

July 2010

Welcome to the July edition of the Rotokare Bush Telegraph.

This issue is jam packed with lots of positive news. From thriving plants, glowing track reports, amazing building progress and a biosecurity wake up call, with a happy ending.

- The best of luck to Alan Rogers for his upcoming hip replacement operation, and Nancy we hope your leg is recovering well. We can't wait to have you both back, hooning around the Rotokare hills.
- Thank you to Janet King (Royal Society Teaching Fellow), who has put in lots of hard work at Rotokare over the last 6 months. She has been an invaluable part of our team, we wish her luck inspiring the staff and students back at School, and we hope to see her out at the lake in the near future.
- Once again a huge thank you to all the volunteers, who have put in so much time, making the progress on the building project possible.
- For those who haven't had the opportunity to get to the reserve in the past few months, do make the effort to have a look at the work that has gone into our buildings.

Revegetation Update

To all those that participated in last years mass planting of Rotokare's bare blocks, well done. They have all bolted away (even the ones with frozen roots!) and Simon says some are over 5 feet tall. Not sure if that's a tall tale or what but nevertheless they are thriving, with only a very few losses.



Volunteer Profile

I found out about Rotokare from my sister Nancy, like her I am keen on outdoors and conservation. I have been blown away by what a small group has been able to achieve to date. This time last year I participated in the planting



of 10,000 trees it was a great project involving a great number of people each giving a little time and effort. Most people don't realise what a difference one person can make. I have made good friends and a great deal from the other volunteers and enjoy being part of the Rotokare family. As a computer engineer, I spend my work days inside in front of a small screen often in a window-less room. So the fresh air and sunshine and even a little frost, blustery wind or torrential rain is a welcome change. **Jim Maessen**

Rotokare Track Upgrades

Receive 5 Stars

On Monday the 10th of May 25 guests came to test run/walk/roll the newly completed track. Guests included Trust members, several members of the public, visitors from Mercy Jenkins Rest Home, South Taranaki District Council, WINZ, and the Taranaki Disabilities Information Centre Trust.



A section of new boardwalk weaving through the forest.



Since November 2009 the Trust has been upgrading the existing 4km walking track around the lake, thanks to funding from the Significant Community Based Projects Fund. Simon Collins, our Site Manager, over saw the project, with technical advice from DoC staff, and good tips from the Taranaki Disabilities Information Trust. Work was carried out by volunteers and four Community Max employees [a WINZ work initiative to get youth in to the workforce].

The first 600m of the track has changed from an uneven grassy challenge to a wide smooth all-weather track, now useable by a wider number of community users, including the wheelchair bound. Buggy areas on the west side of the lake have also had a boost, with the addition of 300m of boardwalk. Great news, our visitors all came back with glowing reports, we hope you do too!

Trustee, Mike Weren, welcomes visitors and talks about the project

Rotokare Resident

Peripatus, or more commonly velvet worms, are curious creatures, who can be found living in dark and humid environments, among moss, leaf litter and particularly under tree trunks and in rotting wood. Velvet worms are ambush predators who hunt nocturnally (at night) on a variety of insects, often capturing animals bigger than themselves, by ejecting a sticky mucous slime which immobilises prey. Often referred to as “living fossils” velvet worms are only occasionally seen by people, however, they are largely overlooked, thought to be merely another worm or caterpillar.

New Zealand has 5 species of the Peripatopsidae family, all of which are endemic (found no where else). Each of the species is identifiable either by the number of legs they have or by their reproductive method.

Peripatoides Novaezealandia (15 pairs of legs) and *P. suteri* (16 pairs of legs) are found in the Taranaki region. It is the later species that we have at Rotokare, of which 3 individuals including the one in the photo have been recently spotted at Rotokare.



Photo by Barry Hartley

Stowaway Rat

By Glen Hansen



One morning while checking the fluid levels on the company car I noticed a rat nest in the engine bay. So where was the rat I asked myself? Certainly not in the car anymore. That's a good thing you say, but this car is parked in the garage connected to our new house, AND this vehicle had been out to Rotokare several times recently to help the Trust with the buildings! When I got home the next evening I saw some chewed rubber on the garage floor where the van had been parked. Thinking that I am just paranoid, I lift the bonnet anyway and shine a torch, and there is Mrs Rat staring at me! Following some quick action with the hose, including a nice steam effect from the exhaust, I decided I was trying to terrify the animal out of my car.

The next day I got some rat poison and placed it around the vehicle's entire engine bay.... I found the rat floating in a barrel of water a couple of weeks later. I'm unsure how long it had been in the van, but it just shows how easy it would be for the lake to be reinfested with a pest. Please help Rotokare by checking your vehicle and gear for stowaways before going to visit.

