

## Welcome to Hancock Forest Views

Welcome to the fourth edition of Hancock Forest Views, a newsletter produced by Hancock Forest Management (HFM) to help keep you informed of what is happening in our forests. This edition includes a range of topical articles from each of our forest regions. We hope that you find the newsletter interesting, and welcome your feedback.

## Ngatihine Forest Harvesting Commences

March 2009 saw the commencement of harvest in one of HFM's Northern estates largest leasehold forests. The Ngatihine Forest is a 5,600 ha pine forest on land owned by 4,063 shareholders who are part of Ngati Hine iwi located near Moerewa to the north west of Whangarei.

The commencement of harvest was celebrated with a tree blessing ceremony. The first tree cut in the forest was blessed with a karakia to signify the beginning of an era and also to ensure the forestry operations happen safely. All HFM staff were welcomed into the forest formally, with speeches acknowledging contributions made since the fragmented maori freehold land were amalgamated in the 1970s and planting began in 1981.



*HFM(NZ) General Manager, Bill McCallum, responds on behalf of HFM(NZ) thanking the Ngati Hine people for their warm welcome*



*Mike Ross (iwi Ngati Hine) cuts the first tree*

Around 65 people gathered to witness the ceremony, including Ngatihine Forest Trustees, shareholders and local kaumatua along with HFM staff and contractors. Bruce McKnight (Hancock Natural Resources Group Managing Director) and Barry Engel (Director, Corporate Resources) who are both based in Boston also attended the ceremony and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

After the welcome, a Ngati Hine forestry worker felled the first tree of the harvest and sliced up the stump for plaques, which will be sanded and inscribed to record the occasion.

Harvesting has now begun with one crew of eight men working in the forest, four of whom are Ngati Hine. Harvesting of the forest is expected to take 10 years.

## Long-tailed Bat Study in Kinleith Forest

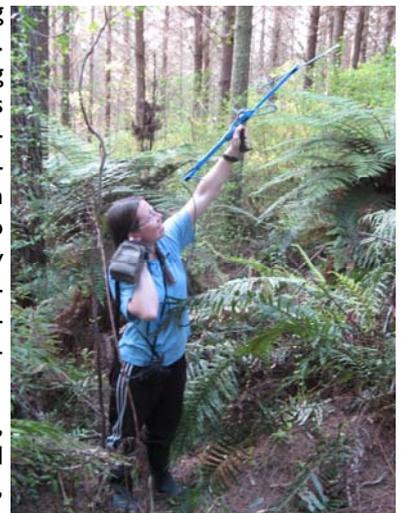
In Issue 2 of our newsletter we reported on a PhD project being undertaken by Auckland University student, Kerry Borkin, aimed at better understanding the use of the plantation forest by Long-tailed bats.

Kerry's study, based in HFM's Kinleith Forest, aimed to improve understanding of where in the forest bats are roosting and breeding, the impact of forestry operations on bats and potentially the effects of bats on the production forest. Working over the summer months when bats are active, Kerry captured bats using a specialized harp net and tracked them using radio transmitter devices.

Kerry has now completed the field work phase of her study, confirming for the first time that the bats are actively roosting and breeding within the plantation forest in significant numbers,

with the most common roost sites being under the loose bark of dead Radiata trees. Kerry is now busy analyzing data and writing up her PhD. A key goal of Kerry's study was to develop recommendations for forest managers to enhance bat survival. Kerry's preliminary recommendations include such things as retaining a mosaic of tree ages to provide bats with alternative habitat nearby following harvesting, undertaking pest control, retention of roost trees, and even provision of artificial bat roosts prior to harvesting.

We will provide a full update in future issues, on completion of Kerry's PhD. Kerry is still keen to receive any reports of bat sightings, particularly in plantation forests. Kerry can be contacted through our Central Area office.





## Houpoto Wetland Enhancement

At 110ha the Houpoto Wetland is the largest intact fertile wetland in the leasehold forests managed by HFM in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. It has been assessed by ecologists as being one of the best wetlands in the Bay of Plenty region and of national significance.

As part of HFM's annual reserves management programme, the Houpoto wetland was identified as a priority for enhancement work. Harvesting had recently been completed around the wetland boundary with replanting setback off the wetland to provide a buffer at the time of next harvesting. Weed infestation was the major remaining issue with grey willow in scattered groups across the wetland and gorse and pampas more prevalent around the margins.



