



Travis Wetland

May 2006

A newsletter from Travis Wetland Trust and the Christchurch City Council

PARK NEWS

Dates to remember

Travis Wetland Trust Work Days

All welcome! Workdays are held on the third Saturday of every month from 9am until 12.30 pm. Meet at the Beach Rd car park. Bring gumboots or boots. The following work days are an opportunity to learn about and get involved in the restoration of Travis Wetland.

- 15 April 2006
- 20 May 2006
- 17 June 2006
- 15 July 2006
- 19 August 2006
- 16 September 2006
- 21 October 2006

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Pateke (Brown Teal)

An exciting step in the restoration of Travis Wetland began in January 2006 with the visit of Richard Maloney, Department of Conservation Technical Advisor for Endangered Species Recovery and leader of the Pateke Recovery Group. The reason for his visit was to discuss the requirements of species reintroductions and in particular Pateke. Richard was very positive about the potential of Travis Wetland as a release site for Pateke. He said the positive aspects of Travis included the quality of habitat,

the predator control programme, the community involvement through the Travis Wetland Trust and ongoing council support. Following the completion of the Site Assessment form, Travis Wetland will be ranked by the recovery group. If the site ranks highly and the consultation process is successful, it is possible that Pateke could be released in 2008. To support such a release, there will be some challenges to overcome, particularly in relation to predator control and the ability of cats and dogs to access the wetland.

Dumping of garden waste a waste of money

Some park neighbours are continuing to dump garden waste over the fence into the reserve and trimming trees and shrubs along the shared boundary. This is costing other Christchurch citizens money in replacement plants, weed control and maintenance. It is also setting back the restoration of Travis Wetland.

Residents are reminded that they are committing an offence and are liable to be fined for these activities. Dumping of plant material is likely to lead to new weed problems in the wetland, while lawn clippings smother plant stems causing plants to rot. Lawn clippings may also contain herbicides which cause plants to die.



The New Totara-Matai-Broadleaved Forest

This planting season got off to an exciting start in May, with the initiation of the totara-matai forest project. This was made possible with the help of IAG New Zealand which has donated \$5000 towards plants and made a commitment from their Christchurch staff to assist with planting and weeding tasks in the first year.

Today totara-matai forest is an extremely rare plant community in Canterbury. In pre-Maori times it would have been found on old alluvial terraces and drier foothills edging the plains. The best surviving pockets occur in the Coopers Creek, Kowai Bush–Otarama, Kaituna Valley, Peel Forest, Woodbury and Geraldine areas and on Banks Peninsula. This new forest at Travis Wetland is being established on a low sandy ridge in the south of the park – tucked into a bend in Angela Stream. It is a little better drained than the surrounding cow paddocks (or grazing marshes as they are now known). The slightly elevated ridge has summer dry soils that are similar to the Kaiapoi soils that previously supported matai-totara forest in the once larger Riccarton Bush. The lower lying ground, which frequently ponds water during winter and has tufted rushes growing on it, is classed as Taitapu soil. It has saturated steely grey subsoils like those at Riccarton Bush that support the magnificent groves of kahikatea. With a dearth of tall podocarp forest (totara, matai,

kahikatea, rimu, etc.) in eastern Christchurch, this new forest will add considerably to the habitat for bush birds such as bellbird, kereru, and maybe one day tui. These iconic birds depend on supplies of nutritious fruits, nectar and/or foliage throughout the year especially for breeding. With the natural variation in the land, the elevated areas will be dominated by totara and large-fruited matai and many native broadleaved or hardwood trees, grading down into kahikatea and pokaka forest on the wetter soils. The planned 6-7 hectare area will take several years, many thousands of plants, and gallons of sweat to fully establish. It will increase the range of habitats at Travis Nature Heritage Park, adding a substantial block of podocarp forest to the swampy willow woodland, manuka-mikimiki-baumea bog woodland, tussock swampland, lake and stream, grazing marsh, and coastal bush and shrubland on the dry high dunes. This will be the last major restoration project foreshadowed in the restoration plan, following Council's purchase of the Travis Swamp dairy farm in 1997.



