

Friends of Baring Head Newsletter



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November 2013 Number 6



Message from the Chair

With the approach of summer and, we hope, long sunny days, activities at Baring Head will be getting underway again. We plan to hold the open day to officially launch the historic pump house and our picnic tables quite soon. A big thank you to Margaret Aitken, Gen Walcott, Nicholette Pomana and partner for their generous donations towards picnic table costs.

Check out below what's on at Baring Head between now and February 2014 and mark on your calendar the things that you or your family might want to do. Remember you'll have to book for some events. Or you could volunteer on any of a range of activities – beach clean-ups, weeding and small mammal monitoring. (You do need sign in for some of these.) Again, they're listed below, but keep a lookout, too, for specific emails nearer to key dates. And even if you can't participate in the planned events, bring yourself, your family or your friends – or the lot – to Baring Head, pack a picnic and a warm jacket and don't forget your camera.

The trustees participated in a meeting with other interested groups to discuss the Greater Wellington ten-year biodiversity plan and we've reached a significant deal of consensus on future goals. Some members also joined a walk around the ox-bow lakes along the Wainuiomata River recently. Thanks Paula for making arrangements. As the special features of Baring Head area become more accessible, it's increasingly important we have good signage to provide information for visitors. The Friends are working with Greater Wellington to finalise suitable historic and environmental information for boards to be progressively placed at key sites. The trees in Khyber Pass and at the car park are looking good and planting has now ceased for the summer. Last, and not least, thanks to Greater Wellington for the very smart toilet now in place!

Joy Baird
Chair

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Rangers roundup

Baring Head seems to have been a hive of activity over the last couple of months. You will see articles by Friends trustee members about Khyber pass planting, banded dotterels, picnic tables, seats and interpretation signage, fresh water ecosystems and horned poppy removal, all of which the trustees and GWRC are working together on to achieve.



At the end of June and start of July, two severe storms hit Wellington causing major damage to East Harbour Regional Park, including Baring Head. The main area at Baring Head which was affected was the lighthouse area, with macrocarpa falling on fence lines and a building and the small shed over a water well being blown off. The well cover has been replaced and the macrocarpa that fell on the building has been removed.

The toilet at the Baring Head Bridge carpark was finally installed in July. This is a great asset to the park. Over the next month we plan to re-metal the car park, install a picnic table and allow room for some native planting this coming planting season. The Council are also planning to put on another 140m³ metal (gravel) on the road to fill in the pot holes and keep the road network in a good working order. We hope to do this before summer.



After involving the trustees in reviewing a brief for project outcomes, Greater Wellington are about to contact with heritage planning consultants for a heritage conservation plan for the lighthouse compound. This plan will define the principal heritage values for the compound and suggest some re-use concepts that will help us to retain and promote these values. A second stage of planning will consider the feasibility of the preferred re-use options and define the work that is involved in bringing the compound back to a useable state. The work should start to happen over the next couple of months. Once the project is complete this should give both the Council and the trustees a clear understanding of what needs to be done at the lighthouse compound.

Lastly, summer is coming up and the Greater Wellington Regional Council runs a summer programme of events – the Great Outdoor Summer Events. Three events are at Baring Head. Firstly a mountain

bike trip from Eastbourne to Wainuiomata, then a Explore Baring Head walking trip and lastly an evening ecological walk along the Wainuiomata River discovering the significance of a river ecosystem – for more details see What’s On below. These will be advertised on the Council’s website once all the events have been finalised. Do note – booking is *essential* for most of them. I am looking forward to seeing a lot of you at the up and coming events or just on a stroll in the park over summer.

Mark McAlpine
East Harbour Park Ranger

Second annual report to 30 June 2013

Welcome to the second annual report of the Friends of Baring Head (FOBH) Charitable Trust. At the end of this our second full year of activity, we have continued to be active on both the planning and practical aspects of our responsibilities to be a lead supporter of, and contributor to, the protection, enhancement and public enjoyment of Baring Head and its environs.

