

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

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number (in case of queries) _____

Physical address and phone number please, if ordering mugs

T-Shirts

Size Number

S

M

L

XL

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

Mugs

Number of mugs

Total at \$35 per mug (incl p&p) \$_____

Postcards

Number of packs (5 cards per pack)

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

TOTAL payment \$_____

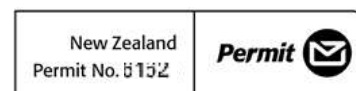
Please send your order to Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, P O Box 15668, New Lynn, Waitakere City. Please enclose your payment with your order. Thank you for your support.

New bestsellers - handpainted Ranges mugs

These stunning mugs have been uniquely designed for the Society by Karekare potter Lynda Harris. The mugs are individually crafted and beautifully painted to show the bush covered ranges and a view to the sea with a splendid kereru admiring karaka berries. The mugs cost \$35 each, including p&p and \$10 from each sale goes to the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society. Launched late 2004, these are proving hugely popular! The mugs are made to order so please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery.



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 126 May 2005

STOP PRESS - Good call by Council on Heritage Area boundary

On 4th May, Waitakere City Council decided the proposed Heritage Area will include the Eastern foothills. This was a vital decision as Councillor Neeson tried to make inclusion of privately owned land in the foothills voluntary. As Councillor Clow said at the meeting, the foothills are the main area being damaged by inappropriate development. A clear majority of foothills landowners support legislation (UMR Research, Feb 2005).

The Society is heartened by the position adopted by new Councillors such as Warren Flaunty, who was initially opposed to the Bill, but took the time to understand the facts and now supports the use of legislation.

Council staff are working to finalise the draft Bill in time for a Councillor workshop on 18th May where external experts will also be asked their view. The meeting on 4th also asked Council staff to examine ways to reinvigorate the foothills as a rural area and consider how rates should apply in the area to be protected; both commendable measures.

We can expect the small number of people who oppose the Bill to be very vocal in the weeks ahead and it would be helpful if members of the Society could express their support for the Council's use of legislation in **letters to the editors** of the Western Leader (edwl@snl.co.nz or PO Box 21167 Henderson) and the NZ Herald (www.nzherald.co.nz or Box 32 Auckland).

At **9.30am on Tuesday 24th May**, Council will decide if the draft Bill should be sent to Parliament for further consideration. Please join us to witness this historic occasion at the Council offices, 6 Waipareira Avenue, Henderson. (Call 836 8000 to check the venue). Background to the project and the first draft of the Bill are available at www.waitakere.govt.nz

Welcome to your Newsletter!

This season's issue is always an important one because it contains our annual report for members who were unable to attend the AGM.

Inside you'll find:

- Your committee's annual report
- The Society's annual accounts
- A report from the AGM itself
- Contacts for your new committee members
- A profile of new committee member Lynda Williams
- An update on the Permanent Protection project

Plus

- Details of winter walks with the Society
- A guide to spotting orchids

Many thanks for your continued support - without you our work would be impossible.

Kath editor@waitakereranges.org.nz

Do you have a red dot?

If you have a red dot on the address panel of this newsletter it means you haven't sent us your **subscription for 2005** yet. We need you to subscribe so we can continue our work and continue to send you your newsletter! Subscription fees are:

Retired or unwaged \$20, Single \$25, Family \$35

Please send to: The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, PO Box 15 668, New Lynn, Waitakere City.

Many thanks.

“Every justification in pushing ahead!”

While a Local Government Act to give permanent protection to the whole of the Waitakere Ranges is closer than it has been in the 39 years since he joined Parliament, it was not yet a certainty, said Jonathan Hunt, when he spoke at the 31st Annual General Meeting of the Society he helped found in 1974.

The four independent opinion polls conducted over the last year show there is “every justification for pushing ahead with what is in the best interest of everyone in this area,” said Mr Hunt. He explained the main reason he supports legislation is because it would then require another Act of Parliament to allow an attack on the Ranges, “so no quiet little deals can be done under the carpet. That’s why it is the safest way to preserve decisions made.”

