Pīpipi

ISSN 1173-6674
print
ISSN 2815-7524
online

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

R.D.3 Akaroa 7583

64 November 2026



Bruce

Bruce Hansen died at the beginning of October, his family at his bedside. He was just four weeks off turning 83. A decade earlier, the founder of our Trust, Maurice White, was wondering who might relieve his ageing shoulders from the responsibility of looking after Hinewai's finances; he was well in to his nineties. Hugh Wilson's sister Margaret, acting then (and now) as a sort of city agent for the reserve, thought of Bruce. He was an old family friend, a sort of rebel protestant priest with a background of accountancy and a vigorous sense

of social justice. Bruce immediately suggested others "who might prove more capable" [one of the few occasions when his judgement failed him - Ed.], but agreed to work with Maurice for a transitional trial period. The two got on well. When Maurice died in July 2019, he was confident that Hinewai's financial resources were in good hands.

Bruce took on far more than we initially expected, diving headfirst in to the complexities of carbon credits, for example, and pursuing possibilities of further land additions.

Only hours before he died, Bruce left a message on Hugh's phone which moved our manager to tears. "I'm just phoning to say goodbye" said Bruce, a bit hyped up by painkillers, a little hesitant, but still himself. "I'm slipping away. I just wanted to say I've really loved my involvement with Hinewai. I have no regrets. The reserve is in a good space and in good hands."

Trustworthy

Less than two weeks before Bruce died, all of the Trustees gathered at his bedside, along with Charlotte Bryden (friend, financial manager and accountant) whom Bruce had asked to help pass on his duties to competent hands. Charlotte leads a very busy life but was willing to act. She has provided excellent and genial support, enhanced by her professional and personal friendship with our accountant Jane. Two weeks after Bruce died we were rapt to elect Hugh Eaton to the Trust. Hugh E. and his partner Jane are well-known and highly regarded Peninsula locals. Hugh has a background in Anthropology, Farm Management, Rural Valuation, Conservation and Finance. He and



"To be honest, I'm a tad disappointed with the table".

Jane live on their 220 hectare hill-country sheep farm at Pigeon Bay, bordering DoC reserves on Tarawera/Mount Sinclair. Hugh is deeply immersed in community projects and organisations, including the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust and Pest Free Banks Peninsula, but is reshuffling some commitments to make time for Hinewai. Their farm includes 30 hectares covenanted with BPCT, and 11 hectares of regenerating native forest registered in the ETS (Emissions Trading Scheme).

At the Trust AGM, Trustee Nick Head stood down after 24 years of much-appreciated service. There are still two Pauls to confuse you. Paul Newport has been on the work team since 2000. Paul Broady's connection to the reserve goes back to 1989. He has been a Trustee since 2019. So now we have two Pauls, two Hughs, and two Janes, not to mention two Toms ~ Trustee Thomas MacTavish and Hugh W's favourite feathery friend, Thomas Tomtit.

The World-wide Workforce

Both Max and Ash made far-flung forays during the winter, while Paul N. and Hugh W. stayed safe and sound within coo-ee of Ōtānerito Bay. Max disappeared in late May, partly to visit their brother Asha in Czechia, partly to attend their friend Victoria's wedding in Deutschland, but mostly to bike for many weeks through Scandinavia, pedalling so far north through Norway as to end up days beyond the Arctic Circle, leaving nights behind. A month later, Ash was phoning home from his ancestral Lincolnshire in remote England, frizzling through the latest European heatwave. He was back in Aotearoa by mid-July, but his adventures were far from over.

Whenua Hou and the kākāpō

For someone with a deep love for birds, meeting

someone as rare and remarkable as a kākāpō would have to be high on a wish list. Ash got his chance in August ~ two weeks on Whenua Hou, an island off the northwest coast of Rakiura with DoC's kākāpō recovery team and a group of carefully chosen volunteers. Whenua Hou is the stronghold for the kākāpō rescue mission. The birds are truly wild there and truly special. They are (we believe) the heaviest and the only flightless parrot in the world, also the only one to have a lek breeding system [boogle it - Ed.]* For a long time they were one of the most abundant bird species in Aotearoa, but alas they were defenceless against the rats, cats and mustelids unleashed on them by Pākehā colonists. By the end of the 20th century they had declined towards what seemed like inevitable extinction. Only a few old males could be located then in what was thought to be their last stand, in Fiordland. Incredibly, in the nick of time, the discovery of a population persisting on Rakiura/Stewart Island, with both males and females, along with hard work by DoC's team of heroes, turned extinction aside. It was a real joy for Ash to be involved in this project, not just for himself, but for the rest of us as we listened spellbound to his stories.



