



March 2026 NEWSLETTER

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Message from F&B Manawatū Chair

When the Tawa Loop Track, Te Apiti, reopened after an upgrade carried out by contractors last year, it was with excitement and anticipation of something amazing to look forward to. Myself and other Forest & Bird people headed in there to see the improvements. What a disappointment!

The new section of the track has been gouged out of the hillside with much of the surrounding bush plants dumped over the bank and there has been no mitigation of the sides of the track to prevent erosion. Further along up the track there is much more destruction to the bush and the weeds are moving in. There is improved drainage however.

The integrity of the original track has been compromised and the track has lost much of its character due to these so-called improvements.

Last Friday another branch member and myself met with a Dept of Conservation representative and we walked through the track and took photos.

There was mutual agreement about the damage. We have asked for an undertaking that there will be no further work on the track while an investigation takes place.

Margaret McKenzie
Chairperson



MARCH 2026 MONTHLY MEETING

Tuesday 10th March 2026 from 7.00 p.m.
Palmerston North City Library – George Street entrance
The talk will be streamed via zoom see below for link

Talk: Small plants that are everywhere: mosses, liverworts, and lichens

Speaker: Leon Perrie, Curator of Botany, Te Papa



New Zealand is the world's hotspot for liverworts, with over 600 species and a comparatively high number of isolated evolutionary lineages. We've got lots of mosses and lichens too, with some 500 and 2000 species, respectively. Because they are small, this rich diversity is easily overlooked and often not appreciated. Nevertheless, mosses, liverworts, and lichens are significant components of many ecosystems, and they can be important in succession, habitat provision, geochemical cycling, and hydrology. This talk will introduce these three groups, and outline how they differ from each other. We'll also cover tips for spotting them in the field.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://forestandbird-org-nz.zoom.us/j/85486021115?pwd=xT7F62qka3DslZoKGawJltJNCZpyOI.1>

Meeting ID: 854 8602 1115

Passcode: 139667

All welcome. Gold coin donation appreciated

If you would like to stay in touch, please sign up to our
Mailing list on our website: www.naturesvoicemanawatu.org.nz

APRIL 2026 MONTHLY MEETING and AGM

Tuesday 14th April from 7.00 p.m.

PN City Library, George Street Entrance, Palmerston North

The Manawātū Branch AGM will start at 7.15 p.m.

followed by the Monthly Talk

(The talk only will be streamed via zoom starting about 7.30 p.m.)

Talk: Agapanthus: Friend or Foe?

Speaker: Murray Dawson AHRIH, MNZM, Cultivated plants project manager
Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture



Beaurepaires Agapanthus White cultivar
Murray crossing agapanthus

Photo: M. Dawson
Photo: Rachel Innes

Kiwis have a dramatic love-hate relationship with agapanthus, however, there is more to their story than these polarising perceptions. In his talk, botanist Murray Dawson will explore the good, the bad, and the ugly of agapanthus and will highlight the recent breeding of sterile 'eco-friendly' selections. These new seedless/low seed-set cultivars provide a win:win for both horticulture and the environment.

All welcome. Gold coin donation appreciated

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FOREST & BIRD MANAWATŪ NOTE CARDS (sold in a pack of 5)

IMAGES OF THE F&B MANAWATŪ NOTE CARDS



We will be selling our Note Cards at the Monthly Meeting - see Anthea at the meeting

- These will only be sold in a pack of 5 cards – see above the images on the cards
- The cost for the pack is \$10.00
- It will be cash sales only. We are not offering internet banking on the cards
- If you wish to buy a pack/s between meetings, please contact manawatu.branch@forestandbird.org.nz

Manawatū Branch Stories needed



Please write 350 words and pick a nice picture to celebrate some success or story of the Manawatū branch for the newsletter and the website.

Why? Because you can't have too much good news and it may help the project get more help. A picture and 350 words would use a page in the newsletter.

Send the article and picture to manawatu.branch@forestandbird.org.nz. Thanking you in advance, Editor (Nigel)

It's time to
FAREWELL our birds
HAERE RA NGA HEKE MANU

Saturday, March 7th at 11:30am
Dawick viewing platform
Foxton Beach

Members of the Manawatu Estuary Trust extend a welcome to everyone to our Manawatu Estuary at Foxton Beach for this annual event.



Thank you for your vote for the Avatar moth: it won *Bug of the Year*.



Photo by Birgit Rhodes
(male)

The Avatar moth *Arctesthes avatar* has been crowned the 2026 Bug of the Year – and Forest & Bird says the win puts a spotlight on the threat facing the entire known habitat of the critically endangered species.

It was discovered in 2012 by entomologist Brian Patrick in 2012 and named after the film because its home – like Pandora – is under threat from a mining company.

The entire known habitat of the avatar moth fits within the Denniston plateau under active mining pressure. It is, quite literally, one bulldozer away from extinction.

