

ŌTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

News and Views December, 2023

New nursery hopes stay alive

In November, Wellington City councillors voted to put the \$3 million Ōtari Landscape Plan back into Council's Long-term Plan recommendations. The landscape plan includes building a much-needed, fit for purpose plant nursery, conservation science laboratory and education facility.

Our gardeners currently work from a nursery that's a crammed jumble of spaces and buildings, added ad hoc over the years, without even an adequate irrigation system. At times, the staff come in during holidays to keep the plants alive! Considering the special nature of the plants propagated and cared for at Ōtari, which include some of New Zealand's rarest species, this is not good enough. Meanwhile laboratory scientists, who are achieving ground-breaking conservation research work, share a Portacom for administration with the Ōtari librarian and archivist.

The proposed new nursery would encompass adequate spaces, a fit-for purpose irrigation system, and a climate-controlled house for alpine species that require low humidity. This will become even more critical as global warming affects temperatures.

The third, major component of the planned new facility encompasses public access to enable education and awareness about the botanical and conservation science work on native plants being achieved at Ōtari. Education and awareness are key themes behind Council's management of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush, also one of the key drivers behind the establishment of the Trust. This education facility would enable access for everyone, not just elite botanists and academics.

In November, council officers proposed a last-minute axing of the landscape plan, along with other community projects, as part of Council's cost-cutting measures. In response, the Trust emailed all city councillors, explaining the critical nature of the work undertaken by the botanists, gardeners and conservation scientists at Ōtari-Wilton's Bush, New Zealand's only botanical garden devoted to native plants and a six-star garden of international significance.

The Trust also presented an oral submission (along with other community groups) to the Council's Long-term Plan, Finance and Performance Committee meeting, on November 9. And they listened!

Happily, councillors voted to keep the Ōtari project in the Long-term Plan, albeit with a slightly reduced budget. However, it's not over yet. At this stage these are only recommendations, there are still two rounds of council decision-making to come this month, fine-tuning the Long-term Plan before it goes out for public submission in March, 2024. While we are grateful for the support we already have from many councillors; we will need to continue pressure to retain this funding.

In terms of Council's overall spend we believe the \$3.1 million involved for this project is small, yet significant for the broad benefits it would realise for New Zealand's native plants, conservation science, education, and the community.

Watch this space – and feel free to add your own influence where you think you can - talk to councillors and send submissions.

Council staff and Trust volunteers work alongside each other every Thursday, caring for Ōtari's gardens collections





Message from the Chair

Kia ora koutou katoa



Open Day, this year, was a great success thanks to all the hard work of Trustees, Trust members, Ōtari staff and their families. There was a steady flow of people attending the walks and talks, chatting to stall holders and buying plants, cakes, preserves and raffles etc. The plant sales team netted the greatest amount of income for the Trust, followed by the cakes and preserves stall. We think if the weather had been better, more people would have come along but the track counters recorded significantly more people than normal for a Saturday.

Trustees have been busy with submissions to WCC on policy documents. For the Dog Policy, as it pertains to Ōtari, we opted to retain the current provision for dogs on leads but requested that short leads be used. We also suggested that dog owners consider putting their dogs through kiwi aversion training but stressed that this is no substitute for having dogs on leads. Kiwi have been seen and heard tantalising close to Ōtari, and could well be here already. Well-controlled dogs on leads should be compatible with kiwi presence, especially since dogs are usually walked during daylight hours when kiwi are asleep in their burrows. We have also been actively engaging with Councillors over the Ōtari Landscape Plan in the Council's Long-term Plan, the details of which are covered in the lead article in this newsletter. If you support the concept of building a fit-for-purpose nursery and lab, with visitor facilities encompassed, please consider making a personal submission. The Trust will be doing its best to ensure the funding is retained and used for its intended purpose.

Also, in this newsletter, you'll see the March Seminar programme of speakers and our extensive list of Autumn Sunday Guided Walks. We look forward to seeing you at some of these events. Thanks to our guest speakers and guides for volunteering their time and expertise.

Through Kathy Ombler's regular, informative posts, we now have 622 followers on Instagram and over 1160 followers on Facebook – the numbers keep growing! The website is also updated from time to time if you are not an Instagram or Facebook user, you can find the latest news and events on our website. The website's newsletter archive is also available, if you need to look up any details of a story you previously read.

