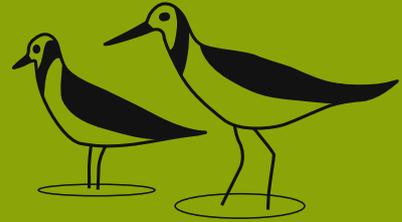


# Uretara Estuary Managers



Newsletter # 3 | November 2007

## National recognition

Highlight of the past year was winning the Minister of the Environment's prestigious Green Ribbon Award. This year eight awards were made in different categories, our group being nominated in "Caring for our Water." Other winners included David and Juliette Wallace, the driving force behind the Maungatautari mainland island, and Karori Sanctuary in Wellington City.

In the publication printed for the awards ceremony many of our activities were listed. The summary went on to say, "The Uretara Estuary Manager's work required an outstanding ability to join residents, landowners, local authorities and students."

We would not have achieved this juncture without the support of our mentors, Environment Bay of Plenty's Lawrie Donald and Western Bay of Plenty District Council's Andrew Jenks.

The award consisted of a beautiful piece of glass by Høglund Art Glass mounted on a wooden base bearing a brass plaque, together with a framed certificate.

We also won the Western Bay of Plenty TrustPower Heritage and Environment Award. The prize in this case was a cheque for \$500 which is helping to pay our running costs.

More recently the Uretara Managers were featured on National Radio's Country Living programme and in a full-page feature in Western Bay's *Outlook newsletter*.

## Mangrove management

Our first trials to remove mangroves in the Uretara Estuary were undertaken over the 2004-05 summer. We were delighted to at last gain resource consent to clear more this year. Four working bees were held during July and August, the planned fifth day being washed out. A major contribution to the clearing was made by the 15-strong rural team from the Tauranga branch of the National Bank who spent the afternoon of their community work day in the mud of the estuary.

Under the terms of our resource consent we ceased mangrove clearing on August 31, so as not to disturb nesting birds. This seems an unnecessary restriction because any shore and wading birds nesting or feeding in the area are separated from the clearing area by a wide estuary channel and an even wider belt of mangroves. We have not seen evidence of nesting in mangroves. We would welcome a reappraisal of the policy.

The resource consent allows us to clear mangroves to a line about half way across the mangroves between the jetty and the bridge across the Levely

Reserve and a similar proportion from Irwin Court to the end of the point.

We agree that, in some situations, mangroves protect shorelines from erosion but believe that their rapid spread across the estuary is:

- reducing the area available to wading birds and marine fauna,
- accelerating silt build-up, and
- reducing the area of the estuary available for recreational activities and pedestrian access to the estuary.



*Some young Tongans living close by added impressive manpower to a mangrove clearing working bee in July.*

**Our Mission Statement** For Uretara Estuary Managers, as a group, to manage the changing nature of the Uretara Estuary, responsibly and on an ongoing basis.

## Upper catchment management

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Aware of the fact that silt coming from the catchment is degrading our estuary and encouraging the spread of mangroves (which then collect more silt around them) we have been working with Environment Bay of Plenty and landowners, fencing and planting stream banks in the upper catchment. Our contribution to the catchment project, through a Sustainable Management Fund grant, is now complete and we hope to review the whole job and gain feedback from the landowners.



*On a fine autumn day members and others interested toured the Uretara catchment project.*

## Public planting

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In August 42 supporters and members of the public planted a grassy slope above the Boyd tributary of the upper Uretara, part of our catchment restoration project. Everyone enjoyed planting more than 700 native trees on the sunny, north-facing slope and then shared a picnic afternoon tea. Many of the plants came from our nursery.



*And, on an ever better winter's day there was a good turnout for a planting day in the catchment.*

## Plant nursery

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Our members operate a small native plant nursery in the grounds of Lexham Park. Raising the plants from our locally collected seed has been an interesting challenge. Over the past year we have successfully reared almost 2000 native plants all of a quality acceptable to Environment Bay of Plenty's land care managers. The plants have been used in various projects along the Uretara Walkway, estuary margins and for upper catchment streambank protection. Now we have begun pricking out the new season's seedlings, germinated in our small plastic house. The plants are grown on in our shade house.



*A group of volunteers on the job at the plant nursery.*

## Native bird life

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There seem to have been many more tui feeding on kowhai nectar in our area this spring although formal monitoring has not been undertaken. If so, it may be because we have maintained bait stations along the southern estuary shoreline to control rats and mice for the past two seasons and have begun our spring programme again this year. Also we are again circling the new wetland beside the lower Uretara with bait stations to control predation of shorebirds and waders.

Before we began this year's programme we monitored rodent numbers by setting out tunnels baited with peanut butter. The ink pads in the tunnels showed no rat footprints but many smaller mice prints. There were also lots of hedgehog tracks. We are told that when rat numbers are reduced there is often a population explosion of mice. Nevertheless we are puzzled that the baits in the bait stations continue to be eaten.



*Monitoring for rodents showed no rat prints on the inkpads in the tunnels, but lots of hedgehog and mice prints.*

## Quarry visit

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Late last month UEM representatives viewed operations at the Katikati Quarry. The quarry was opened in 1968 and is now owned by J Swap Contractors Ltd. Tauranga manager Craig Payne showed us round. He said it had only seven more year's life. All the high quality andesite had been extracted and now lower quality ignimbrite was being quarried.

It was a windy day and fine material was blowing in clouds from the extensive heaps of over burden and other waste matter, spreading dust over a wide area down wind.

