

# ŌTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

## News and Views March, 2023

For all walks meet at the Information Centre, Tāne Whakapiripiri unless otherwise stated. Walks with talks first will start at the Leonard Cockayne Centre. Easy walking and sensible walking shoes recommended. Web site: [www.owbt.nz](http://www.owbt.nz)

Unless otherwise stated walks are free to Trust members & children under 15, otherwise \$6 (includes \$1 booking fee). Please note that bookings are essential. Please make your booking via Eventfinda. [eventfinda.co.nz](http://eventfinda.co.nz)

<b>Second Saturdays</b>	<b>Plant care</b> is on the second Saturday of each month. 9am. Contact Wilbur Dovey, 499 1044.
<b>Tuesdays March</b>	<b>March Seminars.</b> 7.30 in the Information Centre, <u>Tāne Whakapiripiri</u> . Wilton Road Gold coin donation. See page 5
<b>Sunday 5 March 2pm</b>	<b>Discovering the insect life of Otari</b> In this 90 min walk you will be encouraged to see the world through the life of an insect living in Otari-Wilton Bush. <i>Leader: Eric Edwards (Entomologist).</i> Numbers limited to 20, family groups welcome.
<b>Sunday 12 March 2pm</b>	<b>Tiny plants that are everywhere: mosses, liverworts, and lichens of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.</b> New Zealand is a world hotspot for liverworts. We've got lots of mosses and lichens too. This rich diversity is easily overlooked, but in this 90 minute walk you will learn about these tiny plants, and pick up tips for recognising them. Bring a magnifying glass if you can. To appreciate these plants is to reveal a new and wondrous world – after this walk you'll look at your surrounds in a completely new way. <i>Leader: Dr Leon Perrie (Curator of Botany at Te Papa).</i> Numbers limited to 20, family groups welcome.
<b>Sunday 19 March 2pm</b>	<b>Animal predator pests in Ōtari – an event for younger people.</b> A 90 minute programme with a slide show, talk and walk designed for younger people (4-15 years) and their families. You will learn about how these pests came to be in New Zealand and in Ōtari, the damage they can do, and how they are being controlled. There will be stuffed animals and traps and plenty of interactive opportunities, plus we'll 'go trapping' along one of our actual traplines nearby. <i>Leaders: Leaders: Jim Tait and Kathy Ombler (RAMBO i.e., Rats &amp; Mustelids Blitzing Otari volunteer group).</i> Numbers limited to 20, family groups welcome.
<b>Sunday 26 March 2pm</b>	<b>The wonderful world of Wellington weeds.</b> At last count, there were over 150 weed species that have been controlled or noted within Wellington City Council reserves. This 90 minute event will first introduce the challenges of managing weeds in the city, followed by a walk to discover and discuss the problems these invasive species cause. <i>Leader: Illona Keenan (WCC weed specialist).</i> Numbers limited to 20, family groups welcome. <b>Note: There is no programme on the 9 April, Easter Sunday.</b>

