



NEWS

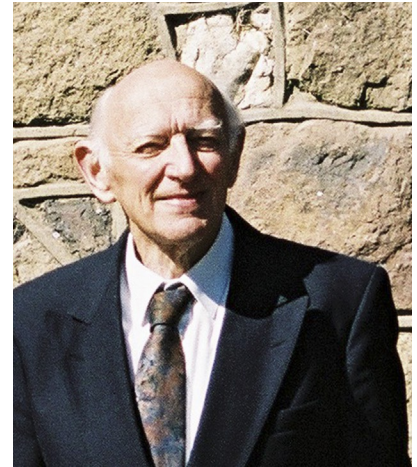
Gordon Kirk, QSM

The 25th July last year was a sad occasion for the Society, with the death of Gordon Kirk. Gordon, whose obituary appeared in the Christchurch Press, made a very significant contribution to the Society and its work over many years, covering the whole range of our activities. He was a past President, and a regular attendee at Board meetings, where he could be relied on to ensure that there was a lively debate about many of the issues we have looked at over the years. Gordon was awarded the Queen's Service Medal for services to the voluntary sector.

Gordon was an early member of the hill work parties, and in the 1980's was the leading figure in creating the Mt Pleasant Bluffs Track. Looking at the track now, which many people consider one of the best and most impressive on the Port Hills, it is easy to overlook its significance. When Gordon and the team first considered the possibilities of a track, they were faced with what appeared to be impenetrable bush and difficult rocky terrain. His vision, sheer hard work and determination ensured that this area was opened up so that future generations can enjoy the regenerating native bush, and the impressive rock architecture. The track also showed how much could be achieved by a group of willing volunteers.

Gordon's skills however, extended far beyond building tracks. He was very active in the Society's objection to the construction of the gondola, and the experience he gained in the complexities of planning and the Resource Management Act was a major asset to the Society. Gordon went on to be active in the lengthy processes associated with the Banks Peninsula District Plan, the Selwyn District Plan and Christchurch's City Plan, and numerous other planning-related issues dealt with by the Society since.

Gordon's most important and visible legacy, however, is Ohinetahi Reserve. From his own detailed knowledge of the Port Hills, Gordon identified an opportunity for the Society to purchase land above Governors Bay, and persuaded the Board that to become a landowner was the Society's next logical step in its development. Three purchases followed resulting in the 'jewel in the crown' which is now our 150ha Ohinetahi Bush Reserve. From the outset he recognised that ownership brought with it responsibilities, and set up and coordinated the group that opened up the reserve with walking tracks and continues to work on track maintenance, planting and weed and animal pest control. Gordon steered the Society through the covenanting of the reserve with the QEII National Trust and the development of our management plan.



1925-2007

Gordon recognised the importance of having the local community on board, and put a lot of effort into the area around the Bay Heights entrance to the reserve, which is now showing the benefit of active management and native plantings. The Society is currently in the process of developing a series of interpretation panels for the reserve, and special reference to Gordon's contribution will be made on the panel at this location. We know that Gordon's family fully supported his vision and work, and are delighted that the family tradition lives on with his daughter, Annette Foster giving her continued support as the Selwyn District Council representative on the Board.

Grants

The Society acknowledges the generous grants received in 2007 from Christchurch City Council and Selwyn District Council for our general running costs and to support our work parties.

Scarborough Bluffs Track

The track on the eastern side of Evans Pass built by Bill LeGros and Terry Everard is now well established and justifiably popular. Not content with

this, they have now extended the track in the other direction above Ocean View Terrace and over Scarborough Hill to Taylors Mistake. Unfortunately, access is still not possible over private land to link with the Heritage Trail from Heberden Avenue. However, when the track is combined with the start of the Captain Thomas Track and then the Taylors Mistake Walkway to Whitewash Head, this gives a superb three hour round walk from Sumner.



Fabulous views can be gained from walking the Scarborough Bluffs track.

Membership

Currently our membership stands at 374, which is an additional 41 since the last newsletter was published in July last year. This continues the growth we have been experiencing over the last four or five years. Included in the membership are 24 groups and reciprocal members, which increase our 'constituency' to over 1,000, a very respectable total.

