OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST News and Views December, 2019

Web site: <u>www.owbt.nz</u> For all walks meet at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane unless otherwise stated. Walks with talks first will start at the Leonard Cockayne Centre. Unless otherwise stated walks are free to Trust members and children under 15, otherwise \$5. For information re walks and seminars contact the Treehouse on (04) 499 1400

The second Saturday of each month. 9am	Plant care is on the second Saturday of each month. Please note there is no plant care in January; resumes in February Contact Wilbur Dovey, 499 1044.
	There is no walk in January
Sunday 23 February 2020 2pm	"Tiny plants that are everywhere: mosses, liverworts, and lichens" New Zealand is a world hotspot for liverworts. We've got lots of mosses and lichens too. This rich diversity is easily overlooked, but this walk will introduce these three groups, with tips for recognising them. Bring a magnifying glass if you can. To appreciate these plants is to reveal a new and wondrous world – you'll afterwards look at your surrounds in a completely new way. <i>Leader: Leon Perrie, Curator of Botany at Te Papa</i>
Sunday 22 March 2pm	"Animal Pests & Predators in Otari" This 1 – 1.5 hour walk was rained out in June 2019, so here is another chance to learn about the animal pests and predators found in Otari and how they are being controlled. We will walk up the Red Trail following one of the trap lines to see traps and monitoring devices in action. Not all traps are on the trail so we will be climbing some steep terrain. Suitable footwear essential and a reasonable level of fitness. <i>Leader: Jim Tait</i>
Sunday 26 April 2pm	 "Introduction to the Fungi Kingdom" A return to one of our most popular walks. Fungi differ from plants and have their own biological kingdom. This walk of about 1 – 1.5 hours will give you a basic understanding of this enormous kingdom and give you an idea of where to find them. Presenter: Geoff Ridley PhD Mycology and past mycologist at SCION. Blog – http://sporesmouldsandfungi.wordpress.com Numbers limited to 30. Free to Trust members otherwise \$6 including \$1 booking fee – please make your booking via Eventfinda (eventfinda.co.nz)

Chairman's Message

Kia ora koutou

It has been a busy time at Otari-Wilton's Bush recently and now we are on the countdown to the festive season! The conservation platform which has been on the drawing board since 2011 is finally in place at the site of our 800 year old Rimu (picture in new Otari calendar for 2020). Thanks to all involved. Flying in materials including gravel, meant steps on the path up to the tree could be upgraded at the same time. It is a great place for reflection on how great this forest is and so close to our city centre. The Trust board has made a substantial donation as mentioned in our September news. We are now working with WCC to



donation as mentioned in our September news. We are now working with WCC to create a suitable plaque to commemorate this construction. They will be arranging interpretation signage at the same time

Further great news is we are now in the planning stages of an update to the Information Centre, in particular the interior and digital displays of information within the space. It will still retain the meeting room capabilities currently available. This will be done prior to July 2020. We hope this will enhance the visitor experience considerably.

Our Otari Open day had brilliant weather, record numbers of people and plants, and was a financial and promotional success! Thanks to all who volunteered on the day and to those successful in the raffle! Thanks also to the Otari and WCC staff who helped on the day and set up on the Friday. Thanks also to the Wilton Bowling club for use of car parking facilities.

The three plant related conferences in Wellington concluded last week and many overseas visitors were introduced to the NZ flora and the special place that we have at Otari-Wilton's Bush. Some of our members were involved in facets of the conferences and enjoyed catching up with old friends and colleagues. I attended a public lecture by Dr Sverker Sorlin, a Swedish environmental historian who had some interesting views on climate change and the future of the planet. Rewi was a co-coordinator with Heidi Meudt from Te Papa where it was held.

Volunteers are still required for hosting, particularly over December /January so don't be shy if you can spare a couple of hours at one weekend a month. Guides for tours are welcome as well. These tours have been progressing well with many visitors. (See page 4.)

Finally thank you and best wishes to all of our volunteers and members for the festive season ahead, stay safe and we look forward to seeing you at Otari-Wilton's Bush soon. The gardens are looking great and there is lots to look at and enjoy.

Cheers Phil Parnell Chair Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust

Can't think of a last minute Christmas present?

Otari Calendars for 2020 are now available from hosts at the Otari Information Centre

11-4pm at weekends. Cash only.

\$20 each, \$50 for 3. With envelopes as required.

