



Forest & Bird

TE REO O TE TAIAO | *Giving Nature a Voice*

MARLBOROUGH-WAIRAU NEWSLETTER

TWIGS AND TWEETS



CHILDREN MAKE QUICK WORK OF PLANTING

Amelia Molony, 11, gets tree-planting tips from Helen Braithwaite, Marlborough Forest & Bird secretary.

Children from preschoolers to high school students dug deep to help plant 250 native seedlings beside the Taylor River in July.

The NZ Landcare Trust Marlborough's Junior Landcare Programme and Marlborough Forest & Bird organised the planting, sponsored by the BUPA foundation. People of all ages came together, in this third year of planting the stony site where there are now 950 seedlings growing.

The plants were placed in pre-dug holes then mulch applied, made from mature poplars which the planting replaces.

For some children, this was the first time they had planted a tree but others were already experienced. After a sunny morning, rain began as the Lions Club of Blenheim served up a sausage sizzle for the hungry workers.



CONTINUE SCROLLING FOR MORE CONSERVATION NEWS

BIODIVERSITY

>>> ACOUSTIC SURVEY TRACKS BATS' WINTER HABITS

It's all good news for the Forest & Bird pekapeka/long-tailed bat project in the Te Hoiere/Pelorus catchment.



Nick Eade guides an automated bat recorder into place.

Twenty automated recorders suspended from trees are checking out pekapeka winter hangouts and behaviour in Carluke, Ronga, Brown and Te Hoiere/Pelorus reserves. The devices were installed on July 1 and will be removed in late September, recording bat activity within 50 metres. A catchment-wide follow-up is scheduled for autumn next year. Nick Eade who's monitoring the recorders describes 7-hectare Carluke Reserve as "bat central" with 15 roost trees in close proximity. Every fortnight she visits each recorder, to change their batteries. A Forest & Bird team will catch, mark and release pekapeka during the summer breeding season.

>>> THE CAT IN THE TRAP

Trapping of pests that predate pekapeka and native birds continued through winter, in Pelorus Scenic Reserve. Volunteer Forest & Bird trapping coordinator, Budyong Hill, reported 112 possums, 809 rats, 170 mice, 9 stoats, 9 cats, 7 hedgehogs, and a ferret have been caught this year to the end of July.



For the first time, a cat was caught in an automated AT220 trap after trying to retrieve a trapped mouse.

There are 80 new auto-traps to deploy in Pelorus Scenic Reserve, requiring volunteers willing to carry a load through the bush. If you'd like to help and are free in late August/early September, contact budyonghill@gmail.com indicating if you're available on weekdays or weekends only. Lucie Daniskova, recently employed as Te Hoiere Bat Recovery Project full-time predator control officer, helped Budyong check traps in August and is setting out the grid for the new auto-trap line.

Farewell to project manager, Daria Erastova, moving on to a permanent position managing the Ark in Park, in the Waitākere Ranges near Auckland. This is a collaborative project between Forest & Bird and Auckland Council, supported by mana whenua Te Kawerau ā Maki. She'll continue to advise Te Hoiere Bat Recovery Project.

RESTORATION

➤➤➤ NETWORK MULTIPLIES BENEFITS FOR NATURE

The Wairau Nature Network has launched a [one-stop information hub](#).

Wendy Sullivan of NZ Landcare Trust (right) founded the network two years ago, recognising that combining nature restoration efforts in the Wairau catchment would multiply benefits and foster shared commitment. Many groups and individuals are planting native seedlings, protecting stream margins, controlling pests and restoring wetlands along the Wairau, says the Marlborough catchments coordinator.

“Bridging gaps by connecting ecological corridors will scale up positive impacts for nature and people,” she says. “Our lowlands are the most depleted of natural habitats so that’s where we’re focusing our efforts.”

Looking after Wairau hill country and contributing catchments would enable fauna and flora to migrate back to lowlands.

The 4-11% of native cover that remains in Wairau catchments is well below the 15% threshold required for the survival of most species, Wendy says. The Network aims to boost that to 15%, by 2045.

This will be by promoting restoration efforts and best practice, connecting volunteers and hosting an information hub which includes resource and grant libraries.

