



North Taranaki Forest & Bird + Kiwi Conservation Club news

P.O. Box 1029 New Plymouth 4340

January to June 2023

*With best wishes to you all
for a happy and healthy 2023
Anne, Dawn, David, Janet, Peter & Lee*

THAT WAS EXCITING!

It depends on your definition of fun, of course, but it was exciting to see not one but *two* kākā in Westown in September. The birds were feeding on kōwhai flowers. There were subsequent reports of sightings at Barrett Lagoon, and the kākā were said to be in the ranges and in Oakura. It would be nice to think that their seemingly increased presence is an indicator of the success of the thousands of volunteer hours and the many dollars devoted to predator control.



LOOKING BACK

For various reasons, it has been six months since the last newsletter . . . apologies . . . so a bit of catch-up is called for! The following is a summary of events in the second half of 2022.

Annual General Meeting + illustrated talk, 17 July

Our AGM was held on 17 July in Community House. There was a smaller attendance than usual, no doubt due in part to Covid. After a short and sweet meeting to re-elect our committee and report to members, Elvina van der Leden, our Regional Conservation Manager, gave an illustrated talk introducing herself and her conservation background, followed by the video she made of her recent voyage to the Subantarctic Islands. Thanks Elvina.

[Update: Congratulations to Elvina and Jesse who are the proud parents of Rawiri, a beautiful baby boy, appropriately born on Labour Day, 24 October. Elvina is on maternity leave until the end of March, with Sarah Lucas taking her place as RCM].



F&B CEO visit: 28 July

We were pleased to give Nicola Toki, Forest & Bird's CEO a guided tour of Te Wairoa on 28 July. It was great to have the chance to show off but also to share concerns and thoughts about our reserves and our branch and to hear about things from the National Office perspective.

Tramping Club talk, 11 August

We joined the New Plymouth Tramping Club as they celebrated their 48th birthday, and listened to a talk from Megan Dimozantos of the Backcountry Trust about what the BCT does. *Nice cake!*



Te Wairoa, seedling gathering event, 3 September

When our planned wetland boardwalk goes in there will be seedling casualties. Anne Collins, Dawn Mills, Jackie Cockeram and Janet Hunt gathered a number of these seedlings — mainly pukatea and kahikatea — and will care for them until they are large enough to be replanted elsewhere.



Coming along nicely.

Bushy Park Tarapurui Forest Sanctuary day trip, 1 October

A group of around a dozen travelled to the fabulous predator-fenced Bushy Park Sanctuary and Historic Homestead. We arrived at Bushy Park in time for lunch, and then spent a couple of hours watching birds and exploring forest trails and wetlands before returning home. It was a drizzly old day but that didn't spoil the experience. There were calls for more of the same! (Watch this space).



Jackie, ready for anything, outside the visitor centre.
R: hihi in a bird feeder; tieke; the fabulous forest.



Te Wairoa, Zoetis group visit, 13 October

In October we were delighted when a group from Zoetis took a day from their work to do good for the community and we were the lucky recipients of their efforts. They knocked out a significant area of *Tradescantia* in the wetland, leaving the ground bare of weeds. Dawn cleaned out the shed at the same time and installed bait stations to deal with rats and mice. Around the same time, David repaired and painted the noticeboard by the gate.



Before



After



Te Wairoa — the south west corner: 5 November

The south-west corner of Te Wairoa Reserve is chest high in long grass. The trees we planted in 2015 would benefit from a bit of releasing and there are also weeds in there (blackberry and lily, and of course, *Tradescantia*) that are crying out for attention. A working bee planned for 5 November attracted only Anne, Janet and Peter Haines, so we treated ourselves to a walk instead.

Along the way we met a new branch member who was armed with all manner of tools and was last seen energetically sweeping leaves off the path to the clearing. *Dear new member, we apologise profusely but time has passed, many things have happened and we have lost your contact details!* It was so good to meet someone fresh and enthusiastic and we are mortified that none of us appear to have recorded your name. Please get in touch.



