

Uretara

Estuary Managers



Newsletter #

Our first year

We held our first recorded meeting on May 29 last year but it was preceded by an earlier meeting to set up the group.

We planned to set out Trakka tunnels and to manufacture bait stations to control the rat population.

June/July.

- Trakka tunnels were set out and a meeting with Bryan Norton to discuss weed control arranged.
- Poison was laid in bait stations in early July.
- A group visited the Pickering property across the estuary. A start has not yet been made on rodent control on this property. Denis Wilks' property was also visited

August.

- A successful weed walk along the walkway was held on August 7.
- Spray and safety equipment for weed control was provided for use by members. It is held by Robert and Judy Noble.
- Woolly nightshade and groundsel seed-heads have been removed from the walkway and plants cut down and left to rot.
- On August 31 Brian Chudleigh led a group on a walk to identify birds along the walkway.

September.

- A group met with John Holwerda who had bought the drained marine swamp/estuarine wetland adjacent to the walkway. There was discussion over the possibility of turning it into a wetland sanctuary.
- Baiting of stations continued through the winter and spring.
- Trakka tunnels were set out by members on Sam Dunlop's wetland but bait stations have not been put in place.

October:

- As part of the Environment BOP exhibit a display was mounted at the Fruits of Katikati Festival including a competition identifying pest footprints. It was well received and viewed by many. Of special interest were Environment BOP's stuffed pests.

- A working bee was held to plant shrubs and trees near the end of Park Road where erosion is occurring and where it had been suggested that weed removal has accelerated the problem. Jack Ripley offered to keep the plants watered through the summer. Plants were provided by WBOPDC and HELP Waihi.
- A group visited Waikaraka Estuary and were greatly impressed by the results of mangrove clearance over the past seven years. The group has applied for a resource consent to manage the estuary and clear more mangroves.

Over this period it was seen by members that the area of interest should widen to include all the properties round the estuary and it is widely recognised that the silt coming from the Katikati Quarry was continuing to cause serious damage to the river and estuary. In November Rosalie wrote to Environment BOP expressing our concern. An informative reply indicated the problem would persist until the Environment BOP's Land and Water Policy was put into effect within the next 12 months. After that the quarry could be asked to seek a renewed resource consent to replace their existing one dating back to 1974. A further letter in April was answered with additional information that the policy was going through the appeals process and as each section was finalised it would become operative during this year.

November.

- A working bee planted 100 flax plants along the edge of the walkway near the end of Park Road.
- Brian has completed a survey of trees that provide food for birds in our area.
- Brian has continued to provide stories for the KK Advertiser listing such plants and about birds he has seen of interest in the neighbourhood.
- Members have provided transport and supervised groups monitoring and baiting bait stations in Wilks' bush. The old access road from Castle Grace to the harbour's edge is being used for access with five lines marked above and below this track, one for each group in each class.

In December a well-attended meeting was called under our umbrella to initiate a plan to control mangrove spread across the estuary. A presentation by David Lind and Ralph Jefferson of Waikaraka Estuary Managers convinced those present that the whole estuary and eventually the watershed required management. As mangrove seeding takes place in January February working bees should not commence till late February or early March. As a result of this meeting the Uretara Estuary Management Group was set up with a separate bank account, also under the wing of the Focus Katikati Charitable Trust. The group has had a most successful series of working bees through from late February to late May.

The effect of rat control on the spring nesting season was difficult to measure. The most successful outcome was a morepork raising a family in a pine tree on Roy and Zae Phillips property, 23B Levely Lane, and an anecdotal report of silvereyes nesting in a garden near the end of Park Road Point.

By the end of the year UWR members had taken 12 year 10 science groups to Wilks' bush – a total of 360 students. Just under 1000 baits were eaten by rats between October and December (the duration of the bait control programme).

February

UWR and UEM members start transporting and supervising year 12 biology students on water monitoring trips to the Boyd and Quarry streams.

March/April

- It was decided to continue maintaining bait stations through the autumn as rats continue to take the baits. As rat control of this type has not been carried out in a suburban area we are in a trial situation. It seems that rats continue invading the area and/or that rat breeding this autumn is unusually prolific.
- Sightings of banded rail, fern birds, silvereve and kakariki (?) have been made. Members are urged to report interesting bird sightings to Brian. He has identified three different shag varieties on the river as well as a dabchick.
- It has been suggested that members could propagate from seed or cuttings suitable plants for food sources for birds. Some have already begun doing this, albeit on a small scale.
- The Reserve Management Plan for the Park Road Reserve is very general with little detail. Bryan Norton reported to Andrew that the UWR are welcome to submit recommendations on the layout and plant selections for the reserve.
- A display (2 A3 laminated sheets of card) was prepared and used as part of the Environment BOP stand at the Tauranga Home Show. It was more recently displayed at a mangroves field day at Whangamata.

April

The first of this year's Katikati College class visits to Wilks' bush have begun with transport and support from our members.

May

We walked the walkway to plan a planting programme along the shoreline.

Issues arising from the first year's activities:

Support protection and management of Wilks' bush (including area within their farm)

- Undertaking pest control on the Dunlop and Pickering properties
- More publicity on availability of spray materials and equipment
- Planting on Park Road Reserve
- Seek inclusion of food bird sources in a list of acceptable plants for planting on Council reserves
- Increase advocacy role, promoting the benefits gained from pest control on local private land