# **Christchurch District Plan Site of Ecological Significance**

# **Site Significance Statement**

Site name: Riccarton Bush

Site number: SES/LP/4

Physical address of site: 16 Kahu Road

Riccarton

Christchurch 8440

# **Summary of Significance:**

The Riccarton Bush SES is significant because it is the last remaining representative remnant of podocarp forest on the low Canterbury Plains and supports a range of native bush birds, threatened plant species and threatened and/or uncommon invertebrates.

# **Site Map**



#### Additional Site Information

**Central point NZTM:** N5180472, E1567304

Area of SES (ha): 7.58 ha

### **Site Description**

Riccarton Bush is the last remaining remnant of podocarp forest in the low Canterbury Plains Ecological District. It is dominated by New Zealand's tallest growing tree, kahikatea (Dacrycarpus dacrydioides) and an association of 82 other extant indigenous conifers and flowering plants as recorded by Molloy (1995) and listed in Appendix 1. Kahikatea forests once occurred throughout much of New Zealand's lowland areas, however are now represented by approximately only 2% of their former extent (Norton 1995). Reduced from its former (1849) extent of approximately 22 hectares (Murray 1924), the forested area of Riccarton bush now covers approximately 7.58 hectares and is estimated to be in excess of 600 years old.

Riccarton Bush is of importance in terms of its invertebrate fauna, with Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) having been collected and studied here since 1859; longer than any other site in New Zealand. Twenty-seven moth species have their type locality as Riccarton Bush. The site boasts up to 260 species of Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies), of which 196 have been confirmed present in recent years. Five of these moth species are listed as endangered (see assessment sections below), and two species (*Grypotheca pertinax* and *Cateristes eustyla*) are endemic to Riccarton Bush and have not been found to occur elsewhere.

In recent years the forest area has been encircled with a pest proof fence that consists of a fine mesh cladding, a partially buried skirt and a pest proof capping to prevent exotic mammalian pest animals from moving through, under and/or over the fence respectively. As a result of this, and the potential for the eradication of mammalian pests from within the fenced area, managers of the forest reserve are able to maintain a pest-free mainland island environment where natural forest processes are able to occur without threat of predation (including seed predation) or herbivory from introduced pest animal species.

#### **Extent of Site of Ecological Significance**

The extent of the SES for Riccarton Bush covers the areal extent of the drip-line of the remnant indigenous forest area, and extends to include the pest proof fence and associated clear-zone/setback which is measured to 4.5 m out from the alignment of the physical structure of the fence. The inclusion of this clear zone/setback within the SES is important as it forms an essential component of the functioning and integrity of the fence as the appropriate management and maintenance of this zone prevents domestic, community and feral cats from leaping the fence and entering the protected refuge.

**Note:** The SES for Riccarton Bush does not include the exotic woodland amenity area and grounds of Riccarton House.

### **Assessment Summary**

Riccarton Bush has been evaluated against the criteria for determining significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitat of indigenous fauna listed in Appendix 3 of the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (Environment Canterbury, 2013) (see below), referring also to the Wildland Consultants (2013) Guidelines and advice from the relevant Specialist Ecologist Groups. Under these criteria the site is ecologically significant because it meets the representativeness (criteria 1 & 2), rarity/distinctiveness (criteria 3, 4 & 6), diversity and pattern (criterion 7) and ecological context criteria (criterion 10).

### **Assessment against Significance Criteria**

### Representativeness

1. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that is representative, typical or characteristic of the natural diversity of the relevant ecological district. This can include degraded examples where they are some of the best remaining examples of their type, or represent all that remains of indigenous biodiversity in some areas.

The site is significant under this criterion.

Riccarton Bush contains more than 70 species of native podocarp and flowering plant (Appendix 1; Molloy 1995) and is the best remaining representative example of tall native forest in the Low Plains Ecological District.

For birds, this site supports a high proportion of the "an association of indigenous species that is distinctive" and of "restricted occurrence". Specifically, this site supports a high proportion of the "Lowland Plains Native Bush Species assemblage" for Christchurch (see appendix 2).

2. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that is a relatively large example of its type within the relevant ecological district.

The site is significant under this criterion.

