



Forest & Bird

GIVING NATURE A VOICE

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South Canterbury Branch Newsletter 2019/01

Evening meetings are held at St John's Hall, 125 Wai-iti Road, Timaru, on the third Thursday of the month, and start at 7.30 pm, unless advised otherwise.

A donation, ideally \$5 or more, to cover meeting expenses is appreciated.

A warm welcome is extended to all members and especially to new members - thank you for supporting Forest and Bird. The Committee would really like to know about the things that interest you or that you would like to be involved with, e.g. penguin monitoring, general volunteering in our local conservation areas, committee work, suggestions for speakers, writing submissions, help with suppers at meetings.....So please make yourself known at evening meetings, or make contact via this email address or by phone (numbers at the bottom of this newsletter).

Programme April - July 2019

Thursday 11 April, Evening meeting, 7.30 pm

"Zero Waste World – what, specifically, we in the West can do to help achieve this goal"

Briony Woodnorth, Zero Waste Advisor with the Timaru District Council will share her knowledge on this important topic and provide us with practical advice on how to 'do our bit' towards achieving this goal.

NB: Please note that this meeting is on the 2nd Thursday of April, to avoid a clash with the Easter break.

Saturday 27 April, 9.45 am

Conway's Bush Weedbusting

Weedbusting at Conway's Bush happens twice a year - in early summer and in autumn. After three postponements because of the persistent wet conditions in early summer, members successfully removed over 1,600 plant pests in early December from this magnificent regenerating forest.

We welcome anybody to join us at the next weedbusting session (27 April) to reduce sycamore, ash and other plant pests in this lovely forest remnant. The culprits are mainly one year old seedlings and can be hand pulled. The work is not strenuous and you will be rewarded with beautiful bird song. Many hands make light work.....

Wear protective clothing, including gloves and suitable footwear, and bring food and drink. Meet at 9.45 am on site (off Rae Rd, Woodbury, near Geraldine). To carpool from Timaru, contact our field officer, Fraser (03 684 3382). If the

weather is unsuitable on the 27th, an email will be sent out early that morning. Saturday 4 May will be the back-up day.

The fences on two sides of the reserve have recently been upgraded and electric fence outriggers attached. Funds for this work were provided in equal share by the Branch, through the Timaru District Council's Significant Natural Area fund, and the Conway Family Trust. Predator control in the reserve is carried out by local members, and there are plans to increase this effort.

Thursday 16 May, AGM and Evening meeting, 7.30 pm

After the brief AGM, Brad Edwards, DOC, will talk about DOC's work on protecting the endangered bird species that nest on our braided rivers.

Thursday 20 June, Evening meeting, 7.30 pm

Speaker to be advised.

Thursday 18 July, Evening meeting, 7.30 pm

Dr Yolanda van Heezik, Zoology Dept, Otago University. Yolanda has a special interest in researching urban biodiversity in New Zealand and will present some very interesting data on the effects of urbanisation on wildlife, and explain why urban biodiversity matters.

Regular Events

Kakahu Bush Passion Killers

Kakahu Bush working bees for control of banana passion fruit and other plant pests take place on the first Saturday of the month, except January, and a small but enthusiastic group would appreciate more helping hands with this important work. The dates for the rest of the year are: **6 April**, 4 May, 1 June, 6 July, 3 August, 7 September, 5 October, 2 November, 7 December.

Any questions, please ring John Talbot (03 614 7896) by 8:30 a.m. on the morning. If you would like to receive Kakahu '1st Saturday' notifications, please email a request to kakahubush@gmail.com

If you would like up-to-date information and photographs from Kakahu Bush, join Kakahu's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Kakahu/about/>



The Branch has a very active Kiwi Conservation Club for kiwi kids who love nature. Check out the KCC website www.kcc.org.nz, or contact Win, Justine or Julie, our enthusiastic Kiwi Conservation Officers, to find out more about our KCC group's recent and upcoming activities (phone numbers below).

News

Riversdale Flats petition

Riversdale Flats, 1000 hectares of highland at the southern gateway to the Arthur's Pass

National Park, was legally gazetted as conservation land in 1902, and was always meant to be added to the national park. Unfortunately it was sold as part of the Mt White Station pastoral lease, and as a result is likely to become developed as green pasture.

University of Canterbury students have created a petition requesting that the Riversdale Flats are added to the national park. **Please consider signing this petition, and also asking others to do so. The petition closing date is Tuesday 2 April.**

https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/petitions/document/PET_80611/petition-of-devon-rutter-protect-the-gateway-to-arthurs

Upper Rangitata commercial jet boat consent application

Resource consent to operate a commercial jet boat activity on the Rangitata River from the top of the Rangitata Gorge to the confluence of the Havelock and Clyde Rivers has been sought from the Ashburton and Timaru District Councils. F&B is concerned that this activity may have detrimental effects on the endangered bird species (e.g. wrybill, back-fronted tern, black billed gull) that breed in this area. If you wish to make a submission on this proposed activity, **submissions are due at either council by 5 pm, 11 April.**

A name for our 60th anniversary kea, please

Following the presentation from Laura Young from the Kea Conservation Trust at our June meeting, which highlighted the threats that face kea, a "Sponsor a Kea Campaign" was launched to celebrate the South Canterbury Branch's 60th anniversary.

We are delighted that F&B members and the Environmental Group at Timaru Boys High School have got behind this campaign and have donated sufficient funds (\$600) to sponsor and name a kea!

Now we have to come up with a suitable name, so are asking members to email their suggestions by 1 May to southcanterbury.branch@forestandbird.org.nz

The committee will select the name that is considered most suitable, and it will be announced at the May evening meeting.

