



Napier Branch Newsletter

June 2021



Forest & Bird

TE REO O TE TAIAO

Giving Nature a Voice



Welcome to the new look Six-Monthly Newsletter

This covers Napier Branch activities for the period

November 2020 to April 2021

THE RURU

The Ruru is a small, dark, forest-dwelling owl. Found in both native and plantation forests, its distinctive “more-pork” call is commonly heard at night in many urban parks and well-vegetated suburbs. Ruru are relatively common throughout much of New Zealand but are sparse through the eastern and central South Island. Their diet consists of insects, small mammals and birds, which it hunts at night.



Ruru inhabit most forested offshore islands from the Three Kings Islands south to some of the muttonbird islands off the south-west tip of Stewart Island.

They are naturally absent from the Poor Knights Islands and Chatham Islands, and vagrant to the Snares Islands. Ruru roost in dark forested areas with high

overhead cover, on a branch, on top of a tree fern or within a cavity. They sometimes roost inside derelict buildings

Distribution and habitat

Ruru are widely distributed throughout the native and exotic forests of New Zealand. They are uncommon in the drier eastern regions of the South Island, especially south of Christchurch. They also occur in more open areas where suitable patches of vegetation remain including sparsely-wooded farmland, and within some urban parks and gardens.

Population

Widespread and moderately abundant.

Photo credits: Little Bush Sign, David Belcher
Ruru fledgling at Boundary Stream, Lynne Anderson
Ruru adult, John Flux, Birdsonline NZ

From the Chair

by David S. Belcher

Hopefully the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic now lies behind us as we resume normal Branch activities. It is very satisfying to see such good support given to the monthly field trips and almost overwhelming numbers attending Branch meetings. This not only shows keen interest but importantly great support for your Branch Committee who organise the programme of events and speakers. Your continued support is appreciated and makes the Branch such a success.

I repeatedly have to state that it is with grateful thanks to Liz Carter and her assistants who offer such a diverse range of monthly field trips. Many hours of devotion are spent preparing the trips along with many a challenge whether it be suitable accessibility for walking or the weather. One earlier trip this year ended up being Plan C when other negotiations failed. Liz was biting her fingernails by this point of time! However, her devotion, determination and that radiant smile make everything worthwhile.

Regretfully at the end of last year our six-monthly newsletter producer, Don Wilson, retired from this position following 23 years of service. The first newsletter he published was in July 1997. I am positive that all members appreciate the dedication Don undertook in producing this newsletter which is well received not only by Branch members but also local Councils, Forest & Bird Central Office and the Board members. We are very fortunate in having Deborah Ives as the producer of our monthly newsletter and she will undertake the editing and production of our six-monthly newsletter. Thank you Deborah for this large responsibility.

At our Branch AGM last February, John Warren, who is a renowned water expert, was elected to our Branch Committee. This proved very timely as our Branch Secretary, Lynne Anderson and Committee Members John Warren, Neil Eagles and Angie Denby spent many hours compiling submissions on behalf of the Napier Branch to both Hawke's Bay Regional Council and Napier City Council on their 10-year plan. Particular interest and questioning was assigned to the proposed wetland development in the Ahuriri Estuary and stormwater disposal. These submissions were a difficult task without either council producing a masterplan. They certainly need to stop and think before returning to the community with some positive answers prior to seeking local community support and engagement.

Our Napier Branch involvement at Waitangi Regional Park continues to be a howling success and again we are extremely grateful to Hawke's Bay Regional Council (HBRC) for their working co-operation. We are privileged to have the controlling guidance of Rod Dickson, HBRC Senior Open Spaces Development Officer and Stevie Smidt, HBRC Open Spaces Development Officer at hand forming an excellent ongoing working relationship which makes this project a growing success.

Last February, we received a surprise contact through the Department of Conservation (DoC) and subsequently HBRC. Dulux Paints NZ, who supply DoC with paint product throughout New Zealand, were staging their NZ Conference in Napier and wished to return a favour by assisting and supporting a local environmental project. As Waitangi Regional Park is in close proximity it became the obvious choice where a team of 150 Dulux Paint representatives spent two hours releasing and applying mulch to the 2019 year plantings. An excellent team worked in a very efficient manner to completely exhaust the remaining large heaps of mulch. A tremendous undertaking was very much appreciated as these plantings continue to grow.



Little Bush Reserve with new sign and Totara

You will note that our 2021 year planting date at Waitangi Regional Park is now on Saturday 24th July owing to very dry ground conditions and better suiting HBRC.

