

Pīpipi

ISSN 1173 6674

Newsletter from Hinewai Reserve, Banks Peninsula
Aotearoa / New Zealand
Maurice White Native Forest Trust

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45

May 2017

Changes

When Maurice White set up his fund in 1977 "to purchase land on Banks Peninsula for conservation" he was a sprightly 54. He was 64 in September 1987 when the Trust bought the 109 hectare nucleus of today's Hinewai Reserve. Those of you good at maths will realise he is now 93, still as sharp as a gorse spike, but needing a rest from holding up the reserve's financial underpinnings. He was frank



Korimako
bellbird

about it. "At my age" he said "I could fall off the perch at any moment, and I don't want to leave a troublesome gap." To which we all said "Bless you Maurice" feeling both grateful and sad. Everyone who loves Hinewai owes Maurice a huge thankyou.

Immediately the Universe stepped in, arranging for someone with just the right mix of expertise and vim, firstly to share the perch with Maurice and then to rule the roost. This particular rooster is Bruce Hansen, no chicken at 74, retired from a life

2 of preaching and accounting and now a valued Hinewai Trustee. Meanwhile we plan to let Maurice enjoy a well-earned rest but to consult him often, if we may.

There are other turnings ahead. You might recall that the Banks Peninsula Track is changing tack — detailed directions below. Furthermore the 31 hectares of Brocheries Flat, now completely encircled by reserve, are swapping hands. You will have to wait and see where this is headed until Pīpipi 46, scheduled for November 2017, weather permitting. What has the weather got to do with the timing of Pīpipi you might be asking? Everything. Pīpipi can be produced only on wet days. There is always far too much outside work in the wings to fritter away a fine day writing.

Ōpātuti Track

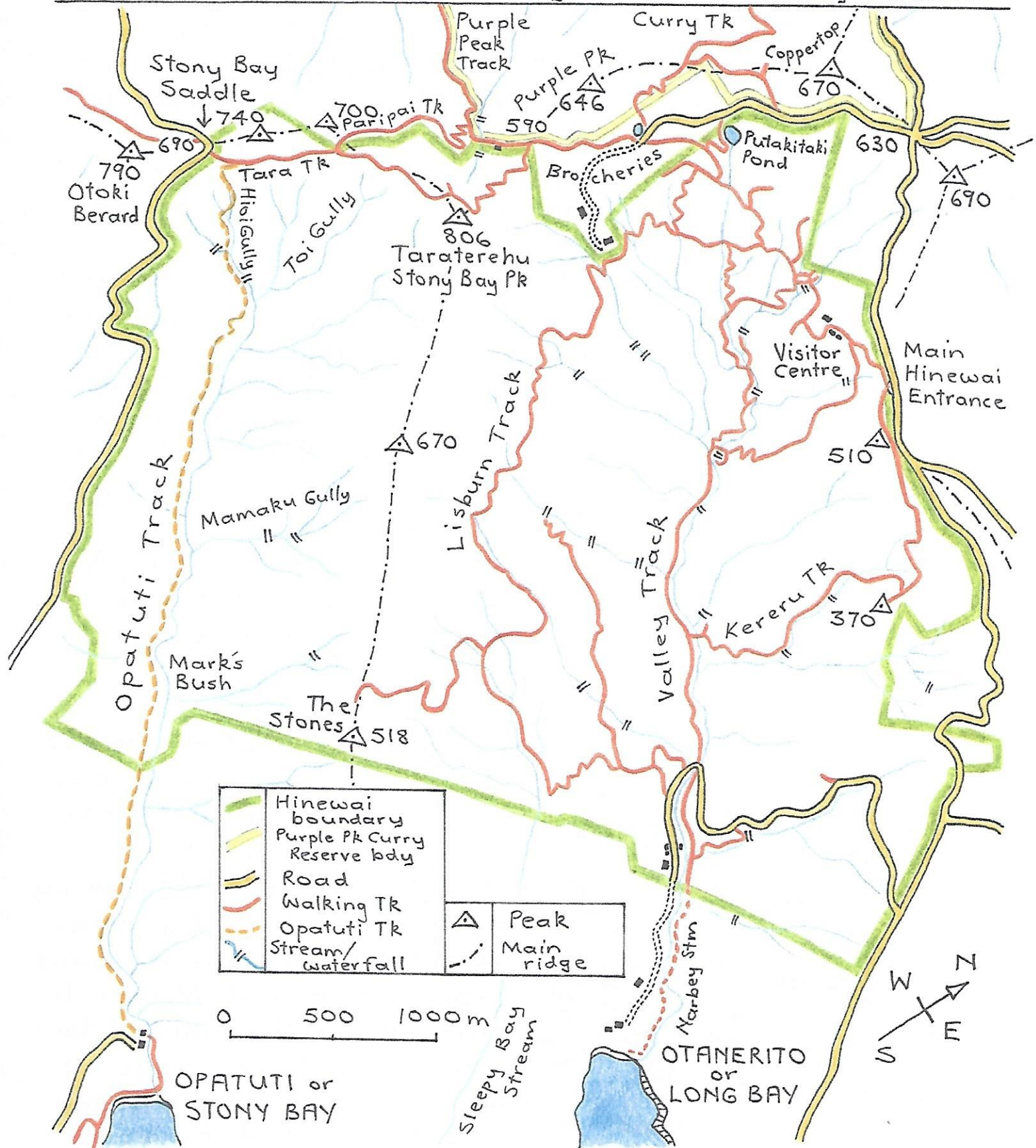
This summer we had a big new project on our hands on top of all the usual work on tracks, trees, boundaries, birds, weeds and wombats [Hugh means possums but he can't resist an alliteration even if inapt — Ed.]. The last of this season's Bankstrack Walkers wobbled