Events held so far have included planting days for people of all ages plus seed collection and propagation workshops. Landowners have sought advice on increasing biodiversity, including with a mix of exotic and native species.

Network committee members include Helen Braithwaite of Marlborough Forest & Bird.

To connect with Wairau Nature Network, head to wairaunaturenetwork.org.nz, email wairaunaturenetwork@gmail.com or follow on Facebook.



WAIRAU NATURE NETWORK

ACTIVISM

➤➤➤ FAST-TRACK TO DESTRUCTION AT DENNISTON



A Forest & Bird event at Denniston celebrated this unique West Coast landscape while highlighting the threat posed by the Fast Track Act allowing open cast mining.

In May, Helen Braithwaite, Marlborough Forest & Bird secretary, joined experts who introduced the flora, lizards and invertebrates of the unique Denniston area, along with impacts of proposed mining. Helen was fascinated by the flora of limestone pavements, where mature trees like southern rātā and mānuka adapted to conditions by growing only to ankle-height in exposed places.

“We saw gorgeous sundews and weird and wonderful liverworts and lichens, too uncommon to even have common names.”

But she was horrified at the proposal to scrape up to 50 metres off the land surface to access coal seams. Open cast mining after-effects include the release of minerals, leading to toxic water polluting waterways for many decades.

“The plan includes rehabilitation; but it’s impossible to recreate the patchwork of ecosystems that have developed over time,” says Helen. “The result is grass-covered mounds.”

The company mining at nearby Stockton doesn’t treat acidic pollution as its responsibility, she says. Management costs New Zealanders as much as the total royalties New Zealand receives from total coal mining.

“It doesn’t make sense to allow a foreign-owned company to rip up conservation land on a landscape scale, destroying rare and special ecosystems. Little money will be spent locally. Work will mostly be short-term, using labour brought in from outside the West Coast.”

As more countries shifted steelmaking to electric powered plants, demand for the coking coal produced in the Stockton/Denniston area would decline along with its price. Mines would be abandoned, once no longer profitable.

“In the past, Forest & Bird successfully fought extensions to mining on the Denniston Plateau. But the Fast Track Act enables the current government to ignore local objections, environment concerns and any other reasoned argument,” Helen says. **Find fact sheets and Denniston Q&As [here](#).**

IN BRIEF



CONGRATULATIONS TO ...

Alex Phelps who last month attended [Untouched World Foundation's Advanced Leadership Programme](#) at Wheke Marae in Rāpaki, Banks Peninsula. Marlborough Forest & Bird's youngest committee member, she resigned this year to study towards a BSc at Otago University.

TAYLOR PLANTING UPDATE

Flight Timber has agreed to install taps in the Forest & Bird native planting along its boundary, by the Taylor River. This can happen once Marlborough District Council reserves gives consent, making it easier to water plants through summer months when the river is dry.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

The Forest & Bird Marlborough committee is researching content for two small signs to be installed by Marshall Place, thanks to funding from the Lions Club of Blenheim.

A ROAR OF APPLAUSE

Marlborough Boys' College Leos are always happy to lend a hand to Marlborough Forest & Birders, weeding, watering and mulching at our Taylor riverside planting and Marshall Place Reserve. Good works in the community this year also included helping Marlborough District Council mulch around young trees at the Wither Hills Farm Park. They split firewood for kindling as a fundraiser for the Alzheimer's Society and combined with Marlborough Girls' College Leos to raise \$6000 in Relay for Life. Well done, boys.

>>> ADD TO YOUR CALENDAR:

Ronga Planting Day, Saturday August 16, 10am

Forest & Bird's annual planting day of 1000 trees at the Ronga Scenic Reserve returns after a one-year break. Planting and ongoing restoration has been occurring at this remnant forest gem with towering podocarps, for at least 12 years.

Wear solid footwear, appropriate clothing, and bring a spade, gloves, a salad to share, thermos, cutlery, cup and plate. DOC will provide a BBQ.

Meet at the far end of the reserve at 10am, beyond existing F&B plantings. Or if unsure, opposite the Brick Oven, Rai Valley township, at 9.45am alerting organiser Michael North if this is needed: totara@ts.co.nz Car sharing is strongly encouraged. **Weather postponement date, Saturday 23rd August.**

Marlborough Environment Awards field days **Check [website](#) for more information.**

Wednesday, September 17, 9.30am; Farming - Glentoi Farm.

