

# Friends of Baring Head Newsletter



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February 2013 Number 4



## Message from the Chair

Compliments of the season to you all!

The Trustees held the first AGM in October last year, with the Greater Wellington Regional Council attending to discuss aspects of the park plan. More recently I spent a windy January Saturday morning with Paula Warren at the Wainuiomata entrance to the East Harbour Regional Park. I was there to introduce the Friends of Baring Head to visitors coming to join in the Greater Wellington Regional Council's four-wheel drive trip to Baring Head, run as part of their summer programme.

Greater Wellington had four separate trips that day, each with seven vehicles packed with eager, warmly wrapped-up visitors. There were the young and fit, there were older people and there were families with small children, some of whom would have found the long steep walk just too tough.

Those to whom I talked had all sorts of reasons for wanting to visit the site. Some were curious because they'd heard about how the land was acquired, others had marvelled at photos of Baring Head and wanted to check it out themselves, yet others had previous associations with the area through fishing, walking or had some connection with the lighthouse.

Most returned speaking in superlatives with big smiles on their faces. We collected names of a number of people who are interested in Friends' future activities. Check out the Greater Wellington website for the participants' contacts and comments. But what is clear to us is that as more people become familiar with this amazing area, the work of the Friends' takes on an increasing importance. We welcome this – there will be no scarcity of volunteer tasks to be done in 2013. See you there!

Joy Baird  
**Chair**

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## East Harbour Regional Park's new ranger



Mark McAlpine has replaced Gareth Cooper, who had worked in the park since 2004. Mark introduces himself:

I have been the park ranger for six months now and I'm really enjoying this fantastic job. I have been an outdoors guy ever since I was young with my first overnight trip into the Orongorongo catchment when I was four months old. My wife always says I'm more at home in the bush than the city.

I graduated from Lincoln University 16 years ago with a Bachelor of Park, Recreation and Tourism Management. I have worked mainly with Greater Wellington since then, as a builder and a self-employed environmental contractor and as a pest plant officer, pest animal officer, and mobile ranger at Kaitoke and Wainuiomata Water Catchment Areas.

This broad range of knowledge and skills helps me deal with the many and widely varied issues that arise in this park.

## Membership

Just a quick reminder that we are always looking out for new members. So spread the word. Feel free to forward this newsletter on to those you think might want to join. To find out more information you can simply [click on this link for the information!](#)

## The pump house



The work on repairing the historic pump house continues at a slow but steady pace. The replacement window has been installed and primed, with only a couple of top coats now needed to complete it. Our project manager, Richard Nester, has arranged with our joiners, Cheriton Classique, for the construction and installation of a new door. Our thanks go to Cheriton Classique for generously donating their time for this part of the project.

With the joinery work either finished or arranged, all that remains is that troublesome north wall. Quite honestly it's going to take forever if we have to rely on elbow grease to get it in a fit state for painting, so we looking at getting some more grunty equipment onto site to speed things up a bit. The Trust will be arranging a working day to do this before the end of summer so watch this space. As always, we will be relying on our wonderful volunteers to allow us to complete the work.

## Painting the lighthouse complex



The lighthouse complex at Baring Head is an important attraction for many visitors. Beyond this, it is of significant historic value and many locals have links with it from the days when it was a manned facility. Indeed, the fear that the complex was going to be demolished and lost forever was one of the main reasons why the community's campaign to protect the property received such widespread and vocal support.

The Trust has had a number of informal discussions with Greater Wellington about the future of these buildings. While these have exploratory only, it is clear that they expect the Trust will have a significant ongoing involvement in their management *and* in helping determine if the buildings can be an asset (and stay) or will remain a liability (and go). There is a lot of work (and talk) needed before the Trust can decide whether it can make such a huge commitment but in the meantime, the buildings are slowly deteriorating.

To preserve the fabric of the buildings in the short term, the Trust has suggested to the Council that the Trust be responsible for repainting the exterior walls. While expensive, this should not be beyond the Trust's means, though we will need sponsorship (which should not be an issue) and a decent amount of volunteer support. However, the painters are going to need on-site accommodation to avoid wasting an inordinate amount of time, travelling to and fro.

So at least one of the houses is going to have to be habitable with at least some of the modcons we've all come to know and love – a toilet, water, cooking facilities and the like. Unfortunately, we can't use a gas fire because of the close proximity of the internationally vital NIWA facilities and the imperative that their results not be compromised by man-derived pollution.

Trustees, Richard Nester and Colin Ryder have begun grappling with these difficult questions with the objective of submitting a conservation plan to the Greater Wellington in due course.

As always, we'll keep you posted.

## Lizard and small mammal monitoring

206 pitfall traps have now been installed for lizard monitoring, and the first of a planned series of annual monitoring events was completed at the end of last year. Teams had to check each trap 7 times – a massive task. The Trust's role was in helping Greater Wellington find volunteers to support the professional monitoring team.

