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# CANOPY

Newsletter of the New Zealand Native Forests Restoration Trust

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## Plans & prospects for the new Waikato Reserve

It is always exciting to sign the dotted line of another land purchase, and when it is a property that has good existing environmental values plus heaps of potential for restoration work as well, we get really enthused.

As reported in previous issues of Canopy, the Waikato Regional Council suggested we should investigate a bush block which they hope would be integral to their 'Halo' project to attract birds, tui in particular, back into central Hamilton. The proposed reserve straddles the road to Raglan (SH23) and is well situated for work by volunteers. Our negotiations are at the stage where we are anxious to get on with this restoration, once we have full title to the property. **We are very pleased to thank the Lou and Iris Fisher Trust for a grant of \$30,000 towards this project.** Some of us, particularly our nimble patron, cannot wait and have started planting flaxes along the roadside already.

The new reserve will be 466 hectares, of which about 300 ha is rough pasture ideal for restoration. We anticipate this will be achieved by three separate processes. The back of the farm has areas of gorse being colonised by natives and we will allow that process to continue, while confining the spread of the gorse. Other areas have already been taken over by native species. Scented fern (*Paesia scaberula*) and bracken are well established on many of the steeper mid-slopes, while quite mature kanuka has shaded out the grass along the drier ridges and in the gullies. The areas of better pasture are ready for restoration which will probably be achieved by two methods, planting and direct sowing of seed.

It is an interesting phenomenon that the dominant tree is kanuka but there is no sign of manuka in the area. The question arises – should we use manuka in our restoration process? We are in talks with the health company Comvita as they are keen on trial plantings of their selected high UMF type manuka (at a site where cross-pollination might be avoided) to produce valuable honey which will provide an income stream for the Trust. Unique Manuka Factor (UMF) refers to the antibacterial factor found in some strains that sets NZ manuka bush honey apart as one of nature's true wonder foods. To learn more, visit [www.umf.org.nz](http://www.umf.org.nz)

THIS POTENTIAL TRUST RESERVE WILL BE DESCRIBED IN A BROCHURE ACCOMPANYING THE NEXT ISSUE OF CANOPY.

## Rangitoto Station – THE BIG PICTURE

Trust members are likely to be aware of Tiritiri Matangi Island as a flagship restoration project. As in the case of NZ NFRT, that success is largely owed to its supporters who are kept informed by a well-established newsletter, Dawn Chorus. This handsome magazine runs a series whose message is that they are 'but one piece of the jigsaw that forms the Big Picture of conservation in New Zealand.' The current issue of Dawn Chorus, Bulletin 90, August 2012, contains "From Grassland to Forest: Rangitoto Station" by Trust members Sharen Graham & Colleen Grayling. This well illustrated article traces the story of this Trust property from its origins and gives due credit to the individuals and volunteer groups involved. Reafforestation of the reserve combined with natural regeneration, supported by predator control on a big scale, has increased the bird population to such a level that robin and kokako are being translocated from there to other sanctuaries such as Tiri. Naturally we are delighted to thank the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi for the inclusion of this item, and to bring Dawn Chorus to the attention of Canopy recipients. For further information, visit [www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz](http://www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz)



## Canopy by email access

We will soon be able to give you access to Canopy by email if you prefer this method. To receive Canopy electronically, would you please send an email to [info@nznftrt.org.nz](mailto:info@nznftrt.org.nz)

Numbers from No. 30 (Autumn 2000) onwards are accessible through the Trust's website. Canopy will continue to be printed and widely distributed to promote the work of the Trust, and will be posted to supporters who do not opt for email.

For more information about the Trust, visit our website: [www.nznftrt.org.nz](http://www.nznftrt.org.nz)

# Muriel Fisher

Mrs Muriel Fisher, QSM, of Fernglen, Birkenhead, died on July 23, just short of her 97th birthday. She will be remembered not only for her life-long advocacy of New Zealand's indigenous flora, but also as one of a small group of passionate conservationists whose actions changed the course of history where the protection of this country's native forests is concerned.

