

Yes! Please send me the following Waitakere Ranges Protection Society goodies...

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number (in case of queries) _____

T-Shirts

Size Number

S

M

L

XL

Total at \$30 each (incl P&P) \$_____

Postcards

Number of packs (5 cards per pack)

Total at \$5 per pack (incl P&P) \$_____

Botanical Cards

Flowering plants
Number of packs (5 cards per pack)

Total at \$10 per pack (incl P&P) \$_____

TOTAL payment \$_____

Please send your order to Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, P O Box 15668, New Lynn, Waitakere City. Please enclose your payment with your order. Thank you for your support.

Get ready for Spring!

The warmer weather will be returning soon so now is a great time to order a new Waitakere Ranges Protection Society T-shirt!

Printed front and back they are NZ made in striking turquoise cotton. T-shirts cost just \$30 each (including postage & packing). Just order the number you need on the form above.



The Hon Judith Tizard with a T-shirt!

Botanical cards or kids' designs!

A card is always appreciated and is a great way to celebrate the Ranges. You can choose:

A set of five botanical cards, with envelopes, featuring flowering plants of Spragg Bush, Or



A set of five postcards featuring winning entries in the Waitakere Ranges Postcard Competition, including this one by Jeremy Roberts of Henderson Valley Primary.

Sender:
The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society
PO Box 15668
New Lynn
Waitakere City



Waitakere Ranges
Protection Society Inc

news

P O Box 15668, New Lynn, Waitakere City
www.waitakereranges.org.nz

Issue 123 August 2004

Your President's Report

The past three months since our last newsletter have seen the new committee settling in and all taking on tasks to progress our goals. I am sure this is the best committee line up since I have been president and we have some real skills and commitment. This is most welcome in a year when **the fate of the ranges truly hangs in the balance.**

It seems **we have never been so close to achieving our goal of permanent protection for the whole of the ranges and yet we face obstacles that can seem overwhelming.** But somehow we must not lose sight of our objective - the permanent protection of the whole of the ranges.

A very important decision has been made by Waitakere City Council in the past few weeks, **which has serious implications** for the ranges and the protection project.

Council have **decided to proceed to a hearing in the environment court on the Swanson Structure Plan.** This is a change in tack by Council, since it had been granted an adjournment from the court last February so they could carry out strategic work on development potential in the foothills. This work was one of the recommendations of the Structure Plan review carried out last year which suggested that Council give consideration to the entire Structure Plan focus and process, particularly policy and assessment criteria relating to subdivision. **It was expected that this strategic level review would take up to two years to complete, and that it should be completed before the Swanson Structure Plan went to the Environment Court.** It was also considered an important part of the Waitakere Ranges protection project. There has been **no explanation of why this work is no longer required.**

The failure of this Council to withdraw the Swanson Structure Plan and proceed to a hearing has **serious implications for the whole of the foothills**, sending a message that structure plans in other areas will be considered on an *ad hoc* basis in response to landowner and development pressures. The Society remains strongly opposed to this *ad hoc* approach.

As a consequence of this decision, I have been forced to review my role as the chairman of Team West, the group that I helped start in 1999 to oppose Go Waitakere and their attempts to destroy the eco city and open up the ranges to subdivision and development. **A large majority of the work the Team West controlled Council has done in the past 3 years has been commendable. However their failure both to withdraw the Swanson Structure Plan and to send a strong message they will really give the ranges permanent protection has meant I can no longer have confidence in them.** As a result I have resigned as chairman of Team West.

Many of our members in the ranges have contacted me, very concerned with these developments, and there is at present much **discussion on how best to deal with the up-coming local body elections.** In past elections, the Society has endorsed candidates who we believe are committed to our goals, and in the next few weeks we hope to be able to do so again. **We will be organising public meetings to discuss our issues with candidates** and we will inform you as soon as arrangements are made.

In all of this it is essential we **keep sight of our goal** of permanent protection for the whole of the ranges. I can assure you your executive and I are strongly committed to and focused on this central issue. If you would like to discuss these matters further with me please feel free to call me on 8128 555, preferably in the evening.

John Edgar
President



Welcome to your Spring Newsletter

You'll find updates on a number of the Society's current projects, including the work to permanently protect the whole of the Waitakere Ranges. **If you have a red dot on this newsletter your subscription for 2004 is overdue.** Please send \$25 to The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, PO Box 15 668, New Lynn, Waitakere City. Best wishes,
Kath - editor@waitakereranges.org.nz

What to watch for in the bush: *Alseuosmia macrophylla*

The word *Alseuosmia* is taken from Greek and literally means 'perfume of the grove'. It also has a Maori name - 'karapapa'. More prosaically, and falsely, it is sometimes referred to as 'bush daphne'. Most people simply call it 'alseuosmia'. *Macrophylla* means 'large leaf'.