The company is now negotiating with the quarry landowner, the Department of Conservation, over rehabilitation work to be undertaken when the quarry closes. This will be determined by the end use planned for it. Other disused quarries have been turned into parks of various kinds, or a stadium might be developed. Craig said the company would welcome community input.

There are two water systems at the quarry. Storm water from the quarry is channelled down through rock revetments to the Quarry Stream, slightly milky water entering the stream. The lowest two ponds are regularly cleared of silt.

In an adjacent gully, water for the plant operation is stored in a large pond which was formed beside the stream when the quarry first opened. Water is pumped from the pond up to the plant and then recycled by pipe back to the pond. The pond is now brimming and rain causes brown, silty water to flow over a weir into the stream. This system may have been acceptable when the quarry's current resource consent was issued in 1976 but a far higher standard would be demanded for a quarry seeking a resource consent today.



*In September 2006 fish numbers and varieties were monitored in the Boyd and Quarry tributaries of the Uretara, setting a base line for future monitoring.*

## Walkway enhancement

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Western Bay of Plenty District Council has made funding available for tree planting along the Yeoman Walkway and part of the Uretara Walkway adjacent to Levely Reserve. With the help of some Rotary Club members, groups of kanuka, kahikatea and cabbage trees have been planted beside the Yeoman Walkway and, during a second working bee, a variety of low growing native plants and kowhai went into the ground on both sides of the Uretara Walkway from east of the Levely Reserve bridge to the jetty.



*Planting the wetland near the Levely Reserve.*

## Bird Walk

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Katikati Open-Air Art is planning to set up bird sculptures along the Yeoman Walkway as a memorial to bird photographer Brian Chudleigh who died earlier this year. We have a representative on the organising subcommittee to ensure our planting and information sign complement their plans. This is an exciting project that takes the mural town concept to a new level and will be of interest to both local residents and visitors.

## Educational input

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We have continued to provide transport for Katikati College students monitoring water quality in the Uretara Stream and its tributaries and also for classes undertaking pest control in Wilks' bush on the northern side of the estuary.

At our request WBOPDC funds were used to remove pampas along the west bank of the lower river and, following the clearance, we gave a polytechnic student the opportunity to undertake a pest monitoring project along the river bank. He found both ship rats and Norway rats occupied the area in relatively high numbers, and that ship rats were more prevalent. We hope the remaining pampas, on the parts of the stop bank inaccessible to heavy machinery, will soon be sprayed.

## Submissions

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Over the past year we have made submissions on the Tauranga Harbour Plan, LTCCP, Environment Bay of Plenty's Annual Plan, the National Coastal Policy, and the Tauranga Harbour Recreational Policy.

## On going environmental education

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Last November ecologist Dr John Innes of Landcare Research spoke to a public meeting on rodent control and how to encourage native birds into suburban areas. Sixty people attended.

At our annual meeting in July, Dr Catherine Beard of Environment Waikato gave a comprehensive talk on mangrove ecology. While much of it was familiar to those of us with a keen interest in these plants, we all learnt more. For example Catherine told us that frosts will "prune back" established and seedling mangroves, and kill tips of branches' but most likely will not kill the plants. It seems that low temperatures generally (not just frosts) cause the plants metabolism to slow, and could be more important in controlling spread and distribution.

## Help and support

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As a care group of Environment Bay of Plenty we continue to get substantial support in the form of advice, materials and funding from the regional council.

The Western Bay of Plenty District Council Mayor, Graham Weld, and local councillors and staff also provide valued support. The district council's operations committee spent a day in Katikati during the winter and viewed the catchment project and the estuary and lower river.

The Community Board has given us \$537 from their Discretionary Grant Fund to help pay for an information sign on the Yeoman Walkway.

In addition, the Rotary Club of Katikati has recently given us a further \$500 for the information sign and for a wagon for moving plants at our nursery.

Other donations and assistance have been gratefully received.



In October last year Western Bay of Plenty Mayor Graham Weld viewed the new wetland at the invitation of owner John Holwerda and the Uretara Estuary Managers.

## More supporters welcome

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Without our supporters – our mailing list is nearing 100 – Uretara Estuary Managers would not exist. We thank you all for the help you give us in many ways. Some of you have made generous financial donations which are greatly appreciated. Many others have joined in our activities and even those who do no more than offer verbal support encourage us to continue our efforts to improve our local environment.

## Our Bird Book

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*Birds of Uretara Estuary and Tauranga Harbour*, our handy guide to the birds of our estuary, continues to sell steadily from the Katikati Information Centre and Jensens Stationery, great value for \$10. The cover shot and bird photographs where taken by the late Brian Chudleigh and the bird identification text was written by Te Puna ornithologist Paul Cuming. Uretara committee member Rosalie Smith assisted editor Sally Greenaway of Waikaraka Estuary Managers. Our booklet is one of a series produced by Environment Bay of Plenty for the Tauranga Harbour estuary care groups. Take advantage of our pre-Christmas special. Buy direct from Uretara Estuary Managers for 'only \$8 a copy'!



## Order form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of copies: \_\_\_\_\_

Orders to be sent to: **Rosalie Smith**  
**15 Francis Drive, Katikati. Ph 07 549 2422**



This shot of the UEM Committee was taken for the Green Ribbon Award Publication. From left: Andrew Jenks, Judy Noble, Ian Gordon (rear), Alan Morris, Graham Sparling (Chairman), Margaret Cameron and Rosalie Smith. Absent: Ron Boggiss and Lawrie Donald.