Travis Wetland

June 2015

Aerial view of Travis Wetland, 2013

Dates to remember

Help restore Travis Wetland

Travis Wetland Trust Work Days are an opportunity to help the Travis Wetland Trust and Christchurch City Council restore the wetland. Meet people interested in restoring the native biodiversity of our city, share ideas and do some light physical work. Tasks vary according to the seasons and range from planting, release weeding and invasive weed control. Morning tea provided.

When: Third Saturday of every month 9am to 12.30pm.

Where: Meet at the Beach Road car park.

What: Bring gumboots or boots, gardening gloves and clothing suitable for the weather and season.

Work day dates for 2015 are:

- Saturday 20 June
- Saturday 18 July
- Saturday 15 August
- Saturday 19 September (community planting day)
- Saturday 17 October

A note from Treasurer Dave Evans

As usual a subscription form is included with the newsletter if your Trust subscription is not up to date. If you think I have it wrong please email or phone me and I will double check my records.

Dave Evans, Treasurer
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New bird species at the wetland (Spotless Crake — Puweto *(Porzanza tabunensis)*)

The first record of a Spotless Crake at Travis Wetland was made by Park Ranger Kenny Rose, he returned on his day off to confirm and photograph it! Spotless Crake are a small crake with distinctive blue and black plumage and contrasting olive brown wings and red eyes. Rarely seen they feed along the margin of the water and the overhanging vegetation.

There have also been several sighting of Marsh Crake, Australasian Bittern and Royal Spoonbills seen at the wetland.

The presence of these birds is due to the improved habitat and lack of disturbance. These birds are very susceptible to disturbance and predation by dogs and cats. Neighbours of the wetland can help by keeping cats inside or using a collar and bell and making sure dogs are secure. Travis is designated as no dog area to protect these and other wildlife.

Christchurch City Council

Moths of Travis

— Denise Ford

Over the last five months Grahame Bell and I (amateur entomologists and Travis Trust members) have been collecting moths at Travis Wetland. The aim is to add to the record of moth diversity at the wetland. New Zealand has a small fauna of Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) compared to other countries such as the British Isles. Over 85% of New Zealand's Lepidoptera is endemic (occurring nowhere else) and many are undescribed (Hoare 2014). Luckily we had the expertise of the entomologist Brian Patrick, an expert on Lepidoptera, to identify the species we collected.

As many moths are active only at night this required us to set up a night light to attract the moths and then wait until it was dark for them to arrive. We choose three main areas to do the light trapping: Matai/Totara forest, Manuka area and the Central Willows, and did at least 3 nights at each site over the five months. We have been blown away by the number and diversity of moths we have caught. At last count we had 123 species within 77 genus from 19 families. Brian has listed many as excellent finds and he has identified a new species of the endemic moth genus Graphania (Noctuidae) collected from the Matai/Totara forest.

Grahame is a fantastic photographer, those that like the Travis Wetland facebook page will have seen his many wonderful photos of the fauna of Travis Wetland. He has documented the majority of moths we have caught and they can be seen on the NatureWatchNZ site, **http://naturewatch.org.nz/projects/moths-of-travis-wetland**

Macfarlane et. al (1998) estimated that the wetland harboured approximately 700 resident insects with at least 25 that are regionally rare and 1.7% flightless. Since the Macfarlane survey much re-vegetation and habitat restoration has occurred, therefore we hope that species abundance and diversity has increased. Another comprehensive survey will be needed to see if this is so. The work done by myself and Grahame adds to existing knowledge of the biodiversity of the wetland.

We hope to get another couple of nights in before it too cold for us and the moths! (Editors note, invertebrates have the largest diversity of all living organisms at the wetland).

Phrissogonus laticostatus

Slender Owlet Moth *(Rhapsa scotosialis)*

Family: Erebidae
Date collected: 2014/11/01
Area collected: Matai Totara area
Sex of moth in image: Male
Forewing length: 14 – 19mm

Adults of this common night moth can be found year round.

Larvae feed on freshly fallen leaves.

Pupation amongst dead leaves.

The moths from Travis are variable in colouration from a deep brown/black through to a light brown.

The consistent feature is the coloured dot on the forewing and the lighter patches on the rear edges.

Based on my photos the female has a yellow dot the male as in this image a red dot.

Epyaxa rosearia

Family: Geometridae
Date collected: 2015/02/07
Area collected: Matai Totara area
Sex of moth in image: Female
Forewing length: 10 – 15mm

The larvae of this very common moth feeds on a variety of herbaceous plants.

Pupation among ground litter.

Colour from Travis moths is variable from plain pale brown through dark brown and several shades of green.

Adults of this night flying moth can be found year round.

Flax Notcher Moth (Tmetolophota steropastis)

