

# Friends of Maara Roa (FMR): 20 years of bringing biodiversity back to the Cannons Creek catchment

We are planting every fine Saturday; meet at 9.30 am at the Cannons Creek entrance to Belmont Regional Park. The nursery group meets every Thursday from 10 am to noon, in the grounds of Aotea College in Okowai Road.

## July 2020 Newsletter

- Welcome back after lockdown
- Celebrating 20 years at the AGM
- GWRC grant boosts pest control
- Glenys Evans
- Committee for 2020-2021
- Cannons Creek and the Kenepuru Stream.

**Welcome back!** As life returns to near normal, we will soon be in touch with those people who expressed interest in joining us to plant this year, to find a date that will suit.

During lockdowns Level 3 and 4, no volunteer activity was permitted in Belmont Regional Park, or any of Greater Wellington Regional Council's parks. In Level 2 working bees and nursery activity restarted with strict protocols to follow.

The move to Level 1 comes just in time for the planting season to start. In many ways the lockdown came at the most convenient time, with the nursery in good shape and plant orders on hold for the new season. However the mix of rain and sun was ideal for weeds as well as young trees, so there is plenty of maintenance work to do now, including clearing a small inkweed forest.

### Celebrating 20 years at the AGM

The Friends of Maara Roa AGM, on Monday 6 July, marked 20 years since the group was established in 2000, and we had a splendid cake to celebrate the milestone. Chairman Sef Truyens, who cut the



cake, touched on some of many highlights in his annual report, which is attached separately. He reminded members that the website [www.maararoad.org.nz](http://www.maararoad.org.nz), although it has not been possible to update it recently, is a treasure trove of past history and well worth visiting.

### GWRC grant boosts pest control

The lockdown worked to our advantage when, because of delays in other spending, Greater Wellington Regional Council was able to pay the full \$4400 awarded for our application to the Environmental Restoration Fund, originally to be paid over two years.

The funds have been used to buy 20 A12 self-resetting possum traps and associated consumables.

Ranger Jeremy Paterson will install the traps in hard-to reach parts of the current bait lines. Thanks to an earlier grant from GWRC we already have a “wall” of A24 resetting rat traps surrounding our planting sites. These traps record activity, which Jeremy says varies greatly between locations.

Rabbits have had a great season, and we are using the recommended repellent, Plantskydd, to protect our youngest plantings and trays of seedlings waiting to be planted.

### **Glenys Evans**

In May we had the sad news that Glenys Evans had died. Though ill health had restricted her activities in recent years, Glenys was famous for her commitment to the wider Wellington environment. She took part in planting and pest control around the region and was famous for tackling the most challenging sites. In earlier days, Glenys took guided walks around Maara Roa; more recently she was part of the small team topping up the possum control bait stations.

### **Committee**

All members of the previous committee have agreed to stand again: Paul Guiniven, Brenda Johnston, Paula Mac Ewan, Keith Nicoll, Sef Truyens, Janet Tyson and Mel Tyson. This leaves one vacancy. We meet every six weeks or so, currently on Tuesdays at 7.30 and at 16 Saunders Close, Whitby. Greater Wellington Regional Council rangers Wayne Boness and Jeremy Paterson also attend the meetings.

Some important decisions need to be made about the future of FMR planting activities. With many of the currently active members getting older, there are questions whether to clear extensive new areas for planting, when so much care and maintenance is needed for what is already there. Similarly, whether it might be time to rely on commercial nurseries to raise and care for plants until they are ready to go in the ground.

### **Interesting observations of Cannons Creek and the Kenepuru Stream**

AGM Guest Speaker Mika Zollner’s presentation attracted a lot of interest and questions. Mika has just finished a Master of Environmental Science at Victoria University, where she studied potential monitoring options for the Kenepuru Stream. Her undergraduate studies were in environmental engineering and she is now working at WSP as a graduate water resources scientist.

Mika observed Kenepuru Stream, and Cannons Creek as its major contributory, over three months from November 2019 to January 2020. She monitored an area of this urban stream intensively using a \$200 time-lapse camera and equipment designed to measure levels of potentially toxic metals, as well as flow and turbidity (amount of materials suspended in the water). Her tutor developed a cheap but effective alternative to the university’s extremely expensive monitoring equipment.

She showed the rapid growth of Porirua from rural to intensive urban areas, with vastly increased stormwater runoff. At times, her studies showed, metals such as zinc reached levels likely to be harmful to fish health. Time lapse photography showed a variety of pollutants like soap and paint, and the impact of erosion around hard surfaces. We hope to have some images from her presentation to circulate in a future newsletter.

**The Friends of Maara Roa (Inc) is supported by Greater Wellington Regional Council. We work to the 20-year Belmont Regional Park Cannons Creek Forest Restoration Plan. Our next committee meeting will be on Tuesday 11 August. Contact Sef [s-v.truyens@xtra.co.nz](mailto:s-v.truyens@xtra.co.nz) or 04 234 7747 if you would like to come along.**