PEGASUS U3A GEOLOGY/BOTANY GROUP September 2025 Newsletter

Hi Everyone,

I'm starting with the sad news that John Hayman has died. It's only a few weeks since he resigned from the committee because he had untreatable lung cancer. It's probably a blessing that he didn't linger on as he was such an active man. We shall miss his input into our group as he was a source of inspiration and ideas.

Last month we had two very good sessions with the excellent talk on weeds and the outing to the Lapidary Club in Waltham Road. Yesterday's talk by Andrew Crossland was also good value despite the late start.

Our next outing is to Bottle Lake where a ranger will show us round. Most of us remember that all the earthquake debris was dumped there, so it will be interesting to see how that has fared. The outing after that is to Rusty Acre Garden at Mandeville; another self-drive one. I've been feeling guilty that we haven't had any bus trips this year but finally in November we do have one. It's to castle Hill and Kate Pedley will be coming with us to talk about the geology. Not being sure how many people will want to come Gill has tentatively booked two buses of different seating capacity. If you weren't at the meeting to sign up and do want to come, please send me an email. After the next meeting I shall open it up to all our U3A members and to Opawaho, so book in soon please to ensure your seat. Friends and relations are welcome to come with you. The cost will be $25 to Geo/Bot members and probably $30 to everyone else. We will subsidise our own people.

Latest talk

1st September 2025 **Bird Conservation** Andrew Crossland

Andrew is a City Council Park Ranger, whose responsibilities include bird and wildlife monitoring across the city. He and other Council staff have helped improve outcomes for local birds by protecting and enhancing existing habitats and establishing new ones. Some of these new wetland areas include Beacon Street Wetland, Charlesworth Reserve, Travis Wetland and the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve. He has been surveying birds for 40 years.

There are 263 species of birds in the Canterbury area. This is the highest in NZ because here is a boundary between North and South Island birds, so we get both sorts. Some local birds are 1100 spoonbills, 1% of the world population, 8000 scaup, ¼ of the world population, Australian crested grebe 25%, and 75% of all the spotted shags.

Many sea birds are now feeding in the estuary where there are 20,000 waders and terns. We are on the migration route, a moulting area and overwintering place. Migrating birds fly enormous distances, with godwits doing the round trip from Alaska to NZ, to China and back to Alaska, a total of 22,000 km.

Many bird species are declining, with 8 threatened, 3 endangered and 8 vulnerable. The council are required to keep biodiversity to help our birds. The main threats to them are loss of habitats, poor conditions of the habitats, avian disease, disturbance by cars, bikes and dogs, and predators such as rats, ferrets and wild cats.

Andrew's job is to manage the space for migratory birds, keeping birds and people separate, but giving access and viewing sites for us to enjoy them. Volunteers are a help in planting and weeding and pest control. Meanwhile Andrew continues to gather data for an 80-year resource. When he left us, he was off to count wrybills at Ellesmere Lake.

Recent Trip

20th August

Lapidary Club

The Canterbury Mineral and Lapidary Club was founded in November 1964 and is based at 110 Waltham Road. The aims of the club are to bring people together who are interested in geology, mineralogy and lapidary work in all its aspects. We were welcomed by Val and Don, enthusiastic members with a wide knowledge of rocks and fossils. They gave us time to wander along the display cabinets which lined one wall of the hall. The original building was destroyed in the earthquake when many of the rocks were damaged and some stolen.

A huge agate from Mt Somers

When we were seated, they chatted about some of the rocks. Greenstone is a general term used for pounamu, nephrite and serpentine, of which there are forty types. Greenstone is very hard, which allows a fine glossy surface when polished. The cabinets have a large collection of agates as Canterbury is rich in them. There are hundreds of different variations of colour and design. Another cabinet had petrified wood. There are twenty ways of petrification, silica, calcification, iron sulphide, carbonization…

We were surprised to hear that 80% of minerals are only visible under a microscope. They have a section of the club dedicated to this study. Some of their specimens are quite rare.

They took us into the workshop where machines for cutting and polishing were kept. The club runs tours to collect rocks and then processes them. They said that when looking for rocks we shouldn't hunt only for something specific but be open to anything as that way interesting finds happen.

They recommended the book The Reed Guide to New Zealand Geology by Jocelyn Thornton and the websites http://www.peterthornton.com and https://www.mindat.com which is useful for identifying rocks.

Future dates

Wed 17th September Bottle Lake trip.

10 am. Meet at the car park by the landfill weighbridge on Landfill Avenue or carpool at McCormacks Bay Road at 9.30.

Mon 6th Oct Corals, Paul Brody

Wed 5th Oct Rusty Acre garden $15 entry fee

Mon 3rd Nov Toxic Plants, Prof Ian Shaw

Wed 19th Nov Bus trip to Castle Hill with Kate Pedley

Our bank account is U3A Botany/Geology 03 1599 0139475 000.

You can contact me on 384 3475 or by email patwandpate@gmail.com