

THE RIMUTAKA FOREST PARK TRUST RAG



RIMUTAKA FOREST PARK TRUST INCORPORATED
C/- Private Bag 43-902 • Wainuiomata

December 2001

Welcome to the first issue of the Rimutaka Forest Park Rag

The newsletter will be produced twice yearly by the Trust to keep members in touch with what is happening in the Rimutaka Forest Park.

Thank you to all those who have supported the Trust over the many years of our work in the park. Recently it has been great to notice an increase in the birdlife while walking in the Park. Tuis & Wood pigeons are very plentiful and are a joy to see and hear. This is obviously a result of our ongoing pest control programme.

The information kiosk at the top carpark has recently had a great panel added explaining the full logging programme. Walk up and take a look!

We are keen to have new members join the Trust and take part in the wide range of interesting projects we are involved in.

If you would like to join please contact Russ McStay, Secretary of the Rimutaka Forest Park ph. 569 2915

Look forward to seeing you on the track!

Bill Milne, Vice Chairman

BRINGING BACK THE BIRDS

The increase in birdlife in the valley has been due to exhaustive trapping and poisoning of non-native pest species. We have destroyed over 900 possums, hundreds of rats, scores of hedgehogs, dozens of stoats and magpies and a couple of feral cats. All of these would have made the regeneration we have seen in the Park impossible.

The Ron Greenwood Trust, Department of Conservation, Visitor Centre donations and Rimutaka Forest Park Trust members have all contributed to this process. One in particular who has made a huge contribution to this work is Kevin O'Donnell. On behalf of the members and volunteers of the Pest Control Unit, I would like to express our sincere thanks for all your help and support these past twenty months.

John Rush, Manager Catchpool Visitor Centre

IF YOU GO DOWN IN THE WOODS TODAY... YOU MIGHT BE IN FOR A SURPRISE!

Take a walk down to the valley and you might be lucky enough to spot some of these:

- A pair of nesting **Tomtits** discovered just off the Five Mile.
- **New Zealand Falcons** whizzing through Catchpool and Orongorongo Valleys.
- Gangs of **Whitehead** on McKerrow and small groups on Middle Ridge Track.
- Groups of fat **Kereru** feeding on tree lucerne.

Go for a walk through the bush by the Five Mile Track and you will hear the songs of **Tui, Kingfisher, Long-tailed** and **Shining Cuckoo, Grey warbler, Bellbird.**

Towards evening **Morepork** can be seen flying from their bush perches on their nightly hunting forays. Almost never seen in recent years, here we have noticed ripening **Tawhara**, the fruit of the climbing **Kiekie.**

IVAN MOVING ON

Nearly 37 years after taking up his woodsman apprenticeship, Ivan Morrison is moving on. Ivan took early retirement on 14 December and is looking forward to turning his hand to something new. That something includes finishing a book on the true and unabridged exploits of forest service rangers that he began but left languishing this past year for lack of time.

Ivan began with the then Forest Service on 19 January 1965, as a woodsman cadet in Dusky Forest, near Tapanui, Otago. He'd had his eyes set on being a deer culler but the 15-year-old was talked out of picking up a rifle quite so young. Those three years of training in bush craft and forestry skills with 11 fellow cadets are an experience he would happily repeat today.

Those skills came in handy when, during stints in the Waitutu Forest in 1971 and 1972 Ivan spent three months followed by a two month tour of duty the following year, in the bush without coming out. By then, after postings in several Otago forests, he'd moved into environmental forestry and finally picked up that rifle. The change in focus was inspired after three work mates were involved in a bad car accident. Though seriously injured, they all survived, and it was in large part thanks to being very fit and tough from their jobs. Ivan says one guy's thighs were so muscled and weathered the nurse broke two syringe needles trying to give him painkilling injections.

Ivan moved north in 1972, to Ruatahuna, in Te Urewera National Park, where he coordinated hunting operations. Until he got married. Being away in the bush so often didn't mix well with marriage so Ivan and his new wife, Poko moved to Kaingaroa for a two-year post teaching new cadets woodsman skills.

They were big intakes in those days - 50-plus cadets. Which proved very useful during one training outing in the Kaimanawa Ranges when Ivan shot a deer - 53 willing

packhorses fought to carry the carcass out for him.

Ivan's next move brought him to Catchpool, in Rimutaka Forest Park, in 1976. And there he has stayed, weathering the demise of the Forest Service and the creation of the Department of Conservation in 1987, and many changes besides. One of the biggest began in June when logging began in the forest he helped plant. It is with mixed feelings that he's watching the trees come down. "I know that may sound strange from a forestry man," he says.

Ivan's not completely sure what the future holds, but it seems unlikely that he will join son Bradley on the DOC fire team. "Too many fire crews made quicker bids."

Marieke Hilhorst

Dave Lewis of DOC, Don Millward of Rimutaka Forest Park and Ian McFadden of DOC recover after laying a line of stoat traps through the Park with other members of the Trust and DOC staff. The traps are being trialed to find a more humane way of catching and killing stoats.



VANDALISM – IT'S UP TO US ALL!

