

## Coming soon! - Travis Wetland Tee Shirts

We are currently looking in designing our own Travis Wetland tee-shirts for sale to the public. Proceeds from the sale will help the Trust continue its restoration and planting work at the wetland.

We will have details of how to order, as well as photos, of the tee-shirts in our next edition.

## Travis Wetland Contacts

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The Travis Wetland Trust now has a presence on the World Wide Web at [www.traviswetland.org.nz](http://www.traviswetland.org.nz)

The Trust also has a new email address and can be contacted at [info@traviswetland.org.nz](mailto:info@traviswetland.org.nz)

## Canterbury Mudfish to be released at Travis Wetland

- John Skilton

Since early 2000 the Travis Wetland Trust has been working with the Department of Conservation to secure the release of Canterbury Mudfish (*Neochanna burrowsius*) into Travis Wetland. This is another example of the role Travis Wetland has as a site for the protection and advocacy of regionally and nationally endangered native species.

The Canterbury mudfish is restricted to Canterbury. It is a small cryptic species adapted to living in wetlands, creeks and irrigation races which are prone to drying out. The Canterbury mudfish has the ability to "breathe" through its skin and can survive without water for up to 5 months by hiding in a cool and damp place. The mudfish were once widespread in Canterbury but the drainage of wetlands has reduced the available habitat. The remaining populations occur as widely scattered remnants on private land where long-term security of their habitat is not certain.

Initial investigations concluded establishing a population of Mudfish in an area with lots of eels may not be successful. Intensification of land use and changes to irrigation practices on the Canterbury plains has been putting pressure on remaining mudfish habitat. Last year a number of adult mudfish were collected by DOC rangers from a threatened site for release at Travis Wetland. The selected site at Travis became too dry to support the release and the fish had to be released at

other sites. This year fry or "young" were collected from an irrigation race near Hororata and have been raised at Southern Encounter Aquarium in Christchurch to a size ready for release this Autumn.

The site will be monitored for three years by City Council rangers and Travis Wetland Trust members. As eels are likely to be the main threat they will be captured and released away from the release site.

During the past 12 months we have recorded three new species of native fish at Travis Wetland. A total of 7 species of native fish have now been recorded at the wetland and include; giant bully (Nov 2009), common smelt (November 2009), black flounder (December 2009), inagna, short-finned eel, upland bully and common bully. These fish species have arrived via Lake Kate Sheppard and Corsers Stream, the waterways that connect Travis Wetland with the Avon River.

Two surveys of the Travis Wetland aquatic environment are nearing completion. These surveys are repeat of work that was carried out 10 years ago following the construction of waterways. It will be useful to compare any changes that may have taken place to water quality, fish and aquatic invertebrates. From the surveys the Council and the Trust hope to identify options for improving and maintaining our aquatic environment.



Canterbury mudfish (DOC photo)

# Travis Wetland

## April 2010



## Birds of Travis

- Grant MacLeod

Each newsletter the Trust will bring you information on a visiting or resident bird that can be found at Travis Wetland. Along with native and migratory birds, we will highlight some of the less desirable birds that may frequent the wetland as well in future editions.

This month's bird is the brown teal, pateke (*Anas chlorotis*)

The pateke or brown teal is a small duck that is endemic to New Zealand (much like a kiwi). The pateke is listed by the Department of Conservation as an endangered species. Once widespread, the pateke is now restricted to a few sites around New Zealand including Travis Wetland. A number of them were released in 2008 at Travis Wetland with help from the Travis Wetland Trust, Department of Conservation and the Christchurch City Council. The pateke's diet is vegetation, aquatic and terrestrial insects. The bird itself spends much of its time on land compared with other waterfowl species. The release of the pateke at Travis Wetland is a great example of the importance that this wetland plays both locally and nationally in regards to New Zealand's endangered species. Those released at Travis have coloured bands to help identify the birds and to see the survival rate of the original release. The pateke is susceptible to predation by cats and several of the released birds have been attacked. Heading forward, and in order to get more native species released at Travis, predator exclusion will be important. If you would like to help with this and you have a cat, a simple bell on the collar can help greatly.



Male pateke (with transmitter aerial) at Travis Wetland.  
Photo - Alex Mitchell

**Dates to Remember** - the third Saturday of every month is the restoration day at Travis Wetland.

## Help Restore Travis Wetland

Travis Wetland Trust Restoration Days are an opportunity to help the Travis Wetland Trust and the 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:** 3rd Saturday of every month 9 am to 12.30 pm.

