

# Pīpipi

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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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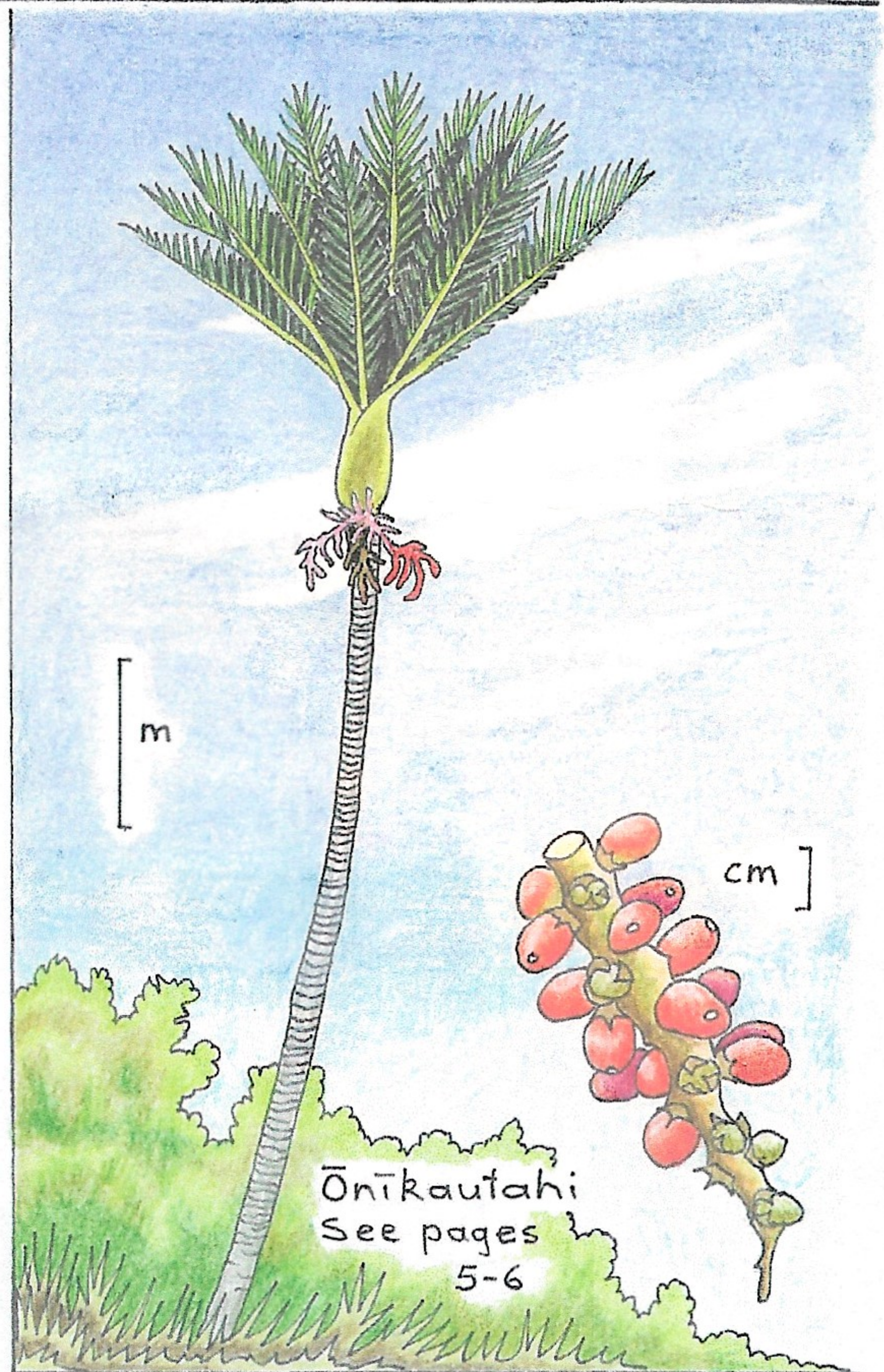
November 2020