First involved in efforts to give the Waitakere Ranges better protection back in 1973, when he sponsored a Protection Bill which fell at the first hurdle, having failed to win Local Authority support, Mr Hunt has been a long



Image: Tony Dunn

term advocate for the Ranges. He urged the well-attended meeting “constant vigilance” would be needed to first get the proposed Bill to Parliament and then ensure its safe passage through the complex and detailed select committee process. “It will not and can not be hurried through Parliament”, said Mr Hunt. “It can’t

be done under urgency if it is a Local Government Bill.” And the Select Committee process was the best way to fine tune the wording of the Bill, he advised, to make sure it delivers on the principles captured in the version the Council introduce to Parliament.

Mr Hunt outlined for the meeting the process the Bill would take through Parliament to become an Act and acknowledged the work of local MPs Lynne Pillay, David Cunliffe, and Chris Carter in supporting the project so far.

Jonathan Hunt is a foundation member and Patron of the Society, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, and New Zealand’s new Ambassador to London. He has been a long term resident of Kare Kare and was elected Labour Party MP for New Lynn in 1966. A full transcript of Jonathan’s speech at the AGM will soon be available at www.waitakereranges.org.nz

ARC attack weeds

ARC are about to embark on a long-term plan to combat weeds in the Waitakere Ranges. Work will soon begin on pampas grass with the aim of eliminating the weed between Whatipu and Muriwai in 3 years. Work will start on the west coast and then head east. Gallant herbicide, which only kills grasses, will be sprayed by a worker with a handgun, suspended on a sling 200 ft below a helicopter, to allow the individual spraying of pampas bushes in inaccessible places such as the wetlands and on the cliffs. Sprayers will attempt at all times to avoid toetoe, Gahnia and other NZ grass species. Because all ferns, podocarps, broadleaf, mosses, etc will be unaffected by the spray, regrowth of natives and in-filling of sprayed areas is expected to be rapid. This work will need a serious investment to tackle an escalating problem.

Mothplant will be similarly targeted, with a different treatment, and further plans include eliminating agapanthus from the west coast roads and other roads around ARC parks. Work is also beginning on climbing asparagus and wild ginger in Waitakere Ranges sites such as Cornwallis. The Society is delighted ARC is undertaking this much needed work.

Meet your committee Lynda Williams

Lynda was born and grew up in Hastings but considers herself a Westie as she has lived in Waitakere Village for the past 30 years and in Swanson for two years before that. She has five children, two of whom were born at home, who have all grown up in Waitakere Village and attended the local schools. She is now a proud grandmother to a 4-year-old granddaughter who lives in Australia and a 2-month-old grandson who lives in England. Lynda is fervently hoping her next grandchild will be born in New Zealand! She has



difficulty understanding how her children can choose to live in other countries after spending their childhood roaming around Waitakere Village, going on bush walks in the Waitakere

Ranges and spending long summer days out at the beach at Te Henga, as well as many visits to Piha and Muriwai.

Lynda has only recently joined the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society although ex-husband, Bill Wilson, was a member of the committee in the 1970s and is pleased Lynda has now joined. As well as raising children Lynda has spent the last 25 years devoting her energies and considerable passion and enthusiasm to the women's health movement. During the 1980s she set up support groups for women who had caesarean births and began lobbying for improvements in maternity services. She is currently working for several women's health groups and balances this by spending long hours at weekends working in her garden and planting kauri trees.

Lynda loves showing visitors to New Zealand and to West Auckland the bush and the beaches that the West is famous for. It was seeing the increasing urbanisation of her beloved Waitakeres and the encroaching subdivision in Swanson area that prompted Lynda to want to do her bit to protect the coastal and foothill areas. Although she is a relative newcomer to WRPS Lynda is currently on a steep learning curve and is looking forward to making whatever contribution she can to the Society's work.

Your Committee:

- President: John Edgar
09 8128 555
jedgar@iconz.co.nz
- Vice-President: Anna Fomison
amfomison@gmail.com
- Treasurer: Sandra Jones
S.jones@auckland.ac.nz
- Secretary: Kath Dewar
Kathdewar@paradise.net.nz
- 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
- John Hadwen
hadwen@att.net
- Ann Poulson
Annp@paradise.net.nz
- Denise Yates
denisejohuia@xtra.co.nz
- Greg Presland
Walaw@paradise.net.nz
- Lynda Williams
witch2@ihug.co.nz



The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc.
P O Box 15668, New Lynn, Waitakere City, NZ
WWW.WAITAKERERANGES.ORG.NZ

AGM recognises patron

On Sunday 20th March, the Society held its Annual General Meeting at the Arataki Visitors' Centre. We were delighted to have foundation member and Patron of the Society, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, and New Zealand's new Ambassador to London, the Rt. Hon. Jonathan Hunt, address the meeting. Jonathan spoke in support of legislation to protect the Waitakere Ranges (see full report) and was thanked for his continuous support of the Society with a gift of a stone sculpture, crafted from Kare Kare river stone by sculptor and Society President John Edgar.

