

# Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

## March 2026

### Editorial: Energy Transition

In a recent LinkedIn post, Niamh O'Flynn, Programme Director at Greenpeace Aotearoa, wrote: *"When a former oil refinery manager makes more strategic sense on climate change than the New Zealand Government, we've hit a bizarre turning point."*

In his interview with RNZ, David Keat noted that New Zealand has aligned itself with "MAGA US States" in its pursuit of fossil fuels and rejection of renewable energy sources. Our government is doubling down on an ideological obsession with oil and gas while the world is getting on with the energy transition."

It did not strike me as bizarre. In 2022, I worked with David Keat, fellow Kāpiti resident Jake Roos, and Robert McLauchlan on a Low Carbon Kāpiti backed campaign to stop the Labour Party's biofuel obligation. The campaign was called [Don't Burn our Future](#). The biofuel obligation was aimed at ramping up biofuel production primarily aimed at fuelling cars and trucks. Biofuel obligations drive up food prices, as the majority of biofuels are made from food and feed crops. Food price increases worsen living conditions for the most vulnerable people around the world. Growing the feedstocks for biofuel drives tropical deforestation, destroys biodiversity, increases emissions and deprives indigenous people of their land and livelihoods.

Our argument was that the EV revolution was coming and, along with more investment in low emission public transport, cycling and walking, we could move away from our reliance on fossil fuels. The Labour Party dropped the obligation in its pre-election bonfire, but then the incoming government has significantly slowed the transition to low emission transport by ditching many policies that supported the shift.

Then in late February 2026, two important reports were issued. One, with the title [National Infrastructure Plan: Mahere Tūāhanga ā-Motu](#), was released by the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission, Te Waihangā.

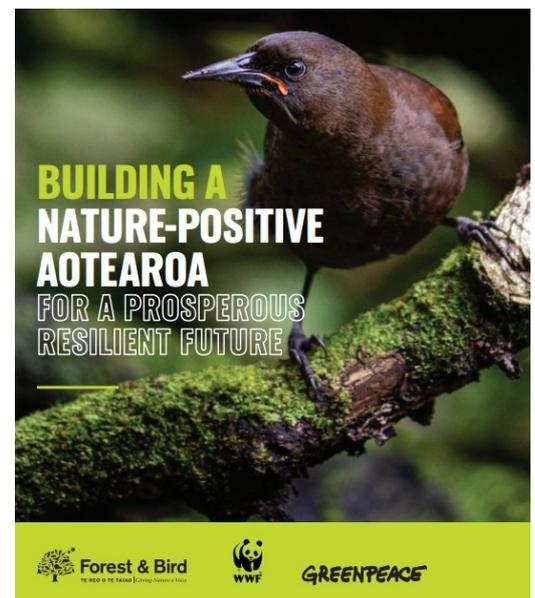
The other was issued by a consortium of Forest & Bird, World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace. Its title is [A shared roadmap to building a nature positive Aotearoa](#).

The infrastructure report was widely discussed both in mainstream and social media. Unfortunately, the 'shared roadmap' never really caught the attention of the wider media. Not surprisingly, the 'roadmap' report was seen by many as simply an advocacy document, full of "vision" but without the hard-nosed lens of the Infrastructure Commission engineers and economists.

I saw both as important. For example, the Infrastructure Commission questions whether we can afford all the Roads of National Significance given funding needed for hospitals, water and other infrastructure.

But it is the 'shared roadmap' that should influence our thinking, especially in the area of transport, given its over-sized contribution to emissions and dependency on oil.

The Forest & Bird, World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace 'shared roadmap', perhaps an unfortunate title as it was less about roads but more about low emission, low energy ways to travel, has five transport recommendations. These are:



1. Repurpose motorway expansion funding for a programme of investment in public transport, including electric rail, busways, cycleways, and regional rail links such as an overnight Auckland-Wellington service.
2. Stimulate active transport quickly and affordably by re-allocating some existing vehicle lanes to cycling where appropriate.
3. Introduce free public transport fares for Community Service Card holders, under-25s, and Total Mobility Card holders and their support people.
4. End new airport expansions and curb demand for private jets and helicopter pads.
5. Set a timeframe to end the import of fossil fuel vehicles, re-introduce fuel efficiency standards, and build a nationwide EV charging network.

Now in late March, we have the ongoing war in the Middle East. Some in the media have suggested that we are potentially heading towards crisis-causing mandated work from home rules, speed restrictions on roads, carless days, and other rationing measures. There is already much worry about increased cost of petrol and the trucking industry is struggling with increased costs of diesel. Food costs will increase. New Zealand's lack of energy self-reliance could cost us dearly.

