



Newsletter 16 ♦ April 2016 ♦ ISSN 1178-4393

Hello from the incoming Chair

RESI has been extremely fortunate to have had Dr Andrea Graves as Chair for the last 4 years. Her gentle nature, passion for the environment, science knowledge, professionalism, contacts, productivity, and organisational skill, not to mention newsletter writing skills have benefitted the RESI community in excelsis. A huge thanks to husband Ian and children Jack and Anna for sharing Andrea with us. Happily Andrea is staying on the committee, so RESI will continue to benefit from her expertise.

Hammond Bush was one of reasons my husband Charlie and I chose Riverlea when we relocated to Hamilton from our Kihikihi ¾ acre 4 years ago. Shortly after the move I attended a RESI AGM, and next minute I was on the committee!

Like many of you, I love being in Hammond Bush, listening out for tui, kereruru or morepork, gazing up at the tall swamp maire along the boardwalk, cooling off in the river, marveling at the cliff-jumpers, spotting glow worms and bats, or saying hi to dogs and their walkers. I also love the monthly working bees where we clear privet and jasmine, or save the new plantings from suffocation by honeysuckle or convolvulus. Working bees are time to meet others who have come to work out, oops, I mean to help out. The Conservation Project Co-ordinator funding means we can maximise what RESI has started. Please apply for the position, or share it around your networks.

Anne Ferrier-Watson, Chairperson

Funding win

The society has been awarded \$20,000 in funding from Waikato Regional Council, as part of their Environmental Initiatives Fund. We were one of two groups to be awarded such a substantial grant. We will spend it on increasing community engagement, particularly with people whose properties directly border the bush section of Hammond Park. We are hoping to promote the benefits of removing weeds and restoring the bush to its full glory on private land, as well the public land we are already chipping away at. We know it's hard work, so this project will be about supporting and resourcing restoration activity.



A Tradescantia stem beetle. Larvae hollow out the stem, and adults make grooves in the leaves. LANDCARE RESEARCH

Conservation Project Co-ordinator role

As part of the funded project, we are seeking a paid Conservation Project Co-ordinator. We need somebody who excels at community engagement, and has excellent interpersonal skills and a knowledge of conservation. This is a part time position for 10 hours a week for 40 weeks. If you know of anybody who would be good at this type of work, please direct them to our website or the Seek website, where they can search for Conservation Project Co-ordinator. Applications close on 18th April.

Hammond Bush, smarter than ever

These days it is not just our working bees making it look great: Hamilton City Council is also putting extra support behind Hammond Bush. It has decided to make it one of their higher priority sites, thanks to the ecological value of the bush, plus the work the community puts into it. Thank you to the Natural Environments team for helping make this happen! They will also be continuing their funding of twice-yearly pest control operations, which has seen Hammond apparently be emptied of possums; sadly the pests will keep trying to return.

History of Riverlea

One of our committee members, Allan Pearson, has been doing some historical sleuthing. After the Second World War, the Riverlea farm, including the old homestead, came into the possession of Don MacKenzie, a returned serviceman. Mr MacKenzie lived for many years at the end of Sherriff Place until his death in 2013. He subdivided his property in the 1960s and 1970s, and the names of his family members are recorded as street names, including Malcolm, Louise, and Norma. Hudson Street was named after the Hudson bomber aeroplanes that Mr MacKenzie flew in WWII, and Balfour was the name of one of his flying companions. Hammond Park is believed to have been named after a city councillor. If you know more about the history of the area, or have historic photographs you are willing to share, please telephone Allan on 858 3464.

Hammond's biggest tree

One of the advantages of having academic research done in Hammond bush is that we get to learn from the results. Kiri Cutting is writing up the research she's been doing on how best to grow young trees in the presence of Tradescantia weed. In the meantime, she is able to tell us that the largest and oldest tree in Hammond is a tawa, at 173 years old. It is located close to the boardwalk, below a house on Silva Crescent.

Tradescantia beetles

Over the last few months the Waikato Regional Council has released two types of bio-control beetles into Hammond Bush to battle the Tradescantia weed. One is a leaf beetle, and the other a stem-boring beetle. The populations are expected to take several years to build up to a size where they have a noticeable effect on the weed. Both larvae and adults should then greatly weaken plants by munching the leaves and making the stems full of holes.

A third, tip-feeding, beetle snips off tips, but is not yet available to us. The releases have not taken place in Hammond Bush proper, to avoid the chance of release patch getting accidentally sprayed or weeded.

The beetles come from Brazil. New Zealand has a terrible history of introducing biological control agents: think about how stoats were introduced to control rabbits! However, rigorous testing has been carried out by Landcare Research to ensure that the Tradescantia beetles will not cause problems.

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

How many trees have we planted?

Since RESI volunteers started doing working bees in Hammond Bush, we've planted about 6000 trees! They are all eco-sourced, meaning they are raised from seed collected in the local vicinity. This means they are better adapted to local conditions, and although the odd loss is inevitable, the vast majority have survived and thrived. They have been selected and ordered by Gerard Kelly, Hamilton City Council's Community Planting Co-ordinator. Thank you, Gerard.

Mangaonua stream and gully

The Mangaonua stream is crossed by the bridge you drive over as you come into come into Hamilton from Cambridge, just before driving up the hill. It runs along the far side of the Riverlea Industrial Area, before entering the Waikato River.

It's possible to walk to it from the grassy area at the bottom of Balfour Crescent by turning left along the riverbank, instead of right onto the boardwalk. There is a rough track, and many weeds. However, there are some lovely trees, and some of the committee and a certain interested local man have started to dream about how wonderful it would be to have it restored, with a good walking track through it. We don't know how or when, but it's free to dream.

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.

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