

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

November 2025

Editorial: New leadership needed

Although we are each responsible for our part in climate disruption, and we should not lead carbon-profligate lives, the difference we can make individually is small. Change from government is what is necessary.

Governments determine the carbon environment and settings that government departments, industries and ourselves operate within - the rate at which government and industry must decarbonise, the carbon producing natural resources that can be exploited, the assistance large industries such as steel and farming get to decarbonise, the approximate price of carbon, the mechanisms that will be used to decarbonise, public transport, the amount of land and sea that will not be exploited for human benefit, and there are many others. Government can shift the country. Individually, we cannot.

Climate change hits the poorest nations and individuals the most, and, along with habitat loss, climate change is causing extinctions. The poorest nations are participating in United Nations Conventions on Climate Change - COP. These conventions try to coordinate the world and get a fair transition to climate stabilisation. Because developed nations have and are still causing most of the high carbon levels we have today, money needs to flow from them to the underdeveloped countries so they can skip development fuelled by oil and coal. It would be ridiculous for us to maintain our high lifestyle, keep Bangladesh in poverty and watch Tuvalu disappear beneath the waves. So the rich nations have to fund the decarbonisation of the poorer nations in addition to their own decarbonisation. Rich countries like us are no longer buying into this premise.

As you know, the richest country in the world - the US, has pulled out of COP and Trump has called climate change a hoax. NZ, which is a rich country, is not pulling out and the government is saying climate change is important and it will honour COP decisions, but its deeds no longer align with COP, with NZ's financial status nor with Government rhetoric. In fact the decisions have been made to make individuals, and industries more profitable and the cost will be environmental degradation and worse climate disruption. The argument I hear from government is that they want to help people in these hard times but the reason that people are finding it hard is more about wealth and income inequalities than about NZ's wealth.

During the term of this government, we have lost a huge amount in the fight against climate change. Here are some of those losses:

- Projects that have serious environmental, including climate, consequences and may have already been turned down on those grounds can, since the passing of the Fast-track Approvals Act, be approved with little scrutiny and rushed decision making. These include mineral, petroleum and coal mining, e.g. mining the Denniston Plateau for coal.
- The ban on offshore oil and gas exploration was reversed.
- Two hundred million dollars was pledged to co-invest in new gas fields. (Gas fields add to the carbon load.)
- Methane emission targets have been lowered by about half. (Methane is a very potent but shorter lived climate gas.)
- The Government green investment fund is being phased out. (This channelled investors' money to green projects.)

- Climate reporting has been dropped for all companies worth over \$1b to now include only those over \$60b; it has been softened and directors can now misrepresent emissions and not be liable.
- The government has pulled out of an alliance of countries that work together to phase out oil and gas and transition to clean energy.
- The clean car discount was dropped and road user charges were added to battery only cars and hybrids, decimating the clean car industry overnight.
- Fees for climate unfriendly cars have been dropped by about 80%, encouraging the import of higher emission cars.
- Herds of deer and tahr can now be protected in the DOC estate, lowering the sequestration potential of our native environments.
- Weakened the ETS, which lead to a carbon price drop.
- Removed the public sector target of carbon zero by 2050.
- Halting plans to price agricultural emissions. (40% of total emissions)
- The government's budgeted environmental spend has been reduced from \$3.6b to \$2.6b.
- The second Emissions Reduction Plan used tree planting and carbon capture to achieve zero by 2050. (Significant carbon capture is a far off dream that maybe one day will suck out 6% of what is needed and tree planting, while important, long-term is slow. It appears that the government wants to continue and maybe increase emissions and try to suck the carbon up with trees and machines at a later date. Reduction is the key method needed to stop our planet becoming dangerous.)
- The hybrid inter-island ferries on order by the last government were cancelled and oil-fuelled ferries have now been ordered.
- The Fast-track Approvals Act is being amended, giving more power to ministers and applicants and less to the public.
- The latest announcement is to turn back the clock on regional councils. When set up, regional councils were run by local mayors. In my opinion, they were parochial, and paid scant attention to the environment. A return to that model does not bode well.

This government has decimated our climate record. That is not to say that the previous government was doing enough – it was not. [Climate tracker](#) lists the performance of each country. It lists 10 countries, Argentina, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Russia, Arabia, Thailand, Türkiye, USA, and Viet Nam as *Critically Insufficient* and 7 countries, Canada, China, Egypt, India, **New Zealand**, Singapore and South Korea as *Highly Insufficient*. We are a rich country, and we are in the 17 poorest-performing countries along with the US.

Any graph of atmospheric carbon dioxide equivalent shows that the level of atmospheric carbon will be determined by what humanity does. We create so much more than the natural world ever did that its contribution is now insignificant. The levels we create will unleash carbon from forest fires, dead coral reefs, etc. but it is the carbon that we release that will cause that. If we allow global warming to proceed and punish us with the ferocity we have fed it, it will be because we have chosen that punishment.