Riccarton Bush (7.58 ha) is one of only two examples of tall native forest in the Low Plains Ecological District, with the second patch (Arowhenua Bush) occurring at Temuka (Harding 2009). Riccarton Bush is therefore a relatively large example of its type within the Low Plains Ecological District.

### Rarity/Distinctiveness

3. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that has been reduced to less than 20% of its former extent in the Region, or relevant land environment, ecological district, or freshwater environment.

The site is significant under this criterion.

Podocarp-hardwood forests have been substantially depleted throughout the Canterbury Region and are a high priority for protection (Harding 2009). Kahikatea forest is estimated to have covered between 1 and 5% of the extent of Low Plains Ecological District, and is now represented by less than 20% of its former extent. Riccarton Bush therefore represents indigenous vegetation AND habitat of indigenous fauna that has been reduced to less than 20% of its former extent in the Low Plains Ecological District (an acutely threatened land environment). The Threatened Environment Classification reports that less that 10% of indigenous cover remains in the Low Plains Ecological District (See Walker et al. 2007; Lloyd et al. 2013).

4. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that supports an indigenous species that is threatened, at risk, or uncommon, nationally or within the relevant ecological district.

The site is significant under this criterion.

Of the moth fauna known from Riccarton Bush, one is listed as Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable, three are listed as At Risk, and two are listed as Data Deficient (Stringer *et al.* 2012):

Zelleria sphentota

 Cateristes eustyla
 Gymnobathra ambigua
 Asaphotes obarata
 Tatosoma agrionata
 Circoxena ditrocha

 (At Risk/Declining)

 (Nationally Vulnerable)
 (At Risk/Declining)
 (At Risk/Naturally Uncommon)

In addition, the site contains four species of moth that are considered uncommon in the Low Canterbury Plains Ecological District (B. Patrick pers. comm. 2014), including:

- Grypotheca pertinax
- Mallobathra metrosema
- Reductoderces microphanes

The site hosts the At Risk (Relict) moth *Hierodoris torrida* listed by Hoare (2005), and the At Risk (Relict) six-eyed spider (*Periegops suterii*) (C. Vink Pers. Comm. 2014).

Among the plant species, Riccarton Bush hosts the At Risk/Declining white mistletoe (*Tuperia antarctica*), and the Nationally Threatened/Vulnerable NZ wind grass (*Anemanthele lessoniana*).

Thus in total, two Threatened, seven At Risk, two Data Deficient, and three locally uncommon taxa are known from Riccarton Bush.

5. The site contains indigenous vegetation or an indigenous species at its distribution limit within Canterbury Region or nationally.

The site is significant under this criterion.

The Site supports a population of the moth *Stigmella kaimanua* which occurs at its northern limit in Riccarton Bush (B. Patrick perrs. comm. 2014).

The site contains hinau (*Elaeocarpus dentatus*) which reaches its southern distributional limit in Riccarton Bush (Lloyd *et al.* 2013)

6. Indigenous vegetation or an association of indigenous species that is distinctive, of restricted occurrence, occurs within an originally rare ecosystem, or has developed as a result of an unusual environmental factor or combinations of factors.

The site is significant under this criterion.

Site contains three species of moth that are endemic to, and therefore restricted to Riccarton Bush (Muir *et al.* 1995), including:

- Grypotheca pertinax
- Mallobathra metrosema
- Reductoderces microphanes

### **Diversity and Pattern**

7. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that contains a high diversity of indigenous ecosystem or habitat types, indigenous taxa, or has changes in species composition reflecting the existence of diverse natural features or ecological gradients.

The site is significant under this criterion.

Twenty-seven of the 39 families (approximately 70%) of Lepidoptera (moths & butterflies) occurring in New Zealand have been recorded from Riccarton Bush. These include 260 species of which 190 species were recorded by Muir *et al.* (1995), who also identified that 35 species not re-recorded during their survey were likely to still be present as they were known to occur in the immediate surroundings.

Riccarton Bush contains more than 70 species of extant indigenous conifer and flowering plants (Appendix 1; Molloy 1995).

### **Ecological Context**

8. Vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that provides or contributes to an important ecological linkage or network, or provides an important buffering function.