Although it is a nondescript shrub with large leaves that looks like any other shrub with large leaves, it is one of the special plants of the Waitakeres. This is because, when it comes into flower, perfume fills the air for some distance so that the passer-by with eyes down or head in the clouds is forced to stop and look around. Compared with many New Zealand flowers, the *alseuosmia* is a beauty. It is relatively large, and the colour varies from cream, to pale pink to dark pink. It is tubular in shape and sometimes has an attractive feathery fringe around the open end of the tube.

The berry is small, red, and oval in shape and is mainly seen in February/March. Its smaller relatives in the central North Island forests are often covered in berries in autumn, but for some reason, and surprisingly for such a widespread plant, our species is rarely seen with berries.

Look for *alseuosmia* in good quality regenerating bush, and in mature forest where the undergrowth is thick. One of the best places of all, and the easiest to access, is at the start of the five-minute Large Kauri Walk towards the northern end of Scenic Drive. Here *alseuosmia* grows and flowers in magnificent abundance, with lots of colour variation. Although the flowering season may spread from as early as May to as late as mid-October, the best time is definitely September.



Good knowledge

The Society has been asked to comment on Waitkere City's draft biodiversity strategy. We are pleased to see the draft strategy acknowledges the weaknesses in current information on the state of biodiversity in the City - as to whether species decline is increasing, slowing or reversing - and the lack of knowledge of how successful any programme is, for example: Do revegetated sites resemble functioning ecosystems they are intended to reflect?

In our response to the Council we will be advocating, amongst other things, an update of The Waitakere Ecological District Survey Report for the Protected Natural Areas Programme, conducted in 1993. This was, in the Society's opinion, a very good report but there are several reasons it needs updating:

- The report was published in 1993 but the fieldwork was undertaken in the late 1980's.
- Much of the ecological data in the report is now out of date for example:
 - The rainbow skink, an Australian species known to have been present for several years and a potential threat to native skinks, is not listed as present in the report.
 - The area is known from other studies to be important for native snails but other than a mention of Atkinson Park in Titirangi, the distribution of significant native snail species is largely not covered.
- Fieldwork techniques have developed immensely since the 1980s.
- the Auckland Regional Council, DoC and Waitakere City Council continue to rely heavily on the ecological data in the Protected Natural Areas report to make management decisions today - hence the relevance of this issue for the Waitakere City Council's Biodiversity Strategy.

The Society will be asking Waitakere City Council to include redoing the Protected Natural Areas survey as part of its Biodiversity Strategy. The City's neighbour, Rodney District Council, sets a good example in this instance; the original Rodney Ecological District PNA was undertaken in 1983-1984 however, 14 years later in 1997-1998 the Rodney District Council repeated the PNA survey so their environmental information was up-to-date.

Meet your committee - John Hadwen

John Hadwen returned to New Zealand in late 2002, after living in the US the previous 14 years -- initially on the East Coast in Connecticut just out of New York City, and the past decade in the Rocky Mountains in Boulder, Colorado. He is an artist, a past Board member of the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, and past Artistic Director of the Performing Arts Program at the museum. His current project is the design and painting of the Waitakere Stadium climbing wall, in collaboration with John Edgar.



In the 70's and 80's, John lived in the upper South Island in relatively remote places such as the Matakaitaki Valley, regularly hiking through some of the lesser traveled areas of the region. As a member of a local, informal environmental group, he was involved in preventing the logging of much of the hill country beech forest in the Murchison area.

While living in the US, John visited family and friends in New Zealand annually. Even if only passing through the Auckland region, he always stopped to visit the west coast beaches and the Waitakere Ranges. He considered these annual visits to the West Coast of Auckland as his touchstone to the essence of this diverse land. Along with the beech forests and mountains of the South Island, the Waitakere Ranges are, for John, one of the significant places remaining in New Zealand where it is possible to imagine and experience the natural resonance of this country.

John is glad of the opportunity to be involved with the Society and considers permanent protection of the Waitakere Ranges to be critical, especially when so little of our coastal forest remains. That it should even be debated he sees as evidence of the tenacity and eagerness of those with a development agenda.

