



North Canterbury Branch

## Annual Report 2020-21

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

You are invited to our AGM and the Lance McCaskill Memorial Address given this year by  
Barry Weeber:

*How is New Zealand Doing in Protecting the Marine Environment - with a focus on fishing?*

7.30pm Tuesday, June 8th, WEA 59 Gloucester St, Christchurch

#### Chairperson's Comment

Last year's annual report focussed on what North Canterbury Branch was doing and who was doing it. It was finally delivered late last year because of the Covid upheaval and constraints. Much that it contained is in the reports of the leaders of our major projects in this year's report. I will elaborate on some of the discussion the committee has been having since then and some of our forward planning.

Several elements have triggered this. Some new committee members; Lorna Deppe joined us last year and as she doesn't live in Christchurch joins us on Zoom mostly. Diana Shand brought her enormous conservation experience and strategic planning when she was co-opted during Covid. Chay Cotter joined at the AGM last year.

The new finance scene with its super low interest rates means that our capital will not even be keeping up with inflation so we are unable to cover our usual running costs with the interest gained. Our reserve capital has been held for big figure items like supporting significant court cases National Office is running, or those of our local Forest and Bird officers - \$10,000 and \$3,000 respectively. Therefore, in the coming year we are looking at ways of trimming our running costs; we will continue to apply for grants for specific items like traps for Boyle Base. We intend to keep giving KCC class kits to West Coast schools (around \$2,000) for teachers use in the classroom. We feel this is a valuable contribution to future conservation. We have decided to increase the value of our tertiary Stocker Scholarships to \$6,000 because we are impressed by the quality of the work produced by these post-graduate students. Finally we have flagged an additional \$15,000 to be drawn on for further conservation projects or to supplement funding for others' projects.

We will be maintaining all our present activities and trying to tie them into wider events such as Seaweek and Environment Day, and are looking to add greater variety to our planned events. Chay is hoping to have a Conservation Week quiz for many of the other conservation and environmental groups to celebrate Conservation Week. We need your support and someone to give Chay a hand. Preferably someone who loves quizzes and participates in them! So keep an eye on our eNews and

Facebook page.

However, 2021 to 2031 is the UN Decade of Ocean Science. Our committee has embraced this idea and it fits some steps we have already taken and that are being led by Lorna Deppe. Her *North Canterbury Marine Conservation Stocktake* (available on the North Canterbury branch webpage) was received in 2019 to assist the branch's understanding of our own piece of the Pacific Ocean. Mostly we see the results of what happens at sea washed up on our beaches or in the seabirds' breeding success when they nest along our shores - both sandy and rocky cliffs.

Our first project has been to take over the maintenance of the Harris Bay, Little blue penguin colony from Chris Challies who has guarded and recorded its population since the late seventies. This project extends our support to Thomas Stracke and Kristina Schutt of Christchurch Penguin Rehabilitation. We pay for the food consumed by the penguins they rescue and care for. We have been helping with funding for Ailsa Howard's efforts to protect Banded dotterels at South Bay Kaikoura.

Our talks from James Nikatine and Andrew Crossland this year have given us firstly, the big picture by extending our understanding of how crucial the ocean is to life on Earth, and then Andrew's detailed analysis of his sea bird counts from Banks Peninsula, providing insights into the possible effects of the earthquakes on sea-bird breeding there. His most worrying message was the apparent plummeting numbers of Spotted shags, an endemic species. Is this species suffering the same food shortages that Dr Tim Mattern (our 2019 AGM speaker) has attributed to the Hoiho decimation?

From all of this I hope that a feasible project will emerge that will have direct results for our sea-birds and be of great interest to you. And of course our AGM speaker has yet more to tell us about our watery environment.

*Valerie Campbell, 2021.*  
*Chairperson.*

### **Esther Fernandez Bequest**

In 2018, the estate of Esther Fernandez made a bequest of \$78,086 to the North Canterbury Branch of Forest and Bird. Esther was an active member of the branch. She enjoyed local branch outings, loved nature and was concerned about its deterioration. After discussions between our chairperson at the time, Colleen Philip and the estate executor, it was decided that the most appropriate use of the bequest would be towards the purchase of a reserve. Because of the scarcity of land suitable for a reserve on the Canterbury Plains, it was decided to focus on Banks Peninsula. Representatives of the QEII National Trust and the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust were consulted about possible options.

