

The Tail Tale

The call came on a Sunday morning, "Please come quickly, there is a dead animal hanging on our door and we don't know what it is and it looks like a human put it there"!

Two German Wwoofers were farm sitting while their hosts were away for a few days. Much to their alarm, they had woken to find this 'thing' hanging on their door. Was it in electrocuted possum? Was it some scare tactic being used to intimidate someone?

I arrived at the farm to find tearful Wwoofers looking very worried. "There is this black thing hanging on the door and we can't find the black cat"! Sure enough, there it was, swinging from the door handle.

In fact it turned out to be a black pig's tail, freshly cut from a wild pig. After some discussion and a phone call or two the story became clear. The hosts had been talking earlier in the week to Bruce, the valley pig hunter about the pigs that were "rooting up" the grass in their top paddock. Of course Bruce didn't want to pass up the opportunity to get some pork so had come early on the Sunday morning for a "poke around" and it so happened it was his lucky day - he bagged a big black boar! Now Bruce is a thoughtful man, so instead of waking up the two Wwoofers so early in the morning, he thought he would leave his "calling card" - a hairy black pig's tail tied to the door handle (in the world of the pig hunter, it's quite a normal thing to do)!

So the two relieved Wwoofers have now learnt yet another aspect of NZ life and know that when you go Wwoofing, expect the unexpected.

Andrew

From the Coordinator's Desk

Wwoof Grants

There was an encouraging response from hosts about the \$500 grants to carry out environmental development projects on their property and number of hosts have put up their hands to receive one. If you are interested please contact Wwoof Headquarters and a application will be sent to you. A host suggested that photos and items relating to the grants could be included in the newsletter/website for others to read about.

Name Change

The July newsletter introduced the idea of changing the name "Willing Workers On Organic Farms" to "World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms". Feedback from hosts was favourable to the change, the feeling was that the new name was a more appropriate reflection of what Wwoof is all about. 2 hosts were concerned about losing the "Work" description and that new Wwoofers may not be aware of what's involved. This concern could be addressed by the clear explanations in the membership literature and the Wwoof Book. Another motivation for the name change is to emphasise the wider benefits Wwoof provides. As well as learning organic farming by helping the farmer, there are also the less tangible things centred around the Cultural Exchange; living with people in a foreign culture, learning about local customs, foods and ways of managing life's problems.



The Latest Edition of the Wwoof Book

As a result of suggestions from hosts, each new edition of the Wwoof Book from now on will be clearly labelled on page 1 with the date the book was printed and a unique Edition Number. This will avoid confusion over which is the current book. What the acronym "Wwoof" stands for is also included on this page.

Hosts used to pay \$5 a year to include a logo or sketch with their listing. Since setting up a new database that inserts the logos automatically there is now no charge for doing this. If you haven't got a sketch for your listing have a look at the ones in the book for some ideas on what works well. Sketches add a personal touch to your text (the book will be next updated about Jan 2003).

A Northland host sent in a map of his region with the physical locations of each host so they can be listed more accurately in the book. If you feel your region is also a bit jumbled, a photocopied map with hosts and their locations would be a great help.

Email Addresses

Some hosts have chosen to remove their email address from their listing. They have left it out as they prefer Wwoofers to phone to arrange their stay. A phone call is a more personal method of communication and allows the hosts to get to know their intending guest a bit better than an email allows. Also hosts have found that often people make bookings in advance via email but then fail to show up on the arranged date. We advise Wwoofers to write a personal email to a specific host that they genuinely wish to visit. Hosts could ask that the Wwoofer phone them 3-4 days before they are supposed to arrive to confirm that they are still coming. Wwoofers, if your plans change, you need to email the host to let them know, it will save them a lot of time, money and worry!

It is handy however for us to have host's email addresses on file even if it is not published in the book. There are sometimes important/urgent messages to send out.

Wwoof Web Site

Wwoofers are finding it useful to view the book on the web site and are also using the forum more and more. The photos that many hosts have included look great and probably inspire many future Wwoofers planning their trip before they leave home. Like the sketches in the book, there is no cost to include photos with your listing. If you wish to send some in they will be scanned and returned to you.

