



Friends of Flora Newsletter

SPRING EDITION No 133, September 2025



Photo credit – Peter Olorenshaw

In this spring edition

From the Chair
Caring for Kahurangi
The determination of FOF volunteers & Trap boxes
Thank You!
A special connection
Meet the volunteers!
The stamina of early naturalists
Photos from the field

From the Chair -Sandy Toy

The winter has been dominated by the Tasman floods. Most FOF volunteers and supporters have been affected either directly or through helping with the clean-up and support. It's been a tough, tough time.

The loss of access to the Flora is in a different league to such devastation. But we knew that a rodent irruption was underway, fuelled by the abundant beech seed on the forest floor and the conditions were too mild for a winter knock down. We feared that the traps would be clogged up with rats, leaving stoats to feast on vulnerable native birds such as kea chicks which hatch over winter.

As in 2012 and 2013, the last time slips closed the Graham Valley Rd, FOF volunteer commitment stepped up a notch as illustrated in Peter Olorenshaw's story. It is an incredible achievement that virtually the entire trap network of 1,348 stations across 10,000 ha was serviced during August. My thanks to everyone involved in making this happen, it's a huge team effort.

Spending time up the hill is always a privilege, and despite the pressure of short winter days and all those traps to service, we all felt enriched by the sight of kakariki feeding on the ground, icicles sparkling in the sun or a whoio wake-up call. And we were delighted to find that in contrast to the destruction in the Motueka valley below, the forest had done its job, acting as a sponge and slowing the flow of the deluge.

We found no major slips and the creeks flowed clear and fresh. Now is surely the time to recognise the value of Kahurangi and our other National Parks in providing such services and invest in looking after them.

Sadly, one of our camera traps had captured footage of a ferret passing by, just two days after a kiwi had ambled past. And deep in the Grecian valley, Peter Born found two ferrets in traps. It appears that ferrets are an emerging threat that we cannot afford to ignore. We hope that access to the Flora will improve over the coming months but there is no easy fix and 'Business as usual' won't be an option any time soon.

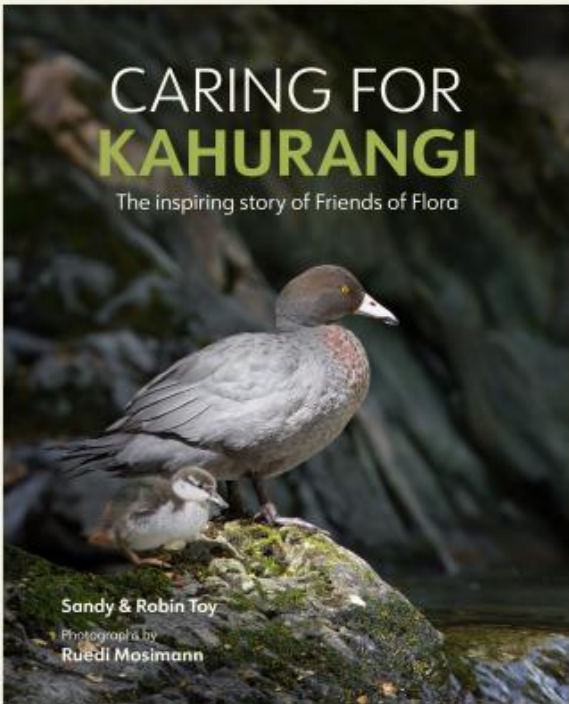
Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers and supporters.

Caring for Kahurangi -Sandy Toy

For the last five years, Robin, Ruedi and I have been working on a book that celebrates the Flora and the work of Friends of Flora. Potton & Burton have crafted our efforts into a stunning book, Caring for Kahurangi. Its launch is almost upon us. We hope that many of you will join us in the Motueka Public Library on 15 October at 6 pm to launch the book and to celebrate the Flora and the mahi of Friends of Flora. Please RSVP to pauline@pottonandburton.co.nz

POTTON & BURTON AND MOTUEKA PUBLIC LIBRARY

invite you to the book launch of



**CARING FOR
KAHURANGI**

The inspiring story of Friends of Flora

Sandy & Robin Toy
Photographs by
Ruedi Mosimann

The story of one of the most successful community-led conservation projects in New Zealand.
Beautifully illustrated with Ruedi Mosimann's photographs.

Wednesday 15 October, 2025

6pm

Motueka Public Library
32 Wallace Street, Motueka

 tasman district
libraries

RSVP: by 10 October 2025
pauline@pottonandburton.co.nz

 pb potton & burton

PLEASE NOTE: The Graham Valley road is closed to the public. We have received special permission for foot access.

The Determination of FOF Volunteers

With no road access from both the Cobb and Graham Valley, the flora traplines have been inaccessible by our normal means. While a group checked some traplines in August after being shuttled to the carpark by some amazing people who have a vehicle on the uphill side of the slip, Peter went in two times by himself, loaded up with trapping and overnight gear. From just below the slip, up to the Flora carpark and the saddle, down to Gridiron and on to Upper junction, all just a week apart.

Peter Olorenshaw has been a member of FOF for 9 years.