Otari Report

This month at Otari we will hopefully be returning to a more relaxed routine as we say goodbye to the (inhale deep breath...) New Zealand Plant Conservation Network and Australasian Systematic Botanist Society Conference, held at Te Papa. Otari certainly got some good coverage in various presentations and was a very popular place for participants to visit. It is always good to show fellow plant people around who have never been, or not in many years, to appreciate for themselves what a special collection and history we have at Otari. We received a lot of compliments and got a few plant identifications at the same time. We would like to thank the Otari Trust for all the support and sponsorship they provided for the conference.



Last month The Botanic Gardens Australia New Zealand Conference (BGANZ) was held in Wellington. I spent some very valuable time viewing Otari with staff from RBG Victoria Cranbourne, Canberra Australian Native Botanic and RBG Mount Annan Sydney. These are all Gardens that specialise in Australian native flora. There was a lot of good conversation on horticulture, conservation and general botanical stories. They were very impressed with where we are heading in the conservation space.

Our Conservation Science advisor, Karin, is entering a busy time of year. *Metrosideros bartlettii* is now flowering at Otari. The only other year it has flowered here was in 2017. Karin's team is busy pollinating flowers by hand in an attempt to produce viable seed. *Metrosideros bartlettii* is self-incompatible and requires a separate individual for successful pollination. All trees at Otari are clones from the same parent and therefore self-incompatible. The other plants in cultivation do come from different parent plants, 2 of these different genotypes are held at Percy's Reserve. There are only 14 trees of rata moehau left in the wild at 3 separate sites in the far north, not far from Spirits Bay. Seed development will hopefully occur over the next few months if pollination is successful. If you weren't aware, Karin is also studying swamp maire (*Syzygium maire*), and how the seed can be stored long term using liquid nitrogen. This will be keeping her and her trusty assistant Jennifer busy for the rest of the season. Watch this space...

Visitor experience consultants, Story Inc., is currently doing a project scope for the Otari Information Centre. We are looking forward to the centre being upgraded. Nothing structurally significant, but the space is to be made more fit for purpose. Newer interpretation and a better space to introduce the visitor to Otari. Hopefully lighter, more welcoming and comfortable while remaining a hub for volunteers and organised events.

The bins have now been removed from Otari. There are 2 remaining, both on the circular walk, that have been modified to take only dog litter. This will be a very much monitored experiment but the response and feedback received so far has been mostly positive.

We have had 2 students from the USA working with us for 3 days a week for the last few months. Mary and Naomi belong to an organisation called HECUA (Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs). If you visit, do check out the Story Map that can be found in the Information Centre. There will be a blurb about their project and you can use the tablet to visit sites of interest at Otari on an interactive map. They did a huge amount of research and have contributed a lot to the conversation of how we may incorporate technology into interpreting the Otari story. Many thanks to Chris Horne, Brian Thomas (WCC Ranger) and James Preston (WCC GIS) for their valued support and assistance.

If you look over the fence into our nursery from the Leonard Cockayne Centre you'll see that the propagation house is still very empty. This Christmas I have asked for benches, misting units and potting up areas. Fingers crossed we'll be up and running here in the New Year.

Many Thanks... Finn Michalak Curator Otari Native Botanic Garden.

The Board of Trustees for the current year is:

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The trustees welcome individual communications from members on any matters relating to Otari-Wilton's Bush Reserve or the Trust, particularly from those who would like to assist and participate in our activities.

Newsletter: Vera Burton. Phone 938 8207. veeanddave93@gmail.com

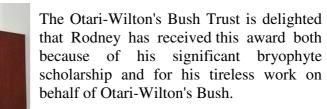
Volunteers wanted to Meet and Greet Visitors to Otari

We need you! We have visitors from overseas, other parts of NZ, and locals. Volunteering as a Host at Otari-Wiltons Bush does not require much knowledge of Botany. While most New Zealanders who enjoy walking or tramping in Nature can recognise a few of our Native Plants, modern smart phones allow our visitors to photograph a plant that interests them and you can show them how to send the photograph to one of 3 sites which will identify it if you cannot. Of course we have on-hand books, cards, and documents which can be consulted in the old fashioned way.

Mostly it is just a matter of handing our visitors an appropriate, self-guided tour brochure and advising them how long that chosen Option will take. In the course of conversation you can assess whether they are appropriately clad, shod, mobile and equipped. We do have some loan items, or you advise them of the most suitable options and activities. You will of course receive training, a manual and on-the-job training, working with an experienced host. Almost all visitors, especially those from out-of-town, are very friendly and appreciate a greeting and some interaction with a local. It is surprising how often you find that you have visited their home Country or Town, even if long ago.

