



North Canterbury Branch

Annual Report 2018-19

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

Chairperson's Comment

As advocates for our native forests and wildlife it will always be very difficult for Forest and Bird to be satisfied with the efforts Government makes with regard to our interests. Let's face it, their job is huge and maintaining economic policies that encourage business exploitation of natural resources makes it even more difficult for them. We are delighted that Conservation Minister Eugene Sage has been able to make some great announcements this year, the extension to Kahurangi National Park being one of them, but it is clear that DOC continues to be shackled by the business arm of the tourism sector, putting pressure on our native species and our wild places (helicopter operators and noise pollution), without the very large additional funding that our wild places need, to allow them to continue to exist. Predator control continues to be a subject that creates vigorous outbursts from a very small and vocal section of society intent on allowing exotic animal species to flourish, thereby adding to the rush to extinction of rare native flora.

The sea-change that the 2017 change of government was expected to create appears to have been dampened by the Fiscal Responsibility Rules and the reluctance of coalition partners. Change has been muted and the speed at which legislation has been enacted, around some environmental issues, has been disappointing. Water quality is a primary concern for almost all New Zealanders but Government's action, particularly around controlling pollution from intensive dairy farming, has been disappointing. Everyone will be aware of the probable extinction of the Eyrewell Ground Beetle in the Amuri Plains. No agency took responsibility to protect this unique New Zealand species allowing big business (big dairy) to profit from destroying something that wasn't theirs. I can only hope that recognition is given to the growing disquiet expressed by young people over climate change and our environment will force those in power to prioritise those policies that will affect our grandchildren and their children.

I wish to point out that the North Canterbury Branch of Forest a Bird gets no funding from your subscriptions to our National Organisation so I ask that you consider making small donations to your branch to assist us and never be reticent in asking how you might be able to assist us with the local work we do. 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. I continue to hope for positive change in New Zealand - long overdue and needed.

*Rick Robinson
Chairperson.*

Forest & Bird Christchurch Youth

Established in late 2018, the Forest & Bird Christchurch Youth Hub is part of the Forest & Bird Youth National Network. The Youth Hub now has over 40 members, who communicate through a Facebook group and via email. The Youth Hub also has a Facebook Page and an Instagram handle to share the group's activities and connect with more young people in the region.

Currently, the group has four Youth Leaders, who meet fortnightly to discuss outreach strategy, organise trips and events, and complete general administrative tasks.

The Christchurch Youth Hub is run by youth, for youth, and focused on creating a friendly, like-minded group of young people (aged 14-25) eager to engage with the region's environmental initiatives. Presently, we mostly engage with volunteering-based activities such as planting, weeding, coastal clean ups, and river restoration. Since the group's inception, we have participated in many fantastic trips and activities:

1. *Arthur's Pass Lupin Trip* (Nov 2018) - The group's first trip was a very successful one. Seventeen attendees travelled to Arthur's Pass to eradicate lupin flowers from the Waimakariri riverbed. The Youth Hub was briefly featured on Seven Sharp afterwards in a segment about lupins.
2. *Middelmost Mudfish Trip #1* (January 2019) - working bee with a small group of six attendees.
3. *Christchurch Beach and Coastal Cleanup* (March 2019) - a group of 10 attendees collected rubbish from Sumner Beach.
4. *Mahoe Nui Working Bee and March to Save Our Water* (March 2019) - a rewarding day with two events, attended by 7 youth.
5. *School Strike for Climate Change* (March 2019)
6. *Middelmost Mudfish Trip #2* (April 2019) - working bee with 7 attendees.
7. *Kaikoura Hutton's Shearwater Trip* (April 2019) - the most recent event was attended by 16 youth. We did weeding and maintenance work at the Kaikoura Peninsula Hutton's breeding colony.

The amazing support that Rebecca Browne has provided for the group is something that we are extremely thankful for. Rebecca played a huge role in the Youth Hub's establishment and continues to assist the Youth Leaders in all facets of the group's operation, most notably sorting out financial hurdles and helping with trip organisation.

The Youth Hub is excited to foster a stronger working relationship with the Forest & Bird North Canterbury Branch in the coming months.

Alex Zhou

Calder Green Reserve

- *General:* In May 2018 the Lizard Sanctuary project kicked off with stone piles and plantings of various tussock and lizard friendly plants. Nearly a year on and all plants are doing very well. Further work on a Stage 2 extension to the Lizard Sanctuary is being planned on land adjacent to the Calder Green Reserve. Some funding for materials & plants, etc for this development will hopefully come from the Christchurch City Council Biodiversity Fund over the next couple of years.
- Overall the Calder Green Reserve site is doing well considering the harsh environment of this saltmarsh area.

