

# Ōruapaeroa / Travis Wetland News

April 2024



## 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 weed-ing and invasive weed control. Morning tea provided.

**When:** Usually third Saturday of every month 9am to 12.00pm (may be moved to another Saturday due to Easter or Labour Weekend, check dates below).

**Where:** Meet at the Education Centre near the Beach Road car park.

**What:** Bring gumboots or boots, gardening gloves and clothing suitable for the weather and season e.g. sunhat, raincoat, warm hat.

#### Saturday Work day dates for 2024 are:

20 April, 18 May, 15 June, 20 July, 17 August, 21 September, 19 October (TFC planting day), 16 November and 21 December

## A note from the Treasurer

The Travis Wetland Trust 2024 financial year began in July 2023. A subscription renewal form will be included with this newsletter if you have not already paid a subscription for the 2024 year. The Trust account is Kiwi-bank 38-9018-0341728-00. Subscriptions may also be paid by credit card on the website page "Contact/ Membership Form" or with cash at the AGM in October. Call the treasurer if you have no suitable way to make a payment. Please help the Trust continue its restoration work at Travis Wetland by paying an annual subscription and/or making a tax-deductible donation (a receipt will be issued). The Charities Services registration number is CC24462.

Dave Evans

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## No dogs at Travis Wetland

A local resident has reported that on several occasions they have seen dogs being walked within Travis Wetland. To protect locally rare birdlife, dogs are prohibited from being anywhere in Travis Wetland Nature Heritage Park.



There are signs at the entrances to the wetland indicating that dogs are not permitted, but the dog owners claim that they have not seen the signs. The signage will be enhanced to make the prohibition more clear. A substantial fee may be charged for infringing the regulations.



## City Nature Challenge

To encourage the use of iNaturalist, a natural history observation recorder, a City Nature Challenge is held each year around the end of April. This year it's 26-29th April inclusive. Christchurch is one of several cities in Aotearoa that is participating. Points are awarded for the number of observations, the number of species observed and the number of observers. So to be competitive it's important to get as many people involved as possible – even if they make only a few observations. More information can be found at <https://inaturalist.nz/projects/city-nature-challenge-2024-otautahi-christchurch>



## Kotoreke (Marsh Crake)

Article: mostly from NZ Birds Online, image: Canadian Michael Ashbee in 2017

Last year Ranger Kenny Rose reported hearing a marsh crake in the wetland. Both marsh crakes and spotless crakes have been heard sporadically at Travis over the years. But seldom seen. Here's some information on marsh crakes from NZ Birds Online "The marsh crake is one of the most secretive New Zealand birds, largely because it inhabits dense wetland vegetation, rarely ventures into the open and usually only calls at dawn or dusk and through the night. These small rails are half the size of the common blackbird but have spectacular plumage. They appear stout or dumpy because of their short tail and relatively long legs for their body size. The upper parts are rich chestnut-brown with flecks of black and white, the under parts are grey with black-and-white bars towards the flanks, the eye is bright red, the beak green and the legs olive. Very little is known of their ecology."



"Voice: the marsh crake's territorial and courtship calls can make them conspicuous in spring, but they generally only call at night. They have a range of calls including: kreeek, trrrrrr (combing), krakrakragagaga.. and krehehehe."

It's wonderful to have such a rare bird living at Travis Wetland.

## Special Butterflies Introduced to Travis

Article: Eleanor Bissell and images: Eleanor and John Dunlop

Over a year ago the plants of *Muehlenbeckia axillaris* and *M. ephedroides* were planted in a sunny spot near the pathway into the Wetland by the Wednesday Volunteers. The planting was most successful, proving the spot was correct.

Establishing habitat the butterflies thrive in today was a massive amount of toil and persistence, carried out by Ranger Kenny and his resilient summer worker Darcie.