Hosting at the OWB Information Centre involves about 2-1/2 hours of rostered time a month. We all realise that it is often difficult to plan 3 months in advance, so a list of contacts makes it relatively easy to arrange swaps of duties. We all have days, periods away or overseas which the Host Coordinators have to allow for in the roster. The more hosts we have, the easier this is and the better the scope of our social get-togethers. Please contact Peter or Jeannie Buxton (O4) 475 3848, (027) 4723455; or pebuxton@xtra.co.nz or (022) 4723455 to discuss your interest or arrange a chance to join a Host.

The presentation of The Allan Mere for 2019 to Darea Sherratt, awarded to the late Rodney Lewington, at Otari-Wilton's Bush, Wellington, 13 November 2019



The Allan Mere was donated by Dr Lucy Moore in 1982 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Harry Howard Barton Allan, first Director of Botany Division, DSIR, and author of Volume 1 of the *Flora of New Zealand*. The New Zealand Botanical Society awards the Allan Mere annually, based on nominations made by Regional Botanical Societies or individual members to persons who have made

outstanding contributions to botany in New Zealand.

This year, 2019, the Committee of the New Zealand Botanical Society has voted to award the Allan Mere to the late Rodney Lewington. On the 13th November, Anthony Wright, President of the New Zealand Botanical Society presented this award to Rodney's Wife Darea in the Leonard Cockayne Centre, at a gathering of Rodney's family, his friends and botanical colleagues. In presenting this award, Anthony emphasized that although the award nomination was given to Rodney, we should not overlook Darea's role in supporting and assisting Rodney in his work.

The formal citation in the Allan Mere Book of Record reads:

Rodney J. Lewington (1935 – 2018)

The late Rodney Lewington was a quiet leader and generous mentor in the botanical world and poured lasting energy into promoting the wonderful world of plants. He was a driving force for the Wellington Botanical Society and the Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust for over five decades. From the 1980s, Rodnev early was a regular contributor to the John Child Bryophtye Workshops, developing a passion for bryophytes that continued for the rest of his life.





A Walk with the Birds of Otari Wilton's Bush

Dr Hugh Robertson led an enthusiastic group of about 50 people on Sunday 20 October, sharing his extensive knowledge of many of the birds to be found in Otari Wilton's Bush.

The birds were quite well-behaved, with many different calls to be heard, even if we didn't see them all. He spent the first 20 minutes or so talking about different traits and interesting facts e.g. did you know adult male tui have a





specially adapted wing feather which causes a whirring sound when flying? Tui particularly were in abundance, but also kaka, kereru and we heard the easily identifiable call of our summer visitor, the Shining Cuckoo. Bush in the city wouldn't be without the presence of both the blackbird and thrush and we heard plenty of their songs too.

Dr Robertson brought along two publications he co-wrote (*The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* and *The Handguide to the Birds of New Zealand*) which we hope to have for sale in the Information Centre in the not-too-distant future. If you missed this excellent presentation, you have another chance next year as Dr Robertson is going to give another walk towards the end of 2020. *Clare Stanford.* Photo: *Kaka. Phil Parnell*

More About The NZPCN-ASBS Conference at Te Papa

The Trust's logo looked impressive among the logos of the nine conference sponsors. Our funding supported the involvement of more students and session 6. The theme of session 6 was "Threatened plants – success stories?", and several of the botanists who presented in this session have previously spoken at the Trust's March seminars, including Karin van der Walt, Carlos Lehnebach, and Debra Wotton.

There were familiar names in other sessions too.

Inviting speakers from both Australia and New Zealand, and limiting speakers to 15 minutes resulted in an amazing diversity of topics. Carol West's chairing of the first session ensured all other sessions ran to time. No speaker wanted to rouse the pink, plastic pig who stayed quiet as long as speakers were away from the podium within 15 minutes.

The Australians were impressed by the speech given by the Hon Eugenie Sage, our Minister of Conservation. It was definitely her speech, and she'd done her homework, including reading the NZPCN's submission on the draft Biodiversity Strategy (*Te Koiroa o Te Koiora*), and the Royal Society's 2015 review of the state of taxonomy in New Zealand. She also showed interest in, and appreciation of questions from the audience which raised issues which were new to her, e.g., funding for Tier 2 and 3 monitoring. One Aussie commented later that they now wanted to swap ministers of conservation as well as prime ministers with New Zealand.

