

ŌTARI-WILTON'S BUSH TRUST

News and Views December, 2022

For all walks meet at the Information Centre, Te Marae o Tane unless otherwise stated. Walks with talks first will start at the Leonard Cockayne Centre. Easy walking and sensible walking shoes recommended. Web site: www.owbt.nz

Unless otherwise stated walks are free to Trust members & children under 15, otherwise \$6 (includes \$1 booking fee. Please note that bookings are essential.

Please make your booking via Eventfinda .eventfinda.co.nz

Second Saturdays

Plant care is on the second Saturday of each month. Please note there is no plant care in January; resumes in February.
Contact Wilbur Dovey, 499 1044.

March Tuesdays 4, 14, 21, 28. 7.30

March Seminars

All seminars will start at 7.30 p.m. in Tāne Whakapiripiri/Ōtari Visitor Centre, Wilton Road. Gold coin donation.

See page 6 for details

There are exciting new plans to change walks for 2023.

Watch this space!

Message from the Chair

Message from the Chair

Kia ora koutou katoa

What a busy few months it has been, with numerous highlights to report!

Our biggest project to date, the book *Ōtari: Two hundred years of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush* by Bee Dawson with photos by Chris Coad, was launched at Wilton Bowling Club on 17 November. It was great to see many of you there. The launch was also an opportunity to thank all of our active volunteers because without your hard work raising funds the Trust could not have published the book. We were fortunate to receive grants from the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture, Nikau Foundation, The New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, Wellington Gardens and an anonymous donor, all of which help to defray the costs. We hope you are enjoying the stories in the book and that you've stocked up on more copies for Christmas presents!

I would particularly like to thank Jane Humble and Tim Mason for their hard work managing all the elements of this project. Neither Tim nor Jane seek the limelight and in the book, you'll see Tim's name only in Bee's acknowledgements and there is a beautiful water colour of Jane's on page 197.

Our new website (<https://www.owbt.nz/>) has been up and running since 11 October. Kathy Ombler revised and added to the previous content and included some of Chris Coad's photographs. We also thank photographer Andy McArthur for allowing us to share some of his stunning Ōtari images, for both the website and social media posts. Andy is often seen wandering through Ōtari, camera in hand and his kākā, kereru and tui portraits are standouts.

Our website developer and host is Robin Sallis, based in Southland. He was wonderful to work with and has set up the site so that we can update it ourselves whenever we need to. The website has links to our Facebook and Instagram accounts and Kathy, our social secretary, keeps all three well supplied with stories and timely information.

Our Facebook page has been going gangbusters – apparently, we are reaching about 10,000 people a week with our posts (seems hard to believe!). As predicted by the Ignite team who helped us earlier in the year, our Facebook audience is older than our Instagram audience, with the greatest numbers in the 35–44-year age range. Most of the audience is Wellington-based with just a few overseas. On Facebook, the greatest audience connection has been about the tracks in Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.

On Instagram we now have 441 followers with 5% coming from overseas and about half of our NZ followers are outside of Wellington. Now over 61% are female. Two stories about Tina tuna, the longfin eel that was injured and healed by vets at Wellington Zoo then released back to its home in Ōtari's section of the Kaiwharawhara Stream, were top of the pops helping us reach almost 600 people. Other popular posts were about the big slip from Wilton Park into the Kaiwharawhara Stream that blocked the track up the valley, as well as the new section of track that makes the walk to view Moko (the big rimu) much easier – see the story by Tim Park elsewhere in the newsletter.

I want to thank Kathy Ombler very much for all her hard work on the new website and for her ongoing work of keeping our growing audience updated and engaged with happenings at Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. Not only does she do this for the Trust but she's out there regularly checking pest trapping lines for RAMBO, thrashing about in the bush in all weathers!

The last significant event I want to mention is the unveiling of the pou in Tāne Whakapiripiri/the Visitor Centre on 9 September. The beautiful carvings are made from totara, rata vines and kiekie



from the Reserve and depict the pristine forest, destruction of the forest and future restoration of the forest. Matthew McIntyre Wilson (Taranaki – Ngā Māhanga, Titahi) carved the pou.

Thanks to all of you who came along to Open Day. Although I couldn't be there, I heard that the many activities were enjoyed by all and the weather was kind. Just so you know, we are intending to have plant sales next year as the Trust's nursery behind the Leonard Cockayne Centre is just getting underway.

Thank you for your support of the Trust and Ōtari-Wilton's Bush. Have a fabulous summer! This ongoing La Nina weather pattern will be good for the bush and gardens, and I hope there are no more major slips or slumps.

