

Central Otago-Lakes Forest & Bird

Newsletter  Spring 2010



From the Chair ...

As the new Chair of our branch, let me tell you how the branch has made several changes to keep up with the evolving times we live in.

We have renamed our branch on the main F&B website from Upper Clutha to Central Otago-Lakes "COLFB". The name starting with "C" also puts us to the front of the branch list of F & B rather than at the back. We welcome any suggestions and help with our branch website www.colfb.org.nz. We have attempted to keep updates flowing on the main F&B website also.

If you have ideas or projects that you are interested in please make contact with myself [info@colfb.org.nz] or anybody on the Committee, particularly if you live in either Queenstown or Alexandra areas. It is difficult for our branch which has such a large geographical spread, to cover the area evenly, and our mainly Wanaka-based Committee always has this in mind. We welcome any ideas or suggestions of how we could include members onto the Committee from the other areas such as Alexandra and Queenstown.

It is encouraging to see that about 2/3 of our branch receive electronic contact from us and hopefully this will grow, but rest assured we will keep on with the trusty method of the postage stamp.

The branches' success is partly due to the very able and willing Committee which does such wonderful work. This is evident when I have attended the last two national Forest and Bird AGMs. For such a small branch with only around 170 members plus the large geographical area, we are right up there at the top. COLFB is one of the few branches still growing so we must be doing something right!

We have a very successful branch trip program where we have run most trips with a theme and include a talk along with the field experience. This has sometimes involved more than just one expert and we thank them for giving their time so generously. These trips are not just for our members but the public as well; we encourage you as members to bring along your friends.



COLFB display at Wanaka Library during Conservation Week, complete with background bird calls.





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There are several hands on projects which the branch is actively working on, from predator control, to planting restoration, to tenure review which are outlined further in the newsletter by the people who are running them.

What members may not be aware of, is all the other areas of advocacy work which are taken up by the Committee, attending meetings, writing submissions, representing the branch at hearings just to name a few.

We have several larger projects that the committee is still hatching out and working on behind the scenes. The Haast Eagle project is a new and exciting development. This has a three-fold objective, one getting the arts community involved with nature, one educational and also giving COLFB a presence with the tourist who visits our region.

We hope it to end up a nature road tour between Haast and Wanaka with stopping places which are highlighted with a replica metal life size Haast Eagle. Each Haast Eagle would have an ecological interpretation of the area, and a more in-depth interpretation sheet could be picked up at either DOC center or viewed electronically. The electronic version could be downloaded and listened to as you drive through the Haast Pass.

I would like all our members to feel proud of F&B and especially our branch COLFB knowing that we are giving Nature a voice.

Mark Ayre, Chairperson

info@colfb.org.nz

027-2404-045

Trip Report to Ben Avon, Ahuriri Valley - Biodiversity Hotspot, by Anne Steven

A cold west wind was blowing down the Ahuriri valley but that did not prevent nine hardy folk enjoying the spectacular scenery and avian wildlife on the high country valley's various wetlands and braided river beds. We arrived at Ben Avon Station woolshed just before 10am and shared a very interesting and companionable hour and a half with Jim Morris, owner of Ben Avon Station. Jim explained to us the High Country

Land Managers Carbon Project which is based on sample areas of Ben Avon's native tussock and shrubland. The purpose of the project is to quantify carbon sequestration under these cover

types and to measure how absence of grazing affects carbon storage. If the project shows that C sequestration improves with no grazing, this could place a whole new perspective on the management of our high country tussock and shrublands. Jim also explained that biodiversity and landscape



values will be evaluated in Stage 2 of the project, which is soon to begin. If you wish to know more about the project you can contact Jim at Ben Avon or Larry Burrows at Landcare Research. The project will also soon be promoted on the ECAN website.



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After our morning session we headed up Birch Creek behind the homestead to inspect stands of native beech and native shrublands, and view the recent additions to the Hawea-Ahuriri conservation lands. Our lunch was taken out on the river flats by River Cottage, an upmarket holiday house overlooking the Ben Avon Scenic Reserve wetlands and the Ahuriri river itself.

