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CANOPY

Newsletter of the New Zealand Native Forests Restoration Trust

PATRON: Sir Paul Reeves, ONZ, GCMG, GCVO, QSO

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From the Chair

The new year promises a busy start to the ongoing work of the Trust, particularly with the confirmed purchase of our latest reserve at Tupare on the South Kaipara Peninsula.

Supporters of the Trust may recall that for a few years now we have been searching for an appropriate purchase that illustrates the aim of the Trust to restore native bush and fauna, close to Auckland for easier access suiting those who would like to visit one of our reserves but are unable to travel far out of the region. Acquisition of this block would not have been possible without the generous backing of far-sighted supporters including the late Marie Neverman, nor without the sterling efforts of previous Trustee Dr Michael Taylor. Gratitude is also due, needless to say, to your Trustees who have worked hard to facilitate the purchase in these difficult economic times, particularly Geoff

Davidson. This reserve will empower the Trust in protecting the Tupare lake as a magnificent show case of bird life, both native and exotic, eventually extending the wetland out to the Kaipara Harbour itself. The box gives details of the Trust's opening on Saturday 14th March 2009, so please mark your calendar and diaries now.

We continue to look for sponsorship for the large block on the Chatham Islands, where the presence of specialised vegetation and burgeoning wildlife presents valid reasons to try and achieve this goal, so if there are those with a particular interest in the Chathams, they should contact Geoff Davidson.

Last year provided many challenges to the Trust in upholding the objective of preservation of our native forests. With a large number of reserves throughout the North Island and in the Nelson region, we as a

Trust are eternally grateful to those who provide their time and skills in looking after the various reserves. Although many of you receive our minutes and are kept up to date on the Trust's work, the concerted efforts of you all are appreciated. Whilst there may be the odd stumbling block - given the limited resources available towards management - Sharen Graham our Field Officer and our Honorary Rangers carry out their tasks diligently and with efficacy. As always we welcome the interest of our supporters with offers of assistance in the Trust's work: for which our contact details are on the website.

Last but not least, a big round of thanks to all Trustees, and supporters of the Trust - without all of you, our work would not continue to flourish.

Colleen Newton

Opening of the Marie Neverman Reserve

Tupare Lake & Wetland, South Kaipara, Auckland

All welcome!

Guest of Honour:

Sir Paul Reeves, Patron of the Trust

Date:

Saturday, 14 March 2009. Formalities from 12 noon, followed by picnics and viewing of the reserve.

Place:

Tupare, South Kaipara Peninsula. Take South Head Road past Parakai Hot Springs for a further 12 km. Tupare Road is on the right at the top of a hill, then turn left into Kaipara Lake Road to reach the Trust property which has easy level access for parking.

Contacts:

Brian Davis (09) 489 1712 (Briandavis@ihug.co.nz)

Michael Taylor (09) 524 9234 (taylor.mjk@xtra.co.nz)

There will be ample opportunity to see the reserve, with view points and bird-watching stations overlooking the lake and coastal wetland. NZ NFRT Trustees and South Kaipara Landcare members will be on hand to meet with supporters.

For more information about the Trust, visit our website: www.nznftrt.org.nz

A New Trust Acquisition, Tupare Swamp The Marie Neverman Wetland Reserve

Canopy of Spring 2008 reported that we were seeking a property to fulfil the wishes of Marie Neverman, who hoped that her bequest of more than \$300,000 to the Trust could be used to preserve bird habitats, preferably in an area where she had lived and worked. We had already been searching the Auckland region, prompted by a supporter wishing to make over a large private investment to the Trust, and very generously prepared for his gift to be added to that of Marie. Hence a number of sites were inspected through a network of contacts, including friends of the Trust and the late Arthur Dunn of Puhoi, whose efforts to identify potential forest and wetland reserves in Rodney County were acknowledged in Canopy #50.

Success! This exciting prospect has been realised. We are delighted to announce that the Trust is currently purchasing a property that includes an important wetland sanctuary, located on the South Kaipara Peninsula beside the route from Parakai Hot Springs to Shelly Beach, as shown on the accompanying sketch map. (The reference is 310115 on Sheet Q10 of the NZMS 260 map series).

This acquisition builds on an earlier initiative of the Trust. Back in 2002, Canopy #35 reprinted “**Wetlands to Save**” a letter to the Listener from Trustee Geoff Davidson which began “The continuing loss of our wetlands is accelerating an environmental disaster” and announced that the NZ Native Forests Restoration Trust, turning its attention to swamps, had already purchased three such areas to ensure their preservation. Geoff’s letter concluded “the education of landowners is a priority ... we can only lead by example.”

