



**ASB Community Trust**  
*Te Kaitiaki Putea o Tamaki o Tai Tokerau*  
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## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT PUKENUI/WESTERN HILLS FOREST CHARITABLE TRUST (August 2014)**

It has been another busy month in the leafy world of Pukenui Forest. The pest team, under the leadership of Max Hutchings, has had meetings and has been pounding away putting up more bait stations in the Ark/Park part of the forest, with the current aim of achieving 600 hectares practically free of possums and rats. That figure has almost been achieved. We have also received permission from the Health Department to bowl possums shortly along the Western Hills part of the forest. But wait, there's more. I am now rattling my daggs to get sign-off for our Ark/Park poison operation (600 ha) this coming September.

Max and I hosted Dr Kevin Parker around Pukenui Forest recently. Kevin is a respected and highly experienced ecologist, and the Trust may be asking him to prepare a report on our restoration work and on our aspirations for species translocations.

I attended the recent Mangere Stream Catchment Group meeting, and heard about the gradual improvement of the river quality. I was able to report the good news that the Department of Conservation has committed twenty thousand dollars for the total eradication of goats in Pukenui Forest. This is as a result of the hard work by us all over the past six years. The bit of bad news is the massive natural slips we observed in the forest after the recent weather bomb Northland experienced.

I have been approached by Peter Smith of Search and Rescue, and we have arranged to attend their next meeting to see how we can assist each other re people getting lost in Pukenui Forest. They have attended two call-outs in the last six months. Max and Chris Windust attended a First Aid course to fulfil our Health and Safety requirements.

I have asked Chris to look out for a rare native tree, *Mida salicifolia* (NZ sandalwood) or *maire taiki* in Maori. It is a naturally rare parasitic plant that has probably taken a hammering from goats and possums. A Wildland Consultants report by Dr Ray Pierce (2005) has recommended that we try and do some conservation work with this species. I gave a picture of *Mida* to our intrepid trapper Chris, who spends a lot of time in Pukenui. It was an artistic image by the well-known native plant artist Audrey Eagle, and the good news is that Chris has found a tree! We plan to take cuttings and, if possible, collect seeds to start the restoration process.



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Finally, I would like to welcome Julianne Newbold to our volunteer team. Like Jane Norman before

her, Julianne is a Royal Society recipient of a Science fellowship who I am mentoring, and already she has been finding out that Pukenui Forest is no stroll in the park!

*Gerry Brackenbury*

**Community Relations/Advocacy (Part-time)**