



ŌTARI
WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

Website: owbt.nz

Ōtari Newsletter

June, 2025

Ngā mihi nui, greetings

In this issue:

- Seminars and Guided Walks – a recap
- City Nature Challenge and the tiny things that live here
- Updates from our Chair, Manager and volunteer groups
- Mistletoe Master's Thesis
- Fungi, a letter, and a host remembers the possum that wasn't
- Who are these people? Photos from the archives
- Ōtari visitors and their myriad reasons for visiting
- Botanical art, by Eleanor Burton
- And more ...



Volunteer forest weeders Richard Grasse and Russell Scott

From the Chair



Kia ora koutou

We were delighted to host a well-attended AGM in May. The new format – a short AGM followed by a social function to say thank you to all of our volunteers, members, and staff, proved popular. Thank you all for coming.

A huge thank you to Tim Mason, our outgoing treasurer. While Tim has been diligent in every respect of his treasurer's role, his major contributions included organising the publication of our book: *Ōtari: Two hundred years of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush* and the establishment of the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Fund, managed by the Nikau Foundation and already reaching more than \$155,000.

We welcome Ivan Jakich, elected as our new Treasurer. Ivan is a chartered accountant with a range of experience, and we look forward to working with him. All other Trustees were re-elected.

Our condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Dave Bidgood, who passed away in March. Dave was a long serving and highly respected gardener and mentor at Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. See our tribute on page 3 and 4.

Next year we will celebrate the centenary of the establishment of the Ōtari Open-air Native Plant Museum, forerunner of today's Ōtari Native Botanic Garden. A formal ceremony is planned for the actual centenary day (12 October), and special events will run throughout the year to appropriately mark this auspicious occasion. Details to come!

Our annual March Seminar Series and Autumn Guided Walks were all well patronised, thanks to all our presenters, expert guides and to Geoff Ridley for bringing these events together. We were delighted to see many young people coming along this year, potentially our conservation scientists and botanists of the future!

As always, a very special thanks to our ever-growing membership, generous volunteers, dedicated Ōtari staff and supportive community. Ōtari-Wilton's Bush and the Trust are in good shape; environmentally, financially and socially but we are not resting: there is always more to do.

Ngā mihi nui, Kevin

Red drama in the gardens:

Metrosideros fulgens, Akatawhiwhi, also known as the scarlett rātā vine, has been putting on a show in Ōtari this winter. Good vantage points are from the lookout just beyond the fernery, and on the canopy walkway (look up). Nectar-feeding tūi are loving it too.

Photo: Tony Stoddard wildbirds.nz



Ōtari update

We have weathered a few decent storms so far this autumn! The biggest storm took out a large tawa, right on the lower edge of the Fernery, as well as a number of horoeka and smaller trees in the gardens. Our prized ngutukākā were both blown over due to their shallow root systems, but we have hopefully saved them by staking, and have also taken cuttings in case they don't survive. Generally, we have fared OK and fingers remain crossed going into winter!



We have started preparing for some planting work and our nursery is looking full, particularly after two summer collecting trips and our very successful recent trip to collect plants on Koro Ruapehu with Ngāti Rangī. We had a very limited list of plants to collect on our permit, but this allowed us to focus



Tom Belworthy (Ōtari staff) and Cindy Telford (Wellington Gardens) collecting above Blyth Hut, Ruapehu

our efforts on the short time we had in the field. We were very fortunate to be well supported by Ngāti Rangī. Their staff welcomed us warmly and joined us for most of the time we were collecting. I love the amazing plants of Tongariro National Park. I have fond memories of botanising there when I was still at primary school, when my family attended summer work parties at the ski lodge we were members of. Ruapehu's alpine landscape is truly stunning. We are looking forward to creating a little garden, filled with Ngāti Rangī's living taonga and inspired by the dramatic volcanic landscapes, here at Ōtari.

Recently we transferred a large number (for Ōtari anyway!) of tororaro (*Muehlenbeckia astonii*) to Berhampore Nursery to make some space. These plants were collected from remnant populations across the region by staff, contractors and partner organisations. As there are fewer than 50 plants left in the North Island, these will be deliberately mixed and planted as seed orchards at secure locations across the region to maximise long term genetic diversity of the regional population.

The team has been sorely missing our friend and colleague Dave Bidgood, who we lost in late March. Dave was a pillar of the team at Ōtari and worked here for 32 years, after completing his apprenticeship at council. Dave was a very humble, hardworking and generous man who openly shared his passion for native plants.

We are currently recruiting for a replacement Gardener and have had Eddy Haydon with us as a temp in the meantime. Our apprentice Cloud is moving to Wellington Botanic Garden ki Paekākā for her next placement and we will be joined by Atom for the next four months. We are constantly impressed by our hardworking volunteers who turn up, rain or shine, to make Ōtari healthier and more beautiful.

People are loving the new bridge, and it is busier than ever at the Northern Carpark. The flat native forest walk from our northern entrance is one of very few relatively accessible forest paths in the region, so please be mindful when parking to make space for others and don't block people in. Work is underway on our new maps and bollards. Keep an eye out for these in the coming months.



Mā te wā, Tim Park

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

A tribute to Dave

Dave Bidgood, long-serving Ōtari gardener, colleague, friend and mentor, passed away on March 28. The Trust extends sincere sympathy to his family and to his Ōtari colleagues.