"Free" listings

There seem to be more and more 'work for food and accommodation' schemes coming into existence, listing host's details and giving them out to travellers. If Wwoof Hosts are considering entering their details on one of these lists please ensure you know where your next "Wwoofer" is coming from. Also please consider the genuine Wwoofer who has actually paid to be a member but finds you are full because you have people from other schemes!

Hours of Work?

We often get asked "how many hours should we work". The answer depends on a number of factors such as the time of year and what the current project on the farm is but generally Wwoof is based on half a days work (4-6 hours a

day) - fair exchange for a full day's food and accommodation.

All the best and remember to enjoy the spring time (it's that short period between being too cold and too hot)!

Kind regards,
Andrew and Jane.

PERMACULTURE DESIGN CERTIFICATE COURSE

Intensive residential 14-day course

7-21 February 2003

Otamatea Eco-village, Kaiwaka

This is a unique Permaculture Design Course, where you'll be working together with some of the founders of an eco-village on site. Topics will cover sustainable ethics, learning by patterns in nature, edible landscapes, animal husbandry, passive solar design houses and more. Bring photos and maps of your land/house you plan to transform into a highly productive, energy efficient place which meets and reflects your specific needs. Permaculture can be applied anywhere, from the balcony to the farm.

What is Permaculture?

Permaculture is about designing ecological human habitats and food production systems. It's an approach to land use which integrates human dwellings, microclimate, annual and perennial plants, animals, soil and water management into stable, productive communities. And having fun in the process!

contact: Lynne 09 431 2921 email: lynne_hindle@xtra.co.nz
or Sabine 09 431 2231 email: pukahu@xtra.co.nz

Bouquets for Hosts

*"Hello Jane and Andrew,
I would just like to say what fantastic WWOOF hosts Tony and Raewyn Lancaster are of Waipoua Lodge, near Dargaville. Myself and my boyfriend WWOOFed for them for ten days and had a great experience. They are really great people.*

*Regards,
Angela O'Gorman and Matthew Witherington"*

Thanks Angela and Matthew for your positive feedback, a \$30 Eco-Store Gift Voucher is on its way to Tony and Raewyn.

Paid Position Offered

We have thoroughly enjoyed 8 years of hosting wwoofers. Now due to expansion we have a paid full time position and part time work we would like to offer to someone who have enjoyed organic farming in N.Z. and would like to stay for longer.

Duties would involve harvesting grass, feeding and milking our 370 dairy goats, also attending to the barn litter, compost making and spreading, and general farm maintenance. Talent for operating machinery is preferred. Our experience with WWOOFers tells us those with farming knowledge from zero grazing systems would be most suited to the job.

There is a furnished cottage provided. Assistance will be given to apply for a work permit, as this position qualifies for approval in principle to employ a non-N.Z. worker. Good wages for those suitably skilled. Regular time off. Immediate start.

Apply by phone 07 8846815 or
email bentham.d.k@xtra.co.nz

Doug and Kathy Bentham

R.D. 1
Te Aroha

Qualified, enthusiastic gardener,
experienced (9 years) in all aspects of horticulture including landscaping, commercial growing, tree surgery. Presently based in UK, applying for residency, seeks full-time, paid position.

Please email douglas.strang@virgin.net

What's NZ weather like and what clothes and footwear should I bring to go WWOOFing?

Go to www.wwoof.co.nz/preparation.htm to find out.

...*"This is my 4th visit to NZ and the WWOOF experience has always been one of the highlights"*...

Amanda Vasey
England

Hosts in Marlborough, Tony and Val Baker sent in a copy of the guidelines below that they give to their WWOOFers. It seems like a good idea that other hosts may be able to adapt for their own use.

WWOOFING GUIDELINES

Please read these guidelines which we hope will make your stay with us a happy one.

You may help with feeding chickens, cows, sheep, bringing firewood from shed, hanging out and getting in washing and preparing vegetables for meals. We will give you other jobs to do during the day and would expect you to work at least 4 hours per day.

You are welcome to go to Blenheim with us from time to time, or we have two bicycles which you can use. There is a small village 7km away called Renwick. It has a post office, supermarket, garage, pub and a few shops. Blenheim is 17km, Nelson 1.5 hours, Picton 30 minutes and Christchurch 4.5 hours. There are wine trail maps in your room.

