



Pest Free News - July



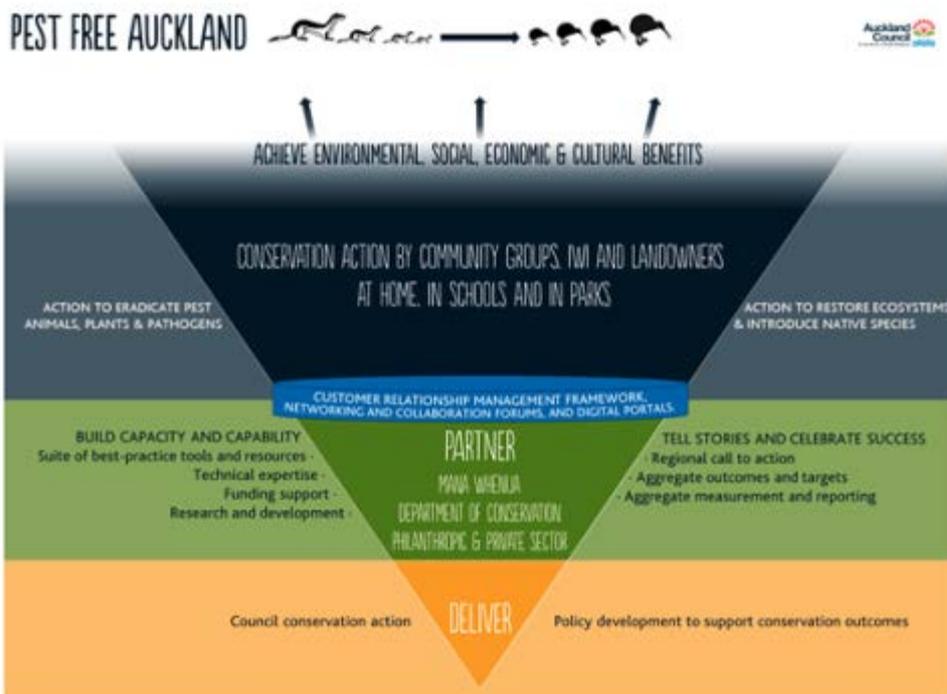
Kia ora

Welcome to the first edition of Pest Free News, a monthly newsletter to keep you informed about regional conservation activity, showcase your projects, share innovation and new techniques, connect you with opportunities for funding, capacity building, networking and collaboration, and track our collective progress. This newsletter builds on, and replaces, the bi-monthly Bio-News and will sit alongside the Auckland Biodiversity [Facebook page](#).

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Pest Free Auckland continues to gain momentum as we focus our efforts to more effectively support community group action, and raise awareness and engagement in conservation issues across the region. As people who attended the festival will know, we have a plan to support the work you do, as shown in the graphic below.



We listened to, and assessed, the invaluable feedback we received from community groups, organisations and landowners following the recent pestival. It is clear from the feedback that the two priority areas for Auckland Council and the Department of Conservation to work on are ‘access to staff and resources’ and ‘lack of knowledge & understanding’.

Access to staff and resources includes sharing knowledge, skills, funding, methodologies and pest eradication best practices. Lack of knowledge & understanding encompasses a lack of awareness about conservation issues and the impacts of pests by the general public, lack of know-how in setting up and sustaining community groups, lack of awareness about active community groups, and personal responsibility and health & safety requirements.

Work that is already underway includes:

- Identifying a key point of contact/s for each community group for easier and integrated access to council. Groups can expect to hear from us soon with details of your key contact.
- Enabling collaboration fora at a regional and local level to support conservation initiatives across Auckland.
- Council in conjunction with the Department of Conservation is working on an integrated approach to supporting community groups grow volunteering opportunities and improved ways of marketing those opportunities to the broader public.
- DOC has established an Auckland based Predator Free 2050 Ranger to support community groups and work closely with Auckland Council and the Predator Free NZ Trust (Kat Lane, email kalane@doc.govt.nz)

We also recognise that a co-designed, co-delivered process is the best solution to achieve a pest free Auckland, and we acknowledge that community groups need to be involved in crafting the process to achieve the best outcomes. We will facilitate the development of the process and we will keep you informed, through this newsletter, about ways to be involved.