We thank the colleagues, volunteers and friends who have shared their tributes for Dave here. They encapsulate the essence of Dave, and what he contributed to Ōtari and its people.



Dave worked at Ōtari for more than 32 years. He dedicated himself to looking after the gardens and forest. Dave's love of plants has always been at the forefront, whether it was working in the nursery, out seed-collecting, planting in our gardens and restoration sites or walking up and down the hills controlling possums because they were eating the forest. Dave was one of those people who absolutely loved plants, had a really good eye for landscaping and the capability to consistently deliver to a high standard. Much of the rock edging created back in his early days at Ōtari is still evident. Lots of discussion and thought went into the placement of each rock. This work transformed Ōtari from a traditionally laid out grid into the naturally curved beauty, characteristic of the entire garden today. This is most evident in the Rainshadow Garden, where the gravel paths mimic the form of braided rivers of the dry eastern South Island. Dave's true passion was in the nursery, propagating plants. Ōtari gave David the opportunity to work with species that are not the easiest to propagate, but provided some great challenges which resulted in impressive successes, particularly for our work to progress plant conservation efforts on the most critically threatened plants in the country. His exceptionally deep knowledge and dedicated passion will be sorely missed, along with his inherent ability to continually pass on his expertise to his fellow workers, as well as just have a good old chat.

Tim Park, Kaiwhakahaere Ōtari Manager and Anita Benbrook, former manager

Dave was responsible for supervising the Thursday morning Weeding Volunteers from the outset, more than twenty years ago. From the point of view of weeding he was very important. The plants here are special, some very rare and can even be mistaken for weeds, to the uninitiated. Dave quietly and calmly supervised a succession of volunteers over the years, correcting and sometimes repairing our mistakes. We are going to miss him very much, for his instruction and for his dry humour. The Trust Nursery will also miss Dave's guidance and support with the discipline of propagation and running a nursery. We couldn't have wished for a better instructor.

Jane Humble Trust Nursery and Thursday gardens maintenance volunteer

I have been a Thursday volunteer weeder at Otari for two or three years now. Dave was always sweet and patient when I asked him about what was a weed or what should not be pulled out. He was so knowledgeable but never a "know-all". We will miss Dave's gentle presence.

Helen Milne

A wealth of knowledge, generously shared — always ready to ID a plant or offer insight. People and plants were always at the heart. A quiet presence with a deep, lasting impact.

He helped ground me in New Zealand when I first arrived and began my journey in horticulture.

He humoured my ideas, introduced me to the process of changing the soil in the Brockie Rock Garden, and taught me how to position rocks with intention and care. Those early lessons shaped more than just my work — they helped me find a sense of place. You've left your mark at Ōtari, and in all of us.

Raydeen Cuffe, Visitor Experience Manager, Wellington Gardens

Dave was so generous with his time and knowledge. When I asked for ideas for the Gardens' social media, he would take me out into the collections and show me plants, some with tiny flowers I would never have seen otherwise. It really opened my eyes to how amazing our native plants are, and made me start looking more closely. He was also just a wonderful, friendly person to be around. His absence is heavily felt.

Amalia McLaren-Brown, Visitor Engagement, Wellington Gardens

David was a quiet, thoughtful man, kind, gentle and empathetic. I got to know him when I was manager at Otari-Wilton's Bush from 2004 to 2006. Dave was a great observer which made him a great horticulturalist. His attention to detail also gave him green fingers in the nursery. When the Evening Post agreed to run articles written about native species by Ōtari staff, David shone. His articles were brilliant.

Robyn Smith, Ōtari Manager 2003-2005

I walked the gardens with my boys and told them about the landscaping of the Rainshadow Garden. My boys were so impressed with how thoughtful and creative that was. I will now think of Dave when walking those paths.

Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust Facebook follower



This photo beautifully captures the joy of passing on knowledge of plants to colleagues and friends that Dave expressed every day and is a snapshot of what we are all missing now and will be for a very long time. Every time we stroll down a curving path or admire a beautiful plant, he'll be with us.

Kate Roud, Wellington Botanic Gardens

Talks and Walks 2025

Our annual Seminar Series and Guided Walks programmes attracted big numbers of both Trust members and newcomers. This is great for building awareness and knowledge of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush and of New Zealand native plants, which are key aims according to the Trust Deed. Notable this year was the number of younger people keen to learn from our expert guides. This must augur well for the future! Here's just some of what went on:



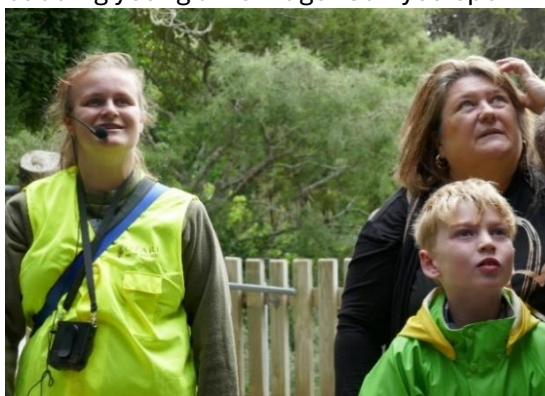
Heidi Meudt, Te Papa Botany Curator, shared her amazing adventures from the 2023 Strannik Auckland Island Expedition. (above middle: *Myosotis capitata*)



Ron Fountain and Te Papa entomologist Julia Kaspar check out some 'weird and wonderful' flies.



