



Sun rising over Centennial Park

Photo: Richard Hursthouse



Newsletter No. 95

April 2023

Summer's Horrific Storms

January 2023 was Auckland's wettest month ever, with the city's monthly total of 539 mm of rain surpassing the 420mm recorded for January 1869. From around 5pm on Friday 27



Chris farewells a fallen warrior

Photo: Richard Hursthouse

January – the start of Auckland Anniversary weekend – reports of flash flooding, following afternoon heavy rains, began. West Auckland and North Shore were worst affected but regions across the entire upper North Island were soon experiencing catastrophic volumes of floodwater. The incredible deluge came on top of heavy rains which had plagued the north and east throughout the Christmas and New Year period. People drowned, homes and businesses were wrecked, cliffs collapsed, houses slipped into the sea and whole communities were decimated.

And then, February 12 to 16, tropical Cyclone Gabrielle hit the country, with Auckland, Coromandel and other regions

flailed by unprecedented winds and more rainstorms. A national state of emergency was declared on 14 February. The cost of Gabrielle's fury is estimated at \$13.5 billion and our hearts go out to everyone affected.

Auckland's parks form natural stormwater drains and are used to coping with downpours but nothing like this! According to Pupuke Golf Club groundsman Mat Cheer, Centennial Park received 170mm of rain on Friday 27 January alone. The park's January 2023 rainfall total was 273mm – as compared with 12mm for January 2022.

Damage was inevitable. Centennial Park has a major new slip on the edge of the 7th fairway, caused by a blocked culvert and overland flow. This slip has severely damaged our beautiful 2022 Matariki restoration site -- gut-wrenching. There is major new stream-bed erosion, particularly in the upper Kohekohe Valley but much of the stream network held up well. Ground-hugging grasses lie flat as flood waters rampage over them, holding the soil. They



Streamside sedges flattened by floodwater

Photo: Richard Hursthouse



Campbells Bay Urban Sanctuary

will right themselves in time.

Campbells Bay's flooding would have been much worse without the catchment's trees and green spaces. Trees help mitigate flooding and native trees and plants have evolved over millennia to survive New Zealand's unpredictable weather. Developers currently remove every tree and scrap of green on building sites. This needs to stop. The great Auckland tree massacre over the last decade has worsened the region's shameful 30 per cent reduction in canopy cover. Politicians need to urgently strengthen urban tree protection rules.

At least five large pines fell in the main valley as did several pines and gums on Pupuke Golf Course. The most visible loss is the gnarly old pine which has fallen into the pond – a salutary reminder that pines and pine plantations are places to steer clear of in wild weather.

Overall, the track network, maintained by CPBS volunteers for the last 20 years, has held up well. Drainage is the key to track resilience. As predicted by volunteers when it was being built, the Walking Bus Track, designed by engineers, performed badly. Attention needed to be paid to deluges flowing off the road, with significant drainage on the uphill side and frequently-spaced large pipes to handle peak flows. An expensive track being destroyed because of poor design is a tragic waste. Climate change will continue to deliver devastating extremes of weather. We must all do things differently in future.

The park's woes pale into insignificance in the face of the heartbreak so many families have suffered across New Zealand.

Toitū te marae a Tāne-Mahuta, Toitū te marae a Tangaroa, Toitū te tangata

If the land is well and the sea is well, the people will thrive.

Richard Hursthouse

Passionate Plantsman

Joe Greig is Centennial Park Bush Society's longest-serving member. His passion for New Zealand's native plants began during boyhood bush tramps organised by scout group leader Roy Nelson, who was also National Director of Forest & Bird. Joe joined CPBS in 1991, when he and his family moved from Eastbourne, Lower Hutt to Aberdeen Road. At Eastbourne the Greig family had enjoyed living on two acres in a bushy gully with native trees, a tinkling stream and weeds aplenty, including wild ginger and old man's beard. Buying 74 Aberdeen Road was therefore "a no-brainer", says Joe. The section adjoined the park and Joe began working with Bush Society founders Pat and John Morton almost immediately; he knew his natives but when it came to native

bush restoration "I was the new boy and had much to learn". When Joe retired in 1996 he started helping at Wednesday working bees, where Pat, Shirley Donn, Daphne and Bob Fairbairn and Hazel and Valda Crichton "were regular and strong, with their little hand-held spray bottles of Escort and morning tea in their weed buckets".

Joe says the fundamental aims of the Bush Society have not changed but the organization got a huge energy boost when Richard Hursthouse took over the chair in June 2003. "Richard brought more ambition to our objectives and widened the scope of our activities. Nothing was too big to take on. The park's huge invasive acmenas had to go; we took on Greville Reserve, the golf course, Campbells Bay Urban Sanctuary concept evolved and we developed closer involvement with Council and its parks staff. We now get regular funding from community boards and material supplies, tools etc." As well as planting and weeding in the park Joe planted four acres of subdivided bare farmland at Mangawhai with trees because he "wanted a green canopy." Joe is never without his cherished pounamu, an 80th birthday gift from his five children. "They are aware of my attraction to things Maori.

