

ŌTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

News and Views December, 2021

*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 & children under 15, otherwise \$5. Web site: www.owbt.nz
Please note that bookings are essential at Eventfinda <http://www.eventfinda.co.nz> if any members wish to attend any of the walks.*

Second Saturdays	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.
Sunday 27 February 2022 2pm	“How do our forests regenerate?” Trees don't live for ever and the major forest canopy species in Aotearoa have different strategies for replacing themselves. During this 1-1.5 hour walk through the gardens we'll learn about the regeneration strategies of kauri, beech and podocarp/hardwood forest species. <i>Leader: Dr Carol West</i> Numbers limited to 30. Free to Trust members otherwise \$6 including \$1 booking fee – please make your booking via Eventfinda (eventfinda.co.nz)
Sunday 27 March 2pm	Details in next newsletter

Message from the Chair

Kia ora koutou katoa

In comparison to the busy winter, spring has been very quiet for the Board, thanks mostly to COVID-19. The August Sunday walk and a Board meeting were cancelled because of social distancing restrictions. Open Day proceeded as a series of virtual talks and walks organised by Tim Park. A good range of topics was covered in both activities and all are very interesting and informative.

You can still take the virtual tour of walks featuring:

- Behind the scenes tour of Ōtari with Tim Park and Carol West
- Raranga with Linda Lee
- Learn your ferns with Leon Perrie
- Advice from an arborist: looking after trees at home with Josh Symes
- Trapping to protect Ōtari with Jim Tait

<https://www.facebook.com/wellingtongardensnz/videos/1956987917810582>.

Some of the talks are still available online, too:

- Gardening at Home with Native Plants by Megan Ireland

<https://www.facebook.com/wellingtongardensnz/videos/594681791542987>

- Research Highlights from the Lions Otari Conservation Lab by Karin van der Walt

<https://www.facebook.com/wellingtongardensnz/videos/624282168954367>

- Orchid Conservation in Aotearoa New Zealand by Carlos Lehnebach

<https://www.facebook.com/wellingtongardensnz/videos/321974023031180>

Things have been pretty busy at Ōtari, especially in the last few weeks where work has begun on the upgrade of the information centre interior and interpretation. At the same time, the flat at the back of the Leonard Cockayne Centre is being converted into lab, office and library space so that the portacom that currently houses the lab can become a properly sterile space.

In addition, work has begun on improving access to Moko, the ancient rimu, by rerouting the track to eliminate the many big steps on the Blue Trail. A new route has been scoped and is being checked to ensure any impact on the bush will be minimal.

Have an enjoyable summer and, once again, thank you for your support of the Trust and Ōtari Wilton's Bush. We look forward to hearing from you.

Carol West

Chair



Ōtari Report



Ōtari Update

Spring has definitely sprung at Ōtari, with many species in our collection from around Aotearoa bursting into flower as summer approaches. Our *Carmichaelia appressa* (prostrate broom) and *Kunzea toelkenii* (Bay of Plenty kanuka) currently seem to have more flowers than leaves, and the native bees are taking great advantage of their plentiful nectar. We are also as busy as bees keeping on top of the growth in the gardens, along with tradespeople working to refresh the Visitor Centre and also renovations of the curator's house to expand the Lions Ōtari Plant Conservation Lab. We are looking forward to both these spaces being operational before Christmas. Recent visitors may have noticed the dilapidated garage has been removed as it was no longer a safe structure.

The weather has allowed us to continue planting late into spring, with some additions and changes to the *Veronica* Garden, Banks Entrance Garden, Offshore Islands Garden, 38 Degrees Garden and Alpine Rock Garden. The team has been busy using the skills from their recent training and making the most of the electric power tools we have been able to acquire recently. We had a fantastic day with Darryl Kee (WeedWorks Ltd) learning weed control strategies to tackle our worst weeds alongside staff from Karori Cemetery, Berhampore Nursery, Wellington Botanic Garden, Council Rangers and Zealandia. Our new gardener Tom Belworthy is looking forward to his trip to Cass for the Practical Field Botany course over summer supported by the Trust and Onslow Garden Club.