Site does not meet this criteria

9. A wetland which plays an important hydrological, biological or ecological role in the natural functioning of a river or coastal system.

Site does not meet this criteria

10. Indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna that provides important habitat (including refuges from predation, or key habitat for feeding, breeding, or resting) for indigenous species, either seasonally or permanently.

The site is significant under this criterion.

Effective pest proof fencing is in place around the perimeter of the forested area and provides an effective refuge from mammalian predation for indigenous fauna and flora.

Furthermore, this site provides important feeding, breeding and nesting habitat for indigenous forest birds, both seasonally (e.g. Shining Cuckoo and Kereru) and permanently for other forest bird species; see Appendix 3.

# Site Management

# **Existing Protection Status**

Protected under the Riccarton Bush Act 1914

Threats and risks	Management recommendations	Support package options					
Pest plant incursion	<ul> <li>Monitor pest plant infestations and implement control as required.</li> <li>Assess new pest plant incursions and implement control as required</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Information packages for neighbouring properties (e.g. 'Plant Me Instead')</li> </ul>					
Animal Pest Incursion	<ul> <li>Monitoring of possible animal pest incursions and trapping as necessary.</li> <li>Regular inspection and maintenance of pest proof fence</li> <li>Maintenance of effective clear-zone around perimeter of pest proof fence</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Provide advice and guidance on pest animal monitoring</li> <li>Supply traps and related training as necessary</li> </ul>					
Erosion of genetic purity through hybridisation with non-local native plant species	<ul> <li>Ensure any plant introductions to Riccarton Bush are sourced from the nearest natural plant populations</li> <li>Monitoring and eradication of problem non-local native plant species.</li> </ul>	Information packages for neighbouring properties (e.g. 'Plant Me Instead')					
Biodiversity Loss	Reintroduction of appropriate locally extinct plant and animal species based on historic records	• N/A					
• Fire	Consider limiting entry to reserve during times of drought	• N/A					

#### References

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- Walker, S., Cieraad, E., Grove, P., Lloyd, K., Myers, S., and Porteous, T. (2007) Guide to users of the threatened environment classification. Landcare Research, Lincoln, New Zealand.

**Assessment completed by:** Dr Antony B. Shadbolt **Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014

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Statement updated by: XXX Date: XXX

Please note this statement is based on information available at the time of writing. Due to the dynamic nature of ecosystems, future reassessment of the site may be necessary to reflect any changes in knowledge of its ecological significance.

### **Appendix 1: Conifers & Flowering Plants**

List of native conifers and flowering plants recorded from Riccarton Bush. Species in gray type indicate species that were recorded from previous surveys (See Molly 1995) of Riccarton Bush, but were not recorded by Molloy in 1993, and are no longer thought to be present. Species marked with an asterisk (\*) are non-local native species.

### TREES & SHRUBS

BOTANICAL NAME COMMON NAME(S)

Alectryon excelsus titoki/NZ ash

Aristotelia serrata wineberry/makomako
Carmichaelia robusta NZ broom/makaka

Carpodetus serratusmarbleleaf/putaputawetaCoprosma areolatathin leaved coprosmaCoprosma crassifoliastiff-stemmed coprosma

Coprosma lucida karamu
Coprosma propinqua mingimingi
Coprosma robusta karamu

Coprosma rotundifolia round leaved coprosma

Coprosma propinqua x C. robusta hybrid coprosma cabbage tree/ti kouka

Coriaria sementosa tutu
Corokia cotoneaster korokio

Dacrycarpus dacrydioides kahikatea/white pine

Elaeocarpus dentatus hinau
Elaeocarpus hookerianus pokaka
Elaeocarpus dentatus x E. hookerianus hybrid

Fuchsia excorticata tree fuchsia/kotukutuku

Fuchsia excorticate x F. perscandens hybrid fuchsia
Griselinia littoralis broadleaf/kapuka

