



**Forest & Bird**  
GIVING NATURE A VOICE

North Canterbury Branch

## **Annual Report 2021-22**

### **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 **Jenny Hughey** (ECan chairperson)

7.30pm Tuesday, July 12th, WEA 59 Gloucester St, Christchurch

*The AGM and address will only proceed if North Canterbury is at Covid Tier 2 or 1 as set by National Office. Currently we are at Tier 3. Any change will be shown on the branch website.*

If you would like to be a branch committee member, please notify our secretary (contact details on page 7) or put your name forward at the AGM. We would love to have you on our committee.

### **Chairperson's Comment**

Last year's report began "How 2021 has rolled by - a bumpy road for everyone. Our branch has had a disrupted year with a number of public meetings and activities cancelled. We've tried to keep conservation moving as nature isn't stopped by human pandemics - and neither are weeds and animal pests!" Not surprising as we finally held that AGM in November.

It's ditto for the past twelve months as well. Forest and Bird Protection Society's national office prescribed much tighter constraints on members and staff for longer periods than government Covid restrictions. Leaders needed to seek permission from Wellington for even open air activities long after the nation had moved from red to orange requirements and meetings were not allowed for much longer. Nevertheless, a number of the work days have been able to go ahead. See reports from leaders of this hands-on work later in this report. I endorse and thank them for their hard work, and admire their enthusiasm to keep these projects rolling. Both the city plantings (at Mahoe-nui, Evans Pass and Calder Green, lower Heathcote) require close liaison with the City Council staff. Work at the Sanctuary (located beside the Waimakariri River) is overseen by ECan bio-diversity staff. There, in the year ending 31 December 2021, trapping tallies were 46 possums, 63 rats, 3 stoats, 8 weasels, 15 hedgehogs, 65 mice and 3 feral cats. This trapping work helps! Nearby braids are safer for those precious river-bed breeders. Work was constrained at Boyle Base by the national office prescriptions, but trapping did resume there. Some vandalism at the hut caused us concern and we thank locals for undertaking repairs.

A few events took place before omicron struck in the second half of 2021. We had a fascinating tour of the Allan Herbarium at Lincoln. We were shown the preparation of new specimens and then some examples of the more than 620,000 specimens they hold. Over two-thirds are of NZ's indigenous species. Over-subscribed, we hope to repeat this worthwhile outing soon. Mick Ingram conducted a casual stroll along the hidden world of the Lower Heathcote meander bend that he, and a few other volunteers, have been claiming back from boneseed and thorn-bush as they create a walkway from Woolston through to Calder Green Reserve.

Our only public meeting was in August 2021 when Terry Thomsen spoke on the evolution of species in New Zealand. He had available for purchase copies of his then, recently published book. *The Lonely Islands*.

No meetings have been possible so far during 2022, because of the greater precautionary approach already mentioned, but the number of significant pieces of legislation have kept committee members busy, writing as private citizens. Nicky Snoyink, our Regional Conservation Manager submits for the Canterbury based branches, as do Forest and Bird Protection Society staff across New Zealand. This is to ensure a united and consistent front on major issues, legislation and plans; both regional and national. She is a very busy person! Personal submissions that support conservation and good outcomes for nature are important and so I would urge members to respond to calls to support such outcomes. Numbers DO count.

Last month, we zoomed presentations by two Stocker scholars for last year: Elizabeth de Jongh (University of Canterbury) spoke about changes in moth biodiversity in tussock grassland over the last 60 years. Little is known about native insect biodiversity in New Zealand but her work showed a serious decline in tussock moths species around the Cass Research station. Fraser Gurney's (Lincoln University) research examined breeding movements and winter dispersal of black-fronted terns through the use of GPS tracking devices. Both these ground-breaking reports were recorded and will be available. Each year our branch provides financial support (presently a total of \$6,000 per year) for young scientists working in areas consistent with Forest and Bird values.