Mycologist and Trustee Geoff Ridley ruled Ōtari's fungi kingdom, with two guided fungi walks quickly filling up. Centre: Ruby Bonnet *Cruentomycena viscidocruenta*. Right: Geoff's fungi finds were closely monitored by budding young artist Fage. Can you spot the tiny scarlet pouch fungi he's drawing?



DOC ecologist Annemieke Hendricks' biodiversity insights (left) and Leon Perrie's introduction to common native plants (right) were both deservedly popular walks. Thanks to everyone involved. See you all next year – don't miss our 2026 Centenary programme!

Who knew this lived here? City Nature Challenge in Ōtari

If there's ever an event that highlights the scale and complexities of natural ecosystems such as Ōtari-Wilton's Bush, the annual iNaturalist Global City Challenge is right up there. This May, we welcomed a plethora of botanists, birders, entomologists, ecologists and wildlife photographers, experts, amateurs and entire families, to Ōtari as part of the international challenge to be the city to record the most iNaturalist observations in one weekend.



Dark-winged fungus gnat, Luca Davenport-Thomas

Outstanding contributions were headed up by Wellington photographer, Luca Davenport-Thomas. Luca's quick snap in Ōtari of a fast-escaping, previously undescribed fungus gnat (*Epidapus* sp.) was the first ever record of the species on iNaturalist. Te Papa evolutionary biologist Lara Shepherd rated this as one of the most exciting discoveries of the weekend. 'Most fungus gnats fly, but this species is completely wingless,' she said. Luca found it crawling over a mossy log next to the footpath near the fernery. Sadly, he said, it was quite fast and disappeared quickly. Meanwhile,

Luca's stunning image of a Globular springtail, *Calvatomina superba*, found on a mossy log near the lookout past the fernery, was rated as an iNaturalist observation of the day. (See next page.)

On the Friday night of the Challenge, entomologists William Brockelsby and Shaun Thompson worked patiently with budding young ecologists seeking insect and moth species under a spotlight on the Troup Lawn. There was a huge turnout of parents, kids and grandparents, which was great fun if a bit hectic for really serious observation work. However, William was pleased to discover a Golden-brown Fern Moth, *Musotima nitidalis*, which he says 'only occasionally shows up'.



Golden-brown Fern Moth, William Brockelsby



On the same night, Lara Shepherd managed 20 plant observations while also looking for bugs, then made a further 24 observations during the weekend. These included a Rockery willowherb (*Epilobium pedunculare*), which she says appears to be fairly uncommon in Wellington city.

All up, during the City Nature Challenge weekend in Ōtari alone, a total of 633 observations and 299 species were recorded by 34 different observers. Of these, 327 were plant observations, of 160 different species, and the remainder were all kinds of insects, spiders, snails, birds, eels, mites, and of course, Luca's springtails and gnat.

Traditionally, Wellington vies with Christchurch for the New Zealand city with the most observations in the annual challenge. Here's what happened this year: Christchurch had the highest number of observations, Wellington recorded the most species and the cities tied for the most observers.

Springtails and mites in macro

After discovering Ōtari-Wilton's Bush during the City Nature Challenge, and recording a previously undescribed fungus gnat on iNaturalist, Luca Davenport-Thomas says he's keen to return. 'I'm aiming to do much more, Ōtari is a great place and I've got much more to find for sure.'



Luca's image of a Globular springtail (*Calvatomina superba*), was judged iNaturalist 'observation of the day'.

If you didn't know, Springtails (*Collembola*) are ancient and despite having six legs, are considered to be a sister group to the insects rather than true insects. They are tiny (often under 1mm) and live in cryptic places; in soil, leaf litter, and on ponds. They are often intensely coloured and have an incredible mechanism for which to jump. Under their belly is a spring-loaded fork that, when released, catapults the whole animal into the air - a great strategy to escape predators.

Globular springtail (*Calvatomina superba*), Luca Davenport-Thomas

Springtails maybe small but they are an essential part of the ecosystem. They assist with nutrient cycling in the soil, helping to form soil microstructure as well as being a ready supply of food for many predators.

Luca found other Springtails and a big red Velvet Mite, in Ōtari during the nature challenge.



Velvet mite, *Chyzeria novaezealandiae*



Globular springtail under a mushroom (Subfamily *Sminthurinae*)



Holacanthella spinosa under damp wood

For those interested in macro photography, Luca said the Velvet Mite was taken with the Laowa 25mm Ultra macro at f/8. 'It was such a big mite I was only at about 3x magnification!' Some of the Springtails are more challenging, he says. 'Being so small it's impossible to get detailed shots in just one picture so I used focus stacking to get the first shot, taking lots of pictures at slightly different depths and stitching them together with software.'

How does he even see them in the first place? 'It's really just about looking closely. When they're under wood it's often not too hard to see the contrast or as they move. For the one on the mossy log, I just glanced at one spot and happened to see the tiny little bump. But they're often so small you can't be sure until you zoom in with the camera!'