As the year progresses we are very much looking forward to Neil Eagles' publication - *The History of the Napier Branch of Forest & Bird*. Neil often informs me that he needs something to do and I am sure that you will support me in offering him our sincere thanks for his commitment to the Branch and Forest & Bird. Neil has spent many an hour researching old records recovered from the late Isabel Morgan even to the point of locating the handwritten minutes of the very first Branch Meeting. Neil's dedication towards this undertaking will become very well received as the Branch will take responsibility for its publication. Certainly a very worthy project as it is invaluable to have historical recordings held in one place. Hopefully this book will become a good Christmas present for members and the community.

A History of Napier Branch

by Neil Eagles

I am writing a history of the Branch as we had pondered a few years ago as to when we were founded as a Branch. We did not have a clue. Many of the old twigs had fallen off their trees and we were at a loss as to when was our birthdate.

I took it upon myself to find out. Hawke's Bay was created as a Division or Branch in 1931 so we are in fact 90 years old. We were separated from Hawke's Bay to form a Napier Branch and a Hastings/Havelock North Branch in 1956. So as a local Branch we are 65 years old.

I have found out lots of information since but would like to gather a few more anecdotes and photos. I have a few photos but would appreciate more clear photos of the past and present to add to the publication. They could be emailed to nandgeagles@outlook.com or delivered to 30 Trigg Cres where I will copy them and return them.

Hopefully the work will be finished by the end of the year and a history booklet will be published for you to treasure.

Neil Eagles / Old Blue Award (2018)



Extract from Forest and Bird magazine - August 1956

NAPIER

At Napier on 29th May St. Paul's Schoolroom was placed at the disposal of the Society, and it was filled to capacity, extra chairs having to be procured and one or two persons having to stand. Dr. Bathgate again took the chair, as until the formation of the Section, it came within his representative district of Hawkes Bay. A Napier Section was formed, the election of officers being : Chairman, Mr. H. R. Holt; Hon. Secretary, Mr H. S. Cottrell; Committee, Mrs. C. W. Nash, Mrs C. C Sorrell and Messrs. G. Crawford, H. B. Smart, G. Snaddon, E. Vogther, R. Williams.

Your membership is the water that turns the generator of our Society, and supplies the power which enables us to do our job of protecting New Zealand's native birds and forests.

Every extra member helps—can you interest a friend?

'Old Blue' was the Chatham Island **Black Robin** who saved her whole species from extinction. Open to members and non-members this award recognises those who have made a significant contribution to advancing the Society's objectives at a Branch level or through non-Society conservation work. Up to five awards are made each year.



Photo caption : Black Robin, David Boyle

Little Bush Reserve

by David S. Belcher, Convenor

Our dear Little Bush Reserve continues to be alive with birdsong chorus mainly from Tui and Kereru and this has been brought to my attention by a number of visitors. This also includes ourselves whilst undertaking pest control or other maintenance duties. I am positive that the increasing birdsong is brought about through our continuing pest control operations.

Our sincere thanks must be expressed to Beau Fahnle our HB Regional Council Biodiversity/Biosecurity Advisor who has offered both personal and advisory support towards the preservation of Little Bush Reserve. With the completion of the deer fencing project, I spent a day with Beau last November creating some permanent photographic recording positions within the reserve to annually record evidence of natural bush regeneration or at the worst deforestation. Some permanent stakes are to be installed marking these monitoring points. During the same visit cameras were placed at varying locations to capture any suspicious evidence of deer possibly being enclosed within the reserve along with other wandering predators including feral cats. Evidence proved to be correct and two deer have since been removed. One camera still remains in operation to further record evidence. Again Beau, a special thank you from the Napier Branch for your invaluable assistance towards Little Bush and we are only sorry that you are leaving HBRC to return to your homeland where we offer you all the very best for your future.

In December the new Forest & Bird sign was erected to replace the outdated sign in the front paddock. I wish to thank Neil Eagles, Mike and Paula Hockey and John Wuts for their invaluable guidance and assistance in erecting this long-awaited sign.



Sunday 14th March was an exciting and memorable day for Little Bush when Biodiversity Hawke's Bay hosted their field day. Exciting because of the perfect weather, the bush was smiling having received rainfall two days prior, the birdsong was performing to its utmost and there were some 60 visitors in attendance. What else could one ask for?

Following the introductory speeches by Kay Griffiths, Chairperson of Biodiversity HB and myself representing Forest & Bird, the group walked the neighbouring paddock to especially view the large Ti Kouka tree and view the diverse range of indigenous forest that the reserve contains.

On return to the carpark, visitors walked the internal bush loop track to observe the beauty that lies within. While walking the internal track I was completely overwhelmed with the visiting children asking Kay Griffiths intelligent questions in relation to the bush and environmental features. So encouraging especially as these children are the future of Forest & Bird.