## A worried world

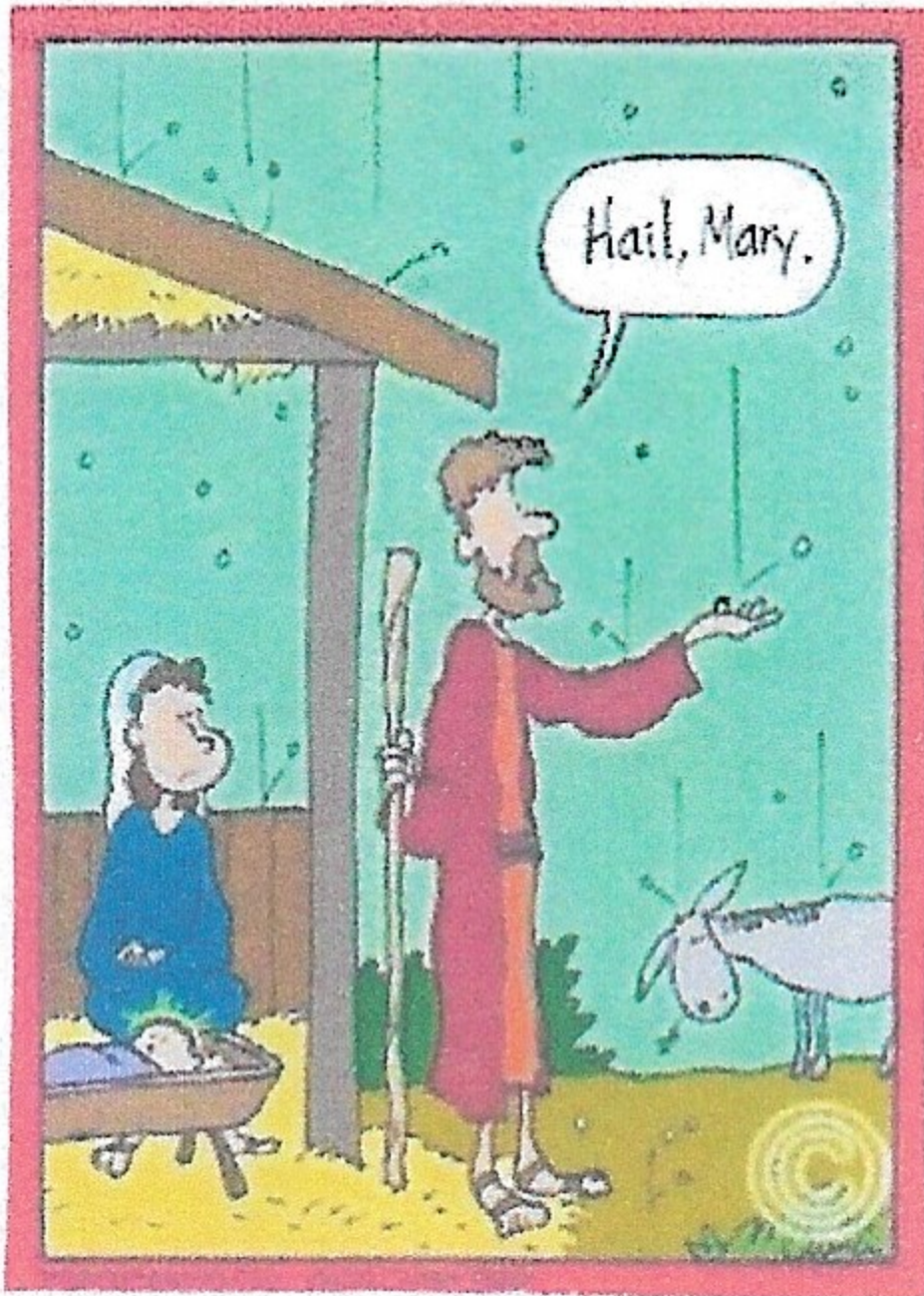
We live in troubled times. As I write, though, Hinewai is covid-free, a generous dollop of rain has just restrained a worryingly dry Spring, Aotearoa has recently re-elected a kind and decisive leader, forests grow, streams flow and birds sing. Brown creepers / pīpipi, a delightful little forest bird abundant on the reserve, continue to chirrup as cheerfully as ever about how good life is across hundreds of hectares of regenerating forest.

## A warming world

Winter this year was uncannily warm and only briefly wet, following an unusually warm dry autumn. At the end of May NIWA revealed that it was now 40 consecutive months since New Zealand



2 had experienced below average temperatures. Hinewai's June rainfall briefly bucked the moisture deficit; 387 mm at Skyline rain gauge roughly equalled the tally for all the preceding

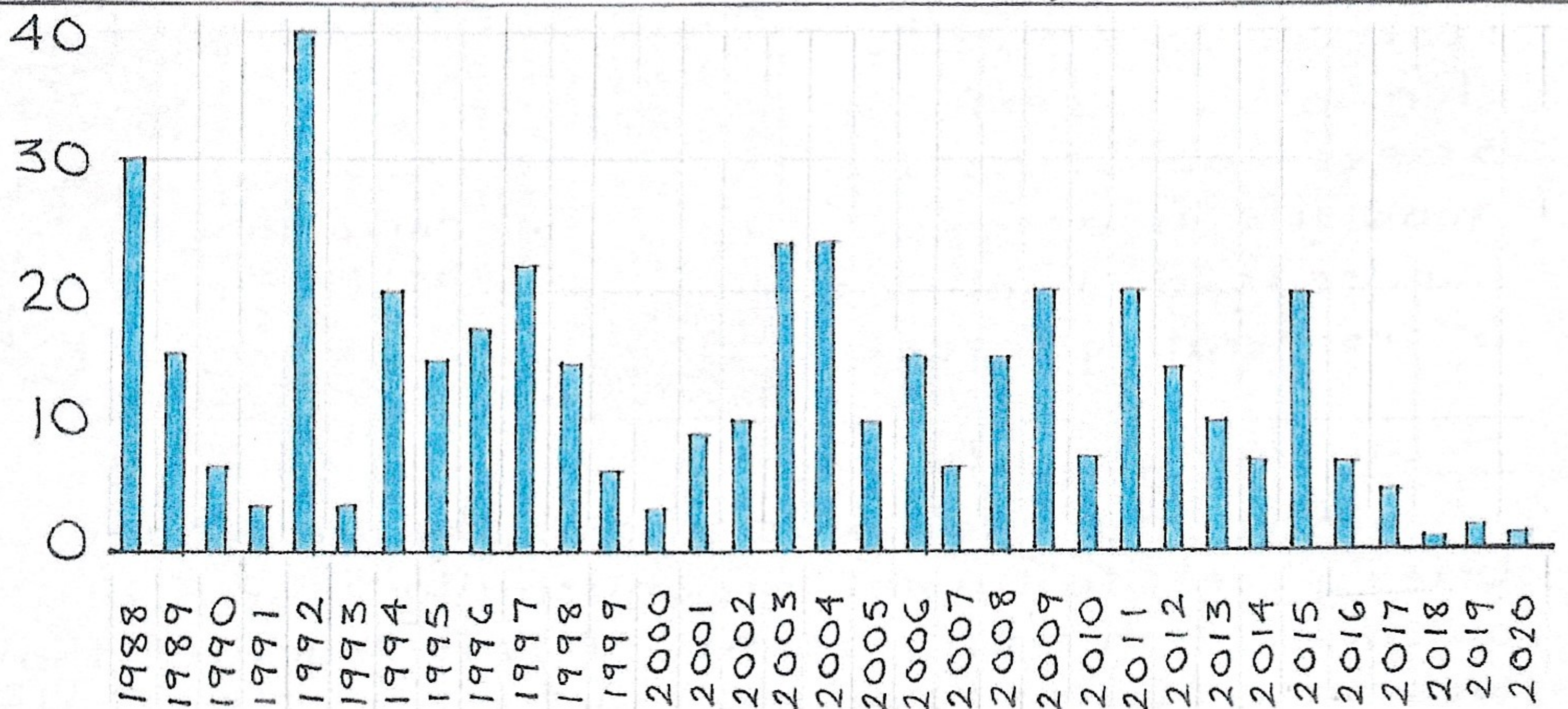


five months. But July and August ebbed in to a thirsty Spring. It was also the fifth winter in a row with almost no snow on Banks Peninsula, and likely the least snowy winter on record in the Southern Alps, off to the west.