This is Peter's story.

On my first trip in I tramped to Salisbury, checking, clearing, and rebaiting part of a trapline that day and staying the night at the Salisbury Lodge. The following, very cold morning, wearing every item of clothing I had, I completed the trapline from yesterday and all the traps up to Balloon Hut then finished the tableland lines. The following day I checked my last line of traps and exited down to upper junction, and out to the vehicle below the slip.

My second trip took me from Upper Junction up and along the Cobb ridge, where I saw and photographed weka tracks in the snow. I proceeded through the tussock, into the alpine vegetation and onto the track junction -left to tablelands, Lake Peel and Balloon hut, right to Cobb valley, servicing traps along the way. Tired, cold, and hungry I went down to Myttons hut for the night, and found the open fireplace was wet from rain coming down the chimney so continued on to Trilobite for the night.

Graham Valley to Trilobite in the Cobb valley in one day by human power while checking two traplines on the way, of course I was tired. With zero wood in the woodshed, and a little poor-quality stuff inside the hut, I managed to find some standing dead wood by headlight and warmed myself up and the living room part of the hut.

The next day I tramped to Bullock Track and up the Cobb ridge again completing a trapline back towards the Power station, on towards Asbestos Cottage (lots of markers and I think perhaps a Chaffey blaze on a tree still visible marking the turnoff down to Asbestos Cottage). Out to Upper junction and back to my vehicle just on dusk. Both trips were pretty magical.

In the 2 trips Peter managed to check & rebait a whopping 366 traps for a total catch of 5 Stoats, 6 Weasels, 51 Rats & 5 Mice.





Some of Peter's photos from his magical time in the Flora

The well-travelled, well-made trap box -Martin Howard

During the recent Motueka Valley flooding many of our neighbours, F4W (Farmers For Whio) trap boxes disappeared down the river. One BT250 box which had been installed to fight the ferrets, washed up on Farewell Spit. It was recovered, sent back to Barry, who cleaned it up and it is now is back out there doing its job!



A Friends of Flora Thank you -Chrissy Kaneen

On behalf of FOF, I would like to pass on a huge thank you to all our sponsors, supporters and volunteers who enable us to work in & for the flora and fauna in an amazing part of New Zealand.

If you have ideas, tips, questions, stories, or photos to share for our next newsletter please feel free to email me @ chrissy2410@gmail.com

A special connection -Rex Hunt

Rex has been with FOF for 11 years.

For many happy years I did Z line, but I am now part of the B & C lines team. This environment became an important part of my connection with the whenua and remains so.

I am fortunate to have my mokopuna attached to this understanding and they have both accompanied me on some of my mahi. Please find some photos of this incredible place. “Walter’s Pool,” is on the side of a ridge near the Lake Peel track. And although it dries up in the summer, it is always a significant stop (my grandson Walter is seven and has my same birthday).

The photos around entering the bush from the Cobb Road is one of my spiritual homes. I always chose to do Z line from the Cobb side as it was always downhill and much much more beautiful, than going up the line and back down it.

Te Rangimarie Rex Hunt



Walter’s Pool



Looking down towards Cobb Reservoir



On the Lake Peel track from the Cobb road entering the bush line looking back down and up the Cobb Valley.

Volunteer in the spotlight

Most of our volunteers are the head down do the work people, but they all deserve to be recognised. We will be introducing one of our volunteers in each newsletter so you can see who the amazing people are behind Friends of Flora. Next up in our spotlight is a lady that nearly everyone I meet knows – **Lesley Hadley**

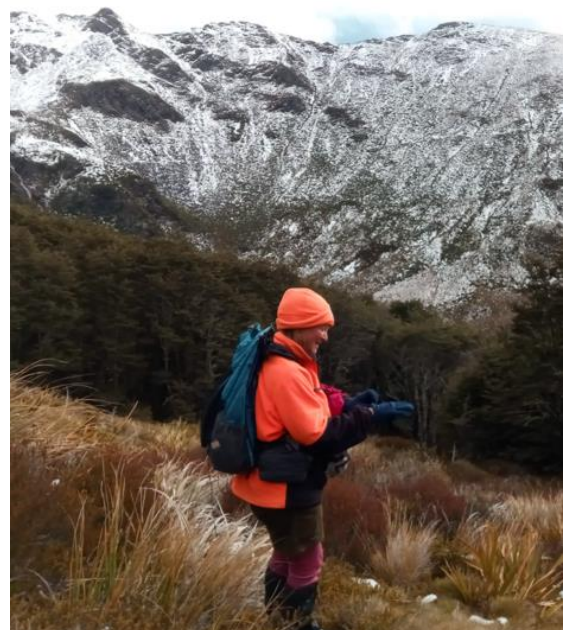
Lesley has been with Friends of Flora for 20 years, and she is a woman with many hats, Committee member, Alpine monitoring project co leader, Trapping subcommittee member, and part of the new volunteer induction group to name just a few.

The reasons why Lesley came to be an enthusiastic FOF volunteer are probably similar to many other ‘vollies’ stories.