Unfortunately, COVID has disrupted some of our planned work in the far north, Pureora and Wairarapa. We hope the situation is easier for us to move around next year.

Investigations into walking track improvements are ongoing, as is a review of our trail markers and signage through the gardens and forest.

As the weather improves, the gardens and forest are getting busier with people and wildlife, meaning that it is more important than ever for people to have their dogs on leads while visiting Ōtari. Kereru, kaka, and many other birds are nesting at present and vulnerable fledglings will soon be on the ground and easy prey for curious canines. This week alone animal control wardens have issued immediate infringement fines of \$300 to a few people who have let their dogs off the leash in Ōtari.

Please make the most of the weather and visit Ōtari soon.

Tim Park

Kaiwhakahaere Ōtari | Manager Ōtari Native Botanic Garden and Wilton's Bush Reserve

Ngā Māra o Poneke | Wellington Gardens

Papa Tākaro Hākinakina | Parks, Sport and Recreation

Mi Heke Ki Poneke | Wellington City Council

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Trust Board 2020 – 2021



The Board of Trustees for the current year is:

Chair: Carol West	9 Mamari Street Rongotai	carolwest@xtra.co.nz	Phone: 387 3396
Secretary: Wilbur Dovey	40 Warwick St., Wilton.	cweag.dovey@xtra.co.nz	Phone: 499 1044
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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

A clarification.

In the September newsletter we ran a piece about the naming Moko and unveiling of plaque on the platform for 800 Year old Rimu.

Margaret Crimp has sent us the following comments from the back copies of the newsletter and minutes: Money was raised for the memorial from a number of sources. The amount given was \$905. This was not from the family per se. They asked friends to donate to OWBT (see below). The ECO organisation (which Bob had formed) also put a notice in their newsletter (Tieke) asking for donations to be paid - see below. ECO also contributed a sizeable sum.

“Donations in memory of Bob Fantl . Bob and his family asked that donations be made to the Otari-Wilton's Bush in Wellington, which Bob loved and where he walked very often.”

“Robert Fantl lived on Wilton Road for many years in a house he designed himself. He was one of the children rescued by Sir Nicholas Winton who brought six train loads of children to safety from Czechoslovakia on the eve of World War II. From England Bob came to NZ. Here he met his mother and sister. He became an architect designing, amongst other buildings, Massey House [with Plischke]. He was a leading nationwide environmental activist. He cofounded COENCO, a nationwide collective of more than 100 environmental groups. This later became ECO. Most importantly for us he fought against a major road cutting a swath through Otari-Wilton's Bush. He took the WCC to the Court of Appeal in 1983-84 and won. Bob was very often to be seen walking in Otari and was always happy to stop for a chat.”

OWBT Newsletter June 2016

The Sanctuaries of New Zealand Simon Collins fund

In a news release after its August conference Sanctuaries New Zealand commented that Simon Collins (the former Sanctuary Manager of the Lake Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust, who had died while cycling in March 2021), exemplified an open, adaptive approach to sanctuary management. *'He had shown the Sanctuaries of New Zealand community how actively sharing knowledge and seeking out solutions from others who might have faced the same challenges before, can lead to even better on-ground outcomes'*.



To acknowledge Simon's contribution Sanctuaries of New Zealand have established a special fund to continue that legacy. The purpose of the fund is to enable an exchange of people between sanctuaries. A grant will be provided to sanctuary staff or volunteers to visit other sanctuaries to learn about how they operate and actively share knowledge. This learning-by-doing approach will support the development of individuals, while also actively facilitating improvements in how sanctuaries operate. The fund will be administered by the Sanctuaries of New Zealand Incorporated (SONZI).

