



ESKDALE PARK is a delightfully unspoilt, 12.5 hectare rural park, an easy 18 km drive from Napier and just past the Eskdale War Memorial Church on SH5 heading towards Taupo. Entry is via Shaw Road.

During 2020, the popular rural idyll came under serious threat of being turned into a mountain bike parking hub with roadways and commercial outlets. This infuriated the local community, as plans for the proposed development had been conducted behind closed doors, solely between Hastings District Council and the Hawke's Bay Mountain Bike Club.



When locals got wind of the audacious, under-the-radar attempt to land grab their much-loved park, they launched a professional opposition to the proposed plan with a petition and formed Friends of Eskdale Park Inc.

Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA) requests revealed the truth. Mayor, Sandra Hazlehurst, Deputy Mayor, Tania Kerr and HDC managers had been secretly plotting the takeover of the park with the HBMTBC since October 2018 - until their partnership and well-advanced plans for a change of use for the public reserve were revealed to shocked locals at a community planting day on 18 July 2020.

It transpired that the HDC/HBMTBC's covert plans were so far advanced that the club had already engaged a bridge builder to erect a \$300,000 swingbridge across the Esk River from the park into the Pan Pac Forest where its MTB tracks are and that the entire project would be finished by March 2021.

Also uncovered was the very disturbing recorded fact that, when the club presented its plans at a closed HDC workshop on 23 June 2020, Mayor Hazlehurst suggested that Council should apply to the Tourism Infrastructure Fund for \$800,000 to pay for HBMTBC infrastructure in the park, including the cost of the swingbridge. Noting that this was nearly four weeks **before** Council initiated any community engagement, it appears that an over-confident mayor thought that their plan was a done deal. When confronted with the e-mail evidence, she refused to explain her underhand behaviour.

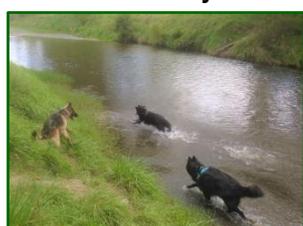
Once the extent of their deceit and the web of lies were exposed, council leaders changed tack and brought forward a Reserve Management Plan initially scheduled for 2030 and this is now underway.

Originally part of Hedgeley Station, the park was gifted by the current landowner's great-grandfather Thomas Clark. Mr Clark was a philanthropist who supported the local community in many ways, including building the pretty church in 1920, a memorial to his son-in-law killed in action in 1918.

Further acreage was added to the park by river accretion and more in 1972 by a local landowner in exchange for the extension of Yule Road.



I visited the park with someone who had enjoyed its peaceful setting beside the Esk River for over seven decades and, at the end of our walk, we both agreed that this lovely reserve might just be one of Hawke's Bay's best-kept secrets and a taonga to be conserved as such.



The park is used extensively by local schools, including neighbour Hukarere Girls' College, for social activities, athletics and sports. It is a favourite destination for dog walkers, who can relax while their pets run off-leash and it is also a well-used location for disability provider Hōhepa Hawke's Bay, whose special-needs clients benefit from exercising in a low-sensory environment.

This is a very family-friendly park – a rare and timeless green space beside a picturesque river - and a slice of rural tranquillity which should be retained as its donor intended.

You can Google **'A History of Eskdale Park'** to read historian Michael Fowler's interesting records.

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Formed in 2018, Biodiversity Hawke's Bay (BHB) is a regional, community-led organisation established to work with, and on behalf of, the community to deliver on the objectives of the [Hawke's Bay Biodiversity Strategy 2015-2050](#).



Put simply, the team of three part-time contractors, Community Facilitator, Dr Belinda Sleight, Administrator, Sarah Reddish and General Manager, Debbie Monahan work to connect, facilitate and enable community action for biodiversity in Hawke's Bay. They are the 'go-to' hub for information, expertise, services, and networks, so that community groups carrying out biodiversity projects are well supported and successful.

The team helps groups with a wide range of tasks from financial and project management to assistance with funding applications, communications and linking with experts in different fields.



An example of a community group that BHB currently supports is the Te Huka Waiohinganga (Esk) River Care Group which has a vision to improve biodiversity and water quality in its local river catchment. BHB plays a part in enabling this community action by holding and managing the group's funds, which frees up the volunteers to focus on doing the hands-on mahi.

