

Hakaterere News

September 2014



Forest & Bird Photo Competition

Val had the idea to hold a photo competition to mark Forest & Bird's 90th anniversary. It was proposed the photos would be displayed and then given to the new museum as a record of some of the biodiversity of the area. Warren took up the idea and ran with it – organising not only a highly successful competition but a wonderful opening night. Rod Morris, one of New Zealand's pre-eminent nature photographers, judged the competition and spoke at the opening.

First place went to Peter Langlands with his photo of three South Island pied oyster catchers; second place went to Don Geddes with his photo of a scree skink. Eight other photos were awarded "Honours" and a further 30 were given "Acceptance" for framing and display.

We are very grateful for the support we received to run the competition from individuals and businesses. Warren worked tirelessly on the many details that ensured the event was of a very high standard and the committee is very grateful for his efforts. The photos can be seen on the Forest & Bird website:

<http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/branches/canterbury/ashburton/forest-bird-ashburton-branch-90th-anniversary-photo-competition-result>



Don Geddes



Warren Jowett



First place - Peter Langlands



Cory Geddes – undescribed weta

Vegetation loss, nutrient zones

Recently a visitor reported that she had seen a helicopter spraying matagouri and native shrubs near Mount Hutt. A second helicopter sighting spraying behind Pudding Hill was also reported.

Coincidentally Ashburton's second District Plan becomes operative on August 25th. It is a planning blueprint for the district and will ensure there is sustainable management of the district's natural resources by a series of rules which the public must abide by.

There are rules about Native Vegetation Removal in the District Plan which state that if you live in Rural A or B a resource consent is needed to remove any native vegetation except in shelter belts or private gardens. In Rural C the District Plan rules are more complex and resource consents are required for most clearance of native vegetation. The information regarding native vegetation clearance is available on line at ADC and the pamphlet has been sent to all landowners.

The District Council relies on members of the public to report sightings of vegetation clearance but like the Mount Hutt spraying episode, most clearance is not noticed until large areas have been sprayed or mechanically removed and beyond repair. This reporting is too late. Council say that this dependence on the public is because monitoring is very expensive. It concerns me these recently reviewed rules require vigilance by the public rather than a monitoring regime by the Council.

Reporting on one another is unpleasant and it seems this would make the reliance on public reporting vegetation clearance very unreliable. Helicopter companies are regularly updated with indigenous vegetation rules regarding spraying and are expected to confirm a consent to do so has been obtained by the land owner. The consent would be dealt with by the planning department at the District Council. It would be precautionary for anyone to check with Council before any vegetation removal in Rural C.

ECan's proposed Land and Water Regional Plan Nutrient Management Rules are also putting pressure on native vegetation. ECan has mapped Nutrient Allocation Zones related to nitrogen loss calculation for example: Red Zone - water quality outcomes not met, Orange Zone - water quality at

risk, Green and Light blue - meets water quality outcomes. As these maps show that alongside the Rakaia and Rangitata rivers from the coast and to the high country there are no water quality issues.

This map gives landowners a great opportunity to move quickly to dairy support with unless the rules are managed rigorously, its associated impacts on the environment. This includes loss of water quality and natural stream ecology and indigenous vegetation. The riverside terraces and berm areas are free draining. Many have native vegetation, for example Kowhai forest near Lowes Cutting and Kowhai Flat. There are numerous clear streams flowing off the higher country and spring fed ephemeral streams flowing alongside these rivers. These water ways such as the example in the photograph are at risk from vegetation clearance and cattle access. Free drainage and seepage from grazing cattle especially when on brassicas has the potential to reduce the water quality and habitat.

We have an irretrievable problem on the plains where intensive land use has had a serious impact. With the benefit of hindsight we can avoid repeating our mistakes. It is important that ECan and the District Council work closely together in a proactive and positive manner to communicate with landowners about issues such as vegetation clearance, effluent management, stock water and waterway ecology before more problems present themselves. *Edith Smith*



This photo shows kale planted adjoining a stream a short distance from the Ashburton River

Planting day – Harris Reserve, Sept 7th

The Ashburton Community Conservation Trust is preparing for the Harris Scientific Reserve planting on Sunday Sept 7th.

This year it is a Forest & Bird organised event with the support of the Living Legends project. We hope to have a good number of volunteers to plant the south west area of the Reserve in predominantly Kowhai. This was a dream of the late Arthur Harris, the original owner of the site. As well as the Kowhai planting we plan to continue to infill laneways to complete the Living Legends site.