L: The grass is as high as an elephant's eye . . . and below: Peter Haines, our new member and Anne Collins.



When Rotokare came to town: 16 November

In May 2020 the late Tony Collins constructed boxing steps on the loop track on a relatively steep section, on the Mountain Road side of Te Wairoa reserve. He had a pile of shingle delivered to the Clearview Road parking area to fill the steps but, with one thing and another, the steps remained unfilled.

Until 16 November 2022 when, in return for all the assistance Tony and Anne, and to a lesser extent,

North Taranaki Forest and Bird, have offered Rotokare, a team of very able bodies came to Te Wairoa and pitched in to get that shingle across the reserve and into the steps. Bravo! It was a massive effort, involving many buckets on trailers and a chain gang carrying the shingle up the hill to the steps.

Thanks so much Rotokare. Tony would be proud and delighted.



Before & after: the steps in May 2020 and in November 2022.



LOOKING FORWARD — 2023

Our first three events of the year are the Great Tradescantia Hunt at Te Wairoa, a Mystery Ramble in the city and a walk in a pristine Taranaki forest, followed, Covid permitting, by our AGM in April. We'll let you know more about that as we get closer. In the meantime — do join us for these events.

The Great Tradescantia Hunt, a KCC event at Te Wairoa

Saturday 21 January, starting at 1:30

Bring a team and enter the Great Tradescantia Hunt! Prizes will be given for the teams that gather the most *Tradescantia* in an hour (also known as Wandering Jew, full name, *Tradescantia fluminensis*). We supply the bags: you supply the muscle!

The award ceremony will be held in the clearing on Clearview Road, along with afternoon tea.



Why don't we like *Tradescantia*? 1] even though it does not produce seed in New Zealand, it will grow from the smallest, teeniest fragment and alas, it just loves conditions in our forests! Because of that, 2] it smothers the forest floor, preventing native seedlings from germinating and thriving. *Out, damned Tradescantia!*

Mystery ramble rescheduled: to 25 Feb 2023, 10:30 to 12:00

A mystery end-of-year event was planned for Sunday 20 November, 2022. It was to have commenced in the centre of New Plymouth and would have taken in a view from the top of Marsland Hill, an historic cemetery, some barbed wire and very high walls, a quarry and a pretty streamside walk.

However, it was far too wet for the ramble, so a dozen or so of us cut to the chase and met at Shining Peak Brewery, where we had a very pleasant hour or so with chat, nibbles and drinks (thank you Jesse and SPB for the first round).

The ramble has been rescheduled for Saturday 25 February, 10:30–12:00.

Meet beside the wind wand. The walk will take approximately an hour and a half, and afterwards, as long as it's fine, and you feel inclined, bring a sandwich and a drink and we can sit on the grassy hill along the walkway and have lunch. No special requirements for the walk other than good shoes and dress for the weather.

Please register your interest by 11 February with Janet at janethuntnz@outlook.com so we can contact you if we need to change anything.

Everett Park forest walk & Pukerangiora Pa: March 25 10:30–12.00

Meet at the gate at Pukerangiora Pa for a quick peek at this most historic site and the view over Waitara River back to the coast — even when you've seen it before, it's still breath-taking.

We'll then drive to Everett Park Scenic Reserve for our main walk, a comfortable loop through pretty lowland forest along the banks of the Kurapete Stream.

The 85-ha DOC reserve is the largest remnant podocarp forest on the Taranaki ringplain. It has been protected since 1889, and consequently features examples of mature kahikatea and pukatea of a magnitude to rival Northland's kauri (well, maybe not quite, but you get the picture). You come around a bend and there it is, a massive trunk rising up, and up . . .

Bring sandwiches to eat on the sandy bend of the Manganui River.



A LITTLE MORE ON RESERVES

Te Wairoa

David Cockeram is now the ranger for Te Wairoa reserve and is coordinator of trapping. Thanks as always to the team who regularly take their turn to check traps. Planning for an extension to the boardwalk in the wetland continues.