Our afternoon was spent driving slowly past the various wetlands and riverbeds on the lookout through our binoculars for black stilt, nesting dotterels and the solitary white heron Jim had told us had taken up residence in the valley. Unfortunately for us, we only saw plenty of parrys, plover, pied stilt, terns, black swan and cygnets, and harrier hawks. We ended our day out on the expansive short tussock flats - an increasingly rare and valued experience - with a visit to a solitary bog pine grove on the valley floor, which incidentally had inspired Jim to think of native shrublands instead of pine trees for C sequestration (on a large scale).

Our thanks go to Jim and his wife Marianne for hosting our visit which was much enjoyed by all.

The Lake Wanaka Millennium Track Restoration Project was instigated by Forest & Bird and is now into it's 6th year. Earlier plantings are well established and coping with droughts and rabbits. The plantings include groves of juvenile kowhai, cabbage tree and *Olearia hectorii*. Forest and Bird plan to continue this project for many years into the future, in association with Te Kakano Aotearoa Trust which has a large supply of plants grown from locally sourced seeds. If you would like to become a supporter or know more, please contact Andrew Penniket 021 342 187

Tenure Review by John Turnbull

So far this year our branch has made submissions on preliminary proposals for three properties in the process, whereas last year there were ten over the entire year. We have been told however that there are quite a few in the pipeline.

The making of submissions (or the writing of any early report prior to a Preliminary Proposal being produced) involves an inspection of the property, much travelling, much research and writing, which in turn involves most of your Committee at times, but we all have a desire to see the job being done in a thorough manner.

One of the highlights of this year has been the opening of the Oteake Conservation Park. This park has mainly been the outcome of the tenure review process, but it did include the outright purchase of



Oteake Reserve at dawn;
Photo: John Turnbull

three properties. It takes in the perimeter of the Manueherikia Basin round to Mt Ida and then some land in towards the Dansey Pass - It is now possible to walk from Michael Peak to Danseys Pass on public land, or in winter, ski that land. As each property must be dealt with individually the boundaries of the Oteake Park, and other conservation land coming out of the process for that matter, are somewhat irregular in places.



Field Trip to Michael Peak by John Turnbull

Over the last twelve years since the Crown Pastoral Land Act came into being most of the land being returned to the Crown for protection - the preferred method - is the higher country of any lease. While this is desirable there is much land of lower altitude containing significant inherent values becoming freehold missing out for various reasons? As the Resource Management Act also requires that Significant Indigenous Vegetation be protected just recently the Queenstown Lakes District Council has set up a committee to do just that, but it is going to take some considerable time to reach completion. Our branch has a representative on that committee.



F&B/DOC Project Crimson trip to Mou Waho, Wanaka, Flo Gaud

COLFB members and DOC staff planted 75 Southern Rata trees on Mou Waho island. The rata trees were purchased from a local nursery with a grant from Project Crimson.

An initial Friday evening talk was held at 7pm at the Yacht Club. This was mainly about the islands of Wanaka and the plan for the following day.

Fortunately the weather was fantastic on Saturday. We met at the marina at 9am and boated to Mou Waho with two boats containing 18 people, plants & gear.



After a planting demonstration and health and safety talk, we split into groups & scattered around the island to commence planting. We savoured a BBQ lunch in paradise. By 2pm we completed the planting and followed Chris on a guided walk up Arthusa pool to discover the flora and fauna of the island.

We boated back to Wanaka at 4pm. Chris from Eco Adventures, generously offered his help for the talk, transport to the island, planting and guided walk. DOC provided staff & boat for the day, organised the trip, purchased the trees, gear and food.

Project Crimson funded the rata trees, potting mix, fertilizer pellets, crystal water, stack and the BBQ Lunch.





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This year's planting day on Mou Waho focused above the main beach. The trees were grown at Nook Nursery near Lake Hawea from cuttings taken from the island some years earlier.