Growing up in Wellington, she gained her love of plants at an early age; at ten she was already pressing and mounting ferns that, with alpines, were to remain among her special favourites. Through the Tararua Tramping Club and friendship with Dr Lucy Moore, Muriel became a member of the Wellington Botanical Society from its inception. She moved to Auckland in 1942, where ten years later she was to meet and marry Bill Fisher whose family had owned a homestead on Auckland's North Shore since 1888. Together they built up a collection of more than 700 native plants, cherishing and protecting the bush remnant and in due course setting up a native plant nursery and a centre for education in New Zealand flora. To spread the message she turned to writing works that have become classics: *Gardening with New Zealand Plants, Shrubs and Trees* followed by *New Zealand Ferns in Your Garden*. The first of these received a Wattie Book Award in 1971, while in 1970 Muriel and Bill had jointly won the prestigious Loder Cup.

Preserving their Birkenhead remnant from clearance and sub-division had been a local issue and in the 1970s the impact of the 'Think Big' projects and the continued logging of native forests became a national concern, particularly in the West Coast beech valleys and within the ancient rimu and totara forests of the central North Island where Whirinaki and Pureora were the flash points. Having witnessed the destruction caused by clear felling, Muriel took a stand with the protesters, lending credence to their cause, and thus played a pivotal role in events that led to the formation of the NZ Native Forests Restoration Trust.

Today's wider appreciation of indigenous plants in the garden and of the status of native forest in the New Zealand 'great outdoors' owes a huge debt to Muriel Fisher, her family, and the many individuals who have been influenced and inspired by her example. The old Fisher property of 9 ha, with its special collections and an Education Centre and Alpine House, is owned and managed by the Auckland Council and the Fernglen Native Plants Management Committee ([www.fernglen.co.nz](http://www.fernglen.co.nz)). It is a lasting memorial to an outstanding person. A further reserve in Birkenhead has been named the Muriel Fisher Reserve in her honour.

# Rangitoto Station woolshed



Rangitoto Station, one of the Trust's earliest reserves, is 427 ha of regenerating bush situated high in the Rangitoto Range of the King Country, surrounded by extensive areas of protected mature forest. It is adjacent to the Mangatutu catchment and the Tunawaea Valley, both habitats of the endangered kokako. However, like all mainland habitats, the area is vulnerable to bird predators and feral animals that hinder bush regeneration. A full description of the property and its flora and fauna can be found on the trust's website, [www.nznfrt.org.nz](http://www.nznfrt.org.nz). The menu path to follow is Reserves/Projects>Existing Reserves>Central North Island>Rangitoto Station.

The area is comparatively rich in diverse bird life and is a source of robins, kokako and other rare birds which are netted and transported to new habitats, such as the Waitakere Ranges and Puketi forest. The Trust has been fortunate in attracting the support of a number of tramping clubs whose members regularly put in much voluntary time providing pest control. At present they are accommodated in a house on the property and, when this is full, in a 60 yr-old woolshed, a relic of the property's former life as a farm. Other workers who use the shed are deer- and goat-hunters and staff of the Department of Conservation carrying out surveys and research into deer control. Members of numerous conservation groups also stay in the shed during bird relocation projects. This usage is expected to increase. The activities at the site are central to the Trust's restoration aims, and a good accommodation base is vital.

The woolshed is large and in sound condition, but is unlined and lacking in most facilities. The roof needs replacement. Most of the floor is slatted and needs covering over to keep the wind out. Internal partitioning, a partial ceiling and a few extra windows are needed, as is an electricity connection to the house so that lighting and heating can be installed. The present toilet and (cold) shower also need upgrading. After this work the building will still be a very basic facility, but it will be a great advance on what is there at present and will encourage greater participation by volunteers in important environmental protection work.

We are looking into the processes necessary to improve and extend the life of this valuable asset and will provide more details in future issues of CANOPY.

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## Grant for Possum control

We gratefully acknowledge a recent grant of \$5000 from the Waikato Community Conservation Fund to expand the work of possum control in the Trust's **Steuart Russell Reserve**.

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## Peter Jenkins

It is with great regret that we record the death in November of Dr Peter Jenkins, at the age of 86. He was a foundation trustee in 1980 and served as NZ NFRT secretary during the formative years. Having begun his career in the Department of Education, Peter joined Auckland University in 1968 to teach biology within the School of Medicine for twenty years before transferring to the Zoology Department. Beyond teaching he built an international reputation for his research into bird song, particularly through his study of the development and transmission of dialects in the freshly established saddleback population of Cuvier Island. As such he was among the pioneers of island translocation which has become a crucial technique in saving New Zealand's endemic species from the risk of extinction.