The interesting and enjoyable AGM included the successful adoption of the committee's annual report and the election of committee members for the year ahead. The AGM was attended by members and friends of the Society including the MP for Waitakere, Lynne Pillay, ARC Councillor Sandra Coney, Mayor of Waitakere City Bob Harvey and Monique Davis of the Waitakere Community Board. The Society thanks everyone who was able to attend.

Perfect for an extra layer or an overseas trip!

There's no end to the places you can wear a Waitakere Ranges Protection Society T Shirt - MP Lynne Pillay even wore hers proudly in Beijing!



Printed front and back, the Society's T shirts are NZ made in striking turquoise cotton and cost just \$30 each (including postage & packing).

The form on the back of this newsletter makes ordering your T-shirts easy!

Society submission on RMA Amendment Bill

The Society's submission on the RMA Amendment Bill addressed a number of serious concerns with the proposed changes.

The Society believes the RMA has a number of serious flaws regarding its ability to protect the landscape and is disappointed the proposed amendments fail to address this.

We do, however largely support the processes around the RMA as they stand. They work well to produce quality decision making. As a result, we are very concerned the RMA Amendment Bill includes changes which will make the situation worse than at present, leading to lower quality decision making. The Amendment Bill will introduce new cost and complexities much earlier on in proceedings, while they are still under consideration at a local government level. Such costs are not currently incurred unless a case goes on appeal to the Environment Court. The changes will make it much more time-consuming, costly and complicated for lay-people to participate in hearings. We hope the Government addresses these concerns before moving forward with the amendments.

Society will appeal Duncan decision

On 24th March, Waitakere City Council decided to allow the subdivision of a 2.7ha Waitakere Ranges block into three lots, all less than one hectare. This is despite the current property being already less than the four hectares allowed under the current, underlying zoning for the area.

The decision was carried on a split vote by just two Councillors and was against the advice of Council officers. The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society believes this is a clear example of why extra measures, including legislation, are needed to safeguard the landscape values of the area from inappropriate development.

After taking legal advice the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society has decided to appeal the decision in the Environment Court.

Legislation wins huge support

Our Mayor, Waitakere City Councillors, ARC Councillors, MPs, and local community groups have all been working hard over the last few months to make sure the proposed Waitakere Heritage Area Bill gets sent to Parliament.



Image: Tony Dunn

We need local government legislation to guide planners when they are granting consents and in future District Plan reviews. It should also give permanence to the current District Plan rules, which enjoy widespread support. Legislation will protect community and landowner interests - helping to ensure that rural neighbourhoods stay rural. Contrary to what some opponents have claimed, the proposed draft legislation will not change what people can currently subdivide, limit minor developments such as sheds or confiscate any land. 75% of people as well as our Mayor, all our local MPs, and the ARC support legislation and celebrities including Sir Edmund Hillary, Michael Jones and the Topp Twins have been joining the calls for the Bill to proceed.

The Society has been working to support local community groups in their advocacy for the proposed Bill and these efforts culminated in 800 people attending a meeting in Henderson on 20th April. The meeting was arranged by the Henderson Valley Residents Association, the Preserve the Swanson Foothills Society and the Kare Kare Ratepayers and Residents Trust. Tim O'Shea of the Henderson Valley Residents Association has been tireless in his efforts and many members of the Society and friends have sent messages of support for the legislation to Council. The issue is seen as hugely important by a vast range of people and the commentators at the K1 kick boxing event at the Waitakere stadium on 20 April were even able to announce the top NZ contender, Alexei 'the scorpion', supports the proposed legislation!

The significance of permanent protection for the region as a whole has been recognised by the NZ Herald which has given the Heritage Area an unequivocal seal of approval in numerous recent editorials.

Waitakere City staff and lawyers are currently working to finalise the draft Bill and **Waitakere City Council will meet to vote to send the Bill to Parliament at 9.30am on 24th May. We look forward to the next stage.**

Take a walk with WRPS!