From our Volunteers

Guides

A massive summer cruise season ended in March. This involved 44 guides and 'tails', amassing 655 volunteer hours, hosting a total of 40 tours and 1,173 passengers. Funds raised for the Trust from cruise ship tours totalled an impressive \$42,568. Sincere thanks to all involved, says Trust Chair, Kevin O'Connor. As always, the funds raised will go towards conservation and education at Ōtari. Guided tours continue through winter, with evening glowworm tours providing their usual sell out hit, and a range of tramping clubs and other visiting groups booked in to discover Ōtari's gems.



Tour Guide Mick Parsons (he's the one in the hi viz)

Kaiwharawhara Revegetation Group



Coordinator Wilbur Dovey

The troops have been rallying at the monthly weeding and restoration working bees so far this year. Project coordinator, Wilbur Dovey, reported a turnout of twelve volunteers in May, ranging from regulars who have been involved for more than ten years, to younger, stronger newcomers. 'With a task force of that size our progress was much greater than expected. We were able to do a cleanup of two areas infested for some years by tradescantia and filled two large weed bags. Thanks to WCC's Illona Keenan and Ranger Adam Groenewegen for supplying the weed bags.'

Forest Weeders

Fortnightly working bees are generally well attended, with up to six volunteers each time supported by Ōtari staff, making a big dent in Tradescantia and other weeds. This is a collegial team (home baking is a feature) and they're proving how a big difference can be made with numbers. The group meets every 1st and 3rd Thursday morning, from 9am until 12, and is supported by Ōtari staff. Some keen beans are also now coming along weekly. On these alternate Thursdays the meeting is more casual but the weeds certainly get weeded, and staff will assist in taking weeds away. Call Maggie if you're interested in joining the team: 027 5454333.



Forest weeder Emily Kelly

Weekend Hosts

Our weekend hosts come across various happenings while on the roster. Sadly, a dead kākā was one recent surprise, when Host Coordinator Justin was introducing new host Andrea to the role. The kākā had been discovered on a nearby path. What to do? An after hours call to the City Council led to advice to call the Department of Conservation, which in turn led to instructions to package the bird and store it in the fridge. It would be collected by DOC, and being a protected species would potentially be offered to iwi for the use of its feathers. If you're a visiting member, do pop in and have a chat with the hosts – they have a wealth of information to share. (See our 'expect the unexpected' host story later in this newsletter.) And while we have a steady roster of some 30 volunteers, we can always use more - something to consider if you like meeting people and sharing knowledge about Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. Give Justin a call to discuss what's involved: 021 211 3019.



Weekend host Gail Andrews

Plant Sales and Gardens Maintenance Weeders

Plant sales are steady, says nursery coordinator, Jane Humble. 'It is gratifying that sale day (the second Saturday of the month) seems to have become part of our customers' routines. The questions about our plants keep coming and we are all learning on the job! We are not able to grow plants to order but we are always pleased to receive suggestions for ideas for future sales. 'Our Thursday morning weeding group has been very busy because of the excellent growing season we have had. We are doing our best to keep ahead of the weeds but we did cancel weeding in the face of the recent southerly and cancelling because of the weather is a RARE event for us!'



Diane Hill, gardens weeding and maintenance

RAMBO (Rodents and Mustelids Blitzing Ōtari)

Ōtari's longstanding predator control project is managed by Jim Tait, with huge support from a volunteer trapping team, trap repair man Robert Thompson and Council biodiversity staff. This month, we can take heart from the latest predator monitoring results. Monitoring is undertaken every six months, with 20 lines set in Council reserves across the 'Western Hills' from Mt Kaukau to above the Southern Landfill, including four lines in Ōtari. In a monitoring exercise in May, the Ōtari lines (totalling 40 tracking tunnels) detected just one hedgehog, a few mice and several invertebrates, including wētā. Findings on other lines were similar. While these are excellent results, we remain vigilant.

A network of more than 140 traps now extends throughout Ōtari and adjoining reserves. However, some of these traps have been in the same place since RAMBO began, in 2007, thus an evaluation of the network is planned. Those involved will be Darren Peters (formerly DOC National Predator Control Manager) who designed the original network, Ōtari Manager Tim Park, James Willcocks (Predator Free Wellington), Greater Wellington biodiversity staff and of course Jim Tait. We look forward to the outcome and the potential for even more protection of Ōtari's plants and wildlife.

Monitoring the monitoring tunnels

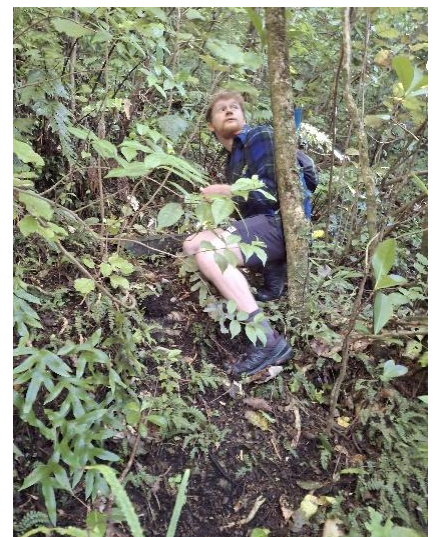


Trapper Ben McElwain-Wilson places a tracking card

You probably won't see the folk doing the tunnel monitoring. Most tunnels are hidden away in the forest, far from the track network. They are also placed in a straight line – so in most cases no gently graded track leads to them. Instead, steep slopes, gnarly little gullies, tangled vines, windfalls and rotting vegetation affording few handholds are all to be negotiated. Twice!

