

Centennial Park at sunrise *Photo: Viv Walker*

Centennial Park Bush Society Newsletter

Newsletter No. 102 *November 2026*

Healing The Awa

On Monday 29th June, Campbells Bay resident Ash Walsh noticed dead fish in the north branch of the stream network which runs through her property. In addition, a large eel or tuna (*Anguilla dieffenbachii* - a taonga species native to New Zealand), which had lived in the stream for 25 years, was gone. Ash immediately contacted our stream champion Viv Walker who visited the site and found a distressing number of dead small eels and banded kōkopu (*Galaxias fasciatus* - also native). Auckland Council Pollution Response Team was notified at once and surveyed the site. No dead fish were collected for examination, nor were water samples taken. A few days later a dead fish was seen in the southern branch which flows through Centennial Park. CPBS volunteers then inspected the entire length of the 6km stream network finding many more dead fish and eels. Some tributaries however still had live kōkopu and eels. Subsequently, a large dead eel was found on Campbells Bay beach and another at Mairangi Bay. Our precious kākahi and kōura (native freshwater mussels and crayfish) appeared to be unaffected.

Clearly a toxin had been introduced into both major branches of the stream network but had not reached every tributary. An investigation undertaken by Auckland Council's compliance team proved inconclusive. Viv was interviewed on Ryan Bridge's TODAY show and the event received newspaper coverage. Viv then contacted Ngāti Manuhiri Settlement Trust and, on Saturday 25th July, trust cultural advisor Carmen led 40 people along the Tūī Track to the mother kahikatea. A haunting karakia for the awa was chanted, as we stood in the rain and contemplated the grievous loss of these taonga.



Dead eel on Campbells Bay Beach

Luckily, by late spring, there are signs the stream's wild creatures are recovering. But decades-old eels are another matter.

This event highlights the sensitivity and ecological significance of the bay's vulnerable streams, and the need for all of us to guard against the introduction of pollutants and poisons. We need to be aware that outside stormwater drains drain into the streams and from there into the sea. Chemicals, paint, plaster wash, concrete wash, oil and clay do not belong in our waterways. See https://restorehb.org.nz/protect-waterways for more information.

Richard Hursthouse



Karakia for the awa *Photo: Antony Gusscott*

No Paint In Drains

It took Restore Hibiscus & Bays catchment advisor Viv Walker just six months to turn her No Paint In Drains brainchild into

an impactful public campaign - with signage, leaflets and QR Code-linked animation. The campaign was launched in July, in 12 retail stores including Resene, Placemakers, Guthrie Bowron and Mitre 10. In her stream restoration work Viv had become aware of how often the Shore's natural waterways are being polluted, particularly by construction runoff and paint. "People seem unaware their actions have a huge negative effect on our natural waterways and the creatures living in them." Viv has been blown away by the positive response to the campaign and is looking to spread the message from the Shore into the wider Auckland region. With many more pollution events reported to Council the wellbeing of our streams is getting a real boost.



If you see stream pollution please take photos and report it IMMEDIATELY to Auckland Council's 24/7 Pollution Hotline: 09 377 3107.

Jenny Chamberlain

Project Pekapeka

Living Tree founder and bat ecologist Fredrik Hjelm brought Hawke, New Zealand's first DoC-certified bat-detecting dog, to the CPBS AGM on 17th June. Gentle Hawke was a total hit but even more so was the wealth of fascinating pekapeka bat facts Fred covered: our native long-tailed bats fly up to 100 km each night in search of insects; bat mums have one pup a year which they carry under their wing; bats live up to 40 years and keep to the same family group; they have a thumb with which they grab onto a tree…and so on. By the finish it was a no-brainer - we had to see if Centennial Park has pekapeka.



Hawke, Fred and Viv talk about bats

Photo: Ash Walsh

Fast forward to Sunday 11th October and a 14-strong Bat Team gathered in the Sandford Street clearing. Organised by Viv Walker and with on-site training by Fred Hjelm and Jenny Gollins from Tūpuna Maunga Authority, the team deployed 19 bat monitors in the park and environs for an initial period of four weeks, focusing on tall old trees near (insect-rich) waterways. The battery-powered monitors record nighttime bat noises within a 50m range. Viv says: "Many New Zealanders don't realise we have native bats and that they are just one step away from extinction - hence the urgent need to understand where they are and bring the community together to help protect them."



Long-tailed bat

Huge thanks to Fred, Jenny and Hawke for their invaluable input and to Viv for her ongoing passion.

