

In this mailout

Lots of useful information so please read carefully. Community restoration and ideas for workshops and working bees in your area. Protecting tui fledging. Battling weeds. Our Gully Contacts have been updated and notable new additions include two new listing in the "pests" section. Connovations, who have some bright ideas for monitoring and attacking plant and animal pests, including a glyphosate gel in a handy dispenser and Goodnature Limited, whose automatic multi-kill humane traps seem to have a lot going for them. Acorn Building supplies have also come on board as a supplier of track building timber. Check out the Gully Contacts list for more information on these suppliers.

What's On

Check out the website www.gullyguide.co.nz to keep up to date with what's on and contact Tim Newton 8386878 for more information. Let me know if you would like to organise or host a tour or workshop in your area of Hamilton. While we generally run these within the city boundaries, out of towners are always most welcome to attend.

Plants for gullies scheme

Record allocation this year with over 3000 plants from the Plants for Gullies Programme going into Hamilton. The plants are now in the ground I'm sure are doing well.

State of the Environment; Tui

Report from John Innes on tui numbers. John notes that there is no hard data on actual numbers of Tui visiting Hamilton at this time but reports continue to come in from areas where tui have not previously been spotted, and numbers are increasing in areas where they were spotted in previously years. Up to 10 tui have been spotted in a single tree. Bellbird sightings are much rarer but also increasing as are kereru.

These increases are due to the targeted control of ship rats and possums within the 10 km Hamilton Halo area (Old Mountain Rd, at Kakepuku, on Pirongia and the Hakarimatas, on Maungatautari, Sanatorium Hill and Te Miro reserves). These ongoing efforts save 100s of tui clutches from ship rats and possums and are sending 100s of new young tui onto rural and urban gardens and parks in the central Waikato. The increased numbers are also a credit to planting that people have done throughout the Waikato, planting which will help to keep the tui fed.

What you can do for tui:

Kill rats and possums now! Nesting may start late September early October with November usually the main nesting month. Typically tui spend 3 to 4 days building a nest and then lay 3 to 4 eggs (one daily). Chicks hatch after two weeks of incubation and fledge after a further 3 weeks. So a period of 6 weeks where tui are vulnerable to predation from rats and possums, which are the main predator threat to Tui.

Keep planting food trees, see <http://www.forestflora.co.nz/birds.html> especially those that flower in late spring or summer when tui nest. Flax, rewarewa, and others serve this purpose, while kowhai is a staple food in September-November. Trapping and poisoning rats and possums in the next two months is really likely to increase fledging numbers.

Tracks and Access

Good access will mean you visit your restoration more regularly. The steep contours which create some challenges also make the gully the most potentially interesting part of your garden.



GULLY TIPS

A goal of restoration is to create a stable and self-sustaining vegetated area. Generally this involves having at least three tiers or layers of plants, as you would see in natural bush area. Often a canopy, sub-canopy and ground cover layer. With open areas the initial challenge is to create a canopy to disrupt the sun loving weeds. Or where exotic plants are established to bring on replacements as in many cases restorers aim to phase out the exotic canopy. Ground cover weeds such as tradescantia disrupt natural restoration processes so ideally you remove this.

Seems like its just about always the season to be weeding so do check www.ew.govt.nz and search weeds; you'll be directed to this page : <http://www.ew.govt.nz/environmental-information/Plant-and-animal-pests/Plant-pests/> which has good pictures and other information. Remember to keep a good lookout for the real nasties such as knotweed and moth plant.

Phone or email me with your email address if you'd like to be added to the electronic newsletter list. Email tim.newton@hcc.govt.nz or phone (07) 838 6878.

The next track building workshop is to be held at the Hamilton East School, starting at 9 am on Tuesday 18th October. Come along to learn and/or participate and check the gully guide website for more details.

Gully owners wishing to host a workshop for a group of neighbours in their area or gully. We're promoting the proven design of Department of Conservation style tracks and steps. Boxed steps are maintenance free, should last 25 years and help stabilise slopes while providing the all important access.

Stream and Bank Stability

Plants for gully stability. There are a number of local plants which are particularly good at hanging on to steep gully walls. Mahoe and cabbage trees are two of a number of good performers though it's important to get good advice or to have a good understanding of the ecology of the plants being planted. Cabbage trees can send a strong taproot close to two metres straight down into the ground, while mahoe send their roots across the surface over a surprisingly large area. Heavy fast growing trees like poplars, pines, acacias and gums are causing a few headaches around town, especially where they are growing near the crest of a steep gully. Natives like totara and kanuka will perform better in many steep situations, tho' often large trees are not appropriate for these kinds of sites. Flax plants are generally not suitable for planting on stream banks or gully slopes; the large heavy flax rhizomes struggle to defy gravity. Harakeke is natural in swamps and backswamps while wharariki are best suited to mountain and coastal cliffs and may have historically been less common in the Hamilton basin. Choosing the right plants for steep sites can mean huge savings in the long term. Good planting advice can provide for a stable slope in the same way that a retaining wall might. However our gullies are dynamic systems and slips and slumps can still happen. The spring sapping process which formed the gullies continues to occur and gully owners on steeper sites are well advised to check that rain water from hard surfaces is diverted to the street, or in some cases directly into gully streams. Water and weight are two key triggers to slips.

Community Restoration

Currently we have a project happening in Riverlea which focuses on a piece of gully owned by around 60 individuals. This gully meets the river at Hammond Bush which is probably the most original and diverse gully remnant in Hamilton. Many residents in this area are participating in a targeted restoration, focussed on eradicating some weed species as well as targeting animal pests such as rats and possums. Controlling the animal pests is our way of welcoming tui, bellbirds, kereru etc into town. Where there are a number of restorers working together or independently in the same area we are able to provide extra support, whether in the form of advice or practical assistance such as chemicals or other methods for poisoning pests, weed phages for noxious weeds.

Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park Update

Back in June 1300 volunteers planted 30000 plants. There are now 15 Ha planted with around 160000 plants in the ground. Seedlings including ferns are now starting to establish in the earlier plantings.

What you can do:

The best way to see the site at this time is to attend a working bee. Contact Moira Cursey on m.cursey@xtra.co.nz or phone 07 8465066.

Moira can add you to her email list to keep you informed of progress and invite you to the regular working bees held at the park. Further information is also available on the very informative website www.waiwhakareke.co.nz



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