Lewis and Clark meet Sylvia and Rhonda.

their way over Narbeyland on the last day of April. Next season, from 1 October, walkers will wander westwards upvalley from Stony Bay. Mark and Soni Armstrong are forging the first 1.5 kilometres of the new route alongside their beautiful bushy stream and across their park-like valley floor, meeting the Hinewai boundary at Mark's Bush, about 100m above sea level. For the next 2 kilometres the track climbs easily but a little more steeply along

the south side of the stream, with alluring views up wooded side valleys. The most dramatic of these is bluffed Mamaku Gully, named after the big tree ferns that grow there. The way steepens, but the wanderers won't worry [we wish - Ed.], because their faltering feet will be forgotten, distracted by cathedral-like old-growth forest of red beech, full of ferns, birdsong and running water. At nearly 700m



4 they emerge suddenly into snow tussock shrubland and on to the well-earned level of Tara Track, with magnificent views in all directions. Those who still don't feel high enough can nip up to the top of Tarate-rehu, 800m, before descending Paripai and Purple Peak Tracks down to Akaroa town. It's different, but it's wonderful. Apparently you can check it out on the new Bankstrack website at www.bankstrack.co.nz

We had long planned to track the Stony Bay Valley, and the needs of the B. P. Track simply booted us into action. It's a big job, but a satisfying one. Before we cut anything, the whole route must be explored and taped, then cleared, shaped, benched, bridged and stepped. One crucial stretch of old farm track, ready-benched but disguised by overgrowth, was revealed on 22 year old aerial photographs. Paul cut an exploratory line along it, so we know exactly where we are going [more than can be said for most people - Ed.], even though we are not there yet. Just-retired psychiatrist Peter of Tai Tapu and ex-vet Brian of Akaroa have been lending their hands, and their professional advice too when Andrew fell backwards off a bank, banging his brain box on a gorse branch.

Ōpātuti is the centuries-old name for Stony Bay. The simplest translation is 'The place of Tuti's stockade', but we don't know yet who Tuti was.

Rain and shine

While much of Aotearoa whinged about an excess of cloud and moisture, eastern Canterbury kept hesitating on the brink of drought, saved each time by adequate but hardly generous rainfalls. The heavens repented in mid-March. In early April the tails of two tropical cyclones gave us wild winds and copious water, but very little damage. A



"We're trying to discourage carrier bag use"

Week after thrashing Queensland on the remote West Island, Cyclone Debbie flooded our streams for the first time in 37 months. No wonder our groundwater had been deficient. In two days Skyline rain gauge tallied 275 mm. Only a week later Cyclone Cook, having battered Kanaky ("Nouvelle Calédonie", as they say in "French" Melanesia), put Skyline's running April total up to 426.5 mm. The waterfalls looked magnificent. We were left with a minor mystery though. Tropical cyclones are meant to be named in alphabetical order. What was Cyclone Debbie doing gate-crashing ahead of Cyclone Cook? Envelopemail your answers to the Editor. [I already know - Ed.].

