



## T-shirts

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

Check the website [www.traviswetland.org.nz](http://www.traviswetland.org.nz) for details and ordering.

## Bellbird Birds of Travis Wetland – Bellbird, Korimako, *Anthornis melanura*

- Dave Evans

I don't think it's my imagination but it seems to me that bellbirds are more common at Travis than they were 10 years ago. It used to be quite an occasion in winter to hear a bellbird, but now they are present all year round. I'm sure the Trust and all its volunteers deserve some of the credit for this improvement in the fortunes of one of New Zealand's iconic birds.

Although it can sometimes be hard to distinguish the call of a bellbird from that of the tui, they are unmistakable at sunrise when a population of bellbirds emits a chorus of bell-like notes. The name bellbird was given on Cook's first voyage when the melodious song was described as sounding "like small bells most exquisitely tuned".

The Maori have many names for the bellbird, of which korimako is perhaps the most common. This must be testament to the wide distribution of the bellbird and the strong impression it makes. Bellbirds must benefit from the absence of tui in Canterbury, as they are frequently chased away from good nectar sources by the bigger tui. In fact at Zealandia I have seen bird feeders with openings sized so that bellbirds can enter, but not tui.

On the mainland north of Auckland the balance is reversed, as bellbirds have been absent for 150 years. The reason for their absence is unknown. However, they have remained present on offshore islands such as Little Barrier and are beginning to recolonise the mainland from there, though slowly because the females do not usually make the crossing. The Three Kings and Poor Knights islands have separate sub-species of bellbird.

Bellbirds are olive-green and the adults have red eyes. Females have a blue gloss on top of the head that is sometimes quite prominent. A notch in the outer primaries (feathers) makes their flight quite noisy and this can draw your attention to them before they call. Bellbirds feed on fruit and insects as well as nectar in flowers and so have a role in seed dispersal as well as pollination. They are probably helping with the re-vegetation of Travis Wetland and so should be regarded as valuable restoration volunteers!

Heather, B.D.; Robertson H.A. 2000. *The field guide to the birds of New Zealand*



Bellbird - Andrew Crossland CCC

## Pest fish (rudd) control working; 2008 to 2014

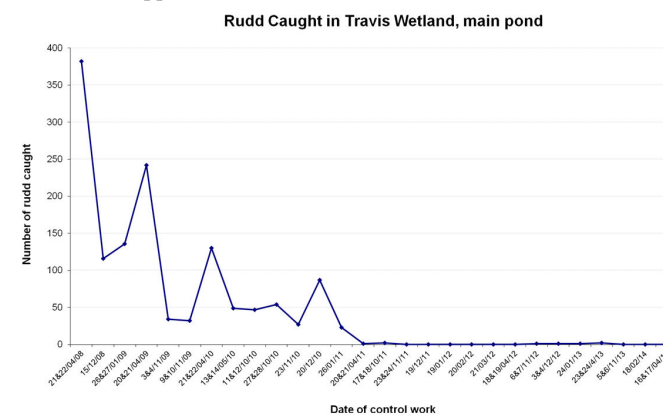
- John Skilton, Park Ranger & Helen McCaughan

This season we fished three times (November, February and April) and NO RUDD were caught – yay! This follows the general trend and now completes two years with between only 2 and 0 rudd being caught each time (see graph below).

We must continue this work each season to ensure the rudd population does not increase to pre-control levels. This is important for the overall health of Travis Wetland and also to help reduce the spread of rudd further through the Avon/OTAKARO River catchment. We anticipate the ongoing effort required to be much the same as that in 2013/14, only increasing if the rudd numbers increase.

There have been habitat changes in the main pond that have made it more suitable for rudd, both for feeding and spawning – particularly growth of the weedy macrophyte *Potamogeton crispus*. The crispus will die back over winter and then increase again as the season warms up. It grows quickly, using nutrients from the water and sediments, so this could have a positive effect on the water quality (the leaves/branches can also help to trap sediment).