It was felt that purchasing private land would be too much of a drain on the branch's finances in that the costs of fencing, covenanting and maintenance as well as possible subdivision would have to be met over and above the purchase price. Hinewai Reserve, owned by the Maurice White Trust, was suggested as a good option since none of the above costs would apply and the cost of the purchase would be shared with other environmental organisations as had occurred in previous purchases by the branch. The idea was discussed with Hugh Wilson, the manager of Hinewai, and eventually the bequest was given to the Trust's Land Purchase Fund (after approval from the North Canterbury Forest and Bird Branch committee and the Society's National Board) to go towards the purchase of MokiMoki Reserve which is at Opatuti (Stony Bay) at the sea end of Hinewai. MokiMoki gives Hinewai direct connection to the sea at Stony Bay.

A sign will be erected beside the reserve acknowledging the contribution of Esther and the North Canterbury Branch.

## Calder Green Reserve

*General.* Overall the Calder Green Reserve site is doing well considering the harsh environment of this salt marsh area. More salt marsh ribbonwoods (*Plagianthus divaricatus*) are getting self-established at the upstream edge of the Reserve.

*Stage 1 Lizard Sanctuary Project* which was planted in 2018 is getting established and is growing well.

*Stage 2 Lizard Sanctuary Project* was done in May, June and July 2020 in an area opposite the Calder Green Reserve. Trying to organise this with lockdowns and social distancing requirements meant tasks were delayed but were achieved eventually. Thanks to the dedicated members who assisted with this. This development was funded for materials and plants, etc, with the aid of the Christchurch City Council Better Communities Fund.

*Sea Lavender.* A ‘search and destroy’ blitz was done again in late January 2021 along with a large team from the ChCh City Council. Numbers of this weed pest have been controlled to low levels. however, this year there was an increase in plants on the true left of the river just upstream of the Ferrymead bridge. Further work will be done next January to control this weed.

### *Volunteer Hours:*

Lizard Sanctuary development	143 hrs;
Plant care	42 hrs;
Sea Lavender	24 hrs;
Other including rubbish clean-up day	70 hrs ( <i>estimate</i> )

*Looking ahead.* As a stakeholder in the Lower Heathcote River / Estuarine area, my approach is to continue to advocate for this area. In Nov 2020 the Community Board put together a working party for the Lower Heathcote River. The role of the Working Party is to develop a plan for the Lower Heathcote River catchment from the Ōpāwa Road Bridge to the Ferrymead River Bridge. Forest and Bird is represented on this working party. Hopefully this will result in better CCC funding for enhancement of this area of the river and riparian zones.

*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 from surrounding farmland since 2006. It lies between Evans Pass Road (near Rapanui Bush) and above the Summit Road. Forest and Bird, with the Sumner Environment group, provide volunteers to help restore the bush under the guidance of dedicated Port Hills rangers Di Carter and Fiona Fenton.

We have two planting days in winter, and two releasing days in spring and in autumn when the long grass that surrounds the young plants is cut back and used to mulch the plants. We planted about 550 trees last winter. This year due to a mistake by the council ordering the plants, we may plant only 250 trees on one planting day. The survival rate for new plants is usually 95% but due to drought conditions this year and last year it is about 70-75%. At our last autumn releasing day volunteers carted 100 litres of water up the hill to give the most thirsty plants two litres of water each.

The working bees are only two hours long and volunteers are rewarded afterwards with a tasty morning tea. Thank you to all the volunteers, for without you the restoration of this bush remnant wouldn't happen. New volunteers always welcome!

Total volunteer hours for last year were 224.

*Helen Hills*

## **The Sanctuary**

My health this year has precluded my involvement in the partnership with Environment Canterbury for work at The Sanctuary, a 20-hectare wetland area on the south bank of the Waimakariri River at the end of Dickies Road. The project involves assisting in the planting program paid for and organized by ECAN and having predator traps regularly cleared and reset, by Forest and Bird, in the area. Forest and Bird has contributed funds for plants in the past.