For some years now we have seen the oceans as a significant area for conservation action and have been supporting a dedicated couple who look after injured penguins - our branch covers the fish and anchovies bills! For a couple of years now, we have also been tending the weeding of the Harris Bay little blue penguins breeding site. This year, we had hoped to expand our activities in the area of marine conservation by supporting a private trust in a programme of micro-chipping Banks Peninsula penguins and tracking their movements at sea during their breeding season. Cost of equipment and micro-chips came to over \$12,000 and so required permission of the Forest and Bird Board. For a number of reasons this was denied although we had thought we presented a strong case. This does demonstrate that branches are constrained in the ways they can support local initiatives.

North Canterbury branch is also active in keeping an eye on what goes on in Christchurch where the possibilities for bio-diversity gains are considerable. Committee members regularly attend council consultations, or step in when that did not occur! One occasion that has resulted in considerable time and discomfort has been in considering a proposed change in the location of part of the 360 degree trail. The final outcome of this still remains with the CCC.

Wilding pines continue to be on our list of to-do items and once again Joy Talbot is organising our volunteers to tackle some of the last stragglers in the Waimakariri upper catchment. Joy also coordinates the Mother of All Clean-ups for Forest and Bird in the Estuary area. Joys' contribution demonstrates that you can make a difference with Forest and Bird even if you hate committees and don't want to go to talks! She has been working as a solo operative for some years and we thank her for that. Others contribute remotely as well. Mick Ingram is our energetic manager of Calder Green developments, Michael Godfrey produces our very professional e-News each month and Stefan Fairweather runs our Facebook page, Eleanor Bissell and helpers continue to entrance our juniors at KCC events, Rick Robinson oversees our financial arrangements and Maria Stocker-Farrell organises suppers after evening meetings. Indeed there are a string of supporters who lighten the load of those I've named, all are helping us make a difference. If any other members have an idea they would like to see us take up please let us know. As always new members on the committee would also be welcome.

*Valerie Campbell*

## **Mahoe-nui Bush 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 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 bush under the guidance of dedicated Port Hills rangers Di Carter and Fiona Fenton.

We usually have two planting days in winter and two releasing days in spring and autumn, when the long grass that surrounds the young plants is cut back and used to mulch the plants. Last winter, due to a

mistake by the council in ordering our plants, we only planted 300 trees instead of 600. We also only had one spring releasing day due to a clash in dates with planting at the Sanctuary. Survival rate of the plants this year is over 95 percent due to the unusual amount of rain we had this summer. National office F&B put constraints on our working bees so a special request was made by yours truly to hold our releasing working bees (thankfully it was approved) as one volunteer pointed out - the weeds don't stop because of covid. The amount of grass growth due to the summer rain was phenomenal and it was very heartening to have a good turnout of our volunteers to release all our small plants from being smothered in long grass.

Unfortunately due to covid we have not been able to have our usual cup of tea afterwards, but at least can have a good chat while we work, albeit from two metres apart. The working bees are only two hours long and we have a great, friendly team of volunteers. New people are always very welcome. Total volunteer hours for the year were 128.

We remember Barbara Duff who sadly passed away last year and who contributed to the restoration of Mahoe-nui since its beginning.

*Helen Hills*

## **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 three circuits to catch rats and mustelids (stoats and weasels) to protect native wildlife in the valley. It takes about two days to get around the traps which are cleared and rebaited monthly.

The trapping management team of Helen Hills, Bruce Craig, Phill McEntee, Geoff Mahan and Rick Robinson have cleared and rebaited the traps once a month. Unfortunately we were unable to take many other volunteers this year due to covid restrictions. National office F&B covid rules for branches are more conservative than the government's.

Numbers of predators caught this year are -20 stoats, 2 weasels, 5 rats and 2 hedgehogs (October 2020 to October 2021). Other groups in the area are also reporting lower numbers of predators.

We are progressing well with using our grant from the DOC community fund to replace 45 of our fenn traps with DOC 200s, with nearly all the boxes being made by Bruce, Phill and Rick. The team have put 27 into the field already, with the rest to be installed as we are able.

