

Travis Wetland

OCTOBER 2001

A newsletter from Travis Wetland Trust and the Christchurch City Council

Dates To Remember

Travis Wetland Trust AGM

23 October at 7.30pm at Travis Wetland Education Centre, Beach Road.

Long time Trust members, Charlie and Caroline Catt, will speak about the Galapagos Islands. This follows their recent six month experience teaching English to scientists at the Charles Darwin Research Station at Santa Cruz.

Workdays for Travis Wetland Trust

3rd Saturday of every month

- 20 October
- 17 November
- 15 December

Meet at Mairehau Road carpark at 9.00am. An opportunity to be involved and learn about restoration.

Habitat Restoration Field Day

Sunday 28 October

NZ Ecological Restoration Network Starts at 9.00am at Travis Wetland, Beach Road.



John Skilton, Bill Karitiana, Rodney Chambers, Colin Meurk and Lynda Burns check out the newly installed information panels in the kiosk

Major Conservation Award for President

Colin Meurk, President of the Travis Wetland Trust, was recently awarded the Loder Cup, New Zealand's premier conservation award.

Colin was awarded the prize by Conservation Minister Hon. Sandra Lee, at a ceremony on August 10, 2001.

"Dr Meurk has been the leader and instigator of much of this work, both in a professional and a personal capacity, and the results are outstanding", Ms Lee said.

"As ecological advisor to the Christchurch City Council, he has played a leading role in the Christchurch City Council's waterway enhancement programme and is at the forefront of the 'greening' of Christchurch, promoting native planting in urban areas.

He has played a key role in saving the Travis Swamp, one of the most valuable areas of natural habitat in the eastern part of the South Island, and remains actively involved in ongoing management of this significant natural area.

Dr Meurk has dedicated his life to the conservation of New Zealand's indigenous flora. His contribution is directed towards



Colin Meurk with the Loder Cup

ensuring that New Zealanders will always appreciate the relevance of their indigenous flora, no matter where they live."

It is the second year in succession that the Loder Cup has gone to Canterbury, reflecting the combined work by local groups and agencies to protect and restore the region's unique natural character. Last year's award winner was Jorge Santos, manager of the Department of Conservation's Motukarara Nursery in North Canterbury. Other recent award winners include Chris and Brian Rance of Southland (1999) and the Auckland based supporters of the restoration of Tiri Tiri Matangi Island (1998).



A Tribute

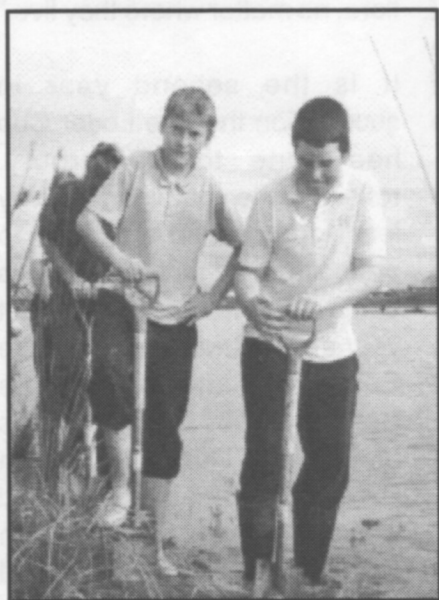
Our President, Colin Meurk, is this year's recipient of the prestigious Loder Cup. He has been honoured for his dogged determination and huge ongoing contribution to the conservation of native plants.

A large number of Colin's friends and colleagues attended a touching ceremony at Landcare Research, Lincoln, where he was awarded the trophy by the Hon. Sandra Lee. He received a standing ovation from all present.

In typical fashion, Colin didn't wear a tie! In his speech he shared his wonderful honour with everyone. He especially thanked his family, all of whom were present, including his very proud mother!

Warmest and very well deserved congratulations, Colin, from us all.

Eleanor Bissel



*Planting by Queenspark School
during Conservation Week*

Kia ora Tane

A transcript of Colin Meurk's acceptance speech

Kia ora Minister, Kath Brown and Don Brown of Taumutu Runanga, my other Ngai Tahu friends and Tangata Whenua, James Gould, distinguished guests, other honoured friends, long-suffering family, Kia orana Hirini and Krystyne, and esteemed colleagues.