<b>Sunday 16 April 2pm</b>	<b>An Introduction to the cutting-edge research taking place at the Lions-Ōtari Plant Conservation Laboratory.</b> Come along for this 60 min visit to NewZealand's only native plant laboratory. Hear about the significant research work going on at Ōtari-Wilton's Bush to save our rare species -from towering kauri to tiny native orchids and their mycorrhizal fungi. <i>Leader: Dr Karin van der Walt (Ōtari-Wilton Bush Conservation Scientist).</i> Numbers limited to 20, family groups welcome.
<b>Sunday 23 April 2pm</b>	<b>Animal pests and predators in Ōtari.</b> This 90 minute programme (slide show, talk and walk) is a chance to learn about the animal pests and predators found in Ōtari and how they are being controlled. We will walk up one of the trap lines to see traps and monitoring devices in action. We will be climbing some reasonably steep terrain so suitable footwear is essential. <i>Leaders: Leaders: Jim Tait and Kathy Ombler (RAMBO i.e., Rats &amp; Mustelids Blitzing Ōtari volunteer group).</i> Numbers Limited to 20
<b>Sunday 30 April 2pm</b>	<b>Introduction to the fungi kingdom.</b> Fungi are different from plants and have their own biological kingdom. This 90 minute walk will give you a basic introduction and understanding of this enormous kingdom and give you an idea of where to find them in Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. Duration: around 2 hours. Meet at the Ōtari Visitor Centre, TāneWhakapiripiri at 2pm for an introduction to the topic, followed by the walk. <i>Leader: Dr Geoff Ridley, (Mycologist).</i>
<b>Sunday 7 May 2pm</b>	<b>More about the Fungi Kingdom.</b> This interesting foray is for those who already know the basics about this fascinating kingdom and goes into more detail about the fungi present in Ōtari on the day. Duration: around 90 min. <i>Leader: Dr Geoff Ridley (Mycologist).</i> Numbers limited to 20, family groups welcome.
<b>Sunday 14 May 2pm</b>	<b>Birds of Ōtari.</b> Join us for this very popular 90 min easy walk to learn more about the birds that inhabit Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. <i>Leader: Dr Hugh Robertson (Principal Science Advisor, Department of Conservation)</i> Numbers limited to 25, family groups welcome.
<b>Sunday 14 May 2pm</b>	<b>Discover how the plants of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush defend themselves.</b> Just like animals, plants defend themselves but without arms and legs. During this 90 min guided walk you will discover some of the crafty self-defence techniques that the plants of Ōtari-Wilton Bush employ to ensure their survival.. <i>Leader: Dr Lara Shepherd (Evolutionary Biologist at Te Papa).</i>
<b>Sunday 28 May 2pm</b>	<b>Everything you wanted to know about tawa but were too shy to ask.</b> On this 90-minute guided walk we'll learn about the biology of this important forest tree and understand why it's the dominant canopy species in many North Island forests. <i>Leader: Dr Carol West (Ecologist).</i> Numbers limited to 20, family groups welcome.

## Message from the Chair

Kia ora koutou katoa

I think it would be fair to say that we have had a summer here in Wellington and have been fortunate to escape the worst of the tropical storms, getting enough rain to keep our gardens and Ōtari well watered, unlike the South Island which has been drying out. Our thoughts are with those regions in the North Island dealing with the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle.

Congratulations to Ōtari staff for retaining 6-star status as a garden of international significance in the recent evaluation. Thanks to all the Trust volunteers who contribute regularly to weeding, restoration and nursery work that helps so much for Ōtari-Wilton's Bush to achieve this recognition.

Sales of our book *Ōtari: Two hundred years of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush* have been going well. We have just under 300 copies left (from a print run of 1000) and are already thinking we might need to reprint it. Our Treasurer is monitoring sales, so we'll know in good time what we need to do. I hope you have enjoyed reading it!

Our audiences on social media are continuing to grow: we now have 480 Instagram followers and our Facebook posts usually reach 500–1000 people. The recent posts featuring some of our volunteers were popular. In addition to these outlets, Kathy Ombler keeps our website up to date too: <https://www.owbt.nz/>.

You can access the Instagram and Facebook posts and recent news via the website by clicking on the tabs in the top right corner.

Our volunteers who guide tourists from cruise ships as well as smaller tour groups have been busy this summer and the participants have really appreciated learning something about our native plants and vegetation. Wilbur Dovey has done a great job of coordinating these visits and organising the roster of guides in recent years but is now looking to retire from this role. If anyone is interested in taking this role on, we'd love to hear from you – organisational and people skills highly desirable! Now that Covid disruptions are behind us, the Board is able to plan events more reliably than we have over the past few years (I hope!). We have set the date for this year's AGM to be on 10 May at 7 pm. Two of our current Trustees will be stepping down so we're looking for two or three keen beans to replace them. If you're interested, please contact me or any of the other Trustees to find out what the role might entail.

