



We've had
the snow...

So what are you waiting for, get up and go

PAGE

36

Stuff of dreams

Taranaki family gives the flick to
power companies

PAGE

9



SATURDAY,
MAY 23, 2009

TARANAKI DAILY NEWS

ESTABLISHED IN NEW PLYMOUTH 1857

WWW.TARANAKIDAILYNEWS.CO.NZ

\$1.10 MONDAY TO FRIDAY \$1.40 SATURDAY
SUBSCRIPTION RATES AVAILABLE

Council rates rise warning

Big increases 'unsustainable'

By RYAN EVANS
ryan.evans@tnl.co.nz

A FORMER high-flying businessman is warning New Plymouth District councillors that further rates rises are becoming unsustainable.

Average ratepayers face a 10.7 per cent rise this year, prompting former Shell Todd Oil Services chief executive Chris Beath to speak out and urge the council to "pause for a cup of tea".

He is calling for the New Plymouth District Council to keep rates rises below the rate of inflation, which in the year to the end of March was 3 per cent.

He says the council should cut staff levels, freeze its spending, and keep borrowing to 2008 levels.

He also calls for the council to redistribute the rates burden so the commercial and retail sectors pay more and domestic ratepayers pay less.

"I believe that ratepayers cannot continue to support plans that show increases above the Consumer Price Index in this economic climate," he says in a submission to the 2009-19 draft

Long Term Council Community Plan.

In the past four years, rates have risen between 5.7 per cent and 9.13 per cent every year.

Mr Beath, now retired in New Plymouth, says he has been a strong supporter of the council and the work it has done in the past but "it is time for NPDC to pause for 'a cup of tea'".

"Rates have increased by two to three times over the rate of inflation for a number of years and the rate increase proposed for next year for my property (a median value property) is 10.2 per cent.

allowed for in the plan and that will mean a larger proportion of the population will struggle to support increases over the CPI."

Mr Beath's submission is echoed by Greypower's chief council watchdog Keith Allum, who says as pensioner numbers rise the average incomes of households in the district will drop.

Mr Allum says the council should adopt a more conservative fiscal policy and be subject to an external review of structure and staffing levels.

Mr Beath says having reviewed and audited the performance of many organisations, that if outside influence and governance is not applied to an organisation, it continues to grow staff numbers and costs.

Organisations do not tend to impose restraints on themselves, just as turkeys don't vote for an early Christmas.

— Chris Beath

"This is three times higher than the CPI and the long term plan indicates that increases in costs are forecast to continue above the CPI.

"It is a basis of this submission that this is not sustainable.

"I note that rates have already increased 25 per cent in the past two years."

Statistics NZ figures show the number of dependants supported by working people will grow by 57 per cent in the next 12 years, his submission says.

"This change in demographics does not seem to have been

"Organisations do not tend to impose restraints on themselves, just as turkeys don't vote for an early Christmas.

"Unfortunately this unconstrained increase in staff and costs over the last few years seems to be the case with the NPDC."

Fulltime employees at the council have increased from 349 in 2002 to 515 this year.

The council will begin hearing oral submissions to the LTCCP on June 1 and both Mr Beath and Mr Allum will be making presentations.

Hunt for missing millions leads police to Hong Kong

THE hunt for a missing couple who fled the country with millions of dollars after being mistakenly given a \$10m overdraft has spread to Hong Kong.

Police and Interpol believe the runaway millionaires are in the southeast Asian hub. They are making inquiries with Hong Kong police, and officials in Beijing, to track down the couple and the missing cash, a police spokesman said yesterday.

Neither the bank nor police have confirmed the identities of the fugitives, but they are believed to be Rotorua BP service station owner Leo Gao and his Kiwi girlfriend Kara Young, who have not been seen since his BP service station in Otonga,

Rotorua, went into receivership on May 8. A third person, Huan Di Zhang, a director of Heights Services Ltd, which owned the service station, is also missing.

The couple are reportedly travelling with Ms Young's seven-year-old daughter, Lena, and her sister, Aroha.

Ms Young's mother, Blenheim hair salon owner Suzanne Hurring, who was interviewed by police yesterday, said the escapee was completely out of character for her daughter.

"She's beautiful and she's honest... she's never pinched a thing in her life."

Her daughter had phoned her once since flitting the country, "but I hung up on her because

I knew what she had done".