We have been recording weather at Hinewai for 33 years, long enough, one wonders, to see if trends linked to global warming

can be detected in the data. There have certainly been almost snowless years before, but nothing to equal 2016 - 2020. Was there anything comparable to this year's droughty Spring? There was. 1988 shows 58 drought days through September, October and November. September 1988 is the driest month we have ever recorded - only 6.4 mm. That Spring was much drier than any other, 2020 included. Earlier records from Akaroa imply that 1980 and 1982 suffered Spring droughts too, possibly worse than 1988.

Depth (cm) of deepest snowpack each year at Hinewai weather station (450m above sea level).



## Gone viral

During nation-wide Level 4 Lockdown we closed the Visitor Centre, but not the tracks. Nevertheless, for 33 days we saw almost no-one. When Level 3 began near the end of April, Government edicts allowed people to travel no further than 30 minutes by vehicle from their home base, but city people seemed to ignore this. Hinewai was suddenly peopled again. The big difference was that Kiwi walkers were no longer joined by international tourists. Did this make our visitors seem a little bland and boring? Not at all. Kiwis themselves are a pretty diverse lot, with interesting ancestries not just from the Pacific and Europe (Māori, Pasifika and Pākehā) but from Asia, Africa, the Americas, and beyond. Added to this mix were overseas people who were trapped here by closing borders (most didn't mind too much, they said), or were already on long-term visitor visas. We found we could still practise greetings across a wide range of tongues [although Hugh has temporarily forgotten how to say "hello" in Estonian - Ed.]. Nor were overall numbers noticeably thinned. Prime Minister Jacinda had urged New Zealanders to become internal tourists and support local economies. Not a few had come home from afar, quarantined themselves for two weeks, and eagerly renewed old friendships with their natal mountains, hills, bush and sea.

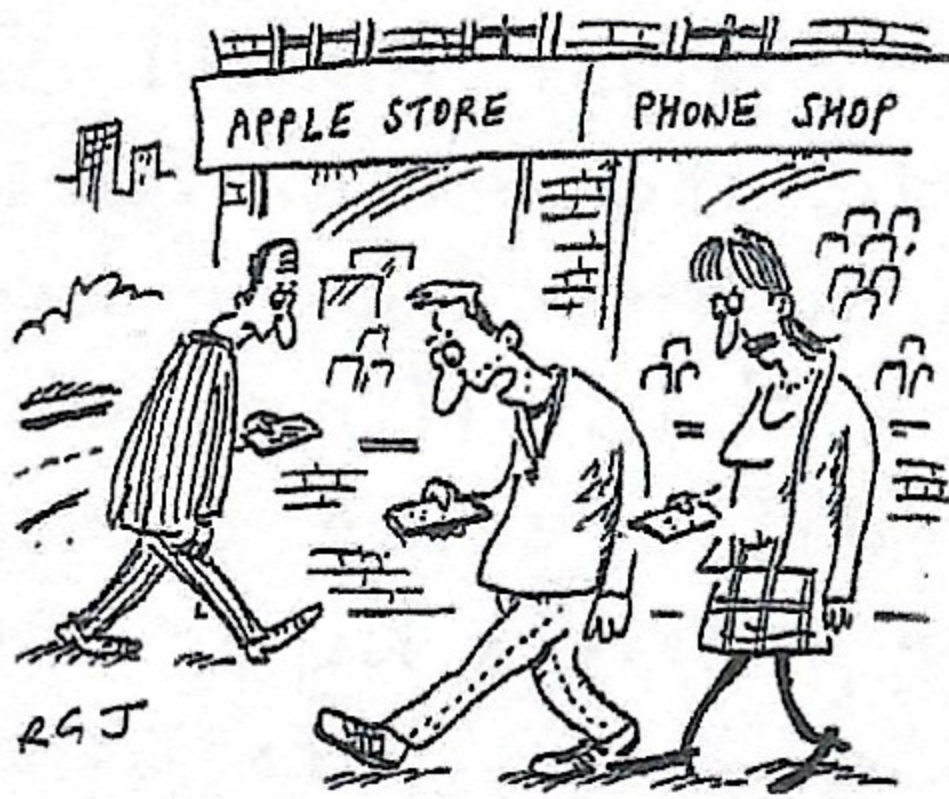
As Pīpipi 52 goes to print, we are all at Level 1 (touch wood), feeling extraordinarily lucky and no doubt infuriatingly smug.

## Finding themselves lost

Hinewai has clear tracks, and signposts at every junction. It's a challenge to get lost. Very few do.

