

Hakaterere News

March 2011



From the Chair

KCC The Kiwi Conservation Club is a great opportunity for children to discover New Zealand's special wildlife and learn about related science as it impacts on us. There are seven schools which have classroom memberships receiving a set of 30 magazines.

We have 29 families which means there are almost 60 children in our KCC too. Many families will have enjoyed our special meetings prior to the adult meeting when there has often been a chance to hear from interesting speakers who are very happy to share their expertise with the children. They have invariably been impressed by the knowledge the KCCs have. This is to the credit of the children's natural curiosity and also the interest and encouragement of their parents.

I acknowledge that the 7pm meeting time has not been a very convenient time for busy families and many times despite an email reminder only a few children have attended. Sometimes the speaker (usually from out of town) will have prepared two talks, one after the other, which is quite a big ask especially when there might only be 3 or 4 children attending. Both children and parents have thoroughly appreciated the wonderful talks over the years but we have decided to discontinue these evening KCC meetings.

Most KCC groups elsewhere focus just on KCC family outings and this is what we plan to do here in Ashburton too. Also in other areas parents have more involvement in planning and running the KCC groups. If any parents are interested to help organise KCC please let us know.

We will continue the Great Days Out for the KCC and there are two outings planned in the new programme. I will email or post information to families prior to these events and hope we will continue to have a good number of KCC families joining in. These events will also be for the older

members. I look forward to seeing some hard workers at the Kids Go Wild Day on **March 27th**.
Edith Smith



KCC's Logan and Abbie McCorkindale pulling wildings in May last year

Wilding Pines in the Lake Heron Basin

One of the features of the Hakaterere Conservation Area is that it is relatively weed free. There are not wide swathes of wildings that we see in the MacKenzie Basin but potentially there could be.

When the Department of Conservation took responsibility for the land alongside Lake Heron area there was a forest of wildings from the neighbouring property. These were removed and pushed into piles which are steadily decomposing. Unfortunately the seed source is in the ground or continues to blow onto the conservation area and there is a persistent crop of little pine seedlings appearing every year.

The conifers alongside Lake Camp are also very productive and last year the KCC and helpers and other concerned public cleared the Conservation area adjoining the road and east of Clearwater Huts of wildings. This week a fresh green carpet of wildings has reappeared. Regular weeding will eventually bring some control but in reality the seed source needs to be dealt with. On the south side of Lake Camp the ADC (Ashburton District

Council) have been clearing wilding pines but too late to avoid the neighbouring property being infested with them. Whose responsibility is it to clear wildings from that property? The ADC surely.

Wildings are a serious concern as they could change the wide tawny landscape that is so part of the Hakatere Conservation Area. They are a very invasive and impact seriously on the biodiversity of an area. Forest & Bird has regularly held wilding days in the Lake Heron area and this year we plan a wilding event near Spider Lakes on the **27th March** and on **May 1st** at Lake Heron.

Many hands make light work and it is a very satisfying job to see the clearance of the wildings while enjoying a day out in such a beautiful setting. We hope for a good muster of helpers at both events. Check the programme for contacts and details. *Edith*

Harris Science Reserve and the Rugby World Cup We celebrate the Rugby World Cup here in Ashburton on **September 4th at 10am**. The Tindall Foundation, Meridian and the Dept of Conservation have funded the (Rugby) Field to Forest Living Legends vegetation restoration project at 17 sites throughout NZ.

Each site has been selected because it is near a community where visiting teams are being hosted. Ashburton is hosting the Romanian team. Also these communities have identified a Living Legend who will support the tree planting event. Jock Ross is our well known local rugby celebrity and the Living Legend. The event will involve many Ashburton groups, from local schools to various firms and rugby clubs.

The Living Legends site is being prepared with preplanting spraying and ripping. The Kanuka plants are growing well at the DOC Motukarara nursery and we have over 1000 locally sourced native plants propagated at the Forest and Bird nursery here at Val and Colin Clemens. Plant protection (Combi Guards) are being provided by the organisers and the compost is already onsite.

Other equipment will be detailed nearer the time. A sausage sizzle and refreshments will be available on the day and it is hoped there will be quite a festive atmosphere. Planting will be supervised by “expert” planters working with small groups to

ensure the plants have the best start. Our infill planting day on **June 12th** will be a good opportunity to train these people so that we have a good number to help with the Rugby World Cup event. Members will be contacted nearer to both these planting days and in the meantime please jot these dates in your diary.

