

# Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

## February 2026

### Editorial: Regional Councils

Greater Wellington (GW) plays a vital role in our wildlife conservation efforts. Their activities include trapping or assisting with trapping within regional parks and forests, water catchment areas, Key Native Ecosystems (KNEs), the Wairarapa Moana, Wellington City halo and Zealandia halo projects, Miramar Peninsula, as well as riparian coastal and river environments. Additionally, they conduct trapping along the expressway, acknowledging its function as a corridor for predators.

GW recently acquired Gollan's Farm, located southeast of Eastbourne. Although some may view this as excessive, its position between native forests and the wetlands and lakes of Pencarrow means its purchase ensures full catchment protection, including the upper swamps of the Parangarahu lakes—ranked 10<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> of NZ's lake wetland systems.



Gollan's Farm

The total catchment is now protected, and area once occupied by the farm will provide improved access to the treasures of East Harbour Regional Park.

As well as predators, ungulates like deer, goats, and pigs are damaging forest undergrowth, leaving only unpalatable plants at reachable heights. Some of the palatable plants are essential for some species of birds and insects. The damage in the Wainui/Orongorongo catchments is so great that replacement palatable plants don't have a chance; the deer are starving and the forest's ability to smooth out rain and

drought events is impaired, a critical factor as climate change intensifies and/or prolongs rainfall and drought events.

GW has approved a new initiative in the Wainuiomata and Orongorongo water catchments, where fencing has helped keep out ungulates from the west and north, but not in the rugged east and south where access remains open. GW has approved building an ungulate fence over ten years and using advanced trapping to remove all ungulates beginning this year. Unlike predator fences, overhead trees are not an issue because ungulates can't climb, so the fence can zigzag through trees without a break in the canopy. The project will boost the understorey, improve water supply, and benefit biodiversity. *(You can learn more about this project at our Waikanae public meeting on 22 April.)*

When an area is protected, charismatic species are noticed, as were the fernbirds in Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP) when they returned. But many unnoticed, non-charismatic species will also increase. These may be insects and other small animals, and maybe stream health and invertebrate life will improve. There are also threatened plants in our region and an increase of them by having an ungulate fence may produce leaves, flowers, fruit and habitats that are important for particular faunal species at particular times of year. We simply don't know enough to determine all the flow-on effects.

So, protecting the environment, especially native areas is incredibly important for biodiversity and for us.

I seldom talk about saving institutions but I have thought about it recently. Changes to local government proposed by this government, if they progress, will result in changes to GW.

Leaving aside GW's corporate functions, GW's focus is:

- Environment: environmental science, regulation, policy, and biosecurity
- Catchment Management: Responsible for flood protection, land management, and biodiversity.
- Parks: Manages the network of regional parks and forests.
- Water Supply: Manages the bulk water supply for the region.
- Public Transport: Plans and funds the regional bus and train network.

These services protect the environment from us and the things we have introduced, protects us from the environment, provide areas where we can recreate in the natural environment, and obtain resources from the natural environment – the most significant is bulk water. Even public transport, which is not an environmental service is nonetheless an important aspect of reducing the environmental cost of transport. The more people that can be carried on public transport, the better. Over the past few years, we have seen GW plant what will become significant native forest areas, and on 9 March this year, GW will begin to block up some drains in QEP to create 16ha of wetlands. These initiatives are GW's response to climate change.

These functions of GW have to be preserved. They are essentially regionwide functions. They have long lead times and it takes years to gather the expertise and the ethos to

manage them. Failure of the systems that GW manage would significantly affect the region. If, for instance, the Wainui bulk water supply suffered a catastrophic failure, or a storm broke the Hutt Valley flood banks, the repercussions would be serious. We could not afford to have the equivalent of a Moa Point wastewater treatment failure in these systems. Even if GW's trapping efforts were cut by a budget issue, native fauna populations which have increased over long periods of time could be lost quite quickly and may take years to recover.

The changes proposed for GW and other regional councils need to be carefully thought through. They should focus on the health of the environment, the delivery of the environmentally derived services we receive, and its ability to continue to deliver those services in the very long term.

It is the health of the environment that I think is priority number one. If we don't have that, based on the best environmental science used to derive good policy, managed in the regional community by good regulation, we will be in for a difficult and unpleasant time.