While we all hope this current crisis will be quickly resolved, the underlying problems of fossil fuel dependency and our high per capita emissions from transport will not go away. We know what to do to reduce emissions while also breaking the dependency on fossil fuels. [Finland](#) provides an example, with more compact cities, excellent urban public transport, extensive cycleways and 15 million people using inter-regional rail compared with just over 300,000 in New Zealand. They have fewer cars per capita and more of these are EVs. This is based on a country with a similar population size and similar wealth to New Zealand.

So, if we followed the Forest & Bird vision locally what might it look like?

1. [Double tracking the railway to Otaki with regular, fast, electric trains linking Wellington all the way to Palmerston North airport.](#)
2. More daily and weekend services by the Capital Connection.
3. [A night train to Auckland.](#)
4. [Closing Kāpiti airport](#) and building medium and high-density housing while protecting the valuable wetlands on the site.
5. [Rolling out protected cycleways](#) across the region as well as lowering speed limits on many urban streets making it safe for school children to cycle to school.
6. On street EV charging for those without off street parking. Backing this with community solar and batteries, including on all local schools and public buildings.
7. Not building houses sprawling out onto valuable horticultural and agricultural land.



*Freight train through QEP*

Those individuals with sufficient resources can buy EVs or an e-bike, install solar panels or decide to fly less. But much of the vision requires society-wide change. Some could be facilitated by local government. However, local government is being restructured, particularly Regional Councils who provide our local public transport. How this will affect their abilities to support a transition is unknown. But much of a transition needs central government support.

The vision of Forest & Bird, World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace needs to be a core part of national transport policy as well as policies in other areas including agriculture. At the end of this year, in the general election, we need to vote for the parties that support this vision.

*Paul Callister*

## Kororā (Little Penguins or Little Blue Penguins, *Eudyptula minor*)

by John Cockrem

Kororā are the smallest species of penguin. Kororā are found along the coasts of the North and South Islands, Stewart Island and the Chatham Islands, and in south and east Australia where they are called fairy penguins.

In the Kāpiti-Mana region, kororā are found on Kāpiti Island, along the coast from Paekākāriki southwards, and on Mana Island.

Kororā nest underneath vegetation such as taupata and flax, in burrows dug in soil, in cavities and crevices between rocks, and in caves. They also nest underneath buildings, and use artificial nestboxes.

The kororā annual cycle begins in early autumn after birds have finished moult, spent some time at sea, and start returning to land. Occupation of nest sites, nest building and pair formation occurs from March and April onwards.

Eggs can be laid by kororā in the Wellington region from July until January. Almost all clutches consist of two eggs, with the eggs incubated for five weeks. After hatching, chicks are guarded by one or the other parent for two to three weeks, then chick-rearing continues with both parents away during the day until the chicks fledge at around eight weeks old.

Moult in kororā takes two to three weeks and occurs after birds have finished breeding. Before moulting, the birds spend time at sea to increase their body weight by about 50% from the average. Once ashore and moult begins, all of the old feathers are pushed out by the new feathers, so the birds must stay on land as they cannot swim whilst they are moulting. Moult can occur from December into February and March.

A kororā colony was created at Napier Port as part of a new wharf project. Two live webcams in nestboxes at the port provide endless hours of fascinating viewing of penguins at home at the nest site:

<https://www.napierport.co.nz/our-business/our-future/6-wharf/building-sustainably/korora-sanctuary/>



*Kororā in nestbox – John Cockrem*

Kororā are declining where there is urban development, residential housing and public access to coastlines. Dogs are strongly attracted to the smell of kororā, and attacks by off-leash dogs are the greatest preventable cause of death for kororā.

In addition to threats from mammalian predators, kororā are vulnerable to natural shortages of food at sea, and the major cause of mortality identified for kororā found dead on beaches is starvation.

Breeding success of kororā changes markedly from year to year. The most recent breeding season has been very successful on Mana Island, with the last chicks fledging in March. Several years ago there was a very different breeding season, with more than half of the breeding attempts on the island failing. Chicks were abandoned by their parents, and adults were tracked swimming more than 100km to the north of the island, indicating that food supplies closer to the island were inadequate to support breeding that year.

Increases in sea surface temperatures and marine heatwaves that are occurring around New Zealand generally lead to reductions in food availability for penguins. Increases in the frequency and intensity of storms will reduce feeding opportunities at sea and, together with sea level rise, will cause coastal erosion and loss of penguin nesting habitat.

