

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

R.D.3 Akaroa 7583

48

November 2018

Fortune-telling

Here, in this quiet corner of Banks Peninsula, scary stories reach us from afar – fearsome floods in northern India, dreadful drought in eastern Oz, hard-to-handle heatwaves in c*r-infested Europe, hostile hurricanes near and far, brutish behaviour worldwide by *Homo sapiens* to



Tauhō/silvereye on wharariki

fellow humans and Mother Earth – I could go on and on. Our own weather forecasters made us nervous, predicting a long, hot, dry, El Niño summer, exacerbated by the inexorable rise of greenhouse gases.

As Pīpipi 48 goes to print, however, Hinewai Reserve looks lush and lovely, sustained by lots of winter rain and enough so far in spring.

Māori tradition also tries to forecast long-term weather, closely observing plants that flower freely some years but more or less skip most others. Early this spring, evergreen tawai trees (southern beeches) turned a rare russet, shedding colourful leaves ahead of a major reproductive flourish. By October the russet had deepened to a richer red as

2 quadrillions of anthers ripened. Soon gusts of wind were puffing clouds of pollen from the forest canopy. Meanwhile big bold buxom buds on tī kōuka, harakeke, and wharariki everywhere swelled and unfolded, luring in bellbirds, tūī and silvereyes. Aha, says Māori lore, a long hot summer lies ahead.



Sometimes, doubtless for complex reasons, Folklore and Science coincide, so watch this space. Maybe cross a few fingers as well for sufficient summer rain.

Pardon, your slip is showing.

There was no lack of wetness in June. Even so, we were surprised when numerous landslides carried off coastal sections of Banks Track and slammed into buildings near Ōtānerito Beach. The rain had not seemed all that excessive. Streams on Hinewai were in boisterous fresh but only slightly discoloured. The reserve suffered one sizeable slip. It swept away a swathe of regenerating forest at the head of Pīwakawaka Stream, near our seaward edge. Downstream from Woodcutters' Clearing, several metres of Valley Track slumped into Narbey Stream along with kākānuka trees, a big silver tree fern, rocks and soil. What remained of the track was wide enough though. Paul edged the brink with wooden safety rails.

Anomalous rainfall on already sodden soils might explain the unexpected. In nearly every rain event, Skyline rain gauge records three or four times the precipitation at the headland, six kilometres away as the karoro flies, and 600 metres lower down. Most potential slips in the uplands have already slid and revegetated under that sort of rainfall; prodigious amounts are needed to trigger mass-movement there. Mid-June rainfall

at Parakākāriki Headland this year, however, was equal to that at Skyline – around 130mm all at once, which is copious for the coast.

Mark and Sonia Armstrong of Stony Bay had to reform their part of Banks Track across numerous coastal landslides before the season opened at the start of October. Further upvalley on our stretch of Ōpātuti Track we had to deal with only one small slurry.

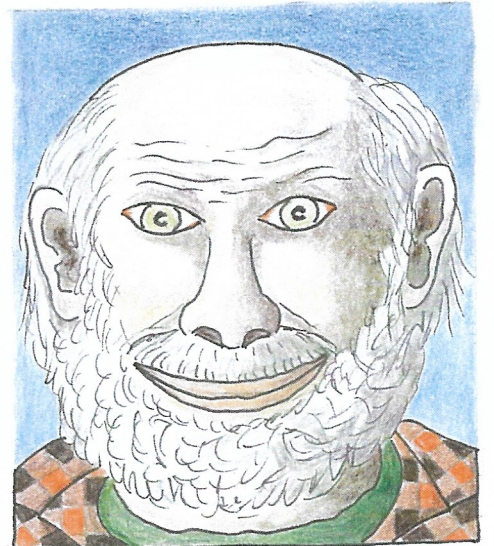
Who's who at the workfaces?

A reader recently requested a description of our workforce, and the Editor wondered out loud if the English language was up to such a challenge. [Let's give it a go – Ed.].