Our key achievement this year has been finishing the restoration of the historic pump house. After much sanding and painting it glistens in pristine white, with a new red roof and rotten boards replaced, thanks to many hours work by numerous people, ably led by Colin Ryder and Richard Nester. This project also benefited from the support of the Community Trust of Wellington, DULUX International and Cheriton Classique. Now we are working on erecting an information board, locating a picnic table and putting suitable planting around this site.

Our submission to the Greater Wellington Regional Council on the Baring Head/Orua-poanui Management was heard and we’re pleased to report most aspects of the submission were accepted in September 2012. This included the somewhat controversial decision not to ban grazing across the whole area, but to remove stock from ecologically sensitive areas and retain stock in areas with a significant fire risk. A key aspect of protecting biodiversity will be working with the council to target priority areas for fencing and balancing fencing and planting work.

In January 2013 some FOBH members introduced the Trust to visitors joining the Greater Wellington four-wheel drive to the lighthouse complex. Seven vehicles did four trips and returning visitors all sported happy, windswept faces and commented in superlatives.

We've held four planting days to establish a planting programme at the Khyber Pass. This windswept location provides a severe challenge to even the toughest native plants. First there was the drought, then the invasion of neighbouring stock and finally the incessant wind. Many FOBH supporters joined in this planting, protecting, weeding and watering and we thank them for their fine effort.

We've organised and participated in a number of animal monitoring and plant search ventures. Small mammal monitoring has continued, in February, we contributed to the placement of over 200 pitfall traps in the first of our annual lizard monitoring. Teams checked each trap many times and we now know there are high numbers of lizards, common skinks and common geckos and also of mice and hedgehogs. Thanks to Paula Warren for her leadership with many of these events.

We noticed with some concern Greater Wellington has provided duck-shooting permits along some stretches of the Wainuiomata River and will be monitoring outcomes of this activity.

We've been very supportive of the establishment of the Baring Head coastal car park by Greater Wellington, as it protects both beach and river. We will be assisting the council with planting around this attractive car park in a few weeks' time. They have also put in a new fence around the Baring Head bridge car park and (to update this report) the new toilet has been installed. The previous temporary toilet nearly succumbed to the wind on one of the open days!

We have sought voluntary donations so we can provide seats and picnic tables at the bridge and pump house sites and elsewhere on the property. To date there hasn't been a rush of sponsorship, but it's still early days and we will also be seeking a grant to contribute towards this cost.

Looking ahead we anticipate being approached for comment on both the Greater Wellington Ten Year Biodiversity Area Plan for Baring Head Orua-Pouanui which covers both native plants and animals, as well as the draft plan for the lighthouse complex.

During the year we have circulated three newsletters to members. We also welcome volunteers, members or not, to join in our planting and animal monitoring activities.

We have particularly appreciated the support from the Tararua Tramping Club, whose members have assisted with a number of projects and activities with us. We have also enjoyed a strong and positive relationship with the Regional Council. A big thank you must go to Mark McAlpine, whose good humour, approachability and willingness to go the extra mile have helped to ensure the Friends can

make a real contribution. Another big thank you to the members who have provided generous donations, which enable us to contribute to programmes of planting, signage and seating. Donations and information from people who tell us of a family connection to the Baring Head area or the lighthouse are especially welcome.

Finally a thank you for financial support from Project Crimson for the purchase and planting of rata seedlings, to the Hutt News for some great publicity and to the Petone Workingmen's Club for use of their meeting rooms.

Joy Baird
FOBH Chair
July 2013

What our volunteers have been doing

BNZ lends a hand to fight the horned poppies

During the BNZ annual "Closed for Good" day, a brave team of data processing staff from Wellington came out to Baring Head to start tackling the horned poppy.

Horned poppies, in spite of the name, don't present too many hazards to volunteers. In fact weeding them out of the beach gravel is quite fun (and some might even think it easy compared to tackling box thorn). We did a significant stretch of beach, both clearing the poppies and picking up rubbish, before the initially relatively pleasant conditions were interrupted by a severe southerly storm. We retreated to the car park and the volunteers, having experienced the wilder aspects of Baring Head, were more than ready for a hot drink, towels and heater at the Greater Wellington Wainuiomata building.