Of course, having a healthy environment that provides services and recreation for us may require what some think are unreasonable rate increases and may constrain the demands of cities and district councils.

*Russell*

## Save Denniston petition

We have had a Denniston promotion day at Waikanae Market, and are planning another in March, but you can help by asking your friends, colleagues and family to sign our petition:

<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/petitions/make-denniston-scientific-reserve>

Link to the Denniston campaign page:

<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/campaigns/denniston-too-precious-mine>

Please photograph the completed forms and email to [office@forestandbird.org.nz](mailto:office@forestandbird.org.nz)



## Tititipounamu

by Pene Burton Bell

New Zealand's smallest bird is the tītītipounamu/rifleman/*Acanthisitta choris granti* weighing in at about 7g - the same weight and similar size to a grey warbler which has a longer tail (the tītītipounamu has almost none at all). It's te reo name comes from the iridescent mirage-like sheen of the male's greenstone-coloured wings in the light, their English name was given because of their similarity in colour to the English greencoat soldiers of the colonial army. The males are a little smaller than the females which are yellowish-brown with speckles on the head and back.



Female

by [Christopher Stephens @ Wikimedia](#)  
(cropped)



Male

by [Melissa Boardman @ Wikimedia](#)  
(cropped)

Both have black-pointed and slightly upward-curving beaks, and light grey undersides. Their wings, like their tail, are very short and they tend to fly short distances, flitting between trees and shrubs, and jumping up and down trunks into the canopy, often hanging upside down while searching for the next insect to munch ([they also enjoy the odd beech seed](#)). Being very fast-moving and preferring to be near the canopy they can be very difficult to spot. Many people cannot hear these sweet little birds either - with their very high-pitched (7-10 kHz) pip or zip produced by them constantly whilst foraging ([listen here](#)). For those who can, and do, spot them, the reward is certainly worthwhile.

The birds form monogamous pairs and only tend to replace a mate if one dies, breeding (often two clutches) between August and February. They often nest within a cavity with spherical alterations done by the male, and a lining of soft feathers added. Both incubate and care for the chicks, and in this they are often also helped by young males of earlier broods (possibly hoping to find a future mate).

Tititipounamu are one of only two surviving wrens in New Zealand - the other is the, even more rare, rock wren, which is found mainly in Fiordland and is a little sturdier and bigger than its forest counterpart. In the North Island, tītītipounamu are considered *at risk - declining*, and it is probably for this reason that a DOC permit was granted to private landowners in Paraparaumu to complete a translocation of up to 50 birds from the Wainuiomata Water Catchment area this summer.

The Kotukutuku Ecological Restoration Project property has been well cared for, and well trapped for over a decade, has old growth forest and a lot of old kanuka which is one of the species the birds favour. You can also see rifleman at Zealandia, or up the top of Hemi Matenga Reserve.

I have been fortunate to be part of the first bird netting, capture and release over the past week. After finding an area with active rifleman (ideally) and a place to erect the mist net where it won't be easily seen by the bird, the team erected the net. It takes at least three people (four is better) to erect the nets which are much the same fabric as mum's hairnet, just in 6m lengths, and we put two lengths above each other creating an approximate 6x6m catch area.



Releasing a bird from the mist net

Then it was a matter of hiding bluetooth speakers on either side of the net and playing rifleman calls to get them interested. The 'fly in the ointment' for us was that the chorus of cicadas was drowning out our ability to hear the birds, and their ability to hear the calls we played, however we have so far caught 11 birds.

They were carefully carried to the banding site in a cloth bag, and once banded, placed in their transfer boxes with a lining of ferns and branches, a perch, some mealworms and half an organic grape. Transferring the birds from Wainuiomata to Kāpiti is a careful, cold, quiet ride – the birds overheat easily, scare easily, and don't like bumps. Finally we arrived and walked them to an ideal piece of forest in their new home, wished them



Banding a rifleman

well, then opened the box and after a few moments they flew up the nearest tree looking for insects. Job done within three hours. Let's hope they thrive.



Tititipounamu in transport box

You can listen to a [clip about the project from National Radio](#).