"I have an absolute love of our native habitats. I like being amongst it and if I infect others with enthusiasm then that's good. I greatly value every tree I have planted around the places I have lived – some are now very large. This work is more important than ever, as the world battles climate change and the need to offset/reduce carbon emissions. Plant more pines for carbon credits? No! Pines have become weeds and controlling wilding pines is becoming increasingly



Joe Greig

Photo: Richard Hursthouse



difficult. Preserve the bush and plant to expand our native cover in perpetuity. Native habitats are the lungs of the earth."

Jenny Chamberlain

Essential Fungi

Park volunteer David Hughes is developing a sharp eye for a shapely fungus. He photographed this fragile blue mushroom – *Coprinopsis lagopus* – on a pile of wood chip mulch in March. Centennial Park has a huge number of fungi, especially when conditions are warm and damp. Mushrooms are not really fungi, they are the fruiting bodies of the actual fungus, which is a hard-to-see network of fine, root-like hairs



A little blue magic Photo: David Hughes

called a mycelium. The mycelium spreads through soil and wood, often travelling great distances and is the means by which plants extract nutrients they need for growth. Most plants cannot survive without the specific fungi associated with them. Fungi are essential to ecosystems.

Save The Dates

Centennial Park Bush Society's 2023 AGM is happening at 7pm on Wednesday 17th May. Once again, the venue for this popular event is the Pupuke Golf Club clubrooms. Come along and enjoy kai and kōrero and an entertaining and informative speaker. All welcome!

Our equally popular **King's Birthday Family Planting** is on Saturday 3 June this year. Starting at 9am, volunteers and their friends and families will race to get 1,400 native plants into the ground near the 14th fairway, so we can get to the morning tea. This event is being supported by East Coast Bays Rotary and students from Rangitoto College, but 1,400 is a lot of plants, so we need every pair of hands we can get! Mark the date on your calendar, grab your gloves, gumboots, spade and water bottle and we'll supply the plants and refreshments. It really is the best fun and now more than ever EVERY TREE MATTERS.

Saturday 15th July is our **pre-dawn Matariki planting** – a special ceremony to mark Matariki and the 20th anniversary of Richard Hursthouse becoming chair of CPBS.



Joe, Peter and Richard cool off after tackling the dairy garden

For more than 30 years Richard has been an unstoppable force for nature both on the Shore and nationally. His leadership, organisational skills and determination have been a major influence on the evolution of environmental volunteering in New Zealand. Richard moved to Campbells Bay in 1984 and practised as a GP in Browns Bay for three decades. In the 1990s he cut his urban forest restoration teeth by becoming involved with the restoration of Campbells Bay School's Community Forest, which opened in August 2000 as part of the school's 75th anniversary celebrations. When Pat Morton retired from CPBS in June 2003, Richard took up the challenge, beginning a new, high-energy era of weed tree removal, planting, stormwater control, trackwork and advocacy which has transformed Centennial Park. In 2013 the early rat trapping scheme he initiated became a catchment-wide baiting programme, now operated by 25 volunteer rat baiters and a team of possum trappers. He instigated weeding and planting small satellite habitats: Greville Reserve, Huntly Reserve, the rock walls on the beach and the dairy garden. Richard has led volunteer stream network restoration in both Campbells and Castor Bays, is active in Forest & Bird both nationally and locally, spearheaded the Tuff Crater project and takes founding/leadership roles in Pest Free Kaipatiki, Restore Hibiscus & Bays and EcoNet. In the last two decades CPBS volunteers have planted an average of 1,400 native trees and plants each year, have removed millions of weeds which would otherwise have overwhelmed the regenerating forest and



volunteer 1,000 hours annually.

Please join us for the planting of a special tree to mark Richard's outstanding contribution to New Zealand's natural heritage. Check details on our Facebook page.

Jenny Chamberlain

Cool Critter

Volunteer Viv spotted this elegant green stick insect on a recent walk in Centennial Park. New Zealand has 23 stick insect species and they're not easy to see as their colour usually matches their host vegetation and they are normally active after dark. When disturbed stick insects often fall to the ground and play dead; they also sway back and forth in a kind of dance -- the function of which is a mystery. Their continued existence in the park is a sign baiting works, as rats are one of their main predators.



Shy stick insect

Photo: Viv Walker

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Centennial Park Bush Society Inc.

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Find out more and **sign up to our mailing list** at

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