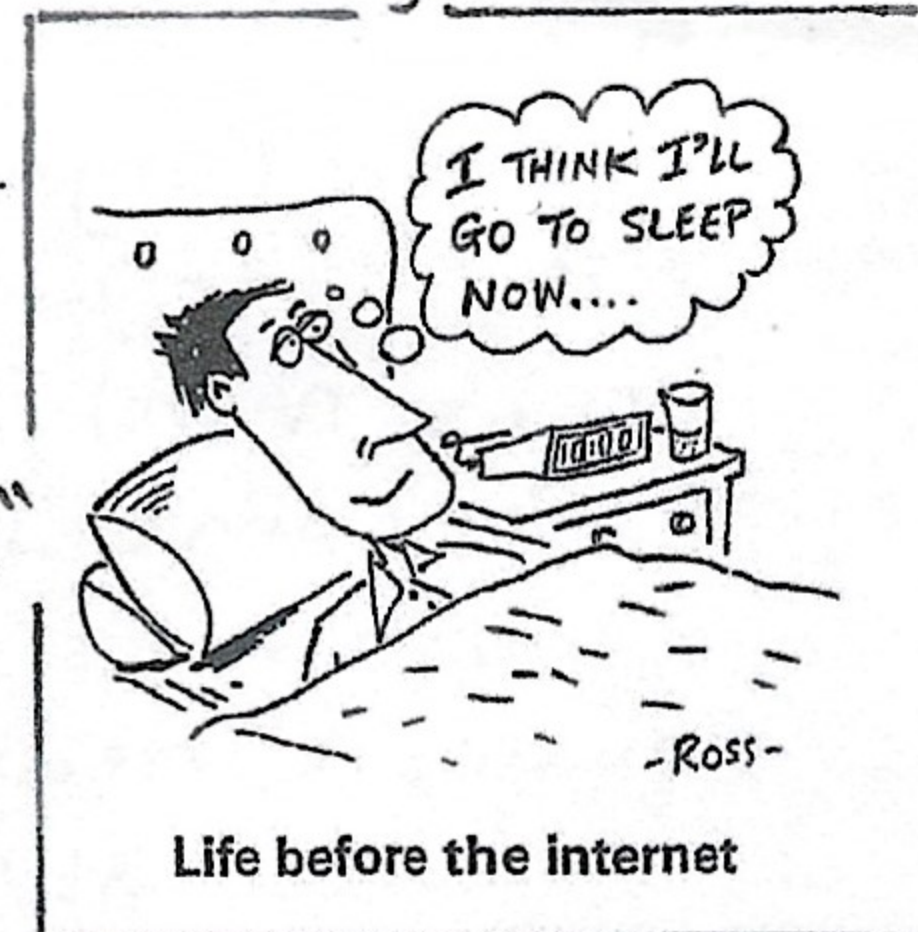
In August, two young adventurers managed to lose each other between Wahanui carpark and the Visitor Centre, no mean feat. Eyes locked to their

4 "smart" phones one headed on down Wahanui Track, the other set off at a right angle towards Jules Knob. Thinking her friend was ahead of her, she kept on walking all the way to Wairuru Falls, 90 minutes away. Meanwhile her erstwhile companion panicked, unable to believe how someone so solid and real could "just vanish into thin air." We insisted there were more likely explanations. Hours later they were re-united.



"I've got an amazing new app... it shows you the road ahead, so you can see where the hell you're going"

Only three weeks later, two more young ones with their life-enhancing devices walked up Curry Track from Akaroa. Instead of curling around on to Purple Peak Track for the descent, they were bewitched by West Track, 180° off course. After a while they met Mohini, out for a quick break from Spring-cleaning the Lodge. "Where is the Visitor Centre?" they asked her. "Nearly there" said Mohini, "just keep going." But when she returned to the Lodge she found the youngsters looking very puzzled. "We meant the Akaroa Visitor Centre" they said.



Life before the internet

## Encounters

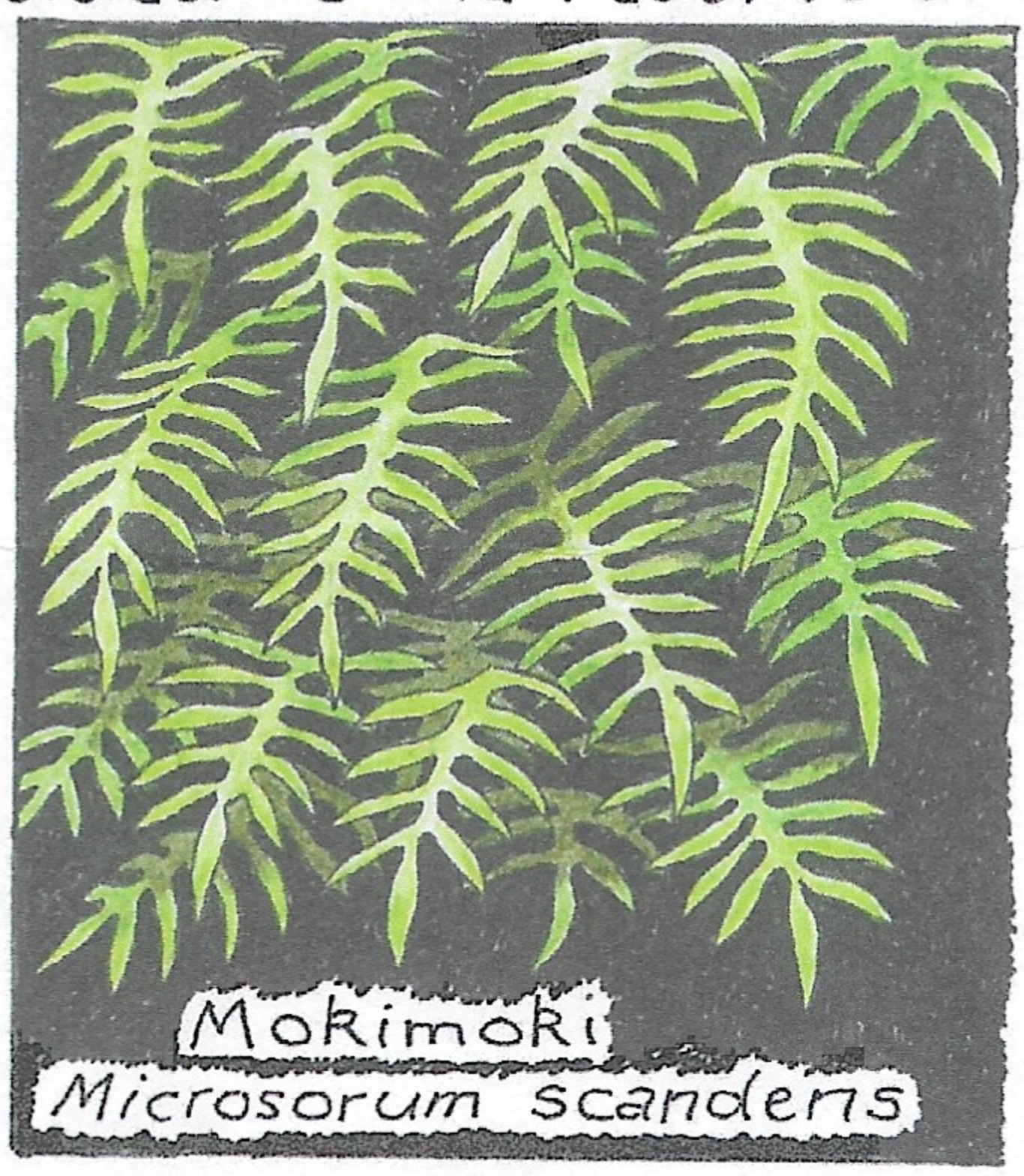
A young visitor from Christchurch could hardly contain his newly found enthusiasm for bird photography. He asked if there was anything really special he might have missed and should look out for. "Falcons" said Hugh at once, "breeding here again after a gap of many years. You would have to be lucky to see one though." The boy's eyes ignited. "I photographed one!" he exclaimed. Hugh immediately wondered if he had mistaken the common Rāhu or harrier hawk for the far-less-frequent falcon, but he shouldn't have doubted. The picture on the digital camera

