



Forest & Bird
GIVING NATURE A VOICE

North Canterbury Branch

Annual Report 2017-18

North Canterbury Branch Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of NZ.

Chairperson's Comment

We are both delighted and proud that Eugenie Sage our new Conservation Minister is addressing us at our AGM this year. This feels like a fitting way to end our 2017-18 year which saw a change of government; and what feels like a sea-change around New Zealand in attitude and responsiveness to at least some environmental issues.

We have a commitment from the coalition partners to a Zero Carbon Act something this branch helped campaign for. We heard recently the Minister for the Environment speak about controlling pollution from intensive farming a likely consequence being reduced cow numbers in some regions. Eugenie herself worked for Forest & Bird before entering regional and national politics. She has already made moves in office reflecting her deep understanding of conservation issues, including significantly boosting funding for pest control.

Our branch along with the whole of the Society played a role in this change. From our heavy involvement in the making of the movie *Seven Rivers Walking: Haere Marire* which reached a large audience, to our and others' actions and efforts as "the voice for nature", we worked hard and I believe effectively throughout the year. I thank personally all the people who engaged with our work throughout the past year and wish everyone all the best as we move into the next.

We have overall a hope for positive change in New Zealand long overdue and needed. We must now embrace this opportunity by reaching out respectfully to all whom we need on this journey with us.

Colleen Philip
Chairperson.

Climate Disruption

In 2017 the North Canterbury branch took a remit to the Forest & Bird national AGM asking for the Society to be signatory to "Our Climate Declaration". This remit passed with ease.

Our relationship with the local 350.org and *Generation Zero* has remained strong throughout this past year. This included hosting a very well attended meeting (26/7/17 at Space Academy) in partnership with Generation Zero to launch the Christchurch campaign for the *Zero Carbon Act*. Gen Zero should be applauded for the success they have had with their campaign for this legislation.

Marine

We were deeply saddened by the loss of Hendrikje Buss in October last year. The branch committee decided to establish the "Hendrikje Buss Marine Fund" in her memory and have done so ring-fencing \$40,000 of branch funds for marine work to which have been and will be added any donations given to the branch for marine purposes. The first major use of this fund has been

to support *Christchurch Penguin Rehabilitation* with costs associated with increasing their capacity to house and rehabilitate penguins including hoiho, little blue and white-flipped penguins.

In 2017 the branch contributed to the national Forest & Bird penguin appeal and we are pleased to see that the penguin advocate position which was a goal of the fundraising has been advertised. We also last year helped with the publication of the children's book "Yolaska the Godwit". More recently Lorna and Colleen have met with people from *Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust*, *CCC*, *ECan*, and *DOC* to discuss ways we can work together on marine conservation locally, especially around Banks Peninsula.

On March 11th, 30 people came on our Seaweed Cycle which has been held for the past three years as part of Seaweed. Islay Marsden, Professor of Marine Biology from the University of Canterbury and Chair of the Avon Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust, gave a very interesting talk on what the birds eat in the Estuary.

Arthur's Pass Summer Programme

Held in the second week in January, the summer programme was a successful start to the year for the branch and resulted in the planning of a weed-busting project involving ourselves, *Arthur's Pass Community Association*, *Arthur's Pass Wildlife Trust*, *DOC* and others with a focus on russell lupin control in the upper Waimakariri scheduled for November 9th-18th, 2018. There will be a summer programme in 2019 and again the second week of January will see a programme focussed on conservation themes.

Kea for Bird of the Year

In 2016, Forest & Bird North Canterbury backed the kea for "Bird of the Year". After a strong campaign it resulted in a second placing to the kōkako in what was a neck-and-neck campaign until the kōkako made it on Seven Sharp!

October 2017 saw the competition return for the 13th time and another kea campaign team was formed with George Moon, Harry Seagar, Laura Young and Annika Werner. Supported again by North Canterbury Forest & Bird, as well as endorsements from the Federated Mountain Clubs and other organisations, the kea managed to get over 7300 votes, taking out the title for 2017!

