



RIVERLEA
environment society

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From the Chair

Kia ora neighbours and friends of RESI,

What a pleasure it is to walk through Hammond Park as it thickens and thrives. Many trees we've planted are now taller than any of us. It's magnificent to see nature flourishing, doing what it does best when simply given the chance.

One of the big boosts has been removing *Tradescantia* weed, which local residents (especially the ever-humble Cumberpatch pair) have eradicated in places. For decades it smothered the ground. Now hundreds of self-seeded native plants, including ferns, are staking their claim instead.

The tūi have upped their splendid singing recently, and I reckon they're saying 'thank you' at times. They may be speaking to our trappers, who are saving chicks from being eaten, and three cheers to them. Hopefully kererū, who are winter visitors, will one day stay and nest in spring, just as tūi did 15 or so years ago. Bellbird/korimako and kākā – other winter visitors – would also be welcome to stay on.

RESI has a wonderful committee. Meetings are enjoyable. We have an excellent new accountant, Melissa Purcell. Next year we'll be looking for a new secretary, and new members are always welcome.

At working bees we have ongoing support from Gerard Kelly at Hamilton City Council, and HCC also provides trapping supplies. Anne Ferrier-Watson does a wonderful morning tea after working bees. Lindsay Cumberpatch lets people know when working bees are on (see overleaf for days/times).

Thank you to everyone who supports RESI.

Ngā mihi, Andrea Graves, chairperson

Our AGM: 28 August

You're invited to RESI's AGM on Thursday 28th August at 7 pm in the Riverlea Theatre lounge, followed by a light supper. The speaker will be Wiremu Puke of Ngāti Wairere, a trained museum ethnographer, accomplished carver, and designer of Te Parapara Garden at Hamilton Gardens. He's an entertaining speaker who will share his knowledge about taonga uncovered in local gully systems, the



A thinning swamp maire in Hammond bush.

history of occupation by Ngāti Wairere, and several pā in and near Riverlea. Highly recommended.

Myrtle rust invasion

One of Hammond bush's great treasures is its rare stand of old swamp maire (maire tawake). These are some of the biggest trees there, festooned with perching plants. They are increasingly sick.

They are infected with myrtle rust, a fungus to which it is especially susceptible. It blew to New Zealand from Australia in 2017. The fungus destroys new growth in summer and autumn when warmth and humidity are high.

As the *Waikato Times* recently reported, a Plant & Food Research scientist from Auckland recently assessed the canopies of Hammond's mature swamp maire as having already died back by half. He said they are functionally extinct, meaning they are unable to flower or fruit. Young trees planted by RESI volunteers are also infected.

Annual attacks are predicted to continue as the trees lose vigour and eventually die. With them will go the rich diversity of perching plants that they support, and the insects and other life fostered by the perching plants.

What can be done? There is some hope of finding trees that are more resistant to the fungus. It requires spraying fungicide to allow flowering and seeding, then collecting the fruit and growing them into young trees that can be checked for resistance. Some Auckland community groups do this.

This will not save our mature trees as it is a long-term project. However, they may be saved by spraying fungicide from drones; this would be expensive and only buy time in the hope that a solution emerges. RESI is still considering whether to pursue spraying. As the Hammond trees are thought to be some of the oldest swamp maire in existence, it will be worth seeking further opinion.

In the meantime, around half of the very large trees in the boggy area of Hammond bush are pukatea, which are unaffected by the fungus. In the drier areas, where swamp maire doesn't grow, we have large, healthy tawa and titoki. This bush will survive, but it needs our help more than ever.

Tremendous trapping

Trapping in Hammond Park continues strongly in order to protect all levels of the ecosystem. Six RESI trappers manage 88 traps of various types to target mice, rats and possums. They use scented bait but no poison. The trappers visit 40 traps once or twice a week to clear and rebait them, which takes about 1.5 hours, and they record catches on a centralised trapping website. Possums are caught occasionally, and 2 to 4 rats or mice are caught most weeks.

The team enjoys support from HCC, which provides supplies and also pays contractors to trap along the Mangaonua gully and the clearing below Balfour Crescent. The contractors' recent monitoring in Hammond Park showed low numbers of rats and possums, but hedgehogs were more numerous. They may soon be targeted also.

The current trapping team would welcome new members. The traps are simple and safe to manage. Please contact Tim at cavanatj@gmail.com.

History of the boardwalk

We now have a fully refreshed boardwalk in Hammond Park. The original boardwalk was constructed in the late 1990s. The council's priority was to avoid the larger tree species like swamp maire, so the boardwalk was fitted around them and made just wide enough for pedestrians, at 1.6 metres. This is why the boardwalk has sharp corners and short sight distances. Construction was done

with narrow machinery that could move along the clearing as the boardwalk was built, rather than work from the sides.

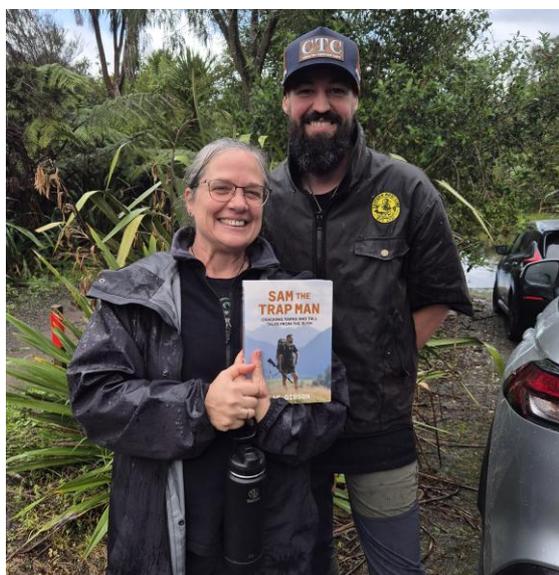
The wooden arch bridge spans 25 metres. It was assembled on the grass area near the bottom of Malcolm Street and lowered in by a large helicopter.

Restoring Hammond bush (i.e. working bees)

Restoration is steaming ahead in Hammond bush. Working bees are advertised on noticeboards at both boardwalk ends and run from 10–12 o'clock:

- Every second Thursday (see noticeboards)
- The last Saturday of every month

All welcome – we need more helpers. Please email riverlea.soc@gmail.com to receive email reminders with details.



Sam the Trap Man inspires RESI trapper Carrie Livingstone-Moore.

Donate to RESI

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

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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. Alternatively, hit the 'donate' button on our website. Thank you for your support.*