

# Hancock Forest Views



A Division of Hancock Timber Resource Group,  
A Manulife Asset Management Company

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Issue 12 - December 2014

## Welcome to Hancock Forest Views

Welcome to the 12th edition of Hancock Forest Views, a newsletter to help keep you informed of what is happening in Hancock Forest Management New Zealand Limited (HFM) forests. This edition includes a range of topical articles from various forest regions. We hope you find the newsletter interesting and welcome your feedback.



## Nelson's Chrome Creek Ultramafic Shrubland

The Chrome Creek Ultramafic-Shrubland is a 100 ha reserve located within Lee Forest in HFM's Tasman Bay Estate. This Ultramafic area is part of the unique mineral belt that runs through the Eastern Hills of the Tasman District, high in magnesium, iron, copper and chromium elements that were commercially mined early last century in this area.

Commercial forestry in the Eastern Hills has been on-going for many decades, with the old NZ Forest Service and private forestry interests utilising the steep lands for commercial radiata pine and Douglas fir crops. Some have even tried to plant trees within areas of the mineral belt with very limited success. Our own Chrome Creek Ultramafic site was never planted in commercial species, but has unfortunately succumbed to the spread of unwanted wildling trees from neighbouring stands.

In 2010, as part of our FSC® (Forest Stewardship Council) processes, the area was assessed as being our most significant ecological site within the Tasman Bay estate, qualifying as 'High Conservation Value' under FSC. As such, we implemented a management plan to protect this very unique and fragile environment.

Each year we have contracted crews to undertake tree poisoning operations; systematically drilling and applying a dose of herbicide to each wildling tree. It sort of goes against the grain for the forestry team, given their main role is to grow and nurture these same species elsewhere on the estate. Cutting

down the wildings was not an option, given the very fragile and endangered species that would have been damaged using this approach.

After several years the results are looking positive for the area. The majority of the wilding trees are nothing more than slowly decaying stems and old firebreaks that had been bulldozed through the area, with all the best intent at the time, are slowly vegetating with the local and endangered flora. The fight against any new invasions will continue in the area to preserve this unique ecosystem.



Red tussock growing on the Nelson Ultramafic Zone.



## Mountain Biking 'Day Night thriller' in Kinleith Forest

Over a number of years, the hard working members of the Tokoroa Mountain Bike Club have designed and built an awesome mountain bike park in Kinleith Forest on the edge of Tokoroa. Known as 'Cougar Park', the bike park offers a mix of forestry roads, single trails, uphill, downhill and plenty of sweeping berms; all within the mature pine forest.

In September the Tokoroa Mountain Bike Club hosted, for the first time, the Torpedo 7 Day-Night Thriller in Cougar Park. The event, now in its 15th year, was previously run in Taupo and this year had over 100 teams and 50 solo riders take part.



HFM staff members Sarah Naylor, Chris Bailey, Theresa Large, Peter Wakeling, Simon Papps, Brendan Morgan and Nathan Baird after competing in the Day-Night thriller

Solo riders and teams completed a 7km circuit which was inspected by and approved by Tokoroa rider and former Commonwealth Games representative, Mike Northcott. The course was easy enough for novice riders, but also offered enough challenge for experienced riders, including NZ Commonwealth Silver Medallist Samuel Gaze.

A number of HFMNZ staff members helped marshal the event, while others took part in a number of the events offered; including two teams who competed under the banner of HFM – Radiata Riders and Pine Pushers.

By all reports the event was a great success, with the Tokoroa Mountain Bike Club looking to host it again in 2015.



HFM Resource Support Forester Simon Papps taking part in the Torpedo 7 Day-Night Thriller

## Cypress Trials



*Cypressus ovensii* at age two in HFM estate.

For a number of years Scion (the NZ Crown Research Institute for forestry research) has been undertaking trials of a range of species, to evaluate their potential for commercial use. To date plantation forestry in NZ has largely been focussed on *Pinus radiata* and to a lesser extent Douglas-fir and Eucalyptus species. Greater species diversity is seen as desirable to mitigate the risk of changing climate and introduced pathogens, with Cyresses seen as one of the tree families with greatest commercial potential.

Cypress species such as *macrocarpa* and *lusitanica*, which originate from California and Mexico/Central America respectively, are valued for their desirable wood properties, with good quality logs achieving higher prices than *Radiata* pine. They have been planted in New Zealand as early as the 1860s, originally as shelter for homesteads and farm stock. However managed plantations are not common.

Unfortunately, the most recognised species, *macrocarpa*, has in recent times suffered from a canker-causing pathogen, particularly when planted on warm sites. Further issues, such as knowledge gaps around establishment and management of stands, limited information on economic returns, and market uncertainty, have to date limited planting of Cyresses. Scion is currently trialling a range of Cyresses and hybrids to evaluate their potential for commercial use.

To complement this work, HFM has established a number of small blocks of *Oven's* cypress throughout the HFM managed estate, to improve understanding of how well they thrive in the range of growing conditions across our estate. This has continued this year with trial planting of some of the new Cypress hybrids being evaluated by Scion, in HFM forests in the Central Area. These trials will provide valuable information to

assist HFM to evaluate the potential for the successful Cypress hybrids arising from the Scion trials, and in decision making around the most suitable sites in our estate to plant these clones, should they be considered commercially viable.



## Hochstetter's Frog Study in Torere Forest

Hochstetter's frogs are one of four species of native frog endemic to New Zealand, belonging to the same ancient order of frogs as the Archey's frog, Hamilton's frog and Maud Island frog. Hochstetter's frogs were once widespread in New Zealand, but are now found only in a number of locations in the upper half of the North Island. They are semi-aquatic, living in and around small upper catchment streams.