The hut unfortunately was broken into three times last year (September and November) with two windows and the door being damaged. All events were reported to the police. Security cameras and lighting have been installed to try to deter more vandalism. Fortunately there was no damage to the inside of the hut. A big thank you to Bruce Craig who repaired the broken windows and door.

Last year the hut was used by DOC who have been doing research up the Doubtful Valley and more recently another group who are going to install traps up the Doubtful Valley, and who do some trapping up the Mt Norma area. Boyle Base was also booked by a few other individuals and families who enjoy using the hut as a base to explore the beautiful Lewis Pass area.

Our trap lines have at last been GPSed. Thank you to Ross Paterson for doing this and collating the coordinates, which have been sent to the DOC ranger for the area -Sandy Yong, who has put them on a map for us. It enables her to see where our traps are in relation to the other groups in the area, and for the groups to work together to cover a larger area.

Thank you to Di Cowan who does our bird counts in spring and autumn and who likes to nobble a few weeds while she is there. Her comments after doing the bird counts were that there were generally lower number of birds than before the 2019 mega masting event which caused a huge increase in the numbers of rats and mustelids. Compared to 2017-2019 there are less grey warblers/riroriro, rifleman /titipounamu, robins/toutouwai and chaffinches, but tomits/miromiro and fantails/piwakwaka were doing ok.

Volunteer hours were approximately 490

Hopefully as the covid restrictions lessen we can involve more volunteers so us old ones don't get worn out.

If you wish to book the hut to explore the beautiful Lewis Pass area or to help us with the trapping programme or hut maintenance/mow lawns, please contact Helen Hills **021 023 26155** or email [helenhills.mcp@gmail.com](mailto:helenhills.mcp@gmail.com)

*Helen Hills*

## **‘The Sanctuary’**

The Sanctuary is a 30-hectare ECan Reserve situated between Coutts Island Road, Templars Island Road and the Waimakariri River. The Sanctuary is the last remaining sizeable freshwater wetland within the Waimakariri River and forms part of the extended flood plain situated between the formed stop bank and the river. The reserve is part of the Waimakariri River flood protection infrastructure and the protection function of the area took priority over native vegetation.

This reserve initially contained a variety of vegetation with over forty native species being recorded, but in recent years a mix of poplars, willows, ‘old man’s beard’, gorse and blackberry took over the remnants of the existing native vegetation.

The grey willow and old man’s beard became prolific and were considered a major issue for a recreation reserve. Over the last few years ECan has been actively involved in the removal of these species using contractors who cut, drill, and poison the weeds. Additional ECan funds are being invested in the project.

Forest and Bird North Canterbury Branch formed a relationship in 2017 with ECan and since then have been involved in an active role of native planting days and pest control, with some maintenance of the trap lines and tracks.

Each year Forest and Bird have two planting days in early spring, with approximately one thousand plants being placed in the ground. ECan also supplement this planting with their own staff, contractors and some other school and community groups on an irregular basis. About twenty thousand plants have been planted over the past four years. When you walk around the reserve, the different planting ages are obvious with early plants now five or six meters high which are suppressing the weeds. Last year due to very wet weather at another site, Sustainable Coastline had two planting days at the north-west end of the reserve (Bailes picnic area). This picnic area has been opened up with access during daylight hours via the unlocked gate at the end of Coutts Island Road. The picnic area is adjacent to the river with good access to several walking and mountain bike tracks for recreation. The Christchurch 360 degree trail passes through the Sanctuary.

Forest and Bird are also involved in predator control within this reserve with approximately seventy traps in the field, comprising a mixture of DoC 200 (for rats and mustelids) and Timms traps for possums. These traps are generally checked every ten to fourteen days by Bruce Craig and Phil McEntee, the core of a small group of volunteers. In the year ending 31 December 2021 trapping tallies were 46 possums, 63 rats, 3 stoats, 8 weasels, 15 hedgehogs, 65 mice and 3 feral cats. Initially the trapping was undertaken in an area planted by Forest and Bird within the central area of the reserve, but in recent years the trap lines have been extended to cover the total reserve. The costs of the traps and lures are met by Ecan.