Tupare Swamp, formerly known as Leighton’s Dam and now to become our **Marie Neverman Wetland Reserve**, has prime importance for bird life. Its value has increased while other Kaipara wetlands, especially the dune lakes, have declined or been lost entirely since the 1980s. Of twenty-plus dune lakes only about five still exist and even Lake Kereta, once a good example, now holds few waterbirds and has an uncertain future.

Meanwhile, however, subdivision of a substantial farm bordering the Kaipara Harbour has created a situation where most of Tupare Swamp is part of a separate rural title. Its purchaser, upon subdivision in 2004, was sympathetic to the special values of the site and negotiated favourable boundaries to facilitate protection of the wetland. This property, which the Trust has bought, has an area of 22.3 ha (54 acres). It comprises 14 ha of wetland as a freshwater lake with adjacent raupo beds, along with 8 ha of smooth pasture bordered by native vegetation, mainly kanuka with some rewarewa. The pasture has new fences and has been grazed to maintain a tidy meadow, although the grassy slopes overlooking the lake require attention where woolly nightshade and other weeds are growing under the kanuka cover.

The mixture of reeds and clear water provides a great sanctuary! Supporters Rod Orange and Michael Taylor recently watched a host of waterbirds. Several hundred Paradise Shelducks and most birds on the list shown below were present in pleasing numbers. The Shag colony was flourishing, there were Grey Teals and Dabchicks on the open water. A Bittern was booming from the reeds and Terns were passing overhead.

Various points were considered before the Trust decided to secure this property for nature conservation:

- The purchase secures a vital wetland of exceptional value for water birds, with scope for study and protection of their nesting sites.
- The reserve can be a show place for Trust activities, working with local owners and the well-established South Kaipara Landcare group.
- Access is good; the Helensville township is nearby and Tupare is less than an hour from central Auckland, with an all-weather approach road and a level entrance to the property.
- The adjacent reclamation of low grade pasture to the north east, which separates the lake from the Kaipara Harbour, has a Rodney County covenant and is suitable for revegetation. Here the reserve protects coastal fringe vegetation - biota identified by DOC and Auckland Regional Council as a scarce and threatened type of habitat.

Waterbirds of Tupare Swamp

Dabchick 12, Little Grebe 5, Pied Shag 30, White-faced Heron 6, Black Swan 11, Paradise Shelduck 39, Mallard 29, Grey Duck 12, Shoveller 34, Grey Teal 51, Scaup (Black Teal) 8.

(The numbers are average figures from 1999 to 2008 during the annual Kaipara Lakes surveys conducted by the Ornithological Society of NZ)



Memorial Tree Planting

The Living Memorial scheme was among the Trust’s early initiatives as a tangible way to remember a loved one by contributing to native forest restoration. Plantings have since accumulated, each acknowledged by a certificate showing the names of those involved as proud evidence of support for the work of the Trust. The certificate is an attractive design by Shirley Smith with a border depicting the leaves and fruits of New Zealand trees and shrubs, 17 species in all. Duplicate copies of these certificates are kept by the Trust in our ‘Red Book of Memorial Trees.’

Christmas Gift from SWP N.Z.

We are delighted to acknowledge a Christmas gift of \$1,500 from **Specialised Welding Products Ltd.**

This kind donation was accompanied by the message “SWP wishes everyone at NZ Native Forests Restoration Trust all the best for the festive season and the New Year.” A policy of assisting worthwhile community-based organisations was initiated from Melbourne and operates through New Zealand branches in Auckland and New Plymouth. Please remember this if needing any SWP goods or services.

Good News of the Kokako



'Save the Kokako' was a rallying cry of conservation activists around the time of the Trust's formation in 1980. Recent years have seen great steps towards this goal. The following exciting news from supporter Mike Graham was reported at greater length in the September 2008 issue of the Ornithological Society magazine Southern Bird.

The Kokako Recovery Group consists of DOC personnel from involved areas, volunteer group representatives, and Auckland and Hamilton Zoos (where birds are held for both educational and captive breeding purposes), along with interested parties such as Landcare Research and District or Regional Councils.

A recovery plan written in 1999 and to be revised this year set an objective of 1000 Kokako pairs by the year 2020. However progress has been so rapid that it should be possible to increase this target. At June 2008 a total of 745 pairs was recorded from sixteen mainland and four island locations. When single birds are included the Kokako population should now exceed 1650.

The Native Forests Restoration Trust has a particular interest in the Mangatutu forest which adjoins our Rangitoto Station reserve. Here 66 territorial pairs of Kokako have now been recorded (a big increase from 31 in 2000 and 46 in 2004, according to DOC censuses of the protected area). Special credit is due to dedicated volunteers, particularly those of the Howick Tramping Club, guided by Laurence Gordon and operating within the North Pureora Dawn Chorus Restoration Project. The HTC is working closely with DOC Maniopototo while NZ NFRT provides ongoing support with access and accommodation at Rangitoto Station - a detailed account appeared in CANOPY #39, Spring 2003.