On day one, white cards are placed into the black plastic tunnels. On each card there is black ink – to track the prints of whatever critter might visit, and bait – to attract that critter. On

day two the volunteers return to collect the cards, to see what's visited overnight, then biosecurity boffins check the cards to identify any footprints. Hedgehog prints have been referred to as 'Big Foot', but we're happy to mostly find the small prints of wētā and other invertebrates, which reflect a healthy forest. And in fact, we do enjoy the bush bash adventure.



Ben negotiates a slippery slope

Letter from a young fan

Our weekend hosts were delighted recently to receive a letter, complete with illustrations, delivered from just across the road from Ōtari. We thought it worth recording here – thanks for writing Lucy.

Dear Ōtari-Wilton's Bush,

Hi, my name is Lucy. I live on Wilton Road right next to the bush. I'm twelve years old and I've lived here ever since I was three! Ōtari-Wilton's Bush has been such a cool place to grow up near – getting to see the eels and the 800-year-old rimu, and of course all the native birds and plants.

My strongest memory here was when I was four or five and I was playing in the stream when an eel came up to me and bit my finger! It didn't hurt very much at all but the eel itself was scary enough to my little kid mind!

Since I've been to see the eels a lot I know where they all live and I have names for them, with good reasons. Here's a few: 'Twinkle toes' seems to dance everywhere, 'Tiny Gerald' is the smallest, tiniest eel ever, and 'Snapper' is the most aggressive eel I have ever met, once coming right onto the land trying to bite me!

I LOVE Ōtari-Wilton's Bush so, so much and I hope you like my letter. Thanks so much everyone for keeping it amazing. Lucy Lensen ❤️ ❤️ ❤️



Puapua-o-autahi, stinkhorn fungi

With thanks to mycologist and Trustee, Geoff Ridley



Stinkhorns are a group of fungi that use insects, in particular flies, rather than the wind to spread their spores. This spore slime will coat some part of the fruit body as it expands out of its protective sack or “egg”. The trick with the slime is that it is also unpleasant smelling, at least to people, but highly attractive to flies. In the case of puapua-o-autahi, or anemone stinkhorn, the slime is confined to a ring around the inner base of the tentacles or arms. On iNaturalist, there have been just seven observations of puapua-o-autahi in Ōtari-Wilton's Bush since 2016, so while it is generally widespread, it is not common within Ōtari. All the observations in Aotearoa are attributed to a single species *Aseroe rubra* but it may turn out that there is more than one species. The whānau of puapua-o-autahi includes the basket stinkhorn, matakupenga (*Ileodictyon cibarium*), which is very common in the mulched gardens around Ōtari.

Mistletoe Masters

Two native mistletoes, currently rated as locally extinct in the wider, Wellington city area, could be restored to Ōtari-Wilton's Bush as a result of a study by master's student Ben Wright.

Ben has a double major, a Bachelor of Ecology and Biodiversity, and Marine Biology. His Master's thesis focuses around the propagation techniques and status of the small green mistletoe, *Ileostylus micranthus* (also known as pirita), and the regionally endangered, nationally at risk, white mistletoe, *Tupeia antarctica*.



Since October 2023, he has planted around 1500 white mistletoes onto host trees in three sites within Ōtari; by the Flax Clearing, the southern picnic lawn, and on trees beside Churchill Drive. The plants came from sources in Wairarapa.

But it's been a slow growing process, says Ben. "For a full year I was staring at unchanging green specks, and I did a little dance of joy when the first one finally started growing. The biggest white is now maybe 10cm in height, but it's way ahead of the others."

Ben Wright, and green mistletoe planted on *Coprosma virescens* by Ōtari staff

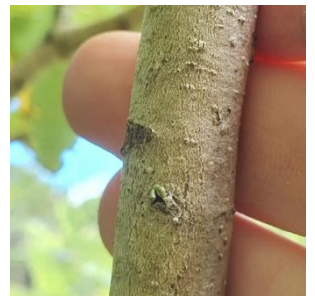
The green mistletoe is even smaller, and has had less time to grow. Ben planted these from April to June in 2024 in the same three Ōtari locations. His sources included the Greytown Memorial Park, a native forest remnant with about 100 mistletoe plants. More than 100 have so far survived, although he suspects he might still lose more.

While many mistletoes overseas are fully parasitic, New Zealand mistletoes are hemiparasitic. They have green leaves or stems that photosynthesise but they rely on the host tree for some nutrients. They can live on a variety of host trees and shrubs, some prove better than others.

'I've planted the green mistletoe on māhoe, which is thought to be the best host though that could change by next summer. Quite a few have succeeded on pittosporum, also on totara and kānuka,' says Ben.

What is special is that many of the trees hosting Ben's mistletoe will have been planted by the Kaiwharawhara Revegetation Group. It's a gratifying outcome, that this restored forest can now support formerly locally extinct hemiparasitic plants. Native mistletoes have declined across New Zealand due largely to possums and rats, habitat loss and a decline in native birds who act as pollinators and seed dispersers. With its restoration, predator control and huge increase in native birdlife, Ōtari shapes up as a healthy 'laboratory' for Ben's thesis. 'I've been excited to see bellbirds in Ōtari. They are dispersers of all our leafy mistletoes,' he notes.