On the final morning, keynote speaker Kevin Thiele, Inaugural Director of Taxonomy Australia, explored what we can do to increase investment in the taxonomy and systematics sector, and improve its productivity so that all the species of plants in Australia and New Zealand can be discovered, documented and named in a time frame that reflects the urgency of doing so. It was a very busy five days, with about 60 lectures, a full day workshop, a full day field trip, a book launch, an AGM, 2 social functions, and the excellent public panel discussion *The Politics of Collecting – from Banks and Solander to Today.* I'm already re-reading some of the abstracts, one about the two indigenous species of Rhododendron in Australia. *Bev Abbott*

Otari Open Day A Success



The weather was perfect for this year's Open Day and there was a constant throng of people visiting the stalls operated by the Trust. Thanks to the generous donations of baked goods by members, the cake stall raised over \$700 and the sales of raffle tickets and cards was better than ever, raising almost \$600. The plant stall raised more than \$400 and the gourmet barbecue was as popular as ever, with a long queue forming. The



proceeds from all stalls combined raised just under \$2,500 for the Trust to invest back into Otari Wilton's Bush.



None of this would have been possible without Trust members giving freely of their time to organise and operate the stalls. I particularly want to thank Athol Swann for,



once again, organising the raffle and donating a beautiful wooden bowl as one of the prizes. The Trust Board members worked tirelessly ahead of and on the day to make sure all stalls ran smoothly. Many Trust members gave sterling service helping on the stalls – your contribution was greatly appreciated.





Winners of the raffle prizes were:

1st prize, Donna who chose the five native plants 2nd prize, Felicity who chose the Cactus Outdoors voucher

3rd prize, Kathryn who got the wooden bowl.

Cactus Outdoors had donated two \$100 vouchers to the Trust and the second one was won by Roy Slack when his name was drawn from amongst all of the volunteers who helped at Open Day. Congratulations, Roy!

A small housekeeping matter: two of the Trust's yellow vests, worn by volunteers, are missing. If you took one home, could you please return it to the locked cupboard in the Information Centre.

Thanks once again to all those who participated, and we look forward to next year's Open Day. *Carol West*

Trip Report: USA Botanical Expeditions and the Cryo2019 conference in San Diego

Karin van der Walt. Conservation and Science Advisor, Otari Native Botanic Garden

In July I had the privilege of travelling to the USA to present at the Cryo2019 conference held in San Diego, California. Adding an additional week onto the trip meant I could visit a couple of facilities specializing in seed conservation and cryopreservation (storage of biological samples in liquid nitrogen). Since my flight arrived in Los Angeles, I decided to stay there for two days, certainly not to compete with crowds at Disneyland Park or Hollywood Hill, but to visit some of the botanical icons such as The Los Angeles Country Arboretum & Botanic Garden and The Huntington.





The Arboretum and The Huntington

The Los Angeles Country Arboretum and Botanic Garden is a 50ha botanical garden and historical site located on the old Rancho Santa Anita in the city of Arcadia. Their mission is to cultivate natural, horticultural and historic resources for learning, enjoyment and inspiration. I was surprised to find geographical collections from Africa, Australia and Madagascar, all rich in species representation. The interpretation throughout the arboretum was well thought out and focussed on public education around gardening for native bees, water-wise gardens, soil conservation practices and food gardens.

Photo 1: The historical house of Henry and Arabella Huntington, with a significant cycad collection in front.

The following day I arranged a visit to The Huntington – Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. In 1919 Henry and Arabella Huntington transformed their private estate, San Marino Ranch, into an institution for advancement of learning, the arts and sciences, and to promote public welfare. This became known as The Huntington, a non-profit collections-based research and educational institution serving scholars and the general public (Photograph 1). The botanical living collections include one of the largest collections of cacti and succulents from around the globe and a palm garden represented by more than 200 species





Photo 2: The palm collection at Huntington Botanical Garden.

