

# TRAVIS WETLAND

NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2000

Since our last newsletter in May, plenty has been happening in Travis Wetland Nature Heritage Park. Some exciting developments are going on, making Travis Wetland rapidly the place we hoped it would be: a place of ecological significance, an environmental research area, and an urban wetland providing education opportunities and activities for everyone.

## DATES FOR THE CALENDAR

**TRAVIS WETLAND TRUST WORK DAYS** - Workdays are held every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of every month. Planting and weed control and much more. Everyone is welcome. Bring planting gear (spades, gloves etc) if you can. Meet: Mairehau Rd car park, 9am.

Next workdays will be on: ♦ 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 2000 ♦ 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2001 ♦ 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2001 ♦ 17<sup>th</sup> Mar 2001 ♦

**CONGRATULATIONS** - To the Christchurch Native Habitats Group on gaining the Community Service Award. This was presented to them by the Burwood Pegasus Community Board on 30<sup>th</sup> October. This award was given in recognition of their contribution and hard work in the restoration of Travis Wetland. And congratulations to Eleanor Bissell for gaining a Civic Award for (environmental) services to the city.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION** - Janice Beaumont started work with the Parks Unit in August as Environmental Education Coordinator for 'learning experiences outside the classroom' (LEOTC). Her role is to help develop and deliver hands-on educational activities at sites including Travis Wetland and to add to the experiences of visiting school students. Janice is also available for pre-visit or follow-up work with students in the classroom - a great way to ensure young people get the right messages about caring for their local environment. She welcomes input from the community and is happy to hear from anyone who has ideas for activities at Travis. To contact Janice, Phone: 371 1298 Or E-mail: janice.beaumont@ccc.govt.nz

## GETTING UP TO DATE...

**Travis Wetland Trust AGM 26<sup>th</sup> October** - Thirty people attended the AGM held at the Ascot Community Center. Two guest speakers, Andrea Byrom - Landcare Research, and Shelley Morgan - masters student at Lincoln University, spoke on predators and predator research in the wetland.

Andrea Byrom summarised her findings and recommendations arising from the predator monitoring study carried out at Travis. Shelley Morgan gave an informative and entertaining outline of her findings on domestic cats in Travis Wetland.

**President** - Colin Meurk thanked Trust members for their dedication and enthusiasm. Colin outlined some challenges and goals for the future including; the need to recruit new and young members to the Trust, the setting up of a data base and monitoring system, and the potential for a 'Mainland Island' concept to be implemented at Travis Wetland.

**The Chairman** - Eric Banks, emphasised the important role the Trust will continue to have as guardians of the wetland. He cited the destruction of the dunes and the application for a storm water discharge both on the Mairehau Rd boundary as examples of the need for continuing vigilance and input by Trust members.



Children from the Kiwi Conservation Club giving their inaugural performance of 'Hey Pukeko' - a song about Travis Wetland.

**Viewing Platform Opening** - The opening, planting and sausage sizzle took place on June 10<sup>th</sup>. Shiner the Pukeko, Tuna the Eel and Rere the damselfly were there along with many others who planted, sang songs, and declared the tower officially open.

If you haven't checked out the view yet, you can find the track at Clarevale Reserve, on Clarevale St or Travis Country Drive.



CHRISTCHURCH  
CITY COUNCIL - PARKS



Enjoying the day's activities

Tapes of 'Hey Pukeko' and other NZ songs are available from Roger - 13 The Spur, Sumner - a great Christmas gift!



Families start out on the Travis Traipse.

**Travis Traipse 13<sup>th</sup> July 2000** - 350 children and adults participated in the Travis Traipse. This included a walk and talk given by City Council staff, an opportunity to climb the viewing platform, and to meet Shiner the Pukeko.

**Clean Up New Zealand Week 17<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> September** - This is a week to raise awareness of our environment and the importance of keeping it clean. Events were held nationwide, including group visits to Travis Wetland. A group from IHC visited Travis Wetland on September 20<sup>th</sup>, and students from Heaton Intermediate came out the following day. Both groups learned about Travis Wetland, participated in planting activities and did their bit to clean up New Zealand with a rubbish collection.



Heaton Intermediate students enjoy a change from the classroom.



High water levels at the newly constructed weir bridge.



A team effort was made by Parkview Primary students to plant 20 Totara trees.