Shakes and tsunamis

Five days after donald trump became president of the splintering states of North America, the Kaikoura Coast (some 180 kms to our north) suffered its own convulsions. The 7.8 quake inflicted mayhem in Marlborough. In some places the seabed was lifted 4 m. Cycle, rail and road links were severed. The shaking was prolonged and strong here, although nowhere near as bad as our September 2010 awakening. We evacuated 11 Banks Peninsula Track walkers inland to Otānerito Homestead; the expected tsunami was small, but it funnelled up Little Pigeon Bay and wrecked the beachfront house there.

After the Kaikoura Quake the seismologists left a little note at Hugh's door: "We visited and removed the earthquake station from Old Piggery Lookout. It is being redeployed to the Kaikoura Region. Thankyou for looking after it for us all those years."

Distant fire

Mid-February put us on edge again, not from storms or quakes, but from a huge fire on the hilly fringes of the c*r-infested Swamp itself. We know what started Hinewai's 2011 conflagration - lightning. We still don't know what sparked the two blazes on the Port Hills that merged to become one terrifying

6 inferno. Nearly 40 kms as the falcon flies lie between the Port Hills and Hinewai, across hills, valleys, and the ample firebreak of the Long Harbour. Nevertheless we watched nervously as huge palls of smoke drifted overhead, to congeal as ugly smudges above the sea horizon.

The fires started on the 13th of February. On the 15th morning, when we headed off to the Ōpātuti workface, it seemed as though the worst was over. So it was shocking to emerge from the valley at the end of that day and to look westwards into apocalypse. Flames were rampaging out of control along the Port Hills. Hundreds of people were evacuated. A helicopter pilot died. Eleven houses were destroyed. Bush was incinerated. Pine trees flared like giant torches. On the 17th, when it was all at last more or less "contained", Paul departed Ōtānerito before dawn to join local firefighters mopping up remaining hotspots.

Back home on Hinewai again Paul told us that, just as after our 2011 fire, grey warblers were about in the charred landscape picking up what he thought must be toasted insects. A Council Worker photographed a jewelled gecko, very much alive, its vibrant greens and golds in startling contrast to the black lifeless background.

Regeneration

It's hard to discern now where Hinewai burned, only 6 years ago. Nature always sets to work at once to regenerate and restore. Hugh tried to cheer up despondent members of the Summit Road Society who had "lost" much of their hard-fought-for Ōhinetahi Reserve above Governors Bay. He sought to reassure them that wonderful Ōhinetahi was not lost, only temporarily waylaid.

The gorse section of the new Ōpātuti Track is a good lesson in how eager Nature is to replace prickly aliens with born-again natives. From the workfront, the sweaty workers pause from time to time to glance back at the freshly cleared passage;

both sides are softened by the luminous green foliage of māhoe, sevenfinger, fivefinger, tarata, putaputāwētā, wineberry, karamū, kaikōmako, mikimiki, poroporo, ongaonga, māpou and others, even light-loving kānuka trees that have managed to keep their heads up in the sun above the rising golden tide.

Wild and warm-hearted

Friendly fantails, far-from-timid tomtits, and calm-natured kererū are not the only wild birds on Hine-wai that come right up to people seemingly without fear. One day while Hugh and Andrew were butchering baby gorse bushes on Pūtakitaki Dam, a black shag (kawau pū) was fishing for whistling tadpoles, unconcerned about the oversized simians acting suspiciously nearby. Before long the bird came quietly ashore to dry its wings, less than a metre from the monstrous monkeys but charmingly unafraid. One night Hugh donned his headlamp and set out to look for a temporarily waylaid walker on West Track, when almost immediately his lamplight lit up a morepork regarding him from beside the gate post. "Excuse me" said Hugh, so close that if he had wanted he could have ruffled ruru's feathers as he sidled past. More recently a plucky pipit has taken up residence at Hugh's house, waiting each morning at the weather station for the 8.00 am readings. As Pīpipi goes to print another pipit has joined him. Romance is suspected, and the patter of tiny pipit feet



ruru

8 in Spring. It's heart-warming that New Zealand pipits (pīhoihoi) are thriving on Hinewai because they appear to have declined across some parts of their range.

