

RANGITIKEI ENVIRONMENT

Treasured Natural Environment Group

Bruce Park – tracks, traps and a post...

By Abi Wrightman, Department of Conservation

Educators gathered to share their knowledge recently at Bruce Park, a remnant of the former forest that covered the Rangitikei area. You might have seen the sign for Bruce Park right next to SH1 on the left as you head towards Hunterville; it's well worth a look, especially if you have children.

Ron Fisher, an Enviroschools educator, invited Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary teachers who are part of the Enviroschools programme to take a forest walk and experience some DOC – style Conservation Education on May 24 2017.

Two Department of Conservation Community Rangers, along with Ron, met the teachers at Bruce Park and began the programme by demonstrating the use of a DOC 200 trap, which kills rats, stoats and hedgehogs humanely.

Tracking tunnels were also shown; these help you to find out what sort of small creatures are creeping around your garden, reserve or school by recording a print of their tracks. The new education resources on the DOC website were described and then the group carried on with their exploration.

As you go into the forest at Bruce Park you get an idea of what the former landscape looked like when giant podocarp rimu, kahikatea, miro, mataī and tōtara trees dominated the landscape. Even in this small reserve you can hear the native birdlife that this environment supports. The group

Inside This Issue

Bruce Park – tracks, traps and a post	1
Horizons' community grants funding spread across region	2
Parks and Reserves Update	3
Rangitikei Environment Group Report	5
Horizons Assisting with Myrtle Rust Search	5

checked the stream that runs through the middle of the forest to see if they could spot the elusive koura.

On their way along the undulating track the group discovered a post with a sign on it displaying a special code word for children to find and send into the Kiwi Guardians website.



*The Kiwi guardians, post at Bruce Park.
Ron Fisher is flanked by Abi Wightman (Community Ranger, left) and Nicole Dillon (Senior Ranger, Community).*

Children who do this receive a medal and a certificate through the post. A map is downloadable from the same website with some kid-friendly activities and things to discover and think about, especially aimed at 6 to 10 year olds.

Further medals can be won by completing some of the conservation actions that are explained on the website and by visiting other Toyota Kiwi Guardian sites within New Zealand.

After discovering the post and following the looping track back to the car park, the teachers pondered how they could get their students involved in visiting Bruce Park or some other conservation-related activities.

Bruce Park is just one of the reserves which is part of the Toyota Kiwi Guardians Scheme. Toyota Kiwi Guardian sites are found all around New Zealand and not just in DOC reserves; the special marker posts can even be found on an island, at a hut, a waterfall, and in reserves within cities. This initiative arises from the partnership between the Department of Conservation and Toyota, focusing on getting kids outdoors and taking action to support Conservation in New Zealand. Find out more on <http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/toyota-kiwi-guardians/>



Horizons' community grants funding spread across Region

By Horizons Regional Council

Two community groups in the Rangitikei District will receive funding towards projects that will enhance the natural environment from Horizons Regional Council's community grants programme.

Set up in 2012, the grants fund was established to support community groups, schools, early childhood centres, and iwi/hapu groups with projects that enhance the Region and encourage more people to engage with the natural environment.

This year, 18 applications sought a share of the allocated \$20,000 funding.

Horizons Chair Bruce Gordon says applications were assessed on environmental benefits, feasibility, community involvement and long-term benefits.

"This year there were a number of requests for native planting, pest plant and animal control, environmental education, and wetland restoration initiatives," says Mr Gordon.

"Horizons community grants provide a great platform for the public to learn more about the environment and encourage greater use of the Region's facilities and amenities. It's also a fantastic way to help these groups get their project off the ground, or enhance what they already doing to conserve our natural environment."

There were 12 successful applicants that were awarded either part or full funding ranging between \$250.00 to \$3,000 and included Hospice Whanganui, schools, and community group projects.

The successful projects from the Rangitikei District include:

- **Bulls River Users Group – weed control, plantings, picnic area upgrade**
- **South Makirikiri School – native planting**

Further successful projects from the Manawatu–Whanganui Region include:

- Bushy Park Education Group – environmental education
- Carlton School – native planting
- Hiwinui School – development of natural area and pest control
- Hospice Whanganui – native planting
- Kairanga School – wetland fencing and signage
- National Park School – planting
- Ohakune 2000 – river enhancement through planting
- Progress Castlecliff – dune restoration
- Rapanui Brunswick Playcentre – planting and introduction of bugs
- Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart – wetland restoration

Applications for the next round of funding will open in 2018.

For further information on community grants please visit www.horizons.govt.nz or phone Horizons on free phone 0508 800 800.

Parks and Reserves Update

By Athol Sanson

The last few months the Parks Team have made significant headway with our winter programs.

We have completed our winter tree and shrub planting program with new plantings being installed across the region. A small planting has been installed at Marton Park near St Stevens Church and consists of ferns and Clivia's which long-term will provide a nice cool effect under the mature trees in this area.

The Marton Park flower gardens showed some great winter colour and are well worth a walk on a nice day to see.

Restoration has been completed on all the Marton CBD and Civic Square park benches. In total nineteen benches were repaired/restored, all old slats were replaced, strapping beneath the seats fixed and the bench ends repainted. We will then put them on a six month maintenance program to keep them in good condition.