Whio/ Blue Duck March is blue duck awareness month. Have a look at this video- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0j0xDcBMnrc>

Giant slugs On November show weekend Mum and I went tramping into Three Creeks Hut on Winterslow Station. We climbed Mt Winterslow and I got quite excited at the large numbers of vegetable sheep – they looked so cool I liked them. The following morning we awoke to a damp misty morning. Outside the hut on a hoheria (lacebark) was this awesome bug. We took photos and he was really interesting. When the sun came up the slug disappeared, we think he dropped off into the long grass at the bottom of the tree. Val told us later it was a leaf vein slug. We are looking forward to our next adventure with you all.

Mark Churchward



A giant leaf vein slug

Forest & Bird Show Weekend Trip 2010 With a one day turn around to catch up on the domestic front, seven F & B members, fresh from their Chatham Island Ecotour were off again. Destination this time was Okarito. Ashburton member Jean Wragg kindly accommodated members at her bach and others stayed at another

bach. Local resident and internationally renowned photographer, Andre Apse, invited us to his studio where we viewed his current top twenty. We learnt how he achieves perfection in the harshest of environments, mainly in Fiordland.

There were opportunities to fossick along the beach and explore paths through Okarito forest to three mile bridge and up the new DOC path to The Trig where weather permitting, Aoraki Mt Cook and Mt Tasman can be revered.

The youngest members enjoyed catching bullies and crabs off the famous wharf. Others chose to explore the lagoon by kayak. On Saturday night we were all privileged to hear local resident Brett Barrett talk about his lowland habitat kea study. Unfortunately these forest dwelling kea are sadly threatened by predation. His recent filming included the carnage caused by stoats in action.

Two members got the last places on the only Kiwi spotting in the wild experience in NZ. The Roti is the rarest of the five Kiwi species and only found in Okarito. This was a special experience and required infrared torches, quiet clothes, mosquito netted hats, walkie talkies and a transmitter detector. We also had to do team training so ten of us could move as one through the forest in the dark with only occasional whispering allowed. We had a lucky night seeing two kiwis close up and heard a male and female calling nearby. We got home by midnight.



White herons nesting at Okarito

Groups of us went to the White Heron colony in Westland National Park. It is in a very natural setting in the bush, reached by van down a farm track to a jet boat, then paddle boat and finally a boardwalk to a hide showing the only nesting site in NZ. There are also royal spoonbills and pied shags sharing the site which has been untouched since its discovery in 1910. An awe inspiring place and experience. *Valerie Sheldon*

Snowdon A blustery nor-wester greeted us on the north side of the Rakaia river for our trip to Snowdon Station. Nicky and Tony Tripp welcomed us again to their property and Tony guided us through the farm and up the hill to see pockets of native bush and tussock grassland. We also saw their wetland which is covenanted with the QE11 trust. This is one of the sources of the Selwyn River and it was good to see that it is protected. We appreciated the Tripp's hospitality and Tony's extensive knowledge of the area's history. *Mary Ralston*



The Snowdon swamp

Quail Island trip Over 30 F & Bers enjoyed the day on the island. A rough crossing made the boat trip interesting and once on the island we enjoyed seeing the established plantings, penguin boxes, ship wrecks and bird life including wood pigeons and bellbirds. Maria Stoker-Farrell guided us around the island and her expertise was much appreciated. Original plantings (pittosporums, coprosmas etc) are now naturally regenerating which was good to see.

The earthquake has caused some of the basalt cliffs to collapse and there is now a gap in between the wharf and the land – otherwise the island has weathered the event well. *Peter Howden*

Chatham Islands – photos by Val Clemens



Parea – Chatham's pigeon



Chatham Islands forget-me-not growing at the beach



Gorse is a problem on the volcanic cone



Looking towards Pitt and Mangere Islands



The Chatham Islands stinging nettle



***Olearia semidentata* – swamp daisy**

News from O Tu Wharekai & Ashburton Lakes

Why our guests enjoy exploring the Hakatere Conservation Park

This summer is the twelfth that we have been running our nature tours into the Hakatere Conservation Park. What is it about this park which keeps attracting us and to which our guests all respond so positively? My stories or Marita's superb cooking? Well, they may add to the enjoyment of the experience (Marita's meals certainly do, not so sure about my stories). But it is the special character of this natural area that is the main reason. What is this special character as it is seen through the eyes of our guests?

Emptiness Invariably when we turn right at the Hakatere corner and head into the park I get requests to stop the vehicle for a photo stop as the vast vista of the Hakatere Basin suddenly opens up before us. We feel alone in the environment. How many places in New Zealand that are so accessible does one find this the case? I can remember two summers ago sitting with Minnesota guests Amanda, Brian and young Finn sheltering from the wind beside Spider Lake. We were looking towards the Taylor Range and a bank of cloud which was sweeping along its western flanks. Amanda commented that from all of her experiences in New Zealand (this was their fourth visit here – they have covered much of it) this was a standout. The scenery, the wind, the action of the cloud bank and the feeling that this was being experienced by her alone made a huge impression.