Since the last newsletter we welcome:

Larry Anderson	Ruth Heins
Canterbury Botanical Society	Clare Heppenstall
Lynda Burns	Neil Lambie
Rod Claridge	Liz Milne
PK Durkin & MJ Slemint	Reg Parnell
Laura Ewen	Peter Taylor
Edna Graham	Paul Tebbutt
Alan Hart & Helen	Christine Toner
Pennington	Bruce Tulloch

Many thanks to those of you who have introduced new members. As we have mentioned on many occasions in the past, out of all the initiatives to increase membership, the most successful is still personal contact, whether this is friends, colleagues or simply talking to people you meet on the hill.

The winner of the membership challenge is Helen Chambers, who receives a voucher for a meal for two at The Sign of the Takahe.

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	President	Mike White 03 312 1551
Vice-President	Richard Pickering 332 2171	
Secretary	John Goodrich 326 7330	
Treasurer	Paul Loughton 322 7082	
Board Members	Geoff Bendall 384 9254	
	Steve Cottrell 337 9049	
	Bill Woods 03 318 4825	
	Anne Kennedy 377 0364	
	Robin Collie 332 1477	
<i>Honorary Life Member</i>	John Jameson 354 5925	
Press Officer	Katherine Trought 332 9877	
<i>Representatives</i>		
Selwyn District Council	Annette Foster 347 8651	
Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board		
	John Freeman 326 6406	
Lyttelton/Mt Herbert Community Board		
	Jeremy Agar 328 9956	
Port Hills Rangers	332 5627	
Eastenders work party	Geoff Bendall 384 9254	
Ohinetahi	Mike White 03 312 1551	
Weekenders	John Goodrich 326 7330	
<p>We are a voluntary society working to enhance, preserve and protect the natural environment, beauty and open character of the Port Hills of Banks Peninsula for people to enjoy. We need and welcome contributions to our work through memberships, donations and corporate sponsorships, participation in work parties (non-members welcome - but why not join us as well!), and bequests.</p>		

EDITOR: JOHN GODDRICH DESIGN: THOMASGRAPHIK

60th Anniversary

2008 is another milestone for the Society – its 60th anniversary. We are planning a series of events throughout the year to celebrate this, and hope that these will prove to be an opportunity to generate more publicity for our work and activities.

■ **Walks:** There will be walks on Sunday April 6, 13, 20 and 27. Details are still to be finalised, but the idea is to provide a representative cross-section of what the Port Hills has to offer, Omahu Bush, Ohinetahi Reserve, Mt Cavendish and Godley Head.

■ **Brochure and Map:** The Society's map of walking tracks is now out of date, and the accompanying brochure is out of print. For some time now we have been working on an updated brochure, and thanks to the generosity of the City Council we will be able to use their map of the Port Hills tracks and reserves as a basis for our new map.

■ **Brochure Launch:** We are intending to have a formal launch of the new brochure at a function to be held at the Sign of the Takahe.

■ **Mid-winter Dinner:** Once again, there will be a mid-winter dinner, a function that has proved popular. Details will be published in due course.

Local elections

As you are aware, the Society is fortunate to have on its Board representatives from the three Community Boards that include the Port Hills and from Selwyn District Council. It was very pleasing therefore that in the local elections, Annette Foster (Selwyn District Council), Jeremy Agar (Lyttelton/Mt Herbert Community Board) and John Freeman (Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board) were re-elected. We are delighted, therefore, that we will have their support for our work for the next three years. Paul de Spa did not stand for re-election to the Spreydon/Heathcote Community Board, and we hope that a new representative will be appointed.

Access

Christchurch is really fortunate in that the Port Hills provides an almost 'seamless' network of walking tracks. It is worth remembering that whilst many of these are on public reserves, a number of tracks cross private land. Access to these is not an automatic right, and will only continue if everyone recognises a few common sense responsibilities such as using stiles, not damaging fences, closing gates, no litter etc. Where landowners ask that the public keep off their land, please respect this.

A&P Committee

As its name suggests, the Activities and Promotions Committee deals with promoting the Society, initiatives to grow membership and arranging the outings programme. Recently a number of people have retired from the Committee, and it needs some new blood and some fresh ideas. If you are interested, please contact the Secretary. The commitment is fairly modest as the Committee meets every two months.

