



Colin Ryder at Island Bay in 2010, with Taputeranga in the background. He chaired the coalition that finally saw the area designated a marine reserve in 2009. © Stuff

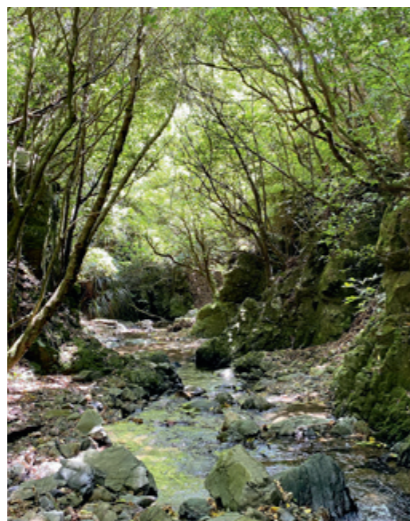
CAPITAL LEGACY OF A 'CAN-DO' CONSERVATIONIST

COLIN RYDER Born 1 November 1946, died 9 March 2021 • Forest & Bird Old Blue

The loss of the driving force behind a string of successful landscape restoration projects for more than 40 years has been felt deeply by Forest & Bird and many other conservation groups across Greater Wellington.

Many of us are still coming to terms with losing our mate Colin Ryder. A man who gave so much of his energy selflessly for the progressive delivery of countless projects to restore and protect nature across Wellington and the world. While he was a belligerent bloke, he had a knack of bringing the right people together and always worked as a part of a team. Everything he did was for a good reason. A few obituaries have been written covering his many exploits and achievements, including the historic eradication of mice from Mana Island, off the Porirua Coast, in the 1980s and the establishment of Wellington's Taputeranga Marine Reserve in 2009, after a 17-year campaign. So I thought I would share my personal stories with you about Colin – because, if there was anything Colin didn't like, it was people wasting their time repeating things!

Colin first became interested in conservation through Forest & Bird in the 1980s and went on to become chairperson of the Wellington Branch. He also served on the National Executive. He was involved in a myriad of other conservation trusts and community groups in and around the capital. I first came to know Colin in the early 2000s when I was working as



Colin took on the challenge of buying and fencing Long Gully Bush in the late 1990s so the habitat could regenerate. Today, it is the largest area of privately owned protected land in Wellington. © Sarah Wilcox

the Wellington representative of the QEII National Trust. Colin was the Treasurer of the Wellington Natural Heritage Trust, a position that he still effectively held when he passed away this year. Driven by Colin, a number of Wellingtonians had formed a trust in the late 1990s to acquire Long Gully Bush Reserve – 50ha of regenerating native forest strategically located between Zealandia and Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park.

Colin managed to find an anonymous donor to enable the acquisition and refused to let their identity be known, even to his closest allies. He took this secret to the grave. The block was riddled with goats and pigs, and wasn't regenerating at all. I quickly learnt that Colin was up for a challenge, and we worked together to source funds to fence out the goats and pigs. We quickly managed to spend more on the fence than the purchase price, despite getting experienced fencers in from the Wairarapa! With council support, possum and predator control was established, and, while funds for this have come and gone over the years, Colin managed to source

enough funding to keep the fence maintained and sustain the predator control. Over the years, the block has grown by working with neighbours, and now it is the largest area of privately owned protected land in Wellington City.

In another huge win for nature, Colin became an instrumental player in the acquisition of the Baring Head block at the entrance to Wellington Harbour, in 2010, working under the auspices of the Wellington Natural Heritage Trust. Time was short, and we quickly devised a strategy for the campaign. Early on, local botanist Chris Horne, my mother Lindsay, and I arranged an undercover visit to the block with the estate agent to scope out the property and get a handle on its natural values. We had to pretend to be a family so as to not give the game away! Behind the scenes, Colin worked skilfully to protect this area using his established networks to drum up support and managed to secure commitments from Hutt City Council, Nature Heritage Fund, Department of Conservation, and Greater Wellington Regional Council, who now manage the land as part of East Harbour Regional Park.

The purchase wasn't easy, because there were as many detractors within these organisations as there were outside them. At one point, we thought there may have been foreign ownership interest in this stunning bit of coastal land, so we contacted the Overseas Investment Office to

make sure all the work securing the purchase was worthwhile. To make the job more difficult, and despite all the major commitments from agencies, there was still \$200k shortfall a few days before the close of the tender. If we couldn't raise the funds in time, we had a couple of contingences lined up, including loans and a plan to subdivide some of the grazed flat areas for lifestyle blocks, but this was far from ideal. Colin worked deftly to find an anonymous donor and, at the eleventh hour, managed to finalise the deal. He sent out an email to all trustees to say it was sorted, promptly turned off his phone, and took his wife to the movies! Colin stayed closely involved with the protection and restoration of Baring Head. Together with others he met as a part of the campaign to protect the area, he formed the Friends of Baring Head Trust. This group continues to raise funds and deliver restoration projects in the area.

Colin didn't just raise money for ground-breaking conservation projects. Over the past four decades, from Mana Island to Baring Head, he was dedicated to carrying out frontline conservation work, including checking predator traps, planting, weeding, painting sheds, and many other tasks. This is what Colin loved, getting people involved in conservation and then working together to achieve great outcomes for nature. Rest in peace my friend, you have earned it.

By Tim Park



Colin on his beloved Mana Island in 1994. It was his "shoot the moon" idea to eradicate five million mice from the island located off the Kāpiti Coast. © Forest & Bird Archives



SAD NEWS FROM ROTOKARE

We share the sad news from Rotokare Scenic Reserve of the sudden and unexpected death of their sanctuary manager Simon Collins. He had a massive heart attack in March while mountain biking. Simon was a passionate and awesome leader in conservation, at Rotokare and beyond. Simon's work was inspiring, and he supported me through the years of my time at Bushy Park Tarapurui – sometimes on the end of the phone, and other times turning up with a bunch of Rotokare volunteers to help us on-site. The Bushy Park Trust has visited Rotokare in recent years and heard Simon share their many stories and achievements. He was a good friend to many of us at Forest & Bird, especially our Taranaki branches. This is a huge loss, and we send our love and support to Rotokare and to Simon's family. You can find out more about Simon's life and legacy at www.rotokare.org.nz.

By Mandy Brooke