Tom & Don's

Big changes are afoot at Tom & Don's. John and Michelle King have sold the access farm to the north of the reserve, effective June. However, the new owner, Katie Simmonds, will be employing the current farm managers and as far as Forest & Bird is concerned, little will change. John and Michelle will continue to live on the property for the foreseeable future. We thank them for the years of coming and going and wish them well.

Mark Perham continues to be our trapper in Tom & Don's, targeting all the usual suspects as well as possums and cats. And we are still developing plans to fence-protect a few outlying trees on the lease land.

QEII inspections 2022

Both reserves had their biennial QEII inspection by Carol Burgess, and have passed with flying colours — and some suggestions, thank you, Carol. It's good to have this endorsement of and support for what we are doing.



Carol at Te Wairoa in November

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Crown Minerals Act 1991 amendment

On 10 October, Anne Collins and Janet Hunt met the New Plymouth Labour MP, Glen Bennett, to underline Forest & Bird's support for Green MP Eugenie Sage's Crown Minerals (Prohibition of Mining) member's bill. The bill calls for a ban on any new mining permits on conservation land and a ban on new coal mining permits on any land in New Zealand after 1 January 2025.

Subsequently, the government has introduced a bill 'to better align' the Act with wider Government policy objectives. Submissions on the Bill are now open and close on 23 January. For more information go to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) website.

Glen was interested and friendly. He made no particular commitments but we enjoyed meeting him and felt that he understood our case.



Stockton Coal Mine on the West Coast, New Zealand's largest open cast mine.

Who's who at North Taranaki F&B & KCC

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Highlights — what we've been up to

Lizard Education Session

On Friday 22 July North Taranaki KCC visited Lake Rotokare for a lizard session with Ash & Sophie, Rotokare Environmental Educators. Ash explained about the predator proof fence before we entered the reserve and we checked our cars for stowaways. (None found). We learned all about skinks and geckos, where they live, what they eat and how to create lizard-friendly gardens in our homes. We saw young geckos and found a gold striped gecko.



Penguin Discovery

In September 17 children and parents/caregivers had an awesome morning of penguin discovery led by Anne, Barbara & Elise from the Nga Motu Marine Society. They explained about tagging and tracking penguins. We watched videos taken at night when the adults returned to feed their chicks and we saw on-screen data from the tracking devices that showed how far the penguins had swum to get food, how deep and how long they dived. One little bird travelled roughly 200kms! We identified penguin footprints and found some where it looked like there had been a penguin party.



We also picked a big bag of rubbish off the beach beside the breakwater and finished with a visit to the Marine Info Centre. We hope to return one evening to listen to penguins under the rocks.

Tracking Kiwi

A group of 13 children and parents/caregivers went to Pukeiti to learn about tracking kiwi. Toby, a ranger with Taranaki Kiwi Trust, told us about relocating kiwi from Lake Rotokare to the Kaitake Ranges, kiwi annual health checks when the batteries need changing in the transmitters, egg incubation and heaps of other facts including that female kiwi have longer beaks! *Does that mean they get tastier bugs?*

Toby also showed us how telemetry gear works. We split into two groups and one group hid a toy kiwi that was wearing a transmitter. The other group then used the telemetry gear and hunted it down. Then the groups swapped. All the children had experience using the telemetry gear and were pretty excited at tracking down the kiwi.



Coming Up

- The Great Tradescantia Hunt: 21 January at Te Wairoa Forest & Bird Reserve, 1.30pm (see p.4)
- Healthy River exploration: 11 February
- Learning about weather patterns, how climate change affects them and making weather stations: 25 March

If you are a Forest and Bird member and have children, grandchildren, nieces & nephews who are not KCC members but you like the sound of what we do, please contact me about coming to an activity to see whether KCC is right for your family member/s.

~ Lee McCracken

