

Wwoof
Andrew and Jane Strange
PO Box 1172
Nelson, New Zealand
Phone or Fax 0064 3 5449890
Email a&j@wwoof.co.nz

Update from

WWOOF HEADQUARTERS

From Andrew and Jane...

If you are a new Wwoofer or Host then welcome aboard and we wish you all the best for your future experiences with Wwoof.

It is nearly 30 years since Sue Coppard first phoned a farm back in England to see if she could come for the weekend and see what life was like on an organic property. It must have been a good idea because today thousands of people are phoning organic farms all over the world to see if they can come and stay. Sue spoke about the beginnings of Wwoof at the inaugural Wwoof Organisers Conference held in England in October. About 30 people attended representing Italy, Canada, Australia, NZ, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Korea, France, UK, Togo and Kenya. A few Wwoofers came along as well to provide their perspective. During the weekend we discussed topics including management and organisation issues, the formation of an international association of Wwoof groups, legal/immigration issues and international Wwoof lists. One topic that was agreed to by all was that the concept of Wwoof is wonderful and it is a privilege to be able to help make it work. Immigration issues are something we would all like to see improved. Australia seems to have set a good precedent whereby travelers are able to stay on Wwoof farms with a visitor's visa as long as Wwoofing is incidental to the traveler's visit. We hope to use Australia's example to try and work a similar solution with NZ immigration.

It was decided that the two international lists produced by Australia and UK would be combined and run under the title Wwoof Independent. These are Wwoof farms in countries that do not yet have their own Wwoof group (which includes countries such as USA and Spain). The aim is to help get new groups established and hand over the list for them to run.

It was decided to form an alliance of Wwoof groups called the International Wwoof Association. This association will help coordinate resources including a central Wwoof web site, provide assistance to new Wwoof groups and help ensure all Wwoof groups are working to achieve the general aims and goals of Wwoof.

The weekend was followed by a week of traveling around England and Wales, visiting places such as the organic research organisation



HDRA, a Welsh Wwoof farm with Mongolian Ger accommodation, The Centre for Alternative Technology which is built on a beautiful old Welsh slate quarry, Kinnersly Castle (a Wwoof farm near the Welsh border), a city farm in Bristol which gives children living in town a place to go and learn about farm life (these children will probably be keen Wwoofers in the future!) and Radford Mill Farm, a cooperatively run farm growing and processing a range of organic products.

The Royal Commission on Genetic Engineering is due to report back to the government in April this year. The commission has spent many months traveling the

country holding public meetings and hearing submissions from those groups who gained "interested persons" status (unfortunately Wwoof was not considered to have a special interest which was disappointing). While there has been a strong representation from pro-GE groups, it seems that logical, well-reasoned and passionate arguments and evidence from anti-GE groups and individuals has left the commission with no doubt about how most people feel. The Nelson meeting was about 150 to 1 against GE. As well as providing evidence and examples showing the dangers of releasing Genetically Modified Organisms, the group stated that the people of NZ had the democratic right to say NO to having GMOs in their food or their environment. Our hope is that the commission will recommend that no field trials of crops or animals be conducted and that GE only be considered as a last option in the case of laboratory only medical research. Once the commission has reported to the government it may then be a case of lobbying the government as they will be the ones making the ultimate decision. Keep up to date with what's happening at www.gefree.org.nz.

We look forward to hearing from you this year. Please read the "Organic Standards" information on page 4, it would be helpful to hear what you think about these important issues.

Kind regards,

Andrew and Jane.

Aotearoa Organic

Certification for Smaller Growers

Aotearoa Organic is designed for the smaller scale growers who are producing for the domestic market (which would include many Wwoof Farms). The certification is based on the Bio-Gro Standards, however the difference comes in the auditing systems and costs.

With Bio-Gro Certification, the certification decision involves Bio-Gro's auditing body SGS and also IFOAM and ISO 65 systems - i.e. a lot of administration and expense. Aotearoa Organic growers are still visited and complete audits as a Bio-Gro grower would, however the certification decision is more directly made by Bio-Gro's auditors, who are under continual review by Bio-Gro.