Hebe salicifolia koromiko
Hoheria angustifolia narrow leaved lacebark/houhere

Hoheria sextylosa\* North Island lacebark

Hoheria angustifolia x H. sextylosa\* hybrid laceberk

Kunzea ericoides white tea tree

Lophomyrtus obcordata

Melicope simplex
Melicytus micranthus

NZ myrtle/rohutu
poataniwha
manakura/shrubby whiteywood

Melicytus micranthusmanakura/shrubby whiteyMelicytus ramiflorusmahoe/whiteywood

Melicytus micranthus x M. ramiflorus hybrid whiteywood

Myoporum laetum ngaio

Myrsine australisred matipoNeomyrtus pedunculataNZ myrtle/rohutu

Pennantia corymbosakaikomakoPittosporum eugenioideslemonwood/tarataPittosporum tenuifoliumkohuhu/black matipo

Plagianthus regius ribbonwood/manatu

Podocarpus totara

Prumnopitys ferruginea Prumnopitys taxifolia Pseudopanax arboreus Pseudopanax crassifolius Pseudowintera colorata

Schefflera digitata

Solanum laciniatum Sophora microphylla Streblus heterophyllus

Urtica ferox

CLIMBING PLANTS

BOTANICAL NAME

Calystegia turguriorum

Clematis paniculata Clematis fosteri

Fuchsia perscandens

Metrosideros diffusa

Muehlenbeckia australis Muehlenbackia complexa

Muehlenbeckia australis x M. complexa

Parsonsia capsularis

Parsonsia heterophylla Passiflora tetandra Ripogonum scandens

Rubus australis

Rubus schmidelioides Rubus squarrosus

Rubus australis x R. squarrosus Rubus australis x R. schmidelioides Rubus schmidelioides x R. squarrosus

**MISTLETOES** 

BOTANICAL NAME Ileostylus micranthus Korthalsella lindsayi

Tuperia antarctica

MONOCOT HERBS

BOTANICAL NAME

Anemanthele lessoniana

Astelia fragrans Astelia grandia Carax coriacea

Carex flagemifera Carex lambertiana

Carex raoulii

totara

miro/brown pine

matai/black pine five-finger/pauhou lancewood/horoeka pepper tree/horopito

seven-finger/pate

poroporo

South Island kowhai milk tree/turepo

tree nettle/ongaonga

COMMON NAME(S)

NZ bindweed/powhiwhi

NZ clematis/puawananga

yellow clematis

climbing fuchsia

white rata/climbing rata

pohuehue/Maori vine shrubby puhuehue hybrid pohue

NZ jasmine/kaiwhiria

NZ jasmine/kaiwhiria Kohia/NZ passion flower

supplejack/kareao bush lawyer/taramoa bush lawyer/taramoa bush lawyer/taramoa

hybrid lawyer hybrid lawyer hybrid lawyer

COMMON NAME(S) common mistletoe dwarf mistletoe

white mistletoe/pirita

COMMON NAME(S)

hunangamoho/NZ wind grass

bush flax/kahaka bush flax/kahaka sedge/rautahi

shining sedge/mania

sedge sedge Carex secta Carex solandri Carex virgata

Carex lambertiana x C. solandri

Cortaderia richardii Gahnia xanthocarpa Hierochloe redolens Juncus distegus Juncus gregiflorus

Juncus greginorus Libertia ixioides

Liuzula picta var. limosa

Luzula rufa

Microlaena avenacea Phormium tenax

Poa imbecilla

Rytidosperma gracile Uncinia leptostachya

Uncinia uncinata

### **DICOT HERBS**

BOTANICAL NAME Acaena anserinifolia Cardamine debilis

Epilobium billardieraenum Epilobium komarovianum Epilobium macropus

Epilobium nummulariifolium Epilobium pallidiflorum Epilobium pictum

Epilobium rotundifolium

Geranium solenderi Gnaphalium involucratum

Hydrocotyle heteromeria Hydrocotyle moschata

Microseris scapigera Oxalis corniculata

Nertera depressa
Parietaria debilis

Pseudognaphalium luteoalbum

Ranunculus glabifolius Rananculus reflexus Rumex flexuosus Scenecio minimus Stellaria parviflora