The whole Bird of the Year competition is an excellent way of raising awareness of the plight of many of our native birds—it's quite saddening browsing the competition website, with so many deserving birds marked as 'in serious trouble'. This year's competition was the biggest ever, with a vote-rigging scandal making the news across the world (BBC, The Guardian etc), as well as national TV news. Long may the competition continue!

George Moon

Kiwi Conservation Club (KCC)

Karen Gokey-Curry and Fiona Miller are the volunteer co-ordinators (KCOs) for KCC. KCC events over the last year have included:

- a trip to see the Oxford Mudfish, with Sophie Allen (*Working Waters Trust*) sharing her knowledge and catching some fish for viewing. Rebecca Browne (KCC Head Office) set up and facilitated the trip to assist with our orientation and "show us the ropes".
- White-flipped penguin trip - a coastal walk and learning about and seeing penguins! Thomas Stracke and Kristina Schutt (*Christchurch Penguin Rehabilitation*) were very generous with their time (2 large groups went.)

- KCC farewell to the Godwits supported kindly by Sandra Wallace and Bev Alexander (*Birds NZ*) with expertise and spotting scopes
- KCC participating in World Fish Migration Day (Our Fabulous Freshwater Fish - Margaret Mahy playground). This event was facilitated by Sjaan Bowie (DOC) and there were activity tents from *ECan*, *Working Waters Trust*, *Fish and Game*, *Marine Ecology Research Group* (UC) and *EOS Ecology*. KCC shared an activity site with Sophie Allen. On offer were activity worksheets/colouring, making a re-usable shopping bag out of a t-shirt and weaving flax fish.

This year KCC celebrates its 30th Birthday and we hope to celebrate this with members later in the year. There is also a KCC nation-wide “be with a tree week” (June 4-10). KCC branches are encouraged to connect with members around this. We will plan some further KCC adventures for the second part of the year.

We would like to acknowledge the fantastic support from Eleanor Bissell (previous KCO) both with her time and expertise. We would also like to thank the committee for supporting us to attend the KCO gathering in October 2017 in Wellington. It was an excellent opportunity for networking with other KCOs and for orientating to the processes and Health & Safety (Vault computer program).

Calder Green Reserve

- *General:* This past year we have again focused on maintaining existing plants. Overall the site is doing well considering the harsh environment of this saltmarsh area. Signage has been installed acknowledging the history and work done by F&B at this reserve.
- *Sea Lavender:* A ‘search and destroy’ blitz was done along with a large team from the CHCH City Council. Numbers of this weed pest have been significantly reduced with further control/monitoring to be done.
- *Bird surveys:* These continue regularly (4 times per year) and results can be found on Ebird. Surveys are now coordinated by Michael Godfrey (mgodfrey@xnet.co.nz)
- *Volunteer hours:* plant care 52; bird surveys 36; other including rubbish-cleanup 100
- *Looking ahead:* A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Christchurch City Council to create an area for a Lizard Sanctuary next to the Calder Green Reserve. The aim is for planting/habitat restoration of plants that will provide shelter and food for lizards. Work on this site started in May 2018.

Mick Ingram

Middelmost Mudfish Project

The Middelmost Mudfish Project had an interesting year, with the sad receivership of the property putting the brakes on the project for a few months. Fortunately the new owner is keen to carry on as before, and even has volunteered his time and digger to expand the mudfish wetland. The sale of the land did however show the fragility of carrying out restoration work even with a landowner agreement in place, but with a QEII covenant requiring willingness, time and effort.

The KCC visited the site in May last year, with a great turn out and lots of interest. We held a few spring planting events with 250 native plants planted along the riparian margin of the main spring. The population is probably the healthiest of the Nationally Critical Canterbury mudfish that Sophie Allen, our partner from *Working Waters Trust*, has ever seen. Because of this, 100 adults were permitted to be translocated to a nearby wetland that had no fish (due to a natural barrier) to start a new population high up in the Coopers Creek catchment. Sophie carried out monitoring in

autumn 2018, and caught some healthy-looking fish that showed good signs that the translocation will be successful, with breeding hoped for next year.

