

Travis Wetland

November 2012



Birds of Travis Wetland- Black swan, *Cygnus atratus*

The native Black swans became extinct in Polynesian times, however recent research has shown the extinct black swan was the same species as its Australian cousin which was introduced for hunting in the 1860's, about the same time self introduced birds were recorded at different sites around New Zealand.

A small number of Black swans are resident at Travis. Swans may be seen on waterways dabbling at the surface or upending to feed off aquatic plants below the surface. Their nests are large semi floating structures and they may lay four to eight eggs. The introduced Mute swan (white), is an occasional visitor to the park.



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 9.00 am 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.

Workday dates for 2012 to 2013 are:

- December 15, 2012
- January 19, 2013
- February 16, 2013
- March 16, 2013
- April 20, 2013
- May 18, 2013
- June 15, 2013



From the Chair

Hi to all our trust members out there.

Please keep an eye on the Avon-Otakaro park progression and support it if you feel you can. See their website www.avonotakaronetwork.co.nz

Also see our website – www.traviswetland.org.nz – and please feed us any comments you have regarding Travis.

The address is: info@traviswetland.org.nz

See you at our next workday!

Regards,

Sean Ward

Chair – Travis Wetland Trust.

Note from the Trust Treasurer, Dave Evans

The Travis Wetland Trust financial year begins in July and those who have yet to pay their subscription will have a subscription form posted to them.

Please help the Trust continue its work at Travis Wetland by paying an annual subscription and/or making a tax-deductible donation.

If you have paid, but receive a form all the same, please contact the Trust Treasurer Dave Evans (dave.evansii@gmail.com, phone: 366 0628) and he will correct his records.

Plants of Travis Wetland – Beggars tick, *Bidens frondosa*

- Dave Evans

In previous newsletters we have looked at desirable plants for Travis Wetland, but this month we are going to cast a jaundiced eye over one



Beggar's Tick (*Bidens frondosa*) flowers

of the peskiest weeds that finds a home at the swamp. *Bidens frondosa* goes by several common names but we know it as Beggars tick. It is a native of North America and somehow it found its way to New Zealand. It probably got to Travis via Otukaikino, where it is very well established. It is a member of the daisy family and dies back in the winter.

Beggars tick grows up to two metres and has small yellow/orange flowers occurring from November to May. It grows rapidly and displaces desirable native species. The barbed seeds are easily transported by people and animals.

The tick part of the common name reputedly comes from the seed's resemblance to a tick (the insect), but I wonder if it is more likely to be a reference to the clinging behaviour of the barbed seed. The genus name *Bidens* refers to the seed's two barbed "legs".

The seeds also appear to be distributed by water, as evidenced by the plant occurring on water-level lines around ponds and along the sides of drains all over the wetland. It has been at Travis for about 10 years and a substantial portion of the annual weed control budget goes on controlling Beggars tick. The main control method is spraying and given its liking for the wet places in the centre of the wetland, it is a major challenge to get the spray gear out there to control it.

We have spent a couple of work days pulling out Beggars tick by hand in those areas where the infestation is light. It is not hard to remove when small. The Department of Conservation have given it a Category A (very serious) invasive weed classification, but has not placed legal control requirements on it. The battle against it at Travis is ongoing, and control, rather than extermination, is the likely outcome. It is notorious for having leaves that bear a strong resemblance to marijuana, but I expect the plant provides no psycho-active extracts, for if it did we'd have plenty of "agencies" helping to control it!

Evening Ramble to see Munchers at the Wetland

Led by Colin Meurk & Eleanor Bissell

Quick report

- Chewed leaves on lots of plants led us to discover the secret hiding places of caterpillars busily stocking up before the cold weather. The young people in the group were soon discovering signs of munching for themselves.
- Colin explained of the need for large munchers - cattle - [which are to be replaced by sheep] and their important role at the wetland. They munch the grass to keep it short enough for the grazing birds and flat growing herbaceous plants like cotula and potentilla.
- The grazing birds include pukeko, canada geese, paradise shelducks, spurwing plovers [by far the noisiest of the bunch we viewed!] and assorted duck species. With near perfect camouflage we spotted a beautiful green stick insect, subtly marked grey and white, very close to the boardwalk - another leaf muncher.
- Further along more munchers; flatworms, a beetle, skink, millipedes and a worm - all part of a well-functioning ecosystem. Stinging nettles hidden away from the track provide food for the munching caterpillars of admiral butterflies. Back at our cars by dusk, we had all enjoyed the uniqueness of this special place. This was our last walk before the Winter cold set in!

P.S. Did you know a flatworm can reproduce independently at a time favourable to itself? A split appears at the top of the body to expel a whitish egg which quickly hardens to a dark blue-brown. The slit seals allowing the flatworm to reproduce again. Egg cases contain between 2 and 11 young which hatch into perfect miniatures of the adult.

Conservation work group

The IHC conservation work group has been a wonderful success story for the people in the team and for Travis Wetland. The team has been at Travis since 2002 and their daily presence ensures the park is well maintained - something which is appreciated by visitors and which helps discourage anti-social behaviour.

Recently with help from Eleanor Bissell (TWT member) the team have been propagating native plants source from seed collected on site. With their supervisor Craig Taylors enthusiasm they have embraced the process from collecting seeds, raising seedlings, potting up and finally planting out.



