

Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc.



President's Annual Report 2010

Presented on behalf of the Executive Committee

This Annual Report is presented to members on behalf of the Executive Committee to the 22nd Annual General Meeting of the Rimutaka Forest Park Charitable Trust Inc. to be held in Wainuiomata, Lower Hutt on 12th October 2010.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met on eight occasions through the year and reviewed progress and made decisions on various topics including governance issues, applications for funding, pest control trapping, the Kiwi Translocation Project, the Catchpool Restoration Project, the Dawn Chorus Project, long-term planning and public relations, including maintaining good cooperation with the Department of Conservation and the Greater Wellington Regional Council. A review of the long-term role of the Trust was initiated.

The 2009/10 Committee comprises:

President	Ian Armitage
Vice President	Peter Cooper
Secretary	Melody McLaughlin
Treasurer	Greg Thompson
Committee members	Don Millward, Kelly Anso, Nikki McArthur and Deborah McIvor. Scott Farrell retired from the committee in February when he moved away from Wainuiomata. Peter Blaxter of the Dept of Conservation also serves on the committee.

Membership

Membership stands at nearly 100 at 30 June 2010 and has been reasonably steady since last year. We welcome new members who have joined during the year and we thank you all for your support to the ongoing work of the Trust. The Committee is pleased to advise that the membership subscription fee will remain unchanged for the next year, \$15 for individuals and \$35 for clubs.

Governance

Although the Rules of the Trust have served us well for many years, the committee has gradually formed the view that they are now in need of comprehensive revision. A review process commenced during the year supported by voluntary legal assistance. It is proposed that the Trust will continue to be governed as a Charitable Incorporated Society. The revised Rules will require the approval of Government authorities (Ministry of Economic Development) and it is hoped that the proposed revision can be circulated to members and adopted at a Special General Meeting of the Trust about April or May 2011.

A short questionnaire was circulated to members and volunteers in April requesting comments on what role the Trust might adopt in the future as an independent, volunteer-based, not-for-profit society that encourages public interest in and enjoyment of the Rimutaka Forest Park. Although there has been a disappointingly small response to date, several helpful comments have been expressed that may be incorporated into a revised mission statement and objectives. Again, any proposed changes will be presented to a Special General Meeting next year. We welcome any further responses from members and volunteers who have yet to reply.

Programme Coordinator

Melody McLaughlin has, once again, held the role of Programme Coordinator for part of the year and it has proved to be very effective for leading, facilitating and coordinating the various Trust projects, in particular the increasingly busy and demanding Kiwi Project. We are pleased to record that further funding was secured from the BNZ 'Save the Kiwi' Trust that has enabled Melody to be reappointed to this valuable role. On behalf of the Committee and membership I wish to thank Melody for the very substantial assistance she continues to provide as Programme Coordinator.

Finances

Greg Thompson has set out the financial position of the Trust in the Financial Statements for the year ended 30th June 2010. Once again, the financial position of the Trust is sound and the resources have been used effectively to implement the various Trust activities. Our accumulated funds are sound and provide us with a comfortable level of reserve financial support although less than in 2009.

The 'Sponsor a Trap' and 'Sponsor a Kiwi' schemes continue to provide valuable financial support and have generated increased income compared with 2009. Income from membership subscriptions is comparable to that of last year. Expenditure on the Kiwi Translocation Project and the Catchpool Restoration Project are higher than in 2009 and reflect the considerably increased operational activity in these two important projects.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of grant sponsorship during the year, namely, from the BNZ Save the Kiwi Fund (\$35,000), the Department of Conservation (\$26,667 – for two projects), Pub Charity (\$5,000), the Wellington Community Trust (\$12,820), Hutt City Council (\$5,000) and the Ron Greenwood Environment Trust (\$1,000), together with several private donations. We are also grateful for and wish to thank numerous companies, Trusts and other agencies for a range of services provided during the year. All have helped to advance the goals of achieving improved conservation of ecosystems and public enjoyment of the forest park.

We wish to thank our Honorary Auditor, Phil Rundle, for his continuing help in auditing of Trust accounts. As Greg Thompson retires from the Committee at this meeting, I express our thanks to Greg on behalf of members for the excellent support he has provided as Treasurer for many years.

Pest Control Trapping

Pest control trapping focuses on the control of small animals with the enthusiastic support of a more than 60 volunteer trappers. Several planning, coordination and operational improvements were introduced during the year by trapping coordinator, Kirby McLeod who is confident that within the initial-trapped area best practice activities for operating a stoat-trapping network are being met, or have been exceeded. Arrangements for trap repair and testing, operator induction and safety, field communications and data recording have all been improved. I wish to thank Kirby the generous and effective assistance he has provided to this critically important and long-standing programme.

The risk to kiwi that venture into the Catchpool and Orongorongo Valleys caused by ferrets as well as stoats and other predators is of increasing concern and increased trapping efforts are being made to target ferrets. The Committee continues to follow progress with trials of self-resetting stoat and possum kill traps. Both of these new and novel designs have the potential to change the way we currently trap stoats, rats and possums and to increase the efficiency of voluntary trapping efforts.

The Trust relies on volunteers for servicing traps so we are always keen to recruit more fit and enthusiastic people who can contribute to this important aspect of protecting forests. I wish to thank all volunteer trappers for the dedicated and effective efforts you have made over the past year.