Ben's white mistletoes have been planted onto lemonwoods and five finger. It's been really gratifying to see the survivors grow, he says. 'There are seven white plants that I'm confident will turn into adult plants and around another seven that I'm quite hopeful about. I expect to get about 20 green adults, maybe up to 40.'



Slow to start *Tupeia antarctica*, white mistletoe



The biggest one yet, as at April 2025

In all, there are eight New Zealand mistletoes. Five are of the leafy variety, from the Loranthaceae family. Ben initially hoped to study the local red mistletoe but the source had a bad fruiting year. He might try again this winter, he says.

With most of the field work complete, his task is now analysing spreadsheets and writing up data. He expects to finish by August.

‘My hope with this project is that it will provide a natural seed source to re-populate Ōtari-Wilton’s Bush, and that seed could be collected for planting around Wellington. Christchurch and Dunedin have a lot of native mistletoe so it would be really nice to have some in Wellington.’

The last known native mistletoes growing naturally in Wellington were in the Botanic Gardens in the 1880s. A few years ago Ōtari staff collected seed from one of the remnant Hutt Valley populations and successfully sowed them onto host *Coprosma virescens* shrubs, near the maze.

Looking ahead, Ben plans to continue working with threatened plants, or other species. ‘I really enjoy that, I’m especially drawn to the stuff that gets the least attention, lizards, freshwater fish, or wetland birds maybe.’



Green mistletoe, *Ileostylus micranthus*, pirita - one year on

Social and collegial times

There was a good turnout to our combined AGM and Volunteer thank you function in May. AGM business was dealt with quickly and we moved onto the fun part, thanking everyone for their support!



Helen Milne, Ruth Mary James



Ann Tuffin, Chris Horne, Susan Timmins



Kevin O'Connor, Jenny Atkinson, Russell Scott



David Burton, Wilbur Dovey

Expect the unexpected: tales from our volunteer hosts

Many of our weekend hosts have been helping Ōtari visitors for years. It's hardly surprising that they have a few interesting recollections. Here's a good one from volunteer host Chris:

'Duty days are always interesting, especially when we can sit out on the deck and engage with the visitors passing by. We meet a great variety of people of all ages and ethnicities, from all over Wellington and overseas, plus of course the dogs in all shapes and sizes. We've even seen them carried in front and backpacks and occasionally in strollers. But you have to expect the unexpected!'



'My most memorable experience was an afternoon several years ago when a woman came rushing into the Visitor Centre with a plastic shopping bag in which something was moving. It was a dying possum, the woman said she had found it beside a track. She wanted me to create a comfy bed for it to die quietly inside the Visitor Centre. When I told her that was not a good idea, she took it to a mulch heap behind the building and carefully laid it there. (I did cop some feedback from her for being heartless.) The staff later told me they were amused to read about this in our Host Book, because the possum was no longer there when they came in the next morning.'

Thanks Chris – we'll bring you more host stories in September.

More recollections: who are these people?

With centenary preparations underway, we've been searching through WCC's photographic archives for some historic takes of Ōtari. But we need your help. Can anybody name these people? (There might be at least one well known politician.) Send your answers to Kathy Ombler, email kathy@ombler.co.nz.



Wellington City Council Archives 1318275 (1988)



Wellington City Council Archives 1318307 (1986)

Bob Brockie

With input from Carol West

We note the passing of Bob Brockie, in May. Bob's father was Walter Brockie, Ōtari curator from 1947 until 1962 and creator of the magnificent Brockie Rock Garden. The Brockie family lived in the Curator's House (now the Leonard Cockayne Centre). They developed an impressive vegetable garden and Bob recalls being sent out to gather droppings from passing horses for use as compost. (Not so many cars in those days.) Like most of the curators' young families, Bob and his siblings loved playing in their 100 hectare 'back yard', getting to know 'every inch of the bush' he said, and 'catching crawlies in the creek, but too small to take home'. (Native freshwater fish were reintroduced into the Kaiwharawhara by Ōtari's first curator, Andy McKay.)

Bob became a well-known political cartoonist, he also picked up some of the Brockie botany heritage. As a boy, he recalls plant collection trips with his father in the Southern Alps, and field trips with the Royal Society and Botanical Society. He became fascinated by harakeke and tī kōuka flowering periodicity and nectar, especially harakeke, once writing of his findings in the Bulletin of the Wellington Botanical Society (see bts.nzpcn.org.nz/articles/flax-phormium-nectar-and-the-tides/). He also completed a Master's thesis on hedgehogs and was an ecologist with the DSIR Ecology Division, where he continued hedgehog research and instituted his famous "road pizza" surveys (as in, collecting dead animals by the roadside).

Social Media and spreading the word

The Trust uses Facebook and Instagram to publish news and updates about Ōtari, with the wider aim of building awareness of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. And it's working! We now have almost 1700 people reading our Facebook page and more than 900 people follow us on Instagram. These include individuals, from locals to renowned botanists, scientists and lots of other specialists, also like-minded groups and organisations, for example Botanical Societies and the NZ Plant Conservation Network (NZPCN). Many of our posts are 'shared', thus spreading our news even further afield, sometimes to thousands.

