

Pī pipi

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

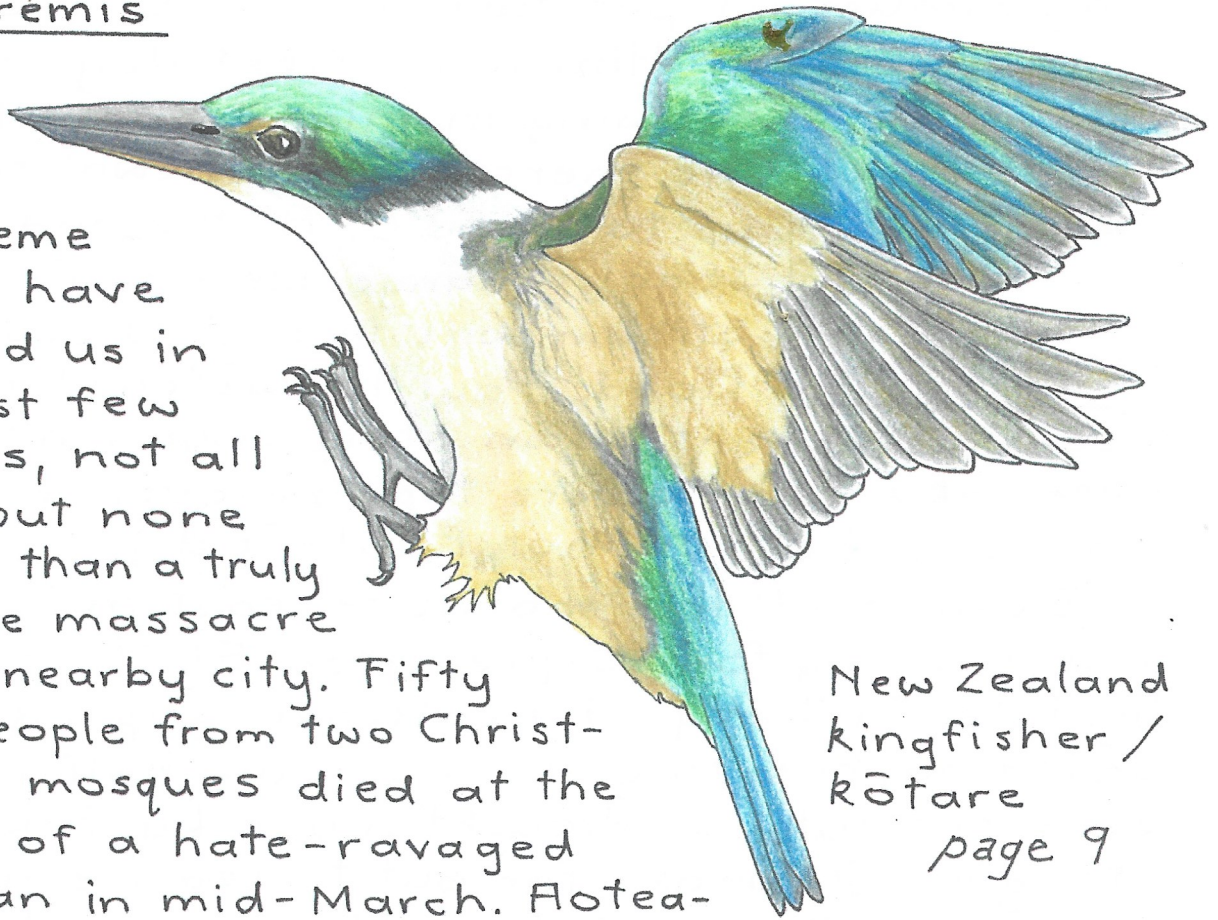
R.D.3 Akaroa 7583

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May 2019

In extremis

Extreme events have touched us in the last few months, not all bad, but none worse than a truly horrible massacre in the nearby city. Fifty one people from two Christchurch mosques died at the hands of a hate-ravaged gunman in mid-March. Aotearoa struggles to comprehend and cope. In the aftermath the peace and beauty of Hinewai seem especially poignant. People continue to visit, of course, in all their wondrous diversity and sameness, believers and unbelievers, blotchy pink and darkest chocolate, speaking tongues rich and varied like the sounds of a rainforest, women, men, gay, straight, and everybody in between, all brief and beautiful on this deeply troubled, many-splendoured Earth.