**October Southerly Storm** - As you may remember, October 12<sup>th</sup> was a fairly wild day for Christchurch. Travis didn't suffer too badly, although the ducklings no doubt felt a little alarmed at the waves on the normally calm pond areas. A number of willows fell over onto tracks, luckily resulting in little damage. Some of the native plantings were looking rather windswept though and have since been re-staked; hopefully they will all recover. Water levels were up as they were everywhere, but returned to normal within a few days.

**Plantings** - A class from Parkview Primary visited the central ponding area on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August and planted 20 Totara trees in the Native Trees Please! plot. At about 9 years old and 1.5m high, these trees were about the same age and height as the children. The trees however won't reach maturity until much later than those who planted them, in at least 300 years!

Three hundred kahikatea trees were planted on the 10<sup>th</sup> August by 50 Chinese English language students. These were planted near the end of Beach Rd.



Community Planting & Travis Wetland Trust work day.

A combined Community planting and Travis Wetland Trust work day took place on September 16<sup>th</sup> at the end of Beach Rd. About 20 people helped to plant 600 grasses, rushes, sedges and shrubs around the new ponding area. The focus on this area is due to the planned development of the visitor information kiosk here which will provide information and the wetland with car parks and toilets nearby.



## DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

**Beach Road Entrance** - Wow! Where do we start! So much is happening at the moment. New map boards, car parks, information kiosk, bird hide, facilities for group education, toilets, are all on the planning table at the moment. These facilities should be opened and ready for use early next year.

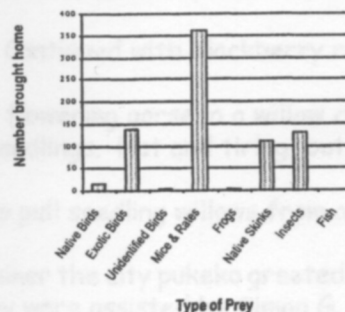
**Weir Bridge** - Constructed during July and August. The weir enables us to manipulate water levels through the year. For example, we can create larger areas of muddy shallows for wading birds to feed in. The weir may also help our birds in the breeding season to be further protected from predators who aren't so keen on getting their paws wet. Andrew Crossland and City Council Water Engineers are working together to set the best water levels.

**Predator Study** - The first part of the predator-monitoring programme is completed, and a number of recommendations from Andrea Byrom, a predator ecologist at Landcare Research, have been made. Predators including stoats, ferrets, and hedgehogs were found to be lurking in our wetland. Further monitoring and work will be done with the aim to keep pests away from our bird-life!

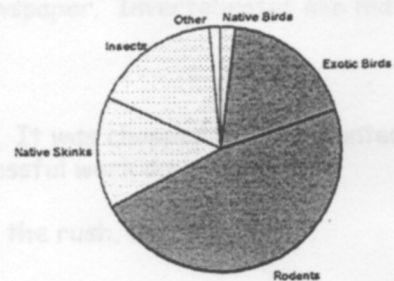
**Domestic Cat Study** - Shelley Morgan, a Masters student from Lincoln University is continuing her study on domestic cat movements and diet. One hundred cats living within 400m of the wetland are involved in the study, of which 22 cats have been radio collared to track their movements.

Results so far have found that while cats mainly use the periphery of the wetland, some are not afraid to get wet and dirty to get to the heart of the wetland. Of the 22 cats radio tracked, nine used Travis with one cat travelling 550 metres into the wetland. Dietary study results indicate that our pets obviously like more variation than just Jelly Meat and Whisketts as can be seen the bar chart below. These results show that approximately one third of prey brought home are native species.

**Dietary Study results, Nov 1999 - Sept 2000**



**Ratio of Native and Exotic Prey caught**

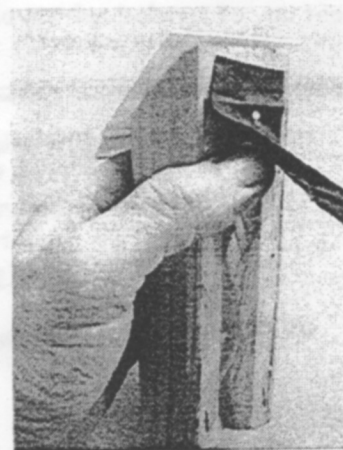


**More Swamp Housing** - More housing recently appeared in Travis Swamp but unlike previous developments this housing has been provided free for local residents. The houses have been built by researchers from the Ecology and Entomology Group, Lincoln University and are to house burrow dwelling invertebrates such as weta and spiders. Amongst other things the project aims to test a new method of monitoring populations of burrowing invertebrates for restoration purposes.