The Southern Rata planting program was first established on Te Peka Karara, one of the island homes of buff weka. With a 60% survival rate the program was extended to Mou Waho 4 years ago with over 300 trees now planted.

The brilliant red flowers of rata appear from November to January, flowering well once every few years.

Reko's Point planting day

Armed with their favourite spade, over 25 people turned out with members of the Central Otago-Lakes Forest and Bird Society (COLFB) to plant 300 native shrubs at Rekos' Point Conservation Area on the weekend.

The community planting day is part of an extensive landscape plan, developed by COLFB in conjunction with the Department of Conservation (DOC).

"The threat of inclement weather didn't hinder the event's success," says Anne Steven, COLFB co-ordinator. "It was great to see so many out planting and having fun with hands-on conservation."



Along with funding the purchase of plant stock, 12 staff from Flooring Xtra volunteered their time to help with the planting. "Donated waste carpet squares are being used as weed matting. This will help to keep competing grass down and retain valuable moisture around the young shrubs" said Anne Steven.

Members from the Rotary Club and the Luggate Community Association, along with other locals also lent their hands to changing the appearance of this area which had over years become infested with pest broom and brier.

The planting site encircles the carpark entrance to the Upper Clutha River Track on Shortcut Road, a main tourist route, and is a popular destination for walkers and mountain bikers.

Flooring Xtra NZ in partnership with the F& B society has developed an environmental programme, called 'Restoring New Zealand's Forest Floor'. They are committed to regular funding from local Flooring Xtra stores to F&B, with the objective of planting in excess of 15,000 native plants and trees around New Zealand every year. The Reko's Point project is the first for Flooring Xtra in this region.





World Wetlands Day

A hot sunny day greeted six volunteers from Forest & Bird who had gathered to celebrate World Wetlands Day. The members planted 20 native trees at the wetlands within the Hawea River Conservation Area. The planting is part of a long term enhancement project, which includes extensive weeding, to restore the native biodiversity of the area.

Download the Best Fish Guide from the main F&B website

[/http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/what-we-do/publications/-best-fish-guide](http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/what-we-do/publications/-best-fish-guide)

Kea

Last June our branch had a visit from two members of the Kea Conservation Trust; a trust which was set up by some people who were greatly concerned at the declining population of this lovely bird. We were treated to a very informative two hour talk about the bird and its life-style. They were doing a tour of the South Island informing people of the state of the present Kea population which was estimated by them at being between 1000 and 5000 birds. They were seeking support for a Kea count, and we were asked to report to them any sighting of kea (and the location) during the weekends of July. Some of us did just that but very few sightings were reported.

I am sure we in our branch are fully supportive of what this trust is doing. Their address is: Tamsin Orr-Walker, Chair, Kea Conservation Trust, www.keaconservation.co.nz (83 Tanekaha Rd, Titirangi, Waitakere City 0604) Ph 09 817 3002 or 0274 24 95 94; email n.notabilis@xtra.co.nz

Build your own worm farm

<http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/get-involved/backyard-projects/-build-worm-farm-in-your-backyard>

BRanch Program : COLFB

Next up is a field trip to the Okarito lagoon on the West Coast Nov 6/7. To find out what's on check out our program on our website. <http://www.colfb.org.nz/branch-program/> and also the Latest News on our home page www.colfb.org.nz for updates and new field trips.

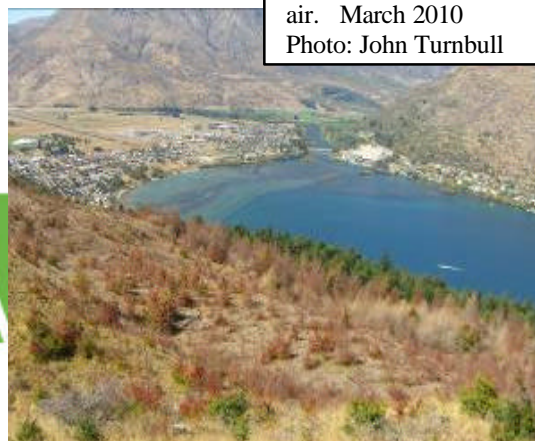
Wilding Conifers by John Turnbull

As members of our branch will be aware, we sometimes help Dunedin branch in felling or pulling out wilding conifers. Also we have at times worked at Lake Ohau, and elsewhere in the Omarama basin doing the same kind of work.