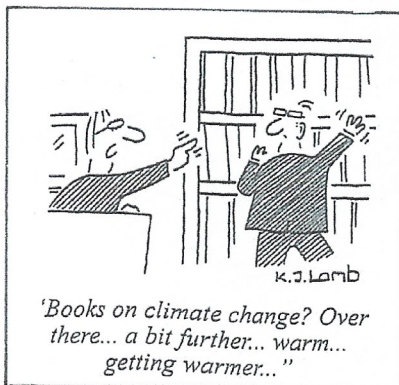
New Zealand
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2 Wetter than ever

2018 ended up as the wettest year we have recorded in 31 years of measuring rainfall here. Can you believe that Hinewai rain gauge totted up 2629 mm, nearly 1000mm more than the 31 year running average (1695mm)? Judging from a 118 year record at Christchurch Botanic Gardens, however, there have been wetter years than 2018, especially 1951 and 1986.

On the 8th November Christchurch recorded a maximum temperature of 31°C (24.5°C at Hinewai). Next day it was snowing in inland Canterbury. The mercury at Hinewai struggled up to 6.5°C . At the end of that soggy, changeable month, Narbey Stream was in high discoloured flood. Paul N. watched a kānuka tree slide upright down steep slopes near Pīwakawaka Falls before toppling over in slow motion [the tree, not Paul - Ed.].



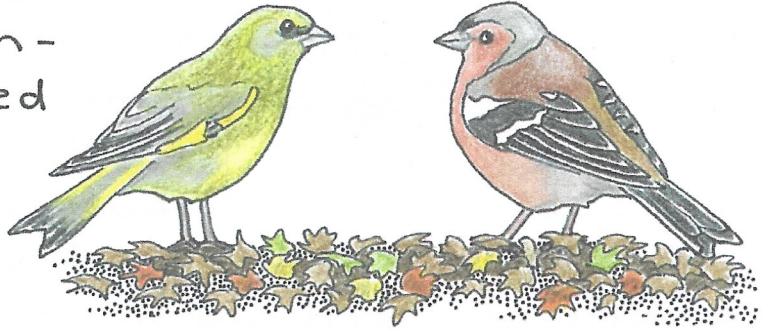
Despite all this moisture, eastern Canterbury was heading for its predicted El Niño drought by late January. A heatwave gripped all of Aotearoa, breaking century and a half records. We were fully in drought mode by February. Stringers of smoke far out to sea we assumed to be from the week-long Nelson wildfires to our north.

Adequate rain saved us at the end of February but gave no relief to scorched and arid Nelson. Rather unusually for February the mountains to our west were briefly white with snow.

Excesses

Despite some storm-disrupted pollination Springs mass flowering matured in to prolific fruiting and seeding. Bellbirds, kererū, silvereyes, blackbirds and the odd tūī, spoilt for choice,

fed avidly on ripe white fruit of tī kōuka, luscious black kōnini, and an exceptional crop of orange kakaha. Fivefingers sagged beneath the weight of big bunches of their tiny fruit, so bland and boring to our taste, so pleasing to the birds, so ample this season that the larders should stay well-stocked right through the winter. In the beech forests far more greenfinches than usual joined the always numerous chaffinches; mixed flocks rose from mast-carpeted floors whenever passing people disturbed their feasting.



