

WELLINGTON UPDATE

Amber Bill and Tim Park

Wellington is a City of hills, harbor and bush. The City has an impressive network of reserves within close proximity to both the Central Business District (CBD) and surrounding suburbs, has been carrying out intensive biodiversity restoration and protection work for more than a decade, and has a massive and ever increasing number of citizen volunteers who plant, control pests, build tracks and trails, and advocate for the City’s nature. As such, the City is proud to be recognized as a Biophilic City.

If we consider biophilic urbanism as a journey, not an end point, then it is important as a City that we continue to explore new initiatives to grow our natural capital and citizen engagement. Our recent work in this space includes policy, advocacy and research.

With regard to policy, in 2015 we prepared a new [Biodiversity Strategy: Our Natural Capital](#). This includes prioritized actions around protection, restoration, connecting and mainstreaming biodiversity, and research to inform our work

over the next 10 years. We have also developed new measures drawn from the internationally recognized City Biodiversity Index.

Work has started on the Code of Practice which will enable implementation of our [Water Sensitive Urban Design Guide](#), through our District Plan, which governs rules for the development of the City.

Community involvement in the City’s biodiversity continues to expand for us, and our vision of a ‘pest free’ Wellington continues to become more realistic. We have recently employed a new biosecurity liaison officer whose role is to support and train community groups participating in pest animal control. We have also focused on bringing more biodiversity engagement initiatives right into the centre of the CBD - this kicked off last year with a popup forest during Parks Week ([we also gave away free locally eco-sourced plants](#)) and has been followed by other initiatives such as a [‘box of birds’ container in town and community garden planters](#).



Wellington Harbour Inlet
Photo Credit: Tim Beatley

We ran [#Peakbragging](#) (a play on the Scottish ‘Peak Bagging’) to encourage people into our Open Spaces, which was really popular, and our GIS team have been busy building [storymaps](#) to provide better online story telling about Wellington’s parks.

[Living Walls](#) are now becoming a more regular feature of our Urban Design projects and we continue to have successes with nationally threatened bird species, initially released into Zealandia, our fenced ecosanctuary, spilling out and breeding in reserves throughout the City. We brought one of these into people’s homes this nesting season with the

[“Kaka cam.”](#) And a new research group to better understand Kaka behaviour in the City has been established, facilitated by our Urban Ecology team. We have also again hosted one of the largest national citizen science projects - [the Great Kereru Count](#) in partnership with WWF-NZ.

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Diver with the Seastar
Photo Credit: Mark Coote