Victoria Park

The roster of members spending a couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon at the Victoria Park Visitor Centre is proving successful, and the Society would like to thank all those members who have supported this initiative. Whilst it has not so far attracted many new members, it is another opportunity to publicise the Society and its work, and the importance of the Port Hills. It is another instance of the partnership we have with the Port Hills Rangers, and we could not have introduced this without their support and encouragement. Please contact the Secretary if you would like to join the roster.

Hill Work Parties

The last six months have been 'business as usual' for the work parties. The **Eastenders** have been concentrating on their usual 'patch', working in a variety of locations, including Barnett Park, Mt Cavendish, Rapanui Bush and Jollies Bush, where there is now a stile to give access some of the best native tussock grassland on the Port Hills around the Mt Pleasant gun emplacements. In a vote of confidence in the group, the Department of conservation has asked the group to carry out regular maintenance of the Taylors Mistake to Godley Head track.

The **Ohinetahi Reserve** group has also been as active as ever, with a mixed bag of track maintenance, the never ending round of weed control, and some further planting near the Bay Heights entrance. Our pest management strategy continues to show good results, and the group is now expanding the area covered with the installation of more bait stations and traps. The **Weekenders** have been dividing their time between Scotts Reserve and Victoria Park, concentrating on clearing broom, plus some planting.

The **Eastenders** and the **Ohinetahi** group have also been carrying out work at Omahu Bush for Grant and Marilyn Nelson. Here, one track has been re-aligned, a bridge replaced, and general track maintenance carried out.

All the work parties welcome more volunteers, so if you are interested, please contact the Secretary.

Once again, our work parties have carried out around 3,500 volunteer hours during the year, which is an impressive achievement. This does not take into account the hours put in by our Board and Committee members. The Society's volunteers are only part of a movement that is very important to New Zealand. The contribution of the not for profit sector is highlighted in a recent report released by Statistics New Zealand, the "Non-profits Institutions Satellite Report Account 2004". This shows that:

- The effort donated to not for profit equates to 2.6% of Gross Domestic Product.
- When volunteer labour is included, this rises to 4.9% of GDP.
- Volunteers work an average of 5.1 hours per week (considerably more than, for instance, Australia or Canada).
- In 2004, 1,011,600 volunteers gave more than 270,000,000 hours of unpaid labour to not for profit!

One of the objectives of the new Charities Commission is to collect more accurate information about the contribution of volunteers via the annual returns submitted by charities, so over time, we will get a much clearer picture of the breadth of volunteering, and how important this is.

Resource Management Roundup

Banks Peninsula District Plan:

At long last we are approaching the final stages of a long and complicated process. All the parties intending to proceed to a court hearing have exchanged evidence, and a hearing lasting two weeks has been set down by the Environment Court to start on the 28th of January. The Society intends to attend the hearing and to present evidence. Leading up to this stage there has been a series of mediations, at which a considerable amount of detail has been agreed by a large number of the parties. However, there remain some parties who have not signed these agreements, and some significant points are still in dispute, particularly the extent of the areas to be classified as 'Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes', and 'Coastal Natural Character Landscape' as defined in the Resource Management Act.

Whilst, with regard to the Port Hills, the proposed District Plan meets most of our concerns, we still have reservations about the extent of the 'Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes', and 'Coastal Natural Character Landscape' and some of the density provisions outside these areas, which in our view could allow the development of more and more lifestyle blocks. For these reasons, we believe that it is still important to put our views before the Court. Hopefully, by the next newsletter, we will be able to report that the Plan has now been finalised and to explain its main provisions in more detail.

Selwyn District Plan

Selwyn District Council took what is arguably a tougher stance than the City Council in discharging its responsibility under Section 6 of the Resource Management Act, by identifying the whole of the Port Hills in the district as "Outstanding Landscape and Natural Features". This aspect of the District Plan has not been appealed. The rules in the Plan, such as the density provisions above and below the 160m contour have in fact been adopted in the Banks Peninsula District Plan. The Commissioner raised questions at the Plan submissions hearing about the management of the "toe of the hills", below the 60m contour. Accordingly, the Council has been taking advice from landscape architects and has asked for public submissions. The Society made a submission advocating controls on development, but recognising that there will be pressure around existing settlements for some expansion. The Council now intends to consider the submissions and publish a Variation to the District Plan early this year. The Variation will be notified and there will be a round of further submissions.