The grant

In year 1 (2021), two grants of up to \$1000 will be offered to selected individuals to assist in costs of airfares, accommodation, covering duties while away, and other allowances. This will be a cash grant to the organisation the person is associated with. If the travel cannot be undertaken within one year, it will be returned to SONZI and offered the following year. Additional grants, or higher value grants, could be offered should sufficient funds be raised.

Building the fund

The first grant will be awarded in December 2021. The initial funding will be contributed by SONZI, and donations to the fund are invited through a Givealittle page

<https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/the-sanctuaries-of-nz-simon-collins-fund-1>

Excess funds beyond that required for grants will remain with SONZI for the benefit of sanctuary work across New Zealand.

Selection of recipients

Applications are invited, and will close on 30 November 2021 .

Applicants will need to fill out this form <https://tinyurl.com/ayw3y6th>

Ian Stockwell

Progress on the writing of a history of Ōtari

Last month Bee Dawson reported to the OWBT Board meeting that the research and writing of the book was well under way and she hoped it would be ready to go to the publisher by the end of the year. The photographer Chris Coad has become a familiar figure around Ōtari as he collects candid photographs of various staff activities, to say nothing of photographs of plants in the collection with some extrovert birds competing for attention.

We are very pleased that Cuba Press has agreed to publish this book. With the uncertainties of delivery and supplies because of the pandemic it has never been more important to have the enthusiastic commitment of a local publisher.

We are very pleased that Bee has kindly agreed to speak to us about her research on the book at the 2022 March Seminars. (See some of Chris's photos on page 8.)

Rat Trap Line along the Kaiwharawhara Stream

People may have noticed that several months ago a line of rat trap tunnels has appeared alongside the track that runs beside the Kaiwharawhara Stream on the circular walk and beyond. This line of traps – 23 in total – runs from the North End carpark through to the double bridges at the south end of the Reserve just before the path goes up to the Karori Cemetery. Some of you may be wondering why this line has been put in recently.

When the trap network was set up in mid-2007, DOC200 traps were used. By that stage, the poison bait program had been running for about 10 years. That particular program was aimed at possums and, because the bait stations were accessible to rats, they were a secondary target. The trapping program was targeted at ground-based predators such as stoats, weasels and hedgehogs, with again rats as a secondary catch. Over the years the number of DOC200 traps was increased and the area covered expanded to include in and around Karori Cemetery. There are now 73 DOC200 traps covering this area.

Over the last five years, catches have been about 100 rats per year, around half a dozen stoats and weasels and around 20 hedgehogs. The stoats, weasels and hedgehogs have mostly been caught on or near the Skyline. What has been particularly noticeable over the last couple of years has been the fall-off in rat catches in the interior of Ōtari -Wilton's Bush, with most catches being along the boundaries, near the Skyline, along the stream or by the cemetery.

Monitoring by both the Regional Council and by a Wellington City Council project showed very low interaction with the tracking tunnels by rats. With low monitoring results and with a higher proportion of total catches close to the stream, it was decided to put in a line of rat traps as a trial. These traps were spaced so that there is a trap – whether it be a DOC200 or a rat trap – every 50m. The results were unexpected.

Since March, when the line of traps went in, 27 rats have now been caught, along with around 70 mice. This compares with 46 rats caught by all the other traps looked after by the RAMBO team since the beginning of the year.



Over the years, many of the rats caught in the DOC200's had been ship rats – the ones with the very long tails that basically live in the trees. The rats caught by this new line along the stream were: 16 Norway rats, 5 ship rats and 6 that were not identified. The fact that the majority were Norway rats was not a great surprise as those rats are frequently found alongside streams and are more ground based than ship rats. What was a surprise was the large size of some of them and the numbers caught.

Many of these rat traps are in full public view, unlike the DOC200's which are largely out of sight. What has been pleasing has been the public reaction when I have been checking these traps which has been very supportive. Many of the people who stop to talk already have a trap in their backyard. I have also had the comment that “it's great to see that finally something is being done about predators in Ōtari”.

