



If you're feeling like a good workout and want to enjoy uninterrupted 360° views of Hawke's Bay, then a trek to the top of the four hectare Sugar Loaf Reserve in Taradale could fit the bill. It's a steep climb but certainly worth the effort when you reach the trig at the top. The vistas are superb. The trig is used by surveyors to determine the location of property boundaries in relation to official geodetic data.

You can park your car at the top of Cumberland Rise, climb over a stile and follow the track to the summit which is 127 metres above sea level. You can also access Halliwell's Track from Church Road while another way to the summit is to start at the Lance Leikis Reserve at the top of Tironui Drive and head skyward.



A stunning red robin hedge in Tironui Drive leads you up to Sugar Loaf.



The stunning views take in Taradale and Napier, Mahia Peninsula on a good day, sweep across the Heretaunga Plains from Bayview to Paki Paki, capture the Kaweka and Ruahine Ranges and follow round to Te Mata Peak and Cape Kidnappers.

Pukekura Pā, an outpost pā of Otatara Pā and Hikurangi Pā, was situated at the summit hence the Māori name of Pukekura Hill. George Halliwell bought the hill and surrounding land from Henry Tiffen in the 1880's and the Halliwell family gave the summit and surrounding area to NCC, to be kept as a reserve, in the 1980's.

While in the Taradale area, a very interesting place to visit is the Otatara Pā, sited just off Springfield Road. DOC has worked closely with Ngāti Paarau of Waiohiki Marae to manage and protect the site since 1987 and both the nearby EIT and Heritage New Zealand have supported the work. The pā complex covers 40 hectares.

This is one of the largest and oldest Māori pā sites in Hawke's Bay. It includes an upper pā (Hikurangi) and a lower one (Otatara). You can see the remains of terraces, dwelling sites and food storage pits.

Otatara Pā Historic Reserve is a Category 1 Historic Place. It is a site of significance to iwi throughout New Zealand as it was where Ngāti Kahungunu spread throughout Hawke's Bay and beyond.



There are spectacular views from the pā looking out towards Te Mata Peak, Cape Kidnappers, Napier, Te Mata Peak and beyond.

Information boards at the entrance provide the full story. For more info go to: www.doc.govt.nz



TALENTED TRIO

There are many amazing artists in Hawke's Bay, but three gifted painters whose exquisite work has caught my eye are Nicola Forster from Haumoana, Gillian Receveur from Havelock North and Heather Denison from Central Hawke's Bay. They all paint, or draw, subjects I am interested in and they paint them beautifully.



Nicola is someone who has a prodigious talent, can paint or draw anything and, with no formal training, is completely self-taught. Her studio, which she and husband Jake built recently, has pencil drawings of Bob Marley, Peter Brock and Dave Grohl from Foo Fighters on the walls which are so lifelike, you expect them to blink! Birds, landscapes, people, cars, motorbikes... you name it and Nicola can paint or draw it to perfection. Recently, she has added the art of tattooing to her repertoire.

The busy mother of two young boys modestly describes herself as 'a mum and an artist', in that order, with painting mostly limited to school hours. Her first exhibition was at the Hastings Community Centre in 2010 and, until it closed recently, she exhibited exclusively at the Quay Gallery in Ahuriri.

Her style is photo-realism or hyper-realism (better than the real thing). I was so impressed with her striking painting of the tui on the easel that I bought it, while her stunning painting of a kakapo was sold to Germany. Check out Nicola's art on her Facebook page: [Nicola Forster Fine Art and Tattoos](#).

Surprisingly, Havelock North's Gillian Receveur's career was not in art but in education, including a fifteen-year stint at Iona College teaching Intermediate grade. Once retired, the gifted artist rekindled her love of drawing and graduated from the Art Worker's Guild Hall in London in 2017 with a Society of Botanical Artist's Diploma. Gillian says that she enjoys the discipline and attention to detail which botanical art requires.



Pohutukawa

Incredibly, one illustration can take up to two months and endless patience to complete.



Two of Gillian's drawings were accepted for the World Wide Botanical Art Exhibition in 2018 which was held in Auckland, Wellington and Blenheim and then digitally toured twenty four other countries. Gillian convenes the weekly Thursday art session at Keirunga Gardens where she is on hand to give other keen artists some helpful hints. Her work has sold nationally; she sells a lovely range of cards and also accepts commissions. E-Mail: gandtreceveur@xtra.co.nz

Heather Denison is a really sought after artist, whose works sell as soon as they are exhibited and she is also kept busy with private commissions. No wonder... she has an amazing talent and combines her love of animals and aesthetics in a unique style that is easy to recognise. Like the other two artists I chatted with, she is also very modest about her achievements and says it's been a lifelong passion.



Initially, Heather trained as a graphic designer in her native Zimbabwe, where she also used to enjoy painting a wide variety of wildlife.

Since moving to New Zealand with husband Peter and their two children in 2003, among other accolades, Heather has won The People's Choice Award at the Art-X National Exhibition in 2016 and 2018. Heather says that she loves the creative process and time spent observing and learning about the birds and animals she includes in her paintings. See more of Heather's art at: www.heatherdenison.co.nz and on [Facebook](#).



PICTURE PERFECT

Thanks to Noel O'Riley for his great shot of an Anderson Park resident.