Corybas – Picture by Elnor Bissell

Plants include *Carex secta*, cabbage tree, *Coprosma robusta*, and manatu. The group have been learning new skills and the project is a great help to the ongoing restoration of Travis Wetland where many of thousands of plants will be required to change the balance of the park to native plant species.

As well, the team has continued their work on recently planted areas, and handle other duties like watering, mulching and weeding, doing litter patrols and keeping the grass mown.



Potting at Travis Wetland



Travis Wetland potting team – Tom, Brian, Joy and Ritchie

Trees for Canterbury and Travis Wetland Trust Community Planting Day

Thank you to the more than sixty people who turned up on a nice spring morning to help plant and enjoy the BBQ afterwards. On 15 September an area was planted with predominantly coastal forest species thanks to Trees for Canterbury's annual donation of 900 plants. (An additional 700 plants were provided by the CCC).

The area planted is adjacent to the park entrance and was recently willows and horse grazing paddock. The plants are predominantly species that will form a coastal forest and including Ngaio, Kanuka, Tauhinu, Akeake and several *Coprosma* species, flax, cabbage trees and some kahikatea planted in the low lying areas.



Mairehau Road dune planting

In June 2012 the area of old sand dunes along side Mairehau Road was planted with 2000 coastal plant species. This very dry site has proved challenging in the past, so this time the area was pre-sprayed and then mulched with several hundred cubic metres of compost. Planting was done by *Habitat Restoration Services* and each plant was planted with a slow-release fertilizer tablet to boost establishment survival.

Ground levels and ground water levels post-earthquakes

The levels for three surface water staff gauges were resurveyed on 8 August 2012. The resurvey was to update the new Christchurch drainage datum as it was assumed the previous figures may no longer be accurate.

The resurveyed figures show the drainage datum has changed due to earthquake effects. The staff gauge at the central pond on the concrete bridge had lowered by 200mm, this drop involves a wide area as the water level in the pond has remained the same relative to the weir.

So it seems that Travis wetland has lowered, as have other areas of the city. With ground water now closer to the surface it is likely that the wetland will be "wetter" and this will need to be taken into consideration when choosing plant species. It is also noticeable that all the waterways are now much shallower than prior to the earthquakes due to liquefaction.

Manuka and mycorrhizae trials

Dr Amanda Black, Bio-Protection Research Centre Lincoln University and her team are carrying out research using manuka sourced from Travis Wetland. Information from these trials may assist in understanding the role of mycorrhizae in planting Manuka in restoration sites.

“We would like to take cuttings from mature manuka plants in the Travis wetland area. The cuttings will be used in a pot trial investigating the effect of three commercial species of mycorrhizal fungi (MF) species (glomus intraradices, glomus mosseae and scleroderma cepa), possibly a strain used in Totara restoration (non-commercial), and a new MF product used in the vineyard industry.

“We are interested in the effects of the commercial MF on the establishment, growth and oil content of mānuka in two textural types (sandy and clay like) of low fertility soils. The pots will be housed in the Lincoln University glass houses and will last the duration of six months where we will measure the growth and root establishment of the mānuka. The aim of this trial is look at ways of increasing growth and improved plant establishment for the overall goal of creating a sustainable and resistant crop”.

The Breeze Walking Festival and AvON and River Spring Festival

The Travis Wetland Trust and CCC Park Rangers hosted two public events in October - on 3 and 6 October - as part of the Breeze Walking Festival. Thanks to members of the Travis Wetland Trust Eleanor Bissell, Denise Ford from the Travis Wetland, and Colin Meurk (who should have been in bed) for being popular and informative guides.

The day of events on 21 October including the popular shadow puppet performance from KidsFest and a guided walk and discussion about the potential for a red-zone eco-sanctuary with the irrepressible Colin Meurk.

Thanks to the organisers of both events for including Travis Wetland in their events and giving us the chance to show it off!



Festival of Walks



Campbell Island and Mohaka sheep arriving at Travis Wetland

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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Managing the Grazing Marsh

The modified grasslands at Travis wetland are important habitats for native plants and birds. Grazing these area helps control invasive woody weeds such as Grey willow and gorse, and keeps the faster growing pasture grass short. Without grazing, these area would rapidly revert to a willow forest which does not have the same value as native species.

Sheep have now replaced cattle as our preferred livestock to manage the grazing marsh. Cattle has been part of the Travis landscape since Europeans began farming the surrounding area in the late 1800's. Sheep grazing has been sought as the preferred grazing stock since the early days of the park.

Recently the Travis Wetland Trust and CCC made contact with the Wild Things Trust who maintain small flocks of early NZ sheep breeds, including a flock of Campbell Island Sheep in Canterbury. Campbell Island sheep will be better suited to conditions at the Wetland than other sheep breeds and to maintain a useful stocking rate other breeds may be present during the drier months.

The sheep are expected to improve the grazing marsh as they will cause less damage through pugging and nutrient loss into waterways. Shorter grass in the grazing marsh will benefit native plants, especially low growing plants such as Button Daisy (*Leptinella dioica* and *Leptinella maniototo*), Dwarf musk (*Mazus novaezelandia*), Pratia (*Lobelia angulata*) and Gunnera dentata. A shorter sward will also benefit birds especially waders including Pied stilt, Black-fronted Dotterel, Banded Dotterel, which feed or nest in the short grassland.

Thank you to our previous lessee, Tussock Hill Farms, for understanding what we were trying to achieve through conservation grazing and for being flexible in the stocking times and rates.