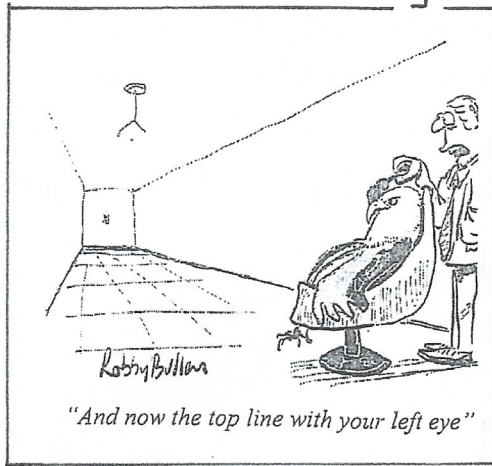
Cacophonies of cicadas (kikihi) lured native karoro (black-backed gulls) and Australian magpies far upvalley, 40 or 50 at a time. Spent from their frenzies of shouting and mating, the big brash insects make easy meals for the piebald birds. Falcons were at large too, leaving their



tell-tale castings of victims' feathers along open stretches of track. One January day both Hugh and Paul, from different directions, heard unceasing alarm calls from bellbirds at Skyline Beech. They compared notes at day's end. Paul had seen a falcon, perched on a tall tree, casually preening, while the local korimako went in to hysterics.

Andrew dutifully carries trap-killed possums, rats, mice, hedge-

4 hogs, hares and rabbits up to "Banquet Knoll" between Mikimiki Knob and Wahanui C*rpark, laying them out there for the hawks.



Falcons don't visit; they much prefer to eat their own fresh kills. But the larger harriers, less choosy, appreciate the bounty. They see it arrive from far off. In early April no fewer than five were seen together at the Knoll although not (it must be said) as one big happy

family. Hedgehog is favourite on the menu, and obviously well worth scrapping over.

Facelook - like and unlike

The portraits of Hinewai's workers in Pīpipi 48 were not universally admired. "Please stick to plants and non-human creatures" one startled reader requested. "Don't give up your day job to become a portrait artist" another advised. Paul Newport's dad Don, in far-off Golden Bay, wrote: "I have not seen my son for a year and had no idea he had aged so much in that time." Hugh had planned to depict the Hinewai Trustees in similar fashion but has put this project on hold until he hones up his airbrush techniques.

Never say never

Across great tracts of Hinewai, in the absence of grazing and the near absence of burning, exotic gorse scrub has metamorphosed into native forest. Just as gorse does, native kānuka thrives in full light, and similarly dies when shaded. Kānuka forms a lovely forest in its own right and is a wonderful habitat for all sorts of native wildlife. It grows much taller than gorse and lives much longer. Wide expanses of Hinewai and Purple Peak Curry Reserve are clothed in kānuka.

The species is sequestering more atmospheric carbon than any other. Eventually it too gives way to more diverse forest. At higher elevations kākūka is often succeeded by native beech trees which in Banks Ecological Region occur naturally only here, in its southeast corner. Lower down, both kākūka and gorse foster podocarp/hardwood forest, which once covered nearly all of Banks Peninsula. Gorse yields to this sort of forest at all altitudes.