So that is why we use Social Media. If you don't like Facebook or Instagram and want to keep up with our latest news simply go to our website: owbt.nz and click on the Facebook or Instagram logo on the home page. Everything is there to read, with no obligation to join. We also publish occasional news items on our website. This quarterly newsletter remains, of course, exclusive to members.

Limited-edition launched



Bird photographer and Ōtari supporter, Tony Stoddard, has released his first Limited-Edition Fine Art Print series. It includes a poignant image of a young ruru, or morepork, which Tony found in Ōtari last summer being traumatized by a tūi. The second print is a pīwauwau, rock wren, which Tony happily watched for more than an hour, darting over glacial boulders near Fiordland's Gertrude Saddle.

The prints are available in two sizes. See Tony's website for details and to purchase: <https://wildbirds.nz>



Tony is donating a percentage of all sales to The Nest Te Kōhanga, the wildlife hospital, where over the past 13 years he has taken more than 30 injured native birds for care, many of them from around Ōtari.

For Trust members, Tony has kindly added a 20% discount (code s3w2b5cd) for the large ruru, and 10% discount (code gdqn9uhu) for the others. Tony is a strong supporter of Ōtari and is particularly generous in sharing his delightful wildlife photography for Trust publications.

Learning, healing and collegial times in Ōtari

A quick peak at some recent Ōtari visitors, and their varied reasons for visiting.

The serenity of Ōtari's forest and gardens provides the perfect venue for experiencing Chanoyu, the ceremonial presentation of Japanese green tea. In April, the Wellington Sakai Association and Wellington Tea Ceremony Club, Omote Senke, invited Japanese Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Makoto Osawa, to Ōtari for this ceremony. Guests also enjoyed a guided tour of the gardens.



Carol West guiding the Chanoyu guests.



Members of Wellington Tea Ceremony Club, Omote Senke



Tawa College students in the 'outdoor classroom'

Education outside the classroom draws students from around Wellington to Ōtari. Many take part in curriculum-based education programmes run by Wellington Gardens. But because of the cost of these trips, in particular bus transport, many schools have not been taking up this opportunity. The Trust, helped with a Transpower grant, is now encouraging more participation in this worthy programme by contributing to the cost of these visits, in particular for transport costs.

Kōnae is the organisation that helps those who were taken as children from their whānau by the State. Specifically, they help with reclaiming often long-lost personal records and photographs. Kōnae came to Ōtari to film 'Koro and Moko, a story about claiming records'. They used the analogy of fishing, and of how some of the catch in the basket (kōnae) can be a mix of good and bad – like their records when they have them returned. Kōnae chose Ōtari for the filming because 'it is such a healing place'. You can see the video on the www.konae.org.nz



Moko and Koro



Wairarapa trampers on the Pony Track, above Ōtari

And a Wairarapa Tramping Club group abandoned their local Tararua Ranges for a guided tour of all that Ōtari-Wilton's Bush has to offer. They spent the better part of a day exploring the gardens, Moko, the Kohekohe Track and Skyline Ridge and returned via the Flax Clearing, Kaiwharawhara Valley and Circle Track.

Introducing our new treasurer



Ivan Jakich took on the Trust's treasurer role following this year's AGM. He is a part-time accountant, with more than 40 years of finance experience across a range of organisations, including not-for-profit. Ivan says he was looking to get involved in a community activity of some kind when approached to consider the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust. 'Ōtari is a place we've often visited over the years and I'm keen to learn about what goes on back of house and contribute from my accounting skill set.' His garden skills, he adds, are very much of the trimming and weeding variety.

And we thank retiring Tim Mason for these thoughtful reflections

Six years as a trustee and treasurer of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust has been an absorbing and fascinating chapter for me. Retiring by rotation, I see Ōtari and the Trust in very good heart and secure for the future, whatever that may bring. Challenges with climate change, conservation priorities and funding are likely to be the most prominent. As a voluntary organisation, The Trust is well placed to continue to remain independent, to advocate for and play a small but significant part in that future.



There have been many retirements and changes of the guard. At the WCC management helm the retirement of the remarkable David Sole and replacement by Becs Ramsay, at curator level Rewi Elliott, and his replacement Tim Park, along with many staff changes. Some long-term trustees have retired. These include Phil Parnell, Bev Abbott, Peter Buxton, Wilbur Dovey, Jane Humble and Ian Stockwell, and there has been a new energy and commitment by their replacements.

My term coincided with many highlights: the opening of the viewing platform around the giant rimu Moko, revision of tracks and signage, refashioning of the Visitor Centre, publication of the centennial book "Ōtari: 200 years of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush", establishment of the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Fund as an endowment fund managed by Nikau Foundation, establishment of the Trust plant nursery by the dedicated Jane Humble, a new focus on the use of social media, a rejuvenation and increase of the energy and involvement of the membership both in numbers and age, and a rejuvenation and increase in involvement by the Trustees.