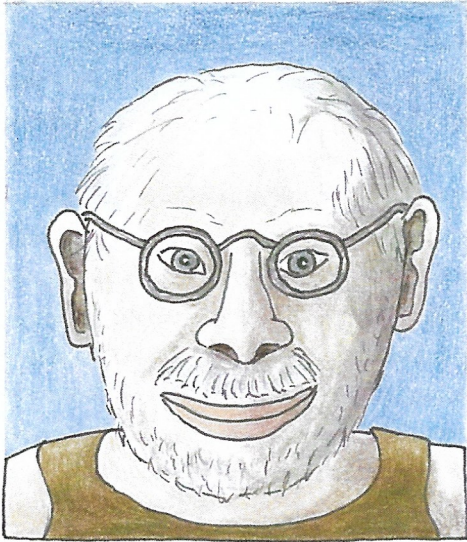
Looking after 1500 hectares of regenerating native forest involves a bit more work than your average suburban section, even when guided by a management philosophy of "minimum interference". Nature does all the serious work, but she leaves us some jobs she's not so keen on – track creation and maintenance for example, fence-making and repairs, boundary weed removal, house-work, and the ousting of a few truly detrimental alien plants and animals.

A tested team of three whittle away at these tasks, directed by a shifting list of priorities and by whatever weather Tāwhirimātea dreams up each morning.

Team leader is Hugh Wilson. His ageing brain can't always remember whether he is 73 or 37. He likes to call himself a botanist and a kaitiaki. 31 years ago [aged 6 or 42? – Ed.], he teamed up with our Trust's founder Maurice White (then 63, now 95) to set the Hinewai project in motion. He has been tracking along here ever since.



4 Paul Newport (49) hails from Golden Bay at the northern end of the South Island. He



gained much experience there in District Council Parks and Reserves, horticulture, and all-round practical usefulness. He first came to Hinewai for two six-month stints as a seasonal worker at the turn of the millennium. He returned for good with his partner Tricia at the end of 2007.

Hugh finds it hard to imagine now how we could possibly get everything done without him. Paul and Tricia live in Ōtānerito Homestead, one hour's walk downvalley from Hugh's house and the Visitor Centre.

In a previous life Tricia Hewlett (53) taught English at the Nelson/Marlborough Institute of Technology. Nowadays her big enthusiasms are art, gardening and Hinewai, assisted by a 35-strong army of brown shaver chookies. [Are you sure Tricia is not 35 with a 53-strong army of chookies? - Ed.]. [I'll count the chookies - Hugh].

Andrew Youngson has been a Hinewai Trustee since 2002. A keen and knowledgeable plantsman he gave up his job with Christchurch City Council early in 2015 and joined our workplace, partly so we could cope with the extra work on Purple Peak Curry Reserve.



63, definitely not 36, he is based at the Old Manager's House four days a week, returning to his wife Suzanne at their family home in Heathcote (eastern Christchurch) between times. Their son Amos designed and runs a Hinewai website:

www.hinewai.org.nz

Another Paul owns the 16-hectare Kāpuka Bush Reserve and manages it as if it were part of Hinewai. Paul Broady hails from Manchester in far-off England. Decades away from there, first in Oz and then Aotearoa, have barely modulated his distinctive execution of the English language. Recently he aged enough to retire from Canterbury University where he researched and taught algae. [Really? - Ed.]. Paul is at the taller end of human dimensions and thus useful as a measure for how high we need to prune our tracks. The "Broady Test" involves pointing him along a track and recording how often he bumps his head between A and B.

Peter Joyce of Tai Tapu recently retired from being head of the Christchurch campus of Otago Medical School. As part of a wide range of relaxing retirement activities he gives Hinewai a day of hard labour each week. He was a key player, for example, in creating Ōpātuti Track through Stony Bay Valley when Banks Track had to change tack in 2017. His artist wife Annabelle (a.k.a. "Track Inspector") often comes to Hinewai with Peter; she roams widely and we ask her to report on windfalls and hazards. More recently Joe Hickey (17), in his final year at Akaroa Area School, has also been giving Hinewai one day a week.

One afternoon most of this motley crew were attacking roadside broom at Curry Knoll when their leader came biking past on his way home from Akaroa. Knowing how hungry they would be after a hard day's work without him, Hugh had specially saved from his town lunch some delicious little cookies called "ginger kisses". "Come down off the bank" he called out "and I'll give each of you a kiss". No-one moved. Even the broom bushes stopped growing for half a nano-second. A few more words of explanation soon got things moving again and the team came

6 tumbling down the slope for their well-earned treat.