Your Committee:

President:	John Edgar 09 8128 555 jedgar@iconz.co.nz
Vice-President:	Kath Dewar Kathdewar@paradise.net.nz
Treasurer:	Sandra Jones S.jones@auckland.ac.nz
Secretary:	Linda Godfrey GodfreyLC@State.gov
Committee:	Trixie Harvey brutrix@xtra.co.nz Mike Nixon mike.nixon@wstconnect.co.nz Colleen Pilcher 09 810 9540 Graeme Ramsay graemer@ww.co.nz Mels Barton mels@wombatsenvironmental.co.nz Anna Fomison annafomison@hotmail.com Melissa Marler Melissamarler@xtra.co.nz Leslie Haines Lhaines@unitec.ac.nz John Hadwen hadwen@att.net Ann Poulson Annp@paradise.net.nz



Society tackles hidden threats to Ranges

Two current projects see the Society's executive tackling hidden threats to the Waitakere Ranges:-

Leaching - In June, the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society became aware of an informal land-fill site at 93 Duffy Rd, Waitakere, Rodney District, which was in operation during the mid 1980's to 1990 and used to dump treated wood waste and other materials. This site is in the catchment of the Waitakere River and the Society has had a long term interest in this area.

Committee member and water expert Dr Mels Barton read the reports of the water quality analyses and consent monitoring performed by the ARC and Woodward Clyde. A retrospective consent to discharge the contaminants to water was sought from the ARC around 2000 and the Woodward Clyde report recommended annual testing.

We learned from ARC that a land use resource consent was sought from Rodney District Council and publicly notified in August 2002. This was intended to carry out earthworks associated with capping and re-contouring the site.

As a result of this information we have contacted Rodney District Council to ask for any detailed information they have on this site and any land use restriction they have imposed on the area. We have also requested details of the consent, any subsequent monitoring and to be advised of any similar sites.

Paper roads - The Society has been aware for some time of the numerous paper roads throughout the Ranges. We are concerned for the future of these as development and transport pressures in the Ranges grow. As a result, we have embarked on a process to understand how we might protect affected sites. We are beginning our work with a paper road at the site the Society purchased last year, 71 Turanga Road.

Water Safety Signage

The Society has been participating in a working party at Piha, along with other community groups and local residents. The working party was established as a result of the coroner's rulings asking ARC and Waitakere City councils to ensure water safety signage followed the national standards. A new Standard NZS 8690:2003 Water safety signage was published in March 2003. The Standard uses internationally recognised symbols so it is not reliant on the written word. The working party is also attempting to incorporate the West Coast Plan directive for signs to be amalgamated.



While the project seems likely to result in more visible warning signs along the road front than at present, the Society is hopeful signs on rocks and the beaches themselves can be avoided. The working party is hoping to finalise recommendations during August for consultation with the community in September. The work at Piha is likely to be followed with similar projects at the other west coast beaches.

Alien reptiles in the Ranges

The Waitakere Branch of Forest & Bird have been receiving increasing reports of strange reptiles in the Ranges. An Australian skink species, the rainbow skink, was first reported Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1960's and is well established throughout the Auckland Region (including the Waitakere Ranges) and elsewhere in the North Island. The impact this species has on native lizards is the subject of an Auckland University study currently underway.

The risk of exotic species entering the country via our ports or escaping from captivity is ever present. The Society would like to see improved border controls, better regulation of exotic pet ownership and better public education - blue tongue lizards from eastern Australia are well established in New Zealand's pet trade and were promoted as pets recently, by a guest on TVNZ's Good Morning. If cane toads or venomous snakes were to establish here it could be disastrous for our native species. If you see or have seen any suspicious reptile or amphibians, please **report the sighting to DoC's Auckland office on 09 307 9279.**



Ecological restoration research: two new concepts

Committee member Trixie Harvey attended a free seminar, run by the Crown Research Institute Landcare, in Hamilton on 20 May 2004, along with over 100 people from community organisations, local authorities and universities.

The programme was varied and included talks on the restoration of peat bogs, some grossly disturbed sites, urban biodiversity, restoring native birds to their habitat, a Maori perspective, the role of mycorrhizae in restoration, and discussion on methods and priorities.

Of particular interest to the Society was a talk on four years of a restoration experiment in Waitakere City, by Lincoln University student Jon Sullivan. The aim was to contrast management methods and understand the ecology of small, patchy sites. It was conducted in the foothills of the Waitakere Ranges on some previously cleared, council owned sites now being restored to native vegetation. Plant growth and immigration of invertebrates were measured at intervals on four sites with varying planting methods, and species mixes.