*The Houpoto Wetland*



*Willow control operations in the Houpoto wetland*

Following discussion with the land owners, the Houpoto Te Pua Management Committee, a plant pest control programme was commenced by HFM in early 2009, with partial funding from the Environment Bay of Plenty Environmental Enhancement Fund. The first years work focused primarily on cutting and spraying willows within the wetland, and spraying of weeds around the wetland margin with excellent results. On completion of the first years work it was clear that further work was required to completely eradicate remaining weeds and to ensure ongoing management of the wetland into the future. HFM arranged for discussions between the Houpoto Te Pua Committee, Environment Bay of Plenty and Nga Whenua Rahui representatives. As a result, agreement has been reached with the landowners to covenant the area under a Nga Whenua Rahui. With the combined input of the landowners, Regional Council, Nga Whenua Rahui and HFM a long term management plan for the wetland is now under preparation that will ensure protection and ongoing management of the wetland into the future.

## Four-Wheel Driving in Woodhill Forest

Woodhill Forest is home to a huge array of recreation opportunities enjoyed by residents of the Auckland Region, and further afield. The Jeep 4WD Adventure Park was established in June 2006 to provide both experienced and novice 4-wheel drivers an opportunity to enjoy some off-road fun not too far from New Zealand's largest metropolitan centre.

One of the challenges of managing Woodhill Forest it to manage not only conflicts between forestry operations and recreation, but also conflicts between the various recreation users in the forest. Obviously if 4-wheel driving, motorbike riding, horse riding, mountain biking and hunting were all to take place in the same area, the result would be chaotic and even dangerous.

A key to safely managing recreation has been to separate the forest into designated areas for each type of recreation activity. Within one of these designated areas the 4WD Adventure Park was established to manage all 4-wheel drive activity in Woodhill Forest. An added goal of the Park was to provide a designated 4-wheel drive facility to reduce vehicle activity on the nearby Muriwai Beach and anecdotal reports from the NZ Police and local residents indicates a significant decline in beach traffic since the Park opened.

The 4WD Adventure Park is set in 2 250 ha of forest and being located on sand dune country is ideally suited to off-road activity. The Park now has a range of 4-wheel drive tracks catering for all skill levels. The Park is open every weekend, and by arrangement mid-week for private events and generally hosts 20 to 40 vehicles per day with the record so far being 102

vehicles in one day.

The Adventure Park managers work closely with the HFM Alternative Land Use Forester Andrea Collings to manage its activities around plantation forestry operations. Harvesting is planned in the 4WD Park's area in the coming year, and planning is already underway to ensure 4WD Park activities can continue around the area of harvesting without impacting harvesting or putting anyone at risk. Another great example of multi-use forestry in Woodhill forest.





## Dactylanthus Protection project

HFM Environmental Planner Robin Black recently made the exciting discovery of a previously unrecorded population of the rare and unusual plant *Dactylanthus taylorii*, in a reserve in HFM's Kinleith Forest near Tokoroa.

*Dactylanthus* is New Zealand's only fully parasitic flowering plant, growing largely underground with the plant growing from a stem attached to the root of a host tree. In response to *Dactylanthus*, the host tree's root moulds into the shape of a fluted wooden rose, which gives the plant its common name of 'wood rose'.

*Dactylanthus* is also unusual in that it is pollinated primarily by very rare short-tailed bats, along with mice and wasps. The host trees are also very particular, occurring only on the margins of podocarp forest in the regenerating shrub/hardwood areas containing mahoe, lemonwood, kohuhu, five finger and lancewood.

As *Dactylanthus* grows underground it is difficult to know the exact distribution and number of plants that exist, however it is estimated there only a few thousand plants remaining.

The discovery was largely the result of investigations by Robin who located a record dating back 20 years of *Dactylanthus*



in reserves adjacent to the southern boundary of Kinleith forest. Robin hosted the Rotorua Ecological Society on a field trip in the area, locating the recorded plants just outside the forest boundary. The group also identified the nearby Maroa Hill reserve in Kinleith forest as potential *Dactylanthus* habitat. Subsequent searches were arranged with the help of Ecological Society members and approximately 30 plants were located.