- *Sea Lavender:* A 'search and destroy' blitz was done again in late January 2019 along with a large team from the ChCh City Council. Numbers of this weed pest have been reduced to low levels 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 coordinated by Michael Godfrey (mgodfrey@xnet.co.nz)
- *Volunteer hours:*
Lizard Sanctuary development 153 hrs; Plant care 32hrs;
Bird surveys 36 hrs; Sea Lavender 20hrs;
Other including rubbish-cleanup 70 hrs
- *Looking ahead:* As a stakeholder in the Lower Heathcote River / Estuarine area, the approach is to continue to advocate for this area and work with the Christchurch City Council to enhance and restore the river and riparian zones near the Calder Green Reserve.

Mick Ingram
CGR Reserve Manager

Mahoe-nui Restoration Project

Mahoe-nui is a lovely gully of remnant native bush behind Sumner. It is on CCC land and has been fenced off since 2006. It is situated from Evans Pass road (near Rapanui Bush) to above the Summit road. Forest and Bird with the Sumner Environment Group provide volunteers to help restore the native bush under the guidance of Port Hills Rangers - Di Carter and Fiona Fenton.

We have 2 planting days in winter and 2 releasing days in spring and also in autumn, when the long grass that surrounds the young plants is cut back. We also remove plant cages from the larger trees, and these are re-used for new plants. Over the last year we have been working mainly at the lower site as the upper site is quite well planted now.

Last winter we planted 400 trees at the lower site and survival rate is about 95%. This winter, we will plant 600 trees at the lower site. The working bees are only 2 hours long and volunteers are rewarded with a tasty morning tea afterward. New volunteers always welcome!

Total volunteer hours for the year were 180

Helen Hills

Middelmost Mudfish Project

The Middelmost Mudfish Project has started to wrap up, after three years of plantings and working bees. Sophie and Bridget monitored the site in January 2019, finding multiple large and healthy mudfish near the spring head, alongside upland bullies, diving beetles and tadpoles further down. The native water plants which had been translocated have finally started to take hold as well, which is promising for the site as well! We were lucky enough in January to have some Forest and Bird youth join us to help out with the monitoring, as well as putting in the hard yards with some weeding! It was a great afternoon to share knowledge about the incredible Canterbury Mudfish.

The project held it's final working bee on the 7th of April 2019, with a whopping turnout of 17 participants, including a large contingent from the Forest and Bird Youth Group. Despite a considerable amount of rain, the group were in fantastic spirits (maybe cake related) and we had a fabulous afternoon. The site looked fantastic with all of the hard work, with a delicious mudfish mudcake being shared by the participants.

We also completed a monitoring of the translocation from Middelmost up to a wetland at the top of the Coopers Creek catchment. Last year we confirmed healthy mudfish survival, so we were looking forward to seeing whether breeding occurred or not. When pulling up the traps, Bridget was delighted to see them absolutely bursting with mudfish! We caught 105 fish at the site, most of them being in the size range of one year old fish. The landowner Annabella and her two children helped us to measure all of them. What an awesome way to finish up the project!

*Bridget White
Living Waters Trust*

The Sanctuary

“The Sanctuary” is an area of about 20 hectares on the south bank of the Waimakariri River about 2 kilometres west of the motorway bridge at the end of Dickeys Road. The area is an Environment Canterbury (ECan) reserve they are developing in partnership with North Canterbury Forest and Bird and other entities. The area is a natural wetland and is subject to flood by the river. No flooding has occurred in the last decade or so. ECan is involving other organisations with a view to encouraging biodiversity and the return of native plants and animals. ECan clears areas of grass, blackberry, fallen willow and poplar and other non-native vegetation and Forest and Bird along with other organisations (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. Planting days and clearing work aimed at Old Man’s Beard are attended by enthusiastic volunteers during the year. 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 50 possums, 20 hedgehogs, several rats, stoats, weasels and wild cats.

The braided river to the north 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. Anecdotal evidence (an increase in Californian Quail, Fantail and Pheasants) suggests that birdlife appears to be increasing. 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. Without that heavy machinery and the employment of contractors by ECan, the task of extending the native plantings would be near impossible. 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. 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 15,000 plants put in the ground over the past couple of years.

If you wish to participate in planting activities or in any other way do not hesitate to contact me. There is always plenty to do.

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, in the Poplars Recreation Area. Its purpose is to monitor and trap mustelids (stoats and weasels) and rats to enhance the survival of native wildlife in the valley.