Carol West

Chair



Ōtari Update

Kia ora koutou

Spring has sprung at Ōtari, with many plants in the collection flowering well this year in the early summer heat. Particularly the *Myosotis pottsiana*, *Bulbinella hookerii*, *Linum monogynum* and *Sonchus kirkii* which all seem to be spreading along the paths, but we aren't considering them weeds yet due their glorious flowering displays.

We have had some momentous occasions here recently with the release of Bee Dawson's Ōtari History book, our Trust chair Dr Carol West being presented with the Allan Mere Award, the opening of the realignment of the new Blue Trail to Moko as well as celebrating our much loved gardener Dave Bidgood's 30 years of service working at Ōtari. Bee's book is a real page-turner and is unlike most history books, as it is a social, ecological, and horticultural history rolled into one and is very well illustrated with Chris Coad's photos. It was a real pleasure to host the awarding of the Allan Mere here at Ōtari. Carol has known me since the 1983 Wellington Botanical Society Summer field trip to Tairāwhiti, which was attended by my whole family and others such as Tony (AP) Druce, who was one of the first recipients of the Award. We are getting overwhelmingly positive feedback from walkers using the new section of track up to Moko, some even mentioned that they thought they would not be able to visit Moko again, but due to the new route, and taking the lower Yellow Track, it is now possible again for them to visit Moko. We are very lucky to have the long serving Dave Bidgood on our team, he has been a mentor to a huge number of staff, passing on his deep knowledge in a gentle way and his real contribution in his own words is that he "has spent most of his life taking the original traditional garden grid and turning it into natural curves".

Dave Bidgood and Megan Ireland.

Photo by Chris Coad



Following on from our success with the experimental cross-pollination of *Celmisia* “Mangaweka” last summer, the team is again hand pollinating the few remaining wild plants of this undescribed entity (which is thought to be extinct in the wild). As it is on the brink of extinction, we are working closely with Percy’s and DOC to ensure we do what we can to propagate this plant, so we can eventually reintroduce it into the wild.

This summer Karin, Carlos and Jennifer are being joined on the orchid conservation project by Joe Dillon (aka online as Welly’s Hungry Botanist) a VUW Botany Student who successfully applied for the summer scholarship which is generously funded by the Deane Endowment Trust. The work in the lab is proceeding well with the collection of some of the orchid seeds needed for the project already, as well as some of the fungal partners. Karin has also joined a group of international plant researchers training others on using specialist techniques to save “Exceptional plant species”.



If you live near Ōtari please keep an eye out for a new weed in your garden called Black Bryony (*Dioscorea communis* or *Tamus communis*). It is the only species in the yam family that has become a naturalised weed in Aotearoa. It has been seen occasionally in the 38 degrees garden over the years, but has recently also been found in the forest on the Blue Trail. It looks similar to Convolvulus, but it has small flowers and the stem has no milky sap when snapped. However the tuber needs to be dug out and when broken the sap in the tuber can cause irritation and is considered toxic so ensure you wear gloves. It also has bright red berries which are undoubtedly spreading via our feathered friends.

Wellington Gardens (including Ōtari) has again been certified as being Carbon Zero as we continue to reduce our carbon footprint and transition to electric equipment.

If you or friend/family member is interest in learning how to weave flax, the Ōtari Raranga Weavers group meetings can be found on Facebook or Eventfinda. Workshops for beginners are happening regularly during the week and on weekends.

Please remember that the mulch pile in the Northern Carpark sometimes does need to close due to its own success, so when the rope is up across the pile please refrain from taking mulch as it is closed. Recent visitors will also have noticed that we have a new drinking fountain at the Troup Picnic Area.

I hope to see you all visiting Ōtari this summer!

Ma te wa,

Tim Park

Kaiwhakahaere Ōtari | Manager Ōtari Native Botanic Garden and Wilton’s Bush Reserve
Ngā Māra o Poneke | Wellington Gardens
Papa Tākaro Hākinakina | Parks, Sport and Recreation
Mi Heke Ki Poneke | Wellington City Council
[0212479739](tel:0212479739) Tim.Park@wcc.govt.nz Wellington.govt.nz

We have a new website!

We have redesigned and updated the Trust website: owbt.nz

To help with the technical expertise we employed Robin Sallis, who is involved in website design for like-minded conservation groups around the country. Robin was great to work with and is continuing in the role of website host.

A whole new bunch of images on the website include those from Chris Coad, photographer for our book *Ōtari: Two hundred years of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush*. There are also some great shots, of the birdlife in particular, from Wellington photographer, Andy McArthur who can often be found wandering the gardens camera in hand. Former Trust chair Phil Parnell has also contributed, and our own Trustees have chipped in with a few.