Aotearoa Organic is jointly supported by Bio-Gro and the Soil & Health Association. This cooperation will provide growers with good technical support and expertise and also guarantee the integrity of the Aotearoa Organic produce. Some of the details of the scheme include;

1. Basic annual certification fee: \$400 + GST.
2. Nutrient and residue test are required initially.
3. Applies to suppliers to the domestic market only.
4. Growers must not be producing any conventional produce.
5. Growers must have a gross turn-over of less

than \$30,000 + GST.

6. Growers must be members of either Soil & Health or Bio-Gro.
7. A similar conversion period as Bio-Gro Applies - i.e. up to 12 months before use of the "In conversion to Aotearoa Organic" trademark and then a further 24 months till full certification.

Aotearoa Organic provides a good stepping stone for growers who are aiming for Bio-Gro certification and the export market. If a grower has Aotearoa Organic certification and wants to transfer to Bio-Gro certification, then the Bio-Gro conversion period can be reduced by up to two years, depending on how long they have had Aotearoa Organic Certification.

For further information contact:

Bio-Gro, PO Box 9693
Marion Square, Wellington.
Ph 04 8019741

Or
Soil & Health, PO Box 36-
170 Northcote, Auckland 9
Ph/Fax 09 4804440

Thanks to Autumn Farm

Many thanks to Peter and Richard for organising a lunch for hosts and Wwoofers at their beautiful Autumn Farm in Golden Bay. It was chance for all to share experiences on topics such as tree planting, what makes a good host, what makes a good Wwoof, certification and organicness of Wwoof Farms.

INSURANCE

A story from a host recently highlighted the position insurance companies usually take with people staying in your home. If you invite a person into your home and they steal from you or cause malicious damage then this is not covered by contents insurance. It is different if they are not invited or have left your home and returned, this is then burglary which is normally covered. Please ask your insurance company to write to you stating what you are covered for with regard to guests in your home. If you are not currently covered then ask if they can provide a policy that does cover you. Remind them that you are not offering a commercial farmstay, rather a cultural exchange/educational experience opportunity for travelers.

Please Note:

Eddy and Lief Thomaes on page 106 are supposed to be on page 30, so if you are in traveling to Northland please don't forget them.



Jonny Stevenson from England writes...

Well, it was back in November 1999. I was 33, a self-employed landscape gardener, no ties, full of enthusiasm and a tremendous urge for a travelling/working experience. Wwoofing was the obvious choice, so I joined months before. I have a passion and feeling for the land and I knew my skills would be appreciated, particularly in a country such as NZ. So, armed with my large rucksack and The Lonely Planet reference books plus travellers cheques. I left everything for Heathrow Airport, ready for the 23 hours flight to Auckland. For 3 1/2 months I would be in NZ with my final 3 weeks being spent, gloriously, in Nepal and India. It was hugely exciting, and I was on my own. I figured NZ would be "my kind of place", that I would be made to feel at home, that I could get the experience I was looking for here in NZ. The Kiwis I was to discover had a very laid back attitude to life, a great feeling for the land and a slower pace of life than the English way, there seemed to be little to get stressed out about. Unsurprisingly, really, from the splendour of what's around i.e. fantastic mountains, remote, wild, rugged landscape, glorious lakes and rivers and endless supplies of fresh air and good, wild food. Not a bad climate either, of course!

When I arrived in Auckland, I was seriously jetlagged so after 18 hours solid sleep in a backpackers hostel I decided I would spend another day settling in and then made off for the real NZ countryside. I had made contact a couple of months earlier with my first hosts who lived near a little town called Warkworth. These hosts were wonderful, I felt like I had known them for years. It was the perfect beginning and I was inspired with work, making weaved fences and dry stone walls. They had a beautiful 7 acre plot of land, full of trees and shrubs, a river running alongside and sculptures of wood dotted about. He

was a sculptor, she a gardener. Together they made a beautiful landscape. They named me "Best Wwoofer" and we made great friends. I was to come by on my way back up, but I had places to go so headed down through Rotorua, Napier, the Wairarapa and the west of Wellington, staying at 4 more Wwoofing places, all interesting and 2 very remote. In between working I would always have time to go off trekking, to read, and to write my journal.