Healthy and safe

As with workplaces all over Aotearoa, Hinewai struggles with the demands of new Safety and Health legislation. We are all for some good old safety and health, but we suspect the new rules

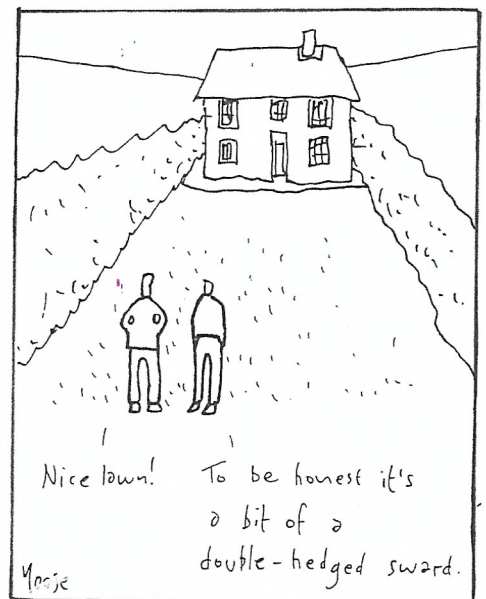


might be a bit over the top. Before our Breeze Walking Festival foray in September, for example, we had to tick numerous boxes and answer lots of queries. "Do you" asked one "have a plan for extricating any vehicles that get stuck in mud?" Hugh enjoyed this one. "Certainly" he affirmed. "We plan to leave them stuck. The

more vehicles immobilised in this way the safer everybody will be." He added an unsolicited observation: "If similar Safety and Health demands were applied to motor vehicles as seem to be needed for a gentle walk in Hinewai's benign forests, not a single car would ever be allowed out of its garage." The walk went off without a worry.

Pushing belief

Weekend walkers often find Hugh mowing Wahanui Track with his efficient and tranquil push mower. They say "Gosh, you don't do all this with that do you?" giving Hugh the chance to feign surprise: "Oh, is there another way of doing it?" Usually the answer is: "Well, there are motor mowers you know" which gives Hugh an excellent opportunity to sound self-righteous: "Fossil fuels to mow grass! No wonder



the world is turning to custard!" Just before Pīpī 48 went to print, this cheery little scenario played itself again but ended otherwise: "Oh, is there another way of doing it?" intoned Hugh smugly. "Scissors" came the prompt reply.