She described her daughter's partner as "an OK guy" and very hard working. "But if you want to know, I'd really like to wring his blimmin' neck."

Ms Hurring hoped her daughter would come back soon.

"I've got to keep my spirits up and get my girls home. Never mind Leo, he can stay there."

TVNZ broadcast footage of Gao's white ute abandoned at Auckland International Airport.

Westpac confirmed the couple had applied for a \$100,000 overdraft but were wrongly given a \$10m limit thanks to a data entry error on May 5.

● Continued Page 3

'I'm basically a relic from the past'



Call of the wild: Veteran possum trapper Bruce Leckie, 67, received an environmental award this week for 60 years of possum hunting. He calls himself a "relic from the past."

Photo: CAMERON BURNELL

Wild bushman is rewarded

Learnt trade from old time hunters

By KIRSTY JOHNSTON
kirsty.johnston@tnl.co.nz

BRUCE LECKIE has spent the past 60 years out in the wild, living it rough and hunting for a living.

The veteran possum trapper has done nearly everything in pest control, working on bush and farms across New Zealand and contracting to "just about anybody".

He can tell you of the days when the hills were crawling with rabbits, the bush was grey and dead from possums and when men were rough, tough and wild.

"I'm basically a relic from the past," he says.

"That was another world, back then."

Sitting on the lone chair surrounded by possum traps in his "camp", a derelict house

somewhere near Oaonui, Bruce, 67, looks every bit the bushman.

He wears layers of wool, a weather-beaten hat and the thoughtful expression of someone who has spent a lot of time alone.

But he is also a man who paints in oils, has a wife and three children and lists da Vinci amongst his early heroes.

Dunedin-born, Bruce began hunting and selling possum skins at seven years old.

He learnt his trade from old, old rabbit skinnners, who worked every day from 4am to midnight to make a living.

"I had to toughen up then because those men were pretty tough," Bruce says.

In those days, what Bruce calls the trapping heydays of the 1950s, hunters went after huge skin tallies, trapping up to 400 animals a day.

"Some people will be aghast at that figure but that's the truth. I've seen pads [possum tracks] up to a metre wide, used by hundreds of possums in one

night. In the fifties the number reached epidemic proportions."

The worst places, he said, were on the west coast of the South Island, which was also the wildest country to work in. "I've had lots and lots of close calls. Snow storms, flooded rivers, I've been right next to avalanches."

He would sleep outside, on a piece of plastic or sometimes just the ground.

Occasionally, Bruce wouldn't see another person for a month at a time, and it got to the stage where he didn't want to see anyone, either.

"That's when I decided to change that path. I had the good sense to see that wasn't... normal."

These days, Bruce contracts for the Taranaki Regional Council and only traps during the week.

He keeps his camp deliberately sparse so he can't get too comfortable, so he'll go back to his wife in Wanganui each week.

And despite the thousands and thousands of possums he has killed, Bruce says he actually likes animals.

"That's the trouble. People cannot understand the paradox. But I do feel as though the distance between myself and the animal has lessened. I get no joy at all out of killing."

Bruce was given an environmental award recently for his contribution to biodiversity and agriculture in Taranaki, but he doesn't see himself as an environmentalist.

"I guess my contribution has been in the forests. Their [the possums'] numbers have been so high they were in a state of near collapse. Just literally collapsing. I've probably rescued many areas of bush."

Instead, Bruce prefers to describe himself as just one puzzle piece in a bigger picture.

"I don't put myself on a pedestal. You must remember you're just part of a whole."

● Green awards: Page 5

www.taranakidailynews.co.nz

Got a classified? Phone (06) 759 0802

Got a story? Phone (06) 759 0824

Index

- Puzzles
- Business
- Weekend television

2

● Magazine: Weekend

7

● Weather

8

● World

9-12

● Letters, editorial, opinion

12

● Sport & racing

13

● Classified index

14

● Weather

● New Plymouth 13°C

Cloudy, some late rain

● Hawera 13°C

Periods of rain



THE HEAT PUMP SHOP

Hit a Six Year Warranty with Fujitsu and Taranaki Refrigeration

- 100% Taranaki owned and operated
- Reliable, honest, reputable sales and service
- We have been selling and installing Fujitsu heat pumps for 13 years

- Fujitsu's preferred accredited installers
- 6 Year Warranty on all parts and service
- A model to suit any home or business

Beat the price
increase - buy NOW
at 2008 prices



NEW ZEALAND'S FAVOURITE AIR

Ring us
today for
a free
quote!