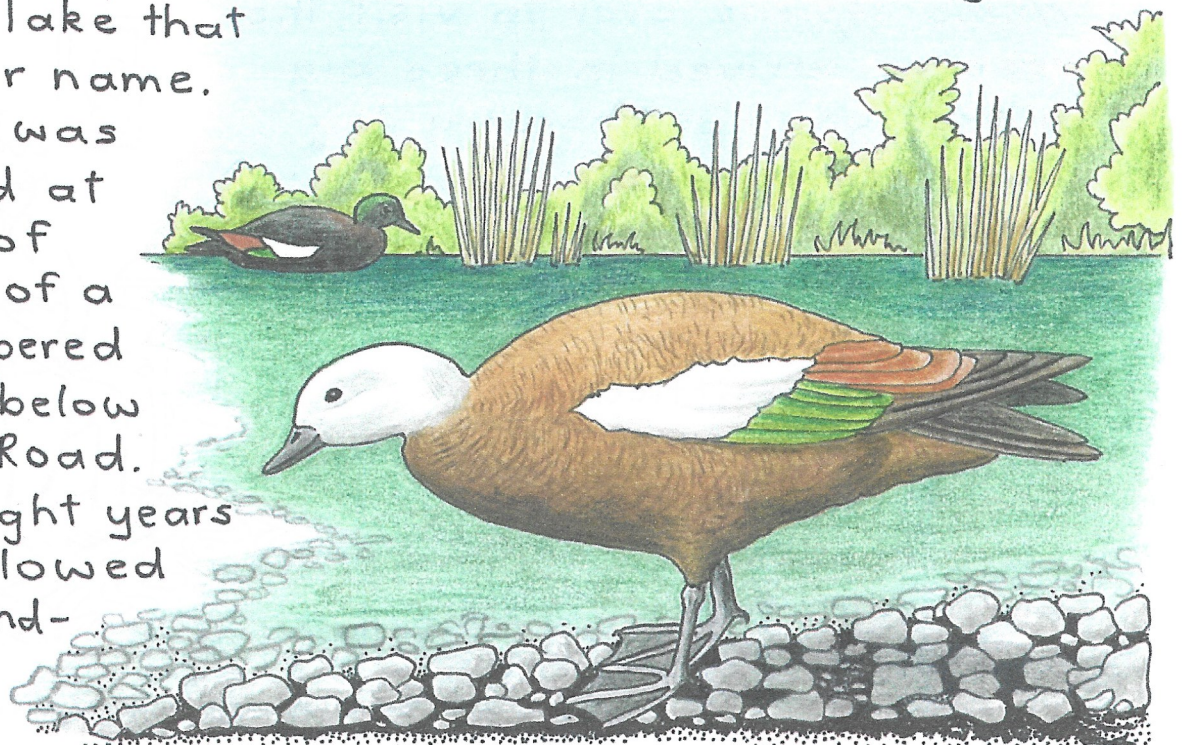
We are used to telling visitors that beech often regenerates under kākūka but never under gorse, probably in part because gorse scrub lacks the mycorrhizal fungi that help both kākūka and beech to flourish. Hugh was pontificating on this very point one day on Mānatu Track to a group of University students. "Beech never regenerates under gorse" he proclaimed. "What's this then?" asked one alert lad, pointing to a healthy red beech sapling threading up through the furze. "Except for that one" Hugh hurriedly added. [Hugh did think he was wrong once but it turned out he was mistaken - Ed.].

Great and small

Pūtakitaki is the Ngāi Tahu word for the goodlooking paradise shelducks who often grace the little lake that bears their name.

The pond was excavated at the end of 1991 out of a gorse-peppered paddock below Brocheries Road.

Twenty eight years have mellowed its surroundings and filled it



6 with wildlife. Besides ducks, swallows constantly hawk across its often wind-ruffled surface. Damselflies and dragonflies dart about like tiny helicopters. Whistling frogs trill unseen. Round its rush-fringed shores the vegetation has changed from weedy pasture to gorse scrub and kānuka, becoming more diverse now as māhoe, wineberry, fivefinger and mikimiki muscle in. This summer we found tōtara seedlings that will become giant forest trees long after we have crumbled into compost. "Ahakoā he iti, he tōtara" says the proverb — "it may be tiny now, yet it is a tōtara tree."

When we measured arboretum plantings in early May, we also ran the tape around 600 year old Big Tōtara, near Fuchsia Falls. We last gauged his substantial girth a decade ago so that we could announce it on a new sign — 1.88 m, it reads. This year the tape declared 1.92 m, but whether this really represents a gain of 4 cm is anyone's guess.

The biggest planted arboretum specimen is a 30 year old red beech at Ōtānerito, now over 13 m tall and 54.2 cm around the waist, pooh-poohing the foolish notion that native trees are sluggards.

All sorts

The largest single group of *Homo sapiens* ever to visit the reserve arrived in three big busses one hot February day from their international conference in Christchurch. One hundred and fifty arachnologists scuttled down Wahanui Track. Soon they were fossicking deep in the forest, finding spiders of every size and



'Once the pair have mated, the larger female spider devours the smaller, weaker male spider...'

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description but almost as thrilled to encounter some of the myriad mites, insects, birds, lizards and plants that also call Hinewai home.