Time: 9.30am to 12.00 **Bring:** gloves, spade

So that we can plan for the day, if you are willing to help this year, please phone Edith Smith 3084440, or Val Clemens 3085620.



Elsbeth Jaine

Wintering cows & nutrient loss

At this time of the year we see throughout the District and more recently in the higher plains and foothills, paddocks of kale being strip fed to dairy cattle. The sight of large numbers of cows standing on muddy soil as they eat the kale to the ground and kale crops planted close to waterways is of concern because of the potential for runoff and the leaching of nitrates and other nutrients. I have noticed in several places where the fence lines are right on the bank of waterways with kale growing and cattle grazing to the edge.

I asked the ECan Land Management Advisor Geoff Thompson, who advises farmers on rules concerning stock exclusion from waterways, about the impacts of the intensive feeding regimes on soils and ground and surface water. He said, “Brassicas have high food value, especially protein, and help maintain and build

cow condition. However cows produce high levels of nitrate after eating brassicas. When cows urinate while standing on bare soil, there are no plants available to uptake the nutrients. The urine may stay in the upper soil profile or if there are periods of heavy rain, there is a risk of nitrates leaching through the soil profile. If once the crop is grazed off and soil conditions allow the paddock to be prepared and sown out in a new crop, some available nitrogen from urine may be taken up by new growing plants but it can be lost because new plant roots are too shallow. This is the long term risk to groundwater.

“Phosphates on the other hand are attached to soil particles, so the risk is the runoff carrying sediment or soil particles flowing into waterways. The risk of phosphate-laden sediments getting into waterways can be helped by having well vegetated riparian strips to act as a filter.”

ECan has fact sheets about riparian planting to exclude stock and to absorb nutrient runoff and help protect water quality which helps deal with the phosphate and sediment contamination of water ways. Unfortunately this is not so with nitrates and despite various combinations of baleage and silage feed, nitrates will still seep into the ground water.

If you are concerned about a situation impacting on the environment you are encouraged to phone the ECan Pollution Hotline. This creates a record in the system that must be followed up and is probably the best way for the public to register their concerns. The Pollution Hot Line is not just for pollution but is also for other breaches of rules such as illegal clearing. **Pollution Hotline 0800 76 5588.** *Edith Smith*



Recently sprayed matagouri on Rural C land

Bird count at the lakes

A beautiful day was organised for the annual bird count at the Ashburton Lakes. Clear and calm conditions meant counting was straightforward. Numbers were generally similar to other years – 4960 birds were counted (3058 last year, 4375 the year before). Much higher than usual numbers of crested grebe were counted (54, as compared to 6 last year, and usually about 20). This is very exciting and may reflect the trapping of predators at Lake Heron and the Maori Lakes (see report below). A bittern was sighted at Lake Emma.

Trapping results

From March 2010 to July 2014, a total of 523 pests have been trapped at Lake Heron, including 92 cats, 128 hedgehogs, 93 ferrets, 115 stoats, 76 rats, 18 weasels and 1 possum.

At Maori Lakes from Nov 2013 to July 2014, total pests trapped were 158, including 30 cats. This fantastic effort by volunteers may be making a major difference to bird and invertebrate survival. Congratulations and thanks to all involved.

If you would like to help with the trapping at Lake Heron, phone Ross Gordon 3028840; and for Maori Lakes, phone Allan Sinclair 3083331.



Mark Churchward, one of the regular volunteers with the Lake Heron trapping group, with a cat

Ashburton Zone Committee

Update Work continues on flow rates for the Hinds Drains area and has been put into the hands of local land owners and representatives from DOC, ECan, Fish and Game, and Forest & Bird. John Waugh, retired hydrologist, is the F & B representative and seems to be having a good time having his “hands back in the water”. The focus is on some new measuring kits to measure the conductivity of water. This has a strong correlation with nitrate levels and will contribute to data that has already been gathered (see John’s report below).

The Zone Committee is entering a new phase at the moment and looking at where we are going in the future. Some of the items in our work programme are:

- Ashburton River, Quantity and Quality. Minimum flows have been identified for the Ashburton River under the Ashburton Zone Committee Implementation Plan. The ZC will keep pressure on ADC and other parties to ensure the flow is put back into the river as soon as possible. In conjunction with that we are considering establishing a water quality standard and how we will implement it.
- Braided Rivers. At this stage little information is available on the flow rates of the lower reaches of the Rakaia and Rangitata Rivers. The upper reaches of these rivers and their river banks are considered green zones therefore have the capacity to have increased nutrient loading. We will look into the implications of the new zoning and try to gain an idea of water flows and quality.
- Carters Creek. This creek is fed by springs above Tinwald and has very poor quality. In conjunction with the community we will investigate ways to improve quality and possibly create a wetland before it goes into the Ashburton River.
- Immediate Steps: An ongoing funding source, we are finally starting to get applications from all around the area mainly for riparian fencing and creating native vegetation plantings. We are very keen to get protection projects established as well so if you know of an area of remnant natives let the landowner know there may be funding available to assist with protection. Harris Reserve with its kanuka is an area of remnant vegetation.
- Ashburton Lakes Sensitive zone

- Chertsey Sub Regional Plan.