"One problem entomologists face is finding insects which live in burrows without destroying the habitat and the animals we are surveying," says Mike Bowie, the project leader, "We hope that this method will also allow us to find these animals more easily and with less disturbance to the environment."

The weta houses are built from untreated pine (kindly provided by The Builders Hardware Company) and have a chamber resembling a burrow cut into one side. The chamber has a window covered in clear plastic to allow researchers to observe the inhabitants with minimal disturbance. The window is covered by a blind to keep the chamber as dark as a natural burrow.

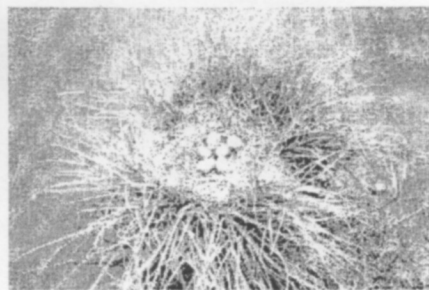
The 50 weta houses in Travis Swamp are part of a larger project with houses at sites on Quail Island, Orton Bradley Park, Hinewai Reserve, Ahuriri Reserve and Coopers Creek. It is hoped that once we have a better understanding of invertebrate dwellings in the Canterbury bush and swamp remnants, weta houses could be used to monitor the effectiveness of transferring insects such as the Banks Peninsula tree weta to new areas. The houses will also help monitor the effects that restoration of areas such as Travis Wetland has on invertebrates.



The project has long term goals as well as short term aims and we hope to start publishing the first of the results within a year. We'll keep you posted.



**Prime Real Estate** - for the discerning Pukeko - Would you choose to locate your home here? For the view - definitely, but the security may need some looking into. John Skilton was very surprised to find this pukeko nest, made on top of some carex plants, left at the waters edge awaiting planting.



### A look back - Notes from the diary

- 21/04/97 Simon Shikongo and John Michael helped to plant the first of the bush rice grass plants. Daphne cleaned around native sundews (wahu) and daisies (peka peka).
- 12/05/97 The group including a new volunteer Nicky Bodger, cut up dead branches that were straight enough to use for pathways to access new work sites. Very wet and muddy underfoot.
- 09/06/97 Attempted to remove onion weed by digging it out and putting it into kleensaks. We quickly discovered that it was much easier to smother it with very thick layers of newspaper. Invertebrates like that too.
- 07/07/97 Bush rice plants looking good. Continued with blackberry removal.
- 04/08/97 All worked on a huge patch of flowering gorse in a willow clearing. It was chopped out and planted with cabbage trees and coprosma seedlings. Hot and tiring, but a successful work day.
- 24/11/97 Simon G. and John M. helped to pull seedling willows from amongst the rush, baumea.
- 03/08/98 4 C frost. Fabulous sunrise. Shiner the city pukeko greeted groups of children from Burwood School (296 in all), who came to plant. They were assisted by Simon G., Simon J., Simon S., John, Daphne and Nicky. Cold, muddy but very enthusiastic children returned to their warm classrooms.

And so the work has continued over the years.

Lots of the plants are now eye-high. Cabbage trees flower, there are berries and seeds; food for piwakawaka, silver eyes and warblers. Sedge, grass and rush patches flourish in the cleared areas. Kingfishers call loudly to one another and continue their ongoing battle to escape the clutches of the hawks. New ferns in soft pinks, apricots and tangerines continue to increase while small ground cover plants flower and seed. In the open the skinks scuttle across mats of grasses. There is a never ending variety of liverworts, lichens, fungi and borer holes in rotting logs. Webs catch an unwary wanderer.

But this is only just the beginning - nature needs our helping hand. This 112 ha garden belongs to you too. Come and join our workday. Third Saturday every month of the year!

**Want to get involved? Learn about the wetland? Organise a guided tour?**

**Sponsor a boardwalk? Find out more?**

**Phone the Coast Care Office, Parks Unit, Christchurch City Council**

**Ph: 3722 840 or Email: [skiltonj@ccc.govt.nz](mailto:skiltonj@ccc.govt.nz)**

**[www.ccc.govt.nz/programmes/coastcare/TravisWetland/](http://www.ccc.govt.nz/programmes/coastcare/TravisWetland/)**

**Or contact the Travis Wetland Trust (evenings), Jenny Lineham Ph: 388 6628 or  
Jessica Hawke Ph: 331 6065**

Should you like to receive this newsletter by email, please let John Skilton know.

Seasons greeting to all - may you have a green Xmas and a divaricating New Year.

**This newsletter was produced by  
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