Three days later the German consular representative in Christchurch (German-born Chris and Malawi-born wife Emma are enthusiastic Hinewai supporters and friends) brought along a 5-strong party from the Deutsch government, keen to see natural regeneration of native forest, and talk about carbon-sequestration. After a cuppa and a good Geplauder in Hugh's Haus, they made eine schöne Wanderung to Big Tōtara and Sudden View Clearing.

An 8-year old English boy, visiting with his family, wanted to know the rudest words he could say in Māori, to add to his collection of rude words from around the World. "Upoko kōhua" offered Hugh. "It loosely translates as 'Go boil your head'." For some reason Bill was also enchanted with the name of Hinewai's highest waterfall in Murderer's Gully. He practised diligently as he walked along West Track. "Upoko kōhua" he muttered many times, and "Whakamate! Whakamate!" He explained he was going to impress his classmates when he got back to school in northern England.

Wait and Sea

Hopes of extending Hinewai to the coast have not faded, but attempts to do so have so far failed. The most promising pursuit hit hurdles, perhaps insurmountable. Possibilities in another direction are being probed. Keep your fingers crossed (perhaps a few toes as well) and continue gazing longingly seawards [that's for shore - Ed.]. [Thankyou Ed. - Hugh].

Captured on film

"Happen Films" is a small trans-Tasman movie company that focusses on short sharp stories about conservation and sustainability. The reserve was already on their radar when a Wellington Trust, long-time supporters of our cause, offered to

8 fund a Hinewai documentary. Another staunch friend in the far-off Netherlands argued gently that it could be good to tell the Hinewai story in this way. Thus movie-makers Antoinette and Jordan, helped by wildlife cameraman Jason and sound ace Anna, traipsed about Hinewai in October, and again in April, following the workers around in as unobtrusive a way as is possible in such circumstances.

Can you believe that the World Première showings of the half-hour feature, one in Christchurch, one in Akaroa, sold out before Pīpipi was even put together? Fear not. Antoinette and Jordan assure us that the film will be free to view from 14 July onwards at foolsanddreamers.com

Animated

One January day on Beech Terrace four tūī were chasing each other through the trees in an excited and joyous manner. We guessed the group was a whānau of proud parents and just-fledged youngsters.

A week later Paul forayed out along the coast of Ōtānerito Bay to the foot of Haumoana Gully, hoping to find some ripe seed on the rare native shore pūhā there. He was thwarted by a phalanx of seals on the wave-cut platform – at least 50 pups with some protective mums and a distinctly daunting dad.

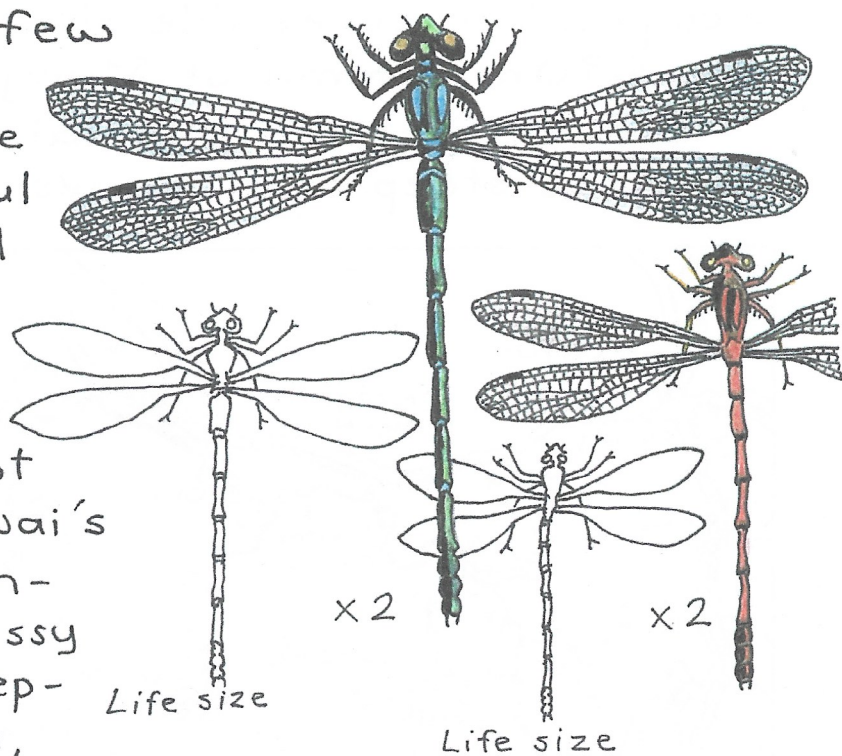
Not far from Hinewai a leatherback turtle washed up dead at Pigeon Bay, swashing in the waves like an upturned dinghy. Rare, and at risk from humanity's mischief in the seas, the ruined reptile was shipped off to Te Papa, the National Museum in Wellington.