Next season when the growth gets really thick we will remove some of it by hand. Taking some of the vegetative matter out like this helps to take the nutrients out of the water and prevents large weedy mats rotting in the pond itself. If we remove the right time we may also be removing rudd eggs. Thanks to Helen McCaughan, DOC, for her enthusiastic support.





## Clever Weeds near the Western Willows Boardwalk at Travis

- Eleanor Bissel and Colin Meurk

This is where some of the most important botanical gems of our wetland occur and a dedicated team of workers spend at least a day a week managing these against the continual encroachment of ‘clever’ weeds. There is ongoing spread of weedy plants that have amazing survival and regenerative powers.

At this site we have plants both native and exotic that can tolerate waterlogged ground. Their stems and roots have internal spongy tissue which can conduct air downstairs so the plants can ‘breathe’ in the anoxic soil. Walkers on the boardwalk may notice some of these weeds. The tall celery buttercup with its shiny green leaves and yellow flowers has a weak spot at the base where root and stem meet; so we need to remove it by pulling it out with the roots; otherwise it is likely to break off leaving the root firmly anchored to then produce new leaves. Another, beggars tick, if cut to the ground will quickly produce many flowers at that level; the seeds will still spread as they are easily transported by wind, water or water fowl.

Water transported and with stems of attractive pink flowers, willow weed can spread in a season over a large area, blocking the growth of plants we want. Blackberry plants are great ‘jumpers’; they are ever ready to pounce, and are spread by birds and by sending out long runners that are good for tripping the unwary. They anchor themselves tenaciously with a good spread and try to hide their new shoots. These need to be removed by the roots also, but often we have to resort to cutting them off at the base and painting the stump with non-residual herbicide to ensure there is no resprouting from the underground bits.

An introduced rush has a clever method of propagation; quite long flower stems produce new plants which quickly establish when they touch the soil. Honeysuckle produces masses of straggly, ropey stems which weave artfully along the ground as well as twisting upwards on a host plant; then a stray stem will sneak off and pop up where it isn’t expected. Again, cutting and painting the stem is the only sure way of getting all the roots. One hardly notices wily thistles until it’s too late, their rhizomes snake along underground and suddenly produce a mass of prickly foliage above ground – just where one hopes they won’t establish - beside a precious native plant! They are then very difficult to extricate without damaging native species.

Recently we discovered bird delivered rowan seedlings happily growing under the willows, surviving the very wet conditions there. Another challenge is the introduced pasture lotus which tangles itself among other plants; its fleshy roots well anchored. If we don’t get all of the roots the remainder grow heartily! Last but certainly not least, yorkshire fog and carnation sedge are two grassy plants that advance in a dense, matted wall on any short vegetation including patches where all those special plants we are trying to protect are found.

All these introduced species require specialized and specific attention from a team who can recognise the friends and foe and know how each is to be treated. These weeds can smother the special native plants – the sundew, orchids, etc., and block new seedlings from establishing. Without a specialized team working in this area we would have lost the very species Travis Wetland was set up to protect – often species now found nowhere else in the Christchurch plains area.

So if you see us half hidden among the tangle of plants we will be tugging, digging and wrestling with weeds. We want our precious native plants to thrive and be showcased - what would have originally grown in the wetland and more widely throughout the swampy areas of primordial Christchurch. We take great pride in ensuring their survival.

## In memory of Jenny Lineham, founding member Travis Wetland Trust

Loyal to the cause of protecting the environment, Jenny joined the Trust as a foundation member in the early 1990’s.

She was a well organised meticulous secretary who in spite of leading a very busy life always found time to work on matters connected with Travis Wetland. When we had no meeting place we met at her home in Jervios St. She kept detailed records which she gave to the New Brighton Museum.

The rights of all living creatures were of huge concern to her – we lost a truly valuable person when Jenny passed away in January of this year. Our sincere thoughts go to Celeste and her family and her long time friend David.