Success in restoring the numbers of Kokako nationally is due to a combination of factors. Human resolve and endeavour comes first, helped by the way in which this amazing bird with its glorious song has captured the imagination of so many of the public. Planning and organisation have been crucial and provide an inspirational example of what can be achieved by well thought out conservation activity. Pest control techniques are crucial and these are improving all the time, though implementation is costly in time and money and there can be unfortunate opposition from some quarters. New management techniques have been involved, such as 'sound anchoring' by broadcasting calls in the appropriate dialect to encourage new pairing and retain translocated birds within the protected area. Another development 'genetic infusion' involves periodically adding a few fresh birds to a local population to strengthen the stock.

The Kokako Recovery Group looks several years ahead; this summer birds are likely to be 'harvested' from productive sites, one of which is Mangatutu, to boost other populations such as Puketi, Tiritiri Matangi, the Maungatautari 'mainland island' and Whirinaki. Next year, Kokako may be introduced to 'Ark in the Park' in the Waitakere Ranges, Mt Moehau at the tip of Coromandel Peninsula, and Otanewainuku Forest in Bay of Plenty. Success on this scale is beyond the most hopeful (wildest!) dreams we cherished during the native forest protests of thirty years ago.

Inspection of the Trust's Reserves

Each of our reserves has its own Honorary Ranger but the Trustees need to maintain a comprehensive view of the wellbeing of every one of these properties. During September 2008 a group consisting of our Field Officer Sharen Graham, with Jo Richie and Ed Chignell of Treescape, plus NFRT members Roy Dench, Geoff Davidson and Hugh Graham visited the Trust's Reserves identifying particular concerns, such as encroachment of weeds or damage to fences and browsing by animal pests. They reported on action required, assigning responsibility for necessary tasks, especially where these are beyond the capacity of the local ranger and require outside help.

As a case in point, the Pehitawa Reserve south of Waitomo includes part of the national Te Araroa walkway. While this is a welcome development it poses special problems, for example a board walk should be installed in wetter areas so that the exact route is clearly defined.

The report detailing this whole exercise has been widely circulated and work has begun in response to a number of the issues that were raised.

Conservation Opportunity on the Chatham Islands

In our Spring 2008 Canopy we wrote that the Trust has been considering an opportunity on the Chatham Islands. In essence, there is a property in the extreme north west corner of the main Chatham Island that is for sale. It is 3,400 hectares owned by two Swiss brothers who have farmed the land for nearly 30 years. This land could now be purchased as a conservation area. The Chatham group probably has a greater number of acutely threatened species than any other area of New Zealand. We can help to save them! With a new government, we ask that you take any opportunity to lobby MPs to increase the financing of the Nature Heritage Fund. We rely on the fund for a substantial contribution towards many of our land purchases. The Fund is managed through DOC and the new Minister of Conservation is Tim Groser. **Contact details:** Email: Tim.Groser@national.org.nz Phone: (04)817 6811 (Parliament)

Meanwhile we are continuing to look for alternative financing and have received helpful offers and suggestions from supporters. **Geoff Davidson**, phone (09) 813 0229.

Rangitoto Station News

The last issue of Canopy warned visitors of the need to cross a rocky stream on route to Rangitoto Station. This obstacle restricts **vehicle access** to high-ground-clearance or 4-wheel-drive vehicles. It is hoped that a concrete ford will soon be built, but in the meantime please contact the Trust's booking officer, Judy Hanbury, on 09 817 7604 for the latest information if you are considering a trip to the reserve or wishing to stay at the house.

For those who made the crossing, **brilliant flax** and 'snow-tipped' manuka formed a glorious New Year display. Tuis were abundant and crowned with gold pollen from feeding in the flower-heads, with Bellbirds in support. Visitors who ventured into the forest were rewarded with songs and sightings of Robins, Tomtits and Whiteheads.

Meanwhile, Trust supporter **Bob Francis** who returned recently from Australia is working hard to clear and open the access and walking tracks, some of which had become blocked. Thankyou, Bob, for your great efforts!

Your donation supports the work of the Trust and ensures that your address remains current on the mailing list for CANOPY

Yes, I should like to give a contribution to the work of the Trust

Here is my tax-deductible donation of \$

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Please make cheques payable to **NZ Native Forests Restoration Trust**
Send to NZ NFRT, PO Box 80007, Green Bay, Waitakere 0643

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