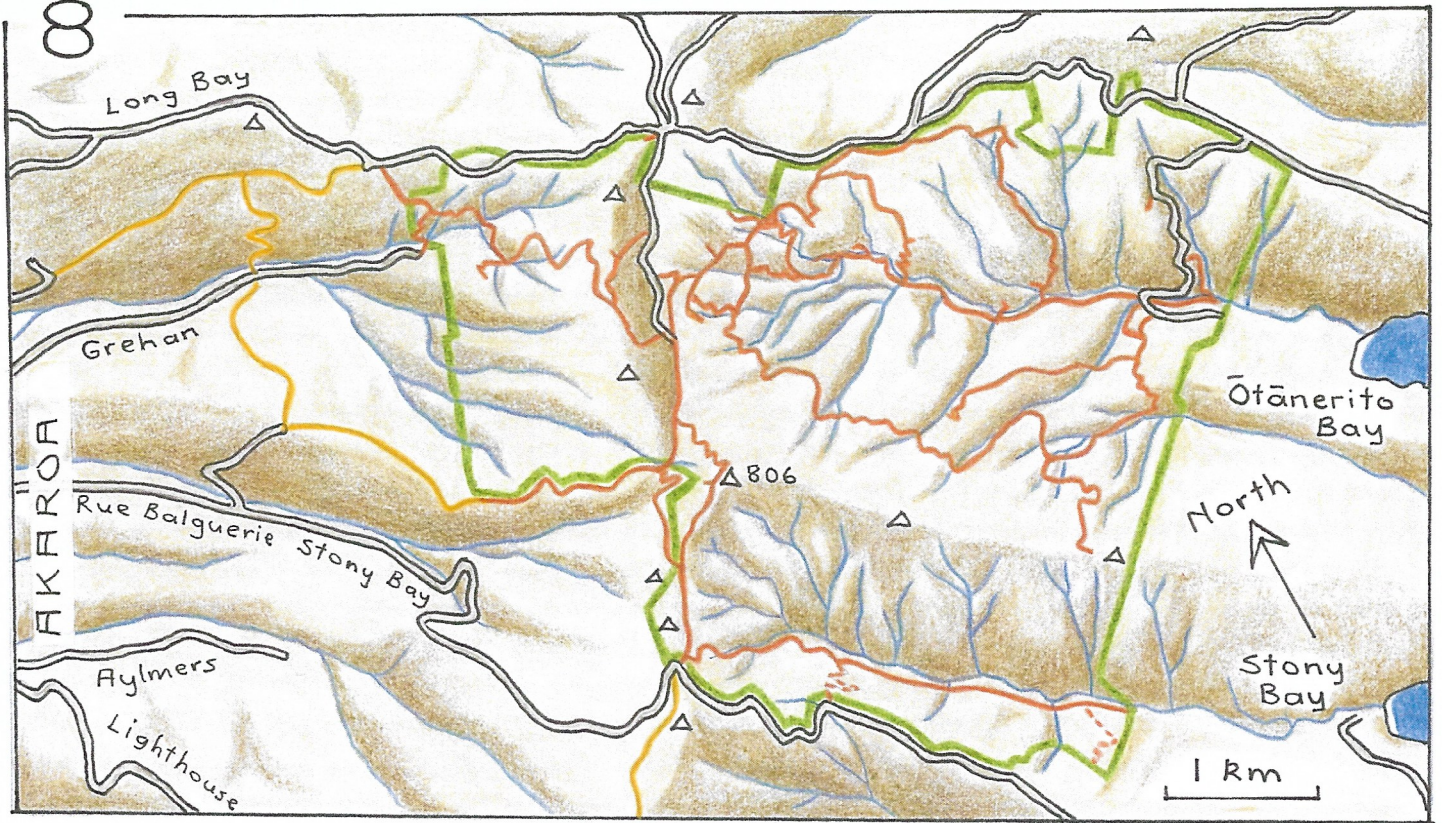
We love challenges. Hugh had long wondered if, with some fast pedalling and a small chilly bin, he could bike a litre of ice-cream home from Akaroa (one and a half hours' journey for your average septuagenarian) and throw it in to his small freezer before it melted. The plan was to make the ice-cream the very last purchase — then into the saddle and away! Akaroa is a small town, however, and most people know each other; a rapid retreat is unlikely. Five conversations later Hugh was chatting to Willi outside an open-air cafe on Rue Lavaud (as we say in Akaroa). "I'd better go" said Hugh, "my ice-cream might be melting." Four Australians at an adjacent outside table thought this hilarious. "It won't melt mate" they snorted. "We're frozen solid."

Home at last, Hugh was less than hopeful. He reached in to his saddlebag. There the ice-cream lay, in perfect condition, frozen and firm. It's tempting to try this feat again, perhaps in an El Niño summer rather than a wintry day in June.

Making tracks, building bridges

"How many kilometres of track do you have now?" trekkers ask. It seemed time to re-measure. Including Purple Peak, Curry and Paripai Tracks, which extend beyond Hinewai's boundaries, we reckon we now have 32 kilometres to maintain each year.

Longer tracks mean more bridges. Ours range from 1 m to 12.5 m long. One mid-May day we mustered no fewer than 9 helpers to carry timber and tools down Pikimai Zigzag



- == Roads — Tracks maintained by Hinewai.
 — Other linking tracks.
 / Boundary of Hinewai, Kāpuka, Ōtepeiki and Purple Peak Curry Reserves.

(cleared by Paul N. for just this job but soon to be upgraded for walkers, thus completing a circle at the head of Stony Bay Valley). Timber hefted down the Zigzag was soon assembled in to three more little crossings along Ōpātuti Track.

So how many bridges have we built now? Each one is numbered, documented, and checked from time to time, so the answer is easy — 59. Upgraded, Pikimai Zigzag will need two.