TaranakiRefrigeration
Air conditioning and Commercial
Refrigeration Specialists

Phone 759 0092 • Fax 759 0013

0800 SO COOL • 0800 76 2665

Office/Showroom 136 Gill Street, New Plymouth



Saturday



Bliss: Gabi Steindl stayed an extra week in Taranaki because the waves are so good.

Being a spokeswoman for one of the world's newest sports has its advantages, Helen Harvey finds.

Austrian Gabi Steindl, 33, is living the dream. She travels around the world kitesurfing and writes about it. For the past two months, her job has been to travel through New Zealand, the last two weeks in Taranaki, where she parked her campervan at Wavehaven in Oakura.

The newest trend is wave kitesurfing, which is why she is in Taranaki.

"Because Taranaki is known for its waves," she says.

Kite-surfing started in Hawaii and France in the mid-1990s, but the sport has really taken off in the 21st century, she says.

"They call it a revolution on the water. It is the fastest growing water sport."

It is also taking off in New Zealand, especially around Auckland, Raglan, Mt Maunganui and down on the southern lakes. It is huge in Christchurch, not so much in Taranaki.

There are different disciplines in kite-surfing, including freestyle, where the surfer does tricks and various kinds of manoeuvres. And it can be done just as well on a lake.

"You don't need waves, just need water and wind. On lakes, in totally flat water, you can jump up to about 15 metres high. You just use your kite like a catapult and you generate pressure against the water and then catapult yourself out of the water. So on flat lakes, you can use your kite to pull yourself into the wave. Instead of



Gabi Steindl heads next to Papua New Guinea.

It's the perfect combination of many sports, like snowboarding and surfing, she says. It's like flying.

"Jumping is definitely one of the best things."

Second is the new trend of wave kite-surfing.

"It's pretty much like surfing: you stay on the wave and do your manoeuvres. Just like surfers, you ride the wave. You use your kite to pull yourself into the wave. Instead of

paddling or using a jetski, you use your kite."

Since wave kite-surfing became a trend, numbers involved in the sport have increased. It's a great alternative to surfing, she says.

"Surfers hate wind, but when you learn to kite, it doesn't bother you anymore. It's the same the other way around. If you are only kiting, a couple of days without wind, then you go crazy."

It's amazing, she says. "It's an addiction, beautiful freedom. You don't need any machine, just the wind. And you go out there and you cruise around and the flying thing – you don't have that in any other water sport."

Kite-surfing is pretty easy to learn, she says. Anyone who has had experience in any of the board sports – snow or surfing or skateboarding – or if they are sporty, will be up on the board in three days. But, like any sport, it takes time to get good at it. And it is an expensive hobby – comparable to wind-surfing. Quite a lot of equipment is needed, such as a harness, board, kite . . .

And surfers need more than one kite and one board. But Ms Steindl says prices are coming down and kites are getting better, so surfers don't need as many sizes.

The size of the kite one uses depends on how strong the wind is; for stronger wind, you need a smaller kite. Lighter wind requires a bigger kite to generate enough power, she says.

Kite-surfing is a good, full-body workout. Kite surfers are hooked into a harness, so it looks heavier on the upper body than it actually is, she says. "You steer the kite, you don't hang on to it, so it takes pressure off the upper body."

Ms Steindl is what is called a free rider. She doesn't enter competitions anymore, but in the past had some international success.

Now she travels around doing media projects. She writes articles in English, German and French and her stories are translated into other languages, such as Italian and Russian. The photos and filming are done by professionals.

"I travel the world and find new spots or find new regions. New Zealand kite-surfing is not that big yet, so I am going to do articles on it for many

international kite surf magazines."

Ms Steindl has been in New Zealand for almost two months. Taranaki is her last stop and she doesn't want to leave. She was due to fly out last week, but put it off for a week.

"I would very much like to come back for the summer. It was one of my best trips ever. I'm so amazed at the beautiful country and beautiful people."

She travelled in a campervan and a photographer accompanied her for two weeks.

"Oh my god, this is the best place," she says of Taranaki. "It's been such a dream of mine to come, because I've heard of Taranaki for so many years. Finally I'm here. I love the waves, I love the people, I love the black beaches."