A bounteous season for native fruit favoured the local wildlife. As late as April several species continued to feed eagerly on kōnini (the tasty berries of tree fuchsia or kōtukutuku) — kererū, silvereyes, bellbirds, blackbirds, Tricia, Paul, Hugh, Andrew, and Paul's pampered parakeets.

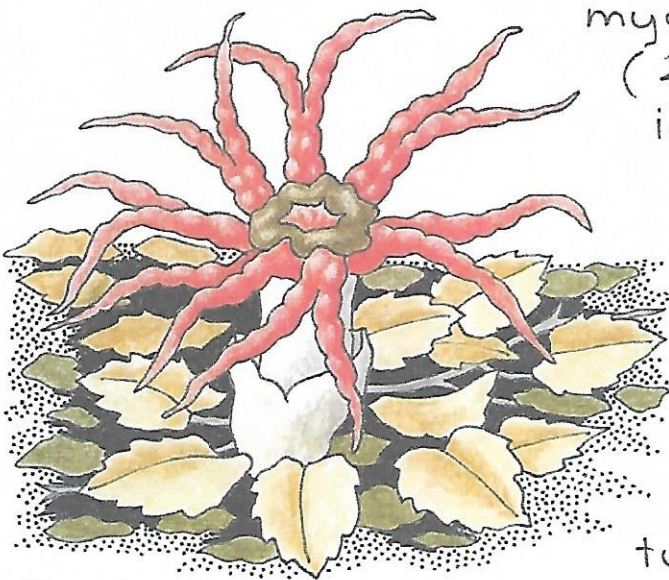
Is it a flower?

Fungi were flourishing in April when American mycologists Jim (86) and Todd (24) visited. These two specialise in truffles — tuber-like underground fungi, a few famous ones reputedly delicious but, more importantly, all of them closely associated with trees and vital to forest health and wellbeing. Jim and Todd turned up some surprising finds, including tiny white truffles under kānuka. What especially took Todd's fancy, though, was a "flower fungus" near Fuchsia Falls — an Australasian species he knew about but had never seen.

Puapuatai is common on Hinewai but the "flowers" are fleeting. Visitors often ask "What's this? Is it a flower? Is it a waylaid sea anemone?" No, it's a fungus in the stinkhorn family, lovely to look at but smelling of tūtae. Flies are lured to the poo-like goo that holds the spores, which are dispersed thus.

Wild but unwanted

Our war against weed trees,



especially pines and sycamores, is not made any easier when the wildings take up defensive positions on near-vertical bluffs. Paul achieved a notable feat in February when he reached a pine tree on Coppertop Bluff that lesser mortals had deemed inaccessible. Comprehensively scratched but rightly pleased with himself he couldn't resist phoning the Manager from his gorse-draped eyrie. "I'm there" he announced, "just checking you really want this pine tree eliminated." Hugh couldn't resist saying "Thanks Paul but I've changed my mind. You can come down now!" but the laugh that followed rendered this unconvincing. Drilled and poisoned, the pine has since passed peacefully away.

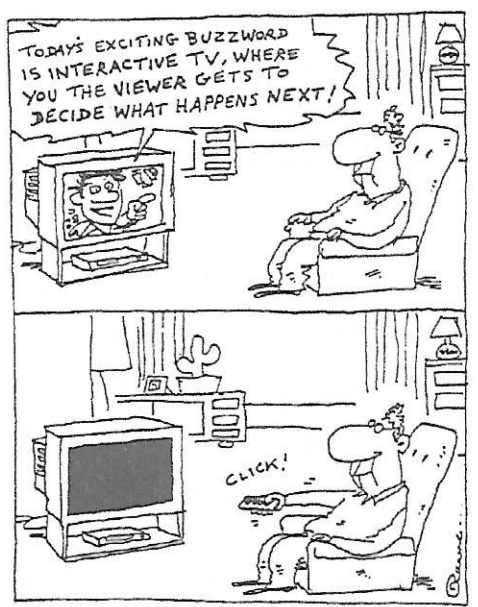
Up to scratch

Paul has also been working away on much-needed maintenance on the Visitor Centre, the houses, and the Ōtānerito ablutions block, replacing weary windows, repairing dubious doors, and repainting roofs and walls.