Following lunch there were demonstration talks provided by Kay Griffiths of the Hawke's Bay Conservation Company, Beau Fahnle, HBRC and Nathan Burkepile of the NZ Landcare Trust. It was also commendable having DoC staff on site offering assistance and advice. Kay Griffiths spoke on the importance of predator control along with physical examples of a stoat and a weasel to define the differences to those present. Beau Fahnle spoke on HBRC's role with predator control and provided demonstration examples of DoC 200 traps and NZ Auto Traps leaving Nathan Burkepile to demonstrate a simple home rat or mouse trap. A really enjoyable and informative day placing Little Bush reserve well in the radar.



Our ongoing pest control continues with some interesting results. Since I last wrote we have caught 27 rats, 12 hedgehogs and 5 ferrets which brings our total number of recorded catches to 570 since the inception of pest control in 2011. The ferrets were large nasty looking creatures, much larger and fearsome looking compared to a stoat. It remains interesting that we have not caught a stoat in some considerable number of months.

With further assistance from HBRC we are currently loading our pest control programme and results into Traps NZ so more news on this system in the next newsletter.



I wish to extend thanks to John Stairmand and others who have volunteered assistance with pest control at Little Bush and I would welcome further assistance from other interested volunteering branch members.



Captions : Previous page - children measuring girth of Te Kouka/Cabbage Tree
Above : Ferrets caught in Doc200 traps
Right : New Signage
Kay Griffiths at the large Te Kouka tree
Biodiversity Hawke's Bay Field Day

Photo credits: David Belcher





Waitangi and Waikahu Wetlands

by Mike Hockey



This summer has seen the Waitangi Regional Park continue to expand its development and tree planting areas, having good growth, even after a dry season.

Good plant release work has shown positive results for the trees planted in June 2019. This area suffered from some poor soil areas and weed invasion, but two good working bees, one in December 2020 by the Napier Forest & Bird members, and the Dulux volunteer day, undertaken by approximately 150 personnel at Napier for a conference, has seen amazing tree growth in this area, well done to all those people who participated in this tree release work!

Last year's plantings in July 2020, continue to do well in the area between the bridges and pre-mulching and hole boring by the Hawke's Bay Regional Council team have shown a good result.

This year, the Napier Forest & Bird Branch will be planting again between the two bridges in a pre-mulched area by the road bridge and infilling around some of last year's plantings. This will be on Saturday 24th of July – later than on the trip programme due to the swapping of the June and July activities as we hope to receive some winter rain before planting out.

Again, a big thanks go out to the HBRC Open Spaces team, Russell Engelke, Rod Dickson, and Stevie Smidt who continue to support Napier Forest & Bird with our tree planting projects at Waitangi Regional Park.

So, see you at Waitangi on the 24th of July.

Photo captions: Left - Winter 2020 plantings, west of the bridge
Right : Tree releasing in December 2020, weeding out fennel and mallow

Ahuriri Estuary Protection Society

By Angie Denby



Richmond School pupils

It has been an active and interesting year for Ahuriri Estuary Protection Society (AEPS). Most importantly we have been building our committee team.

We are attending council meetings on topics related to the estuary, and networking with staff. Since the acid spill into the estuary, it has been interesting to follow the machinations of the Napier City Council's process on whether they can successfully prosecute the offending company.



We are writing submissions and presenting them at council or DoC hearings, to outline any concerns we have.

We were involved with trips with Richmond School pupils and the BirdsNZ Youth Camp.

Our monthly rubbish clean-ups keep down the levels of rubbish in the Humber St walkway car-park and entrance, and around the estuary waterways.

We have had our second annual summer picnic with a speaker, and the numbers of participants doubled this year.

And last but not least, two of our committee (with support of BirdsNZ and DoC) have instigated "Meet the Godwits" gatherings, with a speaker, to develop a greater understanding in the community of the importance of the estuary.

Our membership is growing, especially from the godwit talks/walks. If the estuary is a passion of yours, do join us to receive our four monthly newsletter and hear how you can become involved in activities.



Sample of rubbish collected



Meet the Godwits gathering

Ahuriri Nursery News

by Geoff Hulbert



This time of year the nursery is literally full to overflowing. Unfortunately as it is still so dry “out there” it will be some time before the plants are sent out to the various planting projects. Again we face the typical space race as the new seedlings will soon need potting up. Hmm... maybe we could build a mezzanine floor.

Alas we had a rabbit problem a couple of months back. I’m not sure what the mass noun for a murder of rabbits is, but murder is bordering on being an appropriate noun. Some were sneaking in to the nursery, possibly through a gap in our netting which hopefully has been plugged. They had a right royal feast on the kakabeak, kowhai, karamu and carex seedlings. Fortunately the chomped plants have mostly recovered from the trauma being eaten alive and will be able to go to their new homes later this year.



Later this year we hope to replace our rather worn out floor matting and do other necessary maintenance. Always good to ensure the irrigation system continues to operate. Plus another check to ensure we are “rabbit proof”.