Were kākāpō once living at Hinewai, sharing our forested valleys with kiwi, takahē, giant eagles, moa and adzebills? Midden bones confirm they were on Banks Peninsula, despite

---

* boogle (verb) = to seek knowledge from books.

the scarcity of their favourite food trees, rimu.

It seems miraculous that we have lost almost none of the plant species that lived on Banks Peninsula a thosand years ago. But, alas, around half of the original bird species are gone, and of those around half (about 25) are globally extinct. Without them, Hinewai's ecosystem will never again be what it once was. Nonetheless, it continues to be richly diverse and predominantly native. And maybe one day kākāpō will boom again across Hinewai's wooded valleys.



Wide-eyed walkers

The Uenuku Ridge Route is proving popular. In May we guided a Banks Peninsula Walking Festival event there. The weather forecast was dubious but as we headed upwards the cloud base rose, so none of the 19 walkers missed the views.

In June we re-routed the start of Curry Track from the Heritage Park, to by-pass Belinda and Victoria's new house site. We had worried that any new owners of the "Curry Airstrip" would want no track there at all, but this lovely family could not have been more accommodating. Belinda sussed out the new route with us, and even produced delicious refreshments for the workers.

Possums, predators and prey

Ollie of Pest Free B.P. popped by in July to advise that Hinewai could now justifiably claim

6 to be possum-free. It's an astonishing achievement, the climax of a long, focussed, intensive effort. Along with monitoring traps and field cameras, everyone is asked to keep a sharp watch for any sign that a possum or two might have hung in there against all odds.

Following behind the advancing possum-free front come the "Muscat" teams, targetting mustelids (stoats, ferrets and weasels) and feral cats. Rats are not ignored, but are on a different scale of challenge which has caused us some anxiety. Most mustelid and cat poo on Hinewai reveal fur rather than feathers. We feared that by reducing numbers of these larger predators we might end up with unintended consequences, boosting rodent populations, perhaps the most deleterious alien marauders of them all. Ollie wisely suggested that the equation might not be that simple. "There's evidence" he explained, "that rodent numbers are determined much more by available food than by predation". That might well mean that we can worry less about unintended consequences of the Muscat programme [freeing up more worry time for climate change, El Niño and Donald Trump-Ed.].





Sheep, goats, deer and browse

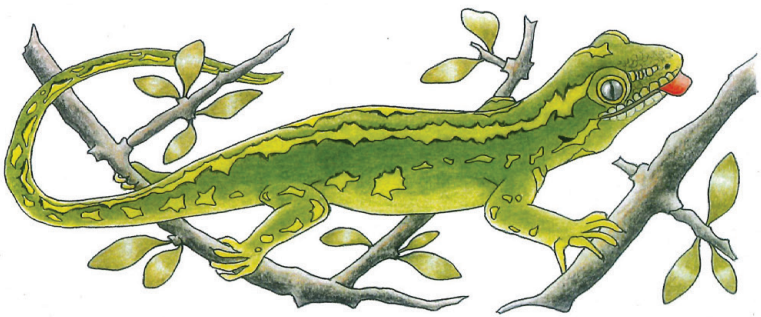
Ring-fenced with standard posts and wire, Hinewai's boundary runs for almost 30 kms across wild, hilly terrain. It's a thin, fallible line. The past year has seen more than our fair share, we reckon, of pushy sheep penetrating our defences, despite our best efforts.

The barrier was never an effective deterrent against goats, but after a 13 year war between 1987 and 2000, goats are no longer on or near the reserve. Deer are our latest challenge, still very few but an incipient nightmare. There are now positive moves to face the problem Peninsula-wide. Local hero Graham Corbishley has almost single-handedly tackled feral pigs in infested parts of the Peninsula, but mercifully Hinewai has so far been free from that particular pestilence.

Of course we long ago lost some native browsers, such as moa, adzebill, takahē and kākāpō. Some people, hunters mostly, claim that deer are de facto natural browsers in the absence of the big birds, but the asserted similarities are not backed up by much evidence.

