

Pīpīpi

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

R.D.3 Akaroa 7583

53

May 2021

Desiccation

It's often hard to recall just how bad some weather was in years gone by. Farmers along the northern and southern flanks of Banks Peninsula reckon that this summer and autumn have been the driest they can remember. Around the coast this may well be true. Our own 33 years of weather records at Hinewai, however, suggest that 2020-21 has been only the third driest season we have so far suffered. Droughts are tricky to compare, but 1988-89 and 1998-99 stand out as distinctly drier.

A little stream that crosses West Track may provide a meaningful measure. Only twice – those two fearfully arid years – has Quiet Stream shut up altogether. A peek in mid-May this year revealed a lingering trickle, even as advancing showers showed some promise of a change.

Somehow the resilient native vegetation copes with



pārekareka/spotted shag

2 not being watered for weeks on end. Treat your household plants like that and they would soon succumb. It's scary though. Climate models suggest that increased global warming will intensify both the frequency and severity of periodic drought along the South Island's east coast, precisely where Banks Peninsula sticks out in to the Pacific like a sore thumb.



"You're not one of those idiots who believe in climate change are you?"

Water

Pūtakitaki Pond is another good gauge of drought-iness. It was still brimful at the start of February, but dropping noticeably by the middle of that month. By the end of March it was half-empty [or half-full, depending on how positive one feels about the World in General - Ed.]. As May got underway the level slipped below a stick we had placed to mark the lowest shoreline of last season. Autumn has brought a bit of rain, but not nearly enough to boost diminished streams or fill depleted pools.

Out on the headlands beyond Hinewai, springs failed. Some farmers had feed for their animals there but could not graze it for want of stock water.

Akaroa town had water woes too, not just from dwindling supply but because some small animals had snuck [is this a word? - Ed.] in to a supposedly secure reservoir and drowned there. Local old-timers thought this was not a big deal; indeed, opined Willie, a dose of good old bacteria can helpfully hone our immune systems. Brian told an entertaining tale about the Golf Club and a decomposing hare. Nevertheless, the Council drained the tainted tanks, restricted water use, and decreed that residents should boil their water until further notice.

Mokimoki Bush

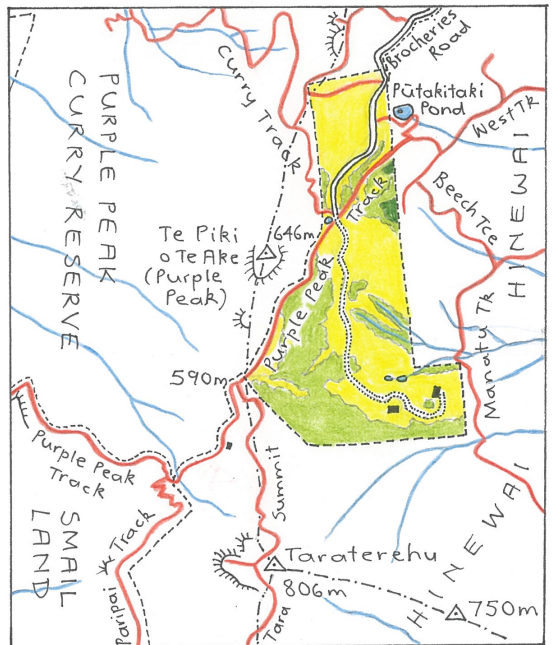
We made signs for the Stony Bay tracks, transported them in electric "Pip", and had them all in place by February. Some day-walkers are making the long trek down Stony Bay Valley to the sea, and Banks Track walkers with surplus energy are exploring Mokimoki Bush, as before, from the Armstrongs' Track Village.

Adding these 37 hectares to Hinewai was hugely helped by a generous bequest from Esther Fernandez, via the North Canterbury branch of Forest and Bird. Regular volunteer Peter Joyce and partner Annabel put in productive hours of track maintenance there.