Vandalism is a continuing problem in the park. When visiting please report any suspicious behaviour to Dave Lewis, Catchpool Ranger phone 564 1249 during the week or email dlewis@doc.govt.nz. If possible note vehicle registration number as this makes catching the culprits much easier!

UPGRADE OF DOC HUTS IN THE ORONGORONGO VALLEY

There was a hive of activity at the five DOC huts in the valley during September. A couple of builders and one DOC staff completed numerous repairs and upgrades to bring the huts up to standard. The work included a new floor for Shamrock Hut, a fire escape for the bunkroom at Raukawa, a new fire at Haurangi and replacing several rotten sections of timber. The working conditions were much enhanced by a very dry September. Still to be completed is a new fire (with wetback) at Jan's Hut and this should be completed by Xmas. A team from the DOC Head Office have kindly offered to paint the remainder of Raukawa in early December, as a respite from their office work.

Anne Relling, Visitor Assets Programme Manager DOC

DID SOMEONE MENTION A DROUGHT?

Looking out the window, you might be surprised to hear anyone mention a drought. However the effects of the drought over last summer through until September has effected vegetation within the park. Tawa trees near the park entrance suffered stress and a number have died. Tree Ferns and Fuchsia (*Fuchsia excorticata*) were all badly burnt with frost later in the winter months almost killing them. They are slowly recovering with new leaves reappearing. Pepperwood was also badly damaged by the frost.

From drought to floods! Parts of the road through Manuka Flat has been washed away in the Orongorongo Valley as the river changed its path because of flooding. Despite this, the wet weather over the last few weeks has brought life back to the park with John Rush, Visitor Centre Manager struggling to keep up with his lawn mower!!! David Lewis, Catchpool Ranger DOC

KEEPING THE HOME FIRES BURNING

The Rimutaka Forest Park Trust will be selling firewood on a weekend day in March/April next year. Look out for ads in the Wainuiomata News and listen on the radio closer to the time.

**Don't miss the Rimutaka Forest Park
Christmas Barbecue !!**

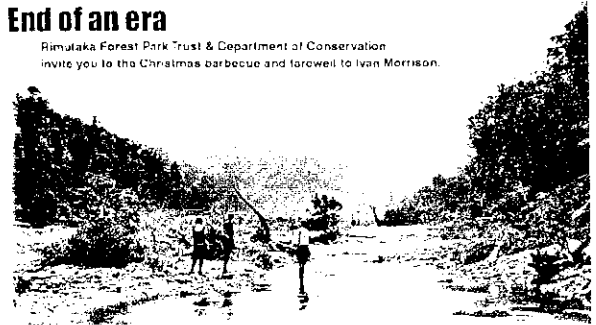
Friday 14 December

All welcome

Please RSVP to Russ McStay, phone 569 2915

End of an era

Rimutaka Forest Park Trust & Department of Conservation
invite you to the Christmas barbecue and farewell to Ivan Morrison.



Date: Friday 14 December 2001
Meet at the workshop, Rimutaka Forest Park
Please RSVP to Russ McStay phone 569 2915
Please wear warm clothes and bring a hat.

LOGGING

Logging has started at Catchpool and the next task is to develop a revegetation plan as required in the resource consent from the Hutt City Council. The plan will encompass a landscape plan and the two will be complementary. The need is to look years ahead and vision what the valley will be like after logging. The plan will identify what use can be made of logging roads for recreation, how the buffer strips will be planted, and what measures can be taken to minimise the logging effects. For example, it is envisioned that new opportunities will exist for walking and mountain biking.

Peter Simpson, Poneke Area Manager DOC

NATIVE PIGEONS AND LOGGING

Recent newspaper articles have reported that there may be a relationship between Kereru (pigeon) deaths and logging in the Catchpool Valley. We are of the opinion that the logging has no significant effect on Kereru numbers. Kereru are attracted to the valley because of the flowering tree Lucerne and only use the pines for occasionally perching. There remain many tall trees in the valley including Eucalypts, pines and tall native trees such as Beech, Rewarewa and Tawa. These provide ample structure for Kereru to perch and fly from.

DOC has a standing contract for autopsy of native wildlife with independent pathologists at Massey University School of Veterinary Science. This year three dead kereru were recovered from Catchpool and sent for autopsy (particularly because we were concerned about Salmonella). The results showed that the causes of death were impact injuries and dog attacks. This is consistent with the most common cause of Kereru death which is flying into windows and cars after gorging on seasonal food.

If you find any dead Kereru or any other native wildlife please contact Poneke area Office - Department of Conservation. Put the bird in a plastic bag and arrange delivery to DOC office. Autopsies have more conclusive results from fresh birds which haven't been frozen. We are happy to give a copy of autopsy results to the people who found the bird.

Rob Stone, Biodiversity Programme
Manager DOC



Kiwi Conservation Kids clean up the beach at Turakirae Scenic Reserve seal colony on the Wainuiomata Coast during Clean up New Zealand Week. The Club is sponsored by Lower Hutt Forest and Bird because "the future of the planet lies in the hands of our children".