*Small Hochstetter's frog located in survey*



*Typical small upper catchment frog habitat in pine forest.*

commonly found under woody debris, logs, and dead nikau and fern fronds. There was also a greater distance between observed frog groups in the pine forest.

With harvesting scheduled to commence in coming years in Torere Forest, HFM has undertaken a number of surveys to confirm areas of frog habitat within the forest and will work closely with the landowners, DoC and the Regional Council regarding harvest plans to minimise impacts on the frogs. Depending on timing, further research may be undertaken through harvesting.

Populations of Hochstetter's frogs have been found in several HFM managed forests, with the largest population in Torere Forest in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. A number of frog surveys carried out in the past by Department of Conservation (DoC), and more recently by HFM prior to harvest, have confirmed frog presence in numerous damp gullies and seeps in both native remnants and in the pine forest.

Earlier this year, Master's student Luke Easton from Otago University Zoology Department carried out a study of the frogs in Torere Forest. The project had two aims - to identify the effects of pine plantation on Hochstetter's frogs and to compare the habitat difference between pine and native cover.

Field work was carried out in late September 2014 with assistance from the forest landowners (Torere 64 and Torere 65), Ngaitai Iwi Authority and DoC staff.

The field work located 96 frogs and confirmed that distribution of frogs was very similar in the pine and native cover, with no significant difference in body condition between those located in the pines and native. Luke did find a difference in habitat with the frogs in the native forest located largely in small, stable cobble streams. In the pine forest, the frogs were more



*The veining pattern in the eyes is unique and is like finger prints when identifying frogs.*

## HFM 10 Year Anniversary



Hancock Forest Management (NZ) Ltd commenced operations in Rotorua on 1st December 2004 with a staff of 15 managing the assets of the Tiaki Plantations Company. Since that time our client base has expanded and our 95 staff now manage 200,000 hectares for Tiaki, Taumata, and Tasman Bay Forests, and also have key roles in the management of the OTPP NZ Ltd and Viking Global Fund forests.

On December 1st, staff in each of our offices celebrated our 10 year anniversary. Over the past 10 years we have achieved a lot, but nothing is more worthy of celebration than the fact that our staff reached the 10 year anniversary with no Lost Time Injuries since commencement of operations.



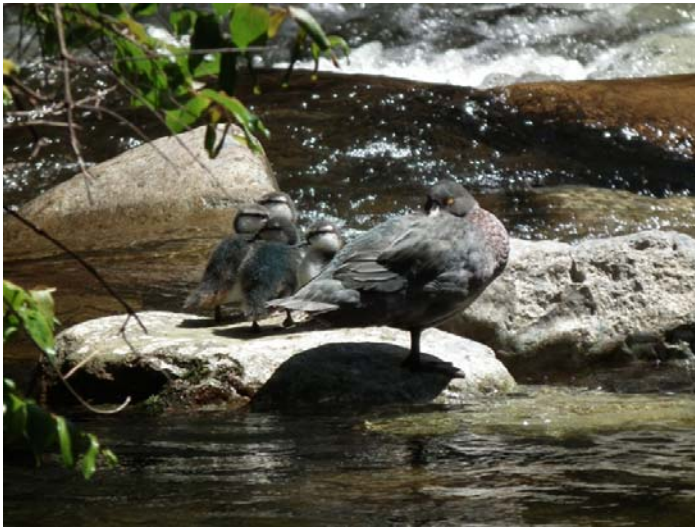
## Pungapunga Blue Duck Project Update

In earlier issues of Hancock Forest Views we have included updates about the NZ Blue Duck (Whio) protection project HFM has underway along the Pungapunga Stream in Waituhi Forest, near Taumarunui. The project is now in its fourth year with funding assistance initially from Department of Conservation (DOC) and Horizons Regional Council, and more recently Genesis Energy, through the Central North Island Blue Duck Charitable Trust.

This has assisted HFM in establishing and maintaining a network of 195 traps, with the goal of controlling predator numbers to assist in the breeding survival of a small resident population of five breeding pairs over a 5km stretch of the river.



*Trained Whio dog Britta on point during the annual duck survey*



*A Whio with ducklings on the Pungapunga stream.*

Trapping effort is focused on the breeding season, with rats, stoats and weasels the most common predators caught. Trap servicing is carried out by local farmer Geoff Marshall, who uses his trained Whio dog 'Britta' to carry out an annual population survey. This year's survey was carried out in early December, with Geoff delighted to report good chick survival, with all five adult pairs having successfully reared ducklings, and a total of 11 ducklings identified in the survey.

It is hoped that improved breeding success in our project area will help boost the population, to repopulate surrounding habitat in Waituhi Forest and the DoC estate, and link in with other Blue Duck projects in the region to assist in the long term survival of this unique species.

## Whatoro Kiwi Project Update

In our last newsletter we reported on the commencement of a kiwi recovery project in Whatoro Forest in Western Northland in September 2013. HFM has joined forces with three of our neighbours and the Northland Regional Council to set up a Community Pest Control Area (CPCA), with an area of approximately 1,200ha now under active predator control.

Located in a strategic location between Trounson Forest Park to the north-west and Kaihu Forest Park to the east, it is hoped that by linking together with other predator control projects in the area, we will create a corridor of protected habitat to enhance kiwi survival in the vicinity, and enable safe transition for kiwi between areas of suitable habitat.

Since commencement, trapping across the four properties has resulted in the catch of 45 stoats, 28 weasels, 84 hedgehogs, 4 feral cats and 280 rats, which is a great result.

It is too early yet to see any definite results from the project, however the first post-commencement population survey is planned to take place in the coming call season (May-July).



*Department of Conservation Mustelid traps*



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