While kororā face challenges, we can still ensure that there are no kororā deaths due to dog attacks, and that kororā habitat is protected.

## Sixteen hectares of new wetland in Queen Elizabeth Park *by Russell Bell*

Sixteen hectares of new wetland have been created in Queen Elizabeth Park. They are not wetlands yet, but will be when rain fills them and they will begin to change. These wetland will be rain-fed, not stream-fed.

The crucial action was damming the comprehensive drainage system that used to continually drain these peat wetlands, and in early March the five dams needed to rewet four wetlands were constructed by a contractor working for Greater Wellington.

The dams are complex, having a steep side to hold water in the wetlands (see photo 1 below), but with a downstream slope of between  $\frac{1}{15}$  to  $\frac{1}{30}$ . In other words, a one metre high dam will be between 15-30m long. The long slope has a shallow trench cut into it. This is designed so that when the wetland is full, it overflows through the trench, allowing fish to swim up it (see photo 2). Inanga, the most populist species of whitebait, and our poorest swimming native fish, can swim up a trench at this slope.



*Steep face which will hold back the water of the wetland. Also, the trench down the low slope to the left provides fish passage when the wetland is full to overflowing.*



*View down the trench to the receiving waters*

We need native fish in the wetlands because they become food for the birds that will inhabit the wetland. This is especially important if we hope to attract bittern to frequent or become resident in Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP).

As some of you will know, I have been talking to Greater Wellington for more than 4 years about the rewetting of QEP peatlands. The reasons for this are that the Wellington Region has only 3% of its original wetlands left, so 16 hectares is significant. A scarcity of any environment means a scarcity of the creatures that live there, so in time these wetlands will increase the insects and birds that use them. Also, this helps with climate change in a small way. These four peat wetlands will stop emitting greenhouse gas (GHG) once the peat is wetted up to its surface. As drained peat, it was emitting 400 tonnes of GHG each year, so that will stop. In addition, a further 32 tonnes of carbon each year will be safely sequestered once the drained land starts to function again as a wetland.

These wetlands are very accessible by foot. They surround the farm road which heads north from Whareroa Road. You will not miss two of the dams on the side of the road and, once rain comes, and you will be walking between the wetlands.

Before, they get too wet, Greater Wellington intends to have them planted with about 7000 wetland plants and the QEP Restoration Group intends to plant another few hundred plants.

But that is not all. There are another 13 ha of wetlands (another 4 wetlands) that have not been constructed this year, but have resource consent and iwi agreement. GW intends to complete the dam construction early next year. All the preparatory work is complete. So, 29 ha in total and about 600 tonnes of GHG.

(Two of the additional wetlands are sand-bottomed rather than peat, so there are no GHG emissions from them.)

Wetland restore very quickly once the essential element, water, is restored. We should see changes within a year and they will be very good wetlands in about 5 years. It is not often that a community can get an increased area of wetland. Usually, we lose wetlands and other natural areas. So this is a great landscape-scale environmental improvement for Kāpiti.

## Next Public Meeting - "WOWCAZUP"

Come and learn about the planned ungulate fence for the Wainuiomata and Orongorongo Water catchment area – **Wed, 22 Apr, 7.30pm** (7.15pm for a cuppa) at the **Waikanae Community Centre**, 28-32 Utauta St.

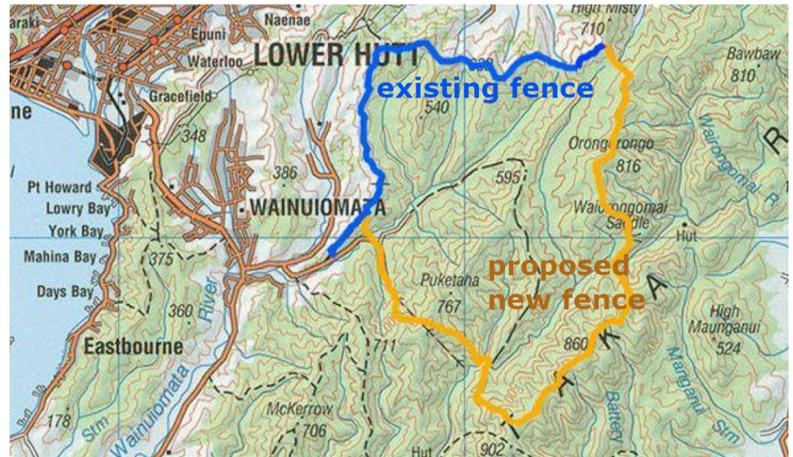
This topic will also interest trappers and hunters, so please invite them. The meeting is open to the public.