Wondrous wildlife

We rightly condemn the rapacious wildlife smugglers who steal Aotearoa's gorgeous green geckos for mercenary gain. Hinewai's ageing kaitiaki has been heard to claim that c*rs are a more serious threat to these ravishing reptiles than are those unforaivable felons. On a short bike ride up to Skyline rain gauge recently he noted no fewer than four c*r-squashed



8 moko kākāriki along less than a kilometre of Long Bay Road. However, now 81 pushing 82, Hugh W. has been seen lately accepting some rides in these very same creature-crushing c*rs, suggesting that he no longer has any self-righteous leg to stand on. [He still has two legs, but they are neither as strong nor as self-righteous as they once were - Ed.].

In late autumn the decomposing body of a large humpback whale calf drifted in to Ōtanerito Bay, attended by giant petrels and black-backed gulls. Much later, in Spring, Ash and Max watched in awe from a cliff-top between Flea and Stony Bays as two huge whales headed gently southwards.

In August a female sea lion (kake) swam in to Ōtānerito Bay for a snooze on the beach, looking distinctly different from the resident fur seals (kekeno).

There was worrying news in July: the virulent avian flu virus spreading round the world was finally detected in New Zealand. All three deceased victims – a skua, a giant petrel and a kāhu – were in the North Island.

Surprised by orchids

Winika or lady's slipper orchid is a comely epiphyte common through much of Aotearoa. Until now, though, the only mention of this species on Banks Peninsula was a dubious record from way back in 1880. So when Chris Morse from Manaaki Whenua



at Lincoln visited Hugh W. with details of his latest botanical finds, Hugh was astonished to see photos of a very local but substantial population of *Winika cunninghamii* (or *Dendrobium cunninghamii* as some botanists prefer). The site is less than 3 kms from Hinewai's Visitor Centre as the falcon flies, not within Hinewai Reserve, but safe on nearby protected land.

Gauging growth

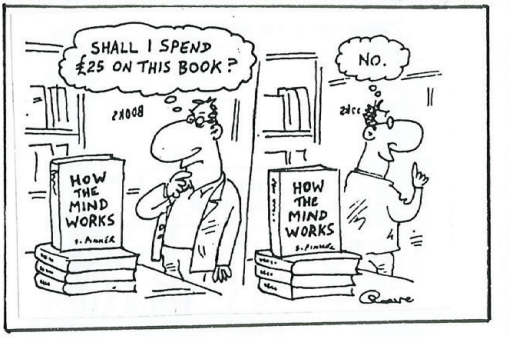
Every year we measure trees planted in our two "arboreta", one collection of local natives around the Visitor Centre at 450m, the other around Ōtānerito Homestead near sea level. Some of the most striking sets of data involve the nīkau palms at Ōtānerito. Nīkau is mainland New Zealand's only native true palm, and Banks Peninsula is the mainland's southernmost natural limit for this handsome species. (It occurs fractionally further south on Pitt Island in the Chathams.) The specimen on the back lawn of Ōtānerito Homestead was germinated at Motukarara Nursery from seed collected by Jorge Santos at nearby Nīkau Bend around 1993. In his younger days Hugh W. was often heard to say "I hope I live long enough to see this palm develop a trunk." His wish was granted. Now 33 years old, the nīkau is 5·65 m tall, with a clean trunk 1·22 m from ground to bulge. It has been producing ripe seed since early 2021, and seedlings have been popping up in the Ōtanerito garden. Interestingly, another



10 nīkau of similar age planted close by but in deep shade, has grown much more slowly than the one in full light. It looks healthy and handsome, but is only 2 m tall with no hint of a trunk, flowers or fruit.

Artful

"Hinewai Reflections" has sold well, far beyond Hugh W.'s expectations. Copies are still available. If you would like to order one [or more - Ed.] simply get in touch with Trustee Tina Troup: phones (03) 328 8622 or 027 3100 222; post P.O Box 27, Lyttelton, 8841; email hinewaibooks@gmail.com Book sales have already provided a beneficial boost to land-purchase funds.