Ngā mihi

Brett Butland
Project Director
Pest Free Auckland



[Schools plan to send rats packing](#)

Farm Cove Intermediate School is leading the way in an ambitious project to rid their school grounds and nearby parks and reserves of rats with the aim of making Howick/Pakuranga Auckland's first rat-free suburb.

Image: School student Jasper Jiang receiving his trap at the Festival. 100 traps were handed out along with instructions on how to gather data about rat kills.

[Read more](#)

[Rats the target in Devonport](#)

Devonport residents take action as they embark on a mission to rid their community of the pesky rodent. The venture partners, Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei, community environmentalists and council, are creating war on the pest as Auckland drives towards pest-free status by 2050.

[Read more](#)



Regional Environment & Natural Heritage grants programme

If your community group or organisation has an environmental project on the go or is contemplating undertaking one and need support, Council may be able to help.

We have grants of up to \$40,000 available per project from a pool of \$362,000 to fund projects that protect, develop or restore Auckland's natural heritage.

Applications open on 1 August. To find out if your group meets the criteria and qualifies for a grant [click here](#).

For information on other Council funding sources, advice or assistance with grant applications contact the grants team by emailing [Environmental Funding](#).

Moth plant pod competition a success

Secondary schools in the Albert-Eden local board area recently completed a month long blitz of removing moth plant pods as part of a competition that was supported by the Albert-Eden local board.

A total of 3692 moth plant pods were removed by Y9-Y13 students from five secondary schools during the competition, which ran from Monday 3 April until Sunday 7 May. The competition winner was Kate Moss-Mason from Mount Albert Grammar School who removed a total of 1704 pods.

The initiative was run by the Mount Albert Grammar School's Enviro-Club, led by coordinating teacher Michael Ashby. In 2018 the Enviro-Club hope to expand the competition to run in a number of central local board areas. They are currently looking at ways to gain support to enable them to do this.

For more information contact [Michael Ashby](#).



Be on the lookout for... CHINESE KNOTWEED

Chinese knotweed (*Persicaria chinensis*) is a fast-growing vine that smothers all available surfaces, including plants and trees. Auckland Council is working with the Ministry for Primary Industries to eradicate the weed, and needs to know if you've seen it.

"It's vital that people do not control Chinese knotweed themselves as this may spread it. Call the council and we will arrange control at no cost to the landowner," says Rowena Gilchrist, Biosecurity Advisor Plants, Auckland Council.

"It has pinkish stems, soft and serrated leaves (4-16cm long), with a conspicuous pale v-shaped blotch, and clustered cream/pink flowers. When not climbing over plants or structures, plants grow up to 1m tall."

Chinese knotweed is an Unwanted Organism under MPI and banned from sale, distribution and propagation. Find images on www.mpi.govt.nz.

Report suspected sightings to Auckland Council Biosecurity on 09 301 0101 or email biosecurity@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz with a photo

if possible.

Konini Primary artwork celebrates kauri



The Waitakere Ranges Local Board has kauri dieback disease as a priority and funds the Kauri Dieback Community co-ordinator to help raise awareness and improve compliance to help stop the spread of the deadly disease.

Last term, Konini Primary School was visited by the co-ordinator, aka 'Christine the Kauri Queen'. Many of these local children have kauri trees in their backyards and spend some of their spare time in their bigger backyard that is the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park.

Classes received a kauri dieback presentation and resources and the kauri prevention message was enthusiastically received.

Other schools in the area like Kaurilands and Green Bay Primary have absorbed the kauri dieback prevention message and turned it into art for the education of future school visitors and the wider community.

