



Wildlands Wellington News March 2013

An update on our people and the services we provide

Wildlands: providing outstanding ecological services to sustain and improve our environments

In the news this quarter: Weeds, threatened shore plover, streams, our services.

Implementation of plans

In the last year or so several plans produced by Wildlands have been implemented. It is a great feeling to see our advice coming to life.

A three-year project to control feral goats on over 12,000 hectares of rural hill country and coastal land in south-west Wellington is largely based on a Goat Plan developed by Wildlands in 2008 for Wellington City Council.

Funding from NZ Transport Agency is transforming "Drain 6", a tributary of the Wharemauku Stream, into a wetland show-casing a variety of wetland plant species. Kapiti Coast District Council commissioned Wildlands to prepare the restoration plan that sits behind this work, for the Friends of the Wharemauku Stream (picture top right).

Wildlands overview investigation into of the Kenepuru Stream has resulted in additional mitigation measures being required for an adjacent subdivision and further work on how to improve the ecological viability and the attractiveness (to people) of the stream and its immediate surroundings.

Surveillance weed found

Wildlands staff undertaking a fish survey in Upper Hutt came across a patch of an unusual plant. A sample was collected and identified as Japanese (or Asiatic) knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*).



This is a surveillance species in the Greater Wellington Region and if you find this species then please contact Greater Wellington on how to deal with it – it is very difficult to eradicate and will resprout from the smallest fragments. Knotweed has destroyed houses and roads overseas.

Wildlands can undertake a site inspection or weed survey for you if you have any concerns about plant species on your property.

'Halo Effect' of Escapees from Mana Island

New Zealand shore plover (*Thinornis novaeseelandiae*) is a Threatened-Nationally Critical species. Juveniles were translocated to Mana Island in 2007 and have successfully bred there. However these small 20 cm birds also have a propensity for 'escaping' to the nearby coast. A banded pair was spotted by Wildlands staff (photo top left) and their location reported to the Department of Conservation. Apparently this pair hangs out at a few different mainland sites.

The value of streams

If you are undertaking works within or near a stream in the Greater Wellington area, you may be asked to undertake a Stream Ecological Valuation (SEV). An SEV looks at the stream habitat quality, fish, and aquatic insects. It then predicts how much mitigation is required to offset any changes proposed for the affected stream. Wildlands can do this work for you, including electro-fishing (middle photo).

Recent Wildlands Wellington projects: Stream ecological valuation, fish surveys, providing ecological advice to Council Planners on District Plan change options, providing advice to the Department of Conservation Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme, ecological impact assessments including cleanfills and subdivisions, providing evidence for Environment Court Hearings including Escarpment Mine, supervision of works near a sensitive site, ecological effect of management options for a major Wairarapa river, and assessing the effectiveness of a fish pass.

Changes to the Resource Management Act – mitigation or compensation?

The February 2012 Technical Advisory Group report on possible improvements to the RMA includes the following definition of **Mitigation**:

- a) means to lessen the rigour or the severity of effects; and,
- b) contemplates that some adverse effects from developments may be considered acceptable, no matter what attributes the site might have. To what extent the adverse effects are acceptable, is, however, a question of fact and degree;
- c) but does not include any form of environmental or financial compensation or similar measure, except to the extent that such measure is to be provided on a voluntary basis.

So how does compensation differ? **Compensation** is a lesser standard, describing a situation where some loss occurs, usually because the environmental values at the compensation site is dissimilar to that impacted, or because the loss of environmental values caused by the development is greater than the improvement achieved elsewhere. Compensation is not considered to be mitigation as it does not carry a sense of the lessening of the adverse effect in question.

Specialist Wildlands skills

Multidisciplinary ecological assessments

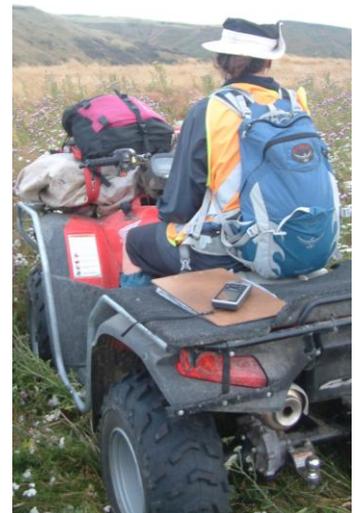
Wildlands has undertaken a diverse range of ecological assessments, involving specialists in vegetation and flora (wetland, alpine, dune, estuarine, forest), bats, freshwater fish, invertebrates, birds (forest, shorebirds, riverbeds, marine, open country), and pest animals and plants. These assessments have been undertaken for farmland, plantation forests, urban areas, mountains, forests, lakes, dunelands, tussockland, and construction sites. Projects have been done for Assessment of Environment Effects, restoration plans, baseline inventories, ecological significance, and many other projects, throughout New Zealand.

Vegetation and Carbon surveys

Wildlands has a range of equipment for assessing vegetation, including: Vertex (for measuring tree heights), compasses, clinometers, measurement tapes, waterproof digital cameras, GPS units with high-sensitivity receivers and in-built topo maps, altimeters, waterproof writing gear, aluminium permolat marker tags, and metal detectors (for locating plot pegs).

Capability for remote field work

Wildlands staff have probably unmatched knowledge, when compared with similar organisations, of New Zealand's back country. Core staff have worked throughout all of New Zealand. In the North Island this includes Tararua Range, Ruahine Range, Kaweka Kaimanawa, Moawhango (Defence Land), inland Wanganui/Matamateonga, Ahimanawa Range, Te Urewera, Otara, Raukumara, Kaimai Mamaku, Coromandel, Hunua, Waitakere, and all of the larger Northland forest tracts. In the South Island, this includes Kahurangi, most of the larger West Coast catchments, Fiordland, Waitutu, the Central Otago Ranges, the Catlins, Blue Mountains, most of the larger East Coast catchments, Molesworth, and the Kaikoura Ranges.



People



Astrid van Meeuwen Dijkgraaf PhD Ecology Senior Ecologist

A highly qualified ecologist with a wealth of experience on large projects such as wind farm and subdivision consent applications; and broad scale monitoring and inventory. Strong leadership skills make Astrid the ideal person to oversee projects while her science background means she can promptly identify and initiate appropriate monitoring and research programmes for your projects.

Her specialties: Survey and monitoring and expert witness at Hearings (birds, bats, lizards, ecology, biodiversity offsets), design of monitoring programmes and data analysis, plant-animal interactions.



Frances Forsyth BSc Geomorphology Ecology Senior Ecologist

An environmental scientist and ecologist with experience on a wide variety of projects Frances has a reputation for well-researched, thoughtful and practical work with reports written in plain English. Strong networking skills and a commitment to a quality product ensure that clients return with requests for further work and recommend her to others.

Her specialties: Ecological restoration, ecological management plans, expert witness, native freshwater fish, and stream management.

OFFICE LOCATIONS

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