Water collection area forest showing the lack of understory plants due to feral deer and goats



View over the water collection area with Mount Matthews in the background



## Have Your Say

### Water Services Strategy in Porirua

Closes 22 April 2026. From 1 July 2026, Tiaki Wai is taking over delivering water services for Porirua and the wider Wellington region. Tiaki Wai is consulting on their draft Water Services Strategy, Significance and Engagement Policy and their Customer Charter from 25 March – 22 April.

Read it at <https://haveyoursay.tiakiwai.co.nz/>

These documents will inform the community about what Tiaki Wai intends to do, how water services will be paid for, what they can expect from their new water services provider, and how they can expect to be engaged with. This consultation will give you the opportunity to provide feedback on what you think is important, so here's your chance to have your say.

## Notices

### Denniston Plateau petition to make it a scientific reserve

Thanks to all who have signed the online (or paper) petition.

If you are willing to collect paper signatures from your friends, etc. and would like the electronic sheet for printing, please email the branch. We have a month to get as many signatures as possible.

### Photos from 15/16 Feb flood events

An important part of emergency management is improving the flood hazard models we use to understand flood risk and prepare for future events. Greater Wellington are gathering photos now so they have good quality information available for future modelling projects.

You can submit your photos to [floods@gw.govt.nz](mailto:floods@gw.govt.nz)

Please include:

- Date and time the photo was taken
- Street address or specific location
- Direction the photo was taken from

### Congratulations to Friends of the Ōtaki River

The Friends have grown, planted, and cared for native trees planted along the Ōtaki River for 25 years this month.

They have made a significant difference, and have no plans to quit.

Well done all!

### **RIP Ian Corder 13 March 2026**

Those who knew him will be saddened to hear of Ian's passing after his long illness. Ian was chair of the Kāpiti-Mana Branch between 2013 and 2015. He spent many years working with Forest and Bird on the Waikanae River and volunteering at Pharazyn Reserve. Ian loved photography and nature and was passionate about its conservation. A celebration of his life will be organised by his wife Gillian. Please email the branch if you wish to be advised when. Gillian has also asked for F&B related photos and stories of Ian if you have them.

### **Lizards of the Paekākāriki Seawall**

With work due to start on the replacement seawall, the council has been undertaking the capture of existing lizards and safely rehoming them on the Paekākāriki Escarpment predator-controlled area. So far, they have caught 110 northern grass skinks. Works cannot begin until the council has had three days' proof of empty lizard traps. The timber wall will be replaced in seven extents over the next six years and this will undoubtedly cause traffic disruptions along the Esplanade. At least we know that the lizards should be happy in their new home. The harakeke is also being moved into a temporary home while work affecting them is completed.

### **Waikanae Easter Fair**

Visit us at the [fair in Mahara Place](#) on Saturday, 4 April, 9am-2pm. Forest & Bird will have a stand at the fair and would love you to stop by and say hello!

### **Forest & Bird 2026 AGM**

All members and supporters are welcome to join this year's Forest & Bird AGM, which will be held online on 27 June 2026, 9am-11am. To attend, please register here: [https://forestandbird-org-nz.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_3A-Z\\_IJ1Tz6-At\\_p-BFqDA#/registration](https://forestandbird-org-nz.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3A-Z_IJ1Tz6-At_p-BFqDA#/registration)

### **Five Minute Bird Count Training at Ngā Manu**



Department of Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai

## Learn: Five Minute Bird Count

Delivered in partnership with DOC, this course uses the correct outcome monitoring method to identify common forest birds.

nmit

NMIT (Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology) is running this 2-day training on 9 & 10 April at [Ngā Manu](#), and it costs only \$25.

We need more bird counters out there, so we know what's there and whether the situation is getting better or worse.

Find out more here:

<https://www.nmit.ac.nz/study/short-courses/cfs/426-five-minute-bird-count>

### **City Nature Challenge**

This is an international event, motivating people to find and document wildlife in their local city. It is an annual 4-day bioblitz to see what local, wild observations can be found. Only 'wild' wildlife counts – no pets, indoor plants or cultivated trees. After the 4 days of bioblitz observation recording, there is time to identify the observations that were made. iNaturalist is how these observations are recorded. A good chance to join the fun and help value our local natural treasures.

<https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/environment/getting-involved/city-nature-challenge/>

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

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