We were busy over summertime carrying out monthly weeding bees for the plants – 1500 of them planted in total now. We also translocated native water plants to the new ponds to create good spawning habitat. We celebrated our second birthday of the project in February with pies at the Sheffield Pie Shop in Oxford, and an additional planting of 250 wetland plants around the newest wetland ponds. Bev Alexander and Chris Martin have been carrying out quarterly bird counts, with a wide diversity of species found for a working dairy farm. View Hill School came for a day to help with monitoring the mudfish in Spring 2017, and counted many large healthy mudfish. The students are great artists, with a session at the school producing some wonderful artworks – some of which have been used for an interpretation panel that will be installed shortly at the site about the project. Thanks to WWF and the Tindall Foundation for the funding that allowed work to be carried out this year.

Mahoe-nui Restoration Project

Mahoe-nui is a lovely gully behind Sumner being restored to a corridor of bush from Evans Pass road to above the summit road. F&B and *Sumner Environment Group* provide volunteers and the work is done under the guidance of Di Carter (Port Hills ranger.)

Last winter our plants (400) and volunteers (33) helped with the Port Hills fire restoration planting instead of planting at Mahoe-nui. Spring and autumn plant releasing working bees were held at both the upper and lower sites as usual. The upper site is looking well planted-out and plant cages were removed also from larger trees at both sites. Another group of volunteers carries out pest control in the reserve.

More stringent health and safety requirements have meant we have introduced carpooling from Sumner to reduce the amount of cars parking at the site. Hopefully this will become more streamlined as a band of dedicated volunteers are keen to “get going” with their work at the reserve! More recently we have also had help from Conservation volunteers at Mahoe-nui.

Total volunteer hours for the year are 220.

Helen Hills

The Sanctuary

This report follows on from my 2016/17 report on this project. For clarity “The Sanctuary” is an area on the south bank of the Waimakariri River about 2 kilometres west of the motorway bridge. The area is an Environment Canterbury (ECan) reserve that they are developing in partnership with North Canterbury Forest and Bird and other entities. The area is a natural wetland and area subject to flood by the river, however no flooding has occurred in the last decade or so. Forest and Bird are only involved in about 20% of The Sanctuary reserve and ECan is involving other organisations with a view to encouraging biodiversity and the return of native plants and animals.

The arrangement so far is that ECan has used its financial resources along with donations from *The Riccarton House and Bush Trust* (payment for heavy machinery and contractors) to clear areas of grass, blackberry, fallen willow and poplar and other non-native vegetation. Forest and Bird and other organisations including *St Margaret’s and Ferndale Schools* and *Belfast Rotary* supply the manpower to plant the native plants supplied by ECan and to keep the planted area free of weeds so as to allow the new plants to come away.

Forest and Bird’s involvement with ECan in the Sanctuary project began in 2016 and has continued through 2017. Plantings have expanded with planting days attended by enthusiastic volunteers during the year. Some clearing work aimed at Old Man’s Beard has also been done with some success. A high level of survival of plantings has been achieved and the weed control work has been continued by Phil McEntee and me. The predator traps set within the planting areas this year have been quite successful resulting in the elimination of about 44 possums, 9

hedgehogs, 7 rats, 1 stoat and two wild cats. In setting traps, it has been necessary to consider that the area is used by the public (cyclists, walkers and runners) sometimes accompanied by their dogs so the traps have been set away from the road frequented by people and their pets so as not to invite injury to dogs. The braided river to the north of the area is an area which ground nesting river birds frequent so that trapping is intended to have a positive effect on their habitat by removing predators. Other areas of The Sanctuary have traps set by ECan. Anecdotal evidence (an increase in Californian Quail, Fantail and Pheasants) suggests that birdlife appears to be increasing in the area.