The project was instigated and managed by Lesley Shand from 2004 until 2017. When the Poplars Pastoral Lease came up for sale, Lesley put forward an urgent proposal that the Nature Heritage Fund be used to buy two thirds (4,356 ha) of the property for the Department of Conservation. DoC gave the Boyle hut to the North Canterbury Branch of Forest and Bird. Lesley led a group of dedicated volunteers who restored the hut into a cosy base for trappers, families, and individuals interested in conservation and enjoying the outdoors

Since Lesley's ill health a group of 4 volunteers - Rick Robinson, Helen Hills, Phil McEntee and Geoff Mahan have been managing the trapping programme with the help of a small group of other volunteers.

This last year we have been re-routing some circuits to ensure volunteer time is spent efficiently and making the routes clear so volunteers can locate the boxes easily. The very wet October /November and resultant grass growth made this a challenge in some areas! After consultation with DoC we are working towards having trap boxes on both sides of the Boyle River from the road to the swing bridge as this is potential whio (blue duck) habitat. We have also replaced boxes along the Lewis River that were washed away several years ago, which required making a new route higher up from the river.

We plan to gradually replace the Fenn traps with DOC 200 traps over the next 5 years or so. We are liaising with other groups in the area to maximise the area covered by our combined trapping projects.

There are about 120 traps in 3 main circuits. We try to clear and rebait the traps about every month and it generally takes 2 days to get around all the traps. From October 2017 to October 2018 we caught 26 stoats, 2 weasels, and 2 hedgehogs.

Approximately 500 hours of volunteer time was spent on trapping, track maintenance, bird counts, stacking firewood etc. over the past year. Thank you to a small but dedicated team of volunteers. We welcome new volunteers especially as this year is a mast year when the large supply of beech seed causes a huge increase in rat and stoat numbers. Bird counts are done in spring and autumn and I would like to thank Di Cowan for her expertise and time doing these.

It is about 14 years since the hut was restored by volunteers led by Lesley, and the outside of the hut is in need of some maintenance. We are fortunate to have Mick Ingram lead this work, and would appreciate any volunteers who would like to help him with this.

We are very thankful to John Dearden, who lives locally, for his many years of helping maintain the grounds around the hut, setting up the solar lighting in the hut, regularly checking the hut, plus sharing his extensive knowledge on trapping with us. John wishes to 'retire' from these duties, so there is a need for volunteers who may wish to spend time at Boyle Base and don't mind mowing the lawn while they are there. There is no cost to stay in the hut for volunteers who are undertaking trapping, maintenance of the hut and grounds, track maintenance of trap lines or eradicating weeds in the area. The hut is insulated, has an efficient log burner in it, solar lighting and sleeps around 8-9 people in bunk accommodation. Thanks to Lesley you will never run out of something to read there!

For more information about volunteering for the trapping project or about booking the hut, contact Helen Hills helenhills.mcp@gmail.com, ph: 021 0232 6155

For more information about volunteering for hut and grounds maintenance, contact Ainslie Talbot talbotjones45@clear.net.nz ph: 027 547 1157

Helen Hills

Stocker Scholarships

Every year the North Canterbury branch offers postgraduate students the opportunity to win up to \$5000 in total for environmental or conservation related research in Canterbury.

In 2018 the branch awarded two postgraduate students Stocker Scholarships to the value of \$5000 for research to be carried out this year.

University of Canterbury Freshwater Ecology MSc student Alexandra Barclay will use her grant to help fund field research and isotope analysis of macroinvertebrate composition and food-web structure of alpine tarns in Canterbury-Westland. Alexandra says the lack of knowledge of alpine tarns during an era of climate change means that we are not in a good position to protect these special habitats and her research will make a difference, enabling more appropriate management of these unique habitats.

Christopher Carr is the second University of Canterbury postgraduate student who received Stocker funding. As part of his MSc Christopher is researching using artificial intelligence to automatically recognise different predator species in the New Zealand bush. The aim of his research is to be able to differentiate pest species through the use of low resolution thermal images. This will assist more effective predator control, particularly when an initial decrease in predator numbers falls below a critical level.

Ainslie Talbot

Arthur's Pass

The last twelve months have been busy in the world of kea conservation! The Kea Sightings Project now has over 3250 sightings on our Kea Database (<http://keadatabase.nz>) covering the length of the South Island. A nice surprise was the database getting an award at the New Zealand Open Source Awards last year in the science category.