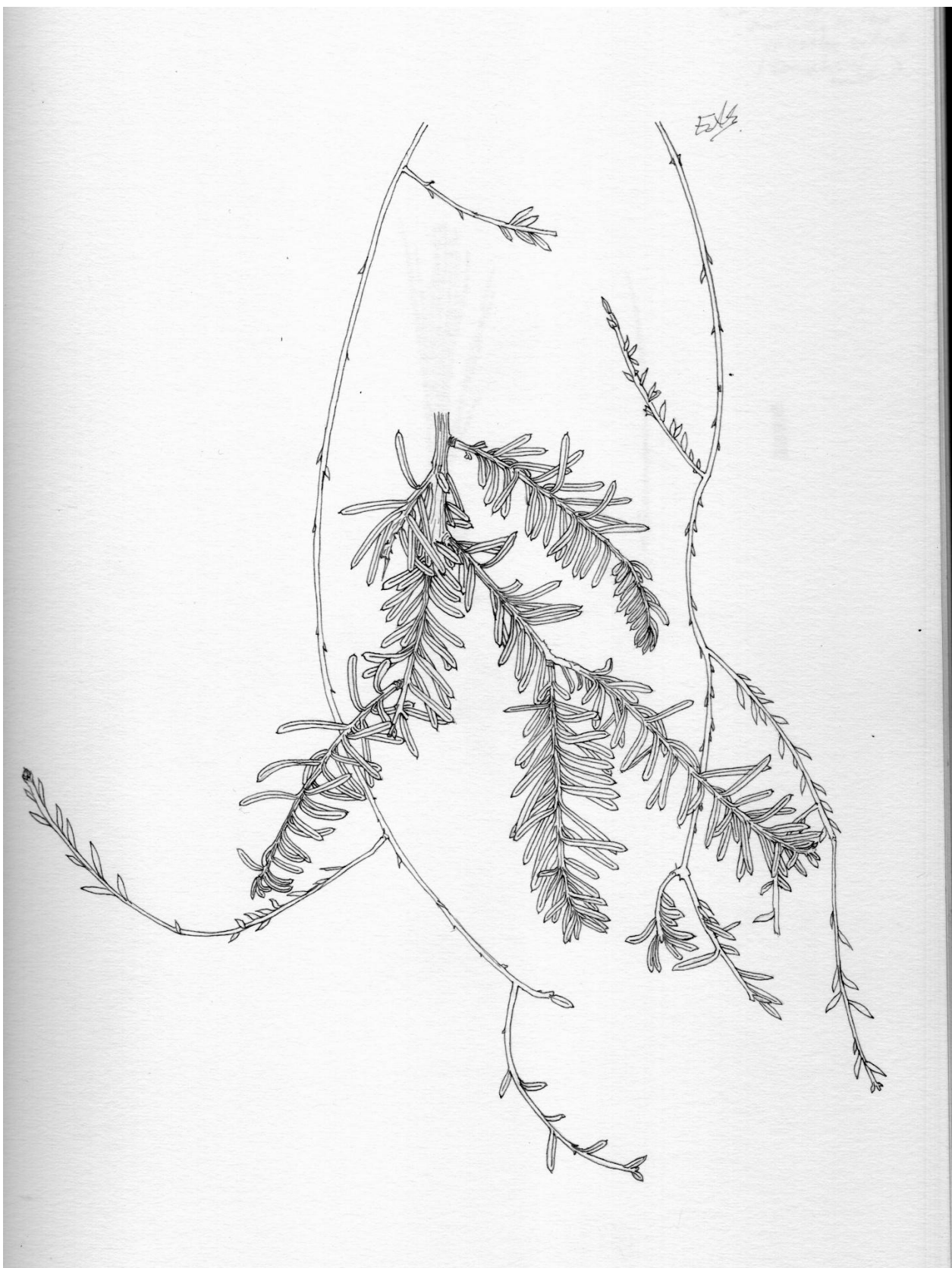
There have been many changes, with members and staff too numerable to mention all doing their bit with good humour and commitment. The place is looking great and the future looks secure. Together let's keep it all going.

Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust - Trustees:

Kevin O'Connor (Chair)	oconnorkevin170@gmail.com 027 270 9787
Maggie Bayfield (Secretary)	bayfield@xtra.co.nz 027 545 4333
Ivan Jakich (Treasurer)	jakichi@outlook.co.nz 022 176 4403
Justin Nacey (Weekend hosts)	justinnacey@gmail.com 021 211 3019
Kathy Ombler (Communications)	kathy@ombler.co.nz 027 275 5152
Geoff Ridley (Seminars and Guided Walks)	Ridley.geoff@gmail.com 027 422 4102
Susan Timmins (Guided Tours)	stimminsdoc1@gmail.com 027 516 2979
Annie Yeates (Guided Tours)	annieontour74@hotmail.com 027 440 0129

The Trustees welcome comments and questions from members on any matters relating to Ōtari-Wilton's Bush or the Trust. For Newsletter comments or contributions contact Trustee Kathy Ombler.

Botanical Art



***Prumnopitys taxifolia*, matai, black pine**

This large tree is often an emergent above the forest canopy. It is found throughout the North, South, and Stewart Islands, and is a tree of lowland forest. It is dioecious (sexes on different plants), female trees producing large black fruits which are dispersed by birds. It has a juvenile form which looks very tatty and needs close inspection to tell whether it is actually alive. Juveniles can be seen in the Gymnosperm collection, and there is a mature tree on the canopy walkway. Drawing by Eleanor Burton.

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 your NAME and MEMBERSHIP
and/or DONATION in the fields