In one way, hers is the dream job, but even dream jobs have their downside. Ms Steindl is a one-woman show. She is her own trainer, coach, web master. And she has to do all the organising herself on the little budget she has.

"There is very little money in kiting."

And she doesn't have a home. She comes from landlocked Austria, but is addicted to the ocean. Ms Steindl has been travelling for eight years. Next stop is Papua New Guinea, then Western Australia.

Sometimes it is a lonely life. And it's not very safe kite-surfing on her own, which she has had to do in Taranaki, due to the lack of kite-surfers in the region.

Then there is trying to check 80 kilos of equipment on to a plane.

"But I live my own dream. And I gave up a really good career for that. Anything you wish for you can really make happen if you don't take no for an answer."

■ For more information on Gabi Steindl, check out her website, www.kitegabi.com.

books

Great Military Lives (Times Books, ISBN: 9780007276707). Reviewed by Charles Gill.

This stodgy and self-serving collection of obituaries from The Times in London serves no real purpose apart from offering an effective cure for insomnia.

It includes The Times obituaries of military lives from Wellington to the Falklands War commander-in-chief, with an understandable bias towards British leaders. A commendable attempt was made to include more unconventional leaders such as the Zulu Cetwayo and the Sioux chief Sitting Bull, but as the entries are published as originally written, this tends to backfire. When Sitting Bull died in 1890, The Times refers to "the Red Indian – of all savages the most unteachable and the most impervious to civilised influences". Such crass assessments were not uncommon at the time, but I have no desire to read them now.

Most of the usual suspects are included, such as U.S. Grant, Hindenburg, Haig and Montgomery. Incidentally, when the last was asked to name the three greatest generals in history he replied, "the other two were Alexander the Great and Napoleon".

Touted as a study of leadership and courage, it lacks balance, insight and interest.

Touring the Natural Wonders of New Zealand, by Peter Janssen (NewHolland; ISBN: 9781869662349). Reviewed by Sarah Foy.

This beautifully illustrated book encompasses 47 driving tours of New Zealand. Starting in the North with the west coast of Northland, it charts a series of tours likely to appeal to Kiwis and overseas visitors with plenty of time. The tours are fairly lengthy – none is less than 100km – and detailed. They bypass cultural or social features like museums, concentrating solely on the natural stuff. For example, the suggested 321km Taranaki route includes the Awakino Gorge, the Three Sisters and Elephant Rock, Mt Dampier Falls, Mt Taranaki, Paritutu, Pouakai and Lake Rotokare.

Interspersed with the text are maps, glossy photos and snippets about native birds and plants. There's also some practical information like best time to visit.

The tours should give domestic visitors a new appreciation of the country's stunning natural beauty. It's easy to lose that wonder when sights get cluttered with tourist buses and retail outlets. Reading this, you're struck by the hundreds of off-the-beaten track wonders our country boasts.

However, these are probably not tours you'd do with a tribe of kids in the backseat. The book is more likely to be appreciated by solo couples with time to amble and soak up the drama and beauty.

NZ Frenzy: An Adventurer's Guide to New Zealand's Wild Places, by Scott Cook (self-published, ISBN: 9780979923234). Reviewed by Sarah Foy.

Scott Cook is an American who's produced an honest, zany guide to the North Island. He hones in on out-of-the-way places attractive to those in campervans with a sense of adventure. The photos in this narrow paperback book are black and white and small. Sometimes arrows transposed onto the photos detract, other times they are helpful. His writing is lively and colloquial. Here's his description of Tongaporutu, a place he calls his favourite spot and the one he features on the front cover:



"Tongaporutu is a little-known dot on the north Taranaki map. It shouldn't be, but nobody promotes it because there's no commercial business nearby. It's captivating, it's breathtaking, it's run-on-the-beach-laughing-cuz-it's-so-gorgeous."

As well as a blurb about each place to visit, Cook includes brief driving information and a tip on where to camp for free.

At the front there's a list of sights grouped under headings like lighthouses, caves and skinny dip mentions. The book isn't high-class in terms of its production values, but as Cook explains in his author's note, lots of info was more important than big, colourful pictures.

"I've tried to give you the absolute biggest bang for your buck. I hope this guide is a bit of an adventure in itself."

He chose the North Island over the South because it's warmer, drier and invites more interaction with nature. He is, however, working on a South Island version and welcomes feedback at NZFrenzy@yahoo.com.