In NZ, our contribution to the level of that punishment, will result from the way we have voted in of the last election and how we vote in the future.

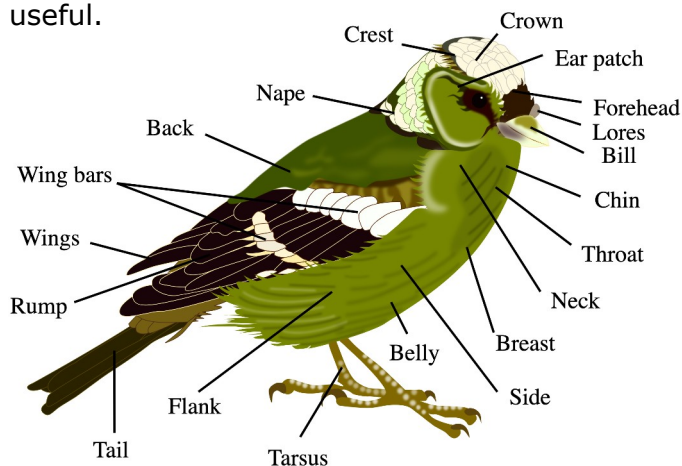
Russell

Watching Birds

by Pene Burton Bell

I was six when I actively started watching birds and it has been a lifelong joy, as well as a great way to learn to appreciate nature more intently and to keep centred. When I started out it wasn't easy to snap a pic (to be fair, it still isn't, but it is cheaper) but I realised that I am more interested in appreciating the bird and its behaviour than trying to take the best image to preserve for perpetuity, and I am glad I made that decision. Another thing I learned early is that if you want to see a bird, you best learn how to listen for a bird and methodically I have trained myself to pinpoint where a bird is calling from (most of the time) and this has led to more great sightings of birds.

In New Zealand there are not that many bird species by comparison to where I started out (South Africa). It was important to know the body parts of a bird so you could distinguish if it had a yellow rump, crown or coverts or all the above, so learning basic bird anatomy is useful.



Bird anatomy - [Habib Mhenni @ Wikimedia](#)

My first exciting bird sighting was a Lilac-Breasted Roller, so the importance was immediately obvious.



Lilac-Breasted Roller - [Charles J. Sharp @ Wikimedia](#)

Local Alan Froggatt wrote "Birdwatching for Beginners" a few years back and it could be a useful book to pick up and has had good reviews.

Another good way to learn the birds we're likely to see around home, is to learn the 20-odd birds on the New Zealand Garden Bird Survey, and their calls – both available here: <https://gardenbirdsurvey.nz/identification/> and to complete the free DOC online bird course : <https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/training/online-courses/bird-identification-online-course/>.

When you are out birding, you can also use the Merlin app to help you identify birds (and can have it listening in the background to help you along):

<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>

Some rely more on sight (then binoculars are useful), I rely on my ears mainly, but then hearing gets worse with age.

I've also found it useful to learn the shape of different birds in flight; for example, starlings remind me of military aircraft in flight, and the goosetstep on the ground, whereas chaffinches almost always fly in a series of arcs.

Once you have a handle on the birds you are hearing and/or seeing, then you can start counting birds.

Why count birds? Because birds are an easy measure of how an environment is changing, and if we can spot changes, we can tell if things are improving or getting worse. Mankind has been using birds for this purpose for a long time – for example, canaries were taken into coal mines to warn against noxious gases (if they stopped singing, it was time to leave).

For pest control operations, it is invaluable to know how bird numbers are changing because of these activities. I recently set up about fifteen sites across Waikanae to monitor birds.

The intention is that each of these sites will be audited once a quarter and the data reported into [Trap.nz](https://trap.nz) (just like the trapping stats) and from there they can be analysed, to note changes (and achievements), and this helps in applications for further funding, for more trapping, etc.

We just need to find willing bird counters to achieve this.

Why not give it a go?

A bird count should take you a little over five minutes each using the method we suggest (note that this differs from the NZ Garden Bird Survey which requires you to watch for an hour).

We suggest Five Minute Bird Counts (5MBCs) because we're all busy people; an hour is quite long to concentrate for, and the 5MBC has been used by the Department of Conservation and

other scientists for over 50 years – so most recorded data is in this format, and comparisons are most easily made against it.

Find out more here:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/five-minute-bird-counts/>

They also offer further training.

You might not be a trapper, but could you help count the birds?

Trapping groups beyond Waikanae are also seeking bird counters. Please get in touch with them if you're keen.

Predator Free Wellington hui report back

By Amelia Geary

Members of Kāpiti-Mana Branch attended a Predator Free Wellington hui on 21 November.