Friday, October 10, 10am; Community Innovation - Envirohub Marlborough.

Thursday, November 27, 9am; Forestry - Top of the South Wood Council.



PROTECT OUR FRESHWATER

>>> BIRDS' RETURN REWARDS PARA RESTORATION

Restoring the 120-hectare Para Swamp is proving a bigger challenge than expected.

About \$1 million has been spent recreating this habitat for game birds and native plant and animal species, says Vaughan Lynn, Marlborough Fish & Game field representative. Work began in 1998, mostly funded by the New Zealand Game Bird Habitat Trust.

The Para is a remnant of the once extensive lower Wairau wetland network, lost to drainage and development. Scattered stands of over 100-year-old kahikatea, swamp maire and lowland ribbonwood are sole survivors of Wairau Plains alluvial forest. Initial efforts focused on removing crack willows that invaded in the 1960s and by the 80s were the dominant cover, said Vaughan at Marlborough Forest & Bird's July talk at Blenheim School. Trees treated with herbicide were expected to take 6-8 years to break down but "after 20 years of herbicide application, about 20% are still standing".

Ground-control finished 10 years ago, followed by foliar spraying on foot, from vehicles, boats and helicopters to prevent reinvasion. Drone-spraying was trialed last year, cheaper than helicopters but more labour-intensive.

Neighbours also sprayed willows, to prevent cross-boundary spread.

About 12,000 native seedlings have been planted; Marlborough Forest & Bird volunteer, Andrew John, helping with propagation and planting. Another member bought and donated 12 adjoining hectares then paid for willow control. Ongoing maintenance includes removing climbing vines and invasive weeds to create a matrix of pond channels. Shallow areas have been excavated then fill used to build islands for nesting birds.

Rewards include sightings of fernbirds, marsh crake, white herons, black and little black shags, grey teal and pūkeko, shoveler ducks, paradise shelducks and rare Australasian bittern. Stream life includes long and short-finned eels/tuna, common bully, inanga, black flounder/mohoao, kōura and freshwater mussels. New Zealand fur seals "sometimes hang out in the channel".

Snapped in the Para: Vaughan Lynn took the photo of the elusive fernbird/mātātā and Mike Aviss of Marlborough District Council captured the more gregarious kōtuku/white heron.



F&B SPEAKERS, AUGUST - NOVEMBER 2025

Blenheim School Hall, Gold coin donation

ROY GROSE | EX-DOC OPERATIONS MANAGER

Thursday, 21 August 7pm

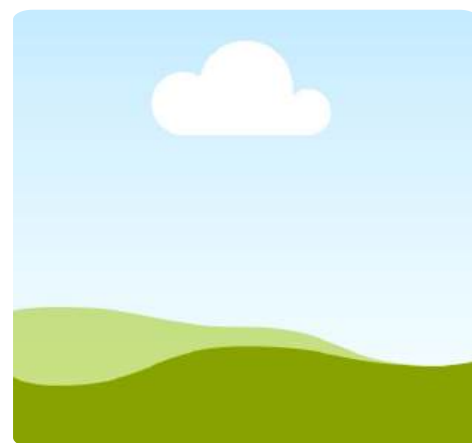
Looking back on 25 years dedicated to conservation in Te Tauihu/Top of the South Island. The focus is working with recovery agencies post the November 2016 Kaikōura earthquake, including managing impacts of the highway rebuild on resident seals.



KET BRADSHAW | SOUTH MARLBOROUGH LANDSCAPE RESTORATION TRUST

Thursday, 18 September 7pm

Covering 870,000 hectares from south of the Wairau river to the Clarence/Waiau-Toa and Molesworth/Rangitahi station, the trust is working hard to remove infestations of self-sown pines. Ket discusses the challenges.



SCOTT BURNETT | FOREST & BIRD REGIONAL CONSERVATION MANAGER

Thursday, 16 October 7pm

[Denniston: too precious to mine](#): The Denniston Plateau, a unique 'lost world' on the West Coast, is under threat from a massive coal mining expansion.



MARK ANDERSON | THE BEETLES

Thursday, November 20 7pm

The challenge of invertebrate conservation and how everyone can make a difference locally.