Greg Stanley is a Biodiversity Officer (amongst many other tasks) for ECan who is responsible for the work being done in the Sanctuary and our relationship with him has been excellent. He is most supportive of our efforts in improving the habitat for the birdlife in the area. I would suggest he is doing his best with the very limited funds available to him. Without that heavy machinery and the employment of contractors by ECan, the task of extending the native plantings would be near impossible. It is important that we don't allow the weeds to come back and negate the work and expense that has been put into the planting programme so far. The work of planting has been focused along the drain (creek) that runs almost the length of the Sanctuary area although extensive enhancement work has been done in the heavily wooded (sub canopy) area between the drain and the stop bank. During this year Forest and Bird provided \$500 to cover the cost of additional plants. The project has potential to last for some years yet. We have planted a few large trees (Kahikatea, Rimu and Matai) with shrubs of Kaikomako, Rohutu, Manatu, Turepo, Hoheria and Poataniwha and there have been about 5,000 plants put in the ground over the past 12 months.

Volunteer hours estimate as follows:

Forest & Bird volunteer planting time	350 hours
My time clearing weeds and trapping predators	150 hours

Rick Robinson

Boyle Base Trapping Project

The Boyle Base Trapping Project is situated in the Lewis Pass area, near the confluence of the Lewis and Boyle rivers, on DOC land. Its purpose is to monitor and trap mustelids and rats to enhance the survival of native wildlife in the valley. The project was set up, and has been managed by Lesley Shand since 2004. Lesley is a life member of F&B and was instrumental in 4000 hectares of land, in the area where the trapping project is, being transferred to DOC when the Poplars farm high country tenure review and subsequent auction failed. She put in an urgent proposal that the *Nature Heritage Fund* buy 2/3 of the property and the other 1/3 was sold as a smaller working farm. This year, for health reasons, Lesley decided to take a reduced role in the trapping but maintains management of the hut, and a keen input into the project.

About every month volunteers spend 2-3 days clearing and rebaiting the 8 trap lines (122 traps altogether), while monitoring of rats and mustelids is carried out every 3-4 months. Bird counts are done in spring and autumn and I would like to thank Di Cowan for her expertise and time doing these.

The project is supported and overseen by DOC, and there are several other groups trapping in the area including *The Boyle River Village Owners Association*, *Boyle Outdoor Education Centre*, *The Deerstalkers Association*, and *Hurunui High* in the nearby Nina Valley. DOC is keen for the different groups to liaise with the potential of possibly "filling in the gaps" between the projects to make a larger pest free area. Trapping records and bird monitoring results will be reported to DOC.

Volunteers stay in the Boyle Base hut which was a run down hut for training deer cullers, but was lovingly restored by F&B volunteers under Lesley's leadership soon after the project was started. The hut is situated 100 m off the main highway, 2km south of the beginning of the St James walkway. The Te Araroa walkway passes its gate. People can hire the hut, and proceeds go

towards the trapping project and upkeep of the hut. This is done by contacting our secretary Frances Wall. This year we successfully removed 28 stoats and 5 weasels from the area. After discussion with DOC, we may review our objectives and possibly target eradicating possums and feral cats as well. We are very thankful to John Dearden, who lives locally for his many years of helping maintain the hut and grounds, checking on it regularly, plus sharing his extensive knowledge of trapping with us.

I wish to thank all the volunteers for giving their time and often using their own resources to help protect the wildlife in the area. A huge thank you to Lesley for setting up and leading this project with absolute dedication and enthusiasm over the last 14 years. At present a group of dedicated volunteers including Rick Robinson, Phil McEntee, Geoff Mahan and I are keeping the trapping project going with the help of a small number of volunteers. We would welcome new volunteers to this very worthwhile project set in a beautiful part of the country.