- her background tramping
- her spiritual home of “being in the hills.”
- a love of all aspects of Aotearoa’s environment
- an abundance of time! (well, no employment demands)
- an opportunity to “walk the talk.”

Lesley was born and raised in Rotorua on the North Island, then spent many years wandering, working, and doing the classic kiwi OE. In 1978 she returned to Aotearoa. The West Coast always had teaching opportunities for returning travellers, so Te Wai Pounamu became her home island - a most grateful immigrant to The Mainland.

Te Tai Poutini was a great place for an outdoor recreationalist but not so easy for a conservationist – the big issue was ending the felling of native beech forests for timber production. Although Lesley never considered herself to be an effective activist, there were plenty of fine examples of people achieving important conservation goals. Lesley continues to be a supporter of conservation values, organisations, and individuals. Friends of Flora fills this role.



The stamina of early naturalists -Sandy Toy

Cosy in my down sleeping bag at Flora Hut during the August 'trapathon,' I started thinking about how the early naturalists did such fine fieldwork with minimal technology.

Herbert Guthrie-Smith appeared to favour layers: Two pairs of stockings, two vests, pants, knickerbockers, woollen shirt, woollen jersey, flannel coat, leather jacket Burberry, rubber thigh boots, oilskin, woollen cap, sou'-wester over it, barely kept out the devastating wind. This is a description of his choice of clothing for observing a mohua nest in NW Nelson. He built an observation platform in a nearby tree where he could sit aloft serene, refrigerated, cold as stone, content. His 1936 book *Sorrows and Joys of a New Zealand Naturalist* is very entertaining.

George Vernon Hudson visited the Tableland in 1889 and ventured into a few caves where he encountered cave wētā: They are extremely active, and can leap 2ft. or 3ft. at a time; their capture is consequently attended with much difficulty in a dark cave, where one can only look about with a single candle. I much wanted to ascertain the food of the insects, but the caves seem devoid of any kind of fungoid vegetation which I should imagine that they would be likely to eat.



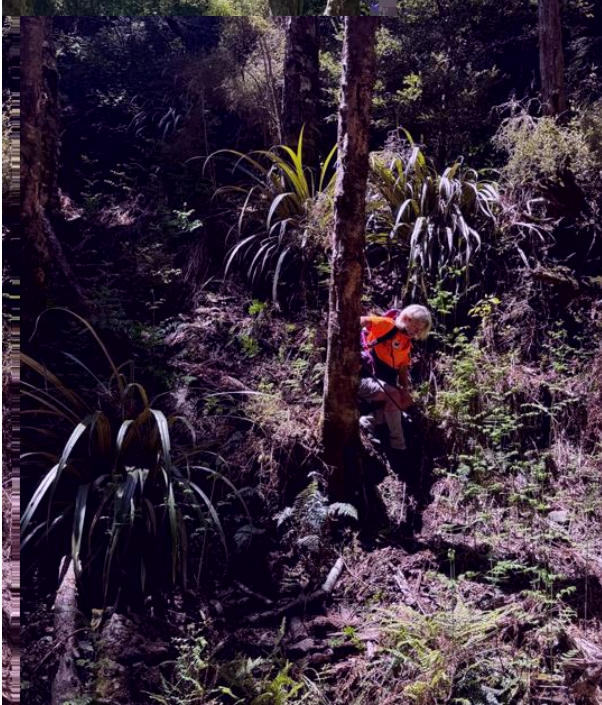
Photo Credit – Ruedi Mosimann

Meanwhile in 1906 pharmacist, William Townson published his catalogue of the plants of the Westport region: I had no conception that it would be such a big undertaking, for thousands of miles had to walk, over hill country and plain, in fair weather and foul. But in looking back upon these years of wandering, when all my senses were on the alert, and my thews and sinews were strung to stand the strain of the longest day's tramp – when the book of nature was no more a sealed book for me, and the trees, plants and birds became my familiar friends – they were undoubtedly the happiest years of my life. (Townson, W. 1907: *On the Vegetation of the Westport District*. *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute* 39: 380–433). Go, those thews and sinews!

Women do not appear to feature much in the early natural history literature. Amy Castle is an exception. She was born near Greymouth but from 1907 was employed by the Dominion Museum in Wellington. Apparently employing female assistants, who were paid less than their male colleagues, was a way of saving money at a time when the museum was under-resourced. The building, at that time behind Parliament Buildings, was damp and poorly ventilated, with no heating. Sounds like Amy might have needed a few layers of clothing. From 1913 she took on responsibility for the entomological collections – a massive task. She also went on collecting expeditions to Mt Taranaki, Kapiti Island, and the Remutaka Range. She lost her job due to public spending cuts in 1931 and moved to England.

Photos from the front line

Lisa Shymkus is one of our newer volunteers and took part in the last December Whio walkthrough survey. This was her first Whio survey and although it took her out of her comfort zone scrambling down hills off track with Martin as her guide, she loved every minute. The December survey found an astonishing 38 Whiolings across the wider Flora area.



The current new normal – an empty Flora carpark with the road closed – Photo Credit Gerald Bruce-Smith