We have also included links to Facebook and Instagram, where you can find heaps of news stories, updates and images of the latest flowering species showing off at Ōtari. Even if you're not a fan of social media, it's easy to just click on these links', you don't have to join up to anything to do so.

So go on, check it out: owbt.nz. Everything you want to know about Ōtari-Wilton's Bush and the Trust is here, and we will be changing and tweaking the content as new events and developments happen around Ōtari-Wilton's Bush.



Trust Board 2021 - 2022

The Board of Trustees for the current year is:

Chair: Carol West	carolwest@xtra.co.nz	Phone: 387 3396
Secretary. Wilbur Dovey	cweag.dovey@xtra.co.nz	Phone: 499 1044
Treasurer. Tim Mason	timmason429@gmail.com	Phone: 479 0544
Maggie Bayfield	bayfield@xtra.co.nz	Ph: 027 545 4333
Jane Humble	jhumble16@gmail.com	Ph: 021 636 226
Justin Nacey	justinnacey@gmail.com	Ph: 021 211 3019
Kevin O'Connor	oconnorkevin170@gmail.com	Ph. 027 270 9787
Kathy Ombler	kathy@ombler.co.nz	Ph: 027 275 5152

The trustees welcome individual communications from members on any matters relating to Otari-Wilton's Bush Reserve or the Trust, particularly from those who would like to assist and participate in our activities.

Newsletter: Vera Burton. Phone 938 8207. veeanddave93@gmail.com

Ōtari March Seminar Series

All seminars will start at 7.30 p.m. in Tāne Whakapiripiri/Ōtari Visitor Centre, Wilton Road. Gold coin donation.

Tuesday March 7: “Taxonomic revision of native New Zealand forget-me-nots (*Myosotis*, Boraginaceae): an update”. Heidi Meudt

Dr Heidi Meudt is a Botany Curator at Te Papa whose collections-based research focuses on the evolution and classification of native New Zealand flowering plants, especially forget-me-nots (*Myosotis*). Heidi also studies native foxgloves (*Ourisia*), plantains (*Plantago*), and hebes (*Veronica*) throughout the southern hemisphere.

Tuesday March 14: " The role of climate in driving fruiting declines for Aotearoa's most abundant fleshy fruited tree: *Beilschmiedia tawa*". Oscar Clendon

Oscar Yukich Clendon recently completed a Master's degree in ecology and conservation at the University of Auckland. His thesis investigated environmental drivers of fruit crop characteristics for the NZ indigenous tree tawa, in an effort to explain observed declines in fruit size and abundance.

Tuesday March 21: "An introduction to NZ geckos". Reino Grundling

Reino is an active conservationist with a great passion for sharing his love of native reptiles. His goal is to "take the geckos out of the manuka bush" and into the hearts and minds of his fellow kiwis.

Tuesday March 28: “The wonderful world of Wellington weeds”. Illona Keenan

Illona has helped manage ecological weeds for Wellington City Council for the last 10 years. At last count, there were over 150 weed species that have been controlled or noted within Wellington City Reserves.

Thirty years on the Ōtari staff.

At the end of November there was a characteristically modest celebration to recognise that Dave Bidgood has worked at Ōtari for thirty years.

It was a privilege as one of the Thursday morning volunteers to be present to share a chocolate cake with Dave and Ōtari staff members and to be able to say thank you to Dave for his unfailing patience and support of the Thursday morning weeders as we disrupt his busy life with our endless questions and chatter.



Photo: Chris Coad

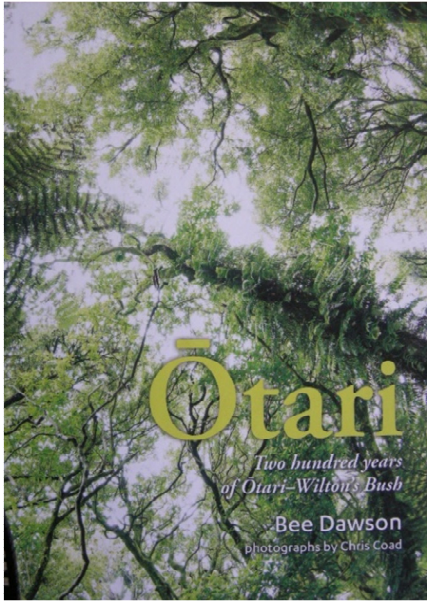
Dave’s continuous service over this length of time is of untold value to Ōtari and under Dave’s watchful management the nursery is looking even more exciting than ever.