We're also looking ahead to Open Day in September (date to be confirmed by WCC who are in charge of the event overall). We heard that the cake stall was missed by many last year and are happy to say that we plan to have a cake stall this year. We're also suggesting having jams and pickles too, something to factor in as we all deal with harvests from our gardens just now. As mentioned in the last newsletter, we will be launching the Trust's plant sales at Open Day – the team of Trust Nursery volunteers have now commenced growing plants so there should be a good selection available by September. We thank Tim Park and his team for setting up the secure facility behind the Leonard Cockayne Centre for the Trust to use.

Coming up soon are the March seminars (see p.6) and the Sunday walks (see the front page). This year we're running a similar number of walks but concentrating them in the autumn months when we hope to have better weather. We hope to see you at some of these events.

Thank you for your support of the Trust and Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.

Carol West

Chair



## Ōtari Update

We have had a busy summer at Otari and the cicadas are singing loudly, indicating time is running out for them to find a mate before winter sets in. Thankfully we survived the worst effects of Cyclone Gabrielle and we are really feeling for those who have been affected, particularly our colleagues in Hawke's Bay and Tairāwhiti. Gabrielle came almost exactly a year after the storm which took out our Service Drive last year, I expect storms like these to become more frequent and intense as our climate changes.



We were very proud recently to retain our six-star status as a Garden of International Significance from the New Zealand Garden Trust, on behalf of the NZ Royal Institute of Horticulture. The judges commendation simply stated "Keep doing what you are doing!" which is a rock-solid endorsement from this national body. The judges were impressed with the cutting edge research happening in the lab to help save some of New Zealand's most threatened species, the refreshed visitors centre 'Tāne Whakapiripiri' and the garden renewals, completed since the previous assessment.

Sadly, we farewelled Peter Griffen at the end of January. Peter loyally looked after the lawns and tracks at Otari for more than 11 years. His smiling face will be missed by staff and locals. Peter has already indicated he might come and volunteer some days which is lovely to hear. We have hired Anthony as the new Groundsperson, so if you see a new face on the tractor please say 'Kia ora!'

On a more happy note, Megan has taken some leave to get married! It has been great working with Trevor Thompson, QE2 National Trust Representative from the Wairarapa, on propagating *Brachyglottis pentacopa*. This small tree only lives in one location near Castlepoint. The remaining population of c 150 trees appears to be declining fast due to deer and goat browse and perhaps a pathogen causing wilt. Despite initial fears of limited success, the cuttings we took last year from 17 individuals have struck well and Trevor has sent us more seed which we have sown. Trevor has also been providing us with seed from *Olearia gardneri* and the mistletoe *Alepis flavida* this summer.



We have resolved a long-standing parking encroachment at the entrance on Churchill Drive, above the beech forest (near the steps up to Izard Park) which was planted in the 1980s. There is now some new fencing in the area and we are planning to expand the pa harakeke and associated planting this winter. Work is about to start on the Wilton Park Slip, diggers and a tracked mulcher are booked to come after the community clean up day on 4 March. This will make the tip of the slip safer, remove the trees blocking the stream and hopefully find a better path for the small stream. We plan to plant the slip face and fan this winter. Mulch from Shelley Bay has been well received by locals, but the mulch pile in the Northern Carpark is now heavily reduced. It is likely that the pile will be closed more frequently in the coming months so it can be replenished. If the rope is across the pile please respect the closure and do not take any. Flax weaving courses are up and running again for the year – search for Ōtari Raranga Weavers on Facebook or Eventfinda to book in.

We have an increase in visitors recently, particularly via the northern entrance off Churchill Drive, so please take care in the carpark. The Upper Yellow Track remains closed due to the precarious location of the slip. A re-route is going to be quite costly but likely the most sustainable option in the long term. I am looking forward to the March Seminar Series – the Trust has organised a great line up again for the 20<sup>th</sup> year!

