



Travis Wetland

July 2008

A newsletter from Travis Wetland Trust and the Christchurch City Council

PARK NEWS

Dates To Remember

Travis Wetland Trust Work Days

Everyone is welcome! Work days are held on the third Saturday of every month from 9.00am to 12.30pm. Meet at the Beach Road car park; bring gumboots or boots, gardening gloves if you have them and outdoor clothing suitable for the weather and season. The work days are an opportunity to help the Travis Wetland Trust and Christchurch City Council restore the wetland. Tasks vary according to the seasons and range from planting, release weeding and invasive weed control.

- July 19, 2008
- August 16, 2008
- September 20, 2008 - Carbon Crusade / Trees for Canterbury Planting Day
- October 18, 2008

Travis Wetland Contacts

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Pest Fish Provide Further Challenges

By John Skilton



Hard to spot in the turbid water and difficult to control or eradicate, the discovery of Rudd in the pond and interconnected waterways of Travis Wetland will pose further challenges to park management.

The discovery of a dead Rudd by ranger John Skilton in late February 2008 prompted DoC and Travis Wetland rangers to carry out a survey to determine the extent of the spread and to develop options for management and, if possible, eradication. Over the years there have been occasional sightings of "gold fish" in Angela Stream and Travis Stream, but fish surveys carried out in 2002 and 2003 did not net any pest fish.

The survey was carried out using a mixture of techniques including electro-fishing, gill nets and Gee-minnow traps. On the evening of the netting in the main pond, Rudd were seen surfacing and even jumping out of the water which immediately confirmed our worst



fears. Overnight, during the survey on April 21-22, 2008, a total of 381 Rudd ranging in size from 85-251mm were caught in the main pond! Two weeks later Lake Kate Sheppard was surveyed and a handful of Rudd were caught there, confirming the population is established outside of Travis Wetland and potentially also in the Avon River.

Pest fish have several negative effects on the native species and waterways, including competing with native species for food and places to live. They prey on eggs, juveniles and adults, and contribute to poor water quality by feeding on and destroying native aquatic plants. When present in such large numbers they may also impact on

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Pateke (Brown Teal) - First Anniversary

By John Skilton

On 16 May last year, 20 captive-reared pateke were released into the Travis Wetland and have been monitored regularly using radio telemetry. One year later, seven birds have been confirmed as being on-site, six by radio telemetry and one by observation.

Signals from the transmitter of two female pateke have not been received for the past four months. However, we have been able to confirm their presence by visual identification of coloured bands and a very faint signal. The surviving pateke have had to learn to fend for

themselves, surviving the attacks of cats, harriers, and the frosts and snow of winter. The fate of the dead or missing pateke is as follows: stoat - 1, cats - 3, small dog/cat - 1, harriers - 2, car - 1, unknown case (carcass scavenged) - 3, left wetland and not recovered - 1, probable transmitter failure - 2. The carcasses of dead birds that were recovered were sent to Massey University Veterinary Science Unit to confirm cause of death.

Let's hope the remaining pateke breed in this spring.



Bird Scene

Every year Travis Wetland continues to attract new and interesting bird species. Two Pectoral Sandpipers were seen at Travis this spring. The first was seen in late August by ranger John Skilton and Kevin Drew, a regular visitor to the wetland. This was joined several weeks later by another. Pectoral sandpipers are uncommon migrants from Alaska. The sandpipers stayed at the wetland for a couple of months and were often seen in the company of

a pair of banded dotterells. A single black fronted dotterel (juvenile) was seen in March feeding in the margins of the pond. A glossy ibis has also made a return, the ninth year that one has been recorded at Travis.



To Our Neighbours

By John Skilton

On the whole, most of our neighbours respect the wetland and support the work being done. Some of them are members of the Travis Wetland Trust. Others keep a protective eye on the park and let us know when damage occurs or when maintenance is needed. From time to time, people on our boundaries take it in to their own hands to curb any damage to the wetlands. A big *thank you* to all those who help towards enhancing the public enjoyment of this park.

Thanks to responsible cat owners. A considerable number of cats are seen in the wetland. However, ranger Matt Rose and I have noticed that more cats appear to have collars now, which does help us distinguish between pets and feral cats. We have even had one family arrive with a cat box looking for their cat, which apparently spends quite a bit of time in the wetland. I like to think that our media releases on responsible pet ownership are being well received by the public.

Two issues, however, continue to occur on our boundary - both of which are anti-social and breach city bylaws:

The practice of cutting trees on the Travis side of the boundary is disappointing. Some residents are cutting plants in the park and this is harming the restoration process. If you have an issue with trees please go through the correct process and contact John Skilton through the CCC Call Centre (941 8999).

Dumping rubbish, including green waste grass clippings, is a recurring problem. Rubbish is a health hazard and unsightly. Green waste brings weeds to the park which cost money to control. Lawn clippings may contain herbicide which can kill our plants, and, when dumped thickly around plant stems, lead to plant diseases.