I am humbled by the gift of your presence. My korero Maori & Waiata are limited – I never remember people's names, but overcompensate with plants. Maori plant names and the species they represent I love as my most cherished taonga.

They are my window into Maori language and wisdom, and pathway to some of my dearest friends. For me the mighty Matai captures the essence of our flora and soul of a nation – deceptively - a pile of dead twigs to most – but I see the tendrils of life twining for the light – initially unsure where it is – in its subtle, copper-tinted indecision. But you can't push it over – it perseveres and eventually wins out to become a giant of the forest. Matai is my god and hero.

In late 1880s Lord Wakehurst (donator of the Loder Cup) was "captivated" by our "incomparable" flora which he "passionately" cultivated at his Surrey Estate.

How woefully different this perceptive attitude of over a century ago is to that of an influential minority today - sometimes displaying palpable hatred for our indigenous flora – in the one special place in the world where these plants, and the wildlife they support, are found. What a bizarre and peculiar practice – surely also a unique phenomenon in the world.

It is really a matter of patriotism. Our All Blacks & Silver Ferns don't exist in isolation – they are symbols of a vigorous bi-cultural nation, a way of life, of landscapes and the unique imagery of our nations plants and animals. We are still losing it, and have to do much more. If we continue asset-stripping our icons – what shallow symbolism we are left with. What would our teams stand for, if the silver fern and kiwi were extinct?

A commentator at the Knowledge Wave Conference in Auckland last week said: "We've got the environment right, the social dimension is about right, and all we have to do is fix up the economics". If everyone went away with that smug and flawed message, then there is a long way to go – no vision, identity, spiritual connection to the land. As with cultural partnership, no one will take triple bottom line seriously unless all three dimensions are on the stage at the end with linked arms. You can see that I have a feeling that the work is not done. But this is a celebration of our taonga and this award rekindles our spirit to fight on. I appreciate that.



I invited all of you to share this occasion; not because I enjoy being thrust into the limelight – I'm a very shrinking violet – but because each of you (and absent friends) has contributed to any successes I've had and supported me in many ways.

In keeping with the sporting theme, I'd like to hold aloft the cup for you and declare that "Botany was the winner on the day".

Finally, after we've had a bit of a party, please take a few moments to linger in the grounds here at Manaaki Whenua to see some of the many New Zealand plants, these national treasures in all their amazing variety and with their memories of the rich history they have witnessed and woven from gondwana – the beginning of time – through to the present.

Kia ora tatou katoa

Native Habitats Group Notes

Work is continuing in the Christchurch Native Habitats Group area adjacent to the Clarevale Reserve. The quarterly weed management of the kahikatea study plots has just been completed, and even though data is still being gathered, a few trends are becoming apparent.

Intensive weed clearance every three months seems to provide no great advantage over minimal management (a yearly release in order to measure growth). Initial weed suppression with bark at the time of planting led unfortunately to enhanced weed growth in the long term, but it also seems to have helped the kahikatea to grow faster.

Two years ago an area adjacent to the western swale was planted on a community planting day. A proportion of the plants died during the winter frosts and

the rest struggled against the in the following summer, but since then they have gone ahead in leaps and bounds. Several of the ribbonwoods and hebes are now over two metres tall, the toi toi and flaxes are flourishing and the carex and juncus are becoming quite imposing. This has been very encouraging and demonstrates the potential for restoration when plants are put where they like to grow best.

In the late winter and early spring, after the worst winter frosts have passed, the group plans to in-fill some of the areas already planted. This will be to replace those plants that have not survived. In the meantime, work continues on the propagation of seedlings and containing the spread of weeds.

Dave Evans

Observations on a Replanted Area

August 1998 saw the planting of an area in the willows that can be seen from the new tower. Preparation in June/July involved the removal of blackberry and some willows, which were then stacked for later use as mulch. We cut the Carex flacca with the weedeater, and dug holes for planting.