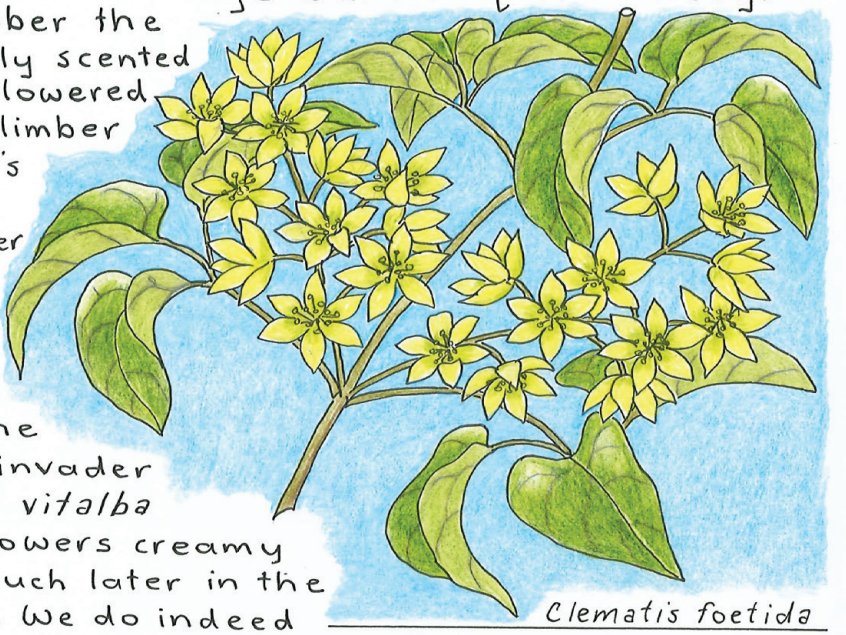


Following Happen Films' wholesome half hour documentary about Hinewai ("Fools and Dreamers"), two rather bizarre videos have appeared on "You Tube", strange mixtures of fact and fiction. We suspect they are the unleashed, delinquent progeny of AI [Oh brave new World - Ed.]. They have spurred Hugh W. to get on with another book project, a quieter, more balanced and factual account of the reserve. "Hinewai. Her Nature. Her Stories" is well underway [but I wouldn't hold your breath - Ed.].

Helpful

A walker came up to Paul N. at his work-face on Jules Knob Track. "You have a problem with the old man's beard" the young man said. Paul had his wits about him, and his response was quick. "Oh, you mean our manager. Yeah-nah, we have him more or less under control." "No, I mean the clematis.

You need to get rid of it." It was a case of some knowledge but not quite enough. In October the pleasantly scented yellow-flowered native climber *Clematis foetida* is in flower all over the place, but some mistake it for the foreign invader *Clematis vitalba* which flowers creamy white much later in the summer. We do indeed have old man's beard clematis on Hinewai, and are working hard to eliminate it.



Clematis foetida

Eventful

One windless August morning we were innocently leading a delegation from the Australasian Weed Conference up Beech Terrace Track [and not an alien plant in sight - Ed.], when a loud crash off to our left suggested that a tree had toppled, or at least that a very large limb had fallen. "Wow!" called out one of the delegates, "that wasn't mentioned in the Health and Safety briefing." Later we checked out what might have happened, but mysteriously we found nothing. [Perhaps an alien landing? - Ed.].

Wet or dry?

As early as June the forecasters were declaring that the weather situation already prevailing across the Pacific was likely to develop in to the most extreme El Niño ever,

12 boosted by our bone-headed, unrestrained abuse of land and air, and likely to bring severe drought to the east of Aotearoa. So far winter and spring have been cheeringly moist and cool. We even had a proper snowfall in early August, accumulating to an 8 cm snowpack above about 400m. Ash made a snow sculpture of our absent workmate and emailed an image to Max in heat-ravaged Europe.



Despite some worryingly dry spells through October, as the month comes to an end and as this newsletter goes to print, we have just enjoyed another 50 mm of rain and thundery hail. Everything is looking lush and lovely. We fear the worst, but are hoping for the best.

Missing in action

We love to thank generous supporters. Can anyone help with contact details for: Carl Davey, P.R. Jones, Anna Minaar, Jennifer Peat, Ms M.E. Pidgeon, H.M. Purdy, A.C. Wilson ?

Pīpipi appears twice a year. There is no sub and no obligation to donate, but donations are hugely helpful. Contributions of $5 or more are tax-deductible. We will post a receipt but need a postal address if we don't already have it.

Account name: Maurice White Native Forest Trust
BNZ 02 0832 0044225 00
Hinewai Reserve, 632 Long Bay Road, R.D.3 Akaroa 7583