Our next meeting will be held on the 2nd September at Rolleston Selwyn District Council and will be a joint meeting with the Selwyn Waihora Zone. They are our neighbouring Zone on the north side of the Rakaia. Attending the meeting will be Trust Power, giving us the opportunity to discuss the Enhancement Fund that they set up as a condition of changing the Water Conservation Order on the Rakaia.

If you are concerned about an issue with water or vegetation in our district you can phone Ecan's Pollution Hotline 0800 765 588. This is an anonymous reporting system. Otherwise for vegetation damage you can phone Ashburton District Council and speak to a planner or Fleur Mulligan, who is the co-ordinator for ADCs Biodiversity Working Group or Alan Totty whom is the Chair of the group. *Donna Field*

Hinds Drains Working Party

The Hinds Drains Working Party has been established by the Ashburton Zone Water Management Committee. We have met each month, with a Field Inspection of the Drains on 20th June and a Technical Meeting at the Eiffelton Hall on 11th July. ECan staff outlined the flow and water quality data then available.

On 1 August we started a sampling programme using a conductivity meter to measure dissolved material in the water. This is a simple indirect way of checking on nitrates dissolved in the water. Sampling points have been established at the top (Boundary Road), middle and near the coast, on Wheatstone, Flemington, Windermere, and Boundary Drains, also two points on Stormy Drain in the Lowcliffe area. Three sampling runs have been completed to date and show values that are remarkably consistent.

Preliminary results show that groundwater coming into the drains at the top of the system (near Boundary Road) is high in nitrate and there is very little change as the water flows down to the coast. There are waterlevel recorders on several of the drains and ECan is installing Staff Gauges (ESG's) at the main sampling sites. Flow gauging (measurements) will allow flows to be estimated off the ESG boards, to accompany the conductivity and nitrate sampling.

Flows in the Hinds Drains in August 2014 are quite large (for drains), not surprising given the high autumn rainfall in March-April and early May. This rainfall has produced a major recharge of the groundwater aquifers and is now flowing into the drain system. Some drains are flowing right into the sea and so may allow native fish to enter the hapua /wetland areas near the coast.
John Waugh

AGM & Conference report

I was fortunate to represent the Branch at the AGM and annual conference in Wellington. The weekend was dominated by the Constitutional Review. A working party, including all members of the executive, had already spent a lot of time and effort fine-tuning the final document. The Constitution was finally passed on Sunday. One effect of the new constitution was that we no longer have an executive, it is now a board. The Board members are: President – Andrew Cutler; Vice President – Mark Hanger; Treasurer – Graeme Bellamy. Board members elected for 1 year: Ines Stager (South Canterbury), Kate Graeme (Tauranga), Tony Dunlop (Auckland). Elected for 2 years: Brent Barrett (Manawatu), Lindsay Britton, John Wenham (Waikato).

Political Panel

Nick Smith Listed the areas that we agree on (1080, marine reserves) but acknowledged the differences (logging wind-blown timber). National wants to be a world leader in marine conservation. Is doing a good job on fishing. Focus in conservation has to be on protecting our native birds - 25 million are still being killed each year by predators. National's blue green approach.

The logging of wind-blown timber was a pragmatic decision and recognises the hard times that the West Coast has gone through. The reason that the decision was made quickly was because the beech wood deteriorates very rapidly and this will be starting in spring. Rimu takes about 5 years to deteriorate and he is having scientific study on the effect of small scale removal of trees. Claims that National is doing a better job on climate change than Labour. Said that National was doing a great job on Climate Change.

Ruth Dyson Congratulated Nick on his tunnel and monorail decisions but castigated him on the logging issue, especially doing it under urgency. Climate Change - Labour will put a proper price

on carbon. Water - dirty rivers will be cleaned up over a generation. Restore WCO.

DoC - will not make a commitment about increasing funding and is concerned about centralisation. Losing contact with local communities. Maui's dolphins - habitat protected, no fishing, no activity including oil exploration. Ruth noted that there are more National MP's than Maui's dolphins and she wants to change both of those figures! Stewardship land - more work has to be done to determine which is good quality and low quality conservation land.