Thank you, Dave from the Ōtari-Wilton’s Bush Trust.



The book launch of Ōtari.

Two Hundred Years of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush



Thursday November 17th was a memorable day for Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust when the book the Trust had commissioned, *Ōtari, Two Hundred Years of Ōtari-Wilton's Bush*, written by Bee Dawson and with beautiful photographs by Chris Coad, was launched at a party held at the Wilton Bowling Club. There was a huge turnout. No-one knows how many guests attended but it must have been close to the regulation 'two hundred guest limit' at the Wilton Bowling Club!

The guests included past and present Ōtari staff members, representatives of families recorded in the book and many Ōtari Wilton's Bush Trust members, without whose fundraising and support the book would not have been possible.

Carol West welcomed everyone on behalf of the Trust and in particular drew attention to the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture Inc., which was a generous supporter of the book and, importantly, one of the original proposers of the concept of native plant gardens in New Zealand of which Ōtari went on to be the only one of the several proposed gardens to come into being in New Zealand. In addition Carol acknowledged those who were not able to be at the launch party.

David Sole, who first suggested the book as a centenary project to the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust Board, spoke on behalf of the Wellington City Council.

Bee Dawson told us of her pleasure in writing the book and listening to the stories of the many people who were involved in the story of Ōtari and of her horror at learning that, far from being the cute creatures from Beatrix Potter's world that she imagined they were, hedgehogs were regarded as terrible pests!

Mary McCallum of The Cuba Press urged us to go out and 'spread the word' about our book and Carlos Lehnebach recounted some of the extreme conditions that botanists endure when collecting plants. Carlos also talked about the rewards for those activities and the important part Ōtari is playing in the restoration of New Zealand plant populations.

It was a very enjoyable evening, full of laughter and friendship. It was an evening for reconnecting with old friends, making new friends and remembering absent friends.

To Purchase the book.

On weekends, you can purchase the book from the Hosts at Tane Whakapiripiri, the Visitors' Centre for \$80.00 (Preferable as proceeds go to OWBT). We now have EFTPOS! Otherwise available from Unity Books, the Millwood pop-up shop in Featherston Street and other reputable booksellers.



Allan Mere award 2022 awarded to Carol West.



After no award was made in 2021 it was wonderful news to learn that Carol West, present Chair of the Ōtari-Wilton's Bush Trust (OWBT), was to be awarded the Allan Mere by the New Zealand Botanical Society. Carol was nominated by the Wellington Botanical Society whose nomination was supported

by the Waikato Botanical Society.

In her career Carol has contributed to the study and protection of New Zealand flora. Her areas of focus included vegetation regeneration and weed eradication. As well as her employment responsibilities, latterly as the Threats Management Manager and then Director Terrestrial Ecosystems for the Department of Conservation, Carol has been actively involved with the Wellington Botanical Society and other organisations such as the OWBT supporting and teaching about all aspects of New Zealand flora.



On the 2nd November a very happy gathering of botanists, professional and amateur, gathered at Tane Whakapiripiri, the Ōtari Visitors Centre, for the presentation of the Allan Mere to Carol by Anthony Wright, President of the New Zealand Botanical Society.

Congratulations Carol.



Dr Carol West, Kate Jordan (Wellington Botanical Society), Anthony Wright (president NZ Botanical Society), Dr Patrick Brownsey (Allan Mere Award 2008), Dr Wendy Nelson (Allan Mere Award 2011).

New Working Space for Our Volunteers



Exciting news for the volunteers

This new propagation area in the nursery has been made available for the volunteers (from Otari-Wiltons Bush Trust) to grow plants for sale

Propagating to commence next month, in January, with regular plant sales expected to begin in the autumn, on Wednesday afternoons and the second Saturday in the month.