Growing up

On the back lawn of Ōtānerito Homestead is a young nīkau palm, germinated from local seed in 1995 when Hugh was a youngster of 50, Andrew was 39, and Paul was only 26 [barely out of nappies — Ed.]. As the palm grew, Hugh repeatedly mumbled "I wouldn't mind living long enough to see a trunk start forming on that nīkau". During arboretum measurements in May this year, oh joy, a trunk, 9 cm of shiny green bole between two pale frond

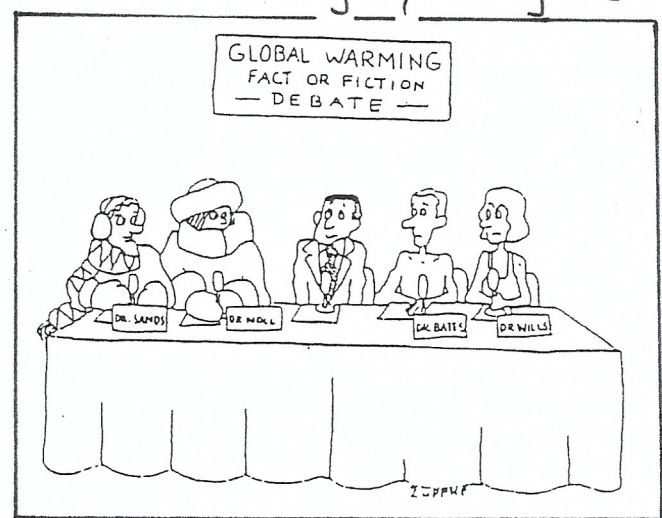
scars. [Now lettest thy servant depart in peace - Ed.]. [Thankyou Ed. - Hugh].

"If climate change really is warming the planet" ask some unbelievers "show us some cold-sensitive species moving uphill." Beautiful kawakawa (*Piper excelsum*) is abundant on Hinewai, mostly below 300m but common enough up to its previously highest recorded altitude of 510m at north-facing Lothlorien. It grows naturally no further south than Banks Peninsula. This September we encountered a young plant growing happily beside Curry Track on the southeast side of Browntop Saddle. The altimeter read 570m. Of course (sceptics might say) two warm years in a row might simply have allowed one opportunistic kawakawa to establish briefly above its normal range, only to be blatted by the next



cold spell. We'll watch what happens.

Close to the Visitor Centre we grow several of the Peninsula's rarest plant treasures - heart-leaved kohukohu, for example, Banks Peninsula forget-me-not, raukawa, pāhautea, and many more.



Rarest of all is the Nationally Endangered pygmy button daisy, *Leptinella nana*. Apart from a single Banks Peninsula population on the Port Hills, there are only two other known sites, one in Marlborough, one near Wellington. A couple of years ago Andrew was potting up some

10 Peninsula-sourced fragments of the button daisy by the workshop when one piece fell on the bare ground there. Like a miracle, it flourished, growing in to a moss-like mat now 80cm across. A circle of stones warns visitors this is something special.

Eat and be eaten

Andrew and Hugh were treated to a marvellously close and prolonged view of a morepork dining delicately on a freshly killed silvereye, which the owl was holding down with one taloned foot. This was in broad but gloomy daylight, early one winter afternoon under kānuka canopy and a cloudy sky. Silvereyes are abundant easy prey in winter, slowed down by the cold. (In the same conditions tomtits look as perky and quick as ever, but distinctly annoyed.)

There is no midwinter food shortage here for silvereyes, bellbirds and tūī. Fivefingers bloom profusely through the coldest months, providing nectar, while also rationing out last season's fruit through to Spring. Fuchsia starts flowering in June on leafless twigs. At the head of Stony Bay Valley, Ōpātuti Track ascends steeply through majestic red beech, then abruptly enters a goblin grove of fuchsia. Suddenly any passing walkers are surrounded by a full stereo concert of singing bellbirds. Fallen red flowers adorn the damp earth. It's a special place. By January, fuchsia flowers are over, but by then ripening fruit sustains the birds till April.