was unmistakably kārearea, perched on a branch, looking superciliously out from the screen.

At midday on the 14th of September Hugh and Andrew downed tools and broke in to a fine rendition [solely their opinion; there was no-one else around to hear them - Ed.] of "Pō-rarekare ana", thus sharing the "Māori Language Moment across the Motu" when a million Kiwis were reported to have spoken or sung in Te Reo as part of Mahuru Māori (Māori Language September).

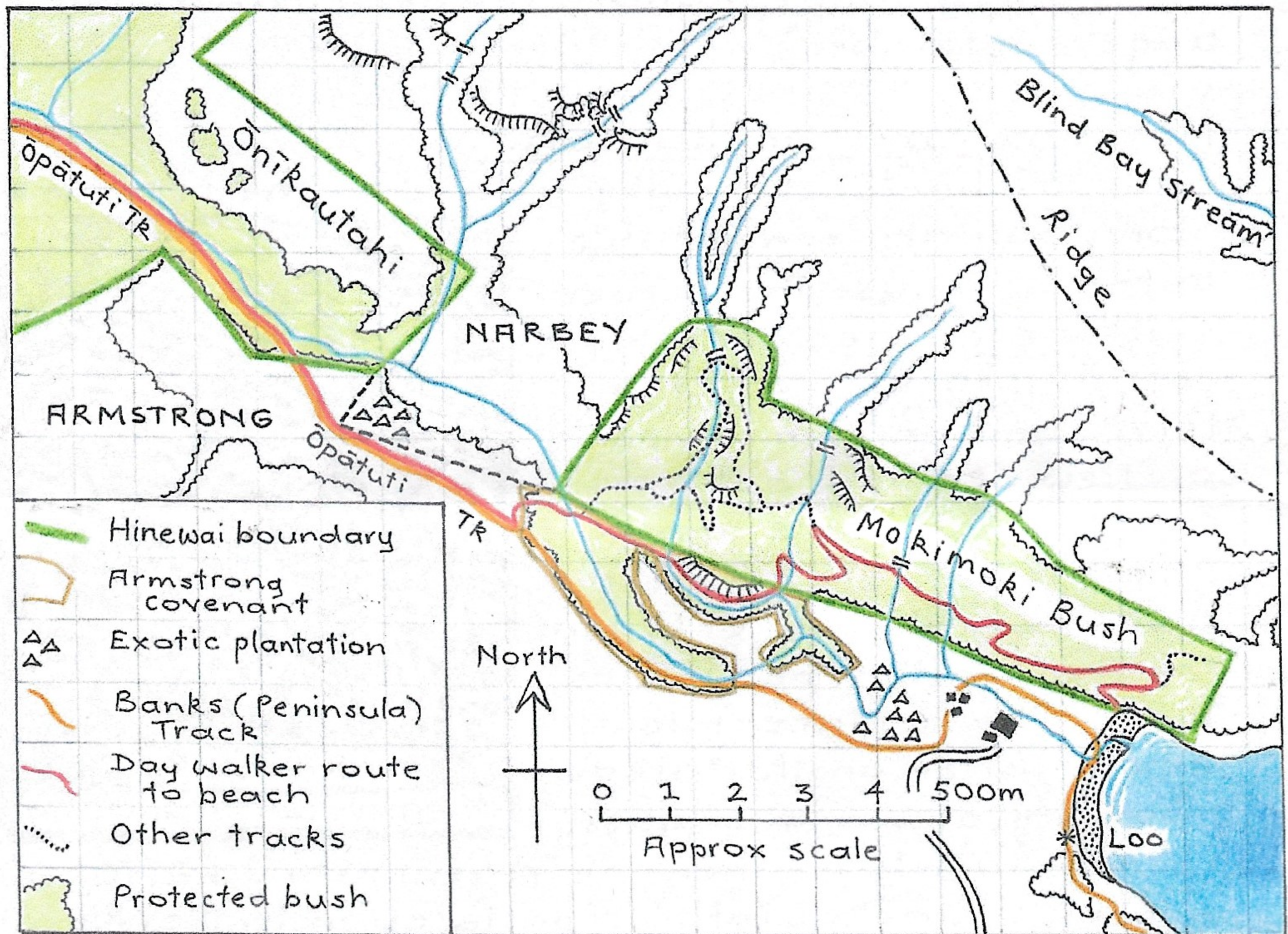
Mokimoki and Ōnīkautahi

The 37 hectares newly added to the reserve at Stony Bay are remarkable in many ways. The larger block of 25 hectares we call "Mokimoki" after a fern common in many parts of New Zealand but very rare on Banks Peninsula. Also special is a tall nīkau palm near the waterfall in the main gully. The smaller block (12 hectares) is named after another nīkau, standing alone on a grassy hillside and taller than the regenerating kānuka nearby. "Ōnīkautahi" translates in to Te Reo Pākehā as "the place of the solitary nīkau palm". We are honouring an existing grazing lease on Ōnīkautahi; sheep will continue to graze it for a little longer. This won't favour immediate recruitment of palms and ferns, but it will encourage the spread of kānuka and mikimiki by checking competition from tall exotic grasses.