Robin then discussed management of the population with local Department of Conservation staff who recommended installation of stainless steel cages over the plants to protect them from browsing damage by pigs and possums. With funding assistance from DOC, Robin arranged to have the purpose built cages constructed from stainless steel mesh with a gap size large enough to allow access by short tailed bats. Over subsequent months, with assistance from *Dactylanthus* specialist John Hobbs, Robin has installed 42 cages, with some cages containing up to 15 flowers. HFM staff will continue to monitor the plants, and it is hoped that the protective cages will assist this rare species to recover and flourish in Maroa Bush.



*Flowering Dactylanthus at Maroa Bush, Kinleith*

## Computers for Moerewa School

As is the case in much of rural New Zealand, the local school is the centre of rural communities in Northland. Discussions amongst HFM Northland staff as to how the company could assist local schools in the vicinity of our forests, lead to the idea of donating second hand computers to schools. At the time HFM's head office were in the process of having older computer's replaced and it was identified that three desk top and two laptop computers were available.

HFM staff had already had contact with Moerewa School located near the Ngatihine Forest, through the 'Share the Road' campaign to educate children and communities about logging trucks. HFM Forestry Operations Manager Peter Houston discussed the possibility of donating the computers with school staff who were very happy to take up the offer. Rather than cluttering up a store room, the computers are now being put to good use by the 213 pupils at Moerewa School – a great outcome.



*HFM(NZ)'s Peter Houston with Jane Barnett, Office-IT Manager of Moerewa Primary School*



## Return of the Western Weka to our Nelson Forests

The Western weka (*Gallirallus australis hector*), or what early European settlers referred to as wood hens, has made its reappearance in the Nelson district after remaining almost invisible for well over a decade or two. Just over two years ago, any sighting of a Weka in our forests, was truly a rarity. Today, it has almost become a regular daily occurrence, having one of these small brown flightless birds, pop out from a thicket of gorse at the roadside, or strut along a forest track to try and persuade you to part with some of your hard earned lunch.

Weka have never been in the limelight, unlike the popular flightless Brown kiwi. Possibly their reputation for stealing anything shiny from camp sites and peoples backyards put them out of favor.

Either way, we view the increased population within our forests as a true positive. Pest control measures such as predator trapping and shooting have helped to reduce the threat from possums and feral cats, and the reduction in wild pig numbers, who compete for food on the forest floor. Increased knowledge and appreciation of native areas within our exotic forests, where these little critters like



to feed and breed, have led to improved operational practices and policies thereby enhancing Weka habitat.

## Pig Hunting in Kinleith Forest

Anyone who drives down State Highway One through Kinleith Forest during the hunting season will know that pig hunting is a very popular sport in the South Waikato, with an array of vehicles used for transporting hunters, dogs, and the favored modes of transport (bikes and horses), parked at every entrance to the forest from May. The hunting season runs from May to August and Hancock Forest Management has so far issued just under 1100 pig hunting permits for this year.

Hunting in the forest is managed by a number of hunting clubs. The oldest of these is the Tokoroa Pighunting Club which started up in the mid-1970's when local hunters became concerned about impacts of changing land use on hunting opportunities in the forest. The club was formed, and became formally recognized in 1975 by the forest owners at the time, NZ Forest Products, as the spokesmen for hunters in the forest. The Tokoroa Pighunting Club was the first incorporated pig hunting Club in New Zealand with a club membership peaking at around 1400 members. The Club now has around 900 members and gets involved in numerous hunting related issues at a local, regional and national level.

The Tokoroa Pighunting Club has survived several changes in ownership of Kinleith Forest and has now been joined by a number of other hunting clubs including the other major hunting club, the Kinleith Forest Recreation Club.

The clubs assist with management of hunting in the forest—managing the permitting process, running health and

safety inductions for hunters, providing hunters insurance cover and managing communications between HFM and hunters. The Tokoroa Pighunting Club also manage an approved pig release programme in the forest to replenish pig numbers for hunting, and organise a rubbish collection day once a year when the Pighunting Club members carry out a much appreciated litter clean-up from gateways and firebreaks around the forest.

While managing hunting in a working forest always presents challenges, it is the proactive and cooperative working relationship between the hunting clubs and Hancock Forest Management that enables the forest management and hunting to co-exist, and will hopefully ensure that future generations of South Waikato hunters can enjoy a day out in the forest.