Ma te wa,

Tim Park

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

Ngā Māra o Pōneke | Wellington Gardens

Papa Tākaro Hākinakina | Parks, Sport and Recreation, Mi Heke Ki Pōneke | Wellington City Council

[0212479739](tel:0212479739) [Tim.Park@wcc.govt.nz](mailto:Tim.Park@wcc.govt.nz) [Wellington.govt.nz](http://Wellington.govt.nz)

## Trust Board 2020 – 2021



### The Board of Trustees for the current year is:

Chair: Carol West	<a href="mailto:carolwest@xtra.co.nz">carolwest@xtra.co.nz</a>	Phone: 387 3396
Secretary. Maggie Bayfield	<a href="mailto:bayfield@xtra.co.nz">bayfield@xtra.co.nz</a>	Ph: 027 545 4333
Treasurer. Tim Mason	<a href="mailto:timmason429@gmail.com">timmason429@gmail.com</a>	Phone: 479 0544
Wilbur Dovey	<a href="mailto:cweag.dovey@xtra.co.nz">cweag.dovey@xtra.co.nz</a>	Phone: 499 1044
Jane Humble	<a href="mailto:jhumble16@gmail.com">jhumble16@gmail.com</a>	Ph: 021 636 226
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Kathy Ombler	<a href="mailto:kathy@ombler.co.nz">kathy@ombler.co.nz</a>	Ph: 027 275 5152

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](mailto:veeanddave93@gmail.com)

### Notice of 23rd Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given to Trust members that the twenty-third Annual General Meeting of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust will be held in Tāne Whakapiripiri/Ōtari Visitor Centre, 150 Wilton Road, at 7.00 p.m. on Wednesday 10 May 2023. Agenda details will be sent out closer to the date.



## March Seminars

All seminars will start at 7.30 p.m. in Tāne Whakapiripiri/Ōtari Visitor Centre, 150 Wilton Road. Gold coin donation.

### **Tuesday March 7: “Taxonomic revision of native New Zealand forget-me-nots (*Myosotis*, Boraginaceae): an update”. Heidi Meudt**

Dr Heidi Meudt is a Botany Curator at Te Papa whose collections-based research focuses on the evolution and classification of native New Zealand flowering plants, especially forget-me-nots (*Myosotis*). Heidi also studies native foxgloves (*Ourisia*), plantains (*Plantago*), and hebes (*Veronica*) throughout the southern hemisphere.

### **Tuesday March 14; The role of climate in driving fruiting declines for Aotearoa’s most abundant fleshy fruited tree: *Beilschmiedia tawa*; Oscar Clendon**

Oscar Yukich Clendon recently completed a Master’s degree in ecology and conservation at the University of Auckland. His thesis investigated environmental drivers of fruit crop characteristics for the NZ indigenous tree tawa, in an effort to explain observed declines in fruit size and abundance.

### **Tuesday March 21: An introduction to NZ geckos: Reino Grundling**

Reino is an active conservationist with a great passion for sharing his love of native reptiles. His goal is to “take the geckos out of the manuka bush” and into the hearts and minds of his fellow kiwis.

### **Tuesday March 28: “The wonderful world of Wellington weeds”. Illona Keenan**

Illona has helped manage ecological weeds for Wellington City Council for the last 10 years. At last count, there were over 150 weed species that have been controlled or noted within Wellington City Reserves.

## Check out our social media

Along with our new website: [owbt.nz](http://owbt.nz), the Trust now has active Facebook and Instagram pages. These are regularly updated with our news and events, conservation research, plus interesting information about our special and rare plant collections; what’s flowering, which native birds are visiting or nesting, and more – all with heaps of photos. These posts are followed by interested people nationally and internationally.