The conclusions were that dense planting on previously ripped ground, (to mitigate soil compaction) was most successful in establishing good cover and keeping out weeds. Early in the experiment weeds flourished but decreased in later years as natives grew taller and more plants established. Nearness to an area of native forest greatly aided the establishment of natives with germination of seeds carried in by birds. The results showed how quickly native forest could be restored in previously cleared areas.

The talk on the role of mycorrhizae was also interesting; mycorrhizae are fungi which grow in association with the roots of forest trees, and assist their growth. They are particularly plentiful under manuka, but their importance in the health of nearly all native trees is only now coming to be recognised.

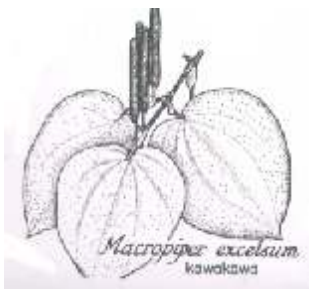
ORAL HISTORY

Work is currently being completed on the pilot study of a new Waitakere Ranges Protection Society project - an oral history of the Society and the Waitakere Ranges. Many of the Society's members can recall specific events or processes of great importance in the history of our special environment, e.g. the passing of the Kaka. And the Society itself has played an interesting role in the history of West Auckland, both in terms of gathering together scientists and artists behind a common cause, and in terms of the outcomes achieved. Documenting the Society's own history lets us understand how all this happened. The Society aims to record as much of this local knowledge still in living memory before it disappears forever.

Thanks to a grant from the Waitakere City Council Wellbeing Fund, the Society has been fortunate to engage the services of a professional Oral Historian, Robyn Mason for this pilot work. Her interest in this area of history started when Robyn was working as Museum Librarian in the United States, work which involved her recording the stories of people living in the community where the museum was located.

Since returning to New Zealand, Robyn has undertaken projects on the baches of the Wairarapa and the Ranui district, as well as interviewing for the Waitakere Library and Information Services. Robyn is a warm and enthusiastic person, who looks forward to getting to know the members of the Society and supporting this endeavour.

The tapes will be held in the Waitakere City Library Oral History Archive, creating a community resource that is easily accessed. It is hoped that by providing an invaluable primary research resource, more people will be encouraged to study the impact of changes within the heritage landscape of the Waitakere Ranges.



Poll shows overwhelming support for permanent protection

A telephone survey of 502 Aucklanders aged 18 years and over, was conducted by Colmar Brunton on behalf of the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, between May 25th and 27th. Respondents were asked:

“We are doing a poll of Aucklanders about the future of the Waitakere Ranges. This includes the west coast villages such as Piha, native bush areas and the eastern foothills including Titirangi and Swanson. About 60% of the land in the area is publicly owned and 40% of it is privately owned. Given the growing pressure, some people have proposed the whole Waitakere Ranges area should be permanently protected from further subdivision and associated development by means of a local bill that would freeze development at its present level.

Using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means you strongly disagree and 7 means you strongly agree, how much do you disagree or agree with permanent protection of the Waitakere Ranges?”

Overall, **81% of Waitakere City residents agree with permanent protection**, and the majority of these people (almost half of the total) expressed very strong agreement (i.e. 7 on the scale). There is only marginally less agreement in other regions.



Agreement with permanent protection is stronger among those who are regular visitors to the Waitakere Ranges (five or more times a year) 87% agree, 57% very strongly. It is slightly weaker among infrequent visitors (less than once a year), but still 74% agree with permanent protection. Agreement is slightly stronger among females compared with males, but there are not significant differences by age or household type.

The poll was funded with help from the Environmental Defence Society and the Waitakere Branch of Forest and Bird. The sample was quota'd so 50% of respondents were Waitakere City residents with the remainder spread across Auckland, Manukau and North Shore Cities.

The maximum error margin for the 81% result for Waitakere City residents is + 4.8%; for the 77% result for the rest of Auckland it is + 5.2%.

Danielle Williams, Arahoe Primary School

The full poll findings and question details are available at www.waitakereranges.org.nz

Sign the petition

The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society is collecting a petition of names for submission to Waitakere City Council, asking them to provide permanent protection via legislation for the whole of the Waitakere Ranges area, including the foothills. The council recently voted to extend the timescale for the current public consultation on the protection project for another year and WRPS thinks this is wasting an excellent opportunity to get legislation before parliament this session. We need your support - please add your name to the call to speed up this vital project and get your friends and neighbours to sign up too.

You can download the petition from our web site www.waitakereranges.org.nz or look out for our committee members at the Titirangi Village Market days.

Permanent Protection update

The Society is disappointed that, despite overwhelming support for permanent protection and a clear electoral mandate, Waitakere City Council announced, on 26th May 2004, delays to the permanent protection project.

