



# Travis Wetland

MAY 2002

A newsletter from Travis Wetland Trust and the Christchurch City Council

## Dates To Remember

### Workdays for Travis Wetland Trust

Meet at the Mairehau Road car park at 9.00 am on the third Saturday of every month.

20 April	20 July
18 May	17 August
15 June	21 September

The workdays are an opportunity to learn about wetland ecology and restoration, and to socialise. You can stay as long as you wish. Gumboots are recommended.

**Trust Committee Meetings** are held on the Tuesday following the workday. Meetings start at 5.30 pm and are held at the Education Centre on Beach Road.

### Open Day

An open day will be held on Sunday 4 August commencing at 1.00pm for Trust members and their families, sponsors and invited guests to acknowledge and celebrate the work and assistance given to the Travis Wetland restoration project. Details will be sent out closer to the day.

### History Group

Travis Wetland Trust has begun a group to investigate and compile the history of the Trust and Travis Wetland itself. They are interested in hearing from anybody willing to share their memories or photos of the swamp, or anything else which may be of interest to the group. Please contact Denise Ford on telephone 981 3805 or email [deniseford@paradise.net.nz](mailto:deniseford@paradise.net.nz).

## Christchurch Native Habitats Group

The group continues to make an impact in the Clarevale Reserve corner of the wetland. It has been a great season for the native species planted last spring and summer, but the weeds have also taken advantage of the good conditions. As in other parts of Travis Wetland, weed control has been a prime activity for the last six months.

Recently the annual measure-up of the kahikatea trees was completed and showed that the good growth of previous seasons is continuing. The tallest tree is now over two metres and some others have nearly reached that mark. It is interesting to note that the effects of the various anti-weed treatments applied over three years ago are still visible. In one strip where newspaper was laid over the ground, not only did a large number of kahikatea die during the first summer but also the newspaper proved to be an ideal seedbed for the drifting willow seed!

The reasons for the high kahikatea mortality are unclear but theories include anaerobic conditions under the newspaper and increased exposure to the wind and sun due to lack of surrounding vegetation. Ironically, this implies that some weeds might have helped protect the trees.

After years of completely clearing areas of willow and gorse, a trial plot has thinned the willow leaving a shady glade where tender native species can be established. Five-finger, lemonwood and wineberry have flourished here over the summer and it will be interesting to see how they survive the winter. Unfortunately when the willow trees lose their leaves the natives will have to survive the winter frosts with little protection from above. Encouraged by the results so far, the group will extend the trial by thinning other areas of willow this winter.



Travis Birdhide

Fery Denzel Hobbs. 328 8368 10-00



## Manuka Group Report by Nicky Bodger

Often when we are working on the pathway to the tower, we have enquiries about the willows. Will they be removed? Are there any benefits having them there? The answer to both questions is yes!

The grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) has both female and male plants. The female flower looks like a green catkin and the tree in spring looks green. The male tree has fluffy grey catkins covered with yellow pollen stamens, and the tree has a yellow sheen to it in spring.



*Female Grey Willow Flower*

At present we are concentrating on controlling the spread of the willows by marking the females, which are either removed or poisoned. Young seedlings are removed by grubbing out or cutting down, and the stump is poisoned. This also allows more light in for the regenerating native plants.

The large male trees are to be left in the meantime, as they provide nesting and perch places for the local birds. One particular tree is a favourite with a kingfisher that is often heard either singing or giving warning sounds of the

impending arrival of one of the local hawks. The trees also provide shelter for new plantings, and new native seedlings arise under the birds' favourite perch areas.

Along the pathway to the tower we have been busy weeding around recent plantings, and in-filling with more plantings. The plants that have done well appear to be *Cordyline australis* (cabbage tree), *Leptospermum scoparium* (manuka), *Phormium tenax* (flax), *Plagianthus regius* (lowland ribbonwood), various *Carex* species (native grasses), *Microlaena avenacea* (bush rice grass), *Blechnum* species (ferns) and *Astelia fragrans*.



*Male Grey Willow Flower*

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## Pet Fish Survey

by Simon Johnson

Over the last few months the Department of Conservation (DoC) has undertaken a national pest fish survey. Several teams set out to discover the broad distribution of pest fish such as Rudd, Koi Carp, Perch, and *Gambusia* (mosquito fish). Generally findings have been very disappointing, with distributions far more widespread than anyone had dared imagine.

In Canterbury the DoC team visited Travis Wetland but failed to find the Rudd reported to the Trust. The drains contractor had reported seeing a silvery coloured fish with red fins while clearing weeds from the top of Angela Stream. DoC have been using a variety of nets and traps to catch Rudd, but diving birds such as Scaup (the little black teal) prevent these methods in the stream. The Trust may organise the use of electric equipment to fish this short stretch of the wetland, in order to confirm the presence of this species.