**Where:** Meet at the Beach Road car park.

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

### Dates for 2010

- May 15 - Community planting day
- June 19
- July 17
- August 14
- September 18 - Community planting day
- October 16
- November 20
- December 18



## Plants of Travis Wetland

- Anne Kennedy, TWT

Azolla floats on the surface of the water by means of numerous, small, closely-overlapping scale-like leaves, with their roots suspended in the water.

The most remarkable characteristic of Azolla is its symbiotic relationship with the nitrogen-fixing, blue-green alga, Anabaena azollae. Azolla provides nutrients and a protective cavity in each leaf to Anabaena colonies in exchange for fixed atmospheric nitrogen and possible other growth-promoting substances. This has led to it being dubbed a super-plant, as it can readily colonise areas of freshwater, and grow at great speed - doubling its biomass every two to three days. The only limiting factor on its growth is phosphorus, another essential mineral. An abundance of phosphorus, due, for example, to eutrophication or chemical runoff, often leads to Azolla blooms.

The nitrogen-fixing capability of Azolla has led to it being widely used as a biofertilizer, especially in parts of southeast Asia. The plant has been used to bolster agricultural productivity in China for over a thousand years. When rice paddies are flooded in the spring, they can be inoculated with Azolla, which then quickly multiplies to cover the water, suppressing weeds. The rotting plant material releases nitrogen to the rice plants, providing up to nine tonnes of protein per hectare per year.

However, together with the exclusion of light, Azolla may eliminate the native submerged flora and it may prevent the diffusion of oxygen from the air to water, producing anoxic condition. This may cause fish kills.



*Azolla filiculoides.*

## The monthly volunteer workdays

- Joe Greenaway, Work Day Coordinator, TWT

Since the last newsletter we have had a variety of work on our monthly Saturday mornings.

### December

One hundred and fifty broadleaf and ribbon wood were planted along the track west of the cattle yards. Although it was mid-summer, the area was quite damp ensuring a good survival rate. Grass smothering will be a problem if it is not kept in check.

### January

Our morning task was quite a bit different and involved weeding beggars ticks from the edge of the Central Pond. Beggars ticks is a very invasive weed in the wetlands and it is important to keep it under control. This is carried out ideally before seed heads form. Gumboots and a good jacket were needed against the cold easterly on this day.

### February

Weeding the totara-matai forest area. Plant establishment is beginning to look quite good and watering and release weeding are ongoing. Look out for our next planting day in this area in May.

### March

Release weeding of harakeke, manuka, ti kouka from the rank grass and convolvulus along the west bank of Travis Stream. An interesting area with potential for more planting.

Thanks to all the volunteers who have contributed. There are many areas in the wetland that reflect your efforts, so let's keep it up. New people are most welcome on the third Saturday of the month.

### Education Centre

Stage two of the renovation of the Travis Education Centre was completed in February 2010, (stage 1 in 2002). The toilets, kitchen services and floor coverings have been replaced and the entrance remodelled. On the exterior, the sash windows have been replaced and weather boards replace the previous plaster, roof and guttering also. The lean-to garage and laundry have been removed. The building is now much more functional for education and community groups. The education centre is home for the Travis Wetland Trust, KCC (Kiwi Conservation Club) and the base for the CCC Learning Through Action programmes. The education centre is available for Council, community or business groups to hire - for bookings call or email the Council call centre. The building can cater for groups of up to 40 people and is now a welcoming, clean, warm-in-winter retreat in an increasingly beautiful setting.



*Travis education centre before renovation.*



*Travis education centre following renovation.*

## Habitat Development

Late summer was a busy time at the wetland because the ground conditions are driest. It is the best possible time to continue with projects identified in the Landscape Development Plan such as improving habitat for wildlife. Work this summer has involved landscaping on a large scale using machinery to naturalise two pre-existing farm drains by shaping the contours of the previously straight drains and using the excavated material to fill unwanted drains. The machinery operators also enjoy the opportunity to use their skills to create a new landform. In the eastern grazing marsh large willow logs, felled on Frosts Road two years ago, have been scattered along the site to provide roosting places for birdlife. The old drain along the north-east boundary has had the banks re-contoured and widened and willow trees removed to act as a moat to deter cats entering the wetland. This site will be planted up with sedges, rushes and flax. During excavation of the eastern waterway, a buried log was found approximately one metre below the ground. We hope to get this analysed to determine if it may be a piece of native vegetation from earlier times.



*Machinery in action.*



*New habitat for waders and ducks*