The Japanese Garden was no less impressive, sporting a traditional Japanese house, moon bridge, Zen garden and large bonsai collection. The adjacent Chinese Garden reflects the traditional style of scholar gardens in Suzhou, China and features a large lake, teahouse and tea shop and waterfalls *Photo 3: The Chinese garden at Huntington Botanical Garden, featuring the, sculptures and traditional buildings.*

At the time of my visit (July 2019), construction was underway on one of the largest classical-style Chinese gardens

in the world. Builders from China were housed in the USA for the duration of the project to ensure every aspect of the buildings is authentic. The main reason for arranging a special visit to Huntington was to meet up with Dr Raquel Folgado, a cryopreservation researcher who was recruited in 2016 to head up cryopreservation and tissue culture projects at Huntington.

Since this is still a fairly new operation, their main focus currently is to secure priority species from the collections in tissue culture and thereafter preserve the shoots through cryopreservation. My visit to Huntington was a great opportunity to compare challenges and opportunities that come along with having a science facility in a botanical garden.

US Department of Agriculture – Fort Collins, Colorado: Sometimes size does matter

Increased airport security screening times coupled with unpredictable Los Angeles traffic meant I had to catch a 3am airport transfer for my flight to Denver, Colorado. The purpose of my visit to Fort Collins (an hour north of Denver) was to meet up with Drs Gayle Volk and Chris Walters at the US Department of



Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Genetic Resources Preservation Research Department. The National Laboratory for Genetic Resources Preservation safeguards more than 500,000 accessions from nearly 12,000 species. Conventional seed banking



Photo 4: The cryovault at the US Department of Agriculture in Fort Collins.

(low moisture content and storage at -18°C) is done in a seed vault located one story below ground behind double security doors. Two stories down is the cryovault, an astonishing room housing 350 individual 1500lt Liquid Nitrogen dewars (Photograph 4).



I looked longingly at the discontinued dewars (due to age), wondering if I can get one through customs as checked luggage. I did appreciate seeing the guts of one of the dewars which has been dissected for illustrative purposes. (Photograph 5)

Photo 5: Dissected 1500lt liquid nitrogen dewar showing the turn table on which sample racks are housed and thick isolation to maintain temperatures at -196°C.

After a full day of very good discussions and idea exchanges I was on my way for yet an earlier transfer (2am) to catch a flight to Phoenix, Arizona where I was spending the weekend in the Sonoran Desert.

Arizona – Cowboy movies, rattlesnakes and Sonora Cacti.

The Sonoran Desert covers large parts of the Southwestern United States including Arizona and California in the north and west, and south into Mexico. The area supports an astonishing 2000 plant species, including the Saguaro Cactus, *Carnegiea gigantea*. This 12m tall cactus is the icon of the American west and cowboy movies and restricted to the Sonoran desert.

My first encounter with this desert giant was at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix (Photograph 6).



Photo 6: Carnegiea gigantea (Saguaro Cactus) next to the administrative buildings at The Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, Arizona

With more than 4400 species, including 400 rare and endangered species and the world's most complete *Opuntioideae* collection, this was well worth a visit (Photograph 7).

Photo 7: Succulent collection at The Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, Arizona has the world's most complete Opuntioideae collection.

The rest of the weekend was spent hiking

in the Catalina State Park amongst thousands of Saguaro Cacti and visiting the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum outside of Tucson

Photo 8: The Tuscon area in Arizona is in the heart of the Sonora desert where the rich flora diversity includes thousands of Saguaro cacti.

As I was driving back to Phoenix to catch my flight to San Diego for the Cryo 2019 conference, I was weighing up the consequences of forgoing the conference for another week in the desert.