Not everybody's favourite bird, pukeko are very abundant and widespread throughout the country. They are native, with a conservation status of 'Not Threatened'.

A species with an interesting and complex social life, they live in permanent social groups and defend a shared territory that is used for both feeding and breeding.

These groups can have multiple breeding males and females, but all eggs are laid in a single nest and the resulting offspring are raised by all group members.



Although usually less common in drier regions, there seem to be plenty of them here in Hawke's Bay. They are typically found near sheltered fresh or brackish water (e.g. vegetated swamps, streams or lagoons), especially beside open grassy areas and pastures. Their habit of frequenting roadsides and drainage ditches together with poor road sense means they regularly fall victim to passing traffic.

Primarily vegetarian, they also dine out on insects, spiders and earthworms but sometimes take larger prey such as frogs, lizards, fish and nestling birds, like ducklings. More information at: www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz

WELCOME HOME: Napier's Forest and Bird Secretary and Birds NZ member, Lynne Anderson and Angie Denby, convenor of the Ahuriri Estuary Protection Society plus DOC staff, recently organised a *Meet the Godwits* event. The birds migrate here every September from Alaska to avoid the northern hemisphere winter before flying home via the Yellow Sea in March to breed.



They arranged for renowned ornithologist, Brent Stephenson, to speak about the bar-tailed godwit's migratory cycle. A group of over sixty enthusiasts walked down to the Westshore Scrapes with binoculars and telescopes to see about 200 godwits roosted up at high tide - and the outing was so successful that organisers hope it will become an annual event.



MYSTERY BIRD: The duck from the November issue was positively identified as a domestic hybrid. Evidently, all domestic breeds (of which there are many), bar the muscovy, are genetically the same as the mallard, like most dog breeds originate from the wolf. Sometimes domestic ducks escape or are released, they meet a mallard, do what ducks do and this results in all sorts of interesting mixtures!

WHALE WATCH: Having seen the good-news story about the recreational fishermen who saved the life of a young orca which had got its tail fluke tangled up in a craypot line and buoy some 30 kms north of Napier, I checked out Whale Watch Hawkes Bay's Facebook page and watched the video. Great work guys.

The page, which has over 6,500 'Likes' is for celebrating whales, dolphins and ocean happenings in Hawkes Bay waters with the aim of encouraging passive viewing of marine animals from shore. When sightings of whales are reported in the area, they are posted with videos and updates.



Fun Facts: Despite being called killer whales, orcas (*Orcinus orca*) are actually the largest member of the dolphin family. They are apex killers without peers and while they have around 45 teeth to rip up larger prey, they can swallow penguins, seals and small sea-lions whole. They eat around 227 kgs per day, sleep with one eye open (half their brain at a time) and resurface to breathe. In the wild, they can live up to 80 years (one female was 103) and males stay with their mothers for their lifetime.



The huge scale of the landscape and the many projects under way at Ocean Beach can only be grasped after a number of visits, because there are so many different facets to the holistic development of the 2,500 hectare privately-owned sanctuary, it would be impossible to take it all in during one day.



The new nursery is sited in spectacular scenery



On the morning that I went out to gather information about the nurseries, it was a hive of activity with volunteers, mostly retirees, cheerfully toiling in all three sites.

400 manuka seedlings had been donated and the group of willing helpers had already potted them up at short notice and transferred them to the recently built nursery (in front of the trees in the photo) before I arrived.

Chris Newton, who showed me around was a mine of information and is one of the core team of volunteers known as Dad's Army, which is coordinated by retired Hastings GP, Stuart Foote. More about them in a future issue...

Stuart organises the volunteers and has been the driving force, along with Andy and Liz Lowe, behind the planting programme which is transforming the landscape and providing a wonderful, natural habitat and biodiversity.



Stuart Foote

Thinking back to 2013, when planting was being carried out in a rather ad-hoc manner with mixed results, Stuart told me how he thought the way forward was for the sanctuary to start its own nursery. The idea and plants flourished but, like Topsy, they grew and soon there were too many for the space.



So, a second nursery was established and that sufficed for two years until, like its predecessor, there wasn't enough room for the multitude of plants being propagated on site.

Last year, thanks to assistance for materials from the One Billion Trees Fund, a third, state-of-the-art nursery, complete with irrigation and an enormous potting shed was created and is rapidly filling up with plants, with the goal to propagate 70,000 plants annually. I was shown 18,000 kanuka seedlings which volunteers had potted up, while others helped transfer hundreds of cabbage tree plants to where they will be tended until ready to be planted out.



In 2018, with the task getting too much for the volunteers, two staff were employed full-time to run the nursery. Apparently, since they came on board, they have raised the bar significantly and the whole operation runs like clockwork.

As a way to say "Thank You" to the volunteers, Liz and Andy established a huge, raised vegetable garden, built by the Dad's Army team, where volunteers are given a selection of beautiful fresh garden produce to take home and enjoy after their day out.



**Would you like to volunteer your time and energy in this amazing place?
Just e-mail:- volunteer@capecsanctuary.co.nz**

If you know of a conservation champion or something relevant going on in Hawke's Bay, please let me know and I'll be happy to follow it up:- jessicamaxwell2017@gmail.com



Every dog owner thinks they have the best dog and none of them are wrong.