*\* If you can hear rifleman, are keen, willing and able to help monitor the birds (the site is pretty uneven and steep in places), please get in touch.*

## Next Public Meeting – “A stitch in time – saving the hihi”

Our next meeting is on **Sunday, 8 March** 2026 at St Andrews church hall, 11 Steyne Avenue, **Plimmerton**. Join us around 2.15pm for a cuppa beforehand, start at **2.30pm** to learn more about this amazing little bird from our guest speaker Erin Patterson from the Hihi Conservation Trust.

*Our next meeting in Waikanae* is on Wednesday, 22 April at the Waikanae Community Centre, 28-32 Utauta Street, Waikanae at 7.30pm (7.15pm for a cuppa) with the topic “WOWCAZUP” – come and hear Chris Cosslet talk about the **W**ainuiomata-**O**rongorongo **W**ater **C**ollection **A**rea **Z**ero **U**ngulates **P**roject.



Members and the public are all welcome at our public meetings!

## Have Your Say

### Flooding photos from the February 2026 flood event

Please provide your photos to GW here to inform, and aid future planning:  
<https://haveyoursay.gw.govt.nz/flood-photos>

### Porirua City Council – Spicer Landfill

Future options for Spicer Landfill, which will close in 2030. Submissions close 25 March 2026.

<https://haveyoursay.porirua.govt.nz/spicer-landfill-future-options>

## Notices

### Working bees

- Whareroa Guardians second working bee of the year is on Sunday, 1 March, 9am to noon along lower Ramaroa.
- Waikanae Estuary Care Group (Otaihanga end) meets on Saturday, 7 March at 9am, byo drinks.
- Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet's [Annual Inlet Cleanup](#): Register at Browns Bay car park at 10.30am on Sunday, 8 March

### Butterfly survey at WECG

For those interested in the Waikanae Reserve's butterflies, you are invited to join the walk through the estuary in groups, noting and counting the butterflies & moths along the way. You will need to wear suitable footwear and clothing. Some walking off the tracks is required. This will take part at 1pm sharp on Tuesday, 3 March, meeting at the Takahē entrance of the reserve for a briefing at 12.30pm.

If this interests you, please email Pam Stapleton at [poes8915@gmail.com](mailto:poes8915@gmail.com) by Monday, 2 March so that equipment and routes can be organised.

### KCDC and Regional Coastal Restoration Trust video on the Kāpiti Coast (15 min)

<https://www.coastalrestorationtrust.org.nz/resources/crt-resources/regional-coastal-restoration-videos/>

Sign up for the **KCDC Biodiversity newsletter**  
<https://mailchi.mp/061eb2b5dff5/5I93j2gjfu>

### Antarctic Film Festival in Paekākāriki

Details here (\$20 to attend)

<https://paekakariki.nz/events/the-antarctic-film-festival/>

### Betwixt and Between

A storytelling & music show with a mix of bat stories, science and folklore from around the world, including our own pekapeka/bats.

<https://events.humanitix.com/paikakariki-bat-s-incredible>

### Dactylanthus flowering

[\*Dactylanthus taylorii\*](#), also known as Te pua o Te Rēinga (the flower of the underworld) or wood rose, is a parasitic plant endemic to Aotearoa New Zealand. It is known to grow on the roots of around 30 species of native trees and shrubs such as *Griselinia littoralis* and *Pseudopanax arboreus*. Ngā Manu Nature Reserve in Waikanae plays a key role in the conservation of *Dactylanthus* in the Wellington region. Plants were introduced in 2014 and flowered for the first time in 2022.



Credit: Emily Roberts, iNaturalist

Each season flowers are hand-pollinated around April. Seed is collected in November and they flower in March–April so it is worth visiting the Nature Reserve to catch a glimpse of this amazing endemic plant.

### A Paraparaumu trapping champion?

We need one (or a few!) – Predator Free Kāpiti has been searching for someone to lead the Paraparaumu part of this initiative (or part of it).

Could it be you? Or someone you know? Some people love to be shoulder-tapped, but it's hard if you don't know who they are.

Please get in touch to find out more, or talk it through: [predatorfreekapiticoast@gmail.com](mailto:predatorfreekapiticoast@gmail.com)

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*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](mailto:russelljamesbell@gmail.com)

**Phone:** 021 22 66 047