Raupo Spread

By Dave Evans

Raupo (bulrush) is an abundant native swamp plant that spreads via creeping rhizomes. The leaves can be over 2m long and the pollen from the flowers was mixed with water and baked into cakes by the Maori. They also used the leaves for whare and making boats (mokihi). Raupo is habitat for the Australasian bittern, one of which is seen regularly at Travis, and also the locally absent spotless crake. There are extensive patches of raupo at Travis Wetland. These are predominantly in the north-eastern part, but recently it has appeared up in Kotuku Basin, adjacent to Clarevale Reserve. Young willow are a problem in this basin and I have wondered in the past whether raupo could be used to displace



the willow. After all, it is a native and this is a place where the raupo could be very successful. However, raupo can spread quickly and gradually "reclaims" open water. This is a natural process by which swamps can eventually become solid ground. We also have to preserve areas of open water as bird habitat, and many don't really want to see the area of swamp diminish. I'm not fond of the idea of pulling out a native plant as if it is a weed. But Kotuku Basin has hosted the elusive marsh crake, and if this desirable species likes the basin, we probably should preserve it the way it is. In the end the fate of these raupo plants is sealed, as excavation work is planned for the southern edge of Kotuku Basin next year. This is to enhance the moat between the Clarevale Reserve and the wetland to try and discourage access by predatory cats, and increase the chance of survival for any marsh crake feeding there.

Canterbury Mudfish Reintroduction

By John Skilton

The reintroduction of Canterbury Mudfish (*Neochanna burrowsius*) is being actively investigated by the Travis Wetland Trust with support from the Christchurch City Council. It is possible that the Trust will approach Wetland Care New Zealand which administers the Banrock Wines Wetland Restoration fund for funding assistance with this project. The reintroduction of mudfish has been considered since about 2000. Since then, the need to establish new populations, in sites that provide long-term security for the species

by translocation, has become more urgent, due to continued habitat loss from intensification of farming in their remaining strongholds on the Canterbury Plains.

A small survey of potential release sites using visual assessment and electro fishing was carried out on the 19 April 2008 by Ichthyo-niche (Leanne O'Brien and Nicholas Dunn). The survey was carried out on a bitterly cold Travis Wetland Trust work day so Trust members Simon Johnson and Charlie Cats and CCC

Ranger John Skilton were able to help. One location that appears to be suitable is the drain adjacent to the board walk through the western willows, which flows towards the Stout Viewing Tower. The water quality, availability of aquatic vegetation and presence of micro-crustaceans and invertebrates for food would provide a quality habitat. Further work needs to be done, including determining the invasion rate of eels and hydrologic connections before a translocation takes place.

Membership – roll up, roll up!

The Travis Wetland Trust is an important partner in the continuing success of the Travis Wetland and members are important to the future success of the Trust.

To support the Trust become a financial member and/or get involved. Subs are \$10/\$5; \$15 family.

Some possible Trust activities you might like to consider being involved in include -

- Monitoring invertebrates and pateke (brown teal)
- Monitoring landscape / plant changes
- Ground-water monitoring
- Potential mudfish and giant kokopu introduction and funding
- Marketing the wetland and the Trust to students, local community, interest groups
- History group interviews and research of the wetland and the local community
- Update of Walking Guide book and production of a new DVD supplement
- Site specific wetland restoration projects
- Board membership roles. Can co-opt at any point during year, with Board elected at AGM (October).
- Help out on work days (weeding and planting). Come along and see what we're about.

Make your involvement work for yourself as well as the wetland.

Contact Eric Banks, Chair, or, Denise Ford, Secretary.
Travis Wetland Trust
Phone: 382 5756



Short Notes

Bunnings Donation

Bunnings Warehouse recently opened its second Christchurch branch in Marshland Road. As part of its opening celebrations a cheque for \$1,000 was presented to the Travis Wetland Trust representing the commitment Bunnings has to forging ties with the local community. Thanks Bunnings!

Frosts Road Willows are Coming Down!

A large number of willow trees have been removed as the large ones are a hazard to traffic and the others are

slowing down the growth of native plants. Replacement with native wetland plants is planned from July 2008.

Fencing

New areas have been fenced off as grazing marsh this Autumn. Grazing these areas with cattle will increase the area of short grass land available for wading birds and water fowl. Grazing will also assist with control of the woody weeds such as willow trees, gorse and blackberry and annual weeds such as beggars ticks.



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the availability of invertebrates as food for ducklings, which feed on the same source for protein.

Significantly the presence of pest fish may also jeopardise future plans for the reintroduction of endangered native fish into the wetland, such as the Canterbury Mudfish (currently being investigated) and Giant Kokopu. The waterways of Travis Wetland are home to many species of native fish, including short finned eels, long finned eels, inanga, common bully, upland bully and numerous native aquatic invertebrates, which are all at risk from these illegal releases.

Rudd are classified as noxious in the Fresh Water Fisheries Regulations. 1983. People who possess, control, rear, hatch, or consign Rudd without authority are liable for a fine of \$5000. The release of any aquatic species (plant or animal) requires a permit under the Conservation Act, and people are also liable for a fine for any breach of this act.

Visitors to the wetland can help by reporting unusual fish sightings, suspicious fishing activity, or people seen releasing fish into waterways, to either the CCC Travis Wetland Ranger (941 8999), DOC (341 9112) or Fish and Game (366 9191).