Another horned poppy day is included in our work plan (see below) – the plant will need an ongoing programme, as there will be a significant seed bank. However, it is a weed that potentially could be eradicated, or at least prevented from becoming a threat to the coastal turf vegetation that is such an important feature of the park. Meanwhile a couple of the trustees are plugging away at the problem.

None of the volunteers had ever been to Baring Head before, and many had never heard of the park but a number indicated they were happy to come back and do more. So the day has meant that more

people are aware of the park and its attractions – and at least one of them is likely to be back to do some mountain biking on the roads.

Small mammal monitoring – the results of the August monitoring

The monitoring was done in August and again, there was a downward trend for rats and mice, with mice activity decreasing to 13% from 29% in May. Only one small mustelid track was noted, and hedgehog activity has dropped from 71% in May, although levels are still high at over 50%. Three night monitoring sessions also showed presence of four possums and a cat. It is likely that the changes reflect seasonal variation rather than any significant shift in pest populations. However, the very high levels of hedgehogs are a major concern given their role as predators of eggs, invertebrates and probably young lizards.

As ever, we are enormously indebted to, and grateful, for our volunteer monitors!

Beach clean-up

The most recent volunteer event was a great success.

The southern team filled six bags of rubbish from areas fairly close to the car parks, as well as re-setting all the predator traps that needed attention. Two more predators down, but no dotterels in sight. They also intercepted a car on the beach and explained to the owner why she couldn't be there. She responded saying she hadn't realised and wouldn't do it again. In addition, they provided lot of information about the area to a Wainuiomata resident who hadn't been there recently and hadn't realised it was now public land.

Both activities are good indicators of the potential value of having people on site who can pass on information to visitors.

The idea of a volunteer patrol has been discussed in the past, and we'd be interested in members' feedback on the idea.

The rubbish in that area was concentrated around the car park areas and in the places that driftwood collects – almost none on the open sand/gravel areas. Given that, it will clearly be worth doing a quick trot around to pick up the obvious material each time we have a bit of spare time at the end of other activities.

The northern team cleaned the beach from the northern boundary to 350m south of the boat on Fitzroy bay beach, filling a dozen bags (they also separated glass and aluminium out for recycling). Most of

the rubbish collected was old plastic bottles but there was anything from a reasonable pair of diving goggles and a solar hot water shower to the plastic part of a car bumper. Again, little rubbish was on the open sand/gravel areas. And the total rubbish collected? It filled a not inconsiderably sized rubbish trailer completely!

A big thank you to Paula Warren for the chocolate cake and fruit juice

What the trust has been involved in

Installing picnic tables and seating

One of the objectives of the Trust is to assist Greater Wellington Regional Council make visits for the public to Baring Head even more enjoyable and worthwhile. The Council has already been working on such initiatives as signage for the tracks and the very welcome toilet at the bridge car park, and the Trust is working with it to progress several others.

As foreshadowed in the last Newsletter, the trustees have agreed to fund the materials involved in assembling and installing four picnic tables at strategic locations on the track; including at the recently restored pump house and at the lighthouse complex. This decision was made possible by the Infinity Foundation and several members generously donating much of the funding required with the Trust providing the balance from its own funds (mostly derived from subscriptions and donations from members). The Council's contribution comprised the labour involved in building and installing the tables. The tables will go in over the next couple of months, with the first picnic table at the pump house done by the end of October. A big thank you to the Hutt City Council for also providing two sets of seats.

The next project on the books for the Trust involves a series of on-site interpretation panels, describing the main features and values of the property. Greater Wellington, working alongside the trustees, is currently developing a comprehensive interpretation strategy for Baring Head, together with a budget. As with the picnic tables, it is anticipated that the Trust will finance the third party costs, while Greater Wellington will provide in-house expertise and labour.

Having seen examples of the Council's on-site interpretation elsewhere on its estate, we are confident that you will be in for a treat. Their work is really first class.