Harrison's Bight – a stunning part of Lake Heron

Landscape The tectonic and erosion forces that have shaped much of the South Island are all on display in the park. Dramatic greywacke mountain ranges have been formed largely in the last 5 million years. The Quaternary Ice Ages over the past 2 million years then shaped these mountains. The result is a spectacular landscape and a diversity of glacial and fluvio-glacial landforms. Nowhere else in New Zealand is there such a diversity of landforms in a relatively small area: roche moutonnées, kettle tarns, terminal and lateral moraines, u-shaped valleys, truncated spurs, outwash plains and braided rivers, to name a few. A geomorphologist's paradise!



The Taylor Range

Ashburton River The section of the river east of Buick's Bridge demonstrates to our guests what a braided river is like in its natural state - weed-free, free-flowing and subject to an ever-changing pattern of channels. They find it thrilling – and frustrating – to search the greywacke gravels for wrybill. This can, and often does, take some time, before a call of "I see one". Often it is a BVD – Better View Desired – but it is a marvellous experience to see this threatened, endemic braided river bird. Banded dotterel and black-fronted tern are more easily spotted but still bring pleasure to the observer. There are also special native plants found here. Dwarf native brooms (*Carmichaelia* sp), cushion forget-me-not and the white sun orchid can all be found flowering during spring and early summer. They don't take much convincing when I tell them that *Carmichaelia nana* is the smallest tree in the world!

Lake Heron We go to the lake ostensibly to see the Australian or southern crested grebe. But the lake has many more attractions:

- The pure and clear water and often the sight of trout or salmon cruising over the shallows on the western side of the lake.
- The kettle tarns and their amazing flora.

- The walk up Lake Hill and the marvellous vista from the summit. To the north and west is the lake and the Arrowsmith Range and to the south and east the Swin River and Taylor Range. As good a high country view as you can enjoy anywhere.
- The Cameron Fan and its stunted vegetation, rare native plants and extensive red tussock wetlands.
- The impressive pest and weed control projects being carried out by volunteers (such as the Lake Heron group working on predator control and Forest and Bird and local run holders on wilding pines and broom) and DoC with its willow and wilding pine eradication programmes.

Fauna and flora treasures The wrybill, black-fronted tern, crested grebe, scaup and New Zealand falcon are all special native birds which can be seen in the Park. Then there are the autumn visits from kotuku and kaki (black stilt). Spotting either of these special birds certainly raises the heart rate of keen birders. On our very first nature tour in 2000 we saw a bittern in a roadside wetland at Lake Heron. I am still waiting for our second sighting of this species!

Seeing an orchid in flower is always a thrill. Sun orchids, grass and onion-leaved orchids and dwarf green-hooded orchids all draw our guests to their knees. The flowering of gentians, some spectacular flowering of spaniards, the green-flowered *Clematis marata* and the blue-flowered *Hebe pimeleoides* are a few of the floristic delights of Lake Heron and the Cameron Fan.

These are some of reasons our guests enjoy exploring the Hakatere Conservation Park and help to explain why we get so much satisfaction taking them there. This was going to be our last season of running Tussock & Beech Ecotours but we are finding it hard to stop. And while we have good health and enjoy doing it, why should we?
Warren Jowett

Trapping at Lake Heron The Lake Heron Conservation Group has now been going for just over a year and has trapped a total of 170 predators – including 23 cats, 44 stoats, 38 ferrets and numerous rats and hedgehogs. We are hoping that the breeding success of the crested grebes will be improved by this reduction in

predator pressure. It is very rewarding to make a difference to the number of mammalian predators at the lake and would like to extend the trapping to other areas. More volunteers are always welcome – phone Ross Gordon on 302.8840 or email ross@sarinz.com if you would like to help.



Moving a trap into position

The Ashburton Branch of F & B:

- Meets on the third Tuesday of every month at the Sinclair Centre, Park St, at 8pm
- Excellent speakers entertain and educate
- Kiwi Conservation Club – the junior branch of F&B – check the programme for KCC Great Days Out
- F&B organises field trips to interesting locations, usually within mid-Canterbury
- We welcome visitors and new members to meetings and field trips

Committee

Chair: Edith Smith 3084440
Secretary: Val Clemens 3085620
Treasurer: Peter Smith 3084440
Committee: Bill Hood, Janet Hood, Donna Field, Peter Howden, Valerie Sheldon, Paul Dyas, Warren Jowett, Don Geddes, Jean Wragg, Allan Sinclair, Mary Ralston
Newsletter editor: Mary Ralston Contributions are welcome – please send to mary.ralston@xtra.co.nz or phone 302920