The cruise ship season is ramping up but already the weather and other vagaries have led to quite a few last-minute changes. Our tour managers, Trustees Annie Yeates and Susan Timmins, are coping with this admirably and we thank the tour guides for their flexibility and forbearance. We hope to be able to resolve all issues we have some control over but the weather in this El Niño season will keep us on our toes.

Recently, the Trust was pleased to support another of the WCC Gardens' apprentices to attend the Botany course at Cass Field Station in January. We have also been working on ways of increasing the Trust's funds so that we can contribute more to supporting the general activities and aims of the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust with a focus on conservation, research, education and public engagement. To that end, we are setting up a fund with the Nikau Foundation that will be known as the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Fund. There will be a launch of this fund in February and you will all be invited! Keep an eye on your inbox (or letterbox) in the New Year for details.

As the year draws to a close, I want to thank Ōtari staff for accommodating the Trust's ideas and input. We are looking forward to the BBQ for volunteers on 15 December! Meantime, have a happy summer everyone and thank you for your support of the Trust and Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.

Carol West

Chair



Ōtari Update

Kia ora koutou

Since our very successful Open Day we have been experiencing a heavy flowering season for many of our plants, as well as many trees in the forest. The ngutukākā (*Clianthus puniceus*) from Tokomaru Bay has put on an amazing show.

Our new forest weeding volunteer group is going from strength to strength, dealing with long established problems such as ivy, bamboo, *Tradescantia* and dock throughout Wilton's Bush Reserve. This group is proving to be a real boost for my team and allows us to tackle some large areas that need careful treatment.



ŌTARI
WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

Ngutukākā, *Clianthus puniceus*
Photo: Andy McArthur

The new rātā moehau shrine, donated by John Randall in memory of his late wife Robin is proving very popular. It is designed by Adam Ellis to be eventually taken over by the tree as the roots establish within each leg of the structure (which will self-decompose over time).

We having been working with local weavers to get our new Pā Harakeke, located beside Churchill Drive, open before Christmas. There will be signage and labels on each group of weaving flaxes. We have installed new seats there, at the Northern Carpark Picnic area. In the next year or so we will be expanding all three pā harakeke with flaxes we have been propagating in our nursery. We are progressing our collections review and are currently interviewing partner organisations and external colleagues. We have some insightful feedback and are very excited for the improvements we are planning.

Megan is planning to join the Wellington BotSoc summer camp in Tongariro with her husband Tom Mayo, and has a permit lodged for collection while on the trip. We hosted Louis Alison-Cooper from the Tongariro Area Office when she was in Wellington for her BotSoc talk. Louis has been doing some great work on threatened plants and environmental weed eradication around the Tongariro area. Meanwhile, we have sent 64 common rushes, *Juncus holochenous* var *holoschoenus*, back to Tongariro to be planted in the wild. We fear the last remaining population in the wild has been lost.

We are very excited that both *Celmisia* 'Mangaweka' and *Metrosideros bartletti* (rātā moehau) are budding up at the moment and we plan to hand pollinate the extremely rare plants to support partner's work to restore these two species in the wild.

We are looking forward to the "thank you" BBQ we are hosting at Ōtari before Christmas. The work we do at Ōtari is hugely supported by volunteers that the Trust coordinates. We feel very fortunate to have such a community around us that helps us to enable Ōtari to be such a spectacular showcase of our native plants. Do not forget to vote for your favourite native plant. This year we are backing kōhurangi (*Brachyglottis kirkii* var. *kirkii*). Working with our City Arborist team, this is a plant we have successfully reintroduced to Pōneke, including to Ōtari and Zealandia, from wild populations in Wellington regional parks. It is a very difficult plant to keep alive so we have been very happy to see it flowering in the 38 Degrees Garden this year. We are collecting seed from wild plants again this year to keep this work going at Ōtari. Vote for kōhurangi here: https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/favourite-plant-vote/?flora_id=14564

There have been recent reports of kiwi around Ōtari and we are now going into peak nesting season for our native birds, so it is more important than ever that dogs are kept on leads at Ōtari. If you see someone with an off-leash dog, please simply remind them that they are risking a \$300 fine. I have found this is a preferable approach. If you feel comfortable doing so, take a photo and send to info@wcc.govt.nz or the Fixit App.

Ma te wa.

Tim Park.

Kaiwhakahaere Ōtari - Manager Ōtari Native Botanic Garden and Wilton's Bush Reserve

Trust plant sales are here!

