping away. On public land it's due to the secretive nightly slaughter by mammals.

Everyone is warmly invited to our AGM later this month. The speaker has experience in pest control and native species protection in a number of exotic places, including our own beautiful back yard! I hope to see you there for an inspiring and social evening.

Andrea Graves, Chairperson

Annual General Meeting

Everyone is welcome to attend our AGM on Thursday 23rd July, 7 pm at 27 Hudson St. After the usual formalities we will hear Riverlea resident Alan Saunders speak on "A community approach to conservation". Supper will follow.

Alan has long been involved in threatened species recovery, invasive species management and island restoration, including "mainland islands". He has worked with the Wildlife Service, Department of Conservation, Landcare Research and most recently Waikato Regional Council as the Natural Heritage Team Leader.

He has advised on wildlife conservation issues in places as diverse as Saudi Arabia, Japan, Ecuador and Tasmania. He has also worked with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in the Pacific, based in Auckland then Suva.

Nominations for Chair and committee membership are encouraged. The committee meets every couple of months for about 90 minutes at a time.

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



June planting below Balfour Crescent

Winter planting: all hands on deck please!

We will have a big tree planting day on Saturday 25th July from 1–3 pm. Please bring a spade if you have one (some will be available) and meet at the Balfour Crescent end of the boardwalk. We will be planting on a steep slope between the boardwalk and the river. The slope was thickly covered with jasmine vines, which working bee volunteers removed with a lot of hard work. Planting it will be the icing on the cake. There will be roles for agile and non-agile people, and children.

The future of the society

There is a possibility of the society appointing a paid co-ordinator to open up more opportunities to enhance Hammond Park. It would be ideal for someone passionate about environmental restoration and community engagement. We have not yet applied for funding, but please get in touch if you know would be interested in such a position.

Volunteer Excellence Awards

The Society was nominated for a Volunteer Excellence Award last month. The awards' celebration evening highlighted the diversity and energy of volunteers in the Waikato. Thank you to Gerard Kelly for nominating us.

Pest control

We've been doing battle with pests in Hammond Bush, as usual. Several possums have been caught in Timms traps, and much poison bait has been eaten.

We have obtained funding from Hamilton City Council's Small Grant (Community) Fund to purchase goodnature traps. These instantly and humanely kill their target species, are toxin-free, and reset themselves so that multiple pests can be killed in between visits by people. The lures need replacing approximately monthly.

The funding covers one possum trap and one rat trap. A Department of Conservation report shows that the traps are successful at controlling these species, but have yet to be perfected for stoats.

The traps cost \$169, and may also be ideal for clean and simple backyard control, with several neighbours potentially sharing one trap. We will advise on our experience with them.

Hamilton City Council has contractors carrying out intensive winter pest control during July with possum traps, and will lay Pindone poison through to spring.

We have had two reports of stoats being seen on residential sections in Riverlea, plus one of a dead stoat on Cobham Drive. Hopefully it is the same stoat! They are rare in town, but if you see one here please let the Society know immediately.



Titoki leaves

A favourite Hammond Bush tree

Titoki is a handsome native tree growing in Hammond Bush. It's also known as the NZ oak, and grows up to 15 metres tall. It has a gnarly, twisted form with wide-spreading branches that are home to many nooks and crannies. The brown bark is fairly smooth, the leaves

are glossy with 4-6 pairs of leaflets, and the young shoots are velvety brown.

Between November and August you can find fantastic little clusters of fruit in clusters at the end of stems. Each fruit is encased in a brown, tear-drop case that splits to reveal a shiny, jet-black seed cupped by brilliant red flesh. The flesh of the fruit was described by Rev. Richard Taylor in 1848 as being "more agreeable to the eye than to the taste", but may even be poisonous. A fine oil can be extracted from the seed and was traditionally used for medical application and in scent sachets.

Titoki is one of my favourite trees because of its many interesting but overlooked features, and I enjoyed climbing one of the Hammond Bush specimens in 2012 to attach epiphytes. Next time you're along the boardwalk, have a closer look for the tremendous tītoki.

Thank you to Catherine Kirby of Waikato University's Environmental Research Institute for this contribution.

Changing rules

Our society has a couple of rule changes to make. One is to officially call you supporters not members. The other is to have a financial review each year rather than a full audit, which is easier for our accountant, and acceptable to the Charities Commission given our petite income. These will be proposed at the AGM.

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

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.