Kiwi Translocation Project

The Kiwi Translocation Project that is introducing a North Island brown kiwi population into the Rimutaka Forest Park, mainly in the Turere Valley, continues to be highlight of the Trust's activities. Based on the release of several captive-bred birds in 2006 and a larger group transferred from Hauturu/Little Barrier Island in 2009 good progress continues to be made in establishing a self-sustaining population of kiwi in the forest park. The programme builds on detailed organisational and operational work by the Kiwi team led by Melody McLaughlin and is a credit to the dedication of the volunteers who continue to implement the programme, often in cold, wet and uncomfortable weather conditions. The team can take pride in its achievement and on behalf of all members we thank you all for your efforts in this regard. There are presently 48 brown kiwi in the forest park of which 18 are breeding adults. There are 14 chicks and juveniles less than one year old.

In this breeding season we will again be implementing BNZ Operation Nest Egg, removing eggs from burrows, incubating and hatching chicks in captivity and later returning young kiwi to the forest park. The practice of leaving some eggs in nests and allowing them to hatch naturally will continue and, as noted last year, is another step towards the aim of establishing a brown kiwi population that can exist with minimal human intervention, other than pest control.

The recent death of another kiwi by a dog is disappointing and highlights yet again a need for vigilance for protecting kiwi, especially from dogs. The Trust has again provided kiwi aversion training for dogs and has continued with public relations efforts to encourage owners to keep their dogs on leads when in the park. The kiwi avoidance training is but another step in the process of protecting the small kiwi population from dog predation. It is unlikely however, that kiwi will ever expand into the Catchpool Valley – the most popular part of the forest park – whilst the risk of kiwi predation from dogs remains high. Ongoing vigilance by all stakeholders is necessary for effective dog control but the primary responsibility for this will always lie with dog owners.

Dawn Chorus Project and Monitoring of Birds

The Dawn Chorus Project continues to control animal pests that are a threat to forest ecosystems, including forest birds. In an extension of this long-standing project a monitoring survey commenced in August 2009 to collect data in the Catchpool Valley, Graces Stream and along part of the Five Mile track to better understand the occurrence of birds in these localities. Monitoring has been running for one year and has provided a valuable baseline of data that will enable future comparisons of bird distribution and conspicuousness to be made. Thirty-four bird species occur (20 are native). Four bird species have a conservation threat ranking of "nationally vulnerable" (N.Z. falcon, brown kiwi [introduced]) and two species are "at risk" (N.Z. pipit, North Is. rifleman).

Catchpool Restoration Project

The Catchpool Restoration Project that commenced in 2009 has continued this year with grant funding from the Community Conservation Fund to support revegetation of parts of the gorse/bracken covered slopes of the lower Catchpool Valley. The short-term aim is to improve the amenity value of the lower slopes near the car park and camping ground that have been disturbed through logging of pine forests and to make these sites more visually appealing to visitors. Equally important, the project aims to widen plant biodiversity and provide more shelter for birds. Good progress has been achieved using assistance from the staff of several companies and Wainuiomata school students who have now planted in excess of 10,000 eco-sourced native trees, shrubs and other plants of 12 different species. The survival and growth of young plants is very satisfactory.

I would like to thank Peter Cooper for the considerable planning and coordination arrangements he has made and continues to make to this critically important programme; it is a credit to him and to

volunteers for the success achieved so far. We are very pleased to be working closely with the Department of Conservation in implementing this project.

Rimutaka Forest Park Restoration Planning

A new initiative that commenced earlier this year is the formulation of a Rimutaka Forest Park Restoration Plan. A draft restoration plan is being assembled by Ms. Bridget Read of Victoria University of Wellington who is completing the plan as a component of her Masters studies in conservation. We have worked closely with Bridget in recent months and we look forward to using her completed plan as a platform for forest park development in the future.

Public Relations

Publicity about the Trust to the wider community has been promoted during the year. Our website, www.rimutakatrust.org.nz continues to be popular with visitors and is the major point of access for information about the Trust. Again, I would like to thank Peter Cooper for his considerable technical skill and enthusiasm in maintaining and developing the website.

An informative brochure printed last year is proving to be effective for widening the 'reach' of our public relations efforts. A 'Sponsor-a-Kiwi' brochure was drafted and printed and has helped to encourage wider sponsorship interest. Press releases were issued during the year on various topics, but mostly concerning the Kiwi Project. Talks to school groups by Trust members further advanced our public relations and in May an informative newsletter, 'The Rag', was printed and distributed. Several compliments have been received for the design and content of the May issue of 'The Rag'. Other public relations initiatives are underway presently. Our sincere thanks go to Kelly Anso, Lianne Beckett and Kerry Swadling for their helpful contributions towards various public relations efforts over the past year.

A popular and enjoyable Stoat Trappers' Ball, a fund-raiser for the Trust, was held in 2009. This year the Ball is to be held at the Wainuiomata Golf Club, on Saturday 30th October and you and your families are all invited to attend.

The Christmas barbeque was held once again at the Catchpool Centre in December and was a fun event for all. Our sincere thanks go to the organisers for this event, an important part of the Trust's social calendar. This year's barbecue will be held on Sunday, 12th December.

Appreciation

On behalf of the Committee I wish to thank all who have helped the Trust to operate successfully as a voluntary community organisation throughout the year. The trappers, the kiwi project team, the Catchpool restoration team and others who have contributed to public relations, fund raising and the numerous small issues that always come up, a big thank you to you all.

I would also like to acknowledge the generous and friendly support of the staff of the Department of Conservation for helping with the implementation of the projects being promoted by the Trust; we are most grateful for your support. May I also acknowledge the warm-hearted and friendly cooperation offered during the year by the staff of the Greater Wellington Regional Council.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Executive Committee for their significant contribution to the effective running of the Trust during the year.

Ian Armitage
President

12 October 2010