Another group to benefit from BHB support is the Pirimai Residents' Association which received help to get their Cross Country Drain biodiversity project underway. Some project planning, introductions to relevant council staff and online promotional support helped the Pirimai Residents 'connect the dots' that led to their first, very successful, community planting day and subsequent HBRC award.

Keen to learn more? Visit Biodiversity Hawke's Bay's website: <https://www.biodiversityhb.org> for information about what is happening in the region and how you can get involved.



SPECIAL COLLECTION: Local good sort, Mary Hannan from Clive, is one of several Special Olympics volunteers who have been collecting aluminium cans and selling them as a fundraiser since 1995.

Once a large wool fadge is full of cans, it is then sold to a local scrap merchant. The environmentally-friendly project has not only kept recyclable rubbish out of landfill and the local wildlife habitat but has also helped raise a total of \$35,000 for Special Olympics.

The local group has some 110 athletes training in swimming, bocce (a ball sport belonging to the boules family), golf, tenpin bowling and football.

Since wine bottle screw tops have been collected, around \$3,000 is now raised annually and the funds go towards the cost of running local tournaments in the above sports.

There are three collection points in Hastings, Clive and Havelock North. Do you know of a business, organisation, school or winery which could collect and donate cans and help Special Olympics? If so, Mary would be delighted to hear from them. Cans and bottle tops can be dropped off at 66 Main Road, Clive (opposite Flowerlands) or e-mail Mary for more details:- maryhannan@slingshot.co.nz



PLANTING PROGRESS: Last year, Hōhepa Hawke's Bay received \$1 million from the Jobs for Nature Fund to expand and protect the wetland habitat that services Te Whanganui-A-Orotu (Ahuriri Estuary) and establish riparian protection zones along the Taipo Stream and the associated waterways.

Laura Mackie, Hōhepa's Funding Support Officer, told me that the three-year project has rocketed off to a successful start, with the wonderful people they support playing a key role in that success. "We have kicked off a work and training programme for ten of our workers and their support people to follow, providing necessary structure and goals every step of the way. Our nurseries in Clive and Haumoana are bursting at the seams with tens of thousands of home-grown plants ready to go as soon as the seasons allow."

Hōhepa has been generously provided access to a large piece of erosion-prone land along Church Road on the outskirts of The Mission's vineyard. This area will be covered in predominantly native plantings, with vital input from local iwi, in order to mitigate the effects of sedimentation into tributaries of the Ahuriri Estuary. This photo shows the site has been cleared and fenced and is well on its way to providing a beautiful blank canvas in which Hōhepa's plants can flourish.



PICTURE PERFECT

Emus in Eskdale Park? Well, not quite - but Catherine Reeves and her husband, who were on their way to the park recently, found this young bird close by, wandering in the middle of busy SH5. They kindly stopped and helped move it to safety in an orchard where it was later collected by its owner. Thanks for the fantastic photo Catherine.

The emu is the second-largest living bird by height, after its ratite relative, the ostrich. It is the largest native bird in Australia and can reach up to 1.9 metres in height.

Emus can travel great distances, and when necessary can sprint at 50 km/hr; they forage for a variety of plants and insects but have been known to go for weeks without eating. They drink infrequently, but take in copious amounts of water when the opportunity arises and their preference is to kneel down to have a drink.

The bird is sufficiently common for it to be rated as a 'least concern' species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Emus are farmed in New Zealand for their low fat meat and also for oil which is used in skincare products.



Fun Fact: An emu has three toes whereas an ostrich has two.



WReNNZ (Wildlife Rehabilitators Network of New Zealand) is New Zealand's only national organisation dedicated to wildlife rehabilitation. The organisation was formed in 2009 with the support of Rosemary Tully, who was the first rehabilitator to run training workshops.

WReNNZ aims to educate and connect wildlife rehabilitators to create better outcomes for wildlife. Community engagement is highly valued as members of the public play an imperative role in preventing harm to wildlife and ensuring those that are sick or injured are able to reach a rehabilitation centre. As a volunteer-run, non-profit organisation, WReNNZ mainly relies on donations and membership subscriptions to fund its activities, with an additional income boost from conferences and workshops. All funds raised go back into the running of the organisation and hosting training opportunities for its members. WReNNZ conferences and workshops facilitate the learning and upskilling of both members and those interested in learning how to care for New Zealand wildlife.