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Montgomery Spur

As we have reported previously, Christchurch is very fortunate that this last remaining undeveloped spur on the eastern Port Hills is now in public ownership. The land is a significant addition to the Council's Port Hills portfolio. The City Council has asked for submissions to enable them to take into account the public's views in the preparation of a management plan.

A draft will be available for comment shortly. The Society's submission suggested public access via walking tracks, the clearance of gorse and broom, the encouragement of regeneration where appropriate, with the majority of the land maintained in its existing state, and the native tussock encouraged by sheep grazing.



The management plan for Montgomery Spur is currently up for discussion including the possibility of public access via walking tracks.

Outings

Port Hills Field Trip

Following the success of the bus tour led by Di Carter last year, we decided to repeat this on 28 October. This time the field trip was led by Andrew Crossland and Phil Crutchley of the Port Hills Rangers. The first stop was Kennedys Bush, where Phil explained the intensive predator control programme that is being carried out, and demonstrated the traps and bait stations being used. Andrew talked about the success of the programme, and the real possibility of this being the first reserve on the Port Hills for the reintroduction of bird species.

From there we drove along the Summit Road, with a number of stops where Andrew talked about the work being carried out by the City Council on various reserves. After that we went to Allandale via Gebbies Pass for lunch. Andrew explained the various habitats around the upper harbour basin, and the opportunities that there are for improvements and for creating links between the harbour basin and the Port Hills. He pointed out that even exotic pine plantations can provide valuable habitat for birds and allow movement between more suitable areas. It is very encouraging that the City Council is now looking in more detail at the ecology of the harbour basin, and starting to plan how this can be protected and enhanced.



Kennedy's Bush, Andrew Crossland demonstrating the traps and bait stations being used in the successful predator programme.



View of the Crater Rim from Allandale, Lyttelton Harbour.

Barnett Park

In August, the Society organised a walk from Barnett Park, up the new track on the eastern side of the valley built by the Eastenders, and then to the Summit Road and Jollies Bush, returning via Clifton Hill. This proved to be a very popular event, with over 60 people attending. The 'Eastenders Track' is a great addition to the network of walking tracks in the area.

Barbecue

The final event of the year was the traditional Friday evening barbecue at Victoria Park on 14 December. Whilst only a few of our 'stalwarts' attended, they were able to reflect on what has, again, been a very successful year for the Society.



A Centennial and a Diamond Jubilee; Harry Ell and his Summit Road



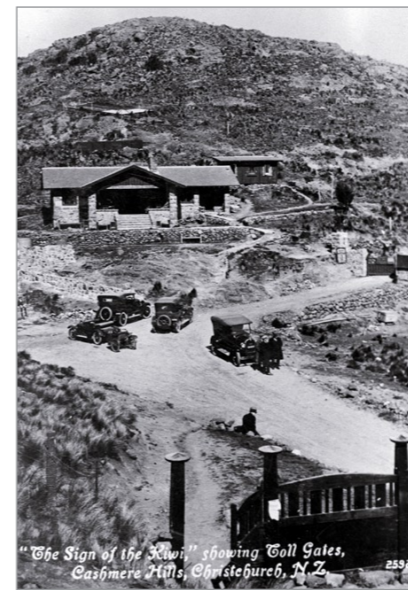
The year 1908 was a busy year for **H. G. Ell** MP. One can envisage him busy with electorate affairs, moving his family to Wellington for the parliamentary sessions, and yet in between attending to those daily tasks at home and keeping in touch with his constituents in Christchurch South. A letter seeking support for young Andrew in his job application, signing in patients to Sunnyside Asylum (as it was called in those days), meeting his electorate team, opening a building, or receiving a deputation from an environmental group – a parliamentary life was a busy one,

and one without the benefits of email or any modern means of communication. Yet these were the days when he was pursuing his Summit Road dreams, and not just dreaming them, but putting them forward with vigour and enthusiasm into action.