Jim Tait with one of the rats caught. Photo: Tim Park



This is the benefit of having some predator control that is visible to the Otāri users. It is also pleasing that these traps have not been interfered with by the public, with only one being thrown in the stream and none set off or removed.

What RAMBO has to consider now is shifting its focus more towards targeting rats. This will mean more rat traps with a tighter spacing between traps. The first focus will be on the streams in Otāri-Wilton's bush, and already additional rat traps have been placed to cover the stream that runs under the Information Centre. Targeting stoats, weasels and hedgehogs will still be important. However, hopefully there are less stoats around as Capital Kiwi has some 4,000 stoat traps to the west of us and have taken around 600 stoats over the last couple of years.



More Consultation on Trading and Events at Ōtari

In early November 2021, Wellington City Council approved a new Trading and Events in Public Places Policy. The aim of the policy is to “enable, support and promote opportunities to trade and hold events in public places.” Public places include roads and footpaths in the central city, and about 35 named reserves in natural areas/open space, and on the Town Belt. As some of the activities changed during the first consultation, Council also decided to do further consultation on the sites and activities in the natural areas, starting late November and ending about mid February 2022.

Original list of activities for Ōtari (In different order)	Revised list of activities for Ōtari (After first round of consultation)
	Stationary activities
Mobile food/coffee carts	Food/coffee trucks/carts
Recreation equipment hire	Recreation equipment hire
Recreation services provision	Recreation services provision
	Mobile activity with a stationary component
Commercial tours	Commercial tours/guiding
Commercial one-off events	Commercial one-off events
Commercial group fitness	Commercial lessons/coaching/group fitness
	Professional dog walking/training

Descriptions of activities are in the revised consultation document

Once the lists from the second consultation have been finalised, delegated officers will either approve or decline applications to conduct specific activities at specific sites. This means the applications don't have to go through a Council committee.

The policy applies only to lists of activities which are considered to be low-scale and low-impact. Council has stressed that approval will not be automatic. "All applications will require a full impact and benefit assessment by delegated officers against the policy, the management plans, the legislation and other relevant Council bylaws, plans or policies."

As one example, the Wellington Botanic Gardens Management Plan (2014) bans mountain bikes from Ōtari, so the delegated officer would decline all applications to run mountain bike tours in Ōtari. (The Management Plan is due for review by 2024).

Food/coffee trucks/carts are on the list for Ōtari. Preparing a submission that sets out whether you agree with this activity (identifying its benefits) and/or why you disagree (identifying any potential negative impacts) will help the delegated officer make a decision, and if giving approval, decide on any conditions to attach to the permit.

Professional dog walkers can operate from any public place as set out in the Council's Dog Policy. The Dogs Policy bans all dogs from Zealandia and from several beaches, sometimes at specific times.

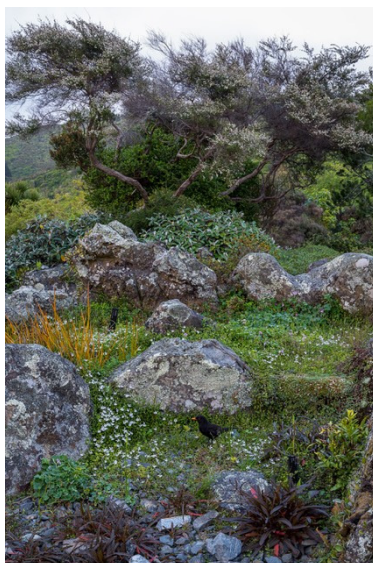
OWBT as an applicant

But we mustn't lose sight of the opportunities that the Trading and Events in Public Places Policy may give the Trust as an independent organisation to trade in different goods and services, or work with other community organisations to run different kinds of events.