The Committee has spent too long in meetings and Council chambers so far this year - and not enough time in the bush...so we've organised three winter walks and would love you to come too:-

Sunday 19 June 10.30am Meet at the Kauri Grove Track car park, Piha Road - for a midwinter solstice tramp on the Kauri Grove and Lucy Cranwell tracks. We should see mistletoe and horopito. (Please don't leave any valuables in your car.) Questions? Call Sandra on 817 6102.



Sunday 17 July 10.30am Meet at the Odilins carpark - 2km up from Kare Kare beach on the Lone Kauri Road - to walk a loop on the Zion Ridge, Zion Hill and Buck Taylor tracks. Questions? Call Mike on 8128 420 or 027 291 0025.

Sunday 14th August 10.30am Meet at the Huia Park entrance carpark for a Karamatura Valley walk.

We'll meet whatever the weather but may vary routes to avoid damage to tracks. Tramps will take about 3 hours so bring a picnic. Hope you join us!

Titirangi Residents' Alert

The Titirangi Residents and Ratepayers Association AGM is on Monday 30th May at 7pm, at the Church Hall on Atkinson Road. With increasing pressure from developers in the Ranges it is more important than ever that members attend their local association meetings and elect committees who care about protection of the Ranges.

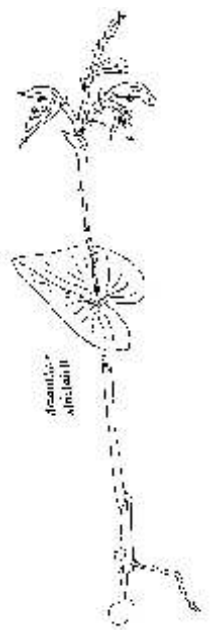
What's in flower in the bush in winter?

You've heard people say that there are lots of ground-dwelling orchids in the Waitakeres, but you're sceptical. You've walked the tracks many times and never seen any.

There are a couple of possible explanations for this: they aren't nearly as big and showy as the flower shop cymbidiums, and they are seasonal. You may just have been in the right place at the wrong time or you may have been looking up instead of down.

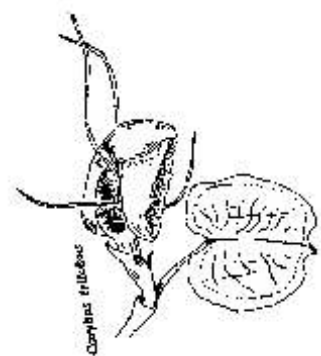
So here's a winter challenge for you. When you are walking the bush tracks, slow down and instead of looking only directly at your feet or up into the trees, look to the edges of the track where the small things grow. Don't look for colour or you may be disappointed; instead look for shape. Here's what you might see:

The tiny, delicate mosquito orchid or "pixie cap" (*Acianthus sinclairii*) (May - July) - this is probably the most common terrestrial orchid of all in the Waitakeres. Its flower stem grows about as tall as your index finger and it has a single heart-shaped leaf towards the base of the stem. Getting down on your knees for a close look at the tiny flowers is well worth the effort, especially if you have what the Americans call a loupe (a x10 hand magnifying lens the sort used by geologists, botanists and jewellers. The University Bookshop sells them for about \$30).



Acianthus sinclairii

The spider orchids (*Corybas*) - there are a number of species that span the mid to late winter months, but they all have the same basic structure. Look first for the leaf. If you see a single living leaf lying almost flat on the ground, it's worth a closer inspection. Partially hidden under the leaf, or sitting proud at the end of the leaf where it joins the stem, you may see a pretty orchid flower, often partially dark purple. The flowers of one common species are tube-like but the others are



