

Travis T-shirts

The Trust has come up with t-shirt designs illustrating some of the key features of the wetland: bird, water and plant life. The illustrations are by Bridget Bahlmann. Do you have a favourite? Email info@traviswetland.org.nz. The Trust is in the process of organising printing of the t-shirts, and following this they will be on sale through the website (www.traviswetland.org.nz).



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The Travis Wetland Trust now has a presence on the World Wide Web at www.traviswetland.org.nz

The Trust also has a new email address and can be contacted at info@traviswetland.org.nz

Transforming a farm to a nature reserve - a personal account

- Joe Greenway, Workday Convener, Travis Wetland Trust

In 1971 I shifted to live on the western side of Travis Wetland. In those days it was known as Travis Swamp and was farmed. Drains crisscrossed the area and were kept clear to promote drainage; cattle grazed to our back fence and there was very little willow.

In 1973, the area which is now Sanctuary Villas was very low-lying and covered in carex, was backfilled with demolition spoil from Mairehau Road to the area known as Greenway corner. This was the start of the board walk and for many years it was a horse paddock. In 1989 after the sale of the greater area of the farm, it was slowly invaded by willows and blackberry. At this time a public meeting was held in the North Brighton surf club rooms to form a trust to save the wetland.

Our workdays back then consisted of carrying out weed control and to halt the further invasion of grey willow in anticipation Travis would one day be a reserve.

Our early days were spent tidying up willow and black berry opposite Burwood Hospital. We progressed into the swamp hand-sawing and poisoning grey willow which had established in great groves. For many months our days consisted of trudging knee-deep in grass and sawing and stacking the willow. Some of these stacks can still be seen today. The re-growth of blackberry and the other invasive weeds were a constant struggle to get on top of.

Walking in a line across an area pulling willow seedlings proved to be a tedious back-breaking task, but these seedlings grew thick and fast and it wasn't until there was a programme of weed control that progress could be seen.

A dedicated group adopted the manuka area saving seed and developed the stand we see today. There is now natural regeneration and it should grow into a good area.

Travis Wetland Trust 2010-2011 subscriptions due

- Dave Evans, treasurer, Travis Wetland Trust

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

Subscriptions for the 2010/11 financial year are now due and if you are not already paid up a subscription form will be included with this newsletter. We depend on subscriptions and donations to fund much of the work we undertake at the wetland. Please support the trust and pay our modest annual subscription so that we can continue to preserve and enhance Travis Wetland.

Canterbury Mud fish

- John Skilton, Christchurch City Council Ranger

Eighty-nine mud fish were released into the wetland in May 2010. A small group of people including Kiwi Conservation Club, Travis Wetland Trust members, DOC and Council rangers welcomed them to their new home. The release would not have been possible without the support and expertise of Anita Spenser (DOC, Mahaanui) and Dave Bradshaw from Southern Encounter Aquarium, so thanks to them.

In August 20 fish were recaptured using G-Minnow fish traps and they were all in healthy condition. However, monitoring in late September following the earthquake, failed to recapture any. The mud fish may have spread further from their release site during this time. Further monitoring is planned for November.



Travis Wetland mudfish monitoring



Releasing mudfish

Travis Wetland

November 2010



Plants of Travis Wetland Harakeke, Flax, (*Phormium tenax*)

In pre-European times, a harakeke would have been a dominant plant in the wetlands of Christchurch. Harakeke remains an important plant to the tangata whenua who value it for its fibre for weaving, ropes, nets, fishing lines, kete and for medicinal purposes. Maori recognised several varieties which they valued for their special properties. Already some flax plants at Travis Wetland are valued by local weavers.

Early European settlers also found the fibre useful. In some parts of New Zealand the extensive tracts of flax swamp were harvested and milled for fibre.

Within Travis Wetland only a handful of harakeke managed to survive the changes to the wetland in post-European times. In recent years, thousands of flax have been propagated with seed collected from those surviving plants. As you walk around the wetland, you may not realise that nearly every individual flax has been planted by hand. The flowers now provide nectar for native and introduced birds and insects. They are a favourite food of the makomako (Bellbird). Several species of insect feed on its leaves.