My time at Rotokare

By Janet King

Primary Teacher Science Fellowship-Funded by the NZ Govt: Administered by the Royal Society of New Zealand Hosted by Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust



My two terms out of the classroom and being involved with the Trust has been a very enjoyable and rewarding time. I have found it refreshing working with enthusiastic, conservation-minded folk who really care about what happens at Lake Rotokare.

During my Fellowship I had three main aims. Firstly it was important to get involved with some of the day to day activities such as fence checks, monitoring and tracking tunnels. I also wanted to find out about invertebrate life so I helped set up pitfall traps, collected data and recorded some results. Lastly I visited a number of different Reserves and Sanctuaries around the North Island which helped me understand a bit more about how these places operate and any common patterns.

I will go back to my school and classroom in New Plymouth with heaps of new ideas about teaching science and hopefully get children more enthusiastic about what science can offer them.

Finally I would like to say a big thank-you to Melissa, Simon and especially Kara who have given me so much assistance and put up with me asking lots of questions! I believe the Trust is indeed fortunate to have such capable, knowledgeable and committed staff working with them at Rotokare. Please check out my blog <http://rotokareramblings.blogspot.com/> to find out more about what I have been up to.

OBITUARY

Kevlar Sea Bear

During the Fernbird count at Lake Rotokare at Station 15 on the 5th of May, the Sea Bear took on water leaving her paddler clawing for overhead branches. An amazing demise, the stern descended very quickly, the paddler reacting speedily as water engulfed him from the back of his cockpit. The angle of Sea Bear made exiting very difficult!

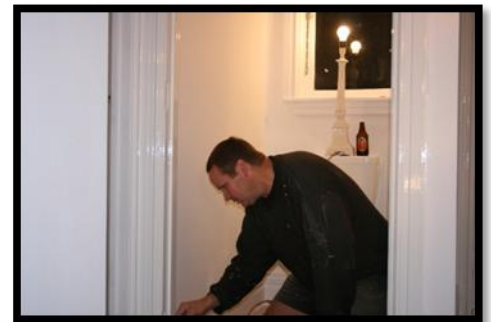
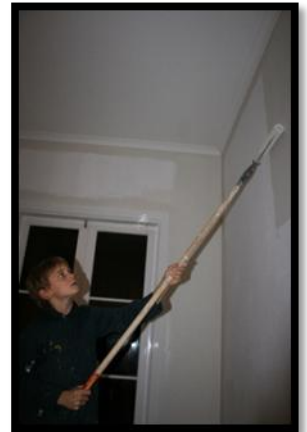
The paddler (we won't mention names, but let's just say he is a Rotokare Trustee with the initials BH) was able to walk back safely to vehicle with paddle and life jacket intact.

Building Progress

By Mike Weren

The house is very near complete. The bedrooms and hallway are finished and look terrific. The main living area and bathroom walls need to be painted, some vinyl needs to be laid in the bathroom and the water supply needs to be hooked up. When completed Simon, Tricia and Tai can move in.

The education centre is looking wonderful. Most of the exterior has one coat of paint on it and as we get the windows and trim painted, it is starting to show what a great building we have. The classroom roof has been replaced, broken window frames are being refurbished and glass replaced where needed. The interior of the classroom part is having a makeover to bring it up to a good standard for Melissa to run her education groups in style. The lights have been turned on again for the first time in over 30 years which brings the 'old girl' back to life. The rear offices and facilities are going to be sorted out next so the whole building can be put into proper use. All of the progress seen in the education buildings has been made possible by the help of Taranaki Electricity Trust.



The workshop is now lockable with the roof and end wall closed in, garage doors in place and broken windows repaired. The concrete floor has been laid and the electricity is connected. This interior will take a bit of a back seat for a while as we are concentrating on finishing the education centre and the last items in the house. A job that made a huge difference was getting the mud cleared off the car park area and the base course laid down. This will be sealed when it settles and the weather allows. The embankment in front of the buildings has been planted in native trees and covered in bark mulch.

There has been a huge effort by volunteers over the past months giving their time, expertise and materials. Some helpers seem to spend more time at Rotokare than at home! One recent example of generosity has come from the Kiser family who donated not only their kitchen, but also their kitchen sink and a new stove for Simon's house.

We can all pat ourselves on the back and be very proud of what we have achieved. It will be a good celebration I'm sure when we can say that job has been ticked off our list. Thank you everyone... not far to go now.