Eugenie Sage Got stuck into National on the logging of wind-blown timber. Reminded the meeting that in 2001 the government gave the West Coast \$100m to compensate for the loss of logging of native timbers. This seem to have been forgotten. Agrees with the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) and review the designation of all stewardship land. Will also make a commitment to Climate Change. They will strengthen the RMA - and reminded us that the National Party will revisit changing the RMA after the election.

President's Report (Andrew Cutler) Andrew's report was very positive. F&B is in good shape, including financially. F&B is increasingly being required to be the only advocate for the environment and conservation. In the past, local & regional government, MoE and DoC have done this but now are being less so involved. The Ruataniwha dam project has been a good example of this and F&B has been very much at the forefront of advocating for the environment.

Financial Report Nearly half (\$2.9m) of total income comes from donations, and most of this is from "Face-to-Face". But membership and fundraising cost \$2.4m. Major component of expenditure was *Nature Conservation Beyond Public Protected Areas* (\$1.2m). Face-to-Face is now in a profit making stage and \$1.2m "profit" was made in the last year. Telemarketing is now raising 29% of income, subscriptions 15%. Endowment Fund is \$2.9m.

In the last year:

- *Face to Face* raised \$1.6m, from 9000 members
- Telemarketing \$602,000 about 3000 members
- Membership \$446,000, from 19,000 members

- KCC \$77, 6000 members

Chief Executive Report (Hone McGregor)

Hone's report was also very positive. Good to see income and profit going up and not down. Great organisation to be part of, committed staff. Need to retain the strong voice for nature. Planning has to be at least 3 years ahead. Hone wants to see the organisation as being relevant and important in society. The Denniston campaign was a huge commitment last year.

We need to be able to change. Because of government cut-backs other voluntary organisations are also in the public fundraising and this puts F&B under pressure to get funding from the public. Hone want to see us raising \$10m by 2020. Reorganisation of the Society starts next month. Youth vision strategy to be launched. Also review of KCC. Brand development strategy this year. Perceptions are that we are old, a govt dept, are always against things and not for things.

Election Campaign We were briefed by Debs Martin on the Society's election strategy. Emphasis will be on: fresh water; oceans; mining on conservation land (+ stewardship land, logging); climate change; & other issues e.g. RMA.

Youth Vision We learnt about this new initiative and the plan to extended the KCC strategic plan to include up to 18 year olds. Branches will be sent a discussion document to consider - in next 3 weeks. KCC website gets 14,000 visits a month.

Funding future Regular giving: 34.7% of F&B income. 5858 regular givers. Bequests: 18% of income. Average bequest in NZ is \$28,000. Donations: 12.5% of income.

Ashburton F&B's photographs The last session finished with the slideshow showing our competition photographs. They had been showing throughout the two days and attracted a lot of favourable comment.

Warren Jowett, Councillor





Elspeth Jaine



Val Clemens – Clematis marata

We need your email address!

Have you received this newsletter in the post? If you do have email, and are happy to receive the newsletter and an occasional email notice electronically, we urge you to update your details with Head Office. Members on email receive the newsletter as a PDF file which is easy to open. Email communications are quicker and save us time and the cost of printing and postage. And you will see the photos in colour!

Please contact Head Office on 04.385.7374 or email them on office@forestandbird.org.nz to tell them your email address and they will pass the updated info to us at the local branch.



Judith Sommerville

Vehicle costs On field trips and outings, it would be appreciated if passengers would contribute to fuel and vehicle running costs. On trips to Christchurch or the high country please offer your driver \$10 per passenger, and \$5 within the Ashburton area.

The Ashburton Branch of F & B:

- Meets on the third Tuesday of alternate months at the Sinclair Centre, Park St, 7.30pm
- Excellent speakers entertain and educate
- Kiwi Conservation Club – the junior branch of F&B – check the programme for KCC Great Days Out
- Field trips to interesting locations, usually within mid-Canterbury, alternate months
- We welcome visitors and new members

Committee

Chair: Edith Smith 3084440

Secretary: Peter Smith 3084440

Treasurer: Peter Smith 3084440

Committee: Val Clemens, Janet Hood, Donna Field, Peter Howden, Warren Jowett, Don Geddes, Jean Wragg, Allan Sinclair, Rennie Davidson, Mary Ralston, Niki Davidson, John Waugh, David Strong.

Newsletter editor: Mary Ralston. Contributions are always welcome – please send to mary.ralston@xtra.co.nz or phone 3029202