Altogether I spent 5 weeks on the North Island initially and I had some very special moments to remember. It was becoming the greatest experience of my life, so many stories already, meeting people, like myself, with a passion for the land and the good things in life. These people were



so welcoming, trusting, like I had known them for years.

The South Island was next, a staggeringly beautiful place, so remote, untouched and mountainous. Was I to have an even better time here? Indeed I was and I was blown away by the sights and sounds and beautiful weather, I decided to stay for 2 weeks over Christmas with 2 hosts in the Golden Bay area of the island. I had a truly memorable time, inspired in work and the highlights included mountain trekking and a canoeing trip early on Christmas morning. I even went sailing on Christmas afternoon and previ-

ous to this, a 3 day trek in a nearby paradise, the Marlborough Sounds.

For New Year I went to the wild and rugged West Coast. What a beautiful coastline! I stayed in Punia-kaiki with a host and an American Wwoofer, we had a tremendous time and a particularly memorable New Year celebration.

I headed down to the glaciers and through Otago, trekking the Routeburn Track and taking in some great areas, back to the east coast via Dunedin, Canterbury and Kaikoura—another real beauty spot amongst high mountains and wilderness areas. I was on the island for 6 1/2 weeks, staying at 6 different hosts and sampling many projects such as dry rock walling, vegetable gardening and landscaping. The hosts were again laid back, welcoming and a lot of fun.

My last 3 weeks, I traveled back up through the North Island, getting some invaluable paid work and taking in the volcanic Tongariro National Park and planning a different route up than I took down. I hitched a lot which was a good experience as I met many Maori people who were extremely warm and friendly. I hitched back to Warkworth where I stayed again at my first hosts' who welcomed me like a member of their family. Here I worked hard, took 2 days off hitching further up north to the Bay of Islands and the Waipoua Forest and had heaps of fun. It was very difficult to leave on that morning of Feb 17th. A tear was shed. I was to say goodbye to a place that really did feel like my home.

I experienced the best of everything; Wwoofing, such a satisfying, fulfilling way of seeing and living in the country, with native people and contributing to their lives. I couldn't recommend it more highly.

I shall be back.

Many thanks,
Jonny Stevenson

Organic Standards

A group of hosts met at Arcadia Organics in Motueka to discuss ways of ensuring the organic integrity of Wwoof Farms.

For many years the question "how organic should a host be" has been asked and there has always been a variety of answers. Recent feedback from hosts on this issue prompted a meeting to try and get some workable ideas.

About 15 hosts met in November at Arcadia Organics and, along with yum organic refreshments, came up with the following 5 suggestions:

1. When an organic farmer applies for membership they should obtain a letter that supports their application from either another Wwoof Host or an appropriate person who is able to endorse the host's character and/or their accommodation and/or their organic practices.
2. Hosts should indicate in their listing what percentage of the food they eat is organic. This could be

an icon in their listing showing a % value. The idea behind this was that if this information is clearly presented then Wwoofers are able to make a more informed choice. Also, as Wwoofers are there to help grow organic food, it seems reasonable that they should experience the benefits of eating organic food.

3. For those hosts who are in transition from chemical to organic production, a simple management plan should be provided stating such things as the overall time frame, rate of conversion, what organic techniques are being adopted etc...
4. A more active method for collecting feedback from Wwoofers should be developed. One method could be a detachable sheet in each Wwoof Book that Wwoofers complete when they finish

Wwoofing and return to Wwoof Headquarters.

5. Requirements for Wwoof Hosts are that they must:
 - Provide experience in organic production techniques, lifestyle, gardening and/or animal management.
 - Provide mainly organic food.
 - Provide a welcoming and safe environment for their WWOOFers.
 - Aim to make educational resources available to WWOOFers to back up the practical experience gained on the farm.



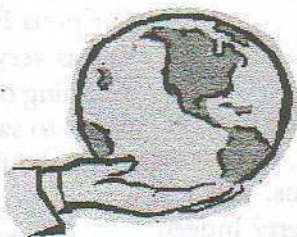
If you have any feedback on the above ideas or have something to add please write to Wwoof

Headquarters. You may wish to write for the newsletter for all members to read. If there is a consensus on the suggestions then they will be introduced during 2001.