If you want to have your say, the consultation document can be found at:

<https://www.letstalk.wellington.govt.nz/town-belt>

Photos taken by Chris Coad around Ōtari



New Sanctuary Manager for the Lake Rotokare Scenic Trust Reserve: Sophie Tucker

In an earlier Otari Wilton's Bush Trust newsletter I contributed an article on **Simon Collins**, Sanctuary Manager, Lake Rotokare Scenic Reserve, who died of a heart attack, in March 2021 at the age of 47 years. Otari Wilton's Bush Trust Board members have had a number of interactions and meetings with Simon and his colleagues over the years.

Three months ago the announcement was made that **Sophie Tucker** had been appointed the new Sanctuary Manager. She is a Chartered Engineer from the UK with over 20 years project and general management experience, who has lived in Taranaki since 2014. Sophie is a keen trumper, and has been an active volunteer member of the Taranaki Alpine Club.

In an interview with Catherine Groenstein, reported in the *Taranaki Daily News* 1 October 2021, Sophie commented that *"I am quite an outdoorsy person. I love getting out into the hills and mountains, but I was living and working in London, which didn't really suit the outdoorsy dream," she said. "I'd had this amazing holiday in New Zealand in 2013, then I got back home. I opened the blinds in the morning, looked out and decided to sell the house and go and live in New Zealand in the mountains."*

A few months later, in January 2014, she had a job with Shell Todd Oil Services and was living in New Plymouth and enjoying tramping and mountain-climbing. She has served on the Taranaki Alpine Club committee for four years, was trips coordinator for three years, and runs snow-craft courses and helps with the annual public open climb.



The role at Rotokare was advertised following the unexpected 20 March 2021 death of Sanctuary Manager Simon Collins. Sophie said that the position which she was appointed to on 9 August was a perfect fit for her passion for the outdoors and her skills in project and team management. As well as a staff team of six, the sanctuary is supported by an army of volunteers.

Sophie said in her *Taranaki Daily News* interview that : *'I am absolutely thrilled to have this opportunity to integrate both my personal and professional skills to lead the team at Rotokare Scenic Reserve. It is a dream role as it combines so many of the things that I enjoy ! '* and that *'I am really looking forward to working with the skilled and passionate team of staff and volunteers in this beautiful location, and the many supporting organisations, to build upon the fantastic achievements of Rotokare and lead it into the future.'*

Sophie Tucker. Photograph supplied by the Lake Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust

Rotokare Developments

Catherine Groenstein also reported that the Rotokare kiwi breeding season is off to a good start, with six monitored birds already incubating eggs, while volunteers are helping to count hihi (stitchbirds) before their breeding season begins. There is a stable population of about 70 hihi in the sanctuary according to Rotokare Trustee Allen Juffermans. He said that the Rotokare Trust has recently bought 30ha of land to link the Lake Rotokare Scenic Reserve with the Totara Block, a farm owned by Tim and Sue Hardwick-Smith, where about 40 kiwi are monitored. Allen said that the land is going to be fenced to keep stock out and intensively predator-trapped, and is a start on the Trust's long-term goal of creating a safe corridor for birds between Taranaki Maunga and the Pātea River.

Environmental Award

Stratford, a town in Central Taranaki, with an estimated population of 6,100 is known for its 'connection' to Stratford – on - Avon in England with some 67 streets named after characters in some of William Shakespeare's plays. Stratford has New Zealand's only glockenspiel clock tower and the dialogue from the balcony scene in 'Romeo and Juliet' is played through loud speakers three times daily.

The Stratford Business Association has a bi - annual celebration of excellence awards known as the Romeo Awards. The work done by the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust was acknowledged with the announcement that the Sanctuary had been selected as the best entry for the Association's 2021 Environmental Impact Award.

Jobs for Nature Funding

In a news release dated 12 August 2021 Conservation Minister Kiri Allan announced Jobs for Nature funding of almost \$10 million for 8 projects in Taranaki. The projects focused on pest control, riparian

planting, stream health and species restoration across Taranaki and provided a total of 116 full-time equivalent roles over a three-year program. One of the recipients was the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust.