You don’t have to ‘join’ Facebook or Instagram to see these. Anyone can enter the short ‘URL’ addresses (see below), click and you’re in! Easier still, go to our website: [owbt.nz](http://owbt.nz) and click on the links at the top of the home page. You’ll also see here a link to our ‘News Page’, which contains even more interesting stuff about the people, plants and life at Ōtari-Wilton’s Bush. [www.owbt.nz](http://www.owbt.nz)

Facebook      [shorturl.at/erITY](https://www.facebook.com/shorturl.at/erITY)

Instagram      [shorturl.at/r0019](https://www.instagram.com/shorturl.at/r0019)



## The work of volunteers is a significant part of the Trust's contribution at Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.



We've recently profiled some of our longstanding helpers on our Facebook and Instagram pages. For those of you who don't use social media, you can read three of these profiles here:



### Geoff and Laurel Couling

One volunteer success story is the restoration of Kaiwharawhara Valley, once a gully full of weeds, where volunteers such as Geoff and Laurel Couling have toiled for many weekends over many years.

In Geoff's words: "We joined Jonathan Kennett and Bronnie Wall's regeneration group in about 2001. Large pine trees felled below Ōtari School had created a space for planting natives. We concentrated on

clearing blackberry, gorse, fennel, tradescantia and other weeds to prepare for winter planting of natives. The grassy clearing is an obvious example of the successful revegetation, with mature trees and flaxes now flourishing. We did have a battle with rabbits though, they ringbarked the new plantings, especially the Coprosmas. Stinky liquid fish manure helped deter them! Fortunately most of these trees were spared destruction by the big slip in 2022.

"More recently, working under Trustee Wilbur Dovey's direction, our biggest challenge has been the old tip face below the rugby grounds, with its steep face and remnants of bricks, concrete, and general rubbish to clear. However, we've made good progress, there are now just a few spaces left to be replanted. Our volunteer numbers have dwindled over the years to a core of about 10, but we are coping. It has been a rewarding experience over the last 20 odd years, meeting many like-minded people interested in conservation, and knowing that we will leave behind a living legacy."



### Lynley Trower

Wherever in Ōtari you wander there's a chance you'll come across Lynley, weeding the garden collections, release weeding new plantings or trapping animal pests. Lynley started helping the Kaiwharawhara revegetation project back in 2001 and she's still there, grubbing out weeds at the monthly working bees on the old tip site. She's also been trapping with our RAMBO (Rats and Mustelids Blitzing Ōtari) team since its inception, in 2007. Competition then was rife among the trappers as to who could catch the most animals and when someone realised Lynley's line was hardly catching anything some sneaky soul reportedly popped a toy rat into one of her traps! Happily, very few (real) rats are now caught on any of the RAMBO lines. Lynley also pops up to the Skyline Ridge from time to time to check RAMBO's possum trapline.



There's more - in 2007 while 'in-between jobs' she joined the Thursday weeding group, helping staff in the garden collections. In Lynley's words: "I really loved the comradeship of this group, so when I retired from full time work, in 2021, I re-joined. I enjoy doing what I do around Ōtari. They are outdoor activities with plenty of fresh air. I love hearing and seeing the birdlife, also working with a great bunch of like-minded people. And there's always the opportunity to learn something new, whether it's about plants or what's happening in the community." In 2017, Lynley was the recipient of the annual Ōtari Award, presented by the Trust for distinguished volunteer service.



Thanks Geoff, Laurel and Lynley, and all of your volunteer colleagues!

## Lions Ōtari Plant Conservation Lab

### Update February 2023:

Orchids have been keeping us busy this summer. Early in December Carlos Lehnebach (Botany Curator at Te Papa) gave a talk on the orchid conservation project at the NZPCN conference. This talk paved the way for an overnight trip to Nelson in search of two green hood orchids, *Pterostylis irwinii* and *P. micromega*. We met up with Laura Parks (DOC ranger at Motueka) to visit *P. irwinii* on Takaka Hill where we found a healthy population from which we sampled roots for fungal culturing. Later, Greg Napp (DOC Ranger Takaka) took us to a wetland close to Farewell Spit which is the site of *P. micromega* (Figure 1A).