ECONATION 2020

The latest edition of the Wwoof Book is sporting the above heading. The Soil and Health Association of NZ has set a very worthwhile goal - that New Zealand become an organic nation by the year 2020. New Zealand earned national pride and international respect for its stand on Nuclear Free, so why not Chemical Free and GE Free?

So what can you do to help achieve this goal? Well, you are probably already helping - are you living on an organic property and gathering knowledge and skills, helping with production and getting ready to go home and tell your friends what is happening in NZ? Hosts, show your neighbours how you manage your



weeds, pests and diseases. Show them that good fertility can be achieved by sowing green manure crops and by making a few good sized compost heaps. Once this organic matter is in the ground the life in the soil will produce much more fertility than can be bought in a sack of chemical fertilizer. It will also last much longer, not to mention how much healthier the crops (and you) will be.

If New Zealand is being marketed as Pure New Zealand, then we want to make sure people from overseas experience this first hand. This includes the environment that they see and the food that they eat.

INTERNSHIPS

64 hosts have said that they are willing to offer placements for students needing practical experience for their studies. These hosts are generally able to offer a variety of activities and have good knowledge of biological farming.

The next edition of the Wwoof book will have a section indicating which hosts are offering this service. This will allow students who are Wwoof members to easily make contact with the appropriate hosts.

It would be good if this could be developed into a more formal certificate/reference that provides a statement of what experience and skills have been learnt. If you have any ideas/ suggestions please send them in to Wwoof Headquarters or to the web site notice board.

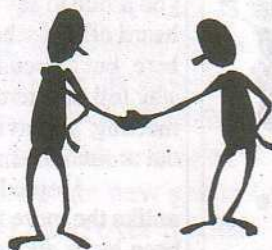
How Wwoof Works

The magic of Wwoof is that such a simple idea can work successfully. This is however no accident. The success of the exchange is due to the willingness of hosts and Wwoofers to each provide their half of a bargain i.e. the hosts provide their hospitality and knowledge while the Wwoofers provide their enthusiasm and assistance.

The first phone call a Wwoofer makes to the host is important. This is the time to introduce yourselves and ask a few questions. Wwoofers should tell hosts what experience or skills they have (or wish learn), ask what jobs the hosts may need help with, what the hours are each day etc. Hosts could ask Wwoofers what they are interesting in doing/learning, if they are a member, how long they wish to stay and if they have been to any other Wwoof farms before.

Remember that if hosts don't ask Wwoofers if they are genuine members, then they are giving the idea that membership is not important. How often does a Wwoofer leave their book behind in a hostel? It may seem fair for another traveler to pick up this book and maybe call a few of the amazing places described within. But what happens if the traveler is not really aware of what the Wwoof exchange is all about? The host may find that their guest is surprised to be asked to spread the compost! What if the host needs to contact their guest

after they have left? There will be no membership details on record at Wwoof Headquarters. If a traveler is happy to just copy names and numbers from someone else's book then their motives are not those of a true Wwoofer. They are not making any commitments to their prospective hosts or providing any financial support for the service they are using. Experience has shown that more often than not, bad experiences occur when hosts accept "Wwoofers" who are not members. So please, if you are a Wwoofer, tell others they must join first. If you are a host, remember to check for membership when they first call. Once your guest arrives ask them to sign in your visitor's book and to include their membership number. If all hosts do this then it presents a clear message to those who may be considering taking advantage of a hosts hospitality. It also allows those genuine members a better chance of finding a host who is free to take them.



Wwoofers, if you make arrangements to go to host and then find you can't get there please let them know. The note from a host below shows why; "Just had two Wwoofers in succession call to make a booking and then not turn up - no phone call or card or explanation. This is not only frustrating if I have jobs for which I need help but difficult financially since I stock up with extra fruit, veges etc. and then no one turns up! Without refrigeration, some is wasted and I can't afford to do that. Perhaps some Wwoofers don't read the guidelines on Page 3! Also, they cause concern - what has happened to them"!!

Many hosts have a trial period of around 3 nights. This allows them to get to know their guest before making a longer-term commitment. After this, it is common for Wwoofers to stay for 1 - 3 weeks, while some hosts prefer to take Wwoofers for even longer periods. Because it takes time for hosts to get Wwoofers accommodation ready and show them how their farm operates, many hosts like to have a minimum stay period of around 3 nights. As Wwoofers are welcomed into the host's homes as guests, it is a good idea for Wwoofers to offer to help their hosts with chores like cooking and washing, as any other guest would do.