We DO NOT allow smoking anywhere indoors, and we take off our shoes and boots before coming inside, (including your room). A heater is provided and we ask that you remember to switch it off when you are not in the room. Please open your windows each morning, especially after using the shower. If you have clothes to wash, please ask to use the washing machine.

Breakfast is at 8.00 am, lunch at 12.00 pm and evening meal at 5.30 pm. You are welcome to watch TV with us until 9 pm.

If you wish to use the phone or fax please ask. Local calls are free but you will have to arrange payment for any long distance calls. Internet is available, please ask first.

We hope you have a happy stay with us, please ask if there is anything that we can help you with.

To Find a Farm

We were homeless. Sitting in a heap under the shade of the flying K-Z yacht in Auckland's Darling Harbour, bound there by a pile of hiking boots and backpacks, we were

trying to find a farm. My travelling buddy was exhausted, and claimed the job of watching the stuff. I went to the phones, armed with my Wwoofing book, a phone card, and a look that said, I'll be a while.

We were overflow backpackers, considering ourselves adept at negotiating foreign countries' systems of transport and accommodation. And there New Zealand had proved a delightful cinch. But we had yet to learn that our backpacking organization was useless for Wwoofers. We made plans. And they flopped. But we couldn't resist. Before I left our hamlet in the shade of the yacht, we had deliberated and democracied to a perfect list: our favorite farms, one or two back-ups, setting our hearts on someone's fruit trees, someone else's sea kayaks. I made a call to our top choice. No one home. And to our next. Booked until April. I kept that to myself. I made two more calls and didn't reach anyone. We needed new plans. I brought the disappointing news to my friend, and we commiserated and chose the backup backup farms. A certain hopelessness was brimming in her, and I decided not to consult her again until I had better news. At the phone again, I reached a little girl of about five. I sang my song, "Hello, my name is Karen and I'm a Wwoofer. I'm wondering if you need any help any time soon."

She responded, "Mummy, do you need any Wwoofers?" The kids never passed us to their parents. I heard muffled grown-up sounds and then the translation. There was pity in her young voice despite her words, "No, we don't like Wwoofers anymore." I kept that to myself too.

I called another one. I reached a man with a thick accent whose language also lacked the politeness that only comes with real fluency. I ran off my line again. He paused, ruminated, and asked, "What can you do?" It was an interview! This was going to be humiliating. We had both finished university with honors, but we were from the suburbs, and the only farm experience we'd had was during the previous three weeks of our stay. We'd spent most of the time weeding, desperately fearful of pulling each of the plants that should stay. "We can weed!" I uttered painfully, hoping to sound extremely enthusiastic. He paused again. "Can you take care of children?" We could, but we didn't really want to. But we were desperate. "Yes!" I said, sounding more enthusiastic, I hoped. "Can you sleep in a housebus?" I had no idea what a housebus was. "Yes!" I'd find out. During his next pause, I figured I must have passed. I had answered everything right, and with enthusiasm! But not yet. "Can you call back in an hour? I'll ask my wife." This time I had to bring the news to my friend. She bought me ice cream for my trouble, and we tried to make it last

the hour. We didn't call anyone in the meantime, putting our hopes on the awkward man with weeds, young kids, and a housebus. So we sat under the boat, under the gaze of the crowds reading the informative signs above our heads. But the search for a farm was always the worst part of Wwoofing, and that day it ended when I called him back. And we loved it there. They fed us delicious food, took pity on us after a couple hot days of weeding, and I fell in love with their two-year-old son.

by Karen Burke July 3, 2002

HAVE A SAY!

Do you support or oppose plans for "conditional" release of GE organisms and the step-by step spread of contamination? Should New Zealand preserve the opportunity to produce GE-Free food? Who should be liable for the damage from GE? What about the serious ecological and economic risks?



TAKE A FEW SECONDS;

e-mail a Quick submission at:
<http://www.hybridweb.co.nz/submissions>
The deadline is the 15th November which means you need to act now (the government has only allowed 10 days for this important "consultation" to take place)!