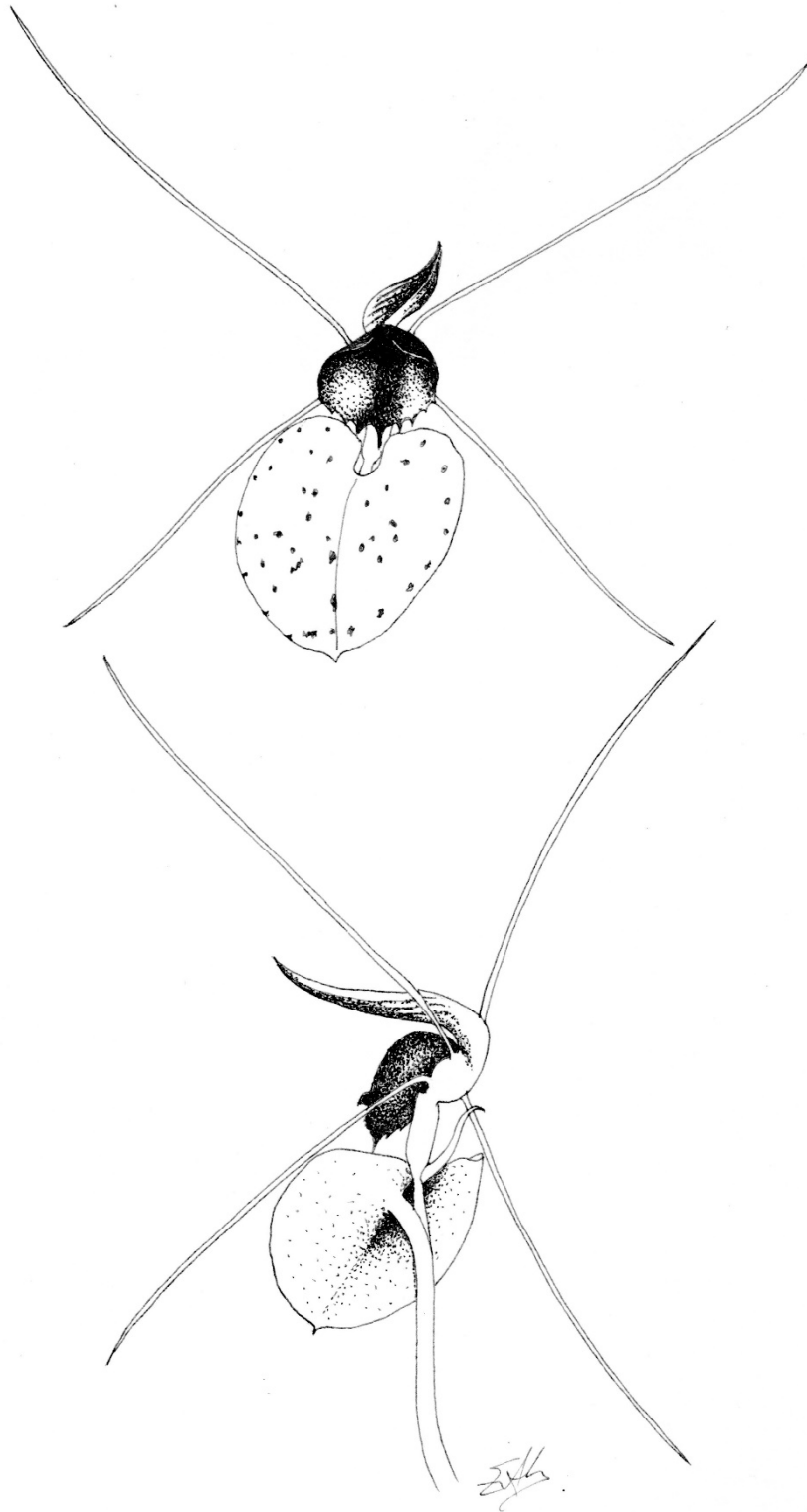


Metrosideros bartletti.

Rātā moehau

One of our rarest plants, now flowering profusely in the nursery at Ōtari

Photos: Eleanor Burton



Corybas iridescens

Spider orchid

This is an orchid of damp places such as seepages and streamsides. It is not threatened, found throughout the North and South Islands, and also on the Chathams. We collected this from near the top of the Remutaka road, where it was growing on a very wet bank in a large colony. The flowers are very dark purple, sometimes red, and iridescent when wet. The leaves are spotted. Ōtari's specimen is growing in a pot in the Celmisia House.

Membership Application/Donation form.

Please note there is also one on the website which can be completed and submitted electronically or downloaded and printed and sent by post or email.



Supporting Otari-Wilton's Bush Reserve

MEMBERSHIP / DONATION FORM

YOUR DETAILS

NAME/S

ADDRESS

PHONE NUMBERS

EMAIL ADDRESS

BILLING NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Above)

NEW MEMBER OR RENEW \$

INDIVIDUAL \$20 \$

DOUBLE/FAMILY \$30 \$

CORPORATE \$30 \$

NEW MEMBER

DONATE

\$20 \$50 \$100 Other \$

I would like a receipt for my donation

P

Paid electronically to account 030518 0205713 000 (please mark your NAME and MEMBERSHIP and/or DONATION in the fields)

COMMENTS