A noticeable increase in bird life has been observed although no bird counts have been undertaken to confirm this. A healthy population of Californian Quail are present with a number of pheasants making the area home. The number of fantails is healthy.

This year the scheduled planting days for Forest and Bird (North Canterbury Branch) are 24 August and 27 September. ECan supply all the tools and plants.

Volunteers only need to provide sturdy footwear, gloves and water. Sustainable Coastlines in conjunction with ECan have scheduled three planting days: 9 July, 30 July and 13 August. Details can be found on the websites. Come along!

*Bruce Craig*

## **KCC Report**

It was great to be able to hold some events in 2021. All enjoyed visiting Avebury House area to forage; discovering so many different fungi at Riccarton Bush was amazing, the winter programme at Travis Wetland was well attended as was the beach programme at South Shore. Very disappointing not to be able to visit the penguins at Harris Bay — we hope to be able to in November this year.

Until we are out of red in our region, we are unable to hold any events. We do want to let you know that we have events planned. Here they are!!

- A visit to Pigeon Bay and the Hay Reserve - so much to do and see
- to our beautiful Botanic Gardens in the City,
- Hinewai a treat to visit, Fungi,
- Brooklands Lagoon
- and an indoor, outdoor programme at Travis Wetland.

Hope to see the penguins this year. Lizards and Katipos at Kaitorete Spit will be in January 2023. We will give you dates as soon as we can.

Exciting to have Jordan and Sam come on board. These young ladies are both so enthusiastic and will be there on outings when they can and will share computer work. Caitlin and Ariana enjoy helping on outings - it's great to have them too, they always have the info we need!

Thank you to them for continuing to be part of KCC.

*Eleanor Bissell*

## **Calder-Green Reserve**

Report on work and progress associated with Calder-Green Reserve, located on the true right bank of the Lower Heathcote River, that continues to expand as our branch of Forest and Bird Protection Society continues its partnership with the CCC. Together, they are returning a former area of wasteland to a viable eco-system.

Mick Ingram, out voluntary project manager, and his mates have been beavering away along the banks of the river meander that runs through an industrial zone. Much of this area has been unused land overgrown with thorn bush and boneseed. Fazed by neither this tough wilderness, nor by the car bodies and dumped concrete, they are creating a bush track that provides pleasant views of the native plants now thriving on the opposite bank, and more distant vistas to the Port Hills. Once the ground has been cleared hardy natives that Mick has proved will grow well in tough, riparian locations, are planted and mulched.

“I’m hoping it will remain a bush track, a wilder place to walk through than many of the all weather, metre-wide paths in much of the city,” Mick explained to Nicky Snoyink, Forest and Bird’s Regional Conservation Manager.

Down at the actual Calder-Green Reserve, where many of you will have worked or visited, Mick’s energies and visions for the Lower Heathcote are also taking shape. The formation of the second area contiguous to the now well established Lizard Sanctuary is well under way. Not only will the three species of local skinks enjoy their own “life-style” blocks but they will share them with a wider range of invertebrates and doubtless passing birds. The habitat is designed so that mice are unable to predate the lizards.

There is only one negative in this project: there are still some walkers and cyclists who ignore signs requesting that they keep their dogs on leads. Tracks across the mud-flats prove over and over that disturbing resting or feeding birds is still regarded as one of the best game in town for some quadrupeds. Sadly, motorbike a bicycle tracks reveal some humans are bird-brained not bird aware.