Jenny Lineham 1992



## Waitākiri School Arbor Day success

Windsor School was the first school to be involved with Travis Wetland and have kept coming back for 20 years. Since the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 there have been little planting activities though many environmental education visits.

Waitākiri School wish to renew this involvement, so its nice to be able to welcome them back as a new school and celebrate Arbor Day with a new generation of children. Twelve classes took part and they did a great job of planting up the edge of an area know as kotuku basin with flax, cabbage trees, kahikatea, pukio (swamp sedge) and kowhai. They also placed the combiguards around each plant which will protect them and ensure a high survival rate. There were lots of muddy hands and smiles.

We look forward to seeing them back. 😊



Waitākiri School “buddies” planting a kahikatea

## World Wetland Day Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>

- Eleanor Bissel

To Celebrate World Wetland day in our city the Avon Otakaro Network (AvON) hosted an all day tour of special Christchurch Wetlands.

Travis Wetland Rangers, John and Kenny along with Travis Wetland Trust members welcomed a large group of enthusiastic supporters of Christchurch’s special places. Mayor Leanne Dalziel, Travis Wetland Patron, spoke sincerely about the importance of saving open places for wildlife. Bus tour participants were treated to a delicious outdoor picnic lunch then a circuit walk ably led by the Trust President Colin of Meurky Walk fame. He presented the eco sanctuary concept that would link the Wetland via a wild life bridge to red zoned land.

People were treated to views of noisy, squawking water fowl especially at the bird hide and in the paddocks to the side of the trail. Among the native vegetation, planted over the last 20 years, spider webs, bag moths, admiral butterflies were sighted by those with sharp eyes. Shy lizards & stick insects used speed & camouflage their best protection against a crowd of walkers. Participants made their last stop for the tour at Bexley Wetland.



Travis Wetland Trust & AvON world wetland day 2nd Feb  
- photos Olivia Burge

## Marsh Crake confirmed at Travis Wetland

Several Marsh Crake have been recorded at different locations within Travis Wetland. This confirms the occasional sighting that marsh crake are resident here.

Faye Richards spent summer nights recording calls. Earlier Faye had used the bat boxes to survey for long-tailed bats at Travis and had recorded marsh crake calls, no bats were recorded. Long-tailed bats were recorded in Christchurch early last century

## The Flightless Crane Fly *Gynoplistia*

*pedestris* - Denise Ford

We are all familiar with the crane fly, a long legged insect that is often seen in our bathrooms (not sure why!). They belong to the family Tipulidae a member of the order Diptera, the true flies.

As all flies, they have one pair of wings and halteres which are small knobbed structures that act as gyroscopes giving the insect balance and the ability to perform rapid movements. On the crane fly these can easily be seen with the naked eye. The Tipulidae family of flies is the biggest in the world, about 15,000 species worldwide. New Zealand has about 600 species with the largest having a body length of 30 mm.

Strangely enough New Zealand has a species of crane fly which is flightless; *Gynoplistia pedestris*. This species is endemic to Canterbury and is classified as Nationally Vulnerable. McFarlane et al. (2007) found that *G. pedestris* prefers open swampy to muddy areas. He noted of 31 suitable sites sampled the fly was only found in six, Travis Wetland being one of these. He believed that urbanisation has reduced or altered the animal’s habitat leading to its conservation status of vulnerable.

Since I have read the Macfarlane report *G. pedestris* it has been sighted at the wetland on at least six occasions by myself and others. I marvel at the evolutionary pathway that has lead this insect to have such reduced wings that it has lost the ability to fly. This adaption has made it vulnerable to habitat loss and fragmentation, so it is great to see that it is surviving well in the wetland.

### References

Macfarlane, R. P., & Scott, R. R. (2007). *Styx Mill Conservation Reserve: invertebrate assessment and implications for management*. Christchurch: Christchurch City Council.



Flightless crane fly at Travis - Grahame Bell