Mark Armstrong had several years ago established good walking tracks through Mokimoki Bush and we will retain most or all of them. Day walkers descending Stony Bay Valley on Ōpātuti

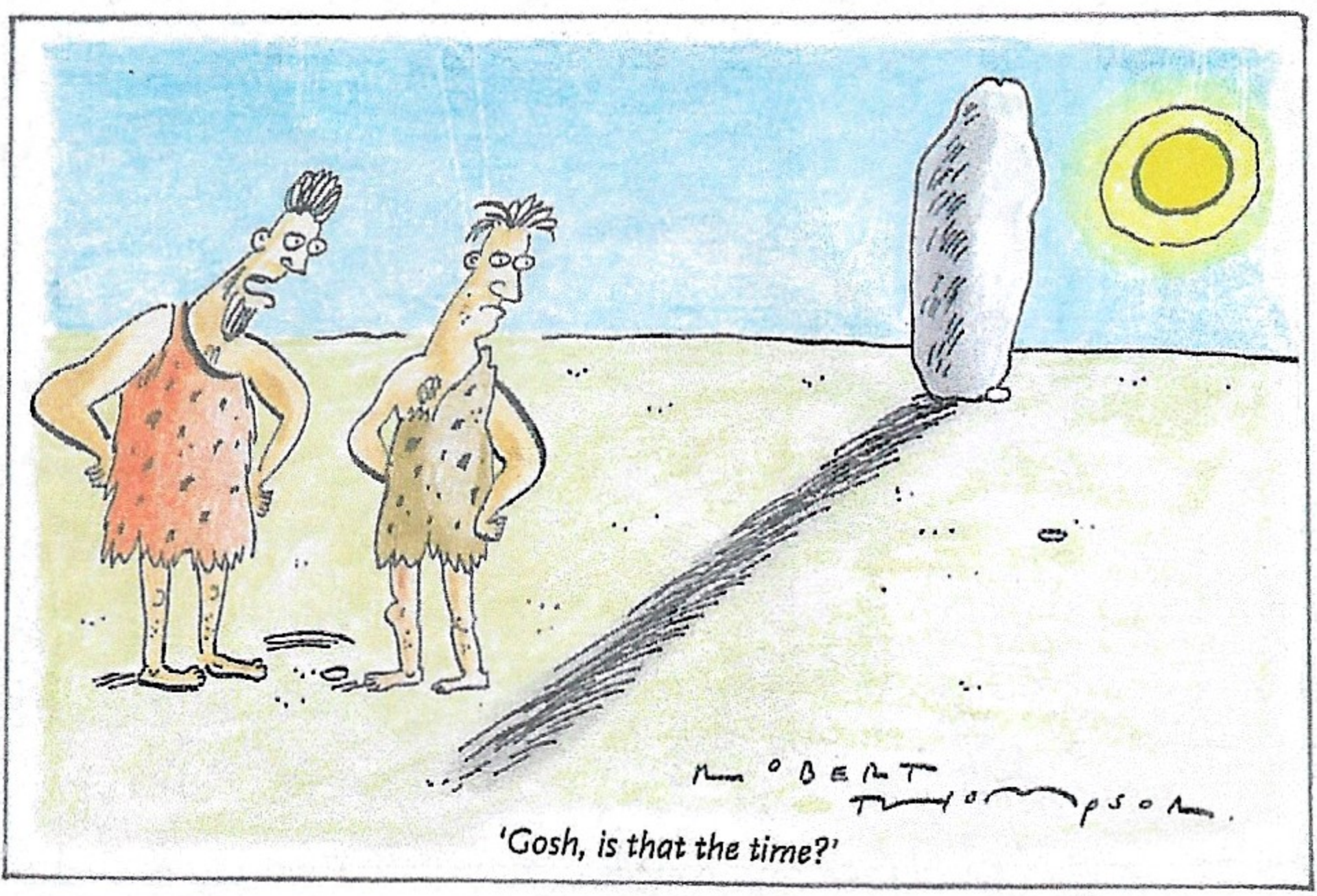
6 Track will veer off the Banks Track route, traverse the Armstrongs' new stream-side covenant, and follow Mokimoki Track to the sea. This should, we hope, keep day walkers from tripping over the Armstrong family or Banks Track walkers, who overnight in the Track Village near the homestead. They may well trip over fur seals, though, snoozing under coastal trees, disguised as furry brown logs.



### Signs of passing times

Making suitable new signage for Ōpātuti Track and Mokimoki Bush involves carefully measuring how long each section takes to walk so that times can be suggested. The trouble is, people move at wildly different speeds. Ageing and disintegrating, Hugh reckoned that if he strolled along at his current rate that would give maximum times, then if a fit young thing were enlisted for measurements at the other end of the scale, a credible mean

could be computed. Tentative results suggest that Ms or Mr Average could walk from Stony Bay Saddle to Stony Bay and back in around 5 hours, and the Ōpātuti-Pikimai circuit at the head of the valley might expend some 2½ hours.



'Gosh, is that the time?'

One thing is certain; someone will question these estimates within a week of the signs going up!

Slow down!

The addition of Mokimoki and Ōnīkautahi should keep us happily busy for a while. At the same time (we cannot pretend otherwise) there are further land possibilities which make really good sense from both ecological and management perspectives. As a Charitable Trust we enter negotiations



'This should open a few doors for you'

painfully aware that "fair market prices" have to be at least our starting points. We have recently paid for detailed independent valuations that can fall well short of expectations from prospective vendors. So we win some and lose some - c'est la vie, as we say in Akaroa. Meanwhile we are steadily strengthening our land purchase fund, using carbon credits and some wonderfully generous donations.

Life on the Wild Side

Thirty three species of shags and cormorants (Phalacrocoracidae to you and me) share the world with us. Aotearoa is a particularly shaggy country,

8 squawking well above its weight. No fewer than twelve species breed in our region, eight of them found nowhere else. Five species live on Banks Peninsula, four common, one rarely seen. Populous colonies of spotted shag/pārekareka are a striking feature of our coastal cliffs.