South Makirikiri School Planting

During April I was contacted by Stu Davenport Principal of South Makirikiri School asking if we could help with the design of new plantings for the school. This planting was to replant where large dangerous pine trees had been removed over summer. The principal wanted the whole school to be involved which was to coincide as close as possible to Arbour Day.

The site is very exposed so the planting had to be plants that are very robust and hardy. Once the plantings were designed the school applied for funding to purchase the plants. They were successful with their application and were able to purchase 700 trees and shrubs.



South Makirikiri School Planting

Our job was to set the plants out for the school to plant. The day of the planting dawned fine and I soon had a load of very eager students happily putting in plants. It was a great day and all 700 trees and shrubs were in the ground by lunch time.

Koitiata Sand Dune Planting

This planting has taken 16 months from planning to implementation and is a project I have been really looking forward to.

Plantings like this have to be done well with the correct planning and implementation. We were very fortunate that we had a good lead-in time for this planting from such an early stage. In environmentally sensitive areas such as this we need to enhance and protect these areas so that they can be enjoyed for future generations.

On the 7th June a planting day was organised with the local community, fifteen students from South Makirikiri School and the RDC Parks team.

With nearly 2000 small plants to plant into the unstable sand and with eager young students the planting was soon underway. The plants were

positioned in locations that were appropriate for the particular species to grow well.

- Fincina nodosa (Wet dune hollows)
- Spinifex sericeus (Moving sand west facing)
- Calystegia soldandella (Moving sand and east facing dune slopes)
- Ficina spiralis (Moving sand)
- Mullenbeckia complexa (Rear dune stable sand)
- Carex pumulia (All areas)

The residents had a nice surprise for the students at lunch. The children were treated with a home cooked lunch courtesy of the local community.

Keith Gray (Koitiata Residents Association President) also thanked the children and the school for their help with the planting. He also talked about how important this work is to the local environment and community.

My thanks to South Makirikiri School and the residents of Koitiata for their help on the day. To the people who made the lunch, a big thanks from the Parks Team.



Koitiata planting day

Rangitikei Environment Group Report

By Hugh Stewart

REG has been involved for the past two years with a project to kill Old Man's Beard along the Otuaireiawa Stream (a tributary to Moawhango River).

The project involves helicopters undertaking aerial spraying of the area to kill the Old Man's Beard. This year was the second year of spraying, with REG really pleased with the results – a high kill of Old Man's Beard and good protection of native vegetation.

This has been achieved through excellent helicopter work and the use of Versatile – which is a gentler pesticide for native vegetation. The project has one more year left to run.

The project has been funded jointly by DoC, Horizons and landowners. While DoC was the initial funding partner (through the Community Partnership Fund), the farmers in the Otuaireiawa catchment contributed just as much.

Horizons also contributed to get the whole catchment completed, down into the Moawhango Gorge.

Future funding from DoC is likely to be applied for to address the Moawhango River, to support work Horizons is undertaking downstream of the Moawhango village to the confluence with the Rangitikei River.

Horizons Assisting with Myrtle Rust Search

By Horizons Regional Council

Horizons Regional Council's biosecurity staff were assisting the MPI as the search for myrtle rust took place in June 2017.

Myrtle rust was first detected in New Zealand in a Northland nursery in May and is believed to have arrived via spores from Australia.

Severe infestations can kill affected plants in the myrtle family, such as pōhutukawa and mānuka, and have long-term impacts on the regeneration of young plants and seedlings.



Checking for Myrtle Rust

Nationally there have been 34 confirmed cases, which include private properties, nurseries, a golf course and an orchard. While most infections are on seedlings, some more recent detections were in established pōhutukawa.

Horizons biodiversity, biosecurity, and partnerships manager, Rod Smillie, says while Te Apiti – Manawatu Gorge had an initial scare of myrtle rust, the area has since been declared ok.

“In fact, the whole Manawatu–Whanganui Region has no known cases,” says Mr Smillie. “However, that doesn't mean we aren't being vigilant.”

“In addition to assessing upcoming riparian plantings for the disease, three of our biosecurity team have been in Taranaki where 29 confirmed cases have been found”.

Led by MPI, the biosecurity capability network (of which Horizons is a partner) set up a local coordination centre in Taranaki.

Mr Smillie says Horizons was stationed there during the searches.

“The process requires suiting up and checking every leaf before decontaminating themselves to ensure no potential spores are transferred when they move onto the next property”.

“Should a plant potentially have the disease, it is double bagged and sent to Auckland for testing. With numerous plant species susceptible to myrtle rust, it is a very thorough operation”.

The MPI Response Team established a Welfare Team to assist people and businesses applying for financial compensation for losses incurred as a result of actions taken under the Biosecurity Act.

Members of the public were asked to check their own gardens and planting areas for Myrtle Rust and to report any suspicious detections to MPI on 0800 80 99 66.

“Myrtle rust generally attacks soft, new growth, including leaf surfaces, shoots, buds, flowers, and fruit. Symptoms to look for include bright yellow powdery spots on both sides of leaves”.

Community Contacts

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