At the moment it’s a quiet time for us. Weeding of course continues to be required. We’ll start putting newly germinated seedlings into root trainers. We’ll keep the root trainers inside as there isn’t any room outside. This includes the flax, cabbage trees, karamu and kowhai.

No doubt we’ll receive a new load of *Pittosporum*

obcordatum seed from DoC’s Helen Jonas. Over the past three years we’ve had a very successful time in getting this seed to germinate.

Speaking of seed, our toetoe hasn’t germinated. If anyone has some seed we’d appreciate it; don’t need too much. While on this begging theme, wouldn’t mind some *P. Ralphii* seed too, again not too much. If you have some please give me a call on 8449472, or 021 065 6181 or email me: gandphulbert@gmail.com.



Again, a big thanks to Alan Lee from DoC for keeping a good eye on the nursery and ensuring things work okay and that we have enough biscuits.

We are sorry that Joy McCormick has decided to hang up her nursery gloves. It’s certainly the end of a very long and enjoyable association with her and of course her mum, Betty. Their combined service at the nursery was decades long and invaluable.

The attached photos show (left) the huge array of *Pittosporum obcordatum* and some of the cabbage trees and (above) some of the kakabeak, karamu and ngaio plus salt marsh ribbonwood in the background



P. obcordatum

Speakers' Corner



NOVEMBER 2020

Bob Brooking - Volunteering for DoC

Bob gave an interesting talk about his experiences volunteering for DoC. His talk was supported by great photographs and covered the adventures below:



- 2000 Golden Point Macraes
This included mud plastering cottages by hand. The mud was made with a special recipe which included cow dung.
- 2001 Mahaenui
South of Te Kuiti this work involved Giant Weta relocation

- 2002 Mason's Bay Stewart Island
This work involved Homestead Restoration. Some of the materials for the restoration were sought from the beach. Work included repairs, repiling, weedeating.
- 2002 Centre Island Rarotoka
In Foveaux Strait this included planting pingao a native grass and removing plant pests.
- 2003 Ports Water Race
Southland west of Invercargill past Riverton, this involved clearing a track which has become part of the New Zealand Te Araroa Trail
- 2005 Pigeon Island
This involved Planting. The island is in Lake Wakatipu. Previous plantings had been burnt in a fire.

JANUARY 2021

Lynne Anderson - Sub-Antarctic Islands

Because the scheduled guest speaker Gabriel Hurford was unable to attend, Lynne Anderson stood in and talked about her experiences of visiting the amazing Sub-Antarctic Islands of New Zealand and Australia with a special focus on the wildlife on the islands.

Sub-Antarctic Islands of New Zealand and Australia include the Snares Islands, Auckland Island, Macquarie Island (Australian territory) and Campbell Island.

The Snares Islands are one of the most pristine places on earth – having never been inhabited or cleared and they have always been pest free. The Snares also avoided the extensive sealing and whaling that happened on the other islands – probably due to rugged terrain and being surrounded by steep cliffs. The 'Penguin Slide' is one of the best known places on the Snares. Millions of seabirds breed there and the Snares are also home to several endemic species of plants, birds and invertebrates.

The Auckland Island mainland is the only NZ Sub-Antarctic island that is not predator free – DoC are doing a feasibility study on ridding the island of cats, pigs and mice which is planned for the future. The island is home to many breeding seabirds, penguins, shags, NZ fur seals and sealions. The Islands have a rich history of ship wrecks and an attempted settlement at Port Ross (1849-1852).



Macquarie Island, the most southern island and Australian territory is a breeding home to millions of penguins, seabirds and elephant seals. It has been predator free since 2011. Australia has a scientific base there which is manned all year round.

Campbell Island, the southern most of NZ's Sub-Antarctic islands, has been predator free since 2003. There is a history of the island being farmed and there use to be weather station there. The island is an extremely important location for wildlife which has flourished since its predator free status including a once thought to be extinct teal and snipe.

MARCH 2021

Mike Hockey - Macquarie Harbour, West Coast Tasmania

Mike Hockey gave a most interesting, amusing and informative talk about his time at Macquarie Harbour, which is six times larger than Sydney Harbour and supports the township of Strahan. Sarah Island lies within the harbour. The entrance to the harbour is so narrow it is called 'Hell's Gate'. The rainfall is similar to the West Coast of NZ.

Mike told how from 1822 – 1833, Sarah Island used to be a penal colony and how the prisoners built a ship from the Huon pine which grew there. We heard how 10 prisoners mutineered the ship and sailed to Chile, three of them were later captured and sent back to Australia where they were tried then sent to the Norfolk Island Penal Colony.

The Huon pines take centuries to grow and the wood used to be much sort after – especially for ship building. However, today the remaining Huon pines are strictly protected.

