



RIVERLEA

environment society

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From the Chair

It's been 10 years since the Riverlea Environment Society was formed, first gathering in 2007 on a rainy October evening outside 44 Chesterman Road. In 10 years the community has planted 6,000 natives at our working bees, removed tonnes of weeds and dispatched hundreds of predators. In honour of our history and achievements, this newsletter is double its usual size.

In our 10th year we have become a Pest-Free community, Hammond bush has been bestowed with a beautiful Māori name, we're sporting a gorgeous new logo, and we've advocated tirelessly for the ongoing protection of Hammond bush (more about these things in this newsletter).

Our future efforts include an application to Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga for Wāhi Tūpuna status. We also hope to continue working with Hamilton City Council and the Te Awa Trust if they include Hammond as a dismount section of the Te Awa River Ride.

Our continued success is due to our passionate, highly skilled and hardworking committee, to our conservation co-ordinator Adrienne Grant, and to our donors and working bee volunteers. Get involved! We'd love to hear from you.

Anne Ferrier-Watson, RESI Chair

Swamp maire flower logo

We hope you like our new logo, above! Until now we've used clip art which was not unique to us.

The new logo was designed pro bono by Ruth Friedlander around flower stencil art by Adrienne Grant.

It features a flower of swamp maire (maire tawake), which is a cousin of pōhutukawa. The flowers are similar to pōhutukawa's, but are white and only thumbnail-sized. They bloom in autumn and are followed by edible red fruit.

Many of the largest trees in the densest part of Hammond bush are swamp maire, and they are a key reason why it is so ecologically significant.

These once-common trees are now rare because the semi-swamp land that they require has been cleared. The trees cope with boggy soil by sending up finger-like roots to obtain oxygen.



A celebration cake at RESI's 2017 annual general meeting

Many young swamp maire have been planted in Hammond bush during our winter planting sessions. Swamp maire are vulnerable to myrtle rust.

Cycleway development

Our last newsletter reported on a proposal to route the Te Awa River Ride, which extends from Ngāruawahia to Karapiro, through Hammond Park. In order to protect the fragile ecology of Hammond bush, the committee opposed any widening of the boardwalk. This was respected, and the boardwalk is now proposed as a dismount-only section, with details of how to encourage dismounting yet to be established. We have requested an alternative on-road route for cyclists not wishing to dismount, and we are advocating for a cycle path on the Peacocke side of the river as soon as possible.

The project proposal includes connecting off-road paths from Hamilton Gardens to Hammond Park, and through the Mangaonua esplanade to Tamahere.

Funding for the project has yet to be approved.

Pest-free Riverlea

Our July Trap Bash was a great success, with volunteers of all ages working together to build 50 tunnels to house rat traps. Huge thanks to Acorn Timber ITM who provided their premises, along with the timber at a very low price. Thanks also to Align Surveyors for a significant donation to the project.

We now have over 100 rat and possum traps out in Riverlea! Our September tracking showed that 17% of our tunnels had signs of rat activity, as opposed to 23% in May. There is no room for complacency because as the weather warms, rats breed fast. They reach their highest numbers in late summer, then look for cosy human houses when cool weather returns.

We will soon begin monitoring bird and bat numbers via their calls. If you'd like to help, quite possibly from the comfort of your own property, please contact David on 021 817 496.

We're receiving few reports of kills, and we'd like more. To get a trap yourself or to report a kill, please email pestfreeriverlea@gmail.com or ph 853 6288.

Scientific research in Hammond Park

Because Hammond Park is Hamilton's most biodiverse bush remnant, it's used for research purposes. The last year brought new projects looking at urban bird life and lizards, and older projects continue, including a study of the best way to grow young tawa trees in the presence of *Tradescantia*, and how to best reintroduce perching plants onto trees.

Researchers at Victoria University and Landcare Research want to know where and how lizards are living in cities. Please report any lizard you see to theurbanlizard.wordpress.com. It will be either a skink or a gecko — New Zealand has both — but you don't need to know which it is to make the report.

Adopt a patch of Hammond Park

Tradescantia (Wandering Willie) is vanishing near Malcolm Street beach thanks to resident Lynley Cumberpatch, who weeds it regularly. "It's addictive and relaxing. You don't have to work too hard," she says. This weed can be eradicated and is now gone from Claudelands bush and Seeley's gully.

Would you like to 'Adopt a patch' of Hammond bush to weed regularly at a time that suits you? We will provide you an accessible site and weed bags.

There is also a mid-week weed busting group anyone can join.

On your own section, pull out grass and weeds around native plants and mulch the area. Do the same to large cleared areas, otherwise they become an invitation to new weeds.

Remember that thanks to Waikato Regional Council funding, all Riverlea gully owners can access free advice on restoration planting and weed and pest control, and a \$300 rebate on plant purchases.

For more information on any of the above, please contact Adrienne on 027 308 1992 or 853 6288.

Please get rid of this plant



Bear's Breeches (*Acanthus mollis*) occurs in Riverlea. This Mediterranean plant is sometimes deliberately planted as an ornamental. Sadly, it turns into a weed and rapidly smothers small native plants. It spreads via birds, water and root fragments.

If you have it on your property, please dig it out and dispose of roots and any seed heads in your rubbish collection. Leaves can be used as mulch. Any remaining roots will re-sprout, and are then best controlled by spraying.

Roading and environmental monitoring

The RESI committee is being kept informed about new roading developments. Planning for the proposed Peacocke subdivision's infrastructure is underway, and engineering consultants AECOM are gathering data on native fauna in the Hammond-Peacocke area. They aim to minimise adverse environmental effects and guide the establishment of new bush reserves. They have been trialling monitoring systems for bats, birds, reptiles and fish this year, and will begin formal baseline monitoring next year. The initial results show light levels have a

noticeable impact on bat behaviour; noise less so.