We estimate that time spent on trap lines (excluding travel time and time spent at the hut), to be at least 450 volunteer hours. If time at the hut and travel time were added that figure would be closer to 1,000 volunteer hours.

Helen Hills

Bird Rescue Parklands

Penny Wright, as she did last year, supported Jackie Stevenson with her bird rescue and rehabilitation work during what for them was again a busy season. A range of native birds benefited from their care. Jackie has been doing this work for 18 years and we are enormously grateful for her skill and effort over such a long period of time.

The Opawaho/Heathcote River Network:

I represent the branch's interests on the committee of the *Opawaho/Heathcote River Network*. It was formed with the aim of achieving "an ecologically healthy river that people take a pride in, enjoy and care for." The organisation's strategy is to act as an umbrella group for the community care groups (including our own Calder Green planting group) in the Heathcote River catchment and to increase communications between those groups and the Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury.

Highlights for this year include:

- The gaining of registration as a charity after finalising the constitution, encouraging the group to make submissions to both the CCC and Ecan's Long Term Community Plans.
- Educating ourselves about issues relating to the river through regular speakers at our meetings. We also are looking forward to learning more of what the river means to Ngai Tahu and their views on its management.
- Increasing contact with the CCC staff on issues relating to the river. This has been significant this year because there are many effects on the river by various flood mitigation measures being undertaken. Submissions were made on the bank stabilisation proposals for the river in upper Beckenham emphasising the need for plantings that enhance habitat for birds, insects and lizards as well as aquatic life. These needs were again emphasised in walkabout meetings with CCC staff in the lower Heathcote prior to dredging work downstream from the barrage and between there and the Radley Street bridge.
- Committee members attended plantings in Radley Park by the *Roi Mata Food Commons* group.
- Committee members met with the CCC team planning a bikeway to run beside the Woolston Loop and were gratified when the plan was modified to have less impact on the river verge.

- A representative also tries to attend the meetings of the *Christchurch West Melton Water Management Zone Committee*.
- The Network's logo appeared on notices for the Mother of all Clean-ups for the first time and members were actively involved in the event on the 12th May this year.

Valerie Campbell

Rhodes Reserve

John Thacker has continued to maintain our reserve in the heart of Governors Bay with the help now of Governors Bay Primary School. The rimu planted in memory of Tom Hay is doing well. John plans both interactive installations for children and commemorative information about conservationists who have played a role in branch affairs over the years.

Colleen Philip

Rapanui-Shag Rock Cycleway

The branch has been very supportive of the *Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust's* concerns regarding stage three of the Rapanui-Shag Rock walk/cycleway along the edge of Humphreys Drive.

These concerns focus around two issues. Disturbance of hundreds of migratory birds feeding close to the edge of the estuary by walkers, dogs and cyclists, and another major incursion into the estuary because of the 11 metre wide development, which includes a rock seawall.

Forest and Bird is arguing for an alternative cycleway route on the Charlesworth Reserve side of Humphreys Drive, or through the Reserve itself. The City Council opposes both options. We have now asked ECan to consider notification of the consent application to allow for public submissions.

Other Advocacy Work

Branch submissions were made to the Environment Canterbury Long Term Plan and Christchurch City Council Long Term Plan. A bus trip was held March 20th, 2018 on which we took ECan councillors and staff to local project sites and the committee and project managers had an opportunity to discuss all our work with them and have conversations with them on a wide range of topics.

Mackenzie Guardians

Progress throughout 2017/2018 has mainly been achieved through the Environment Court process. Court decisions on Mackenzie District Plan Change 13 and other court actions, have been vital in helping to protect the Mackenzie's natural values.

Mackenzie Guardians continue to work with Forest and Bird and the Environment Defence Society to seek stronger outcomes for the Mackenzie. It is pleasing to see that, with a change of Government, the Department of Conservation is back providing a `voice for nature`. DOC presented important evidence at the Plan Change 13 Court Hearing, and at the Council Hearing of the Maryburn retrospective consents.

