

Forest and Bird Nelson Tasman – Hadfield Clearing Planting – Saturday 16 September 2023

Back in 2014, work began on a 10-year project to restore Hadfield Clearing, which had been farmed by several generations of the Hadfield family since 1863, but since the early 2000's is now part of the Abel Tasman National Park and administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Project Janszoon (www.janszoon.org/our-work/forest-restoration) have been working with DOC on the restoration, with Forest and Bird Nelson Tasman involved through (almost) annual plantings. Helen Lindsay, the Restoration Supervisor from Project Janszoon, had over 600 plants ready for us to plant over the two days.

From the sign at site: “Kahikatea forest was one extensive in the Nelson/Tasman area, but is now almost regionally extinct and this is one of the district’s last remnants of lowland kahikatea forest, along with a sizeable wetland. This restoration project will extend the existing 10 hectares of the forest at Hadfield Clearing to 25 hectares of kahikatea and other suitable native species.”

To begin, we gathered on the afternoon of Friday 15 September at our accommodation, the beautiful Ngarata Homestead (usually used by school groups), and walked a short distance to a clearing beside Totaranui estuary, where we planted Northern Rata, all well encased in cages as protection from deer and possums.



The next day we started early and drove in convoy to Hadfield Clearing, just off the road between Totaranui and Awaroa. Helen briefed us on the challenges of the site – over the years of restoration, they have learnt a lot, with some plants struggling in the exposed site. Extreme frosts, followed by rapid thawing in the direct morning sun, have caused higher than usual losses. Planting later in the season will spare the young plants from the worst frosts, but gives them limited time to establish before summer.



The first site was just inside the gate to the former farm. We planted a mix of flax, toi toi, kānuka/ mānuka and kahikatea in between the sprayed grass that had all been prepared for us.



Lunch was at the old shearing shed, which held stories of the history of the farm.

After lunch we gathered for a photo in front of an area with well-established trees, planted by previous Forest and Bird groups.



The next planting was beyond the shed, beside the river and between two large kahikatea trees (both male unfortunately, so not a natural seed source, though they do contribute to fertilising some female trees nearby). Here we planted over 100 five-year-old kahikatea trees, along with other varieties, with a sprinkle of fertiliser to help them get started in time for the challenges of summer.



To end the day, we finished work started by contractors, planting a mānuka windbreak that will provide shelter for the more fragile species. In all we planted 645 trees.

We then returned to Ngarata Homestead for a delicious pot luck dinner and enjoyable evening together.



Thanks to Helen for coordinating the planting and generously sharing her knowledge of how to restore and care for the land. Also thanks to

Michael Stocker for coordinating us all, and bringing along the youngest and most enthusiastic planter.

While the project is coming to the end of the 10 year plan, there is much work still to do and we look to continue our connection with this special place.

By Julie Evans, with contributions from Michael Stocker, 26 September 2023