Corybas trilobus

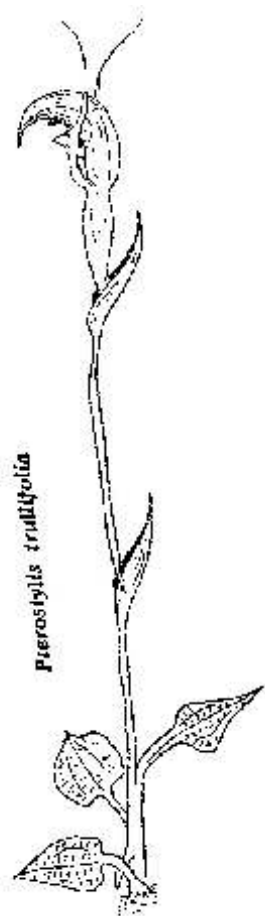
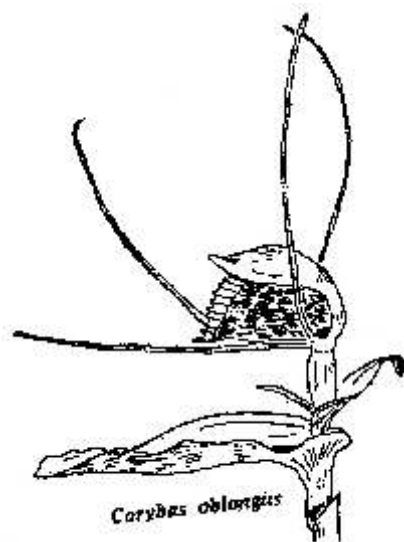
more open, and most have pairs of very long thread-like 'horns'. Sometimes that is all that's visible above the leaf.

The greenhood orchids (May - June) - you may be familiar with the large October tutukiwi but one of the very early species of this genus to appear each year (*Pterostylis trullifolia*)

has the smallest of flowers, on slender stems +/- 10cm tall. However, it's not so difficult to spot because it often grows in young kauri forest where it occurs in fairly dense patches with its delicate flower stems standing tall like a regiment on parade. Have a look at its heart-shaped rosette leaves at the base of the flower: the network of veins are raised on top of the leaf, giving it an embossed appearance. Another early flowering species (*P. brumalis*) has a broader 'cobra'-shaped hood and grows only in the immediate vicinity of kauri.

Sandra Jones

Illustrations by ED (Dan) Hatch, Laingholm.



Big thanks to Piha Library

Our thanks to Max Cryer, Glenys Bean, Yvonne Dufaur and the volunteers of Piha library for their support through a reading of Max Cryer's work in April. The library had a full house, served a great afternoon tea and raised money for the library as well as donating half the proceeds of ticket sales to the Society. With an extra donation this came to \$75 for which we are very grateful. Such community support is really appreciated by all our committee and makes our work possible..

Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc. Statement of Financial Position

As at 31st January 2005

2004			
	<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>		
10,117	ASB Bank - 00 Account	8,881	
1,649	ASB Bank - 01 Account	1,649	
83,360	ASB Bank - Short Term Deposit	78,539	
<u>95,125</u>	<u>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</u>		<u>89,069</u>
	<u>LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</u>		
10,805	Waitakere Book	-	
6,126	Reserves Fund	1,126	
-	GST Account	(75)	
<u>16,931</u>	<u>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</u>		<u>1,051</u>
<u>78,194</u>	<u>NET ASSETS</u>		<u>88,018</u>
	Represented by:		
	FUNDS EMPLOYED		
15,843	Accumulated Funds	78,195	
62,351	Net Surplus (Deficit)	9,823	
<u>78,194</u>	<u>TOTAL EQUITY</u>		<u>88,018</u>
<u>78,194</u>	<u>TOTAL FUNDS EMPLOYED</u>		<u>88,018</u>



Image courtesy of Alan Esler (2002) and ARC.

Natural Burials

The article on natural burials in the last issue of this newsletter was of interest to many readers. These included Elizabeth Francke who has been advocating for them for many years and has a great deal of useful knowledge and materials from around the world. Elizabeth also pointed out natural burials are currently possible at Waikumete Cemetery.

Since the last newsletter Deb Cairns has been contacted by several members and also arranged for a US specialist to talk at the Arataki Visitor Centre on 15th April.

We would have liked to provide more of an update on this topic but due to space constraints will have to postpone this to a future edition. Members who would like more information are encouraged to contact Deb on 817 8220 or Elizabeth on 817 8130.

Lone Kauri Restoration Trust Update

By the 14th April, 16 stoats had been caught for the season, most within the boundaries of the Restoration area. Almost all 20 stoat traps were out at times. Bird surveys and anecdotal evidence reflect large increases in tui numbers over the last two years within the area and recent weeks have shown a large increase in fantails and tomtits, reflecting a successful breeding season. The Restoration area has also been visited by whitehead from the Ark in the Park release and the species are now reported to have successfully bred at Kare Kare.

