

North Taranaki Forest & Bird + Kiwi Conservation Club news

P.O. Box 1029 New Plymouth 4340

March to June 2022

HAERE MAI, ELVISA

No Airangi, No Piripaina oku tupuna

No Tokoroa ahau

Ko Taranaki toku kainga

Ko Elvisa Van Der Leden toku ingoa



Kia ora, I'm Elvise Van Der Leden, the new Forest & Bird Regional Conservation Manager (RCM) for Taranaki and Waikato!

My new role is focused on advocacy and campaigning which means supporting local branches with campaigns and submissions, collaborating with communities to help raise awareness about environmental issues and influence positive political change. Previously, there was one role managing the upper North Island and one role for lower North Island so it's awesome that there are several of us now managing a couple of regions each and getting as much impactful reach as possible.

I studied media studies and marine science, and have worked for Department of Conservation, Nga Motu Marine Reserve Society, Sustainable Taranaki and volunteer for Taranaki Conservationists.

My first experience in conservation volunteering was helping to monitor kororā (blue penguin) in Tauranga after the *Rena* accident in 2014 while I was studying. I loved it

so much that I'm still volunteering with Nga Motu Marine Reserve Society to monitor kororā here in Taranaki!

I recently visited the Sub Antarctic Islands with Heritage Expeditions on a subsidized scholarship where I was lucky enough to see more penguin species in person. I've attached some photos for your enjoyment.



TOP: taking to the waves on the Sub Antarctic Islands expedition; BELOW: Snares crested penguins. See more pics on the back page.

I am very excited and grateful to join the Forest & Bird whānau and I look forward to contributing to the organization's awesome mahi. I'm sure I will meet many of you at F&B gatherings once we're in the green again but until then, stay safe and feel free to get in touch to say hello via email (e.vanderleden@forestandbird.org.nz).

FROM THE COMMITTEE

Covid, of course, is having an increasing impact on society and our branch is no exception. The North Taranaki committee has followed National Office guidelines and continued to meet over recent months using Zoom: it's not quite the same as getting together in person but it certainly saves on travel kilometres and time.

However, as it does not seem wise or even possible to run any events, we are reduced to our core activity, namely the oversight and maintenance of our reserves. We are not planning anything more for the immediate future, including for our KCC members.

Our AGM was previously scheduled for 10 April but we have postponed it to later in the year, with no date yet set. However, we will let you know in plenty of time. This means that we continue without a chair in the meantime, but it doesn't seem to be a problem!

FERAL CATS

For a short while last year, a small black feral cat lived under our laundry steps. It was little more than a kitten but so utterly traumatised and suspicious of people that there was no way we could befriend it or help it. It eventually disappeared and very likely died of starvation. There are many similar stories.



There has recently been a push for increased feral cat control from National Office. Coincidentally, our branch has also been active in this area, with members attending a forum in New Plymouth in November 2021, along with a number of other parties, all interested in seeing reduction in feral cat numbers and a corresponding reprieve for native wildlife.

We know that rural people regularly report pregnant cats and kittens being dumped on or near their properties. Some who live near Lake Mangamahoe, for instance, especially notice this in summer and autumn. Many of these animals are doomed to miserable short lives of disease and starvation, while those that survive become skilled, lethal hunters.

During kitten season toxoplasmosis cyst numbers soar and enter our waterways. Toxoplasmosis is thought to be a cause of death of critically endangered Maui dolphins, and is also a danger to human health.

Recently the committee wrote to the Taranaki Regional Council to express concerns at the impact of feral cats on New Zealand wildlife. We suggest that councils direct

YOU ARE INVITED —

The New Plymouth Tramping Club invites us to join them for club night on *Thurs 12 May 7.30 pm at Beach Street Hall* when Alasdair Nicholl will talk about the restoration that he and Karen have been involved in at the ancient Rotomanuka peat lakes, Ohaupo, near Te Awamutu. As adjoining landowners, they have been part of the project since 1999, with fencing, tree planting, bird and bat surveys, predator control and weed control.

Come and hear all about it.



some funding from Predator Free New Zealand to feral cat control. We understand and applaud that some councils are already doing this.

We advocate for:

- A nation-wide standard definition of a feral cat.
- A facility where unwanted cats can be left, for no charge (to avoid irresponsible dumping).
- District and regional council funding for feral cat control as part of long term plans.
- Banning of feeding feral cat colonies on public land.
- Legislation for a National Cat Management Act, which would include registration and micro-chipping of all domestic cats.

We recommend that:

All domestic cats are de-sexed unless the owner is a registered breeder; that the numbers of cats per household is limited (and that this limit is policed); that domestic cats are kept indoors at night and that any legal rights for them to freely roam is rescinded.

We also want to see continuing public education on responsible cat ownership as well as a ban on cat ownership on new subdivisions near areas of high biodiversity (as we know is already happening in some places).

Forest and Bird does not oppose the keeping of domestic cats, which, when cared for responsibly, are great companion animals. However, we do want more legislated control over the ownership of cats, as protection not only for our wildlife, but for all cats in general.

RESERVES REPORT

Tom & Don's

The King's farm manager, Bernie Hall, is leaving at the end of this milking season. Although our contact with Bernie has been limited, we have appreciated working with him and wish him well.