Jenny Chamberlain

Rockpool Recovery

New Ministry for Primary Industries regulations aimed at stopping the wholesale stripping of marine life from coastal intertidal zones came into force on 1st November 2026. The restrictions cover beaches, rocky shores and rockpools on Auckland's east and west coasts, Waiheke Island and Coromandel. The new rules prohibit the take of marine invertebrates except for limited numbers of: cockles, crabs, kina, octopus, oysters, pāua, pipi, rock lobsters, scallops, sea cucumbers, prawns/shrimps, squid and tuatua. While it's not the total ban many hoped for it's a historic step forward for New Zealand's coastal creatures. Protect Whangaparāoa Rockpools founder Mark Lenton says his region's rockpools showed signs of recovery seven months following protection. He reckons it will take between five and 10 years for life in newly-protected coastal zones to robustly regenerate. Heartfelt thanks to Mark for his courage and tenacity and to everyone who attended meetings and submitted during the crucial public consultation period.

Jenny Chamberlain

Sea For Yourself

Come see the life under the water at Campbells Bay at the Community Snorkel Day, at Huntly Reserve, Campbells Bay Beach, on Saturday 12th December, 2026, 10:30am - 3:30pm. This is a free event run by Mountains To Sea Conservation Trust. Bring the family and enjoy guided snorkelling with all equipment provided. Places are limited, so please register at: mountainstosea.org.nz/events.



One Vision

Designated recreation reserve in 1884, Centennial Park is one of Auckland's oldest public reserves. The park comprises 44.5ha of land leased to Pupuke Golf and 29ha of regenerating native forest, managed by CPBS volunteers, with Auckland Council support. Ecologically these two areas blend, sharing stream and bush margins, trees, shrubs, insects, birds, fish and, alas, pests and weeds. The entire reserve is effectively a wildlife-rich integrated ecosystem.

CPBS chair Richard Hursthouse says: "CPBS volunteers have worked hard on the Pupuke leased land over the last 25 years, with Pupuke and Auckland Council support. One of the first things we did was remove 50 mature monkey apple trees from the course, replanting with native and exotic species. We also funded the removal of hundreds of mature wattles around the perimeter of the course and removed some dead trees. CPBS has funded regular weed control in the bush blocks, including the fourth, fifth and 17th fairway blocks and in Park Rise Bush. The Park Rise to Kōwhai Road Track was constructed by CPBS volunteers. Volunteers have also planted thousands of trees in the bush blocks and on redundant bare grass areas including along the eighth and 14th fairways and the perimeters of the bush blocks. Pupuke staff have been incredibly supportive, helping move plants, mulch and materials."



CPBS volunteers mulching by the pond.

The park's predator control operation - one of Auckland's most comprehensive - is co-ordinated by Mark Woodward. The scheme comprises 40 volunteers who run 58 possum traps, 258 rat baiting stations and 60 monitoring tunnels - a total of 376 pest control devices spread through the park, the golf course and the surrounding urban area.

Jenny Chamberlain

Growing Gold



Kōwhai flowers on Kōwhai Road

Photo: Andrew Woodmansey

Have you noticed kōwhai in abundant and glorious flower everywhere this spring? Especially along Kōwhai Road, the Pupuke fairways, forest boundaries, within the forest itself and in the golf course blocks. The golden flowers, and the tūī and kererū which feast on them, are visual proof of the transformative power of decades of CPBS volunteer planting in the park and its wider catchment. CPBS volunteers plant hundreds of native trees every winter and, this year, an extraordinary 70 new kōwhai went in the ground too. These young trees need water to survive summer's dry months. If you'd like to help turn a few young trees into golden oldies join SWAT, our summer watering team. Contact Liz on: elizandchris@hotmail.com.

For a succinct summary of what CPBS volunteer mahi has achieved in CP over the decades internet search Richard Hursthouse's talk with Paddy Gower on RNZ's Saturday Morning show. It aired on Saturday 19th September.

Jenny Chamberlain

Park Nightlife

Last Christmas Eve, Campbells Bay-born entomologist and wētā specialist Maddy Pye took a night-walk through the park with her family and found treasure. "We saw loads of insects and other creepy crawlies. There were several species of wētā including: Auckland tree wētā, ground wētā, and two cave wētā. We saw many juvenile wētā of all species and leaf vein slugs and blue flatworms were highlights!

"Unfortunately we also saw a few invasive Australian raspy crickets, which are commonly and incorrectly called 'winged wētā'. Unlike true wētā they are carnivorous and eat our native insect species."
Maddy was delighted to see a photo of a hura native giant centipede, which Mark found recently and which are rare on the mainland because pests usually eat them before they mature. She says the hura's existence in the park shows our pest control is working. Maddy is a trustee of the Wētā Conservation Charitable Trust and is currently studying the rare Canterbury knobbled weevil. Thank you for sharing your time and knowledge, Maddy.
Jenny Chamberlain



Wētā in Centennial Park
Photo: Maddy Pye



Hura in Centennial Park
Photo: Andrew Woodmansey

MERI KIRIHIMETE

to all our volunteers, supporters and readers

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