WReNNZ welcomes new members, whether they are actively involved in wildlife rehabilitation or just have a passion for wildlife and would like to support the organisation. More details about WReNNZ - <https://www.wrennz.org.nz/>
WReNNZ Memberships - <https://www.wrennz.org.nz/membership>
Training Opportunities - <https://www.wrennz.org.nz/wildlife-training>



VICTIMS OF WAR: The thoughts and prayers of the world are with the Ukrainian people during their hell on earth experience of war. Everyday people turned into heroes, risking their own lives to rescue humans and animals alike; incredibly brave people staying with dogs and cats in shelters or with wildlife in zoos, with some dedicated carers being killed while protecting their



innocent four-legged friends. Like the people who have been murdered, these animals had names.

Heroism has been everywhere. These two screen shots from the *Daily Mail* are from a story about fifty keepers at Kyiv Zoo who risked all to stay on site and care for 4,000 terrified wildlife.

Humanity and a love for animals still exist. Neighbouring countries have allowed those fleeing to bring their beloved pets in without passports and selfless individuals, vets and rescue organisations are saving as many animals as possible.



AUCKLAND ZOO celebrates its centenary this year, so what better time to visit one of the city's most popular destinations and be part of the zoo's year-long celebrations.

First opened in December 1922, the zoo is a winner of national and international awards and is at the leading-edge of wildlife research, conservation work and innovative zoo design.

Located at Western Springs and run by Auckland Council, it covers 16.35 hectares (40 acres) and is home to around 1,400 individual animals and birds and some 144 species.



The zoo partners with DOC, community groups and other like-minded organisations to help wildlife recovery efforts across New Zealand and overseas and a team of experienced vets and vet nurses operates a modern wildlife hospital. Go to **YouTube** for a clinic tour. Currently, the zoo is undertaking a \$130 million, ten-year development plan which will serve to further transform it into a world-leading modern zoo.



It is building exceptional habitats for all its animals and creating extraordinary experiences for everyone who visits, as well as providing world-class facilities for its staff and future conservationists.

Last December saw the opening of an impressive new boardwalk that snakes (pun intended) across the zoo's lake and links up all the South East Asia habitats. Here, you can walk across the lake, experience being under the orangutan and siamang aerial pathways, where the primates may be swinging above you - and take in the lush new plantings and wetlands.



The zoo has a flock of female ostriches and would love you to come and see them.



Fun Facts about ostriches: World Ostrich Day is celebrated on 2nd February each year. It is the tallest and heaviest bird in the world; a male can be up to 2.75m tall and weigh more than 150kg; it can run at a top speed of 60 – 70 kms an hour on its two toes; female ostriches produce the largest eggs in the world – equivalent to 24 chicken eggs and weighing 1.5 kg; one nest can contain 60 eggs, as a dominant female chooses the nest and others lay their eggs there too; they have the largest eye of any land mammal at 5 cm across but have a very small brain; they have three stomachs but, contrary to rumour, they don't actually bury their heads in the sand!

Find out more about the zoo at:- <https://www.aucklandzoo.co.nz> or check out its Facebook page.



Denise McBride sent me photos of nine different fungi she spotted recently in Palmbrook Reserve while taking Flynn for a walk. Isn't nature amazing? Each little fungus was doing its own thing, attached to a tree stump or emerging from the ground.

While they may look insignificant, fungi play an important role in the ecosystem. Together with bacteria, they are responsible for breaking down organic matter and releasing carbon, oxygen, nitrogen and phosphorus into the soil and atmosphere. Without fungi, nutrients would not cycle through an ecosystem, causing the breakdown of the entire food chain.

Fungi are essential to many household and industrial processes, notably bread-making, wine, beer, certain cheeses and of course antibiotics, such as the accidental discovery of penicillin in 1928.



If you're aware 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



*'A lie is like a cat:
You need to stop it before it gets out the door,
or it's really hard to catch.'*

Charles M. Blow