If your community group, school, or preschool would like a visit or resources of Sterigene from the Kauri Dieback Community Co-ordinator, please email christine.rose@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

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here](#).*



Pack your bags, you're leaving town

Published: 19 July 2017



A bunch of school kids will use a grant from Howick Local Board for traps to send rats packing from their neighbourhood.

Farm Cove Intermediate School wants to send rats packing and now has the tools to do it with a grant from [Howick Local Board](#) enabling it to purchase 170 re-usable rat traps.

Specialist science teacher Lynn Dunbar applied for the grant because she thinks a cluster of school science classes could make a real difference in making Howick/Pakuranga Auckland's first rat-free suburb.

"We had 120 people, including groups like scouts, at a community meeting and now we have five schools ready to go with their trakka tunnels and traps.

"We'll start with ridding schools of rats and then move into reserves and parks, and onto private addresses. The idea is to clear an area and move outwards."

But, there's more to this just trapping rats.

“We want to send the rats packing, but we’re also engaging our children in authentic learning which dovetails into the science curriculum,” says Lynn.

“Howick is an ideal test-ground because it’s on a peninsula and by uploading results into CatchIT, a pest control database at the University of Auckland, we’ll track how well the programme is doing.”

The efforts by the schools are a great example of how local communities can help deliver Auckland Council’s Pest Free Auckland by 2050 strategy.

The project also fits well with the outcome included in the Howick Local Board Plan for a treasured local environment that is preserved for future generations.

Working with other community groups

The local board wants to increase opportunities to partner with schools, community groups and local business on environmental programmes such as tree planting and weed and pest eradication.

Among some of the other environmental initiatives the local board already delivers is an annual project to remove the invasive moth plant and Rhamnus, by setting up disposal bins.

The council’s sustainable schools advisor Cate Jessep says there is growing interest and understanding from local schools about the importance of pest eradication.

“Students, teachers and principals are motivated by imagining how many endemic birds from nearby pest free Islands in Hauraki Gulf will be visiting Howick schools, backyards, parks and reserves.

“Three more Enviroschools want to start trapping rats in term three. If this interest continues over the next two years, culminating in students from all 43 Howick schools being involved in the pilot, and they encouraged five other households in their street to trap rats too, could Howick become Auckland’s first pest free suburb?”

Cate says students love the idea that if they kill pest animals and plants, they can welcome back more birds and lizards into their backyards.

Devonport leads pest-free campaign

Published: 18 July 2017



Rats and rodents are no longer welcome in Devonport.

That's the message from local environmentalists, who are working with Auckland Council to tackle a prevalent pest problem along the peninsula - a stone's throw from pest-free Rangitoto and Motutapu islands.

Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei has kindly donated 1500 rat traps, with the aim to have one in every five Devonport households. Residents and local groups are also seizing the opportunity, with many stepping up their trapping efforts across the peninsula.

"We're driving for a pest-free Auckland by 2050," Ben Paris, Senior Biodiversity Advisor for the council, says. "We're really excited about everyone working towards making Devonport pest-free, as a symbol of what can be achieved when community, iwi and council partner together.

Locals band together

"Devonport peninsula is of strategic importance to Pest-Free Auckland as it is defensible on three sides by water. We can use this opportunity to start a rolling front of trapping and weed control up from Devonport up the peninsula towards Takapuna," Ben says.

"The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board is also working with community volunteers to help coordinate extra protection of endangered shorebird habitat along Shoal and Ngataranga Bays."

Devonport is likely to be one of the first stopover points for birds like kaka and bellbird, travelling from pest-free islands to the mainland. Having areas of habitat, including resident's gardens, which are safe, healthy and connected is important in creating the North-West Wildlink, connecting nature across Auckland from the Hauraki Gulf to the Waitakere Ranges.

Learn more

Visit these websites for more information on how you can get involved:

- [Pest Free Auckland](#)
- [Pest Free Devonport Peninsula](#)
- [Join the Devonport Urban Rat Project](#)
- [North-West Wildlink](#)