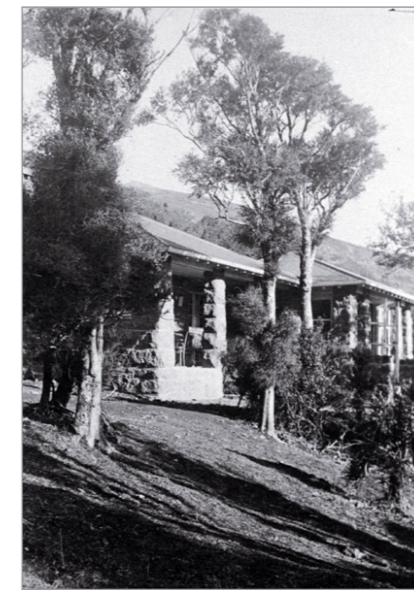
By 1908 he had already promoted amendments to the Scenery Preservation Acts and looked at tightening up road closure legislation. One suspects that these two pieces of legislation arose from problems associated with his Summit Road concept. By this time, the first Scenic Reserve on the Port Hills had been created at Kennedy's Bush and most of the route for his Summit Road was pegged out and surveyed. In 1911 five further reserves were brought in and the

first Summit Road Reserves Committee had been formed.

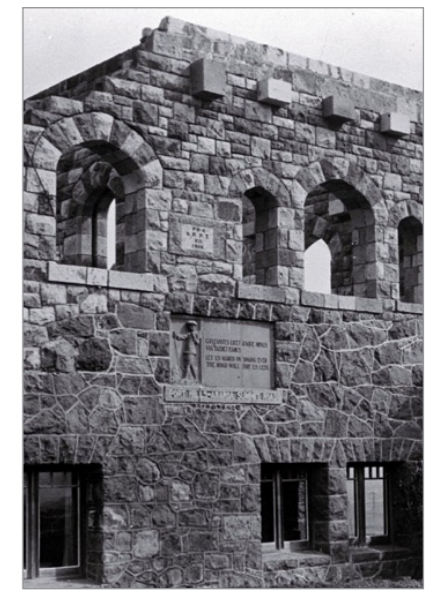
In the meantime he served as Postmaster General for a few months, became firm friends of Apirana Ngata, Maui Pomare and Peter Buck. In his younger years he had been strongly influenced by the Maori attitude to land values when he served at Parihaka with the armed constabulary. The writer has photographs of him opening Post Offices in widely separate parts of both islands. He laid the foundation stone of the original Post Office building in Sydenham and attended the consecration of the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Barbadoes Street. Yes, a very busy life for a man with strong family ties.



Sign of the Kiwi, 1930



Sign of the Bellbird, circa 1920



Sign of the Takahe during construction 1927

A map we have of 1916 vintage shows that he had by then surveyed the whole route of his Port Hills to Akaroa Summit Road and was also planning and building the first two of his "Rest Houses", the Sign of the Bellbird and the Sign of the Kiwi. Soon to follow was the tram terminus shelter, later developed into the grand building we know as the Sign of the Takahe. By 1919 all three, plus the Sign of the Packhorse on the Kaituna Saddle were dispensing refreshments and offering shelter to weary travellers.

The accumulation of land and the forming of the Summit Road itself proceeded satisfactorily, with plentiful labour eventually available from the ranks of the unemployed. Fencing in of

native bush, the formation of walking tracks – all this activity was only limited by lack of finance, or rather, it should have been. But Harry Ell would not allow this to slow him down – rather it was a challenge that he gladly accepted himself, even sacrificing loyal supporters in the process. One senses that he loved a battle as it brought publicity, it weeded out procrastinators and it brought both enemies and loyal supporters. Harry Ell, speaking of his Summit Road concept said "...I will not yield up to the keeping of others the ideals and sentiments which I have always associated with this public work. It is my work and I intend to continue with it." The mid 1920's and early 1930's were riddled with these battles. The family knew that his health was failing.

Could it be that he knew his days were limited, hence the sense of urgency? We think so.