Greg Stanley, the ECAN Ranger in charge of the project tells me that he estimates that there were over 2,000 plants put in the ground this year. There have been a few plants lost with the dry weather, but most are growing well. The Sanctuary recovery is a community project and there were a couple of student groups and schools who put in 300 to 400 plants each. There was a large planting day in the middle of the year that involved ECAN staff and also a couple of Forest and Bird planting days. Those area plantings and a bit of infill plantings would have totaled more than 2,000 plants. Greg says that there have been over 20,000 plants established in the Sanctuary, over the last five years.

Greg tells me that the major success this year has been an obvious increase in bellbird presence in the reserve. He says that four years ago, the bellbird presence was limited to mostly transient birds during the winter feeding on Kowhai etc, but this season there have been at least four pairs of birds roosting in the reserve throughout the whole season. He says that it's fairly anecdotal, but he has been in the reserve at least once a fortnight and could hear multiple birds throughout the reserve on those occasions. ECAN employs contractors to clear invasive weeds such as old-mans-beard and blackberry and his contractors have also commented on this positive change in bird life.

One of the 'functional' plants he has been keeping his eye on over the last two years is Māhoe and he's delighted to report that the plant continues to proliferate through the areas of bush at the western end of the reserve where he is actively weeding and under-planting because the seeds are being spread by birds. He has also had self-sewn seedlings turn up at the eastern end as well showing that the birds, that feed on the Māhoe seeds are all over the reserve. So, in addition to the 20,000 items planted, it is really encouraging that there are tens of thousands of native seedlings around the place, as a result of the birds. Greg also tells me that he has been noticing less browsing of sub-canopy plants by possums.

Greg credits the increase in bird life and the reduction in possum browsing directly to the work of the Forest and Bird volunteers, Bruce Craig and Phil McEntee and their regular work on the trap line. Greg tells me that it's a huge benefit to the sanctuary to have an extensive trapline checked on a fortnightly basis. The trapping program has become the absolute backbone of the reserve in terms of flora recovery.

I want to express my gratitude to Bruce and Phil for all their hard work. The results are clear to see (and hear). The work ECAN is putting into the area is considerable (thanks Greg) and maybe Forest and Bird members could take the time for a stroll in the reserve. It's easily accessible from the end of Dickies Road and the fantails are wonderful.

*Rick Robinson*

## **Boyle Base Trapping Project**

The Boyle Base trapping Project is located in the Lewis Pass area near the Boyle village on DOC land. We have about 140 traps in 3 circuits to catch rats and mustelids (stoats and weasels) to protect native wildlife in the valley.

The trapping management team of Helen Hills. Rick Robinson, Bruce Craig, Phil McEntee and Geoff Mahan with a small number of other volunteers, clear and rebait the traps once a month. Over the year from April 2020 to April 2021 we have removed 66 rats, 64 stoats and 21 weasels from the trapped area.

In September, we were successful in getting a grant of nearly \$8,000 from the DOC Community Fund to replace some of our old fenn traps with DOC 200s. This will be done at the rate of 15 trap boxes each year for three years. The grant also covers the cost of lure and transport for the next three years.

Thank you again to Di Cowan and also Andrew Stace for doing our spring and autumn bird surveys. Di also kindly gave some guidance to the trapping volunteers from the deerstalkers' lodge down the road with setting up their bird surveys.

Volunteer hours for the year were approximately 500.

The Boyle Base hut continues to be a cosy base for the trapping volunteers, families, individuals wanting to explore the area, fishers and DOC who are doing some research in the Lewis Pass area. Boyle base hut was gifted to our branch by DOC in 2004 largely due to Lesley Shand's involvement in two thirds of the Poplars Pastoral lease becoming the Poplars Conservation area.

For more information on volunteering for trapping/hut maintenance, or booking the hut contact Helen Hills: [helenhills.mcp@gmail.com](mailto:helenhills.mcp@gmail.com) ph: 02102326155

*Helen Hills*

## **Stocker Scholarships**

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

In 2020 the branch awarded two postgraduate students Stocker Scholarships to the value of \$5000 for research to be carried out this year.