Harakeke flowers at Travis Wetland

Now with so much seed available harakeke is self-colonising within the Park. However, like many of our native plants, it initially struggled to compete with fast-growing and introduced grasses such as twitch and Yorkshire fog.

Dates to Remember

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

- December 18, 2010
- January 15, 2011
- February 19, 2011
- March 19, 2011
- April 16, 2011
- May 21, 2011 (Community planting event)



Travis Wetland Trust considers predator-proof fence for the wetland

- Sean Ward, Chair, Travis Wetland Trust

The Trust, well actually the Predator-Proof Fence Subcommittee (yes one does exist) has over the majority of this year been in discussion with various predator fencing companies over the potential for installation of a predator exclusion fence at Travis. It is also having low-level discussions about the potential that exists for introduction of various iconic endemic species (including kiwi and tuatara).

While the process is only in its early stages, it has become apparent that really only one company is interested in the project. This company has a strong background in the construction of predator-exclusion fences at other locations around the country, including some in Canterbury. As yet it appears that fencing a wetland, with all the associated issues of water crossings and soft/shifting substrates, has not been done. That doesn't mean it is impossible, but it is likely to be more involved and, of course, more costly.

There are also technical issues with fencing over waterways and retaining out- and in-flow of water while excluding predators that are not averse to swimming. Public access is also a strong concern and the trust is not, with the idea of a fence, suggesting that access would be curtailed, so appropriate access points and gate solutions also have to be included in any design.

Despite these issues, the subcommittee believes that the huge potential provided by a 120-hectare site within the city warrants a continued investigation.

We have asked the company we are talking with to provide materials (the Trust is meeting the cost of labour for the construction) to erect a small section of fencing as a demonstration and discussion prompt. This has been agreed, and the fence was erected a few weeks ago. It is situated (if you haven't already seen it) near the info centre and the Beach Road entrance car park.

The mesh on the demo is not necessarily the preferred type (a woven form is preferred to the welded one), but the overall effect is similar in a visual sense. The fence sits approximately 1.8 metres high, and you can see also in a small section how the mesh is buried out for a short distance from the toe of the fence to stop access to the inside of the fenced area by burrowing. The cap is to stop any animals able to jump from getting a hold at the top of the fence. Research has shown that 1.8 metres is generally sufficient a height to stop cats gaining access over the fence.



Predator fence demonstration section

Please come down and take a look, you can work it in with a circuit of the track. Let us know what you think about how the fence looks, about what we might achieve in the wetland if we could exclude predators, and really, about anything on your mind in regard to Travis Wetland.

The address is: info@traviswetland.org.nz

Birds of Travis Wetland White Faced Heron (*Ardea novaehollandiae*)

The white-faced heron is the most common species of heron and egret in New Zealand, occurring in a variety of wetland, grassland and shoreline habitats. Its diet comprises aquatic and terrestrial insects, spiders, earthworms, frogs and fish - all of which can be found at Travis. The white-faced heron is easily recognised as a tall, long-legged, long-necked wading bird with bluish-grey body and a white face. White-faced herons are an uncommon visitor to Travis, perhaps preferring the ready food supply of the Estuary at low tide.



White-faced heron

Effect of September 4 Earthquake

- John Skilton, Christchurch City Council Ranger

Travis escaped with only minor damage to the walkway and structures. Contracted engineers quickly inspected all structures to see which could be approved for use. The Stout viewing tower is closed until the loose guy wires can be re-tensioned by an engineer.

Teams of PD workers and their supervisors have been working hard repairing the walkway along Mairehau Road and the section from Clarevale viewing tower.

The boardwalk near the manuka area has been stretched apart at one corner, but is structurally sound and temporarily repaired with plywood. The new anti-slip grid has stretched in places and requires some re-stapling. More permanent repairs will be made when the aftershocks reduce.

There were some changes to waterways. The upstream end of Angela stream was filled in with material from liquefaction for a distance of 20m across the full 8m width of the channel. This has already been excavated as Angela Stream also functions as part of the storm water system for this area.

A similar but much smaller event occurred in the swale along the Chartwell Street boundary. There have been some changes to old drains and surface water levels within the north-west peat swamp part of the wetland. It will be interesting to observe the seasonal changes through to next winter to see whether there has been any significant changes to the ground or surface water.

Celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity 2010 at Travis Wetland

- John Skilton, Christchurch City Council Ranger

Wetlands are amongst the most threatened environments both world-wide and in New Zealand where natural wetlands provide the habitat for specially-adapted native plants, birds, fish lizards and invertebrates which depend on them. Healthy, functioning natural wetlands adjacent to the city help sustain our living environment by retaining and slowing storm water flow into rivers, trapping nutrients and sediment within the plant roots and soils and maintaining groundwater systems.

Since 1992, the Travis Wetland Trust and Christchurch City Council have worked in partnership to restore the wetland, competently managing the Wetland to enable the introduction of native plants and animals into the biodiversity of the wetland. Some of these species have been introduced, but several have made their own way here.

With the support of DOC, three species have been reintroduced, Canterbury mudfish were in May 2010, koura and freshwater mussel in 2009. Twenty pateke were released in 2007 and some remain on site and are breeding.

A positive outcome to our pest fish control effort for rudd is that we have been able to observe the establishment of several native fish species. Seven species are now known to live in the waterways of the wetland. These include, short finned eel, inanga, common bully, upland bully, giant bully, smelt and black flounder. The recent appearance of some of these native fish may be a response to improved habitat and reduced competition from the introduced rudd.



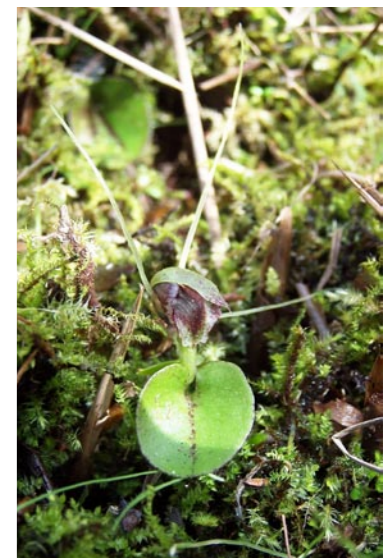
The giant bully

Workday Volunteers

The September community planting day is the most well-supported of the monthly Travis Wetland Trust workdays. Perhaps it's the BBQ afterwards? This year volunteers planted 1500 plants. Trees for Canterbury donated nearly 1000 plants with the remainder coming from the City Council. More than 60 people arrived to help including many families and some corporate groups. It was hard to miss the purple t-shirts of the team from FedEx who have become regular volunteers at this event.



Several species of uncommon or endangered native birds have been observed including bittern, marsh crake, shining cuckoo and pectoral sandpiper. We also have large resident populations of native ducks and waders including scaup, Australasian shoveler, paradise shelduck, grey teal, pukeko, pied stilt and banded dotterel. Species that were seasonal visitors such as bellbirds and kingfisher are now year-round residents. Control of predator and the development of habitat have benefited the native bird life.



The Spider Orchid (*Corybas macranthus*)

In the first steps to restoring the native plant communities more than 60,000 native plants have been planted during the past 10 years including trees, shrubs, harakeke, rushes, sedges. Some species such as silver weed (*Potentilla anserinoides*), button daisy *Leptinella dioica*, have benefited from the grazing. Attempts are being made to establish native turf plants into the grazing marsh genera *dentata* and *lobellia angulata*. The dedicated members of Manuka Group have expanded the manuka area and have been successfully propagating the locally rare *Ranunculus glabrifolius*, *Celmisia graminifolia* and Spider Orchid (*Corybas macranthus*).

Established plants are now self-seeding ensuring the restoration is gaining momentum. In total 82 species of native plants have been added to the 83 species that existed prior to the creation of the Park.

A recent survey of aquatic the environment also points to changes in within this habitat and the invertebrates that live there. The native biodiversity of the wetland is worth celebrating.

Old Blue awarded to Tom Hay

First President of the Travis Wetland Trust Tom Hay was recently awarded an Old Blue, Forest & Bird's highest award in recognition of his volunteer work throughout the years and "on behalf of nature", as he would say.

Tom was an inspiring and positive president who was always looking to make the next stage happen.

Family and friends from as far as the West Coast who were involved with his many successful endeavours were present to honour him.



Tom Hay (right) receives the Old Blue award from Professor Alan Mark