Speaking in tongues

Hinewai boasts rich biodiversity, but the variety of human visitors is impressive too. They come in subtle shades from a sort of blotchy pale pink to dark chocolate, and their speech is equally varied. When working on popular tracks, Hinewai staff like to guess the nationality and language of approaching walkers, thinking that even saying hello in someone else's tongue is worth a try.

Recently on Paripai Track Hugh [excruciatingly smug about his supposed knack of producing some sort of greeting in ten languages, including Australian - Ed.] misjudged five walkers in a row. Aha, he thought, I'll cover the lot for the next one. She was suntanned



10 and fit-looking — southern European of some kind he decided. " Buenas dias, buon jorno, bon jour, guten tag----" he began. " Yeah, gidday" she said. Gaewyn was a dairy farmer from Southland. " He's always trying" explained Andrew.

Hugh's attempt at being cheery would have gone down better with the next couple — they were from the German-speaking part of Italy, and as well as their native Deutsch they spoke fluent Italiano, English and Español [but they were perfectly happy with hello — Ed.].

At Purple Peak Shelter an overseas walker had written in the Visitors' Book : " Is it possible that from the top of Taraterehu we could see both the northern and southern ends of the South Island?" to which the next rambler had replied succinctly " No." That's true, but on a clear day one can see northwards to the Kaikoura Mountains and southwards to the Hunter Hills, two fifths of Te Wai Pounamu's eastern edge.

Hugh's Ozzie cuzzies visited in November. There was a vigorous discussion about what a dangerous place the big West Island is, what with snakes, crocodiles, Peter Dutton, Sydney funnelweb spiders, motorists, etc. Lisa, Rob and Eddy were a wee bit defensive. Less than a week later they were near Kaikoura when the earth moved. They were distinctly rattled. " Give us the crocodiles any day" wrote Lisa, with feeling, once they were all safely home on the stolid side of the Tasman.

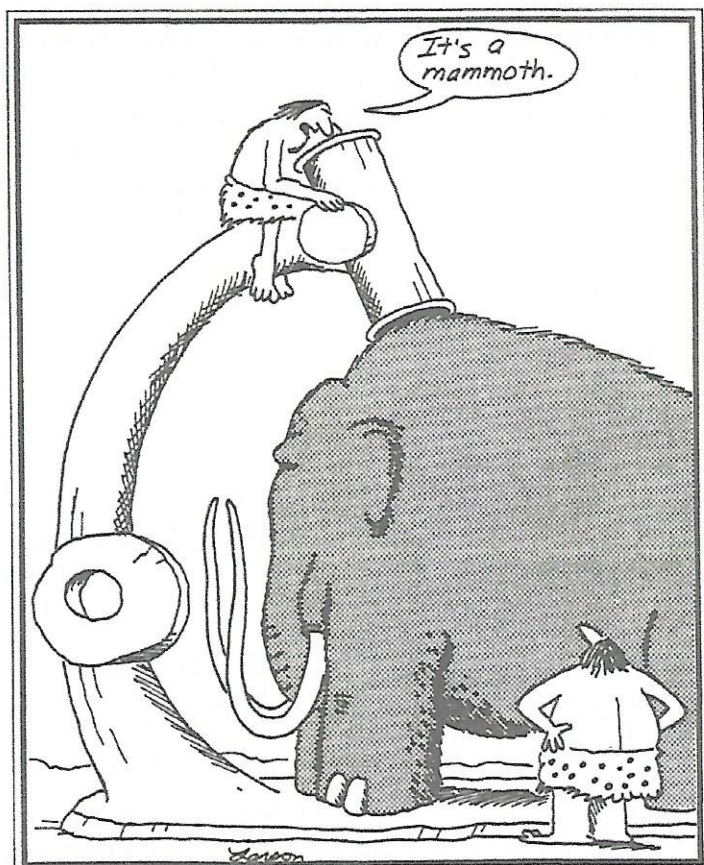
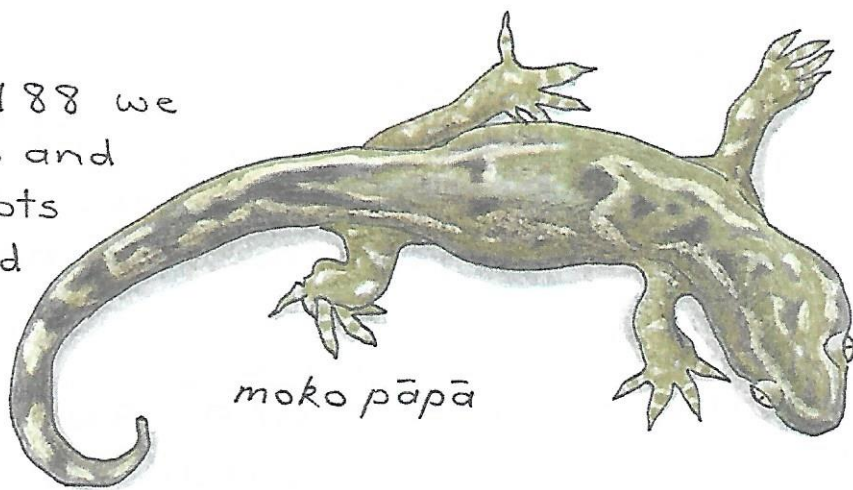
Wonderful Canadian supporter Rudy Haase (94) visited in January with his son Bruce. The Mason family of Christchurch also called in with a startling gift. Daughter Abby had produced a marvellous book of poetry as a school project, sold it to friends and parents, and raised an astonishing sum for Hinewai. She seemed delighted that it might one day help extend Hinewai to the sea.