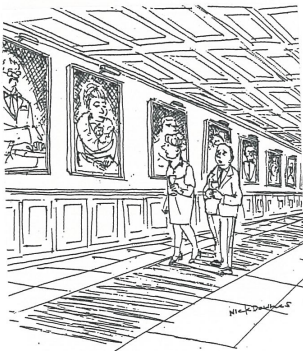
By March, Mokimoki Bush was showing severe drought stress, especially on kawakawa, māhoe and ferns – mostly on the rocky spurs though; the gullies stayed lush and green.

Ōtepiki and the Begley Family

Warren Begley, who bought Ōtepiki/Brocherries Flat from Frank Miessen in September 2017, is a force to be reckoned with. [Never end a sentence with with - Ed.]. [You just did - Hugh]. A Christchurch restaurateur, he



4 purchased the 31 hectares solely to make them part of a wider reserve complex. By then, Brocherie's Flat was entirely surrounded by reserve land, Hinewai to the south and east, Purple Peak Curry Reserve to the west and north. Purple Peak Track, a main walking artery in to Hinewai from Akaaroa, runs right through the heart of it. During Frank Miessen's 25 years he fenced off bush areas and leased out the open pasture for grazing. Warren destocked all of it, and initiated a conservation covenant with the QE II National Trust. When 110 hectares in the Hickory Bay Valley next to DoC's Ellangowan Reserve came up for sale in 2020, Warren felt it was too important to let slip in to the soiled hands of pine-planting "carbon farmers". He put in a bid, which was accepted. It was a financial stretch. Warren discussed matters with our Trust. He had fallen in love with Ōtepiki, and was reluctant to part with her. But we sorted out an arrangement which wins all round. The land will be "owned" by our Trust. (Hugh shared with Warren his own



'I come from a long line of people who have died'

unsolicited personal views about land "ownership" which he regards as a bizarre example of human hubris. "Toitū he whenua" goes the wise proverb, "whatungarongaro he tangata" - "the land alone endures; people vanish".)

Warren will stay involved with Ōtepiki, continue to use the upper dwelling as a retreat from city life, remove the big farm shed that Frank used as an unconsented house, and keep on maintaining the walking tracks.

Trustworthy

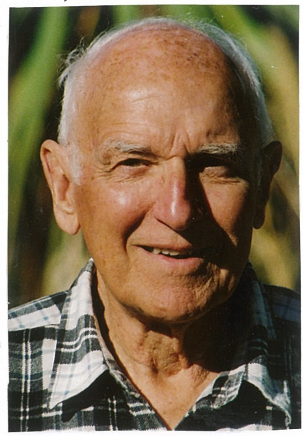
Pīpipi 52 promised an update and a rundown about Hinewai's Trust Board. That prompted further pleas from sensitive readers to be spared fresh attempts by Hugh at portrait drawing. Instead, Hugh

got out his trusty old film camera and pointed it at as many Trustees as he could muster.



David Round is currently our Chairperson. He recently retired from lecturing in Environmental Law at Canterbury University. He lives in a big old house at Port Levy / Koukourarata, northwest Banks Peninsula.

Bruce Hansen took over the financial role from



Maurice White in 2017 and threw himself in to it with enormous skill; energy and enthusiasm. He has emerged from a curious background in Presbyterian ministry and accountancy. He and wife Alison (a music teacher) live in Bishopdale in the c*xr-infested Swamp.



Hugh Wilson is both an on-site Kaitiaki and a Trustee. His leafy background is in Botany. His involvement with Hinewai goes back to the beginnings in 1987. [He can't draw people for peanuts - Ed.].

Nicholas (Nick) Head is also a botanist, but a much younger one. He worked with

the Department of Conservation (DoC) for many years, but is now Christchurch City Council's plant ecologist. He and his partner Anna live on Mount Pleasant, eastern Christchurch, with two young botanically-named daughters Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Holly (*Olearia ilicifolia*, not *Ilex aquifolium*).