Unfortunately, *P. micromega* did not have a great year at this site and the few plants we located did not have fruit. Jennifer Alderton-Moss (Research Technician at the lab) did an excellent job isolating the fungi from the roots and growing them, and we are delighted to say we now have *P. irwinii* seed germinating with various fungal partners. Christmas and New Year was no time to kick back and relax as we headed out to count and hand-pollinate *Gastrodia cooperae* at Castle Cliff in the Wairarapa. We were delighted to find ten plants this year, a significant increase from the single specimen at the same site in 2021. Carlos did a few pollination experiments before we tagged individuals with Joe Dillion (more about Joe below) (Figure 1B & 1C). Upon our return in early February, we found healthy capsules which ensures we can continue our germination trials.



Figure 1 : A busy orchid summer included searching for *Pterostylis micromega* (A) with Greg Napp (back), Laura Park (middle) both DOC rangers, and Carlos Lehnebach (front). This was followed by counting flowers and hand- pollination of *Gastrodia cooperae* (B) with summer scholar recipient Joe Dillion (front) and Carlos Lehnebach (back). (C) *Gastrodia cooperae* in flower 27 December 2022.

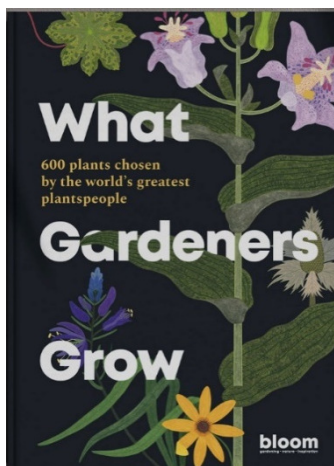
This year our Victoria University summer scholarship recipient was Joe Dillion. Joe focussed on various aspects of orchid conservation and assisted with field surveys, habitat description and seed germination. He also did pollination observations on perching orchids of the genus *Drymoanthus* and wrote an enjoyable blog which you can read at <https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/01/24/summer-scholar-turns-the-spotlight-on-native-tree-perching-orchids/>. We would like to thank the Deane Endowment Trust for funding the 2022/2023 summer scholarship.



The lab also received two new scientific freezers which enables us to store our seed more effectively in conventional seed banks. These freezers are designed to maintain a consistent -20°C as opposed to the fluctuating temperatures (between -11 and -23°C) associated with automatic thaw cycles in domestic freezers. One of the freezers will remain in the lab while the second will be housed at Wellington City Council's Newtown depot as a duplicate storage. Our two sterile rooms in the lab continue to elevate our work with contamination of our orchids largely something of the past. Again, a huge thank you to Darea Sherratt for making this possible.



## Featured in a new book



**Look out for this book. 'What Gardeners Grow' will be published on March 16<sup>th</sup>.**

We are delighted that Eleanor Burton has had a contribution on some NZ plants accepted for this publication. At this time we don't know exactly which plants are included.

If you do share it on Instagram, feel free to tag @bloom\_the\_magazine and @franceslincolnpub.

You can also share this handy

link: <https://geni.us/WhatGardenersGrow> or send people to [www.bloommag.co.uk](http://www.bloommag.co.uk) to help promote sales of the book.

Eleanor recently visited the Catlins in Otago.

Here are some photos.

Below: *Samolus* and *Puccinellia*

Right: *Libocedrus bidwillii*







Top left: *Hymenophyllum frankliniae*

Centre left: *Celmisia lindsayii*

Below left: *Helichrysum filicaule*

Below: Seen in a Wanaka bookshop

Below right: *Lobelia arenaria*





***Celmisia lindsayi***

This species is a Catlins endemic, found on coastal rocks, usually shaded and south facing though not necessarily sheltered. We saw it at Nugget Point, and again at Long Point when we were in the Catlins recently. We have collected seed and one cutting, so hopefully will have it growing at Ōtari soon, though it will be in the pot collection in the nursery. *Celmisia* are very susceptible to soil diseases, so mostly don't do well in the garden. Its threat status is Range Restricted – Naturally Uncommon.



## 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