In the last weeks before winter all 210 bait-stations, either on boundaries or roads like Lone Kauri, will be refreshed. This past year we refreshed all 730 baitstations we monitored and plan to repeat this again in the Spring of this year coming. In the Spring the Trust hopes it can have one person, working fulltime, can co-ordinate the refilling of all 730 bait-stations by a volunteer team. The volunteer work would suit a corporate team-building exercise and any interested companies should **contact Mike Nixon on 027 2910 025**. Anyone wanting to donate money towards the cost of double Fenn traps for year round stoat control should also call Mike on this number. The Trust wants to buy 12 units at \$50 each.

After more long-term monitoring of the success of the pest control and clear evidence of the improved health of the forest the Trust would one day like to apply for bird translocations.

Annual Report continued

Congratulations to three foundation members of the Society on being awarded New Zealand honours this year. Our Patron the Rt. Hon. Jonathan Hunt was made a Member of the Order of New Zealand, our country's highest honour. We also congratulate Patron Professor Dick Bellamy in being made a Companion of the Order of New Zealand, and Gary Taylor for being awarded the Queen's Service Order. The Society is proud of these three great New Zealanders, and is honoured by their long association with us and by their huge contribution to protecting the Waitakere Ranges. Please join with us in congratulating them.

I want to acknowledge the dedication of your executive committee. This is certainly the best committee that we have had recently. The expertise on a wide range of subjects is formidable, and the high level of debate at our monthly meetings is stimulating. The committee requires a huge commitment from each person and there are times when we are under considerable stress, but the shared vision, the professionalism and the friendships that have developed have carried the day on so many occasions. Jenny Taylor has maintained our membership database and we are grateful for her administration skills. During the year we co-opted Greg Presland and Denise Yates on to the committee and their contribution was immediately valuable.

I would like to ask the outgoing committee to stand up. These people are your elected executive who have given the Society so much over the past year. It has been a pleasure and an honour to work with you all and I would like this meeting to join with me in showing our appreciation for your efforts on our behalf. I would also like to thank Leslie Haines, Melissa Marler and Linda Godfrey who will be standing down from the committee this year.

Very special thanks go to Sandra Jones who as treasurer has really brought a new level of professionalism to the Society with her meticulous care of our finances. At a time when there has been more money than ever in the accounts due to the grants for the book, such care is much needed and appreciated. The audit of the Society's books this year by our honorary auditor Martin Bailey of McGregor Bailey Ltd is gratefully acknowledged.

I especially want to thank Kath Dewar, our Vice President, who always takes the initiative and who generously gives the Society her valuable time and considerable expertise on so many issues. She has given me great support throughout the year by sharing the work load that would otherwise get quite daunting.

We offer our condolences to the family of Graeme Ashdown of Piha who died last July. Graeme was member of the Society for fifteen years.

Finally we want to thank all the members and friends who have supported us over the past year. We can assure you that the coming year will be even busier and more exciting. We hope that when we meet for our AGM in a year's time the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Bill has progressed to the House of Representatives. We are so close to achieving this great vision, and yet there is still so much that needs to be done to ensure that the ranges are truly saved. Please do not relax your vigilance. We need your support more than ever and I cannot see the Society becoming redundant for many years.

John Edgar
President, Waitakere Ranges Protection Society

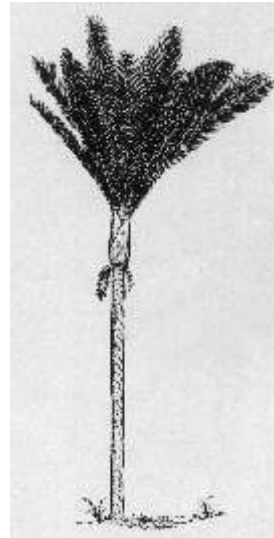


Image courtesy of Alan Esler, 2002 and ARC

Annual Report of the Executive Committee THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY INC.

**As presented at the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,
Arataki Visitors Centre, Sunday 20 March, 2005**

I am pleased to present the 31st Annual Report of the Executive Committee of The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Incorporated.

The past year has been a very demanding one for the Society. The executive has done well to progress our core business while under increasing pressure to attend public meetings and hearings, many related to the Waitakere Ranges Protection Project. At the last AGM in April 2004, we were about to go into consultation round two of the project. These meetings discussed community values and objectives, but legislation was not available and many people would not endorse a bill until they had read it. It was a time of some frustration.