We employ a contractor, Mark Perham, to undertake pest animal control for us. His recent report, following a trapping round in late February, noted increased possum activity in the reserve as well as signs of wear on the possum master traps currently in use.

We have therefore authorised the use of Feratox (cyanide) in a network of 60–80 bait stations that will be

supplied and set up by Mark. This initial outlay should make future control more time and cost effective. He will do this in late April/early May, when food becomes more scarce for possums.

He will also, in parallel with the possum treatment, apply humane toxins to treat feral cats, stoats and ferrets. We will notify neighbours in order that they can keep pet cats away from the reserve while this is happening.

For various reasons, including Covid, nothing has yet happened about the fence to protect the trees in the paddock outside the reserve but we are under way.

Te Wairoa

Things are always changing at Te Wairoa! Recent winds have toppled a few trees, including one reported across the track in early March (it's still passable, however).

As always, our rostered team of trappers is doing a fabulous job, with monthly (and sometimes more) checking and replenishing of the traps — our thanks to David Cockeram, Quin and Janica Amore, John Velvin, Peter Haines, Peter Winter, John Velvin and Matt Kyle (TRC). All catches are registered on the TrapNZ website — total catch for the last round, as reported by David, was 10 rats and 1 hedgehog.

All done

High Frontiers removed the large tree that was blocking the track along the Mountain Rd side of the reserve.

We contracted Dave Hare from Tree Machine to bring a team in and remove the lilies that have slowly been invading the wetland. It seemed a good idea to target just one species, and so it proved — they did a brilliant job.



Lily no more. These are now all gone.

Still to do

In November the committee noted a number of tasks yet to be tackled. In summary (lest we forget!), they are:

- Clearview Road entrance: clean the sign; trim around the stile and path; move shingle to the other side of the reserve for Tony's steps.

- Clearview Roadside: grass trimming and removal of agapanthus and the strange wattle-like bushes at the southern end.
- Clearview clearing: update and reposition the signs; trim around the edges; mow under the rimu trees.
- Perimeter track: remove drums and old carpet from around trees in the lower Clearview Rd area.
- Lower reserve: remove (over time) honeysuckle, blackberry and hydrangea.
- South-east corner: release plantings.

Keeping feet dry

We have sufficient funds to substantially extend the boardwalk in the wetland.

As noted previously, this will make the access more weatherproof and will protect the vegetation underfoot, especially in the wettest areas. This will be a long-term project but planning is under way. We will very soon be pegging out the desired route.



The boardwalk will be constructed along the same lines as the already-existing boardwalk (this was installed in 2011 and has since been lengthened). It will extend across most of the wetland.

KCC

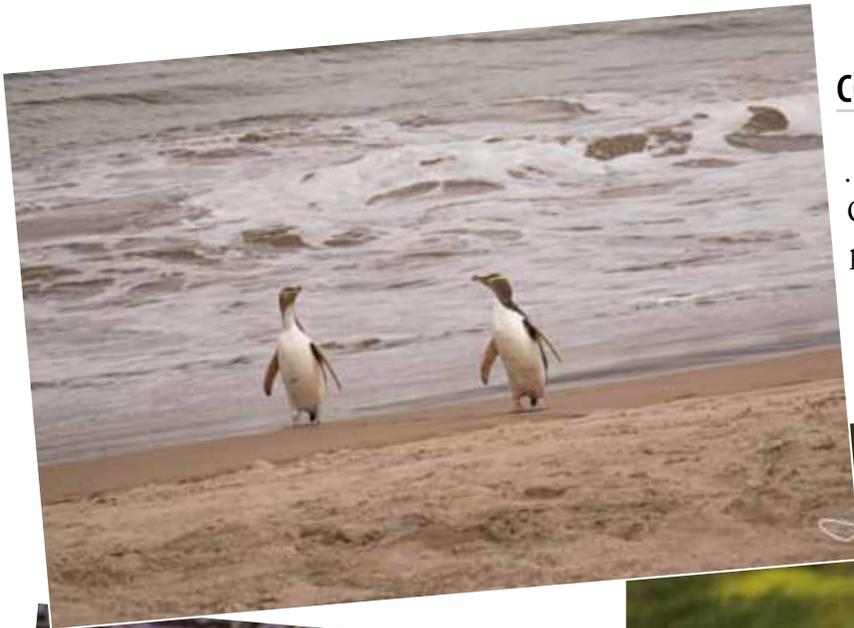
KCC is on hold while the country remains under Covid restrictions. We thank our wonderful coordinator, Lee, for her patience and look forward to the days when we can resume business as usual!

In the meantime, all members should have received the KCC magazine, *Wild Things*. The autumn issue is dedicated to pre-human times in Aotearoa New Zealand. You can even make your own ammonite! *Very cool!*

North Taranaki branch purchases additional copies of the magazine for distribution around the New Plymouth libraries — check them out at a library near you.



A DIY ammonite — made of bread dough!



CONTINUED FROM P.1

... More of Elvisa's wonderful photographs. Clockwise from left: hoiho (yellow-eyed penguins) coming ashore at the end of day; a Southern rockhopper penguin and an elephant seal — the face only a mother (or another elephant seal) would love!



Stop press!

For more about feral cats

View this webinar: https://youtu.be/VOZPTvN_s-E

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