Thomas (Tom) MacTavish is our youngest Trustee. He

6 works vigorously for DoC on Banks Peninsula from a home in Governors Bay. He hails from the little coastal village of Moeraki in North Otago. A few years ago he retraced the journey of Shackleton, Worsley and Crean across South Georgia. He has temporarily escaped the Trustee photo muster, missing in action as he was at the time.



← Paul Broady is a phycologist, recently retired from Canterbury University. He bloomed first in Lancashire in remote England, but has now lived much more of his life in Australasia, first on the big dry West Island, then on the mainland. He lives in Somerfield, Christchurch, but is

owned by Kāpuka, 16 hectares next to Mikimiki and Jules Knobs. Christina (Tina) Troup will formally transmogrify in to a Trustee at our next AGM in Spring. She has had a long involvement with Hinewai and is one of many part-owners of Ōtānerito Beach House (Hugh is another one). She is fluent in French, English and Ornithology. Her partner Penny is currently Chairperson of the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust (and yet another owner at the beach).



The cracked old manager's house

The house on the original 109 hectare Hinewai farmlet was built of poured concrete in the mid 1960s, so it was around two decades old when Hugh moved in, late in 1987. It was his home until March 2013 when he transferred to the new wooden house on Papakaika Meadow, some 100 metres to the west. The September 2010 quake had shocked him awake from deep slumber [along with the rest of Canterbury - Ed.]. He was sure the concrete walls were about to squash him like a pinned-down blowfly, but they only cracked here and there — damage that the Earthquake Assessors deemed cosmetic rather than structural.

We continued to use the building off and on. Andrew Youngson stayed there, part-time, during his 5-year stint on the work team. Lately Paul Broady has used it as a base for his work on Kā-puka. He also launched in to an impressive clean-up and clear-out. What with Andrew's departure [and Hugh's decrepitude - Ed.] our Trust mulled over what was needed to house near-future workers on the reserve. Trust minutes make many mentions of "the cracked old manager's house" and then ask for clarification: do those adjectives refer to the manager or the house? The outcome is one of this winter's big projects — revamping the cracked old manager's house for staff accommodation. Local builder, hunter, firefighter and all-round good Kiwi bloke David, backed by his multi-tasking partner Jan, is tackling the challenge. Notches already in his belt include visitor lodgings on Quail Island and the Rod Donald Hut above Little River.



"Physick for the cure of thy Ague". When was the last time we cleared out this medicine cabinet?"

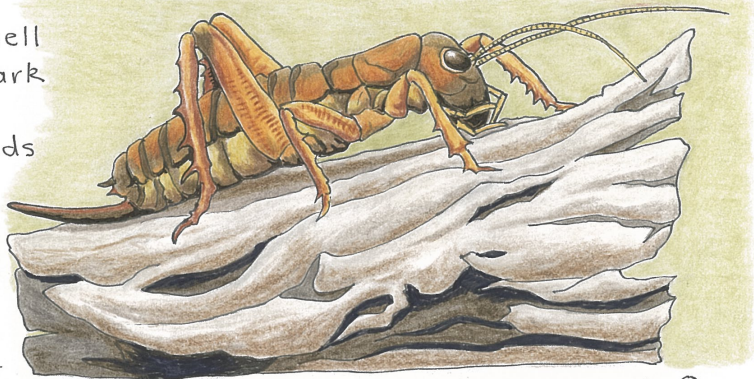
Vehicle-free Wahanui Track leads down from Long Bay Road to the houses and the Visitor Centre. Many of the bird-filled native trees regenerating here are labelled, and people tend to linger; instead of a 5 minute descent, some settle on a half hour dawdle. Nearly everyone appreciates the car-free ambience. Not so two power-company gorillas who arrived to check the transformer. One was carrying a ladder and a big chip on his shoulder. He could scarcely believe there was no vehicle access. He growled that they might find something wrong with the transformer and would then have to bring in "a great big bulldozer" and then "a great big truck" to get "right up to the power pole." Getting this off his chest made the gorilla feel a lot better.