The Gordon River, which flows into Macquarie Harbour, is extremely picturesque and today it is a UNESCO World Heritage site. However, the area was lucky to survive as in the 1980s there was a plan to dam the Franklin River which flows into the Gordon. The protests had parallels to saving the Manapouri campaigns in New Zealand and the river was saved. Yesterday's protesters are now today's heroes.

Unfortunately Mike and wife Paula had to cut their holiday short and return to New Zealand and just got home before the borders closed and the first Covid level 4 lockdown.

APRIL 2021

Gabriel Harford, Waste Minimisation Officer, Napier City Council

Gabriel gave a lively and entertaining talk about rubbish. He spoke about the introduction of the new household rubbish wheelie bins and recycling crates following a community survey which had 5,000 responses – a record. He demonstrated the use of the bins and crates with two members sorting samples of waste as examples. He spoke at length about every aspect of recycling from kerbside collection to product manufacture or to landfill. Only aluminium and tin items are sent overseas with the remainder recycled by various companies where possible within New Zealand. Gabriel urged the meeting to reduce waste impact by the 'R' method – Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Repurpose, Rot or Recycle. Many questions were answered and the audience were well informed.



Photo caption : Macquarie Harbour lighthouse

Field Trip Reports

by Liz Carter, Co-ordinator



Photo captions:
Father Christmas at the Beach
Members waiting for Christmas
celebrations



Above:
Ocean Beach conservation area
Lunch at the beach
Tuatara in the Cape enclosure

Sunday 29th November — Maraetotara Falls, Mohi Bush and Waimarama Beach

A cool, cloudy start to the day for the 45 members, with some threatening clouds about, but no rain fell. First stop was at the Maraetotara Falls, which is very popular with swimmers. A quick wander down to view the picturesque falls and then back on the bus and up to Mohi Bush. Chilly there as well, probably because we were high up on the plateau. A beautiful walk through and around this lovely coastal forest. Then back at the shelter for lunch then we made our way down to Waimarama beach for our Christmas celebrations. On our journey to the beach, David Belcher told us the interesting history of the area, as he had farmed in that area. Once at the beach most had a wander along to finish the day. Father Christmas made a unexpected appearance with a 'Ho Ho Ho', and cake and drinks were enjoyed by all. The raffle was drawn with first prize of a \$100 voucher was won by Duncan Watson, and second prize of \$30 for a free trip voucher was won by Deborah Ives. A good ending to a short year for field trips - better luck for 2021.

Leader - Liz Willis Team helpers - Virginia Moore, Carol King and David Belcher

Sunday 31st January — Ocean Beach and Cape Sanctuary

The landowners share a vision extending beyond 50 years to restore the coastal communities of land and sea birds, reptiles and invertebrates that would once have existed on the Cape Kidnappers peninsula. The project aims to achieve conservation gains for nationally significant species within a highly modified farming and multi-use landscape including forestry, tourism and recreation. Oh what a day we had. We arrived out at Ocean Beach Cape Sanctuary at about 9.30am with nearly a full bus of eager walkers and all keen to see this wonderful sanctuary again. Seven members were from Hastings /Havelock North Branch.

On arrival we were met by landowner Andy Lowe, (unexpected) and Rachel Ward (new manager). A quick health and safety talk by Rachel then Andy gave us the run down on what has been happening out at the Cape. Multiple projects taking place, with huge amounts of native tree plantings, pest eradication, reintroducing many species of sea birds and native birds etc. The walk got under way with Andy leading it, along the way he was telling us all about what was happening at the Sanctuary, very interesting to hear. We felt quite honoured to have Andy with us for the day along with Rachel. Her job was to help Bob Brooking ferry our Treasures group up to the bird site in her vehicle and then return them back down to the bus after lunch. We were very thankful that Bob also came out in his 'beaut ute' to help with transport. A busy day for both Rachel and Bob and very much appreciated by the Treasures. Tutatara were spotted nearby in their enclosure which got cameras clicking and many shy birds appeared every now and then. After lunch the hikers made their way down to the beach and walked along then headed inland across the sand dunes and finally back to the bus.

Our Branch donated a \$100 Mitre-10 voucher for the Sanctuary to go towards their projects. Our thanks to Andy Lowe and Rachel Ward for taking the time to spend the day with us. A great start to our new year and a most enjoyable day was had by everyone.