Since then, the legislation has been drafted, it has been endorsed by the ARC, and WCC and RDC have given themselves until May to conduct a third round of consultation on the draft legislation. While we are concerned with what this further delay could mean for the project we are working with the councils and the community to ensure that when the project comes back to a vote in May it will have the support of a majority of councillors. What is required in the next two months is that the councils hear yet again from affected landowners and residents who support the bill. Write a letter to the Mayor and the councillors and tell them you support the legislation. Write a letter to the papers, talk to your MP, and above all, be heard above the small but vociferous group of landowners who would do anything to scuttle this project and who wish to see all private land open to endless subdivision. It is just as Morgan Williams predicted four years ago: if the whole area is not given permanent protection, then it will come, in our lifetimes, to be suburbia. It is time to stand up, to be heard and to know that this project is so tantalisingly close, and yet so precariously balanced. This matter has been the major preoccupation of the executive over the past year, and we will continue to make it our priority for as long as is needed.

We were encouraged by the results of the Colmar-Brunton poll that we commissioned in May. 500 Aucklanders were asked how strongly they believed that all of the WR should be permanently protected from further subdivision and associated development by means of a local bill that would hold development provisions at the present level. Of the 250 people living in Waitakere City, 81% agreed with legislation, and of the other 250 people living in the greater Auckland area 87% agreed. Thanks to F&B Waitakere and EDS for their financial assistance with this poll. The three councils have each conducted independent surveys of their own in the past months, and the results have been similar to ours, with always a majority of people agreeing to permanent protection by legislation.

Our thirtieth birthday celebrations in 2004 culminated in full payment for the residential section at 71 Turanga Road, and the registering of a QE II covenant on the land. In November last year we took a delegation to the first council meeting of the ARC, and formally gifted the land to them to be included in the WR Regional Park. This was our thirtieth birthday present to the people of Auckland. Thanks to all the donors who gave so generously. Special thanks to Greg Presland who did all the conveyancing *pro bono*, and to WC who donated \$25,000 to the purchase price.

Donations to the Society continue to come in from many people. We could not achieve as much as we do without this financial support and it is much appreciated. In April it was especially pleasing to receive a donation from Society member and world-famous bird photographer Geoff Moon of \$2161 from sales of photographs at his exhibition in the Corban Estate Arts Centre.

As we reported a year ago, there are still a few outstanding District Plan appeals to which the...
(continued overleaf)



Great kids' postcard designs!

These postcards, designed by local kids, are a great way to support the Society. Just \$5 will get you a set of five postcards featuring winning entries in the Waitakere Ranges Postcard Competition, including this one by Jeremy Roberts of Henderson Valley Primary. **The form on the back of this newsletter makes ordering your postcards easy!**



Annual Report continued

Society is a party, and these are being resolved at present in the Environment Court. The most important of these appeals relate to the structure plan provisions in the eastern foothills. We are opposed to structure plans in principle, as they are ultimately just another way of providing for subdivision. In Birdwood and in Swanson, the SP process has caused huge division and animosity in the communities. This is a social cost that has not been accounted for by Council. Whatever the outcome in Swanson, there are going to be ongoing problems arising from the poor management, the long and exhausting consultation process, and the subsequent sociological and psychological effects on the community. These alone should be reasons enough for not even beginning the SP process in new areas of the foothills, and we are encouraged by the residents association in the Henderson Valley who are strongly opposed to SPs and very supportive of legislation. We will continue to oppose SPs in principle and argue as we successfully did in Birdwood that prohibited activity status is required to stop non-complying applications being made *ad infinitum*.



We have had a substantial input into the long-anticipated WR Visitor Study that has now been drafted by ARC and WCC. Our main cause for concern is the provisions for a trial study of mountain biking in the park. We have for years opposed vehicles in the park, and this trial is most alarming in the message it sends to off-road bikers about the ranges. In the past the rationale for permitting activities in the park has been more about providing recreational opportunities than conservation, and we have a real battle ahead to restrict the more extreme recreational activities like mountain biking and canyoning.

Commercial concessions for canyoning in the ranges continue to be of concern. Canyoning is an extreme form of adventure tourism where people pay to be guided off-track to slide and abseil down streambeds and waterfalls. There are currently two licensed operators in the Park, at Kitekite Falls, Piha and Cowan Stream, Pararaha. During the year we were able to withdraw our Environment Court proceedings after ARC agreed to pay the costs of a rare moss survey in the canyoning streams, and to pay half our costs in bringing the legal action. We will continue to put pressure on ARC to confine these activities to other parks where ecological values are not so high and we need to convince them that extreme recreation like this does not have a place in this park. To that end we are closely monitoring the present activities to ensure that the operators abide by their consent conditions.