People can sign the Forest & Bird petition and join more than 16,000 other New Zealanders to reclassify Denniston's conservation stewardship land as a scientific reserve. Forest & Bird wants to protect the Avatar moth and other taonga species such as the carnivorous snail *Powelliphanta patrickensis* and roroa great spotted kiwi.

<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/resources/avatar-moth-wins-2026-bug-year>



The first Kākāpō hatches on Valentines Day.

Kākāpō face a range of challenges with low hatching success being a key obstacle. So far this season there are 187 eggs, and 74 of them are fertile. Of those, not all will hatch, and not all chicks will survive through to fledging.

"The kākāpō population was once down to just 51 birds which created a genetic bottleneck we are still managing today," said DOC Operations Manager for kākāpō/takahē Deidre Vercoe.

The official kakapo population will reach 237 once the newest bird fledges.

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2026-media-releases/first-kakapo-chick-in-four-years-hatches-on-valentines-day/>

Voting opens for Fish of the year



The blob fish (pictured) was crowned fish of the year in 2025 but a new competition started on Saturday 28 February.

The competition run by the Mountain to Sea Conservation Trust celebrates New Zealand's weird, wonderful, and often overlooked marine life – many of which are endemic.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/588081/plenty-of-fish-in-the-sea-voting-opens-for-fish-of-the-year-competition>

Vote at: <https://www.mountaintosea.org.nz/fish-of-the-year>



Trip to Keebles Bush

The kahikatea was fruiting when we visited on 21 Feb., and here's some photo's taken from the path to Linton.

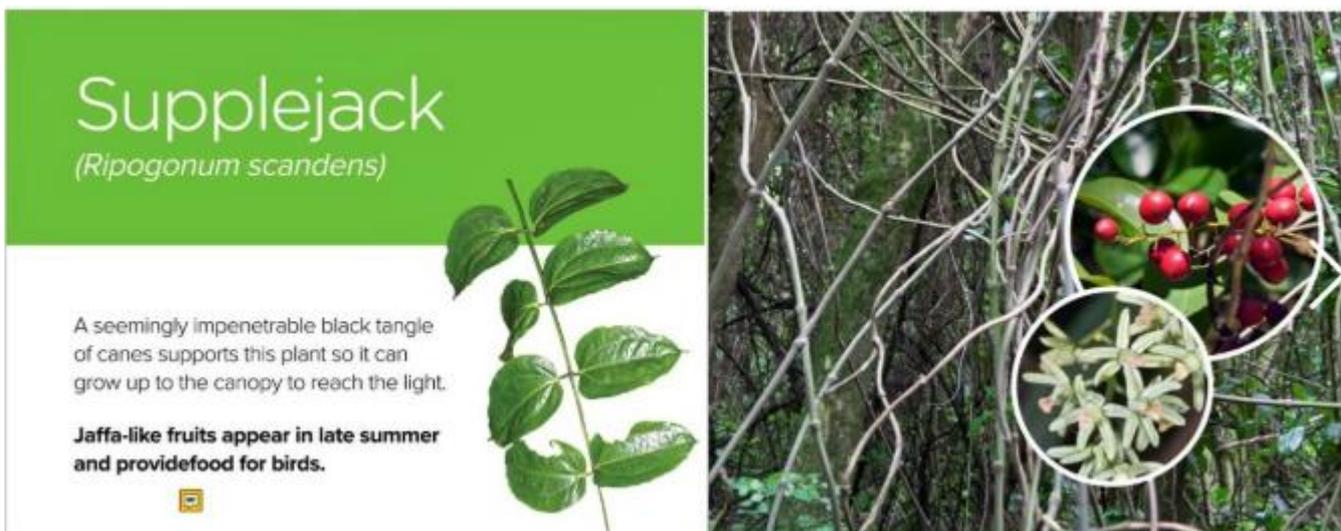
The rata was planted by Michael Greenwood - who was a foundation member of this branch in 1957.

Google: [trilepidea-166-170923](https://www.google.com/search?q=trilepidea-166-170923) for more details about his work.



WORKING BEES

- [F&B Poutoa bush restoration](#) –Every second Friday morning 9 – 11 a.m.
Contact: 022 473 1096 or margaret51mckenzie@gmail.com
- [Ahimate Reserve](#)
- [Dune Gardens, Foxton.](#)
- [Green Corridors Summerhill](#) Help maintain corridors of native trees.
- [Apollo Butterfly Park](#) Planting for Monarch butterflies, etc..
- Growing natives from eco-sourced seed.
- [Pit Park Roslyn](#) A restored urban native bush habitat.
- [Manawatū Estuary Trust](#) - **Most Sundays** keeping exotic species out of the wetland



From the Forest & Bird Nature Trail signs in the Esplanade