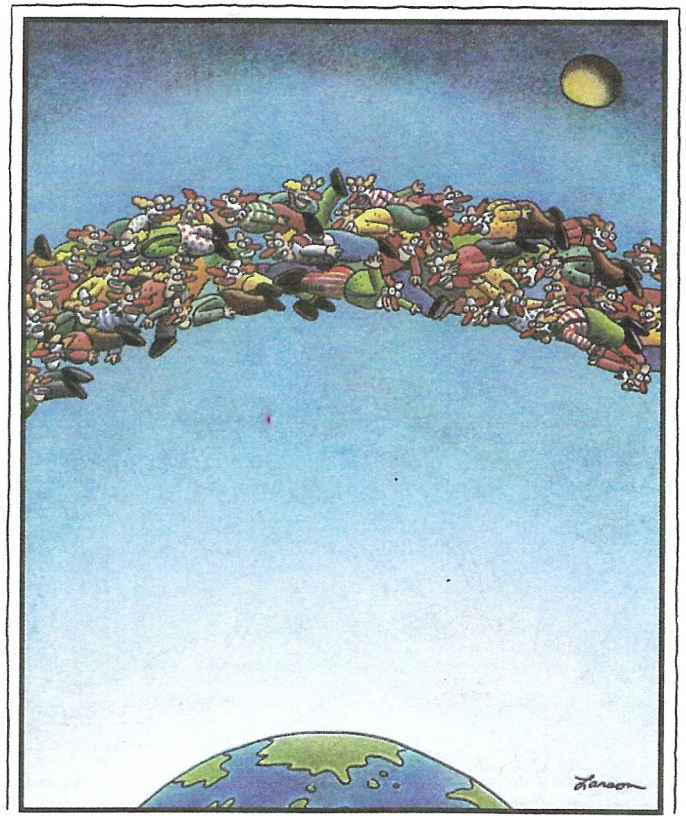
Forest phantoms

It's a great pity that fuchsia and fivefinger are so vulnerable to hungry possums and deer. While we keep possum numbers uneasily in check, deer are a growing threat. Fully feral from escaped farm stock, they stray in to Hinewai from time to time, still in small numbers, seldom seen, noticed only by their sign — bark stripped from fivefingers, browsed ferns and foliage, hoofprints in soft soil, tell-tale droppings, concealed campsites, and mud wallows in wet hollows.

We clambered through gorse off Skyline Track to confirm that dead and dying fivefingers there were deer-stripped rather than diseased. During winter, ruthless assassins Norman, Tristran, Julia, Simon, Francis, Will, etc., [but Ruth obviously couldn't make it — Ed.] forayed in and forayed out. No animals were seen, let alone shot. They seem as elusive as patu-paiarehe, mythical pale-skinned fairy folk who figure richly in the Māori fables of our area.

The aesthetics of road maintenance

Christchurch City Council runs a robust rates-funded roadside uglification programme using blunt fossil-fuelled rotary slashers and toxic herbicides. It is said to be all about enabling c*rs and trucks to speed along unhindered and to allow storm water to rush as fast as possible off the roads and on to



The bozone layer: shielding the rest of the solar system from the Earth's harmful effects.

12 neighbouring fences, landscapes, and slip-prone gullies. We run a parallel programme along roads that border Hinewai. After each uglification we perform emergency surgery on mutilated trees, euthanising the worst victims. The herbicided plant life is beyond help. We are beginning to suspect that *Homo sapiens* might be too.

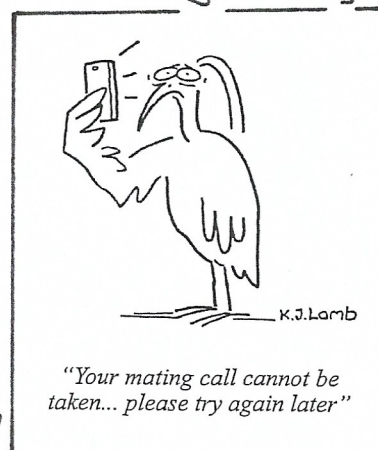
Some comings and goings

All the senior class from Akaroa Area School visited Hinewai with their teacher Gary. Thomas Tomtit came right up to the Lodge window to be admired by the students.

Akaroa Playcentre children, plus mums, and one dad, also visited Hinewai in somewhat gloomy weather. They traipsed staunchly off on an ambling foray with Hinewai staff, picking up vividly yellow fivefinger and wineberry leaves and lacy māhoe leaf skeletons.

On West Track we met a young

woman from Illinois, U.S.A., heading east, trying to navigate on to Curry Track (behind her, to the west) by looking at her cellphone. Hugh's low-tech left hemisphere soon put her right. He spun her gently 180° and left her to it.



Pīpipi appears twice a year. There is no sub and no obligation to donate, but donations are hugely useful and greatly appreciated. Contributions of \$5 or more are tax deductible. We will post a receipt.

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