When electrician Shane installed a new meter near the Visitor Centre he was delightfully concerned about

the Canterbury gecko snoozing behind the old meter. He and Hugh gently ushered the sleepy lizard out of harm's way until the job was done.

The plots thicken

Way back in 1988 we set up photopoints and fixed sampling plots to monitor expected vegetation changes on the reserve. 29 years later the landscape is indisputably transformed. Plot by plot, though, the rate of forest recovery varies a lot. Plot 3 near Boundary Falls was old man gorse in 1988. It is now native hardwood forest 9 m tall. The only hints that gorse once dominated here are mouldering branches, most on the ground, one still angling upwards as if its last years of life were a desperate but futile attempt to stay in the sun. In contrast, Plot 1 in Billy Goat Clearing still looks like gorse scrub 3 to 5m tall. Gorse was scraped away here in 1985 during the primitive farming era, along with much of the topsoil. The clearing was oversown with birdsfoot trefoil and grass, then closely grazed by sheep. By January 1989 it was dense gorse again, a metre tall. By 1992 the gorse was 3m tall. It was then flattened by the Great Snow in August of that year, the resulting packed thatch cutting off almost all light to the ground. At the start of 2017, viewed



Early microscope

12 from West Track, the plot still seemed to be gorse scrub, up to 5m tall, seemingly impenetrable. In the interests of science, Hugh penetrated it. It was worth every scratch. He discovered that the gorse was finally collapsing to form sheltered "light wells" in which all sorts of native plants were establishing. Sevenfingers were waving out the top, like big tropical pot plants. So Plot 1 has taken its time, but is now scheming to be native forest in no time at all!

Partners and champions

THANKYOU! KIA ORA RAWA ATU! ARIGATO!
TSE TSE! MERCI BEAUCOUP! DANKE SCHÖN!
TERIMA KASEH! YEAH-NO-TA! [Australian-Ed].
It's time to say all this. Many Pīpīpi readers may not realise that donations they have been sending, large or small, now tot up to the biggest single category of the incoming funds that make Hinewai financially viable. It's a great joy that so many people love this reserve and support it in practical ways, financial or otherwise. No-one really "owns" Hinewai, but in a sense we all do, each for our own brief



Pīpīpi appears twice a year. There is no sub and no obligation to donate, but donations are very helpful to the reserve and hugely appreciated. Contributions of \$5 or more are tax-deductible. We will send a receipt.

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span. TOITU HE WHENUA;
WHATUNGARONGARO HE
TANGATA as we say in
Aotearoa [the land alone
endures; people pass
away].

A wee note: A Jim Knight sent a fat donation. For all its sophistication and freedom from malware, our shoebox card address database failed to come up with the data. Jim or friends, if you are reading this, a receipt and thankyou note are itching to reach you.