The writer, his grandson, was aware of family tensions because of this unrelenting urgency to put the work beyond the point of no return. Certainly the public became aware of this tremendous public work just up there on their favourite hills. He finally agreed to see his doctor, was operated on for cancer, and died the next day on the 25th of June 1934. In his obituary he was described as "...active, virile, tenacious and often tempestuous..." probably a veiled reference to the difficulties he experienced, and indeed caused, in his determination to ensure that his Summit Road concept became a

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reality. However, a further contemporary quote better sums up what drove Harry Ell's vision for the Port Hills and describes him as a man "... who with rare foresight and vision, lifted up his eyes to the hills, and saw in them a source of inspiration and recreation for the people of the province, if only they could be opened up for easy access from the city..."

The work at the Takahe carried on and the Summit Road between Dyers Pass and Evans Pass was opened in 1938. With the declaration of war in 1939 the Trust foundered, the buildings were vacated by tenants, in some cases enlisting in the services, and without leadership the whole project slipped into neglect, and considerable vandalism occurred until the City Council accepted responsibility in 1947. As this newsletter is read by family and friends of members and circulated to other groups and organisations, we make no apologies about promoting the Summit Road Society and its work.

Cats and Native Fauna: Friend or Foe?

The number of cats owned by New Zealanders has inevitably led to questions and a significant amount of research about the impact on our fauna. Look at the Department of Conservation and royal Forest and Bird's websites, and you will see a number of scholarly papers and other information on the subject. The answer to the question posed above is probably "yes and no" and "yes and no". As far as feral cats are concerned, there is little doubt that they have no place in our ecosystems. Phil Crutchley (Port Hills Rangers) occasionally finds these on the Port Hills, and assures us that they are easy to identify by their general appearance and aggressive behaviour, and cannot be mistaken for a wandering family pet. However, as cats never lose their hunting instincts even if well fed, and can wander in a 5km radius during a single night, what affect do they have on wildlife?



Cats are now on the World Conservation Union's list of the top 100 most unwanted animals. In Britain, for instance, it is estimated that they account for 70 million casualties each year, including 20 million birds. However, the situation in New Zealand is very different. As Wellington ecologist John Flux points out, the findings are of little use here, given that cats are important predators of small mammals, and with the exception of bats, all New Zealand's small mammals are vermin. Craig Gillies, a predator ecologist with the Department of Conservation concedes that with regard to the relationship between cats, rats, mice, stoats, ferrets and weasels "The

The writer, with backing from the Junior Chamber of Commerce, formed the Summit Road society in 1948, and with full support from the City Council and conservation interests, which gradually grew as a vital voluntary group carrying out projects for the improvement of the reserves. The Society's members and affiliated groups are still working assiduously to develop some form of collective responsibility, to maintain, develop and coordinate projects in furtherance of its environmental concepts. Some 70 members give of their time and energy on practical programmes such as fencing, new tracks for trampers and mountain-bikers, tree planting animal and noxious weed control, always working under the watchful eyes of the City Council's Port Hills Rangers team. The Society also organises annual schools Arbor Day plantings, and its committee works in close support with other conservation groups.

The Society, through a generous bequest, was able to purchase a significant block of land above Governors Bay, and by further purchase and gifting, now maintains 150ha of regenerating native bush. The Ohinetahi Reserve is a prime example of the enterprise and dedication of the Society over 60 years. Members can be proud of what has been accomplished, but recognise the importance of ongoing vigilance and dedication in furtherance of its objectives.

As the 60th anniversary approaches, we seek continuing support and renewal, with targets both physical and financial still to be achieved, and ask for that continuing support from the public and citizens of Christchurch.

John W. Jameson Q.S.M.

simple answer is that there's no simple answer". He takes the view that if you own a cat and live, for instance, near a forest reserve or a shorebird breeding colony, then a domestic cat is a definite threat to native fauna.

In Lower Hutt, Flux has just completed a 17-year study of his own cat's toll. Over the period, it caught 223 birds, of which only 54 were native, the majority of which were silvereyes, a bird that is not at risk of extinction. More interestingly were the mammals recorded over the period, which comprised 221 mice, 63 rats, 35 rabbits, four hares and two weasels. It has long been recognised that cats kill lizards, but if you balance this against the impact of a single pair of rats that can produce 1700 progeny in a year, and it becomes evident that the situation is complex, and that there could even be an argument that managed properly, cats are of benefit.