Leader - Liz Carter Team helpers - Steve Borrett, John Stairmand and Liz Willis

Sunday 28th February — Waipawa/Waipukurau River Trails and Lindsay Bush

After doing the recce for Red Island we decided that it would be too difficult for many of the group to get down to the beach and back up again, as access was very steep. Instead we went to Plan B which was the Tutaekuri River gorge., but six days before we were to do the recce, heavy rain brought the local rivers levels up and they were quite discoloured. So Plan C had to be decided on pretty quickly which was the Central Hawke's Bay River Trails. We headed south to Waipawa onto Tapaira Rd which is just across the Waipawa bridge and drove to the end of the road to the start of the walk. The hikers headed off first and once across the new swing bridge to the new trail and up the left-hand side of the Tukituki river to Russell Park at Waipukurau, about 6kms away. Morning tea was under some lovely trees. We were joined by the Treasures who had enjoyed a short walk to the swing bridge and across for a thrill and then returned to the bus which took them to Russell Park. After morning tea the hikers got under way again and walked 5kms to Lindsay Bush. We all had lunch at the carpark, joined by the Treasures as well, followed by a walk through this delightful remnant of lowland forest. It is maintained by CHB Forest & Bird and contains very big old Kahikatea which are thought to be 250 to 500 years old. A easy walking day made it very relaxing, and a enjoyable day for everyone.

Leader - Marilyn Lorimer Team helpers - Tony des Landes, Liz Carter, Virginia Moore and Carol King



Photo captions:

Top:
The swing bridge over the Tukituki River

Members on the Tukituki Trail admiring the ancient English Oak planted in 1856 by Ihaia Hutana as a memorial to his wife.

Walkers testing the bridge wobbles

Left: A group of Napier Branch members enjoying the Cape Kidnappers Sanctuary in January





Sunday 28th March — Masters Shelter and Golden Crown Ridge

A perfect day for the walk, with a beautiful scenic drive along with the changing colours of the autumn trees. We headed down Highway 50 turning off at Maraekakaho, along Kereru Road and into Mangleton Road until we came to the entrance to Masters Shelter and Golden Crown Ridge. The first part of the walk took us across farmland and through a series of gates until we got to Masters Shelter, where we had morning tea. The Treasures arrived later and based themselves at the Shelter. The main group of hikers got under way, led by John Stairmand and started the 625-metre climb up through the bush-clad Crown Ridge. A lot of huffing and puffing went on with many stops to catch breath. Once at the 625 metres the group popped through a fence into the grassy farm paddock to a lookout point (with the farmer's permission). Lunch was enjoyed overlooking the spectacular views. A quick lunch for a few hardy ones and then John took them up to 800 metres and a rocky outcrop, which gave them a good work-out. The Treasures made their way up part of the ridge and managed very well and enjoyed the day pottering around. We left on the bus for home a little earlier at 2.30pm. The picture perfect scenery made a lovely drive to an area seldom visited by many.

Leader - John Stairmand Helpers - John Wuts, Tony des Landes and Liz Carter

Sunday 25th April — Mount Kahuranaki

On a beautiful sunny autumn day, having crossed the Red Bridge over the Tukituki river, we took the Kahuranaki Road for about 8kms until arriving at Kahuranaki Station. The Treasures group walked around the lower slopes of the mountain and the main group made their way up a well-maintained track; a steady climb to the top. About halfway up we stopped for morning tea where everyone on the trip received a Anzac biscuit with the compliments of Liz Carter. After about two hours walk, and a bit of huffing and puffing we finally reached the summit, where we had lunch with beautiful views all around. We descended on the Maraetotara valley side and came across the only piece of native bush to be seen, clinging on to a steep rocky slope. As we rounded the southern end of the mountain, we were back on a wide vehicle track again, a gentle downhill walk in glorious sunshine with the amazing backdrop of steep grass-covered mountain side with rocky outcrops. Everyone had a very enjoyable Anzac Day out.

Leader - Stephen Borrett

Team helpers - Liz Willis, Christine Lawrence

and David Belcher

Photo captions from top: Les Davies, a 90-year-old veteran of Napier Branch, enjoying Lunch at Masters Shelter. The Branch greatly appreciates Les' contribution over the years.

Fantail in the bush

Mt Kahuranaki track

Reaching the top of Mt Kahuranaki

Hawke's Bay Regional Council biodiversity mahi

Highlights from the last six months



Biodiversity monitoring masters study

A Hawke's Bay-born masters student is testing an exciting new biodiversity monitoring framework for national reporting led by the Regional Council and Manaaki Whenua.

Ruby Macgillivray is monitoring a selection of 10 ecologically prioritised sites and comparing each of the sites based on different fencing management strategies, vegetation and plants, soil types, and bird life.

Once Ruby has finished her research we will know how successful the framework is at measuring different strategies. It will also give us an idea of the ecological compositions of these Hawke's Bay sites.

Community trapping

A new community trapping group is protecting native birdlife on the Tūtaekurī River, one trap at a time.

The group, a collaboration between the Regional Council and Hawke's Bay Fish and Game, kicked off in September last year trapping from Dartmoor to Puketapu, utilising Fish and Game's network of hunters and fishermen who are keen on conservation.