8 However, to revamp the old house we do need to transport a lot of heavy items up and down Wahanui Track. A bit reluctantly, Paul and Hugh pruned back the sides, just enough to allow "Pip", the electric side-by-side, to wend its quiet way down through the trees.

Mind your language

Linguists in the early 19th century made a good job of transcribing spoken Māori in to a written language. They often indicated longer vowels simply by doubling them. More recently, the alternative of placing a macron over the long vowel has become standard.

Just as well too! When Mark Nixon and Megan Reynolds "acquired" some land above Akaroa's Grehan Valley they wanted to refer to it by a name,



Akaroa tree wētā (natural size) ♀

preferably in Māori, that might honour some appropriate natural feature. They settled on "putawētā", and quickly grasped the importance of those little lines above the 'ā's. Putawētā (literally "wētā holes") is a charming small tree with marbled leaves and frosty white flowers. On the other hand, putaweta is a poo pit.

Language is full of pitfalls, but also rich rewards. Down at the Akaroa Supermarket Hugh had been gathering some Hindi phrases from Manpreet. Multi-linguist Mohini suggested one day at the Visitor Centre that on his next shopping expedition he might surprise Manpreet with "Namaste Manpreet. Aap bahot sundar ho!" "What does that mean?" asked Hugh. "You'll see"

said Mohini. The result was beyond expectation. Hugh found Manpreet restocking some shelves. "Namaste" he said. "Aap bahot sundar ho!" Manpreet gave a piercing squeal of delight that turned every head in the little supermarket. "Oh oh" she cried, "Hugh has just told me I am very beautiful - and in my own language!"

All around us

Adjoining Hinewai on the Akaroa side of Taraterehu / Stony Bay Peak are 76 hectares of mostly steep bush, treeland, gorse and pasture at the head of Balquerie Stream. Who belongs to this land? James and Tracey Smail. James is a cousin of Mark Armstrong (at Stony Bay); his dad Tom lived his final years in a wee house further downvalley. James and Tracey live in Sydney (Oz) but they leased out their land to a local farmer. Years ago they also let us route Paripai Track along their upper margin. Forming Paripai Track there rather than on our side of the boundary made life a lot simpler. The track became very popular with day walkers who enjoyed its spacious views and the grand circle it provided up, over and around Taraterehu and its splendid bluff (= paripai). When we had to re-route the Banks Peninsula Track in 2017, Paripai Track became a crucial section. The Smails were happy for it to be used thus.

Mid-January this year a message arrived from Oz: "We no longer have sheep on our property" wrote James. "Our long-term plan to regenerate the bush is moving a step closer."

Smail land, Putawētā and Warren Begley's Hickory Bay venture are just the closest of several new Banks Peninsula conservation initiatives. The Rod Donald Trust set its sights high, securing 500 hectares around the Peninsula's highest tops for "public ownership". Te Ahu Pātiki / Mount Herbert is 919m high, and Mount Bradley 855m.

10 The accomplishment links Orton Bradley Park with established reserves to the south, and safeguards Te Ara Pātaka, the walkway along the spine of the Peninsula. A similar initiative is underway near Little River and another above Purau.

A second wave

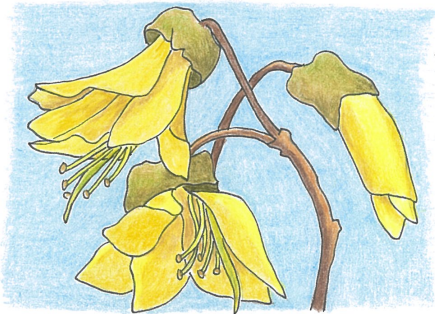
Kōwhai succumbed to caterpillars for the second year in a row, which seems unusual. Normally handsome trees with feathery foliage and a blaze of golden flowers in