If you have recently visited our Visitor Centre, Tāne Whakapiripiri, during the weekend you might have noticed that our Volunteer Hosts are selling native plants. (As well as all the other things they are busy doing to make our visitors feel welcome.)

The plants have been raised by volunteer botanists and gardeners in the Trust's own propagation nursery, recently established at Ōtari. Taking the lead from Leonard Cockayne's original principles, in establishing the native plant collections for their long-term protection, these plants have been specially chosen as suitable for the domestic garden, for Wellington conditions in particular. They include grasses, ground covers and shrubs of various sizes



Jane Humble in the Trust's new propagation nursery

We have started small, by making this modest selection available every weekend. However, starting from February 2024, we intend to have a larger selection of plants available for purchase on the second Saturday of every month. Our Trust nursery people will be at the Visitor Centre to discuss the plants and answer any questions you might have.

And while our primary aim is not large-scale revegetation, we are always happy to discuss your special project with you and supply a selection of competitively priced and well grown plants, including larger trees. If you have any specific requests for a native plant that is not on our current list, please get in touch. We welcome your suggestions.

We are very excited about this project which fits well with the Trust's aims to promote awareness of our native flora, and at the same time supports the wonderful work happening at Ōtari with any funds that we raise.

Plants currently included in the Trust's nursery propagation project:

Acaena juvenca

Leptinella calcarean

Brachyglottis greyi

Leptinella potentillina

Brachyglottis laxifolia

Leptinella squalida susp. squalida

Carex comans

Lobelia angulata

Carex flagellifera

Melicytus orarius

Chionoichloa conspicua subsp.cConspicua

Myosotis eximia

Geranium microphyllum

Myosotis pottsiana

Geranium traversii

Plantago triandra

Jovellana sinclairii

Veronica diosmifolia

Trust Board 2021 - 2022



The Board of Trustees for the current year is:

Chair: Carol West	carolwest@xtra.co.nz	Phone: 387 3396
Secretary: Wilbur Dovey	cweag.dovey@xtra.co.nz	Phone: 499 1044
Treasurer: Tim Mason	timmason429@gmail.com	Phone: 479 0544
Maggie Bayfield	bayfield@xtra.co.nz	Ph: 027 545 4333
Jane Humble	jhumble16@gmail.com	Ph: 021 636 226
Justin Nacey	justinnacey@gmail.com	Ph: 021 211 3019
Kevin O'Connor	oconnorkevin170@gmail.com	Ph. 027 270 9787
Kathy Ombler	kathy@ombler.co.nz	Ph: 027 275 5152

The trustees welcome individual communications from members on any matters relating to Otari-Wilton's Bush Reserve or the Trust, particularly from those who would like to assist and participate in our activities.

Newsletter: Vera Burton. Phone 938 8207. veeanddave93@gmail.com

Green fingers anyone?

Would you like to learn first-hand about New Zealand's only native botanic garden? Would you like to be involved in actually caring for it? With professional guidance, of course. What are you doing on Thursday mornings? We have several volunteers who work with Council's gardening staff on the garden collections every Thursday, from 8.30am until midday.



The work involves weeding, trimming, pruning, all those ongoing maintenance things a good garden needs, especially a six star garden of international significance. It's a big job, even more so now after the warm rainy winter and the weeds are flourishing so the more volunteers we have, the better! Ōtari's specialist gardeners will work with you, and there's always lots of conviviality at morning tea. It's rather a special opportunity for any keen gardener. If you think this is you, or you'd like to know more, email us at enquiries@owbt.nz

Tours, tours and more tours

The cruise ship season is off with a bang this year. After a few quieter years, thanks to COVID, cruising visitors are flocking back! The season kicked off in November, with nearly 80 visitors from the Royal Princess visiting in one day. This was the first of 37 cruise ships that have booked passengers to visit Ōtari this summer. It's very special to be able to give overseas guests an insight into how unique New Zealand flora is and give them a feel for our native forests. Fees from the tours go to the Trust and help fund our various projects.

As well as cruise ship visitors, we have hosted some delightful tours for local groups, for example the Karori Garden Club who wanted to specifically look at poisonous plants, and Wadestown School teachers who came to see the glow worms. We have also hosted tours for groups using the Leonard Cockayne Centre, while guests from further afield included an enthusiastic group from the University of Washington. They loved the forest walk out to the famous Moko and enjoyed some 'forest bathing' under its ancient canopy.