Numbers of pied shags have increased dramatically in recent decades. In late autumn one dropped in on Paul and Tricia's decking at Ōtānerito. Feeling honoured, they fed it fish. It seemed in no hurry to leave. Word must have spread because a few days later a black shag / kawau pū flew over the homestead and dropped in to the stream. This one caught its own fish.

Of all our close encounters with our resident falcons, none was closer than on one cloudy November day when Hugh and Andrew were talking to two visitors at Hugh's gate. Slowed to a relaxed cruising speed, a falcon came straight for the startled humans as if sizing

Kāruhiruhi / pied shag  
*Phalacrocorax varius*

them up, passing at head height a bare metre away, then zipping on across the meadow. Currently the favourite food of these fierce little hunters is song thrush. Four talking apes must have seemed a tad too ambitious.

### Awesome skies

Out of sight of Akaroa town, and far from its lights, the dark heavens of Hinewai's Ōtānerito and Stony Bay Valleys are an awe-filled wonder



to behold. It was a rude shock, then, when one clear autumn night Megan phoned from Putawētā, on the Akaroa side of the hill, to alert Hugh to numerous linked satellites passing overhead like captured stars. Hugh nipped outside to see them, distinctly rattled at this puffed-up human intrusion in to the firmament. A morepork was hooting reassuringly nearby.

More than stars perform in the extravagant theatre of Hinewai's skies. One June morning Andrew watched a meteor streak in on an angle through the atmosphere, leaving a white trail in the pre-dawn gloom, the head swelling and turning green before exploding above the sea. Two days later at the Heritage Park (which faces west across the harbour) two young English women were arriving "to see the sunset". They expressed disappointment that the sun was obscured by thick high cloud. Hugh reassured them. "In a few minutes", he promised, "the sun would drop in to the clear sky of the NW arch above the mountains, with beautiful low-angle light on the hills and gorgeous colour on the clouds." They looked dubious. But just as he biked away, the sun obliged. Excited English cries of "ooh" and "aah" erupted behind him.

Spring brought forth two spectacular displays of lightning, fortunately out to sea. (After the Big Fire of 2011 any hint of lightning brings on panic attacks; gorse is highly inflammable. Thank heavens, the sea is not). From a single mountain of cumulus in otherwise cloudless blue, the second storm performed for more than 5 hours, flashing every 5 seconds or so, later spaced to 10 or 20 seconds as the tumult moved slowly out to sea, finally vanishing over the horizon, at midnight.

"Pip" to the Post

Our new electric side-by-side "Pip", combined with Paul's driving skills and the kindness of our Narbey neighbours who let "Pip" pass along their

10 farm tracks, has eased the transport of staff, tools and heavy materials between Ōtānerito and Stony Bay. On request Paul demonstrated "Pip"'s prowess to City Council Parks and Reserves staff worker Roy, who was impressed with the performance on the steep and sometimes slippery terrain. Not long afterwards the Council purchased a clone of "Pip" for their own reserve work.

### Leaving his post

Andrew Youngson reckons 65 is just the age when one should retire gracefully. A few health hiccups helped to ratify this conclusion. By the time you are reading this newsletter Hinewai will have lost him.

Andrew was a Trustee from 2002 to 2019 and a paid worker from 2015 to 2020. For decades at his family home in Heathcote he has been planting native trees and ferns which now mantle much of his large suburban section. He is looking forward to spending more time with his forest and his family. We're sure to see him again though.

For the next little while Hugh and Paul will front the workfaces, hopefully with continuing generous help from stalwart Peter of Tai Tapu. Numerous people offer time and muscle power to Hinewai, and we wish we could take up their kind suggestions more freely. Practicalities of training, supervision, health and safety, numbers, efficiency, equipment, accommodation, weather, etc., mean that we probably sometimes sound a bit negative and ungrateful. Remember though that the reserve is freely open for you to explore whenever you like. Soon we will be advertising a paid position, initially just a summer posting, as we seek to find just the right addition to the team.

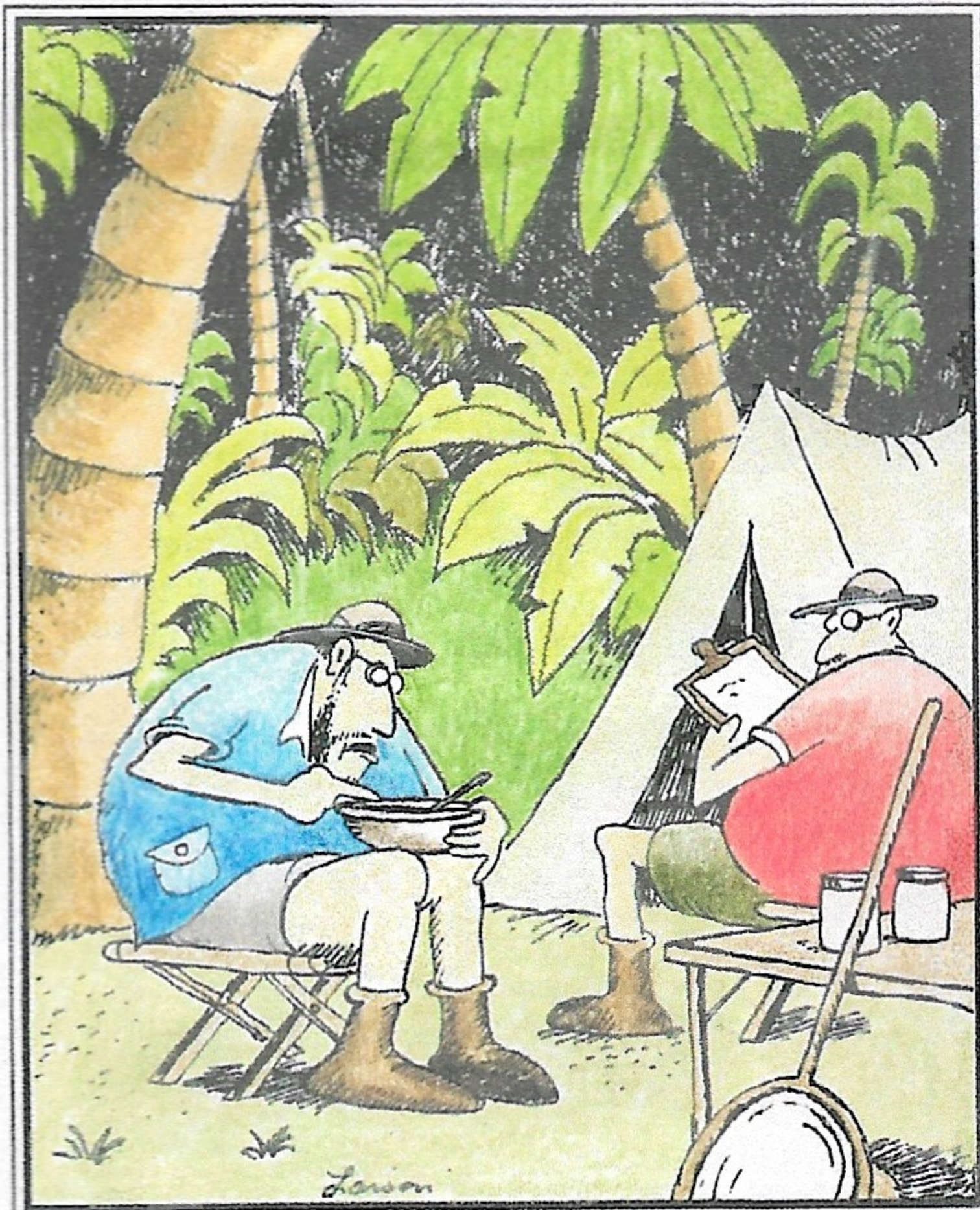
Our Trust Board too is evolving. Currently our Trustees are (in strictly alphabetical order - that way we don't offend nobody - Ed.): Paul Broady,

