



NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2012



Weeds at Grovetown Lagoon

Contributed by Dave Barker

Like many wetlands in New Zealand, Grovetown Lagoon has been used as a dumping ground for decades. Dead cars, dead animals, fridges, TVs, garden waste, etc, have been thrown down banks out of sight.

The garden waste included many varieties of weeds which survived and often thrived. GTL has many rampant weeds which include 2 types of ivy, old man's beard, blackberry, climbing geranium, periwinkle, Japanese honeysuckle, cleavers, tradescantia, convulvulus and mallow. They are mainly the creepers and smotherers.



The weed trees include barberry, plum, hawthorn and two types of willow. Two native plants, poroporo and *muehlenbeckia australis* also tend to take over when we disrupt the dominant willow forests, we also deal to these.

We have been shutting down massive areas of crack willow by drilling and filling them with glyphosate. This is selective work and allows existing natives such as cabbage trees, flax and sedges, which were struggling in the shade beneath the willow forests, to get growing. Any of the above mentioned weed species which are also growing beneath or along the willow

forest edge also get growing.

We have targeted large trees which are a source of seed. These are plums, barberry and hawthorn which the birds spread while eating the fruit berries.

For the creepers and smotherers the knapsack sprayer is a very good tool and allows us to carefully target unwanted plants amongst the plants we want to remain. Using knapsacks also allows us to operate close to adjoining vineyards.

Weed control is not all about applying herbicides. We plan, prepare and plant native plants into areas which have come available due to the increased sunlight after willows have been killed. Standing dead willows are an ideal nursery type place for young trees to grow in. As saplings they cope with falling dead willows. We also collect seed and throw it around appropriate areas to help more native plants germinate, establish and out compete any rival weeds.



The shade house we established at Grovetown School allows us to ongrow over two thousand plants at a time. It also allows the school children more involvement with the project other than a couple of planting days a year.

The kids enjoy working in the shade house as well as planting at the lagoon. Gradually the margins of the lagoon are being transformed from predominantly willow forest to a mixture of native plants.

Willows are a great tree, providing important, very early nectar and pollen in the spring to bee hives.

Queen bees begin laying when this supply first arrives. They help with river bank stability, provide firewood, shade and shelter. Along wetland margins they often dominate and when they lose their leaves in the winter they don't provide any shelter for wildlife, they are a bag of bones.



Trees such as manuka, kanuka, cabbage trees, kowhai, totara, rimu, kapuka, swamp maire, kahikatea, coprosma and also flaxes and sedges all provide year round shelter, hiding and nesting places and also a variety of food for wildlife.

They also help to shade out, suppress and prevent weeds re establishing at the lagoon.

We are planting a lot of these trees and plants at the lagoon with the help of Grovetown school kids and adults and also those who come along and help on working bees.

New Executive Committee visits the lagoon

On March 8 the new Executive Committee embarked on a field visit to look around various areas of the lagoon and surrounding land, and to familiarize themselves with restoration progress. The Committee also used this time on site to discuss potential new efforts.



Most of the Executive Committee were able to attend, with 2 members of Council staff who have had a long association with the lagoon project coming along to assist. Brin Willaman (Council Rivers Section) and Peter Hamill (Council Environmental Science and Monitoring Section) provided background information about past and current vegetation around the lagoon, water levels at different times, restoration plantings, previous land uses, and property ownership.

It was an ideal opportunity for the new Executive Committee to see firsthand how the river, the lagoon, the wetland and the catchment waterways function, to discuss the effects of human intervention in the past, and how to maximise the potential of the natural systems there to contribute toward improved habitat for fish and birds. As a community project, which brings together many different perspectives - mana whenua, the Council, the Department of Conservation, Nelson Marlborough Fish and Game, the Grovetown Community and NZ Landcare Trust - the importance of creating opportunities for everyone to participate in restoration and enhancement was also discussed.



Dates for Your Diary

April

Working Bee Grovetown Lagoon - Sunday 29 at 9.30am

May

Working Group Meeting MDC Committee Room – Tuesday 8 at 3.30pm

Working Bee Grovetown Lagoon - Sunday 27 at 9.30am

June

Working Group Meeting MDC Committee Room – Tuesday 19 at 3.30pm

Working Bee Grovetown Lagoon - Sunday 24 at 9.30am

July

Working Group Meeting MDC Committee Room – Tuesday 31 at 3.30pm

Working Bee Grovetown Lagoon - Sunday 29 at 9.30am

August

Working Bee Grovetown Lagoon - Sunday 26 at 9.30am

If you are interested in coming along to a Working Bee, call the Co-ordinator Jenny Keene on 572-7288, email at jennnymkeene@gmail.com, or just turn up on the day. The group meets on the above dates at the Wairau Rowing Club. After a couple of hours work everyone can enjoy a sausage sizzle and cup of tea.

Join the Fun!



The February Working Bee was a busy morning of weed control and spreading native plant seeds.

The group who worked together on Sunday morning focussed on a specific area where weed control is seen to be a problem at the moment. Weed control work is very necessary at the lagoon, especially at this time of year when growth can be very rapid. New plants can easily be smothered without weeds being controlled in the immediate area, so weed work must be constant so new plants have the best environment after planting. With no weeds around them new plants do not have to compete for sunlight and water when they are just becoming established.

More volunteers are always welcome at the Working Bees, which are held on a regular basis. As well as a chance to get stuck in to the job of the day, it is a chance to catch up with other progress on the project, and enjoy the company of other locals involved.



Working Bees start and 9:30am and finish at 12:30, after a tasty sausage and cuppa to reward you for all your work.

We hope to see you there. You'll enjoy a couple of hours in a beautiful spot, and a range of jobs are available – with full training provided.



Black Swan – Native or Introduced?

With its elegant long neck, the black swan (*Cygnus atratus*) is New Zealand's largest wetland bird, around 1.2 metres long and weighing 5–6 kilograms. There are plenty to be seen out on the lagoon at the moment.



Black swans mainly eat the leaves of aquatic plants, which they reach underwater with their long necks, tail up-ended like a mallard.

They also graze on clover and pasture close to lakes.

About 100 black swans were brought to the South Island from Australia in the 1860s, and the species has traditionally been regarded as introduced.

However, numbers have increased faster than expected, suggesting more birds arrived independently – in which case it should be considered a self-introduced native. Black swans are partially protected, and are hunted in season according to regional limits.

Black swans on Grovetown Lagoon, March 2012

Progress on Draft Development Plan

The Working Group meeting on March 27th saw lots of lively discussion about the Draft Development Plan for Grovetown Lagoon. Participants brought many comments and ideas to the table, and it was a helpful and positive discussion about the future planning of projects at the lagoon. All the discussion at the meeting was documented so all these ideas can be taken to the Executive Committee, who will continue the discussion, and take the next steps. Thank you to everyone who has participated so far, the result will help the restoration project move forward, and hopefully also increase community interest in Grovetown Lagoon.

Grovetown School

Grovetown School has always been closely involved with restoration efforts over the years, and it's great to see how interested and keen the pupils always are. The Working Group has recently provided the school with laminated maps and photos of the lagoon area to use during class time, as they prepare for field work. Many thanks to the Council for printing and laminating these materials for the school. Look out in upcoming newsletters as we feature news about pupils, activities and their involvement at the lagoon.



For more information, or to contribute to the newsletter contact Jenny Keene at 572-7288, or email jennymkeene@gmail.com