Court action is expensive, but the legal, landscape and ecological evidence put before the Court by the environmental groups, has been absolutely crucial. The most valuable evidence has been provided by the ecologists Mr Nicholas Head and Dr Susan Walker, and by landscape architects Di Lucas and Stephen Brown. (Some of their evidence has been posted on the Mackenzie Guardians' website for your information).

Mackenzie Guardians has been funded by the Environmental Legal Assistance Fund (ELA), administered by the Ministry for the Environment, and by the generous donations of members,

other groups and individuals. So, things are looking promising, and Mackenzie Guardians believe 2018 is shaping up to be the `turning` point for the Mackenzie.

Rosalie Snoyink

Field Trips/Activities.

August 2017: Port Hills (post fire) planting (organised by Helen Hills)

September: Spring planting at project sites (led by project managers).

October: Styx River bus trip (led by Hugh Thorpe)

November: River bird surveys (as advertised).

December: White-flippered penguin colony (led by Thomas Stracke and Kristina Schutt)

March 2018: Seaweed Cycle (organised by Colleen Philip)

April: Kaikoura weekend (organised by Colleen Philip)

May: Mother of All Rubbish Cleanups (led by Joy Talbot)

If you have a place you think the branch members would like to go to for a field trip and/or you are keen to organise one please contact the branch secretary.

Newsletter/website

An email newsletter of coming events and local environmental news is sent to 2,500 North Canterbury members eleven times a year and a printed newsletter twice a year to a further 350 members.

The society also maintains a web site at <http://www.forestandbird.org.nz/north-canterbury> with information on upcoming events, our projects, scholarships, advocacy work and a resources page.

Facebook Page

The primary focus for the page has been on events and all the great activities the branch is involved in. The page has been growing steadily over the last 12 months to currently 330 committed followers. Our total post reach over the last year is around 32,643 people. \$69.97 was spent on promotions, primarily for North Canterbury Forest & Bird Events.

There is always room for improvement with page management, the goal for the next year is to grow the page to reach 1,000 followers.

Gabriel Calcott

Public Meetings

Public meetings featuring guest speakers were held monthly until November 2017. A committee decision was made in November to hold meetings bi-monthly in 2018. Meetings typically have 30 – 60 attendees, and receive very positive feedback from the audience.

- *July 11, 2017: Why Green the Red Zone?* Ashley Campbell (Greening the Red Zone) and Denise Ford (Avon/Otakaro Network). Attendees: 30
- *August 8, 2017: The Story of the Ashburton/Hakatere River, past present and future.* Edith Smith (Ashburton Branch), John Waugh (Ashburton Water Zone Committee) and Donna Field (DOC). Attendees: 80+
- *October 10, 2017: Microbes and Climate Change, or Don't Forget the Bugs.* Dr Paul Broady (University of Canterbury). Attendees: 56
- *February 13, 2018: Living by and off the Sea - Challenges for Kaikoura's Marine Birdlife.* Ailsa Howard (Kaikoura F&B) and Dr Lorna Deppe (U of C). Attendees: 50
- *April 10, 2018: Westland Petrels and their Influence on Forest Ecology and Biodiversity.* Dr David Hawke (Ara Institute on Canterbury). Attendees: 37
- *June 5, 2018: North Canterbury AGM* will be held; the speaker will be the Hon. Eugenie Sage.

2017-18 Committee

Colleen Philip: Chairperson
Frances Wall: Secretary
Hugh Thorpe: Treasurer
Karen Goky-Curry: KCC
Michael Godfrey: Website, eNews
Steve Attwood
Paul Broady
Gabriel Calcott
Valerie Campbell
Shannon Gilmore
Helen Hills
George Moon
Rick Robinson
Lesley Shand
Ainslie Talbot
Renee Habluetzel (until February 2018)
Marion Parker (from February 2018)
Mary Long (from March 2018)
Penny Wright (until March 2018)

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