And for the first time, the Trust joined Wellington's annual Heritage Festival, offering two guided tours that explored the history and botanical heritage of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. This covered the botanists, farmers and curators involved in the development of this special place. Foresight was the theme! Feedback from both tours was positive and we plan to include a re-run in our Walks programme next March.

None of these hosted tours could happen without our wonderful guides and 'tail-ends', who have a wealth of knowledge and are passionate about the taonga that is Ōtari. A big thank you to our guiding volunteers old and new. We are also delighted to welcome 26 new guides/tails to our guiding crew. A big thank you to our guiding volunteers old and new. If you are keen to help out on the tours, please contact stimmins@xtra.co.nz. If you would like to book a tour, contact owbt@yahoo.co.nz. Tours are free for members!



University of Washington students enjoyed a guided tour that included a walk to Moko

Thanks Andy!

Those of you who follow social media will know the value of a great photo. You can have the most exciting story to tell, but it's inevitably the photo that attracts attention. And it needs to be a sharp and focused photo that gives us a professional look. Thus we are fortunate to have a good friend, an avid Ōtari supporter, with a very good camera and ability to use it, who generously donates many of his great Ōtari images for us to use. He's particularly clever in 'capturing' the birds, plus he helps us with photos of our special, flowering plants, often on request. So we thought we should acknowledge and thank our photographer friend Andy McArthur. Thanks so much Andy. You make a huge difference!



Kereru. Photo: Andy McArthur

For the record, our social media following continues to grow by a dozen or so each month. By November we had 620 Instagram followers and 1163 on Facebook. These include individuals and like-minded organisations from all around New Zealand, and there's even a few from overseas keeping an eye on our news. Our posts are often shared with other groups, so our messages and updates are spread widely. If social media isn't for you, you can still check in with our news and updates by going to the home page of our website: owbt.nz – then click on the symbols at the top. No need to join anything that you don't want to!

Changes for Revegetation Group.

This year has brought some changes in direction to the work of the Otari Revegetation Group (aka Plant Care Group). Our group has been in existence since 2001, before even the formation of the Trust, and has won plaudits for its achievements in restoration along the Kaiwharawhara Valley.

We have continued our regular monthly work of weed clearance and winter planting on the area below Ian Galloway Park. This was previously the tip face for the Council tip, until its closure in 1973, so there was much restoration to be done!

However, this year we have also been involved in rubbish clearance and re-planting of the big slip below Wilton Park, which carried tonnes of spoil down to the South Picnic Area and into the Kaiwharawhara Stream. This work also led to new opportunities.

Through its concern with whole of catchment restoration, the Zealandia-led initiative, Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara Sanctuary to Sea (S2S) also became involved in the clearance and planting of the slip,

leading to collaboration between Cat Ayres, Uenuku Philips and more recently Nate Rigler of Sanctuary to Sea, and Wilbur Dovey, co-ordinator of the Ōtari Revegetation Group.



The photo doesn't do justice to the size of the pile we generated in our joint weeding project!

Wilbur was asked to guide an enthusiastic group from Zealandia's Rangai Rangatahi Youth Collective along the Ōtari section of the Kaiwharawhara Stream. Subsequently, Nate Rigler suggested we run a joint volunteer weeding session in Ōtari in October, instead of the Revegetation Group's usual monthly weed clearance group.

Because our focus this year has been largely on clearing tradescantia from the area around and below the rugby club, we suggested we concentrate on that species for this joint project. The chosen Saturday morning was wet, but we agreed we should go ahead. There were six volunteers from Zealandia and five from Otari and the rain stopped right on cue, exactly at our agreed start time. The Zealandia volunteers really threw themselves into the work and we ended up with some very muddy weeders and a big pile of *Tradescantia*, too much for the usual weed bag

The Sanctuary to Sea group is looking to organise similar joint projects with other groups interested in Kaiwharawhara Stream restoration.

However, we hope to continue our involvement and organise future joint projects in Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.



Autumn Guided Walks

Bring out your walking shoes! Our annual Guided Walks programme is all but complete, and includes its usual mix of interesting and enlightened content, plus some new ideas. Here's what we have planned, along with booking details. Mark the dates in your diary, and watch our website for updates. Remember these tours, guided by some leading experts in their fields, are free to members.