60th anniversary kahikatea planted

In addition to sponsoring a kea to celebrate 60 years of F&B advocating for nature in South Canterbury, Fraser Ross our field officer has planted a kahikatea/white pine in the Otipua Wetland on behalf of the Branch. It was sourced from Arowhenua Bush and is growing well. Ask Fraser where it is sited - it would be great if members visited it and encouraged it to thrive so it will grow into a giant tree over the next few centuries!

KCC News

On Sunday 3rd March eight families met at the lighthouse above Caroline Bay to talk about the crashing waves and the dangerous rocky coastline. Win brought some wonderful images and paintings of the coast from around the time that European settlers landed. She asked the 16 children to think about what it would have been like living on a small sailing ship for 3 months, landing on a rocky shore and having no buildings/Timaru to come too. For the little children this was a tricky concept to imagine! After this we made our own 'boats' from flax flower stems, skewers, leaves and string. The parents enjoyed this way more than the kids! Our catamaran designs had a few gummy lolly people and some milk bottles (rum rations) skewered into place. We walked down to the sand with our togs and ocean-ready craft. The kids tested their boats on the waves and in the process became completely wet. A few families collected shells and other natural beach treasure, and using the 'Shore Guide' we identified the shells and creatures. A great afternoon on the sandy and sunny Caroline Bay beach.



"What's for dinner? Cameras on yellow-eyed penguins".

This was the title of the presentation that Thomas Mattern, a penguin researcher based in Otago, gave at the 21 March evening meeting. Thomas used satellite trackers to track hoiho/yellow eyed penguins at sea, and provide data on their dive depths, and also used new small animal-borne video cameras to show the foraging conditions they encounter. Thomas' very informative presentation and his extensive knowledge of hoiho demonstrated the challenges these penguins face, and the amazing feats they perform on a daily basis. His talk was superbly illustrated with photographs, graphics generated from tracking device data, and videos of diving and foraging behaviour of hoiho.

Tracks of penguins from Bushy Beach, Oamaru, showed that the penguins dived down to the seafloor and then back up to the surface to breathe, up to 300 times during each foraging trip. They went out 15 km or more from the shore on each trip, and dived to depths of up to 100 m each time. Small cameras attached to their backs showed they often fed around patches of horse mussels where fish were found. In the 1980/90s, red cod were the preferred prey, but those fish stocks are now depleted, and opalfish, juvenile tarakihi and blue cod are now the main prey. The latter are large, strong fish, which are more difficult for the penguins to catch and swallow, and are often too big for their chicks to swallow. Sadly, these large fish are often seen decomposing in nests beside starving chicks. Encouragingly, the local fishing community is now aware of this and making changes to fishing practices that hopefully will benefit the penguins. Thomas asked that we all do our best to raise awareness of all our penguin species, and the need to provide for better protection for them.

A video showing a dive of a female hoiho from The Catlins is available at the following link, and is well worth watching:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KTqntfbo1>

Mega mast expected

Department of Conservation staff have been out in our beech and podocarp forests sampling seed, and all signs point to a monster 'mega mast' that could spell disaster for local populations of threatened species. We can all do our own bit and make an effort to reduce predators if we want to continue to enjoy korimako/bellbirds, tūī, pekapeka/long-tailed bats, lizards, and many other species **in our own backyards**.

There have been multiple observations of stoats and weasels lately. Stoats were introduced to New Zealand in 1884 to control rabbits and hares. Sadly, warnings from scientists that stoats would be a threat to birds were ignored. Stoats don't have any predators here, they are one of the world's top 100 invaders, and they are difficult to trap. Rats, mice, birds, rabbits, hares, possums and insects (particularly weta) are their main prey. They will also eat lizards, freshwater crayfish, roadkill, hedgehogs and fish. They are capable of killing animals much bigger than themselves. A recent video clip, filmed at Aoraki/Mt Cook showed a stoat approaching a kārearea/NZ falcon on a picnic table. It had no fear! <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=395068864658511>

More information on stoats in the link below.

<https://predatorfreenz.org/resources/introduced-predator-facts/stoat-facts/>

For further information on the mega mast, the RNZ link below is to an informative article.

https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/383718/all-signs-pointing-to-predicted-mega-mast-which-will-fuel-predator-numbers?utm_source=Nature+Action&utm_campaign=a3e7a0a956-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_02_10_10_43_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a089c35381-a3e7a0a956-339257761

Newsletters from other organisations

The Branch receives electronic newsletters from the Canterbury Botanical Society and the Orokonui Eco-sanctuary and DOC's O Tu Wharekai/Ashburton Lakes newsletter. If you are not currently on the email list for these newsletters, and would like to be, please let the secretary know by emailing southcanterbury.branch@forestandbird.org.nz

Contacts

Secretary Joy Sagar 03 693 8176

Field Officer Fraser Ross 03 684 3382

Kiwi Conservation officers: Win Parkes 03 688 8195, Justine Carson-Iles 03 688 8370,
or 021 202 5180 and Julie Calder 027 285 8815

South Canterbury Branch Facebook Page

Just a reminder that Forest & Bird South Canterbury has its own Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/forestandbirdsouthcanterbury/>

Check it out and keep up with the latest Branch news and views.....

Forest & Bird is Aotearoa/New Zealand's leading independent conservation organisation.

We are nature's voice, and work to defend nature – across our land, fresh water, oceans and climate. But we can't do it without your support. Check out our website for the latest conservation news and information <https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/>

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