The Peninsula's kōwhai trees endured a caterpillar pandemic. Some summers, larvae of the native kōwhai moth swarm in enormous numbers, defoliating thousands of trees. When we were building a stepway extension on steep East Track above Boundary Falls, caterpillars were strolling nonchalantly across

all the timbers and tools. By April the plague was over and the trees were leafy again, readying themselves perhaps for a glorious display of golden blossom in the Spring.

Broom gall mite (*Aceria genistae*) was introduced into Aotearoa in 2006 after extensive host-testing. This summer it has been so abundant that uninfected Scottish broom is becoming harder to find. Heavily galled bushes are dying. This is only likely to enhance broom's efficacy as nurse canopy, opening up more quickly for native take-overs. Some people have noticed similar galls on native brooms and feared that the alien mites have jumped hosts. Fear not. Galls on native brooms are caused by a native mite (*Aceria carmichaeliae*), always about but largely overlooked.

In early March Brocheries Pond was nearly dry but nonetheless alive with innumerable blue damselflies, and a few red ones, in an orgy of coupling. These are wonderfully colourful insects. New Zealand fauna and flora have a bit of a reputation for subdued and sombre hues, not fully deserved. Hinewai's birds, for example, include bellbirds in mossy greens, and brown creepers in low-key khaki, but also kingfishers that



flash new meanings into "blue" and "green" whenever sunshine catches them with unexpected fire.