ŌTARI
WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

Discovering the insect life of Ōtari



Will Brockelsby, DOC Entomologist
See the world of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush through the life of insects.
3rd March

Ecclitica torogramma, a beautiful wee moth in Ōtari that feeds on ferns.
Photo by Christopher Stephens



Will Brockelsby, DOC Entomologist

Understanding the ecology of Ōtari

Annemieke Hendricks, Ecologist

Learn how the plants and animals of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush interact and thrive alongside each other.
10th March

The wonderful world of Wellington weeds.

Ilona Keenan, weed specialist

Hear about the challenges of managing more than 150 weed species found in the city, followed by a walk to uncover some of these invasive species and the problems they cause.

17th March

An introduction to the cutting-edge research taking place at the Lions Ōtari Plant Conservation Laboratory

Karin van der Walt, Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Conservation Scientist

Visit New Zealand's only native plant laboratory and learn about the research happening here to save our rare species - from towering kauri to tiny native orchids and their mycorrhizal fungi.

24th March 60 minutes

*Karin van der Walt
Conservation Scientist*



A walk through the heritage of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.

Kathy Ombler, Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trustee.

From forest to farm to internationally acclaimed botanic garden: learn about the legacies of the visionary gardeners, botanists, farmers and volunteers of Ōtari-Wilton Bush. See their work, first-hand.

7th April, up to 2 hours

Learn about Ōtari's heritage on our April guided walk.

Everything you wanted to know about Tawa but were too shy to ask.

Dr Carol West, Ecologist

Learn about the biology of this important forest tree and understand why it's the dominant canopy species in many North Island forests.

14th April

The birds of Ōtari

Hugh Robertson, ornithologist

This is always a popular, easy walk, to learn about the wonderful birdlife to be found in Ōtari-Wilton's Bush with DOC's Principal Science Advisor and renowned ornithologist.

21st April



Hugh Robertson, ornithologist (and not a local kiwi)



Discover how the plants of Otari-Wilton's Bush defend themselves

Lara Shepherd, Evolutionary Biologist Te Papa

Discover some crafty self-defence techniques that the plants of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush employ to ensure their survival.

28th April

An introduction to the restoration projects in the Kaiwharawhara catchment

Nate Rigler, Project Lead – Kia M. ouriora te Kaiwharawhara Sanctuary to Sea

An update on restoration projects in the Kaiwharawhara valley, including Zealandia and Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. With a water-based focus, the session will end with a short walk down to the stream

5th May

Introduction to the fungi kingdom

Geoff Ridley, Mycologist

Fungi are different from plants, they have their own biological kingdom. Join this basic introduction to the enormous fungi kingdom and learn where to find them.

12th May, up to 2 hours

More about the fungi kingdom

Geoff Ridley, Mycologist

For those who know the basics, this tour will delve into deeper detail about our fungi kingdom.

19th May



An introduction for beginners to Wellington's common native plants

Leon Perrie, Curator of Botany, Te Papa

Learn about the diversity of our local and common native plants, and gain appreciation of the ecology and requirements of the plant life around us.

26th May

NOTE:

All tours start at 2pm, at the Otari Visitor Centre, Tāne Whakapiripiri.

All are for about 90 minutes (unless otherwise stated) and involve easy walking (sensible walking shoes are recommended). Tours are free to Trust members, otherwise cost \$6 (including \$1 booking fee) Please, whether you are a member or not, make your booking via Eventfinda (eventfinda.co.nz). Tours are limited to 20, family groups are welcome.

Ōtari March Seminar Series

For more than a decade now, the Trust has been presenting an annual programme of seminars, inviting experts in their fields to present research findings and specialist knowledge about the wonderful natural world supported in Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.

The programme for March, 2024, looks set to be a fascinating collection of views and knowledge. Here's what's on the list:



Tuesday March 5: “Genetic restoration of maire tawake in a changing natural environment: learning for this taonga species and thoughts on Aotearoa’s drive to restore habitat”

Colan Balkwill, Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington

Aotearoa New Zealand is on a zealous drive to restore its natural habitats, and ensuring its species can adapt to changing stresses in future needs to be part of this. In this talk, Colan Balkwill will discuss his PhD work focussed on ensuring the complete genetic diversity, and by proxy adaptability, of a taonga wetland tree species is captured in restoration projects. He will also reflect on how these findings relate to the conservation and restoration of the plant species in Aotearoa as a whole.

Tuesday March 12: "Is it art or is it science? The difference between Botanical Illustration and Botanical Art and why this continues to be relevant in the age of technology."