In recent weeks, Laura Young (co-founder of the project and Kea Conservation Trust staff), finished a kea conservation tour of the South Island, including Aoraki, Te Anau, Milford Sound, Franz Josef and, of course, Arthur's Pass. During this tour she worked to connect with local conservation communities and educate the wider public on the threats facing kea, especially with regards to lead poisoning. This was a highly successful trip, resulting in many kea being banded and tested for lead levels, and an increased enthusiasm and understanding for protecting kea.

Locally, there have been a number of banding/testing trips to Arthur's Pass, and we're hoping to get out and check on kea at the ski-fields again this winter. The focus for the upcoming year will continue to be on removing lead from the environment, and further promoting understanding of the threats to these amazing birds. Forest & Bird's support of conservation in our mountains and forests is invaluable, especially with the looming predator plague this year due to the mega-mast event.

George Moon

The Opawaho/Heathcote River Network:

I am on the committee of the above network to speak for the ideals of our Society. I can report that they are generally reflected in its actions. It was formed as an umbrella organisation for the many community activities that occur on this southerly Christchurch river and have many aspirations for its maintenance and enhancement.

The Network has developed a working relationship with Ecan and CCC and has played an important role in standing up for the Opāwaho/Heathcote's ecological values at a time when

massive changes are occurring. In its catchment, the formation of retention basins to clean the water released into it should have great outcomes and help meet many of Forest and Bird's protection ideals of improved water quality. Parts of the Ōpāwaho/Heathcote River are amongst the most polluted urban rivers in New Zealand.

Massive re-modelling of bank profiles and dredging proceeding from Beckenham seawards has caused great disturbance but should have benefits for in-stream biota in the longer term. For example tunnels and runs have been included to provide eel habitat.

The removal of mature exotics in the lower riparian zone to enable large scale dredging machinery has diminished the roosting habitats of many birds. Planting, once they occur, will take a considerable time to recreate this and to restore the deep shade the exotics had cast on the waters of important whitebait spawning sites. Despite members of the Network participating in a CCC river-walk no notice appears to have been taken of its concerns regarding the above matters.

Valerie Campbell

KCC

Over the last year KCC has undertaken the following events

- In June, KCC celebrated a KCC Nation wide event - "Be with a Tree" - As part of this KCC members joined in the community tree planting at Halswell Quarry (organised by CCC Rangers). It was a cold day but there was a warm sausage sizzle to follow that was enjoyed.
- In August, around 24 KCC members plus caregivers met with members of Marlborough Falcon Trust and saw two Karearea up close. We also upcycled old t-shirts into reusable shopping bags, and shared home made soup.
- In Sept 2018, Anthea Madill of Remix Plastics shared her knowledge of "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle". This included making wallets out of tetrapaks. This event was well attended with around 20 KCC members and their caregivers participating.
- In December, we unfortunately had to cancel our trip to see the White-flipped Penguins with Thomas and Kristina due to inclement weather.
- In April 2019, there was a Fungal Foray at Riccarton bush. This was facilitated by Quenby and Millie, and supported by Eleanor Bissell. The children were captivated as Quenby showed how to identify fungi and it was a reminder of what we can see in the middle of our City if we remember to take the time to look. It was another well attended event with around 17 children and their caregivers.
- In May 2019, Eleanor shared her knowledge of Travis, Birds and Insect life at a well attended "Birds of a Feather" event at Travis Wetland. This event was attended by 16 children and caregivers.

KCC would like to thank Eleanor Bissell for her on-going support of KCC North Canterbury and for supporting KCOs Fiona Miller and Karen Gokey-Curry.

Fiona Miller

Advocacy Activity

Advocacy for conservation and the environment has been a part of the branch's activity over the last year. Usually this takes the form of submissions from individual committee members on environmental and conservation proposals, resource consent applications, local authority management plans and other matters of environmental or conservation concern. We have also met with both City Council and Environment Canterbury over various matters

At other times the Forest and Bird's National or Canterbury/Westland Regional offices submit on the branch's behalf.

The main issues North Canterbury branch has submitted or made representations on include:

- The Misty Peaks Reserve on Banks Peninsula
- High Country Tenure Review reform proposals
- The future of the Riversdale Flats Mt White Station
- Aoraki Mt Cook Management Plan
- Westland Tai Poutini Management Plan
- Kaikoura District Council, threats to banded dotterel
- CCC meeting re Humphreys Drive redevelopment and impact on Avon-Heathcote estuary
- Management of City Council mowing contractors and native plants.
- Christchurch City Council Flood Mitigation re-modelling of Heathcote River banks and meeting re dredging works and plantings. (vmc)

The branch would like to thank Nicky Snoyink, Regional Manager Canterbury-Westland, for her advice and assistance over the year in advocacy matters.