University of Canterbury Biological Sciences MSc student Elizabeth de Jongh is using her grant to update our knowledge of native moth biodiversity in the Canterbury High Country over the last 60 years. She is using earlier studies of native moth prevalence from the 1960s and 1980s (Graeme White), drawing conclusions on the current relative status of moths near the Cass Mountain Research Station in the Waimakariri Basin. The aim is to document long term insect trends and causes of native insect decline by measuring the impacts of land use, faunal and altered plant diversity.

Fraser Gurney, MSc student from Lincoln University, is researching the breeding movements and winter dispersal of black-fronted terns. Black-fronted terns are an endangered species endemic to New Zealand, breeding on braided rivers where they are exposed to serious predation. The aim of the study is to determine through the use of GPS tracking how and where terns breed and where they disperse to in coastal areas after the breeding season is over. Data collected will enable better conservation management and more effective predator control than at present.

*Ainslie Talbot*

## **KCC**

Lockdown and Covid Level changes affected our activities in the first half of the year, though we did manage to hold one planned event at the Museum in August, looking at bones in conjunction with the Squawkzilla fossil exhibition. This was an interesting and successful outing and would have been followed by a second session a week later had alert levels not changed.

### **Fishing at Travis Wetland September 2020**

Helen McCaughan from DOC made our outing so interesting and informative. A mudfish for all to see was among her fishy treasures. Nets were pulled out of the pond area near the Education Centre to show eels and native bullies. Kids watched as Helen gamely waded through the water to retrieve and then release her finds. We saw how painstaking it is to clean then fold the nets after they have been dried. Many thankyou's Helen. It is so important to know about these creatures.

### **Penguin Visits to Harris Bay November 2020.**

Three groups of KCC children visited the site and to their delight and awe were able to see the growing young penguins at close range. Kristina and Thomas hosted the visits as they have taken over from stalwart Dr Chris Challies who has monitored and maintained the site since 1976. Because of his constant vigilance the colony continues to flourish! We are so fortunate to have within a reasonable distance of our city such a place. Thank you Kristina and Thomas for taking time out from your busy lives to show the penguins to the children.

### **Foraging Fun in the Red Zone February 2021**

*Discovery* was the theme for the group who enjoyed exploring the red zone area around Avebury House. Plenty to discover including, of course, a variety of fruit trees. We visited the site where the eels are depicted on beautifully made signs. The group wandered along the river bank and enjoyed respectful foraging in the garden near the homestead. A very worthwhile outing.

### **Autumn Picnic at Riccarton Bush May 2021**

Fungi at Riccarton Bush was very well attended which meant we needed to divide the attendees into two groups. Quenby led each group to look at fungi; magnifiers were nearly worn out from over use, fantails twittered and after the fungi exploration the participants made colourful pictures with autumn leaves, glue, crayons and enthusiasm. Jen organised a Mindful Nature Hunt so with great weather on our side a most enjoyable day.

Big thankyou's to Jen and Simone, who lead very busy lives, for their time and dedication to KCC.

*Co-coordinator Eleanor Bissell.*

## **Newsletter/website**

The North Canterbury branch email newsletter detailing upcoming activities, went out seven times in 2020, as well as reminders and notices. This was fewer than normal as branch activities were constrained by Covid restrictions. On average, 41% of the around 2,200 members who have email and elected to receive the newsletters read our eNews, which is a high opening rate for electronic newsletters.

The branch also maintains its website at

<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/branches/north-canterbury>

which contains information about our projects and links to the latest newsletter as well as the annual report and financial statements. Upcoming events can be viewed at the bottom of the web page.

*Michael Godfrey*

## **Facebook Page**

The number of people who 'like' Forest and Bird's Facebook (FB) page has increased from 535 to 602 between April 1st 2020 to April 12th 2021. People who 'like' the FB page will have their own FB page populated with posts we make promoting events, public talks, photos from events etc. They can of course choose to see less of these posts if there are too many (but still continue to like/follow our page).