It was great to see attendance of a number of Kāpiti-based and Porirua-based Predator Free groups. There were a range of interesting presentations, the most compelling of which were from the well-funded Capital Kiwi and Predator Free Wellington projects.

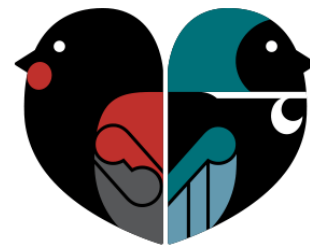
The work of those groups didn't detract from the committed work of volunteers in the region, but it did suggest that our role is more about holding the line, until the funded roll out reaches us.

The day was a comprehensive mix of practical and aspirational. We have a long way to go but that doesn't mean we can't make an impact even in our own backyards. Cam Speedy gave some pro-tips as a professional trapper. His rule is a third a third a third. A third of the bait in the trap, a third of the bait around the trap and a third of the bait in the wider environment.

He said you want to create a "neon sign" in the environment making your trap as inviting as possible to the wary pest. *"Don't be a trap checker, be a trapping ninja"* was his refrain.

The overall emphasis was the importance of us working as a collective; of not being patch protective; of sharing information on pro-tips for trapping, best lures, tricks of the trade.

Jessi Morgan put it succinctly:
"There's no IP in predator free."



PREDATOR FREE
WELLINGTON

Over 53,000 pests have been trapped locally by backyard trappers in the last 12 months as a regional Wellington collective according to data in [Trap.nz](https://www.trap.nz/). This is not to be sniffed at and only the tip of the iceberg when you consider the myriad backyard trappers that don't record their results.

When asking yourself what the point is as you check your line by yourself on a gloomy day in the bush, you can reassure yourself that you're not alone. We're part of a much bigger operation that hopefully one day, will get us to a Predator Free New Zealand. And if you need help recording your trapping results, please do get in touch with your local trapping group – better data leads to better outcomes.

You can locate your nearest group through the map on predatorfreenz.org, or check our volunteer conservation activities listing.



We hear there are plans for another such trappers' hui in Porirua in the new year.

Christmas is coming...

Might an interest in birds give some ideas for your Christmas gifts this year?

A pair of binoculars and a bird book are good starter kit. I use the [eBird app](#) to record all my birding stats and that means I have an international record of what I saw where and when (and the data is useful to scientists too).

Other ideas could include

- giving a trap and/or bait, 
- a subscription to Forest & Bird or Kiwi Conservation Club 
<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/support-us/become-member-forest-bird> ,
- a native plant, 
- a nature-rich experience like whale-watching in Kaikoura or ziplining in Rotorua,
- something from the F&B online shop - <https://shop.forestandbird.org.nz/>

All these options are much more environmentally friendly than plastic-fantastic, which will break and end up clogging our environment.

Major changes underway along Te Wharemauku Awa

[Te Wharemauku Awa](#), the stream that flows from the hills above Paraparaumu through the town centre to Raumati Beach, is facing its biggest changes in more than 50 years.

- Coastlands has consent to redevelop its section of the stream where it passes out from under the mall with terracing and planting. Coastlands Square, another empty area of future development across Rimu Rd, also sits alongside the Wharemauku.
- The soon to be fast-tracked New Central Park project, which has “Whale Song” as a key component, includes an 8-hectare restoration of a wetland/flood water ponding area as part of the realignment and naturalisation of the path of the Wharemauku from its current trench. This will help prevent downstream flooding.
- A growing vision to reinvigorate the Kāpiti airport which include the wetlands at the southern end that is a part of the Wharemauku awa.

The Wharemauku sits at the heart of Kāpiti’s transformation, an essential artery that is undergoing repair and restoration, becoming a focus for the future.

Amid this momentum, a new community-led group called Te Wharemauku Awa Rōpū (TWAR)* has formed to help coordinate efforts and ensure that development, restoration and community action align under a shared vision: a thriving, healthy awa that supports people and wildlife alike and becomes a community asset to enjoy and care for.

“The Wharemauku is changing faster than it has in decades and that brings both opportunity and responsibility,” says Marco Zeeman, spokesperson for Te Wharemauku Awa Rōpū.

“If we connect the people, plans and projects along the stream, we can make these changes add up to something extraordinary. Together we can restore the awa’s mauri, create beautiful public spaces and build a legacy for generations to come.”

TWAR wants to build strong connections between mana whenua, residents with the stream in their backyard, schools, community groups, agencies and landowners to coordinate restoration, share knowledge and advocate for the awa’s long-term wellbeing.

TWAr is also very keen to start collecting stories/history that surround this awa. How it has changed, how people used to engage with the Wharemauku, foraging for food, newsworthy stories, historical connections, memories.... Please share your stories with us....

Kaitawa Reserve already shows what's possible when community and nature thrive together, with an established native forest, thriving birdlife and flourishing freshwater ecosystems. Similarly, the expressway wetlands, along with tributaries planted and cared for over many years by volunteers, now support rich native planting and accessible trails, offering a glimpse of how restored habitats can reconnect people with the awa.

