

The GULLY FIX

October 2010

This newsletter goes to print as council cordons off sections of the Waikato River walkways due to high and rising river levels. Squally rain will hopefully be over by the time you read this. A wet winter with strong winds and falling trees has done a bit of damage around the place.

In this mailout

An updated list of gully contacts is enclosed. The newsletter gives you an update of the situation with bats, tui, bellbirds, the Waiwhakareke project and a couple of useful gully tips; managing tree weeds and tackling tradescantia.

What's On

We're hoping to provide plenty of opportunity to learn more about restoration with a number of events coming up. Check out the website www.gullyguide.co.nz to keep up to date with what's on and contact Tim Newton for more information. Coming up in October is a track building workshop, see over the page for more details. Also batwalks, see below, as part of the museums holiday programme.

What's New

The Gully Restoration Programme coordination role has moved upstairs, from the second to the 4th floor. I now sit in the Parks and Gardens Unit with the rest of the Hamilton City council Restoration Team: Gerard Kelly (Community Planting Coordinator) and Paul Duffy (Natural Areas Contracts Supervisor). My position is now 30 hours per week solely dedicated to providing support to Hamilton's private gully restorers, this is up from what was previously about a third of my time spent on gully restoration matters.

Plants for gullies scheme

72 applicants were successful this year with over 2700 plants allocated. Recipients included 9 schools some of whom are restoring gullies, while others are planting "Gully Education Gardens" on their grounds. As well as getting more local vegetation planted this will help to raise the profile of gullies within school communities.

I look forward to catching up with successful applicants in summer to see how restorations are progressing, to learn and to share and exchange restoration tips.

State of the Bat Environment

We have more batwalks happening as part of the Museum Holiday Programme. The walk does take about 15-20 minutes each way along path and boardwalk. As it will be getting dark and cold make sure you dress up well and wear suitable walking shoes and bring a torch!

Dates: Wednesday 29 September, Monday 4 October, Wednesday 6 October
Time: 5.30pm—8.30pm **Cost:** \$5 children and \$8 adults Children must be accompanied by an adult. Bookings are essential as there are limited spaces so to book phone 838 6606 or email museum@hcc.govt.nz. Talks start at the Museum and you need to transport yourselves to Malcolm St after the talk for the bat walk after dusk.

What you can do for bats:

Where possible avoid the removal of large or old trees along the Waikato River Margin as these are excellent bat habitat.



GULLY TIPS

Tree Weeds in Restoration Don't be too hasty in removing exotic trees from your restoration: What's a weed? This is a tricky question at the best of times. An existing willow or other exotic canopy will keep many other weeds at bay until a sub-canopy of native vegetation is established. Exotics can then be phased out by ring barking and if necessary poisoning. So what is a weed in restorations? Answer; It changes over time. Lower growing plants including grasses can cause problems in the early stages while other larger tree "weeds" can be beneficial in early stages and will disappear or need to be "phased out" in time. Get to know the ecology of the restoration plants as well as that of weeds and use this knowledge to your advantage.

Tradescantia control: How to kill/dispose of it once you've raked or pulled it. A tip from Gerard Kelly. Dig a grave sized hole up to 75 cm deep, fill with tradescantia and cover carefully with a thick piece of 200 micron black polythene sheeting. (the thicker stuff won't get holes in it). Gerard says putting bits of dry tree fern fronds in (wheki) seems to help it to rot down which will still take a couple of months. Keep filling the hole and it keeps rotting down till you have none left on your property. Can be achieved in a year or two if you are persistent. If you can't get the neighbours to do the same you still have border patrol. Tradescantia will not grow from seed, can only spread as fast as it can grow across the surface, and does not send roots far into the ground.



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Tracks and Access

On the 16th October there is a track building workshop at Silverdale School starting 1 pm park on Silverdale Road or school parking area and meet in the far corner of the playing field next to the swimming pool. Following Department of Conservation principles of creating permanent low maintenance tracks which blend with their natural surroundings we will be building a small section of track with a couple of boxed sections and a piece of flat track at the top of the gully next to recently planted Silverdale School Gully garden.

Tui and Bellbirds

Kowhai trees around Hamilton are really looking great at the moment, and in some cases sounding great too! Landcare Research Scientist John Innes reports on the 2010 biennial August counts in Hamilton City green areas. The final tally was tui at 23 of 101 count stations. That's up from 3 in 2004, 6 in 2006 and 8 in 2008, a nearly 3-fold increase since 2 years ago. The most tui at one station was 6! Note these are the results from this single survey and doesn't include the many sightings being reported to Environment Waikato. Some of you will remember the bellbird release back in May; here's an update from Hamilton Halo (AKA Ben Paris of Environment Waikato) straight from the dreaded facebook. "Since the bellbird release in May, 14 of 50 bellbirds have been tracked in Hamilton and surrounding areas. More important are the sightings of unbanded bellbirds in the city which could suggest the released birds may be attracting other "wild" bellbirds from outside Hamilton. This is a good start for the city population but it may take some time for them to form pairs to breed to similar levels to tui." You can keep up to date with tui and bellbird happenings on facebook (Hamiltonhalo) and twitter as well as on the Environment Waikato website. www.ew.govt.nz/Projects/Hamilton-Halo.

Community Groups

A recent open day coordinated by the newly established Mangaiti Gully Restoration Group attracted a good crowd of around 30, despite the wild and squally weather conditions.

Mangaiti Gully Restoration Group; <http://gullyrestoration.blogspot.com>
Riverlea Environment Society Inc Tel. 8568355 www.resi.org.nz

Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park Update

The first tui has been seen at Waiwhakareke. A new track funded by the WEL Energy Trust off Brymer Rd has made a huge difference to access. A patch of 35000 plants on the hill above the lake are doing well in the wet and warming soil. There is a new fence and gate off Baverstock Rd to improve access for planting and the entrance has been planted. The site is not yet open to the visitors, although tui are permitted and have been visiting!

What you can do:

The best way to see the site at this time is to attend a working bee. Contact Catherine Smith on 2smiths@wave.co.nz or phone 07 855 8296. Catherine 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

Electronic Contacts

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.