pīpīwharau
shining cuckoo

golden flowers in Spring, nearly every one was leafless and grey by mid- to late-February. We watched cuckoos, silvereyes and bellbirds picking caterpillars off the last remnants of leafiness. Never-

theless both tree and moth are native here; they have long learned to get along together. (Not so the alien myrtle rust which has just appeared in Christchurch, perilously close to Hinewai.) By the 10th of March it was impossible to find any remaining caterpillars on the ransacked trees. And by early May their ferny foliage was flourishing again. It will be interesting to see if double defoliation, back to back, leaves trees with enough oomph to flower profusely in the coming Spring.



Many-splendoured wings

As we age, some older folk can no longer hear the high-pitched 'tsit tsit tsit' of tītītipounamu/rifleman. It's a significant loss when one is trying to record all birds heard and seen on the

bird surveys we tackle twice a year. But last ¹¹ January at Plot 8 in the beech forest a group of four twittered right past Hugh, unheard but close enough to touch, as if to say "we're here! Notice us! Write us down!"

Red admiral butterflies / Kahukura were especially abundant in March, along with coppers and little blues. As usual here, though, sightings of yellow admirals were few.

In early autumn we fielded some enquiries about the flourishing falcons. Were they, perhaps, some wondered, reducing numbers of tūī, silvereyes, and somebody's [they wished to remain anomalous - Ed.] [right-Hugh] white doves? After sighing a little at each query, Hugh tried to explain the important role of predators - and not just any old predator but wonderfully special rare endemic swift-winged predators - in prey populations that have evolved with them for millennia (the anomalous white doves excepted).

Human quirks and quibbles

Paul Newport and Hugh brushcut Curry Track in February. The plan was to start at either end and meet in the middle. On the second day their workfaces collided on the Akaroa side of Browntop Saddle. Hugh (probably Paul too although he was too kind to say it out loud) could not avoid noticing that he had covered about one third of the distance and Paul two thirds. Did this mean Paul was worth two workers, or that Hugh was only half a worker? [Both - Ed.]. In defence, Hugh pleaded old age. He also claims his left hip is complaining, although



12 he can't decide whether the twinges are muscular or bonular [not a word-Ed]. [It is now-Hugh].

Bruce often reminds the other Trustees that we are all responsible for the careful and transparent management of Trust funds. Even he was a little surprised by a bill from IRD on Christmas Day. It stated that we owed the tax department \$0.04, due immediately. We could be charged a 10% non-payment penalty if we did not pay the amount in full or enter in to an instalment agreement. Bruce hasn't mentioned the outcome yet, but he has definitely not gone to prison for mismanaging Trust funds.

Sounds of silence

One autumn night in very still conditions the sound of waves on Otānerito Beach, 4 kilometres from Hugh's house and 450 metres lower down, sounded almost as if we were right beside the warming rising sea. On another autumn day of thick windless mist, crowds of redpolls were swirling about Papakaika Meadow, chirruping as usual, but with the whirring of their wings curiously amplified by the



yellow admiral



Pīpipi appears twice a year. There is no sub and no obligation to donate, but donations of any size are hugely helpful and appreciated. We will post a receipt but need your postal address.

NAME

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632 Long Bay Road
R.D. 3 Akaaroa 7583

HUGH'S PHONE (Evenings)

03 304 8501

CC 11107 [Pīpipi 53]

Fog.

Cheque-mate

Alas, the banks have abandoned cheques and closed our local Akaaroa branch, dropping any pretence of genuine customer service, or any respect for diversity, community and choice. For those of you who have donated so generously by cheque over the years and who are left with few practical options or none at all to continue financial support - a thousand heartfelt thanks. The banks, with what little they have left in the way of community responsibility, may or may not suggest workable options.

If you are able to make direct credits or telephone donations, please add identification details and a postal address (if we don't have it) so we can send you good old-fashioned personal thanks and a receipt.