Jane Humble, botanical artist, co-ordinator Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust propagation nursery

This talk will include a brief history of botanical illustration, with particular reference to the flora of New Zealand, along with brief histories of New Zealand botanical artists, some well-known and others not so well known.

Tuesday March 19: “100 Year moth project – update and overview”

Julia Kasper, Te Papa Lead Curator, Entomology / William Brockelsby, entomologist and 100 Year Moth Project co-ordinator

The Entomological Society of NZ Wellington branch is partnering with Ōtari-Wilton's Bush to generate a species list for moth and butterfly fauna found throughout the reserve. Our efforts will be compared to historical lists generated 100 years ago by eminent entomologist, George Vernon Hudson, with the ultimate aim of using moths and butterflies to tell the story of land use change and restoration in the wider Wellington region.

Tuesday March 26: “Weedy ferns in Aotearoa New Zealand”

Leon Perrie, Curator of Botany, Te Papa

We will begin with an introduction to ferns and how their biology compares with other land plants. We'll then hear an overview of the ferns in New Zealand, and discuss the characteristics that are useful for distinguishing different species of ferns. With that as background, we'll turn to looking at the weedy ferns in New Zealand – 64 exotic species have been recorded as present in the wild, of which 27 are fully naturalised. The 13 that are most problematic will be detailed – their distinguishing characters and distributions. As Te Papa Curator of Botany, Leon's research focuses on the taxonomy and relationships of New Zealand's ferns and lycophytes. He was the lead science curator for Te Papa's principal natural history exhibition: *Te Taiao Nature*.

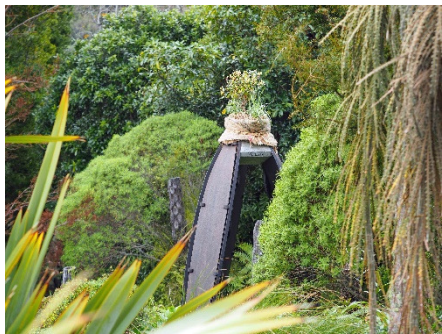
Please Note: All seminars will start at 7.30 pm in the Ōtari Visitor Centre, Tāne Whakapiripiri, Wilton Road. Gold coin donation. No bookings are required but these seminars can be popular. Be prompt to be sure of getting a seat!

The Rātā shrine

The white flowering rātā moehau, Bartlett's rātā, is one of the special treasures of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. Only 13 plants remain in the wild, in the Far North, while two trees grow in Ōtari. Now there's a third rātā moehau beginning life in Ōtari.

For those of you wondering about the structure that's appeared in the Ōtari epiphyte garden, a 'rātā shrine' is what you're looking at. It's quite a special story. Adam Ellis works in creative fields; industrial product design and urban public gardens, integrating designed structural elements within lived landscapes (see pollen.net.nz). He also loves rātā. Years ago, supported by Ōtari supervisor, Anita Benbrook, Adam volunteered at Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. He learned so much from the gardeners and botanists he wanted to 'give back', so recently approached manager Tim Park with an idea to design a 'living structure' that celebrates rātā. He's built a few other iterations around the country but none like this one.

True to Ōtari's ethos of celebrating and protecting rare native plants, this new structure features the rātā moehau (Bartlett's rātā, *Metrosideros barlettii*), now close to extinction. Most rātā begin life as epiphytes and some grow into trees. This new tripod-shaped structure is designed to rot



away over time and its supports are filled with sphagnum that will host tendrils reaching to the ground from the rātā planted at the top. It will take many years, but eventually, all going well, the plant at the top will become a self-supporting tree.

The Rātā Shrine, designer/builder Adam Ellis



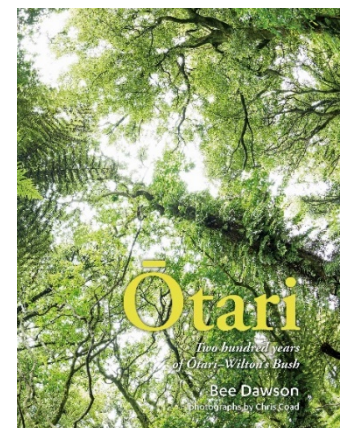
Benefactor, John Randall and designer, Adam Ellis, contemplate the shrine.

The Trust is grateful for Adam's creative inspiration, to Ōtari staff who enabled the project, and especially for the generosity of John Randall, who funded the project as a living memorial to his late wife Robin, daughter of noted botanist, photographer and Ōtari supporter, Olaf John.