Graphania plena

Totara *(Podocarpus totara)*

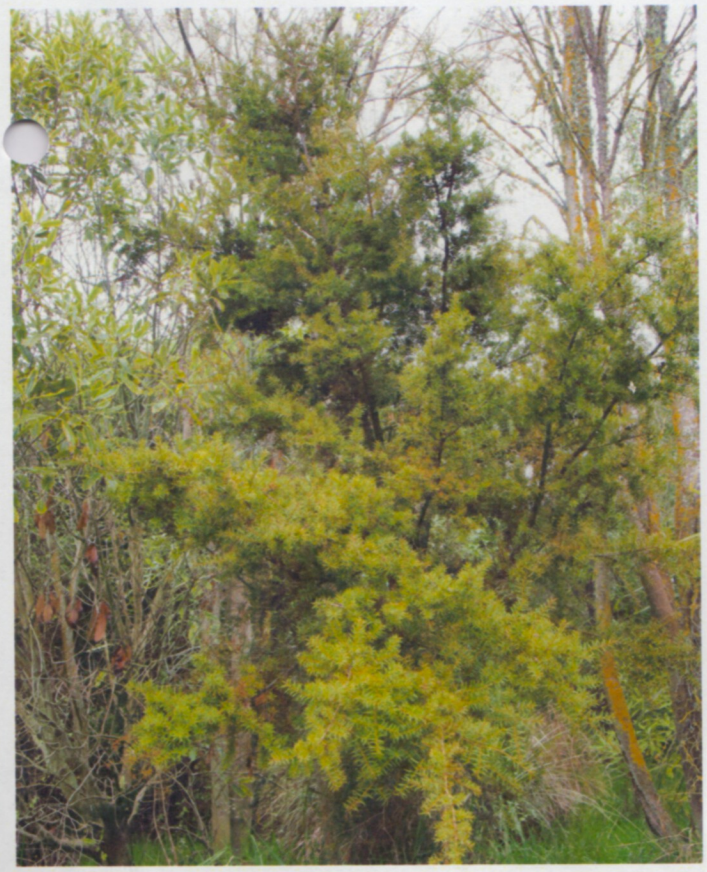
— Dave Evans

You will have all participated in, or heard about, the establishment of a totara/matai forest at the southern end of Travis Wetland. I wrote about matai in a newsletter a few years ago, but I don't think totara has been featured in the Travis newsletter before.

Totara, Matai and Kahikatea were commonly associated in South Island pre-human New Zealand forests, with Kahikatea on the wetter ground and totara on the better drained sites. Totara is the largest of the Podocarp species (although not the tallest — that's Kahikatea). We could expect a totara tree at Travis to ultimately grow to at least 25m tall, over several centuries. There is an estimated 600 year old specimen at Hinewai that is 1.75m in diameter. Totara is endemic to New Zealand and the world's largest, called Pouakani, is near Pureora forest in the central North Island. On those fertile volcanic soils Pouakani has grown to 42m tall and nearly 4m in diameter. I visited it once and it appears to be all as it looms up through the understory trees.

Totara has stiff, sharp, broadish-needle leaves. Its female flowers develop into a berry and seed that are eaten by Kereru, Tui and Bellbirds. The birds digest the berry and excrete the seed, thereby dispersing the totara seed. Totara wood is strong and durable and it is the primary wood for Maori carvings and especially waka. Early European farmers valued totara for providing long-lasting fence posts. Totara will establish on open ground and is not eaten by stock, so it is often seen standing alone on farmland. There is a juvenile growing well beside the Halswell to Tai Tapu road, shortly before where the Old Tai Tapu road veers off.

It's going to be a long while before we see totara of an imposing size at Travis, but at any size they are a welcome addition to the local biodiversity.



Spreading the Word

— Sue Britain

Travis Wetland Trust volunteers have been busy promoting our aims over the summer. In November we had a display stand at the Summerstarter fun run event. We were in a marquee with Avon Otakaro network and other organisations under the theme of Eastern Visions. We were able to chat to many visitors and some tried their luck with our 'Name the Native Plant' contest. Two lucky winners received free Trust membership.

In February we boldly erected a gazebo in strong south-west wind at the 'I love New Brighton' family fun day. We had to tie down our display material and visitor numbers were down due to the weather, but we still managed to chat to some interested folk and sell a few cards and badges.

At the finish line of the popular 'Coast to Coast' event at New Brighton later in February we were once again in the Eastern Visions marquee. A number of people, many from out of the area, came through and our plant naming contest got people thinking once again.

Trust members may be available to provide informative stands at community events or to talk to small groups. Please contact us at **info@traviswetland.org.nz** if you are part of a group that could be interested.

T-shirts

The Travis Wetland Trust now has t-shirts for sale. Two great designs and sizes.

Check the website **www.traviswetland.org.nz** for details and ordering.

Pegasus Health workday at Travis Wetland — November 2014

— Charlie Catt

Twelve enthusiastic volunteer Pegasus Health employees turned up for a range of jobs at the wetland in early November. The team got stuck in, literally in a few cases, with planting manuka and flax next to the boardwalk in the west of the wetland, and inevitably a few people got gumboots full of mud. However, this did not deter them from being able to plant all the mauka and flax that was to hand.

Much to Eleanor's joy, the next (much less hazardous) job was to remove the weeds from the pots in the nursery. What might have taken Eleanor and her team weeks to do was done in a couple of hours. A great job done in record time.

The final job for those still there after lunch was to remove convolvulus that was strangling some of the plants along Beach Road. Again, this job was tackled with great gusto and a very impressive pile of the stuff was on show after about an hour.

Many thanks indeed to the Pegasus team for all their hard work – they made a huge difference in a relatively short time. Thanks also to Kenny, and the Travis team who helped out.

Royal Spoonbill *(Platalea regia)*

— Grahame Bell

The distinctive looking Royal Spoonbill is starting to become a regular at Travis. The largest group I've heard of is 14 birds.

Originally only seen as vagrants from Australia Spoonbill's didn't start breeding in New Zealand till 1949. They disperse from their breeding sites in autumn and can be found from Parengarenga to Invercargill.

Their diet is mainly small invertebrates, fish and frogs. You can tell an adult from juvenile Spoonbill by the yellow eyebrows and red spot in the centre of the fore head. The adults spoon also has many more creases in it the that of young birds.

The bird above is in breeding plumage as shown by the plumes on the head and the faint yellow wash across the breast.

Royal Royal Spoonbill

Travis Wetland Trust Meetings

The Travis Wetland Trust board meets monthly on the Tuesday following the work day, from 6.30pm — 8.30pm at the Travis Wetland Education Centre. The board extends a welcome to all who wish to attend.

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