*Valerie Campbell*

NZ Society for Preservation of  
Forests and birds  
North Canterbury Branch  
Statement of Receipts and Payments  
Year Ended 31 December 2021

|   |                             |                  |                          |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Opening Bank Balances 01-01-2021          | <b>We started off with;</b> |                  |                          |
| KIWI Bank                                 | Current Account             | 70,340.23        |                          |
| KIWI Bank                                 | 90 Day PIE A/c              | 67,421.08        |                          |
| KIWI Bank                                 | Investment Account          | 227,169.55       |                          |
| KIWI Bank                                 | Investment Account          | <u>30,452.05</u> | <u>395,382.91</u>        |
| <b>We received monies from;</b>           |                             |                  |                          |
| GST recovered                             |                             | 1,533.32         |                          |
| Adams Bequest                             |                             | 1,428.57         |                          |
| Net revenue Calendars & Diaries           |                             | 408.70           |                          |
| Interest                                  |                             | 3,575.17         |                          |
| Wilding donations                         |                             | 600.00           |                          |
| Donations                                 |                             | <u>392.80</u>    | 7,938.56                 |
| <b>We made Payments to;</b>               |                             |                  |                          |
| F & B National Office Appeals             |                             |                  |                          |
| Southland Coalmining                      |                             | 869.57           |                          |
| McKenzie Country                          |                             | <u>2,608.70</u>  | 3,478.26                 |
| Major Contributions                       |                             |                  |                          |
| Hiniwai Donation                          |                             |                  | 80,000.00                |
| Administration                            |                             |                  |                          |
| GST paid                                  |                             | 1,616.80         |                          |
| Annual meeting exp                        |                             | 1,301.54         |                          |
| Meetings Rent                             |                             | 717.39           |                          |
| Miscellaneous Admin Expenses              |                             | 194.68           |                          |
| EDS Subscriptiom                          |                             | 52.17            |                          |
| Enews                                     |                             | 575.59           |                          |
| Early Withdrawal penalty                  |                             | 73.98            |                          |
| F&B Subscriptions - West Coast Schools    |                             | <u>1,391.30</u>  | 5,923.46                 |
| Boyle Project                             |                             |                  |                          |
| Rent Boyle Base                           | 982.61                      |                  |                          |
| Boyle Base DOC Grant                      | <u>2,664.99</u>             |                  |                          |
| Boyle Hut Repairs                         |                             | 492.15           |                          |
| Boyle Trapping Travel                     |                             | 538.90           |                          |
| Boyle Trapping Expense/bait               |                             | 682.50           |                          |
| Boyle Miscellaneous Purchases             |                             | 180.49           |                          |
| Boyle Trap Costs                          |                             | <u>1,773.52</u>  | 19.97                    |
| Other                                     |                             |                  |                          |
| Otamahua Quail Is. Trust - Plants         |                             | 3,000.00         |                          |
| Advocacy Grant - Daniel Logan - Heathcote |                             | 1,000.00         |                          |
| Arthurs Pass Lupin project                |                             | <u>104.35</u>    | 4,104.35                 |
| Penguin Project                           |                             |                  |                          |
| Penguin Food                              |                             |                  | <u>352.08</u>            |
| <b>We spent more that we received</b>     |                             |                  | <b>-85,939.55</b>        |
| We now have in the bank                   |                             |                  | <u><u>309,443.36</u></u> |
| Closing Bank Balances - 31-12-2021        |                             |                  |                          |
| KIWI Bank                                 | Current Account             | 10,899.49        |                          |
| KIWI Bank                                 | 90 Day PIE Account          | 37,846.92        |                          |
| KIWI Bank                                 | Investment Account #2       | 229,806.91       |                          |
| KIWI Bank                                 | Investment Account #1       | <u>30,890.04</u> | <u>309,443.36</u>        |

## **Committee**

Valerie Campbell (Chairperson)  
Frances Wall (Secretary)  
Hugh Thorpe (Treasurer)  
Helen Hills  
Diana Shand  
Rick Robinson  
Lorna Deppe  
Chay Cotter

**Contact:** Forest and Bird North Canterbury, PO Box 2389, Christchurch 8140  
[northcanterbury.branch@forestandbird.org.nz](mailto:northcanterbury.branch@forestandbird.org.nz)