We helped Dunedin at Clyde and at Bannockburn some ten years ago but it is now becoming evident we will have to re-visit some of these places again if we are to keep them clear; so do not be surprised if we see the clearance of wilding conifers on our program for next year.

There is a constant risk that in the Wakatipu basin that conifers could invade the tussock slopes of the Remarkables

Wilding Conifers on Queenstown Hill after being sprayed from the air. March 2010
Photo: John Turnbull



and any hill slopes downwind across the lake from Ben Lomond or Queenstown Hill. That these slopes have been kept clear is due entirely to the sterling efforts of the Wakatipu Wilding Conifer Control Group Incorporated. This group was formed just over a year ago to tackle the problem of Wildings in the Basin. The group came into being after groups of concerned people, farmers, DOC and the Queenstown Lakes District Council came together and drew up a strategy to tackle the problem: the group is partly funded by the QLDC. This concept could well be used in other areas coming under threat from wilding conifers. A stitch in time saves nine.



Predator Control: Haast Valley by Mark Ayre

The predator control work up in Aspiring National Park on the Haast Pass road has now been in operation since 1998. Without all the volunteer work we would never have been able to continue such a successful operation. There are far too many people to name, but a big “thank you” goes out to everybody who has helped and especially to Mt Aspiring College students who helped.



Mt Aspiring Student Rebecca Farrent with her prize catch! Photo: Mark Ayre

In the early days COLFB borrowed all the traps from the Otago Regional Council. We then raised and applied for the money to build our own tunnels and buy the traps. Next, along came DOC; we worked alongside DOC to our present-day partnership (the road is checked by DOC), and COLFB now check the trap line along all four major tracks up the Makarora Valley.

Our operation is divided into two sections; each section takes about half a day for 3 people. This makes for a practical time spent giving something back to Nature. One section is the new Blue Pools track (Blue-Young link) to the start of the Young River and back, where we are using the new DOC 200 traps. The second section is driving to the top of the Haast Pass, while two people walk the bridle track while the driver checks the Haast Lookout track. The driver checks the line at the Link track at the Blue Pools Car Park, then drives back to Davis Flat and collects the two who have checked the Bridle track traps.



Preparing to start at the top of the Haast Pass, Mark Ayre, Andrew Penniket with Two Mt Aspiring Students. Photo: Mark Ayre

Have we made a difference?

One thing for sure is: we killed a huge number of stoats and rats overall these years. The original purpose was to protect and enhance the Mohua population so that the public and tourists who stop in the park have a more enriched experience after hearing and seeing these birds. Anecdotally, we have certainly maintained the two areas where the Mohua are regularly seen: at the top of the Haast track and around the Blue Pools carpark.



By performing regular bird surveys at given locations we could improve the evidence. We need to train a number of people who are willing to go regularly up the valley and record the birds they see and hear at specific locations. The more often the surveys are done the better the supporting evidence will be. The standard for this type of work is called a Five Minute Bird Survey. Everyone who conducts the survey is required to have first completed a two day course which is held over at Glenorchy.

We are looking for volunteers who are willing to help out on this survey work; we will send them on this course. If you are interested please contact Mark Ayre at info@colfb.org.nz to find out more.



Free and interesting high quality video clips

Enjoy a fantastic 4 part documentary on the Kea, thanks to NZ ON Screen.
<http://www.nzonscreen.com/title/kea-mountain-parrot-1993>

Committee

Mark Ayre (Chair) info@colfb.org.nz, Denise Bruns (Secretary) denise.bruns@gmail.com, Mike Nelson (Treasurer), John Turnbull, Shaun Collins, Florence Gaud, Caroline Harker, Jean Kenney, Anne Steven, Bruce Jefferies, Andrew Penniket.