Declared noxious, Rudd are heavy grazers of aquatic plants and tend to disturb the beds of streams and lakes, depleting water quality for our native aquatic communities. People who possess, control, rear, raise, hatch or consign Rudd without authority are





liable for a fine of \$5000 (Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983). These fish are difficult to see from above. Dark coloured ribbons wriggle across their silver grey backs. From side on, they often look golden - orange-red over silver - a bit like silvery goldfish. Although they can grow quite big like trout, they are often found much smaller, about the size of adult whitebait.

In the past, Perch have been introduced by coarse fishers to control Rudd numbers and to enhance the quality of their catches, although neither fish is considered edible. Coarse fishing, in which fishers use a float and baited hook, is a sport brought to New Zealand from the UK. With the sport came the pests. Many years ago consent was given to use a former shingle pit at Kaiapoi for strictly catch and release coarse fishing, as the main coarse fish species were already well established.

Given the present widespread distribution it seems likely that some members of this group, fearing their sport would be banned from New Zealand waterways, have spread these sport fish beyond the confines of that Kaiapoi site. The possible presence of Rudd at Travis suggests the work of someone tossing one or two into the stream. Although present in the nearby Avon River, how can Rudd climb over three weir systems on Angela Stream?

Many landlocked water bodies in Canterbury are full of pest fish. Indeed, in the survey, many of the landowners whose properties they were on recall giving consent years ago when asked if the fish could be introduced to ponds, without realising that such activity is illegal.

Posters featuring photos of these pest fish have been supplied to the Trust by DoC, and will soon be on display at the Information Centre at Travis. If you see someone tipping fish into any of the waterways, please contact the ranger, and get the offender's number plate, if you can.

One positive outcome of the survey at Travis Wetland was the recording of the native lowland bully, a new species for the wetland.

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## Rangers' Roundup

Developments at Travis since the last newsletter include the opening of the gate on Beach Road in January and a fully accessible path linking the car park, information building and bird hide. The bird hide is a wonderful place to spend an early morning or evening bird watching. Bird identification guides are in place, aimed at helping children and family groups. Adjacent to the Beach Road car park, a picnic area is being developed and will feature a large table built with funds donated by the Seaview Lions Club.

Plants and weeds have both benefited from the ideal growing conditions over the spring and summer, with a good survival rate among new plantings on Mairehau Road and by the pond.

## Purple Loosestrife

A lot of our volunteer time on workdays as well as contract spraying have focussed on controlling the spread of two highly invasive weeds, Purple loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, and Beggars Ticks, *Biddens frondosa*.

Purple Loosestrife has been declared an unwanted organism in New Zealand. It is now one of the worst wetland weed problems in North America. Each plant can produce up to two million seeds, with the resulting dense stands smothering other plants.

## New board walk

A 400 metre long wooden boardwalk will be built between the viewing tower and the 'Telecom land'. This exciting project will enable walking and wheelchair access between Travis and Mairehau Roads. Construction is expected to start in May and take up to three months to complete.

## Wild file

In March two Glossy Ibis were seen several times catching small eels in the shallow margins of the pond. These birds are itinerant winter visitors from Australia. A single bird has been a regular visitor to Travis for the past few years.

In February two ferrets were seen attacking a pukeko chick. If we want to maintain breeding birds and introduce new bird species, we will need to control such predators in the wetland.



*Celmissia (Daphne Banks)*

# Freshwater Invertebrates

by Abi Wightman

Travis has proven to be a great location for people of all ages to find out what sort of wildlife is living under the water in a wetland environment.

For World Wetland Day in February, Anna Page of ECAN liased with Coastal Area Parks staff to organise an event where people learned about freshwater invertebrates. After a welcome from Area Head Ranger, Rodney Chambers, in the visitors centre, the group was encouraged to scoop some animals out of the water from the central ponding area into trays. The main finds here were backswimmers, water boatmen, water fleas and damselflies nymphs. Then Eric Scott, who lectures at Lincoln University, gave an illustrated talk about a few freshwater invertebrates and their life cycles.

After morning tea, keen people were driven by minibus to the Clarevale side of Travis so that they could sample in Angela's Stream. We found a greater diversity of animals here, including leeches, flatworms and even a dragonfly nymph. Many of those attending had not seen some of the animals before, and it was a very enjoyable morning.

Chisnallwood Intermediate had no idea that their trip to Travis on World Water Day in March was to be so well publicised. This event encourages people to think about rivers, streams and other waterways, and how to care for them. Local and national media were keen to record any events happening in Christchurch to mark the day. About a hundred

children from the school, one class at a time, biked to Travis to sample in Angela's Stream and learn about the wetland environment. One group managed to catch very young eels!

NOW TV filmed a couple of groups, then interviewed John Skilton and me, while a presenter from Radio New Zealand's 'Country Life' programme interviewed some children. This was broadcast next morning and came across well, apart from a mention of the tide coming into Travis Wetland ... not yet we hope!



*Dragonfly nymph*



*Water boatman*



*Freshwater mite*

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:



**Travis  
Wetland**

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