AECOM consulted us on plans for the proposed Wairere-Cobham Drives separated-level intersection, for which we provided a letter of support. Construction may start next year, and involves significant environmental reinstatement, as well as paths for pedestrians and cyclists.

Life force of the ancestors

Hammond Park has a rich Māori history, and a connection with the ancestors and the land remains. Earlier this year Ngāti Wairere kaumatua Wiremu Puke bestowed the park with the name *Te Mauri o Ngā Tūpuna o Neherā* (The Life Force of the Ancestors of Ancient Times). He named the boardwalk *Te Ara o Ngā Tūpuna o Neherā* (The path of the Ancestors of Ancient Times).

The area was greatly important to the ancient Tainui hapū. They foraged, fished and gardened here. They moved between three pā sites: one that is now a grassy clearing below Malcolm Street overlooking the river, Te Pā o Ruamutu on what is now the western arm of Balfour Crescent, and the Mangaonua pā that lies below Ruakura Tractors on Riverlea Road.

Te Pā o Ruamutu was built by Ngā Iwi chief Ruamutu. The pā and its lands were claimed by Ngāti Wairere chief Hānui and his people after a battle in the 1700s in which Ruamutu was killed.

The following century the pā was abandoned due to the killing of Ngāti Wairere paramount chief Whare Koata whilst away on a bird-hunting trip. The pā then became an urupā (burial ground). *Te Mauri o Ngā Tūpuna o Neherā* and land encompassing the pā sites was taken by the government after the land wars of 1863-4. It was given to Captain James McPherson for his role in the Waikato Land Wars. In 1867 he built the homestead from which the name of the suburb is derived.

The beginning of RESI

In November 2007, 100 or so residents met to discuss a letter advising that Blacktop Construction had applied for an air discharge consent. The company planned to place an asphalt plant on Mexted Place, off Riverlea Road. The residents were concerned and angry. We formed an incorporated society, engaged a planner and lawyer, and worked for months to prepare a case against the proposal, which was to be decided at a hearing. Just prior to the hearing, Blacktop withdrew its application.

Keen to keep protecting the environment, RESI relaunched working bees in Hammond Park and continued to work to ensure that another Blacktop could never appear. This was achieved in 2014 with a district plan change to the Riverlea Industrial Area after successful lobbying by RESI.

But first, the goats

In the late 1980s, Hammond Park was a wilderness with a rough track through it. "There were goats all through the riverbank, including up the Mangaonua stream," explains long-time Riverlea Road resident Gordon Palmer.

Gordon and his supervisor and co-worker at the Hamilton City Council's Parks and Reserves unit were keen hunters. The police gave permission for the men to use firearms in the area, and they began to spend evenings and weekends shooting the goats.

"For us it was fun and exercise," said Gordon, "and we were busy showing each other how well we could shoot. But we could see the goats were destroying a lot of things." The process took three to four years. "I don't know whether we got them all in the end or they just disappeared further down."

The goats got cunning, he explains. "One shot and they're all gone. They'd be hiding and watching you. You could walk right past them and you'd never know." The boss's dog sniffed them out.

With the support of business owners, Gordon was also heavily involved in campaigning for the sealing and upgrade of Riverlea Road.

HEIRS

Before RESI, there was HEIRS (Hamilton Environmental Improvement in the Riverlea Suburb). It was this group of residents that began to weed and plant Hammond bush, starting in the late 1990s.

There was once a grassy clearing to the right of the boardwalk near the Malcolm Street end. In 2000, HEIRS volunteers planted 100 young kawakawa and karamū trees there, creating the bush we see today.

The group also collected seeds from the bush for growing on and planting, successfully campaigned for traffic-calming measures in Howell Avenue and Johnsvie Terrace, and produced a regular newsletter. HEIRS had obtained funding for a community noticeboard, but the group closed down before it could be constructed. The funds were passed to RESI, and helped pay for the Hammond Park sign at the Malcolm Street entrance to the boardwalk.

A brief history of the boardwalk

Hammond bush's boardwalk was built in 1999 to provide access and to protect the bush from multiple informal paths that walkers had been using. Its winding route preserved the most significant trees.



The boardwalk bridge that spans the stream below the Hudson Street dip made a dramatic entry in May of that year. It was assembled on the grassy area below Malcolm Street following delivery of its two supporting laminated timber arches. A large Russian helicopter flew it to its site and lowered it into place. It weighed just over four tonnes.

Leadership and project management opportunities

The RESI committee offers opportunities for experience in leadership and environmental and project management, not to mention the company of nice people! We do rewarding work. If you'd like

to join us, please get in touch. No experience needed.

What would you like from us? Do you have ideas about what this community could achieve? Let us know at riverlea.soc@gmail.com or phone 856 5156.

Forest bathing

Did you know that time in the forest exposes you to healthy plant chemicals that have been shown to be good for body and mind? In Japan they call it 'forest bathing'! Our working bees dose you with these chemicals, plus provide a workout and chats with neighbours. Just one session a year by most Riverlea residents would do wonders for Hammond Park!

I would like to support to the Riverlea Environment Society Inc. with a tax-deductible donation.

Name(s)

Address

Phone

email

Suggested donation per household: \$40 per year, or any other amount of your choosing.

Our bank account is 03 1559 0110053 000. To donate online, 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.

Total year-to-date community donations: \$796



Tania Macdonald, Anne Ferrier-Watson, John Badham, Robert Welch, Don Burns, Andrea Graves, Graham McBride, Jane Landman, Allan Pearson. Absent: Bruce Winders