We received a grant some time ago from ARC Environmental Initiative Fund to continue our bird counts which we began in 1997. Committee member Mike Nixon carried out a bird survey in the Lone Kauri Forest Restoration area in April. We are determined to obtain more funding to continue this work which gives us basic information on the state of the environment and the effects of pest eradication. The three pest control programs now operating in the ranges, Ark in the Park, La Trobe and Lone Kauri, are all showing that people with commitment and enthusiasm can really make a difference to the environment, and we remind you that volunteers for these three programs are always needed.

The Society keeps a watching brief on developments at the Te Henga quarry, the water quality issues at Lake Wainamu, and the weed eradication program in the Waitakere Valley wetlands. Thanks go to our representatives on these various committees. The ARC did a major fish cull from Lake Wainamu over summer with about 3000 exotic fish being removed from the lake, and the water quality improved immediately. We will ensure that this is an ongoing program.

Over the next three days we will be attending a hearing at ARC on the consent applications by WSL to operate the five dams in the ranges. Douglas Allan will make submissions for the Society and committee member and water scientist Mels Barton and native fish biologist Clinton McCullough will give evidence. At present there are no water releases from the dams except when they are full and overflowing, which means that the main stream below the dams is usually dry down to the first tributary. We are arguing that compensation flows from the dams are required to ensure that native flora and fauna have a range of habitats available. This is a project that has been going on for two years and we want to thank Mels for her expertise and the time that she has given to this project, and also Clinton, who is currently working at University of Western Australia and has generously given his time for the hearing.

New committee member Ann Poulsen has initiated the Society's Oral History project and together with Robyn Mason from Waitakere Libraries we have begun a library of tape-recorded interviews with Society members about the conservation history of the ranges. The first recording is of our Patron, Professor Dick Bellamy. Funding to date has come from WC Wellbeing fund, and we are currently applying for further funding to continue recording and archiving this material. We are also considering lodging early Society records with Waitakere Libraries where they can be professionally archived.

The Waitakere Ranges book grows closer by the day. Designer Paul Nicolai is working hard to bring the book to print this year. It is looking wonderful with the huge amount of text and images in a sparse and elegant design. We appreciate that it is overdue, but good things take time, and considering that it is over twenty years since this book was initiated, we feel another few months to get it perfect will be time well spent. Thanks to the editors Bruce and Trixie Harvey this book is going to be the definitive work on the WR for some time to come and will be a great advocate for the ranges and for the work of the Society.

Thanks to our editor Kath Dewar, our quarterly newsletter continues to add to our advocacy and communication. Contributions from members are always much appreciated. Our website continues to be developed by Mike Nixon. Internet presence is an essential tool for the Society as we can ensure that it has the latest information, and we recommend you visit the website regularly.

The Society continues to have a presence at local festivals. This is an opportunity for us to meet people, to explain our work and to promote our message. Having the Society well-represented at festivals such as the recent EcoShow is only made possible by the enthusiasm of committee members, especially our event organiser Anna Fomison. Society members need to support Anna and her team by volunteering to help out for an hour or two at these events. In August the Society was a sponsor of the EDS Coastal Conference where I presented a paper on the place the coast has in our arts and culture.

Throughout the year the Society relies on professional consultants to prepare submissions and evidence for us on a range of matters. We especially need to mention two people who always find time to give the Society the very best advice. To our legal counsel Douglas Allan and resource management consultant Gary Taylor the Society owes a great debt for their extremely generous *pro bono* contributions to our work. There are also many other people who have worked for the Society, and we acknowledge them all by saying that without each individual's contribution we would not be achieving the way we do.



Image: Tony Dunn

We would like to thank people for the support that Paul Robinson and I received when we stood as candidates in Waitakere Ward last October. The Save Our Ranges ticket did very well, and while neither of us got elected we kept the protection of the ranges prominent and it was heartening to hear all seven candidates say they supported permanent protection of the ranges. We made many new friends and with only a few weeks to get organised we ran a very effective campaign. Thanks to Ted Scott's photographs, our beautiful billboards designed by Julia Moore attracted much attention, and incited at least one person to nightly acts of vandalism with a can of fluorescent paint. Obviously neither they nor their friends could spell, and this vandalism alone gained us votes as its message said more about the vandals than us.