A native uprising

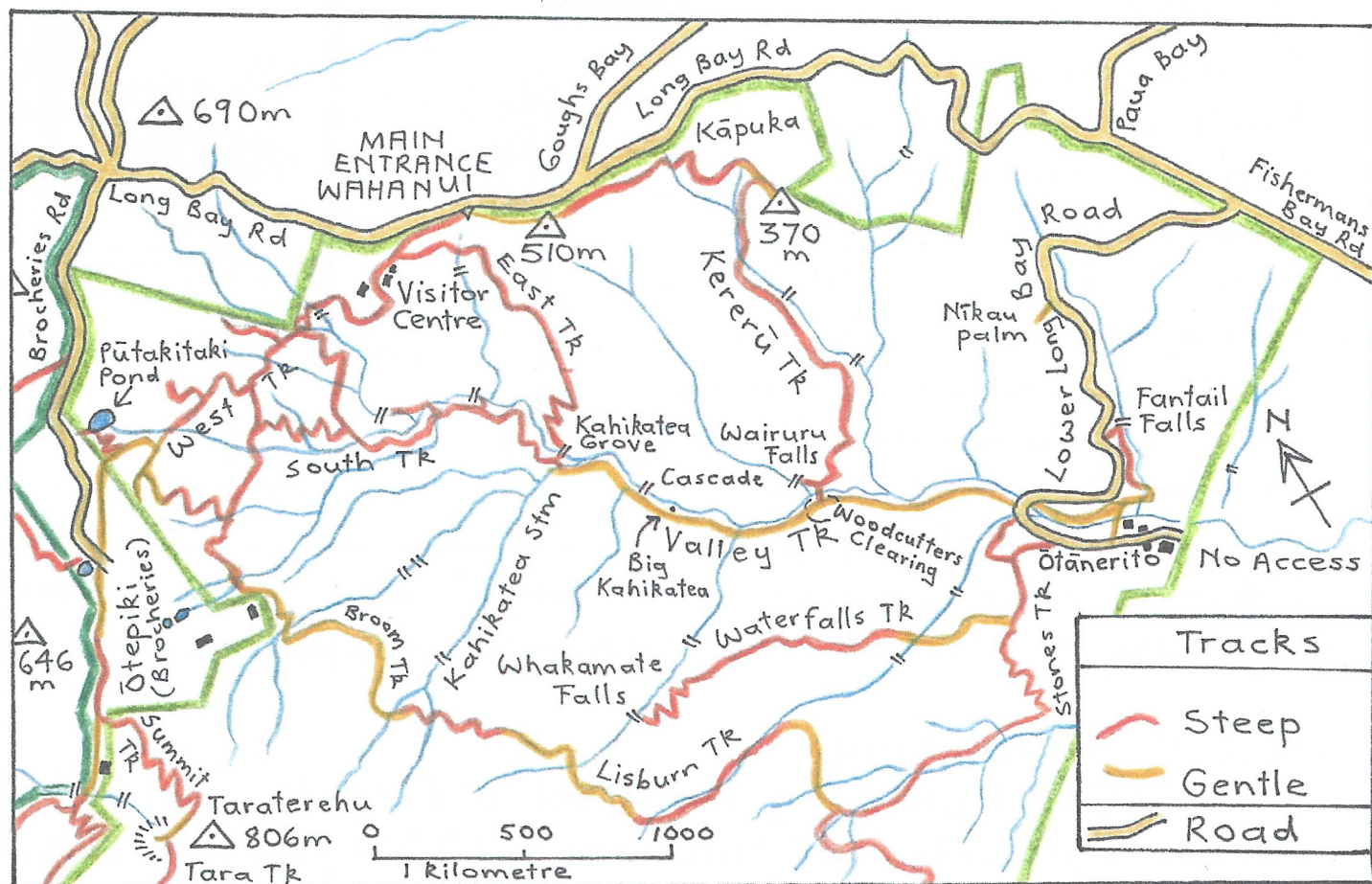
In 2011 lightning kindled a fire that burned across a quarter of Hinewai's 1250 hectares. What burned was nearly all gorse scrub with scattered

10 emergent natives. We thought at the time that regeneration of native forest had been set back 20 years. But we under-estimated Nature's recuperative powers. Only 8 years have slipped by, but we have now pretty much caught up. Broom and gorse are back, of course (they boom on a bit of burning), but many of the razed natives have resprouted and are busy reclaiming their *mana whenua*.

Many ways in

"Wahanui" is an interesting Māori word; it translates as "big mouth" or "main entrance." Many visitors enter Hinewai this way, calling in on the Visitor Centre before being swallowed up in regenerating forest along West Track. Many others walk directly up from Akaroa, climbing Summit Track to the 800m brink of Taraterehu Bluff. This wonderful viewpoint is accessible also along Tara Track from the 690m summit of Stony Bay Road.

Lower parts of Hinewai provide a nice contrast to these steep high places. Past the Paua Bay turn-