Some local authorities in Australia have imposed cat curfews, with cat owners being fined for infringements. However, night is the time that cats will take rats and other mammals. Both Gillies and Flux agree that such measures in suburban New Zealand would only be partially useful. Gillies, however, still favours cat bans or at least owner education around critical native wildlife habitat. Many owners are aware of cat bells, but, again, the jury is out, with evidence that cats are stealthy enough to prevent them ringing until the final pounce. The latest innovation is the "pounce protector", a neoprene cat bib that has apparently reduces the kill rate by 75%.

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The conclusion to all this seems to be that a common sense and a responsible attitude are appropriate. Owners should recognise that their cats can be a threat, and take particular care where they live close to important wildlife habitat. For most of us who live in predominantly urban areas, however, the occasional loss of a native bird may not be a problem, and your feline friend may even help in the control of rats and mice. For more information see the Department of

Conservation and forest and Bird's websites, the November issue of the Forest and Bird magazine. A leaflet produced by Kaupapa Kereru, the group monitoring and encouraging the growth of New Zealand's native pigeon population on Banks Peninsula is also worth looking at.

From "The great cat flap" by Dave Hansford, New Zealand Listener 17-23 November 2007.

Some Background on the Birdlife of Ohinetahi Bush and the Port Hills

By Andrew Crossland, Park Ranger, Regional Parks Team, Christchurch City Council



Shining Cuckoo (Pipiharauroa)



Silvereye (Tauhou)



NZ Wood Pigeon (Kereru)

In the mid 1800s early ornithologists like Thomas Potts and Walter Lawry Buller reported that the Port Hills and the wider environs of Banks Peninsula supported a rich and diverse native bird fauna. Birds such as Kokako, Saddleback, Native Thrush, Yellowhead, Robin, Weka, Falcon, Kaka and Kakariki were commonly met with, while species such as Tui, Bellbird, Brown Creeper, Wood Pigeon and Pipit were all extremely abundant.

Rapid habitat loss through logging and fires; hunting; successive waves of mammalian predators (rats at first - then dogs and pigs - then cats - then mustelids, hedgehogs and possums); competition and sometimes predation by introduced birds, as well as avian disease all combined to bring about widespread extinctions, range contractions and severe reductions in populations of native birds. As an isolated range, The Port Hills was harder hit than the rest of Banks Peninsula and lost a number of species that survived in pockets elsewhere. These included Rifleman, Tomtit, Morepork, Brown Creeper, Tui and Sooty Shearwater.

Bucking the trend of the previous 150 years, the last decade has seen some encouraging improvements for birdlife on the Port Hills. With better fencing and control of browsing/grazing animals, the condition of many existing bush patches has improved to a state that is probably better than at any

time in the last century. Natural bush regeneration, augmented by planting programmes is increasing the acreage of suitable bird habitat and the relatively recent introduction of predator control programmes is already starting to deliver higher breeding success and improved survival amongst a wide range of bird species. The successful recolonisation of the Port Hills by Tomtit and the recent reappearance of small numbers of Morepork, Falcon, Brown Creeper and Long-tailed Cuckoo all bode well for the restoration of a rich and diverse bird fauna on the hills.

During the early 2000s the City Council rangers set up a series of environmental monitoring programmes to provide detailed information on the birds, pest animals, invertebrates and vegetation of the Port Hills. The bird monitoring programme commenced in 2003 and covers 13 sites from Ahuriri Summit Bush in the south to Jollies Bush in the east. All birds (both native and introduced species) are surveyed once a month for 12 consecutive months, by way of the "slow walk transect method". This involves an observer walking slowly through the bush along a pre-set transect and recording all birds seen and heard within 10 metres (30 feet) either side of the metre wide centre line. Any birds beyond those boundaries are not included in the survey, so essentially what is monitored is a (21 m) 63 foot wide corridor through the

bush. These surveys are repeated at 3-4 yearly intervals and will show up any changes in bird populations as well as any changes in the patterns of seasonal abundance.

