

## Kaituna Wetland, River and Maketu 2/9/13

By Maurice Boniface



Monday was a lovely fine day. I went to Wesley and went with Ken again. Phillip and Isabel had Terry and Paul with them. We went to Truman Lane and picked up John and Maureen. We drove down Pah Road to the Kaituna Wetlands. It is ten years since we have been here. We put on our gear, climbed through the gate and looked at the signs. One of them said that the Reserve is now closed for shooting. The duck shooting season is only during May and June. The other one said that there are walking and kayaking trails. The kayakers would have to be fit because some of the waterways had quite a bit of weed in them. The track went along between two canal type waterways and the grass on it was fairly long and pretty wet with dew. There were all sorts of grasses and a lot of Cabbage Trees all around the Reserve. We came to a sign pointing to the right which said Long Loop Track, but we kept straight ahead. The waterways opened out into wider expanses every now and then. One of them had several posts with tubes of straw on top of them – what they were for we didn't know, maybe birds nest in them or something. We came to a tall poll with a solar panel on it and a post in the water. Terry said that it was a flood warning device which would send a signal when the water started to rise. We

turned off the track we were on and went down one to the right. There was some vegetation in the water. Last time Dave told us that a pink one was an aquatic fern. There was quite a bit of Pampas Grass, which looks a bit like Toe-toe, all around. It is a weed and some of it had been sprayed. The track takes another right turn while the kayak one keeps straight ahead. We came across some Buttercups and Maureen put one under our chins – if it reflects on your chin then you like butter! Looking over to an island in the middle of the water we could see a Maimai, a small structure where you hide to shoot at Ducks. They must get to it by kayak! Shortly we came across another one just off the track we were on. It had a green door and someone opened it and we had a look inside. It was made of corrugated iron and was covered by a creeper. It had a wooden floor and seat plus a bench etc. and a large open window area looking out onto the water. I will attach a photo of the view up the lake. On the right you can see a grove of Cabbage Trees and some Pampas Grass but no Ducks! We saw very few today. Paul picked an empty shell case off the floor. He pointed out an empty bird's nest up on the roof beam. We carried on and saw several more Maimais on various parts of the waterways. We came to a small lake

covered in a bright pink algae or something and then another one with a bright green one – the Pink and Green Lakes! We came back to the cars then drove to the Kaituna Cut. The Kaituna River's Estuary always used to be flooding so quite a few years ago the Council put a shortcut to the sea and diverted the water through there. It solved the flooding problem but now the Maoris say that it has spoiled the Estuary and the shellfish etc they used to collect so they are looking at putting more water along Estuary. We found a nice spot near the end where we could have morning tea so I rang Mum and replied to Laurie's text. There were lots people and their vehicles along here because it is the whitebaiting season and they were lined up along the bank of the Cut with their nets. There was a cool wind blowing so we sat down behind some boulders. We were now right on the coast with Motiti Island right out in front of us and the Mount further along to the north and the Maketu Peninsular to the south. There was a short concrete pier with a notice on it saying that boats have to be careful coming across the bar so people fishing have to pull in their lines while boats are coming in.

Ken said that we would now walk along the beach towards Maketu then come back along a track beside the Estu-

ary. We set off along the beach and found it was on quite an angle but the sand was quite firm. The tide was fairly well out so there was plenty of room. We saw several Oyster Catchers on the beach who remind me of little old men as they run along the sand. There were sand dunes off to our right with the Estuary on the other side of them. When we were about three quarters of the way along the beach Ken said that he thought we should not go right along but go over to the Estuary now because we were running short of time. We went over the top of the sand dunes and there was Maram and Tussock grasses all around with waterways over further. We came to a trap with a notice on it 'Warning! Stoat/Rat kill trap inside this box. Keep hands and fingers out. Keep children away.' Further along we came to a low zig zag 'fence' made of plastic sheets with the same sort of traps as the other one at all of the points. There was also a notice to say poison bait was laid for the control of rabbits. Next we saw some trees whose branches were all growing at an angle caused by the wind. We got back to the cars and drove to Maketu and had lunch at a very nice spot by the mouth of the river. Some of them sat on the steps of a Centennial Memorial 1840-1940 and included the arrival of the Maori Waka in 1340 which landed here. Phillip took a photo of me 'firing' a very old cannon dating from the Maori Wars! I rang Mum and sent my texts.

We shifted the cars a bit further along and then Terry, Phillip, John and Paul set off along the coast between the sea and the cliffs around the peninsular which goes over an area covered in rocks. We have done this walk several times before but Ken said that he and I would walk up the road over to Newdicks Beach and meet the others there. Isabel and Maureen said that they would come with us. The others set off along the coast and we started along Town Point Road which goes up a hill to the Newdicks Road. We walked alongside the Maketu Beach Holi-

day Park where they have motels, chalets, flats, cabins, and tent and camper-van sites. The road had no footpath but there was a mown grass strip along it. There were some nice homes along here but up on a rise with a lovely view were several containers which were being used as houses and sheds. We passed a chap mowing lawns on a ride-on mower. We passed a concrete fence with paua shells embedded in it as decorations. We came to the top of the hill with lovely views up and down the coast. I rang Terry to see how far they had got and he said they were a hundred metres from the point. We had a sit on a seat here and looked at the notice which said that Newdicks Beach was private and that you have to pay a fee to go down the road by vehicle but walkers were free. We met a chap with a dog and a child in a stroller and another couple with a dog. We got down onto the beach. We crossed a little stream and saw a couple of 'animals' made out of driftwood. We saw a dead Stingray lying on the beach and there was a young couple surf casting but hadn't caught anything yet. The couple with the dog pointed to the rocks at the end of the cliffs further along the beach where you could just make out a Seal moving on one of the rocks on the horizon. It wasn't long before we saw a figure come around the end of the cliff near the Seal. Then another three appeared so they weren't far away. Paul was the first one to reach us and he said he saw about three Seals on the rocks. When the others arrived Terry said that they were Sea Lions, which are related to the Fur Seals. We all turned around and went back the way we had come. When we got back to the cars we took off our boots and had afternoon tea on some steps looking along the coast.