Farm Safety

Hosts must ensure that their farms are safe places for WWOOFers to be. Discuss with WWOOFers where not to go and what not to touch and identify any potential hazards. Do not allow WWOOFers to use machinery such as chainsaws, tractors, 4 wheel motorbikes etc. WWOOFers may be willing but they often do not have the experience or expertise to use them safely. While ACC will cover travellers in the event of an accident, OSH requires farmers to manage their farm in a safe manner.

Clever Conservation

"I am slowly replanting my property back into natives as it joins up with Waima Kauri Forest which joins up to the Waipoua Kauri Forest, I have planted native trees over the last 3 years and all are doing well, am now planning to expand further and make it available for tourists and visitors to plant tree which will be their trees as they will purchase them, they will be labelled with their names so that when they come back to NZ in 10-20 years time and will want to come and visit their trees and see how they are doing, however we need to do some fencing first before we can expand the area to be planted.

We will probably give every WWOOFer that stays

with us their own tree to plant, or plant for them if it is not the right time of year. Hopefully it will catch on, plan to advertise the opportunity for visitors to help regenerate NZ.

I have already floated the idea amongst friends in a chat room on the net, and about 10 of them have promised to buy trees to plant out in it. Some are planting them for their grand children, I intend to send gift certificates to those overseas for their trees and a map of how to get to their piece of bush, eventually I hope to replant all but an acre of my property back into natives with tracks and water features throughout as it takes in a wetland area”.

Louis Toorenburg
Labyrinth Woodworks & Maze
Hokianga

Vacation Verde

Vacation Verde (Green Vacation) is an accommodation guide providing for travellers who wish to have wholesome holiday experiences and also to promote the hospitality aspect of the organic industry to the domestic market and also overseas holiday makers. The guide will include people who wish to provide homestays, farmstays, B&B accommodation where organic food is available. Along with organic food, many people are also able to offer mud/straw/earth/recycled non-toxic eco-accommodation as part of the package. The guide will also include eco-excursions such as organic cafés, restaurants, vineyards, olive groves, conservation projects etc. This service will be offered via the internet. The aim is to produce a printed version as well. Either write to Wwoof for more info or submit your listing at www.wwoof.co.nz/vv

A Woofa's Experience...

Being in the medical profession and desiring to work and travel in other countries, I've looked for ways to combine them. I was first in New Zealand twenty years ago when I was employed at a hospital in Wellington working with a pharmacologist on a sleep research project. During that time I made lots of friends who I have stayed in touch with over the years and continue to see on return trips.

In the summer of 1999 I was visiting friends in Northland for part of the summer on my way back to the US from a trip to Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. I met a friend of a friend who told me about the WOOFA organization and invited me to come back the following summer to spend some time helping her after I'd become a member. This became my first of 6 or 7 experiences during the

summer of 2000 and it was fabulous-I was hooked. My little accommodation was cozy and private with a spectacular view of the Pacific Ocean and the family was unbelievably perfect in every way.

That was the first in a long line of great experiences of that summer. I still cannot believe how friendly and welcoming Kiwis are!

My daily Woofa work included the variety that I specifically asked for. I consistently found my Woofa hosts open to suggestions about how best to use my time and talents, what my favorite time of the day for work was (early mornings usually from 7-11) and what work I did not feel physically able to do.

The majority of the work was, of course, organic gardening and that included the usual, things; lots of weeding, mulching, composting, planting, harvesting, propagating and pruning. In addition to this, maybe, because I'd specifically asked for variety, I was able to do other things like painting (large outside doors, window frames, a sofa and chair, a wall), cleaning bee equipment and helping with honey collection, helping with flowers on their way to market and several days of cleaning, sorting and organizing garden sheds.

I had decided to buy a car early on so that I could get around to some of the more out-of-the-way Woofa spots and also to be able to be more independent, in general. This meant that on weekends I could go wherever I wanted and I used this time to explore the north of the north, visit friends, go to workshops and visit lots of small towns and beaches.

Without exception, these Woofa hosts were the greatest people to meet and spend time with and I have stayed in touch with at least half of my hosts since. I plan to do more Woofa work with at least three of the families I stayed with in 2000 when I return for the summer in Jan. 2003 for another three month stay.

Any questions or comments please e-mail me at moopaula@yahoo.com

Paula Moon
Minnesota
USA