The aim is to have traps covering 7km of the Tūtaekurī river corridor to protect ground nesting birds from predators including rates, mustelids, hedgehogs, and feral cats. The project is using an app called Trap NZ which allows trappers to log catches and build a picture of what's happening in the environment.



Deer fencing

We've completed deer fencing two significant, acutely threatened wetlands, Orea Swamp and Pigsty Wetland. These sites have also been receiving weed control and an extensive aerial willow control programme is being planned for next summer.



These projects were fast-tracked thanks to Jobs for Nature funding.

Pigsty wetland is a 90 hectare wetland which is very rare as there aren't many wetlands of that size left in Aotearoa. It is surrounded by native bush and is beside the Ngaruroro River. The deer fencing and weed control will allow native bush to regenerate and support native birds to flourish.

Chairman's Annual Report 2020/2021

by David S. Belcher

Welcome everyone to the 64th Annual Meeting of the Napier Branch of Forest & Bird. Certainly a year of highs, lows and if I may add, achievements for the Branch.

It is very satisfying that the Branch membership has responded so well over the past twelve months of disruption whether it be meeting attendance or field trip participation.

According to Central Office our Branch membership numbers stood at 356 as at 31st January 2020 and 400 as at 31st January 2021. Your committee experiences ongoing communication breakdowns with Central Office regarding the membership of the Society with a few members being wiped from the database for no apparent reason. We firmly believe that these actions by Central Office deter membership and financial support to the Society. Your committee have voiced these concerns to the Board and once again at a recent meeting held in Napier.

As your current Branch Chairman, I have felt very honoured to have had such a co-operative and focused working committee to make this Napier Branch function so well by undertaking various rolls with interest and efficiency. Thank you all very much for your invaluable time and assistance especially with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our Branch Secretary remains unsurpassable, recording all minutes and meeting reports in such fine detail. All correspondence and records are maintained to the highest degree and efficiency. Very many thanks Lynne on behalf of us all.

Our long-standing Treasurer of many years continues so willingly to fulfill her roll with efficiency and accuracy recording all transactions with a broad smile. With all transactions recorded in fine detail the annual accounts balance to the last cent. Thank you Sue on behalf of all members for your ongoing and much appreciated commitment.

Your Newsletter Editor continues to come up as a real surprise quietly compiling relevant information into a monthly newsletter detailing branch meetings, field trips, environmental news and upcoming events. There remains no excuse for lack of knowledge or perhaps participation. We are most grateful to Deborah for producing this high-class monthly publication which is very much appreciated.

The monthly newsletter is not to be confused with the six monthly high-class newsletter. Production of this newsletter commenced in July 1997 by Don Wilson. Don has been responsible for the

well-recognised production of this newsletter for the past 23 years with the aid of editors Liz Carter 10 years, Valerie Hart 10 years and currently Deborah Ives. The production of this well received publication commenced with some six to seven pages and has grown to 16 to 18 pages in recent years. Regretfully, Don Wilson has now retired as the publisher and we honour him for his 23 years of service which has been most appreciated by all members, Forest & Bird Central Office, the Forest & Bird Board, Department of Conservation (DoC), and local councils. Very many thanks to you Don for your long-serving commitment. Deborah Ives will continue editing and producing this publication.

I must also express thanks to our Branch Health & Safety Champion, Cheryl Nicholls, who keeps us updated with compliance administered from Central Office. Cheryl also multitasks with secretarial duties in our Branch Secretary's absence.

In early March 2020 we were saddened with the loss of Isabel Morgan, aged 98 years. As previously reported Isabel was a pioneer for the Napier Branch and the Society in recognition of restoration and preservation. Her attributes are held in high regard with the most important being the formation of the Napier Junior Group in 1967. Her contribution of ideas and enthusiasm finally saw all Forest & Bird branches agree to establishing the Kiwi Conservation Club in 1989 and this section of Forest & Bird remains today. She became a member of the Napier Branch Committee in 1966 and was

elected Chairperson in 1981 and retained this position until 2007, a term of 26 years' service.

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March, all meetings, field trips and activities were cancelled until June. Our Biennial Public Seminar hosting Kevin Hague, our CEO, was to have been held towards the end of March but regulations also placed a halt to this fixture.

The highlight of our Napier Branch year was the Old Blue Award presented to Liz Carter. With the cancellation of the Forest & Bird conference and annual dinner presentations, Liz had to wait some months for the receipt of her well-deserved award. In the meanwhile and by the end of July we had moved from Level 2 to Level 1 lockdown and with great excitement the Branch held a dinner to celebrate Liz's highly commendable achievement. It was not until November when the Forest & Bird Board met with our branch in Napier that Liz was finally presented with this prestigious award. In some ways, better still as a good number of Branch members were able to be present to honour this presentation.