Somewhat further down the track (in a manner of speaking) could be the establishment of a interpretation centre/visitor facility at the

lighthouse complex, possibly in the old generator shed. While this has been talked about as part of any future restoration and utilisation of the lighthouse buildings, no real work has done so far to progress it. As mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter, this will change soon with the Council about to engage a consultant to draft a conservation plan for all the buildings, including the generator shed. This will be a big deal for both the Council and the Trust, it will be expensive and it will require some big decisions and big ongoing commitments from both parties. *It won't be easy but it will happen.*

Protecting the banded dotterels at Baring Head

Nationwide, the population is declining. They have disappeared from many sites throughout New Zealand, including some where the habitat has changed little in recent decades. In the Wellington region, these birds nest at only half a dozen sites along the Kapiti and South Wellington coastlines including at Baring Head and Pencarrow.

Monitoring over the past two years at both the Wellington sites had indicated that they have only achieved, on average, a three per cent nesting



success rate. Most of the nests are predated by hedgehogs, but cats, rats, mustelids (stoats, weasels and ferrets) and even possums will also predate the nesting birds, chicks and eggs. The nests are also vulnerable to disturbance by visitors and vehicles. Urgent action is needed to prevent these populations from going locally extinct.

The nesting sites of the closely related New Zealand Dotterel have been protected in the Wairarapa by installing a range of bait stations and traps to control these predators intensively and by erecting temporary fencing. Signs explain to the public why the fence is there and what values are being protected.

Following an urgent request from Greater Wellington, the trustees agreed to fund the protection of the banded dotterels at Baring Head this season using the same package of measures on the eastern side of the Wainuiomata River mouth where the majority of the birds nest. The traps and bait stations will be monitored and replenished at least monthly by Trust volunteers over the nesting season, which runs from

September to February.

The measures are already in place and trustee Colin Ryder has been trained by Biosecurity Officer, Gareth Cooper, on how to service the traps without breaking any fingers. Incidentally, a weasel, a ferret, two stoats and seven hedgehogs have already been caught.



Due to a lot of disturbance by quad bikes over the school holidays, only one pair of birds has attempted to nest. This nest failed within a week. Waiting for the birds to nest before erecting the fence is now not an option. The fence will be up before Labour weekend in the same area as

the birds nested last year. It is hoped the birds will use this safer area and breed successfully.

This initiative will also boost the breeding success of the pied oystercatcher that also nests at this site.

The Trust received a donation from the Ron D. and E.A. Greenwood Trust towards this project. The Trust's support is both welcomed and appreciated.

We are very happy to be able to help Greater Wellington with this small but important project.

What's on at Baring Head November 2013 – February 2014

November 2013

- Small Mammal Monitoring 3 days – 16th, 17th and 20th (weather dependent)
- Horned Poppy Removal with BNZ – 2 days during the week to suit them.
- Horned Poppy Removal will also occur on the 16th, 17th and 20th in association with the small mammal monitoring, if enough volunteers are available.

December 2013

- Lizard Monitoring – 7-8 days (dates to be confirmed) with a total 204 traps to be checked each time.
- 14th or 15th – Weeding and protecting the Khyber Pass and Coastal Car Park plantings.

January 2014

- 11 or 12th – Beach clean up and Horned Poppy removal
- 25th Mountain Bike from Eastbourne to Baring Head - 10.00 am start
- 29th - Evening ecological walk - 6.30 pm start

February 2014

- Small Mammal Monitoring 3 days.
- 16th – Explore Baring Head Walk - 9.30 am start

Pump house opening – will occur in late 2013, after the picnic table has been installed.

The lighthouse complex work may start in February as well.

Membership renewal and/or joining the Friends

Memberships now need to be renewed. Instructions are below. We do value your membership – and as you can see, the funding your membership provides is well used!

You may also be considering joining the Friends.

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. However, subscriptions paid between February and June 2013 will be valid until 30 June 2014.

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 and any donation to:
Friends of Baring Head Charitable Trust, PO Box 38 076 Te Puni Mail Centre Lower Hutt 5045 or deposit directly to our bank account, Westpac 03 0543 0326859 00, including your name in the reference box.