Te Wharemauku Awa Rōpū hopes to see these successes echoed from the headwaters to the sea. Locals are encouraged to connect with Te Wharemauku Awa Rōpū to learn more, share stories/memories and link up with the many groups already doing great mahi along the awa.

Join the mailing list: <https://forms.gle/QcJf5BxkQfLuNekY6>

Follow on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61582485867255>

Email for more info: tewharemauku@gmail.com

If you're involved in a project or group working on the stream, we'd love to hear from you so we can support and amplify your efforts.

** Te Wharemauku Awa Rōpū (TWAr) connects, supports and amplifies the mahi of all who care for the Wharemauku Stream. From source to sea, the group works to restore wildlife corridors, improve water quality and build community understanding and guardianship of this vital taonga and its surroundings.*

And Breaking News about the Wharemauku...

The stream has always had a good native fish population, but there have been two serious long-term issues that need fixing. One is a fish passage blockage where the Wharemauku passes under Riwai Street and the other is that Koi Carp live in it. The good news is the fish passage blockage has been fixed and the Koi Carp issue is being worked on.

The fish passage obstruction was in the main tributary on the lower side of Riwai Street where the stream drops off sharply. I remember it had been fixed once before but had washed out. This time large rocks have been placed in rows across the stream and the reaches in between filled with gravel. It looks a great job and I believe it will last. GW paid for the job. Of course, the fish had to be cleared out of the way of diggers before the job could start and during this, two piharau / lamprey were found, so that is very good news for the diversity of fish in the stream.



The source of the Koi carp in the Wharemauku are some ponds on the Paraparaumu flood plain. They need to be removed from the ponds first, because if not, they would reinfest the stream. Native fish have been removed from the ponds as a first step to dealing with the carp.

We will keep you updated.

Have Your Say

Simplifying Local Government?

Consultation closes 20 February 2026

On 25 November 2025, the government announced that it is consulting on its proposal to simplify local government.

Our concern is that local councils will be even more stretched and have less overall funding and less understanding, and the environment will lose as a result.

You can read more detail in the proposal document here:

[Simplifying Local Government - A draft proposal \(PDF, 547kB\)](#)

Consultation will be open until 20 February 2026.

Upcoming Forest & Bird Events

We will meet in Waikanae in early February 2026 to elect a new committee for our branch.

After many years of wonderful service, Peter Kentish, our treasurer, is standing down. So, we are keen to find a new treasurer, as well as more committee members from the Mana end of the branch.

If you might be able to help, please get in touch to discuss.

Notices

Snorkelling in Taputeranga Marine Reserve

6 December 2025 from 9.45am

Beginners welcome! All necessary gear provided and experienced guides to ensure your safety and enjoyment in the water. Participants just need to be at least eight years old and confident swimmers. Those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult.

Come down to book a snorkel time for the day, as spots may fill up quickly. Bring your togs, towel, refreshments and make a day of it exploring the activities and environment at Taputeranga Marine Reserve.

Stay updated by checking the Mountains to Sea Wellington Facebook event listings for any cancellations, postponements, or location changes. More info:

<https://www.mountaintoseawellington.org/events>

A morning at Waikanae Beach

7 December 2025 from 9.30am

Waikanae North End Beach Restoration Group - is just starting up and would love volunteers to join them at their next volunteer session as they expand dune restoration to the north end of Waikanae Beach. Contact Deborah djforsyth@me.com

The mission is simple:

- Remove invasive lupins
- Make space for natives like pīngao and spinifex
- Help protect the dunes and our coastline
- Meet at William Street beach access (opposite 106 Field Way)
- Bring gloves and loppers if you've got them.

Sanderson Plaque Blessing

18 December 2025 9.30am

When Forest & Bird turned 50, a plaque was unveiled in Paraparaumu within sight of Kāpiti Island to recognise the role of our founder, local man Captain Val Sanderson.

The plaque has moved twice but has finally been reinstalled in Macleans Park beside the beach entry near the outlet of Tikotu Stream, and we will hold a small blessing ceremony.

You are welcome to come along or may wish to check out the plaque next time you are in the area.



Pāuatahanui Picnic – 22 February 2026

A get-together with the wider Wellington Forest & Bird family.

It seems a long way off but please put the date in your diaries for next year:

- From 3.30pm on Sunday, 22 February 2026 at Pāuatahanui Wildlife Reserve
- A shared potluck/BBQ - BYO everything
- Enjoy the summer together with other Forest & Birders from around the region.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Your feedback on this newsletter would be most welcome, as would contributions to future newsletters.

Editors: Russell Bell & Pene Burton Bell

Email: russelljamesbell@gmail.com

Phone: 021 22 66 047