Wwoof Web Site



Advertising? For Sale? Farm Sitting? Advice? Questions? Feedback? Notice Board?

Visit

www.wwoof.co.nz

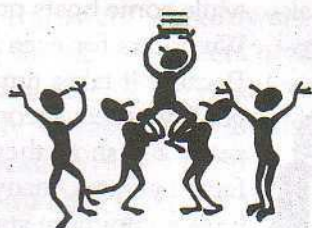
Grandma's Proverb

Use it up,
Wear it out,
Make it do,
Or do without.

Wwoof Winners at Waikato EcoFest

Organised by the Waikato Student's Union the EcoFest attracted about 600

people. A prize supplied by Wwoof included organic produce, cookbook, sub to Forest and Bird, seeds and organic info was offered to the most "sustainable student flat".



The prize winning flat reused materials (including making an acoustic music room by fixing old egg trays on the wall), recycled its wastes and even attempted home-grown veges (although the landlord was not impressed with the converted flower garden)!



Diana Hemara writes...

I'm a backpacker having been living and working in NZ for a year. I've had the pleasure of Wwoofing a number of times and just thought I'd drop you a line to say thanks. I'd never heard of this scheme upon arrival here, but a friend came back from a stay full of interesting news about meeting and living with locals whilst out around the farm.

I joined the scheme and unlike the more typical traveler, have been lucky enough to be completely immersed in a Kiwi lifestyle - something I never thought I'd be able to do just on a working holiday. I've Wwoofed all over NZ and met some of the most amazing people and learnt a variety of skills. My painting is now pretty spectacular as is my gardening (never green fingered till I Wwoofed), horse riding (never ridden B4 NZ either)! That particular stay was interesting—cleaned vast amounts of horse manure and got

briefly electrocuted after being head-butted by a foul into an electric fence—ahh, memories...

I'm now a demon with the iron, cleaning pools and boats and of course weeding. In return for my labours I have been made welcome into families, large and small and done some more unusual stuff too. Learnt massage techniques at a retreat, met famous composers, went to plays, concerts, 4-wheel drive meetings (hmm), many "BarBies, had enlightening chats with people from all walks of life and generally had memories not just made up of the tourist trail activities.

Thanks soooo much [hosts] for giving me the opportunity. I'll be off to Australia in a month, and plan to Wwoof out there too!

Thanks again,

A grateful globe-trotter.



Rachel Bradford writes...

I began Wwoofing on 2nd Oct 2000 in Golden Bay after leaving my old life in the City of Christchurch behind and moving away from my parents.

Travelers need to read the blurb in the book - especially about the sleeping/accommodation i.e. tent/house bus/room in the house/is there heating etc. Also facilities on the property: Is there a shower? If not, where's the closest one? Toilets? Many places have long-drops. Firebaths - many places have these, a great experience! What stage of set-up/development is the place in? Phone - can I make toll calls?

Expectations:

How many hours work daily?

How many days per week?

Do I have options?

Does cooking, cleaning come into work hours or is this extra?

In my experience the more pertinent questions I asked on the phone, the greater degree of clarity about the situation I was about to adventure into.

During my travels in 6 weeks I've mainly met very focused, intelligent, sensitive, creative, generous people from all over the world who have been very open and willing to share their homes and lives in a free way. Most people tend to live simply and very close to nature and enjoy the company of new people and create a nurturing environment full of life, love and joy and most places are 100% organic food.

I learned - and am still learning lots of new recipies, ways of gardening and have been opened to lots of inspirational music etc.

and have felt like I would keep in touch easily after leaving.

It's been a wonderful opportunity to see different ways of living, to see small communities making things happen and to be part of making the world a better and more peaceful place.

Hosts need to be realistic about; facilities, expectations, where they are currently at and heading towards. Perhaps a trial time of 2-3 days and then evaluate. Open and honest communication on all levels with back-up support if necessary. Encourage Wwoofers to get involved in activities off the land in the community.

Kind regards,

Rachel.