# A proposal for Retaruke and Kurua Reserves

The Trustees of the NFRT have been approached by Keith and Elly Buswell, honorary rangers for the Retaruke and Kurua Reserves and adjoining land-owners, to canvas the idea of them purchasing these reserves from the Trust.

The two Trust reserves (Retaruke 198ha and Kurua 15ha) are within a few kilometers of each other in the hills of the Kaitieke district about 24 km south-west of Owhanga in the southern King Country. Their isolation makes for very intermittent supervision by Trustees.

Keith and Elly Buswell are both Te Kuiti-based doctors in general practice who own the 276 ha bush block adjoining the Retaruke Reserve. They are very good custodians of the land, carrying out quite intensive pest control over both blocks. The Buswells have accommodation on their property and visit regularly for recreation and pest control purposes. Their motivation for the proposed purchase of the Reserves is two-fold. Ownership would increase their incentive for continued and perhaps more intensive pest control and they see the proposal would provide the Trust with capital for buying additional unprotected land that may even be higher priority for revegetation or biodiversity protection. We have been presented with a timely opportunity to re-use the money donated to buy the Retaruke block and therefore save yet another bush block.

One concern raised by Trustees is for the long-term security of the forest on the land. This is adequately protected by the QEII National Trust Open Space Covenants over our reserves. The Buswells are also at pains to point out that their adult offspring are equally conservation minded and actively involved in pest control. Keith and Elly Buswell have demonstrated their credentials by protecting their own block in perpetuity with a QEII Trust covenant. As a further protection in the case of a possible future transfer of ownership from their family trust the Native Forests Restoration Trust could be offered a first option to repurchase the Reserves.

The Trustees welcome any feedback from supporters either for or against the proposal. We are aware it could be precedent-setting and wish to take all concerns into consideration before making a decision.

# Mangarakau Swamp

## Making friends, or in the wrong place at Easter?



“We’ll be doing a bit of weeding.” This was my briefing before heading to Mangarakau Swamp in Golden Bay for Easter. I was to trade my biker’s leathers for overalls, my riding boots for gumboots, and join 16 volunteers from The Brook Sanctuary & Forest and Bird. We are told that weeds are ‘plants growing where they are not wanted’ – I have another definition but it’s unprintable. I confess to being green – not as in ‘environmentally savvy and politically active’ but as ‘inexperienced and naïve.’

Green as in thinking that ‘bush bashing’ meant that I get a chance to whack something that deserves a good thrashing with a big stick.

Green as in thinking ‘A bit of weeding’ might be languishing about in a gentle autumn breeze pulling the odd small plant out of the ground in between pleasant hot cups of tea and hot cross buns spread on a chequered cloth.

Green as in actually *believing* these ‘Saviours of Swamps’ when they reassured me as we squelched about lost in the swamp “You’ll be fine, we’re going on a picnic.”

In reality I found myself atop a scrub-covered island amidst a 400 hectare swamp wondering how the #@%! am I going to keep up with that legendary 70 year old over there who hasn’t appeared to have rested once in two hours of weeding! How is it that I have manuka grit pouring with perspiration into my pants and veteran ‘weeders’ are hardly breaking a sweat? What am I doing bent over like a half-shut pocket knife underneath gorse and manuka armed with loppers and poison when at this time of year I ought to be reclining on a couch eating a chocolate egg? I must be in the wrong place! What difference is my tiny contribution scratching around like a swamp hen really going to make up against the devastation we humans cause to mother earth?

After I was rehydrated enough to speak I offered to write a ‘Beginners guide to weeding’ which resulted in me being given the task of writing the trip report. It is difficult as there are some very disturbing questions flitting like a fernbird in my head.

- How have I remained so ignorant of the steadfastness, vision and *gumption* of all these environmentally minded volunteers?
- How have I lived this long in New Zealand and not *truly experienced* the serenity, poise and perfection of a native swamp?