The monthly field trips have recommenced and as previously reported remain a highlight of the Napier Branch often with the support of 50 members. Your Trip Co-ordinator continues year after year to provide an inspiring range of field trips with all encounters taken into consideration including health and safety, the weather, reconnaissance trips, trip leaders, organising the bus, printed trip sheets, the 'Treasurers' group and so the list grows. A tremendous undertaking of responsibility which as I repeatedly say deserves special recognition. We know that Liz loves organising trips but thank you very much Liz for your devotion.

The highly valued and ongoing restoration programme at Waitangi Regional Park in conjunction with Hawke's Bay Regional Council is now entering into its seventh year. We are most grateful to our Committee Member, Mike Hockey, who does a splendid job liaising with HBRC to organise the Annual Forest & Bird Planting Day and the maintenance days thereafter. Fortunately, a most successful planting day was able to be scheduled at the end of last July when at lockdown Level 1. The co-operation with HBRC staff, Rod Dickson and Stevie Smidt is very commendable even to the point of pest control which has been introduced. Mike has taken the responsibility of the pest control not only here at Waitangi but also in an area of the Ahuriri Estuary in conjunction with DoC. Thank you very much Mike on behalf of all members.

A number of our members assist with the DoC Ahuriri Estuary Restoration Group led by Louise Mc Namara and Alan Lee. The main task is the eradication of seaweed lavender *Limonium companyonis*. If left, this plant could be a possible ecological threat as it spreads to compete with the native saltmarsh which is a most desirable plant to our estuary bird population. This day also provides an opportunity to associate with DoC and local programmes.

Last August and on behalf of the Society, an elected committee of Lynne Anderson, Liz Carter, Deborah Ives, Angie Denby and others organised a full programme of speakers and events to host the North Island Forest & Bird Gathering. Mid-August saw the reversion of the Level 2 lockdown. Following long communications with Central Office it was with regret that this event was postponed because of risk, which was unfortunate but safety is paramount. Thank you so much to everyone who assisted with organising this event with guest speakers and a full programme of events featuring wetlands and estuaries.

The Branch Nursery in conjunction with DoC consists of a small but most efficient working group who operate at Turfrey Road propagating and growing some 5,000 trees and shrubs each year. These are ready for planting in various reserves including Little Bush. Very well done team and keep on with the great work.

The Little Bush Reserve has been in the news again. We are most grateful for the communications and financial assistance received from the HBRC Biodiversity and Biosecurity staff. With the move

of the Covid-19 lockdown to Level 1 at the end of June, an opportunity arose to have stage two of the deer fencing project completed. Our ongoing pest control programme also contributes significantly to the preservation of this unique reserve. The pest control programme commenced in 2011 and to date some 550 catches are recorded. Our sincere thanks must be extended to Beau Fahnle, HBRC Biosecurity Advisor in collating the pest control and introducing us to the Trap NZ programme which stores all records. Beau also installed several cameras for a period whereby we proved evidence of one fawn deer remaining fenced within the reserve. This offender has since been removed.

Upon completion of the deer fencing project a letter of appreciation was forwarded to the CEO and Board Chairman of HBRC. In answer to this the committee was invited to a presentation before the HBRC Board expanding on our appreciation which proved to be an invaluable exercise.

I offer sincere thanks to members who have volunteered their time and expertise towards Little Bush pest control, blackberry spraying and tree/plant maintenance. Many plants are showing good growth in place of what was a very large blackberry patch a few years ago. Just prior to last Christmas our new sign was erected to replace the former sign. Quite a long procedure but well worth the wait and again many thanks to the team who assisted on the day.

I simply cannot let this report pass without special mention of a very active and supportive member of our Branch Committee. Neil continues to be greatly appreciated for his active involvement towards the Branch and the Society. His many involvements over the years have become far too extensive to mention here but I can assure you that we are well represented within other groups. Neil is writing the history of the Napier Branch and has researched invaluable early history back to handwritten minutes of the first Branch meeting held in May 1956. We look forward to this book which will be published by our Napier Branch later this 2021 year.

Finally, I wish to thank all members of the Napier Branch for their presence and assistance towards making the Branch so functional and supportive towards conservation and restoration. It has been my privilege as your Branch Chairman, along with the unanimous support of the Committee, to now have both Neil Eagles and Liz Carter awarded with an 'Old Blue'. Without their commitment the Napier Branch would not stand as it does today.

I also wish to thank you all for placing confidence in myself to act as your Branch Chairman this past year.

May I also thank my wife, Marilyn, who offers tremendous support to myself and being a supportive member.

25th February, 2021

Photo captions: Waitangi Regional Park
Previous page: David Belcher clearing
blackberry at Little Bush

FOREST AND BIRD – NAPIER BRANCH COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS 2021

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Large Ti Kouka at Little Bush

“It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living.”

— Sir David Attenborough