Some sites such as Kennedys Bush, Omahu Bush and Sugarloaf Bush are now already into their second round of surveys, but to date, the only surveyed site within the Summit Road Society's Ohinetahi Reserve - along the upper section of Wattling Track, starting from the Summit Road) - has been surveyed once: from January to December 2004. This transect is 480m in length and for the most part cuts through mahoe forest and then into mixed broadleaf/hardwood forest.

Although not fully analysed to date, the raw data (presented below) provides for us an interesting insight into bird populations along Watlings Track:

■ Some 21 bird species during the 12 month survey period. These comprised 9 native and 12 introduced species.

■ Seven species (Dunnock, Blackbird, Grey Warbler, Fantail, Silvereye, Bellbird & Chaffinch) are resident, being recorded in 10 or more months. The annual cycle of most of these showed lowest numbers in winter, an influx of birds (for nesting) in spring, and greatest abundance occurring in late summer-autumn (when adults and newly fledged juveniles were all present within the study area).

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■ Highest numbers of species were recorded during the breeding season (September – December, average 11 species) and the post-breeding dispersal period (March – April, average 11.5 species). Lowest numbers of species were recorded during the cooler autumn-winter period (May – Aug, average 7.5 species) and during summer (Jan – Feb, average 9 species) when peak singing activity has ceased and some cryptic species may be undetected on the survey.

■ The ten most abundant species occurring along Wattlings Track are Silvereye, Bellbird, Redpoll, Grey Warbler, Chaffinch, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Blackbird, Fantail and Greenfinch. Other species, including natives such as NZ Pigeon, Tomtit, Shining Cuckoo and Welcome Swallow occur in much smaller numbers.

■ As is the pattern in many Port Hills bush patches, a number of bird species appear to use Ohinetahi Bush as a breeding area in spring-summer, but are scarce or absent during the autumn-winter period. These species include Shining Cuckoo, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Redpoll and California Quail. Other birds, such as Magpie, Song Thrush and Tomtit appear to have the opposite pattern, occurring chiefly outside of the breeding season.

Ohinetahi Bush (Wattlings Track) Bush Bird Surveys

Species	21/1/04	10/2/04	12/3/04	27/4/04	26/5/04	16/6/04	28/7/04	31/8/04
California Quail	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NZ Pigeon*	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-
Shining Cuckoo*	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Skylark	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Welcome Swallow*	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
NZ Pipit*	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Dunnock	1	1	1	4	4	5	2	1
Blackbird	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Song Thrush	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Grey Warbler*	3	3	4	3	3	1	2	3
SI Fantail*	1	1	1	4	2	2	1	1
SI Tomtit*	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Silvereye*	16	16	20	28	11	14	8	4
Bellbird*	3	4	5	4	5	5	1	-
Yellowhammer	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Chaffinch	2	2	2	3	-	4	2	-
Greenfinch	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Goldfinch	-	2	3	1	-	-	-	1
Redpoll	5	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Starling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Magpie	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
*=native species								
TOTAL	33	30	39	53	28	35	17	11
No. species	9	9	10	13	8	9	7	6

Species	22/9/04	26/10/04	27/11/04	23/12/04	Total mths recorded	total cum. records
California Quail	1	-	-	1	2	x2
NZ Pigeon*	-	1	-	-	3	x4
Shining Cuckoo*	-	-	-	-	1	x1
Skylark	1	-	-	-	1	x1
Welcome Swallow*	2	-	2	2	4	x7
NZ Pipit*	-	-	-	-	1	x1
Dunnock	2	2	2	3	12	x28
Blackbird	2	2	3	3	12	x18
Song Thrush	-	-	-	-	1	x1
Grey Warbler*	4	3	2	2	12	x33
SI Fantail*	-	1	1	1	11	x16
SI Tomtit*	-	-	-	1	2	x2
Silvereye*	7	10	9	13	12	x156
Bellbird*	3	6	9	8	11	x53
Yellowhammer	-	1	-	2	2	x2
Chaffinch	2	2	5	4	10	x28
Greenfinch	-	5	3	2	4	x11
Goldfinch	2	8	2	2	8	x21
Redpoll	-	16	12	14	6	x49
Starling	-	-	-	5	1	x5
Magpie	-	-	-	-	2	x2
*=native species						
TOTAL	26	57	50	63		
No. species	10	12	11	15	21 species	x441