Christmas shopping

At the risk of sounding like a commercial – we have got a few great ideas for Christmas presents. Our book, *Ōtari: Two hundred years of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush*, provides a fascinating account of the history, right back to the mana whenua living in and around Ōtarikākā (the place for snaring kākā) and the foresight and vision of botanists, a farmer, gardeners, curators and community volunteers who have together created the special place that is Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. And it interviews those who continue to protect and enhance it, today and into the future. In the book's rollicking 228 pages there are heaps of personal anecdotes, historic photos, beautiful colour images and insights to all the people involved with Ōtari over the years. The book retails for \$80. It can be purchased from our weekend hosts at the visitor centre, Tāne Whakapiripiri (11am to 4pm Saturdays and Sundays).

And while you're out shopping, here's a plug for our three generous sponsors of raffle prizes for Open Day this year. New Zealand bird artist and illustrator, Melissa Boardman, has a website packed full of very special illustrations, calendars, stickers, patches and prints of the native birds she comes across in her volunteer work with Zealandia, and other conservation causes. Melissa lives locally and is often out spotting the birdlife of Ōtari. Take a look for ideas on melissaboardman.com



Judi Lapsley Miller creates what she describes as ‘joyful, quirky and playful art’ in the form of archival fine-art prints, mixed-media artworks, and bird-themed gifts. She is also an advocate for wildlife conservation and donates a percentage of her sales to local conservation causes, including the Ōtari-Wilton’s Bush Trust.

And it wouldn’t be Christmas without a cool ale, or two. Local craft brewer, Garage Project, donated generously for our raffle prizes. We could return the favour. If you’re wondering which of their many products to choose from, the pilsner Treehugger could be an idea - \$1 from every six pack sold goes towards funding grassroots tree planting projects in New Zealand



Catchment collaboration – and a survey for you.

The Trust is delighted to be continuing its engagement with Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara | Sanctuary to Sea, a collaborative, whole-of-catchment restoration aimed to heal the mouri/lifeforce of the Kaiwharawhara. The stream begins in Zealandia and flows through the heart of Ōtari’s 100 hectares of native forest on its way to the sea.

You can read elsewhere in this newsletter about how our Kaiwharawhara Revegetation Group recently joined Sanctuary to Sea volunteers in a working bee, attacking Tradescantia in the valley. Dr Nate Rigler, Sanctuary to Sea project lead, says he is keen to link up with other community groups, however he wanted to start with Ōtari because he used to work here.

Meanwhile representatives from the Trust, plus Jim Tait from Ōtari’s RAMBO predator control group and Wilbur Dovey, from the Kaiwharawhara Revegetation Group, caught up with the latest efforts and research related to the Kaiwharawhara catchment, at a Sanctuary to Sea community hui held at Zealandia in November.

Assessing the presence of microplastics in the stream, in particular as it flows through Ōtari-Wilton’s Bush, was one somewhat scarily enlightening presentation by VUW Masters student, Jazmine Fraga. She also provided insights into the causes of microplastics and what actions can reduce them.

We also heard about another Masters project, student Astri Noorbani’s study on the Community’s Connectivity to Kaiwharawhara. Astri’s research looks into existing local community, connections, interactions and awareness of the river, forest and wildlife of the Kaiwharawhara catchment.

Everyone is welcome to take part in a survey that forms a major part of her research for gathering community data. It takes about ten minutes to complete and continues until the end of the year.

You can find it on

https://vuw.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dgplO6d85xyWd70



Dr Nate Rigler (aka 'Birdman' as seen at the Ōtari Open Day

Volunteer Profile: Ron Fountain

Each newsletter we aim to profile one of our many invaluable Trust volunteers. This month, we meet Ron Fountain.

He's been a primary school teacher, university ESOL lecturer, Scripture Union children and families co-ordinator, Cannons Creek pastor, and much more, then Ron finally retired to his Wilton home, a few minutes' walk from Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. But he didn't stop. In 2006 he spotted a notice calling for weekend hosts at the Ōtari Visitor Centre. Seventeen years later, he's still hosting in the weekends, now at the new visitor centre, Tāne Whakapiripiri.



'I chat to the visitors, ask if they are familiar with the place and that can lead to all sorts of interesting conversations,' he says. 'Some people have specific questions, others don't really care, you need to judge - I try not to bore them,' he laughs.

