



OUR WORLD
with **Gerry Brackenbury**
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What is 1700 hectares in size, co-managed by the Department of Conservation and the Whangarei District Council and contains a species of bat?

Thousands of cars drive past it every day, unaware that **Pukenui Forest** (including the Western Hills) is the largest contiguous area of relatively unmodified native forest within 20 kilometers of Whangarei City.

The **Pukenui Forest**-Ngahere o **Pukenui** Management Plan has recently been developed so that this incredibly important forest, with its attendant wetlands and streams, is protected in perpetuity for the welfare of its wildlife and for people of the Whangarei District and beyond, to care for and enjoy.

The **Pukenui Forest** Trust has been set up, including representatives from Tangata Whenua, NorthTec, the WDC, **Forest** and Bird, tramping clubs and others.

Their task is to make the Management Plan work, which is a mammoth task, considering the size of the forest.

Pukenui Forest encompasses the Whau Valley catchment, the Barge Park showgrounds, Maunu Scenic Reserve and a large block of land, administered by DoC and known as **Pukenui Forest** Conservation Park.

Under Section 41 of the Reserves Act 1977, the purpose of a management plan is to "provide for, and ensure the use, enjoyment, maintenance, protection and preservation of the reserve".

It is one thing to go for a gentle tramp through the forest, noting possum damage and how open the understorey is with just a few ferns _ and quite another to grasp the native nettle and begin the process of protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural values of this forest.

This mammoth task can only be achieved with your help.

One of the trust's visions or goals is "the restoration inspires the community and visitors to undertake their own action".

In other words, for **Pukenui Forest** to reach its full potential of a place booming with native wildlife and filled with the cries of happy trampers and students, it must get buy-in and a little sweat from the community.

It is the trustees job, through good and intelligent management, to get the ball rolling and lead by example. And this has already started.

For all that God gave us goats, She shouldn't have made them so randy.

Around the world, goats have devastated habitats from the Galapagos to our own Three Kings Islands.

And **Pukenui Forest** is no different.

The good news is that professional hunters contracted by DoC have removed 230 goats that infested the forest.

Thanks must go to the Northland Regional Council for their advice and financial assistance.

The next critters to go in the pest strategy are possums, once a population analysis has been completed.

Known as an RTC (red tape compulsory) _ no, seriously, it stands for "residual trap catch" _ NorthTec has an excellent hunting training module, and the students will probably do the RTC.

Issues to come out of a possum knock-down are improved water-catchment quality and iwi/hapu support.

While the hunters were dealing to the goats, it soon became apparent that wasps were everywhere, and 70 nests were destroyed at the same time.

Other tasks for the trustees to consider are archeological site surveys, native bird and bat surveys, tracks and signs and a scientific survey.

The well-written **Pukenui** Management Plan is 108 pages long and covers just about everything from Treaty of Waitangi issues to dogs, horses, neighbours and weeds.

I have barely touched on the natural values of **Pukenui Forest**, that once hosted many kiwi and parrots.

Suffice it to say that when trustee Denis Hewitt told me that he had recently seen a tom-tit in the forest, I knew the long journey ahead would all be worthwhile.