The Friends of Mangarakau were delighted in getting their ‘bit of weeding’ done, plus we planted over 130 natives trees and stacked a couple of loads of firewood in the shed, yet I feel that I contributed very little.

BUT, during the absolutely gorgeous walk to Kahurangi lighthouse - a full moon slicing through the cracks in the tarp I slept under with nothing but a *very* thin fly between me and mother earth - I had some insights.

Robyn, Murray and David (*the most active friends of Mangarakau that I met*) are inspirational, visionary and motivational beyond the words of this writer. Without any fancy terminology or doomsday predictions they demonstrate *by their actions* the significant difference one person *does* make.

For me, this trip was like being cast in a dramatic documentary with perfect lighting, an educational learning extravaganza in 3D, a thriller without a stunt double.

The eclectic fun-loving group of intrepid volunteers led (or should I say inveigled) by Ian Price has surreptitiously and entertainingly inducted me into the *real* meaning of ‘a bit of weeding’.

Experienced volunteers! Never underestimate the power of the small seemingly insignificant gestures you make; - all the way from explaining the ecological magic of swamps to pointing out a fernbird, to sharing a squashed Easter egg at just the right moment.

Being home I miss waking up to the quiet, the mist, the cliffs, the birds. I was in the right place at Easter after all. You don’t so much become a Friend of the Swamp, the Mangarakau Swamp has a way of befriending you. A financial donation or helping out is just what friends do. I guess most importantly of all it remains true that a weed is a plant growing where it is not wanted - in the wrong place. Over a thousand gums and as many wattles found themselves identified and exterminated for being in the wrong place this Easter.

Anne Harvey



# Buried Treasure

Newsletter editors keep a look out for interesting or usual material to add zest to their pages. Imagine the pleasant surprise it was to discover, yellowing and folded between the pages of a second-hand book published in 1962, a fourth-form essay on the beauty of New Zealand Bush. The name 'Jean Fleming' might have identified its author as one of the three daughters of Sir Charles Fleming, F.R.S.\* Today, as Professor Fleming and holder of the Chair of Science Communication at Otago University, Jean was intrigued by the discovery – but the hand-writing was not hers. In case some other lover of native forest is able to lay claim to this essay with its good mark of 21/25, the opening paragraph is reproduced below. It begins with a quotation from the poet Rudyard Kipling:

“Last, loneliest, loveliest.” Did ever man more aptly describe in three brief words the subtle beauty of our New Zealand bushland? Of our South Island bush I know little, except that it is more open, and more favoured by the rare tui and other representatives of bird life. However, I shall endeavour to carry you away for a brief space of time into a veritable fairyland that I know of, situated on the West Coast of the North Island, not far inland from the beautiful ocean beach of Muriwai. It is, I believe, a typical sample of North Island bush. [The essay continues with an enthusiastic description of a walk through the Waitakere Ranges]

*\*Sir Charles Fleming, who died in 1987, was one of a select group of eminent persons that included Muriel Fisher (see elsewhere in this Canopy) who backed the stand against native forest logging in the Muldoon era.*

*Come and stay at*

## Mangarakau Wetland Field Centre, NW Nelson



Attractive 17 bed lodge situated amid wonderful scenery with walking tracks around the swamp. Close to outstanding natural wilderness areas with access to Kahurangi National Park, Farewell Spit and Te Tai Tapu Marine Reserve. Bring own bedding and food.

**For more information and Lodge Bookings:**

**Ph/fax Jo-Anne Vaughan (03) 525 6031 javn@xtra.co.nz**  
**[www.gbworkcentre.org.nz/mangarakauswamp/index.html](http://www.gbworkcentre.org.nz/mangarakauswamp/index.html)**

*Come and stay at*

## Rangitoto Station Reserve



Modern 3-bedroomed house, 34km from Otorohanga, King Country. Well-equipped and ideal for small to medium groups but sleeping space depends on how many workers are there at the time. Camping permitted near the woolshed. Hours of walking tracks through bush or open country with superb views. Many native bird species including kokako, kaka and falcon.

**Relax and enjoy the peace and quietness.**

**House Bookings: Ph. Judy (09) 817-7604 (pte)**  
**[jrhanbury@actrix.co.nz](mailto:jrhanbury@actrix.co.nz)**



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