In 2007, he joined the Kaiwharawhara Valley Restoration Project in its fight against blackberry, gorse, bamboo and copious other mongrel plants and yes, he's still out there on Saturday mornings, once a month, digging, grubbing, planting, release weeding, helping the restoration team.

Back in 2007, Ron recalls that John Dawson (foundation Trust member and eminent botanist) guided popular Sunday walks through Ōtari. Ron joined them, all ears. 'Those tours were wonderful. I really didn't know much about trees, the first thing I did was walk the canopy walkway learning every tree along the way.' Thus, in 2010, when the Trust started organising tours for cruise ship visitors and urgently needed guides, Ron put his hand up. He thoroughly enjoyed the training given by John Dawson. 'We learned so much, I remember how we had to repeat back to John everything we were going to say to our visitors.'

There's another thing Ron's quietly been doing, also since 2007, every Thursday morning. 'I just thought something that I could do is walk around Ōtari picking up rubbish, also the cabbage tree leaves. They don't decompose and it would be a huge job for the staff to gather them up regularly.' He starts at the entrance by Ōtari School, heads down to the Troup Picnic Lawn then along the Kaiwharawhara Stream to the northern car park, and returns via the Circle Track and the main car park.



'A lot of rubbish gets dumped by the bottom car park, and there's always a heap of cabbage tree leaves by the Wilton Memorial Gates.' The weekly walk takes up to three hours. Ron also offers an extra pair of 'eyes' during his weekly walks, seeing what's going on around the reserve, says grateful Ōtari manager, Tim Park.

'I just thoroughly enjoy getting to know more and more about the reserve,' says Ron. 'I keep on being filled with wonder with what we have here. The forest is so renewing. I used to bring my grandchildren here when they were younger.'

It's great exercise too, he adds, though it seems the restoration work, gorse grubbing and digging up bamboo roots, much of it on the steep slopes of the old tip face further up valley is rather more of a workout. 'Some of that ground is very slippery and inaccessible, I always go there with someone else. We're working on another weed now, Beer's Breeches, if you leave a tiny bit of seed it spreads, you have to go back to it every month.'

While Ron has many happy memories of Ōtari, one special time comes to mind. 'It was when I was digging out some bamboo, I met a chap walking along the track and we had a chat. When I told him what we were doing he said I could use that bamboo. It turns out he was a zookeeper and needed bamboo for feeding the animals, so he took a whole lot of bamboo roots away to recycle. That was real boost.'

In 2012, Ron received an Ōtari Award, granted for distinguished volunteer service. To think, he was only just getting started!

Ōtari Open Day

A keen wind didn't deter keen locals from our annual Rā Tūwhera ki Ōtari | Ōtari Open Day. There was a lot going on. A small-scale plant sale included specialties propagated by our very own, new Trust nursery. Talks and guided walks enlightened visitors about the key role Ōtari-Wilton's Bush plays in native plant conservation and supporting the thriving native bird populations of Wellington. Key people were there, from RAMBO, Ōtari's community predator control group, Capital Kiwi, Animal Services (keeping kiwi and other birds safe from dogs), Porirua Nursery, Zealandia and Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara | Sanctuary to Sea, Ōtari Raranga Weavers and Rongoā (traditional health). Meanwhile everyone, kids and grown up kids, had a ton of fun playing games on the Cockayne Lawn with the health and wellbeing team from Tū Mātau Ora. The Trust's own cakes and preserves stall, cards and book sales, and raffles (thanks heaps to prize donors Melissa Boardman, Judi Lapsley Miller and Garage Project), helped maintain the lively vibe. Thanks for coming everyone!



Welcome smiles from Trustees Annie, Tim and Maggie



Ever vigilant Jim Tait, RAMBO co-ordinator since 2014.



It was all hands to the cake stall.

The 'birdmen', Uenuku Phillips and Nate Rigler were flapping around, spreading the word about Kia Mouriora te Kaiwharawhara | Sanctuary to Sea





Morelotia affinis

This is a smallish attractive sedge, closely allied to *Gahnia* in which it used to be included. In the Wellington area I have only seen it on some of the tracks at Eastbourne; it seems not to be a swamp thing. Its habitat is coastal to montane, in scrub and shrubland. It likes steep rocky places and clay banks. It is said to be difficult to propagate, being hard to germinate and not liking root disturbance. At Otari we have it in the nursery

Membership Application/Donation form.

Please note there is also one on the website which can be completed and submitted electronically or downloaded and printed and sent by post or email.



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