Bruce Hansen, Nicholas Head, Thomas Mac-  
Tavish, David Round and Hugh Wilson. A  
glance in their direction though would reveal a  
certain sameness – all male, all pale, all  
largely monolingual, for example. As a first  
step towards better diversity, plans are afoot to  
add a person who just happens to be fluently  
bilingual and also of the female persuasion. In  
Pīpipi 53 we hope to give you an update and a  
rundown about the Trust and the Trustees.

### Contrary conifers continue causing concern

Invasive wilding conifers from the remote  
northern hemisphere cause angst among Kiwi  
ecologists. Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*) is  
number one on Banks Peninsula, followed by  
Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Both are  
magnificent trees in their own right and in their  
own native North America; both are important  
timber crops in New Zealand. Despite burgeoning  
plantations, we agree with the Banks Peninsula  
Conservation Trust that the wilding war here is  
winnable though wearisome.

It can be discouraging. Paul, for example, spotted  
a pine on steep bushy  
slopes in Stony Bay Valley,  
visible from only one point  
on Ōpātuti Track but  
(we thought) once seen,  
that's one more prisoner  
taken. While Hugh con-  
tinued track work, Paul  
launched himself on to  
what he fondly imagined  
was a direct line to the  
offender. It hid. Stray  
sheep do this, but they  
are not 10m tall and  
rooted to the spot. Two



"Hey! What's this *Drosophila melanogaster* doing in  
my soup?"

12 hours later, scratched and bleeding, bowed but not defeated, Paul met up with Hugh again. Before long we will mount a counter-offensive, sneaking in unseen, we hope, from above.

### Check this out

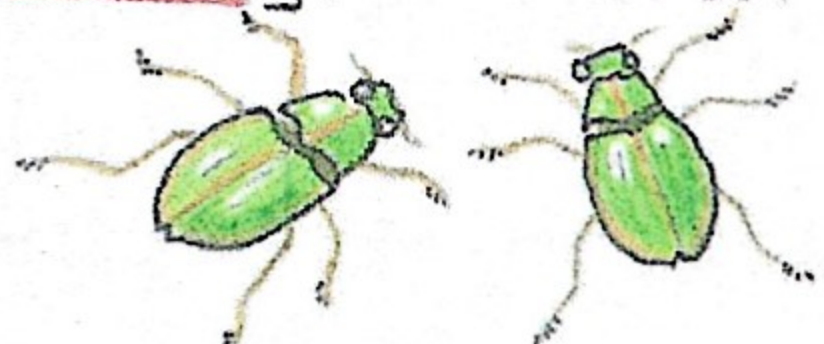
We deeply regret that the Digital Age has conspired with the banks to abolish cheques – an unfortunate and unforgivable policy of elder abuse and digital exclusion. Needless to say, donations by cheque to Hinewai will be welcome to the last. BNZ Akaroa plans to drop the guillotine in July 2021. Like other naive institutions they claim that other means are available to transfer funds. Not for everyone, though, especially those of us, old, young and ageless, who think that a personal computer for every individual on the planet, is not quite as essential as food, fresh air, shelter, clean water, simple face to face human contact, and a survivable climate. *E aue!* as we say in Aotearoa.




### Can you help?

We hate being unable to acknowledge and receipt donations, but we seem to have no postal address or contact for the following:

Bell, Ms A.E; Boulton, Simon (Ellie Lott, birthday); Bristow, T. (T/A HOUND); Frankpitt, A.R.; Galbraith, P.S. (Pete); Gilchrist, B.S.; Guedj, Adele S.; Halverson, M.H.; McLeay, I.A.; Merfield, C.; Mouat-Carver, Mrs M.J.; Raravula, Meli; Raynel, R.A.; Roche, J.C.; Simcock, R.C.; Stockdill, S.A.; Surynt, Mr A.P.; Valerie (Duvauchelle); Whitlow, MLK; Young, Ms C.L.



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

NAME  
ADDRESS

**CHEQUES** Make out to  
Maurice White Native Forest Trust

**DIRECT CREDIT**  
BNZ Akaroa  
02 0832 0044225 00

**POST**: Hinewai Reserve  
632 Long Bay Road  
R.D. 3 Akaroa 7583

**HUGH'S PHONE** (Evenings)  
03 304 8501

CC 11107 [Pipipi 52]