The results show that there are lizards everywhere – even in the middle of the farmland – although they are more numerous in the better habitat. Common skinks were the most frequently detected, followed by common geckos. One copper skink was found, no spotted skink (they should be present), and possibly a brown skink. The work has definitely confirmed that Baring Head is an important habitat for lizards. The trapping method probably under-counts geckos, as they have sticky pads on their feet and can often climb out of the trap, whereas skinks have to wait to be released.

The team will look at some supplementary survey methods for the 2013 count to give more information about the rarer species.

The November small mammal monitoring was the most successful yet, with every card collected (although in some cases after an animal had pulled it out of the tunnel). Many thanks to the volunteers and to Colleen Davey from the Tararua Tramping Club, who is now our volunteer coordinator, for her work in juggling volunteers and transport and ensuring the job was successfully completed.

Rat numbers are still fairly low, but mouse and hedgehog numbers continue to be high. Insect (wētā) numbers are low.

For the first time we got no stoat tracks, but one volunteer group saw two stoats running towards them as they were putting out the cards – no tracks clearly do not equal no stoats. But we hope the lack of tracks mean low numbers. There were a few possum prints. Hedgehog tracks were up, but this is to be expected at this time of year.

Skinks and geckos were recorded on a few cards.

The next small mammal monitoring is the weekend 16/17 February and Wednesday 20 February. We have lines suitable for anyone, whether you're an experienced trumper or a family with babies and small children – the children are always very enthusiastic helpers. So we hope to see you there. Get in touch with Colleen Davey at [colleen.davey@paradise.net.nz](mailto:colleen.davey@paradise.net.nz) if you plan to come.

## Biodiversity plan

Greater Wellington's biodiversity planning is now well advanced, and the Trustees are hoping to see a draft plan in February. This will provide a sound basis for restoration work, including fencing, planting, weed and pest control, and possibly reintroductions.

A key limitation on how well we're able to protect the biodiversity in the short term will be funding for fencing. Because of the fire risk in the grassed areas, Greater Wellington has decided to not remove stock until areas can be planted. That increases fencing costs, as we obviously can't plant the entire property immediately. We shall be working with the council to try to maximise the benefits from available fencing funds, and to progress planting as rapidly as possible.

## Volunteering for work in the park



We particularly value people becoming financial members, as financial support will enable us to do far more work for the area. But we would also love more volunteers who aren't members but who can bring enthusiasm or experience to the job. So even if you're not a member, do think about going on the volunteer list. You can send an email to Paul Hughes at [pmhughes@clear.net.nz](mailto:pmhughes@clear.net.nz) and you will be notified of opportunities. Do as many or as few of the activities as you like, or just get the notices and pass them to suitable friends.



## Ranger roundup

The car park at the end of Coast Road was completed just before Labour weekend last year. This went in to prevent vehicles getting down on to the beach and protects the natural ecosystem – and the dotterels that breed on the beach in particular – from vehicle damage. We thought the fence that borders the beach would be constantly broken down, but surprisingly it has been cut only once, on Halloween.

The dotterel breeding season is coming to a close and we're delighted to report a good result. Four juveniles have fledged this year, a considerable increase on none last season! The video camera we've had set up at a number of nests over the season shows main predator of eggs was hedgehogs. However, a cat did destroy one nest over the season.

Last November a number of people helped the Friends and Greater Wellington plant 300 plants, among them kowhai, flax, taupata, and toetoe, at Khyber Pass. It was cold, it was very windy and the ground was rocky but we got everything planted and the plants have survived well over the summer and the windy conditions. Another planting will be organised for this autumn. We'll be in touch!

Joy Baird has already touched on four-wheel drive tour on 12 January and the subsequent positive comment received. One hundred people attended and travelled in council vehicles from the bridge up to the farm, then walked across the to lighthouse complex area. Gordon Brailsford from NIWA gave them a tour through the clean air weather research station.

Greater Wellington and the Friends are also looking into the possibility of installing a few more picnic tables around the park. We shall create a map with possible locations and then consult with the Friends on both location and funding. A new toilet is also to be installed at the entrance to Baring Head along Coast Road.

I should like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers that have helped out in the recent activities we had over the last few months. Both the lizard survey and rodent monitoring went well and without your continued help we simply couldn't get these necessary activities done. Sarah Moylan from Ecogecko Consultants (a consultancy group Greater Wellington uses in its work in lizards, frogs and tuatara) also passes on her thanks for helping with the lizard monitor.

Finally, keeping you up to date on the next activity at the park, on 3 February 35 people will be joining Michael Kelly and me on Greater Wellington's highly popular (and fully booked) guided walking tour of the park.

## How can I join the Friends?

New members are always welcome. There are four levels of membership – individual (waged \$20 or unwaged \$10), family \$30, or organisation \$50.

The financial year runs from 1 July to 30 June.

For those with web access, [click here to get a membership/renewal of membership form](#).

For those without email, a membership form has come with your newsletter. Please send your form and subscription to:

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PO Box 38 076  
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