Posting on a Facebook page is a balance of posting enough content to interest people and generate an 'engagement' (people click on the link, comment on a photo, make an enquiry) versus posting too much content so that there is user fatigue and people simply either scroll past the content, or in the worst case scenario, unlike/unfollow the page. A simple internet search suggests that a FB page should post no more than three times per week (and never more than once a day) to strike the balance between interest and fatigue. In reality it is often difficult to post this many times a week, so I am appreciative of those who have helped with public posts, or supplied content in the form of photos from events. The newsletter is a great source of events to post.

While the outcome of the increase in FB page 'likes' can be hard to measure objectively, it does mean that there is a greater number of people being exposed to events and other posts made on the page. Some committee members have commented that attendees at working bees have seen the events advertised on FB.

I have not 'boosted' any events this year. Boosting is the term used by FB to pay to advertise a specific FB post. For example, one might make a post about an upcoming public talk. FB then gives you the opportunity to 'boost this event'. You can choose how much you want to pay per day for how many days, and this will determine how many people you can 'reach' i.e your post will be advertised on their FB feed. You can select your audience according to a variety of demographics and interests.

In summary, please continue to email me photos and events. The more notice you can give for an event, the better. I and the other FB editors will endeavour to post up to three times a week.

*Stefan Fairweather*

## Public Meetings

Public meetings are held bi-monthly at the WEA, 59 Gloucester Street, Christchurch. There were fewer in 2020 due to Covid restrictions.

- *February 11, 2020:* Stocker Scholarship postgraduate students presented their research findings for 2019
- *August 11, 2020:* Looking after our Local Lizards by Dr Marieke Lettink
- *October 13, 2020:* A Southern Ocean Journey by Nicky Snoyink
- *November 11, 2020:* Effects of Sweeping Land Use Change on Indigenous Dryland Ecosystems in the Mackenzie/High Country, Past, Present and Future by Dr Susan Walker

## Field Trips.

*October 18 2020:* Fern Factor Nursery

*November 14 2020:* Penguin Colony

## 2019-20 Committee

Valerie Campbell: Chairperson  
Frances Wall: Secretary  
Hugh Thorpe: Treasurer  
Michael Godfrey: Website, eNews  
Rick Robinson  
Helen Hills  
Lorna Deppe  
Ann Godfrey  
Diana Shand  
Chay Cotter

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North Canterbury Branch  
Royal Society for the Protection of Forests and Birds

Statement of Receipts and Payments  
Year Ended 31 December 2020

Opening Bank Balances 01-01-2020			
KIWI Bank	Current Account		58,271.51
KIWI Bank	90 Day PIE A/c		154,771.28
KIWI Bank	Investment Account		220,000.00
KIWI Bank	Investment Account		<u>30,000.00</u>
			463,042.79
Revenue			
GST recovered			936.09
Adams Bequest			1,490.69
Net revenue Calendars & Diaries			293.86
Interest			10,323.18
Donations			<u>316.50</u>
			<u>13,360.32</u>
			<u>476,403.11</u>
Significant Transfers to National Office			
Dove Corporation Donation		50,000.00	
National Office Deficit		<u>10,000.00</u>	60,000.00
F & B national - Ngaruroro River Conservation - donation			10,000.00
Administration			
Annual meeting exp		753.72	
Meetings misc		142.08	
WEA Rent		452.61	
Miscellaneous Admin Expenses		324.74	
EDS Subscription		104.35	
Enews		655.26	
Early Withdrawal penalty		51.78	
F&B Subscriptions - West Coast Schools		<u>2,100.00</u>	4,584.54
Boyle Project			
Rent Boyle Base		719.57	
Boyle Base Misc Donation		50.00	
Boyle Base DOC Grant		<u>1,332.50</u>	
Boyle Miscellaneous Expenses		769.22	
Boyle Trapping Expenses		<u>722.60</u>	-610.25
Other			
Stocker Scholarships			4,347.83
Contribution to Kaikoura Branch Shearwater project			2,300.00
Penguin Project			
Penguin Food			<u>398.08</u>
			81,020.20
Closing Bank Balances - 31-12-2020			
KIWI Bank	Current Account		70,340.23
KIWI Bank	90 Day PIE Account		67,421.08
KIWI Bank	Investment Account #2		227,169.55
KIWI Bank	Investment Account #3		<u>30,452.05</u>
			<u>395,382.91</u>
			<u>476,403.11</u>