



North Taranaki Forest & Bird news, summer 2024

P.O. Box 1029 New Plymouth 4340

February to May 2024

Above: walking onto the beach at Tongapōrutu.
See pp.3–4.

COMING EVENTS

Saturday 24 February • Picnic at Tom & Don's • Meet at the gate, 65 Albion Rd, Okato at 11:00

It's been some time since we've visited Tom & Don's, our largest reserve, mainly because it is land-locked. Access can be a wee bit tricky, but for those whose vehicles can't handle the farm tracks, Peter Winter is going to take his 4-WD vehicle and ferry us from the farm entrance. We're looking forward to seeing how things are going out there and thinking about what we do next.

We'll take a look around our riparian plantings done over many years, stroll around some of the fenceline and take peek inside the bush block. Then we'll sit on the hill and look out to sea while we tuck in.

Please let us know if you plan to join us, just so we can coordinate transport: janethuntz@outlook.com



Left: It looks very different these days. This was the beginning of the riparian planting, in July, 2011. We will be going up this track to the main bush and eat our picnics on the hill looking at the view.

North Taranaki Forest & Bird owns two blocks at Tom & Don's. The first, 20.2343 hectares (50 acres) is primarily in grass and is leased to the surrounding farm for grazing. This, provides our branch with a steady income. The second, 20.6390 hectares is forested and is covenanted with QEII.

The blocks were first purchased

by Tom Hammonds in 1945 and sold to his friend and branch member, Don Smith, in 1967. Don, in turn, left them to the Society effective from September 2005. Branch members assisted Don from the late 1980s, fencing off the bush and obtaining the QEII covenant.

In 2000 the bush was described as 'a tiny remnant of a scarce

vegetation type. It is better quality, more diverse and has a better range of habitats than the even tinier Te Wairoa Reserve, which contains the same vegetation type. It is important that remnants such as this are protected from further modification.' (Peter White, 2000).

Saturday 2 March, 10:00 to 12:00 • Working bee at Te Wairoa

The hill section of Te Wairoa is looking really good, thanks to the hard work of many volunteers over many years. It's not too weedy and the birds and trees are happily doing their own thing.

However, there is always something to be going on with, and if chopping back is your thing, there's some over-enthusiastic growth in the clearing that needs a talking to.

The lower reserve is another matter . . . following the epic work of Paul and Erin McDaid in eliminating a major section of *Tradescantia* under the kahikatea, Karen Hamer has done great things and has significantly knocked back a further large section of this ghastly weed.

For this working bee, we are targeting arum lilies. We will be cutting them off and pasting the stumps to prevent regrowth. We will provide protective gloves and glasses.

Meet on Clearview Rd at the gate at the top of the hill.



Upcoming events

We are yet to finalise other activities for the next little while. We hope to include a visit to see robins on the lower slopes of the mountain, to call on our counterparts in South Taranaki and hope to have a speaker for our AGM in June. Watch this space.



RECENT EVENTS

25 November, 2023: our end-of-year event

We had a blustery but sunny day for our end-of-year get-together. A group of 13 were taken on a 'history-mystery' tour by Janet Hunt and Peter Haines. We followed a route that took us around old New Plymouth, which, by chance, almost exactly matched the city perimeter on Fred Carrington's 1850 map. We started in Gill St and walked along the coast then back across town, through the cathedral grounds, over the top of Marsland Hill and down the other side to the Huatoki walkway, then back into the city, ending up in Gill Street at Shining Peak Brewery, to quench our thirst and have something to eat.



Above: There's a lot happening in this photograph! In the far distance you can see New Plymouth's war memorial, a tribute to those who served overseas in the armed forces in a number of theatres of war. On the right is the very historic White Hart hotel and on the left, of course, the gleaming futuristic building of the Len Lye Centre.



At one point it was possible that this trip would be cancelled for lack of numbers, but in the end, there were 14 of us. Perfect!

It drizzled all the way to Tongapōrutu and we were in wet weather gear when we met at 11:00. But almost the moment we stepped into the mud along the riverbank, the rain stopped. It was overcast for most of our visit, which was just right.

We had a fabulous time. It's such an awesome place—the sense of geological time and the forces of nature is very strong, with all the layers evident in the cliffs and the rock stacks. And it's always different, from visit-to-visit, with new stacks appearing and older ones collapsing and eroding away.

The tide was well out, allowing for wide-ranging wandering and exploring, including watching white-fronted tara/terns/fishing out beyond the breakers and flying back with sprats to feed their offspring.

We were on the beach for maybe two hours before hunger got the better of us and we returned to the carpark.

After lunch we drove to Pilot Rd to visit the ōi/grey-faced petrel colony. We got slightly lost going over the fields (!) but re-oriented ourselves sufficiently to find the gate, get in and look around. The cliffs below the boardwalk have collapsed but we were still able to go a good distance along it. And, of course, during the day, the birds were not in residence—but we could see the nest boxes!

Above: A colourful but grumpy local on one of the stacks.

Left: Looking back towards the river.

Below and below left: juvenile tara waiting on their parents.





From left: Gary and Lee, Amy, Peter, two woofers (sorry, didn't get their names), Rowan and Oliver, Lyndon, Tui, Catherine and Stephen and Beverley.



Left: Rowan, Oliver and Amy on a photo shoot.

Below left: Looking out to sea from the boardwalk at the ōi colony.

Below: Catherine and Lyndon just taking it all in.



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