This means little progress on legislation - a mechanism essential to any degree of long term certainty - will be made before the local council elections in October. This delay potentially jeopardises the introduction of a local government bill to the current session of parliament. This is particularly disappointing given the strong support the project has enjoyed from the region's ARC councillors and MPs.

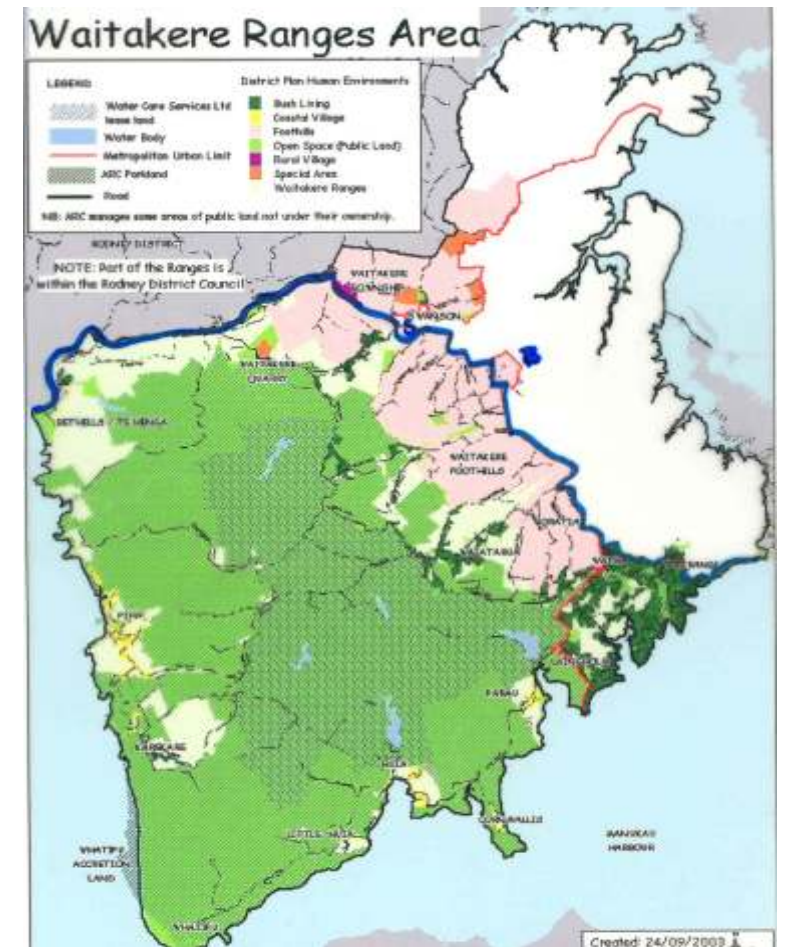
Council's revised time line is as follows:

July 8	Environmental Management Committee – considered results from phase two community consultation
June - August	Further technical work undertaken on proposed package e.g. proposed legislation, biosphere and trust and the implications to landowners
June - December	Further technical work on landscape and role of foothills
September 2004	Report to Council meeting on components of proposed package e.g. proposed legislation, biosphere and trust
Feb - March 2005	Final consultation with community on proposed mechanisms for the further protection of the Ranges.

Further details of the project are available on Waitakere City Council's website at: www.waitakere.govt.nz (under 'About the city', 'Ranges Protection'). This includes results of the phase one consultation but the results of the phase two consultation, presented to the Environmental Management Committee on July 8th, have not yet been posted to the site.

The measures being considered by the Political Liaison Group (Waitakere City Council, Auckland Regional Council, Iwi and the Region's MPs) are:

- Introduce legislation via a local government bill,
- Prioritise the Ranges in Councils' Long Term Council Community Plans,
- Amend the Regional Growth Agreement,
- Amend the Regional Policy Statement and District Plan as required,
- Establish a charitable trust to raise funds
- Investigate world biosphere status,
- Establish core teams within agencies whose members focus on the Ranges,
- Develop an implementation plan.



As a result of their studies into landscape protection in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas, the Environmental Defence Society drafted a suggested local government bill. You can access this at www.waitakereranges.org.nz

Make your voice heard

It is essential all current Waitakere City councillors and the candidates in October's local body elections know how important permanent protection of the Ranges is to you. If you haven't already, please put pen to paper. Write to your councillor, the Mayor, The Western Leader or the New Zealand Herald and explain why you think the Ranges, including the foothills and coastal villages, must be protected from development in perpetuity.