Urtica incisa

Wahlenbergia gracilis

sedge/purei sedge

swamp sedge

sedge toetoe

giant gahnia holy grass/karetu

rush rush

NZ iris/mikoikoi

woodrush woodrush

bush rice grass NZ flax/harakeke

weak poa

danthonia/bush danthonia hooked sedge/matau

hooked sedge/kamu

COMMON NAME(s) piripiri/bidibidi NZ cress/panapana

willowherb willowherb willowherb willowherb willowherb willowherb

cranesbill/cut-leaved geranium

creeping cudweed

NZ waxweed/hydrocotyle hydrocotyle/marsh pennywart

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creeping oxalis

nertera NZ pellitory

common cudweed

NZ buttercup NZ buttercup Maori dock/nuna

fireweed NZ stichwort

dwarf nettle/forest nettle

NZ harebell

### **Appendix 2: Bush Bird Assemblage**

Comparison of bush bird species recorded at Riccarton Bush compared to the Lowland Plains Native bush Bird Species Assemblage for Christchurch Species recorded at the study site are marked with a tick  $(\checkmark)$ ; species considered to be breeding on site are underlined; species not recorded at site but part of the above assemblage are shown in grey font (Crossland 2007).

# **COMMON RESIDENT**

✓ Grey Warbler Gerygone igata

✓ <u>Silvereye</u> Zosterops lateralis lateralis

#### **LESS COMMON BREEDING RESIDENT**

✓ <u>Bellbird</u> Anthornis melanura melanura
 ✓ <u>South Island Fantail</u> Rhipidura fuliginosa fuliginosa

# SCARCE BREEDING RESIDENT

✓ New Zealand Kingfisher Halcyon sancta vagans

✓ New Zealand Pigeon Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae

### Seasonal/Regular Visitor

✓ <u>Shining Cuckoo</u> Chrysococcyx lucidus lucidus
 ✓ Welcome Swallow Hirundo neoxena neoxena

### **IRREGULAR VISITOR**

Tui Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae

✓ South Island Tomtit Petroica macrocephala macrocephala

# **Appendix 3: Bush Bird Monitoring**

Bush Bird Monitoring Programme Riccarton Bush (TRIM 13/187988)

Table 1: Bush bird monitoring at Riccarton Bush 2004 – 2005; Observers A. Crossland & J, Moore. Transect length 810 m

Species	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Welcome Swallow	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Grey Warbler	2	3	6	5	9	6	7	4	2	3	3	7
Fantail	10	6	6	5	4	4	3	3	6	4	10	12
Silvereye	35	10	54	14	41	18	37	44	37	11	65	43
Bellbird	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Kereru	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Chaffinch	2	1	4	3	10	7	8	4	6	8	5	1
Greenfinch	3	0	0	0	2	1	1	17	3	4	6	2
Goldfinch	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	0
Redpoll	3	4	3	0	1	3	1	16	6	7	10	0
House Sparrow	2	0	0	1	2	1	6	0	0	0	0	0
Dunnock	5	5	5	6	11	7	8	9	5	8	9	7
Blackbird	17	17	15	10	11	17	15	18	10	7	9	16
Song Thrush	3	5	8	7	2	3	7	2	3	3	4	2
Starling	13	78	12	0	2	2	12	4	0	0	0	4
Magpie	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2: Bush bird monitoring at Riccarton Bush 2008 – 2009; Observers A. Crossland & J, Moore. Transect length 810 m.

Species	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Grey Warbler	5	9	9	12	14	8	7	8	10	5	3	5
Fantail	7	9	13	6	4	5	9	7	13	12	5	10
Silvereye	56	18	21	26	47	32	41	35	29	29	59	20
Bellbird	2	2	2	2	1	2	4	2	2	1	2	1
Kereru	3	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	0
Rock Pigeon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Chaffinch	1	1	4	2	1	6	8	5	6	3	3	2
Greenfinch	0	0	1	0	0	4	14	19	23	28	20	4
Goldfinch	0	1	0	1	2	2	2	1	6	5	0	1
Redpoll	1	0	0	0	0	2	25	19	30	26	7	0
House Sparrow	2	3	1	3	4	4	0	1	2	2	4	0
Dunnock	2	8	7	6	5	5	4	6	9	7	4	3
Blackbird	16	16	16	12	9	13	9	10	0	12	14	4
Song Thrush	3	5	5	2	1	3	7	8	0	4	3	2
Starling	51	1	3	9	11	0	3	2	1	1	9	5
Magpie	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
California Quail	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0