The new release also said that:

The Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust faces significant challenges due to the impact of COVID-19. Its Jobs for Nature funding ensures the trust's significant conservation successes are not lost, including management of a pest-free sanctuary which is a focal point for species restoration, education and community engagement with nature, including threatened species.

Under the summary of the funded projects it was mentioned that the **Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust**, 'a community-led conservation project in central Taranaki, receives a \$480,000 investment over a three year period aimed at protecting the roles of staff employed by the trust. The funding it said 'would ensure ongoing specialist species management and pest-free sanctuary management skills, plus the operational management of the sanctuary's biodiversity and biosecurity programmes'.

Comment

The 230 hectare Rotokare Scenic Reserve, near Eltham is well worth a visit with entry being free. There are picnic tables for those who wish to take their own lunch. There is a 4 km track, which most fitness levels can cope with, around the 17 hectare Lake Rotokare. The Lake walk takes 1.5 – two hours. The first 600m of the track is accessible for wheelchairs. In 2015 the 6 km Rotokare Ridgeway Walk was opened. This walk, which includes sections close to the 8.4 km predator proof fence, takes between 3 -5 hours and requires a medium to high level of fitness.

The Trust is financially supported by individuals, the South Taranaki District Council, the Taranaki Regional Development Council and many businesses, large and small, located in the Taranaki province. The huge number of volunteers is what makes this Sanctuary so unique. Their contribution was clearly shown in the construction of the Ridgeway Walk where 120 steps were built, 10,000 nails used - 123 volunteers were involved in this project.

An important aspect of the Trust's work is in the area of environmental education where programmes and supporting resource packs are provided, for a fee, from early childhood through to senior secondary school students. Click on the website

www.rotokare.org.nz for more information.

Ian Stockwell



Team Day at Whitirea

On Friday 26th November we had a Team Day out at Whitireia, where we met Robyn Smith and had a look at revegetation projects for the various habitats in the reserve. The *Leptinella nana* (New Zealand's favourite plant) has grown a lot since I last saw it 3 years ago, and recruitment is happening; the challenge is providing enough habitat under the wind-shorn shrubs, as it can't compete with the rank grass. We also looked at the dune revegetation at Onehunga Bay and further around at Kaiaua Bay, fascinating to see a dune so far into the harbour. Though as it was a very windy day we could see how that happened. Revegetating Whitireia is a huge project, but the areas we looked at were making excellent progress.

Photos: *above*, the team sitting in the long grass in a sheltered corner, listening to Tim.

From left: *Acaena pallida*, *Calystegia tuguriorum* (not convolvulus, but a NZ native!), *Spinifex sericeus* female flowers. Eleanor Burton.





Coprosma virescens

This is a shrub from eastern New Zealand, from Gisborne south to Otago, but rare or missing in many parts of its range. It is fairly common in cultivation, being an attractive shrub to about 3 metres, with a graceful weeping habit and overall orange colour. It is one of New Zealand's many small leaved divaricating coprosmas, and like all coprosmas it is dioecious (sexes on different plants). At Ōtari *Coprosma virescens* can be seen in the Divaricate Garden.

Membership Application/Donation form.

Please note there is also one on the website which can be completed and submitted electronically or downloaded and printed and sent by post or email.



Supporting Otari-Wilton's Bush Reserve



MEMBERSHIP / DONATION FORM

YOUR DETAILS

NAME/S

ADDRESS

PHONE NUMBERS

EMAIL ADDRESS

BILLING NAME & ADDRESS (if
different from Above

NEW MEMBER OR RENEW

\$

INDIVIDUAL \$20

\$

DOUBLE/FAMILY \$30

\$

CORPORATE \$30

\$

NEW MEMBER

☐

DONATE

\$20

\$50

\$100

Other

\$

☐

I would like a receipt for my donation

P

☐

Paid electronically to account 030518 0205713 000 (please mark tour NAME and MEMBERSHIP
and/or DONATION in the fields

COMMENTS