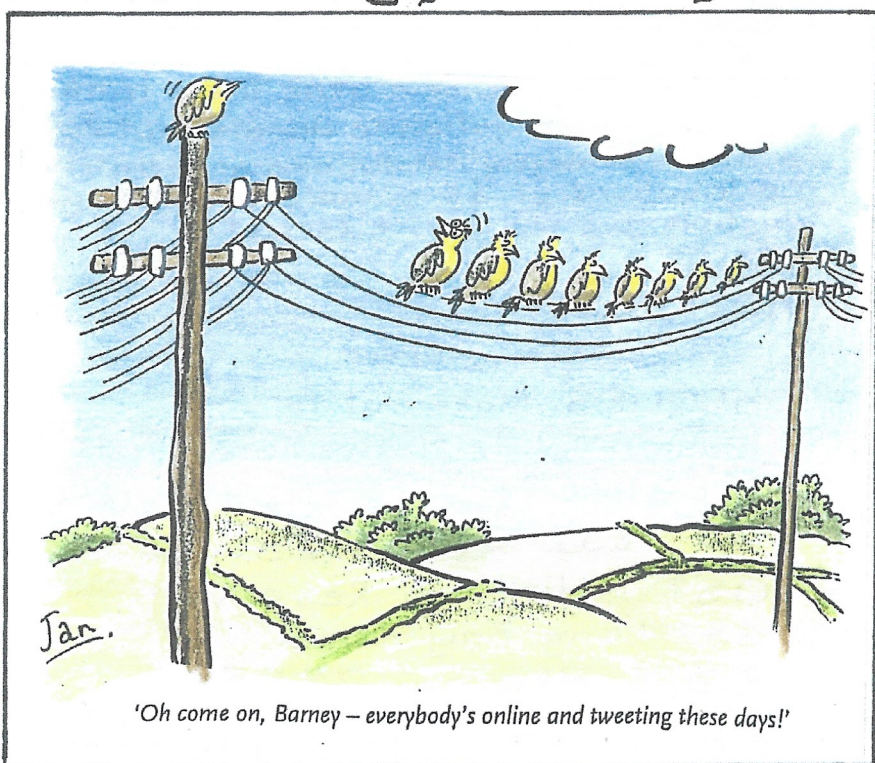


off, lower Long Bay Road turns sharply right // at the intersection where Fishermans Bay Road goes straight ahead. You wind on down for two more kilometres to the roadbridge across Narbey Stream, flanked all the way by beautifully regenerating native forest, faced for the last 300 descending metres with a full-frontal view up bushy Ōtānerito Valley to the western skyline. It may be hard to believe that this entire scene was dominated by gorse three decades ago. How much gorse can you spy now? [Correct answer — not a lot — Ed.].

By track or road, now that you are down on the level valley floor, several walking options present themselves, some seriously uphill as in the upper valley, but some so gradual as to be almost flat, for a while at least. Valley Track is a gentle joy, a riverside bush walk slowly gaining height upvalley, until the way steepens suddenly at last, just past Kahikatea Stream.

Staying in touch

Hugh's delight in using older, gentler, less frenetic means of communication has resulted in some confusion. Hinewai does have an email address [hinewaireserve@gmail.com] but the messages go to Paul and Tricia's computer at Ōtānerito Homestead, one hour's walk away from Hugh's low-tech home on Papakaika Meadow. Tricia dutifully responds with an automatic explanation and prints out the message for Hugh, to deliver whenever,



'Oh come on, Barney — everybody's online and tweeting these days!'

12 [It can take a few days - Ed.]. He replies in good old-fashioned envelopes, helping N.Z. Post eke out its ebbing existence. Hinewai is out of cellphone range but you can easily catch Hugh in the evenings, between 7.30 and 9.30, on his landline (03 304 8501) or even write to him at R.D. 3 Akaroa 7583. A letter will follow.

Receipts and thankyou's have not yet reached the following generous supporters because Hugh's otherwise sophisticated shoe box has failed to deliver their details. If anyone can provide postal addresses or phone numbers for these unacknowledged heroes, you will be much appreciated: Bruce and Rosa Allan, B.S. Gilchrist, S.J. and G.R. Clarke, John and Kamik Gould, I.A. McLeay, C.L. Young.

With help from friends

Tricia organised a fund-raising art exhibition in the city. She called it "Birds of a Feather", whistled up a flock of artistic friends, and all together they laid not a lot less than \$1000 into Hinewai's land purchase nest.

Kind rural neighbours lent us electric tools to trial on windfalls and tracks. Two equally kind and generous supporters, hearing of this, made a targetted donation for a fossil-fuel-free chainsaw. Mostly, of course, we use hand tools, that run on muscle power and meusli.

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

NAME

ADDRESS

CHEQUES Make out to

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