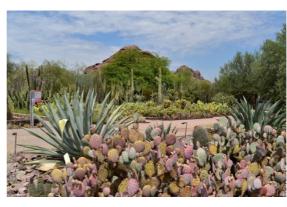
Cryo2019: The freezing experts

Cryo2019 was the 56th Annual Meeting of the Society for Cryobiology. The conference attracted participants from a multi-disciplinary field ranging from human organ storage for transplantation, human fertility and reproductive medicine, securing the world's food resources through long term genetic preservation of agricultural important species and lastly, protecting and preserving the world's endangered flora and fauna. I was delighted that biodiversity conservation dominated the first three plenary talks, the first delivered by Oliver Ryder from The Frozen Zoo of San Diego taking us through the 40 year journey of the Frozen Zoo and we all had a good laugh about the absence of health and safety regulations in 1975. I was really looking forward to the second speaker, Prof Hugh Pritchard from Kew Millennium Seed Bank. His talk did not disappoint as he highlighted the importance and urgency needed to use cryobiotechnology (using tissue culture and cryopreservation) for wild plant species conservation. The last plenary presenter, Dr Bart Panis from Biodiversity International (based in Belgium) illustrated the use of cryopreservation for global food security. During the following two days the plant-related sessions delivered diverse talks covering crop species, native orchids from India, oaks from the USA and of course, our own Syzygium maire (swamp maire). My presentation was wedged between a rather technical presentation on the glassy state of cryopreserved seeds delivered by Dani Ballesteros (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) and Christina Walters (US Department of Agriculture) illustrating the response of Papaya seeds during storage at sub-zero conditions. Being flanked by such experienced and accomplished researchers was rather intimidating and I was rather relieved when my presentation was well received, followed by many questions which thankfully I was able to answer. Delivering a presentation early in a conference is a great advantage since it provides a gateway for subsequent discussions. By the time the conference officially wrapped up on Thursday, I found myself excited about the next season for swamp maire as the general consensus from the cryopreservation gurus is

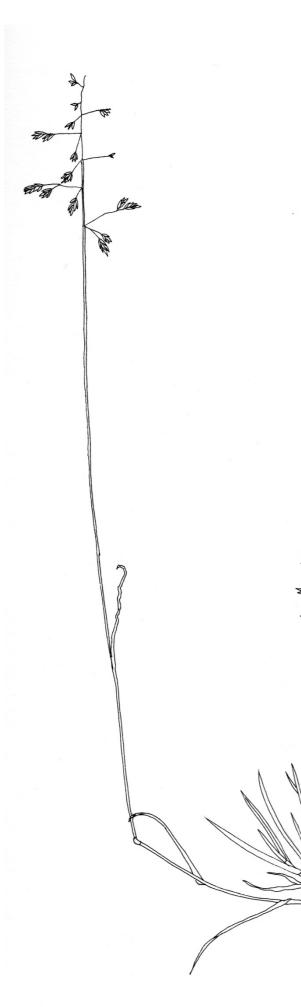
that all the signs are there that we can get swamp maire to survive the cryopreservation process. I was further humbled by all the support and networking opportunities offered, not only because *Syzygium* is a global genus and we desperately need expertise in its conservation, but also because they learned about this small native botanic garden in New Zealand which is absolutely dedicated to plant conservation.

Acknowledgements

This trip was made possible by funding received from the Otari Trust, Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture, Massey University Conference Scholarship, Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand and Wellington City Council. I truly appreciate the significant contribution made by the Otari Trust paving the way for further funding.







Poa colensoi

Blue tussock

This is a small clump forming tussock with an erect habit, found throughout the country from Coromandel south – inconspicuous and ubiquitous. Blue-green or light green in colour, found in lowland to alpine habitats, widespread in tussock grassland and herbfield, especially in rocky places. This plant came originally from Bendigo, in central Otago, and is in the Otari nursery.

OTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

(Supporting Otari-Wilton's Bush Reserve)

Membership Application Form

We are delighted to welcome new supporters and there are a number of ways you can help us to preserve this internationally significant native botanic garden and bush reserve for future generations. Our membership year is from 1 April to 31 March.

New members joining after 1 January will have the membership accredited to the following year. Please fill out the form below.

YOUR DETAILS	MEMBERSHIP	\$
Name(s):	Student/Unwaged \$5	\$
Address:	Individual \$10	\$
PHONE Number(s):	Double/Family \$15	\$
Email Address:	Corporate \$30	\$
* Donation		
Billing name & address: (if different from above)	Total Payment:	\$

Cheque enclosed (Please make out to Otari Wilton's Bush Trust	Paid electronically (please mark DONATION & your NAME in reference.
Please post to:	WAIVIE III Telefence.
The Treasurer, Otari-Wilton's Bush Trust, 160 Wilton Road, Wilton, Wellington 6012	Westpac account # 030518 0205713 000

*The Trust is registered as a Charitable organisation and donations over \$5.00 qualify for a tax

rebate to individual taxpayers. (annual limits apply). Unfortunately we are unable to process payments by Credit Card.

I would like a receipt for my donation.

• VOLUNTEER

We have over 100 volunteers who are active regularly at Otari. It's up to you how much time you commit – and you can choose how you would like to get involved from a range of activities, from hosting and guiding tours to working in the Otari nursery, pest control and forest restoration. Please contact Secretary Wilbur Dovey cweag.dovey@xtra.co.nz