Ainslie Talbot and Valerie Campbell

Mackenzie Guardians

Mackenzie Guardians recently attended meetings in Christchurch, Fairlie and Twizel in relation to Mackenzie Basin issues. The meetings focussed on potential breaches of the Simons Pass consent conditions, on progress of the alignment of five agencies with statutory responsibilities in the Mackenzie, and on a consultation meeting with LINZ about Tenure Review. The Guardians also attended an Environment Court Declaration Hearing (4 & 14 February) sought by the Mackenzie District Council to clarify points around Plan Change 13 rules.

Key developments:

1. Tenure Review to end

On 14 February 2019 the Hon Eugenie Sage, Minister of Land Information, announced the Government's decision to end tenure review. Mackenzie Guardians welcomed this news. It is uncertain how the decision will affect tenure review proposals that are in the early stages of the process. The eight applications which have reached the Substantive Proposal stage will be completed, but the remaining applications, including Simons Pass, will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

LINZ is consulting with key stakeholders, and the public, on the future management of Crown Pastoral Land.

2. Decision on Court Declaration.

On Monday, 1 April 2019, the Environment Court issued a decision on Declarations sought by the Mackenzie District Council (MDC) seeking clarity around the new Plan Change 13 rules and how they relate to recent Simons Pass applications for resource consents. The Environmental Defence Society presented evidence in support of the Council. The decision confirms the date when some agricultural activities changed from permitted activity status to discretionary, meaning resource consents were required after 13 April 2017, applications publicly notified, and could be declined. Whilst Simons Pass have Environment Canterbury resource consents to irrigate, land use consents are required from MDC for irrigation and direct drilling. We understand Simons Pass applications to MDC to irrigate and direct drill on Node C, the first dairy farm, remain on hold. See Mackenzie Guardians' website for information on the Declaration decision.

<http://mackenzieguardians.co.nz/>

Rosalie Snoyink and Liz Weir

Newsletter/website

An email newsletter of coming events and local environmental news is sent to 2,000 North Canterbury members eleven times a year and a printed newsletter once 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

Interest in the Forest and Bird North Canterbury Facebook page has continued to steadily grow over the last year. As of May 31st 2018, there were 322 people who 'liked' the Facebook page. As of May 1st 2019, there are now 426 people who like the page.

The Facebook page continues to be a good platform for posting events and generating member interest. Paid promotions generally result in a spike in user engagement and higher turn out at events. Last year \$25 was spent on each of two paid promotions - *Let's Lose the Lupins* and *The Heathcote River Fieldtrip*. Detailed data is available for these paid events - and other events that were not 'promoted' (i.e. paid advertising) on Facebook - but it has not been fully analysed. It has been very helpful from an administrator's point of view to receive photos to post on the Facebook page. A post or two a week seems to keep people's interest without risking supporter 'fatigue' with too many posts.

Looking forward, if members from field trips, working bees, etc could write short reports and send them to the administrators or committee members (to pass onto me) along with photos, this would give a good source of material to post and maintain user engagement. With respect to advertising events or promotions, the earlier that committee members can let the admin know, the better results and wider reach we are likely to achieve with Forest and Bird members/supporters who are engaged on the Facebook page.

Stefan Fairweather

Public Meetings

Public meetings are held bi-monthly at the WEA, 59 Gloucester Street, Christchurch. Meetings typically have 30 – 60 attendees, and receive very positive feedback from the audience.

- *August 14, 2018:* Microbes and Climate Change by Dr Paul Broady Part 2 - Methane and Nitrous Oxide
- *October 9, 2018:* Dryland Nuances - Di Lucas
- *February 12, 2019:* Q & A with ECan Councillors
- *April 9, 2019:* Christchurch Penguin Rehabilitation - 10 years of Caring for Penguins in New Zealand
- *June 11, 2019:* North Canterbury AGM will be held; the speaker will be Dr Thomas Mattern.

Field Trips.

August 2018: Delving into the Depths of the Museum

October 2018: Hinewai Reserve

October 2018: Heathcote/Opawaho River bus trip

December 2018: White-flipped penguin colony

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.

2018-19 Committee

Rick Robinson:	Chairperson
Frances Wall:	Secretary
Hugh Thorpe:	Treasurer
Karen Goky-Curry:	KCC
Michael Godfrey:	Website, eNews
Valerie Campbell	
Helen Hills	
Lesley Shand	
Ainslie Talbot	
Stefan Fairweather	

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