

vociferous - in recent years over the place of native plants and exotic species in the city structure.

Significant long-term changes are in progress in Christchurch. For some years the Council has promoted re-planting of the city's many waterways with species (chiefly native) that will start to bring biodiversity back into the urban environment and will also familiarise people with the amenity value of many of our native species. The Styx River in the northern part of the city is a specific large-scale restoration project and includes a 'Living Laboratory' study site. This waterways initiative has involved a number of people including Ken Couling, Robert Watts and Christine Heremaia of the City Council and Colin Meurk of Landcare Research. A current issue is maintenance and the challenge of integrating stream restoration into adjacent residential and parkland areas.

The City Council is in the process of working through and deciding on a comprehensive city-wide Biodiversity Strategy. The strategy will build on a booklet on the city's biodiversity produced several years ago and draw attention to the wide range of indigenous species that still survive within the city. Species like Canterbury mudfish and the endangered duck New Zealand scaup are starting to thrive again within the city boundaries. It also draws on work done by Colin Meurk and Di Lucas who have delineated broad soil-vegetation-landform zones across Christchurch, related to the pre-European landscape.

The Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation at Lincoln University and the City Council have an Urban Ecology

Working Group that brings together council staff and researchers. The Canterbury Regional Council is also represented on this group. One of the outputs has been a rapidly expanding research agenda that can be used as the basis for collaborative research bids and prioritising issues and problems in Christchurch, especially in the light of current city expansion, both for industry and housing. This has resulted in subcontracted collaboration in a Foundation for Research Science and Technology (FRST) project led by Landcare Research that will carry out biological and landscape research in the southwest of the city over the next three years. A PhD project by Helen Greenup (recent recipient of the inaugural Zonta Branz Award) will focus on finding which New Zealand plant species are best suited to grow in built-up areas.

The Christchurch Botanic Gardens is undergoing a major review and capital investment programme over the coming five years (stimulated by its 150th anniversary being in 2013). This includes plans to develop a collaborative research programme, which will facilitate research in the urban environment. The Botanic Gardens and adjacent Hagley Park provide a marvellous natural laboratory of green space, and at over 250 hectares is reputed to be one of the largest continuous areas of city centre parkland in the world. Currently we are looking at ways that this can be used for experimental work and biodiversity trials through collaborative arrangements with research organizations.

So, the future for urban ecology looks good in Christchurch, so that in years to come alongside its image as the garden city can also be the accolade of 'ecological city'.

Update from the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network

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The New Zealand Plant Conservation Network's annual conference and AGM is to be held at the Auckland Regional Botanic Gardens in Manurewa, Auckland on Saturday 7th August 2004. Workshops to be run during the day include:

- An introduction to the threatened plants of Auckland
- An introduction to New Zealand fungi
- A threatened plant translocation workshop
- A tour of the threatened plant garden at the Auckland Botanic Gardens

The New Zealand Plant Conservation Network has continued to grow at a steady pace with new members joining each week (including territorial authorities, private individuals, government agencies and botanists). Use of

the Network's website has doubled in the last six months with over 2400 visitors now accessing the site each month. Funding has been received for the next three years to improve and add further information to the website about New Zealand's threatened plant life. A series of new features have been added recently to the site including a search engine for threatened plants as well as a plant conservation bibliographic search engine. For more information see www.nzpcn.org.nz

A regular electronic E-newsletter is now sent out to members each month with information about plant conservation events, news and stories. For more information about the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network email info@nzpcn.org.nz or write to P.P. Box 16-102, Wellington, New Zealand.



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