History Of Travis Wetland

The Trust's history group has been making progress in getting interviews, historical data and photos of what used to happen on the wetland before the Trust became involved. A number of the farmers and their families who used to graze dairy cows for the town milk supply have been interviewed and filmed. The group

says it wants to record as many recollections as possible from people who have had something to do with the wetland in the past. If anyone knows someone who should be interviewed or thinks they have a good story to tell contact Phil Teague on phone 383 4122.

Travis Wetland DVD

A 20 minute DVD of Travis Wetland Nature Heritage Park has been created by the Bush Telly film crew. Bush Telly is the Natural History unit of NZERN that is involved in making short films and radio documentaries on ecological projects. The film crew included Bush Telly volunteer, Derek Keller and Bush Telly interns and American students, Kirsten Weiss and Mike Kinney,

The DVD gives an overview of the history of the wetland from the natural history to human activity that changed the swamp and efforts to save and restore the ecology of the area, with Colin Meurk doing a great job of narrating.

The film crew spent time filming different aspects of the wetland including a Trust workday showing the work done by volunteers. A screening of the DVD was held at a very appreciative April meeting of the Trust. Ongoing filming will continue so that extra footage of birds and plants can be included to give a seasonal view of the wetland. The Trust is delighted that a professional, exciting and informative DVD is being produced for promotional and educational purposes.

The Trust thanks Bush Telly and NZERN for their efforts. To check out other Bush Telly projects go to bush.org.nz/telly/programs.html



Autumn Bird Observations

Two glossy ibises, an adult and a juvenile, were spotted at Travis Wetland on 16 February by CCC ranger Andrew Crossland. A single adult has been a winter resident of Travis for several years but this was the earliest sighting so far and the first observation of two birds. The glossy ibis is a slender dull-brown long-legged bird with a down curving bill. From a distance, it looks rather like a pukeko when on the ground and like a shag, when in the air. The glossy ibis has probably migrated here from Australia for the non-breeding season. They feed in rough, damp pasture and on the margin of ponds. Since February only the adult bird has been seen at Travis.

On 31 March, an Australasian bittern (Maori name, matuku) was observed at the wetland by Trust member Simon Johnson. A bittern has been seen at Travis for several years. It has probably migrated here from an inland wetland for the winter. The Australasian bittern is a large (1kg+) mottled brown native bird that is very secretive and partially nocturnal. It likes dense cover, especially raupo or reeds. When

alarmed, it will freeze with its bill pointing skyward and may even bend in the breeze with the surrounding vegetation. With its camouflage colouring the bittern is very hard to see when behaving this way. At Travis, it is most often



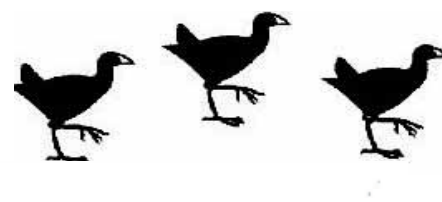
seen in the morning by the first person to walk down to the bird hide. The bittern will be flushed from the field where it is feeding and fly back to more dense vegetation for the daylight hours.

Two Cattle Egret were seen on 1 May, again by Simon Johnson and his crew, in the southern end

of the grazing paddocks. Cattle Egrets are seasonal migrants from Australia and haven't been seen at Travis Wetland for some time.

Two nesting boxes for grey teal (Maori name tete) have been erected in the willows adjacent to the main pond and they are already in use. Over time as many as 20 more nesting boxes, generously made by patients at Burwood Hospital, will be installed. The grey teal is a native light grey-brown duck with a red eye that feeds by filtering on the water surface, or by dredging its bill in soft mud. Grey teal like to nest in holes in trees, so they readily take to nest boxes. The boxes have been placed 1 – 1.5m above the ground and there is no perch outside the hole. It's interesting

to speculate quite how a duck manages to enter a nesting box!



Travis Stream Widening

In March, the Travis Stream from near the Information Centre to down alongside Frosts Road was widened and reformed. A large digger worked for five days to re-contour and deepen the stream to restore its effectiveness as a barrier to animal pests wanting to infiltrate the wetland. Over the years, the stream had become narrow and choked with grass. The width has been increased from as little as 1.5m to 5 – 8m.

Beaches and shallows have been formed in the stream bends to provide improved habitat for water birds. In the months and years to come, the banks will be vegetated on planting days and by school groups. After the excavation was completed white-faced herons and ducks were quick to take advantage of the feeding opportunities provided by the disturbed ground.