A Lost Wife's Tale, by Marion McGilvray (Penguin Group, ISBN: 9780670917891). Reviewed by Helen Harvey.

This is an occasion when you shouldn't judge a book by the cover. On the outside it looked like chick-lit of the lowest order. I only picked it up because I was desperate for something to read. But I was pleasantly surprised. The story turned out to be a mystery. A young woman starts a new job as a housekeeper, but over time it is revealed she isn't who she says she is. The chapters flick from past to present to tell the story of why she is running. It is funny, sad and tragic all in one. And there is a twist at the end you won't see coming.

Endal, by Allen & Sandra Parton (HarperCollins, ISBN: 9780007303014). Reviewed by Sheila Forbes.

Experts would have us believe that dogs have no intelligence, that their actions are governed by instinct and learned behaviour. I defy anyone to read this true story and maintain that stance.

Allen Parton is a naval officer serving in the Gulf when an accident leaves him disabled and with no memory of his family or past events. Prospects of recovery are dim and wife Sandra struggles to cope with two small children and the angry, frustrated and morose stranger who is her husband. After several years the marriage is barely surviving. Then Sandra volunteers to be a puppy walker for an organisation called Canine Partners for Independence. Through that they acquire a yellow Labrador called Endal.

Endal not only learns an astonishing range of commands, he acts independently when Parton is under threat. Despite painful physical conditions of his own, Endal never wavers in his devotion and determination to serve all Allen's needs, and receives several awards, including the PDSA gold medal. Allen and Sandra write alternate chapters of this book, frankly detailing their individual struggles with their situation and with each other. It is a well-written and moving account of a marriage rescued by a dog.

SUBSCRIBE AND REVIVE a special subscription offer from the Taranaki Daily News.

Subscribe now and receive a luxurious **ANTIPODES®** pack

CONNECT WITH NATURE



\$125 RRP

Enjoy the benefits of free home delivery, special promotions and competitions, while saving on the retail price.

Subscribe to the Taranaki Daily News by Direct Debit before Monday, 25 May and you'll also receive a **FREE** Antipodes® gift pack (valued at \$125).

A monthly payment of \$24-\$26* will be direct debited from your credit card or bank account.

* Dependent on the number of papers each month.

Antipodes® is certified organic, natural skincare featuring premium avocado oil and exotic New Zealand plant extracts. Try three of our best ultra-hydrating skin preparations that contain bioactive botanical ingredients, and which imbue your daily skincare rituals with aromatic blends of heavenly plant fragrances.

REJOICE LIGHT FACIAL DAY CREAM

Light and non-oily to enhance your skin's natural hydration. All organic ingredients of manuka, avocado oil, macadamia and jojoba.

RESURRECT FACIAL TONER

This beautifully refreshing toner can be misted directly over make-up to freshen it, as well as to provide a major hydration boost for skin resurrection.

DIVINE FACE OIL

A light yet deeply-penetrating, non-greasy, 100% pure avocado oil. Full of essential fatty acids to keep your skin strong and hydrated.

To subscribe to the Taranaki Daily News

Phone 06 759 0800 ext 7410#

Email newspaper.sales@tnl.co.nz

Post Complete and post the coupon to:
Subscribers, Taranaki Daily News
PO Box 444
New Plymouth 4340



First Name _____
Surname _____
Delivery Address _____

Billing Address _____

Home Ph _____ Work Ph _____
Email _____
PAYMENT
I authorise the Taranaki Daily News to charge this invoice and all future subscriptions to the following credit card: VISA ☐ Mastercard ☐
Card Number
Expiry Date Cardholder's name _____
Signature _____

ANTIPODES® TARANAKI **DAILY NEWS**
CONNECT WITH NATURE Your Place, Your Paper

Terms and Conditions: New subscribers to the Taranaki Daily News will qualify for the complimentary Antipodes® pack. The offer expires 10am on Saturday, 23 May 2009. The offer is only available in the Taranaki Daily News home delivery area. Rural subscriptions incur additional fees. Qualifiers for Antipodes® gift pack are contracted to remain a Taranaki Daily News subscriber for 3 months. Only people who have not been a subscriber for 6 months will be eligible for the gift pack. There will be a one month stand down period before packs are sent to applicants. The offer is only valid while stocks last. Not available in conjunction with other offers. All existing subscribers are automatically entered into the draw to win one of five Antipodes® packs. Winners will be drawn on Monday, 25 May 2009.