Plants were sourced from nurseries at Trees For Canterbury, the C.C.C. Linwood site, and in other areas within the Swamp. They included Cordyline australis, Carex solandri, C.secta, C. virgata, Coprosma robusta, Cop. propinqua, Blechnum n.z., Microlaena avenacea, Pittosporum eugenioides, Pitto.tenuifolium. The water level in the area varied, and planting was positioned with this in mind. After planting, newspapers were placed around the whole area. This was then covered by mulch from Carex flacca, blackberry and dead willow branches.

Each year we have gone back and done some weeding and general maintenance. In the first year, the Coprosma propinqua and the Pittosporum sps. did not survive well. I suspect they were establishing their root systems, as the following year the surviving plants put on excellent growth. The newspaper is still there, but is covered with thick fine mulch and the birds are often there digging around and collecting insects. The Carex sps. and Microlaena sp. flowered well last year. We now have seedlings of some of them appearing, as well as seedlings of Blechnum n.z. This last year we have potted up some of these seedlings and spent time clearing back the encroaching willows.

Nicky Bodger, Manuka Group

Recent Developments at Travis Wetland

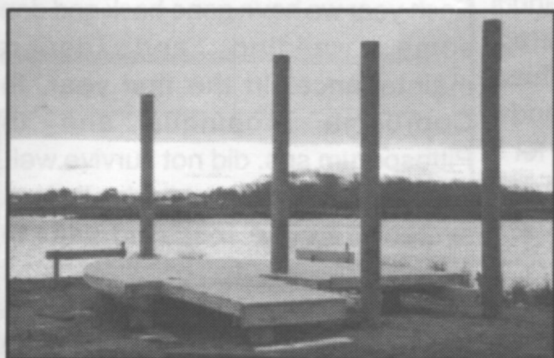
Many significant and exciting developments have occurred in Travis Wetland Heritage Park since our last newsletter, including:

- The information pavilion and its interpretive displays
- Stage 1 of the redevelopment of the farmhouse, for use as an Education Centre
- A car park and toilets at the end of Beach Road.

The Education Centre is now the long-awaited home of the Travis Wetland Trust. This project and the information pavilion were funded by grants from Ecan and the Lotteries Grants Board.

The bird hide, designed by architect Crispin Schurr of Christchurch City Council, is currently being built, and is due for completion in mid October. Funds have come from NZ Forest and Bird and the Lotteries Grant Board.

Together these projects will become the central focus for visitors to the park.

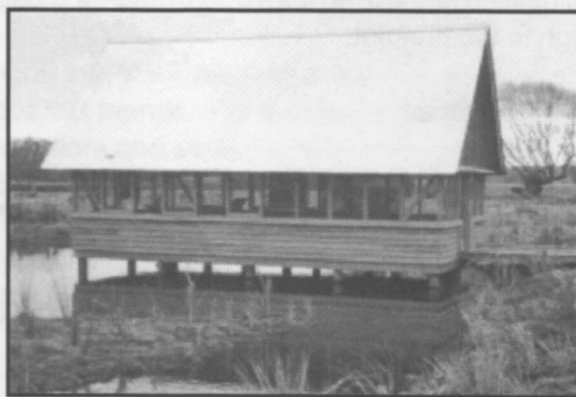


The bird hide under construction

Coming Up

- New maps in preparation for installation at Beach Road, Clarevale and Mairehau Road carpark.
- Tracks to link the developments at Beach Road with the Inwoods Road track.
- Western Board Walk – the construction start date is subject to the success of funding applications.

Celebratory Opening Day - Keep your eye on the local papers for details early next year.



The new information pavilion

An Unusual Study

Joe Rich, who lives locally, studied the behaviours of 20 slugs collected at Travis Wetland. His paper sets out the behavioural responses from *Limax maximus*, a large introduced Tiger Slug, to temperature changes and preferences. Little do those slugs know about how valuable they were to Joe's education!

Great Work Joe! It is interesting to know that there are many species of introduced slugs in the more disturbed areas of Travis Wetland. In less disturbed areas we have an intricately patterned leaf veined native slug

Eleanor Bissell

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:



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Wetland**

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