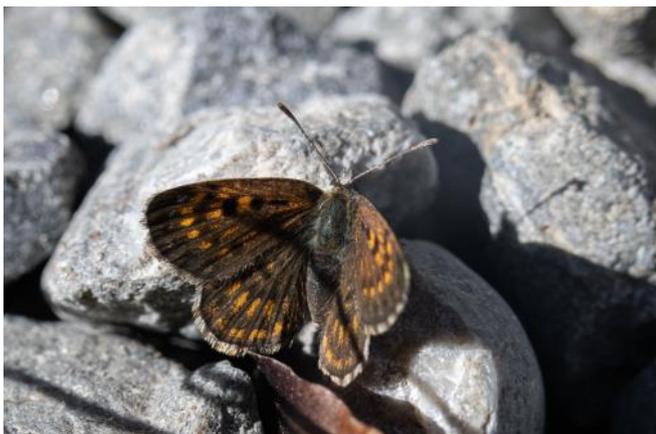
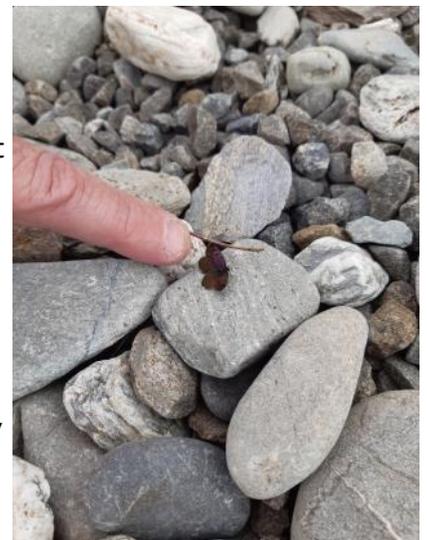
First they used a digger to clear the grassed area of soil which then had to be disposed of. Many loads of gravel and large stones were brought on site and unloaded; very heavy work well done.

This October saw Brian Patrick release 12 Boulder copper butterflies into the new habitat – six males and six females. They love the warm stones, which also camouflages them, but with careful observation they are visible. When they are active one can spot the females, which are orange

with some blue, while the males are shiny purple with some orange.

Brian says the greenish larvae are difficult to spot; they feed out of sight on the flowers and leaves. The adults fly low, feed on nectar from the flowers and so help pollinate the flowers. They live for about two weeks. Boulder copper larvae survive through the winter and emerge as adults in late spring.

We are grateful to Brian for his huge interest in the habitat at Travis, which is attracting lots of attention from the public. Thank you Brian.





Poaka, juvenile Pied Stilt



Bumble Bee, *Bombus terrestris*



Fruiting kahikatea



Kakīānau, Black Swan

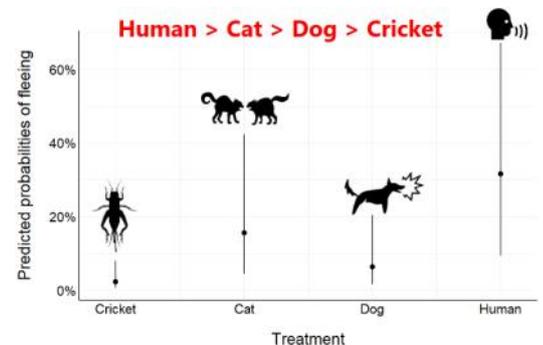
Images: Grahame

## Non-lethal Cat Management

Article: Dave Evans, graphic Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research

At last year's Travis Wetland Trust AGM, Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research scientists Sze-Wing Yiu and Patrick Garvey spoke about a 2-year project which aims to investigate possibilities for repelling cats from wildlife reserves. The proposed approach is to use sounds to scare the cats away and is taking place over locations in Christchurch, Auckland and Wellington. The reserves being studied in Christchurch are Travis and the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve. Cats are serious invasive predators, but there is not a lot of public support for the containment of domestic cats. There is also little support for using lethal force against cats where there is the possibility of the presence of domestic cats. Therefore non-lethal means for repelling cats from the reserves are being sought.

It has been found in North America that the presence of humans and dogs is sufficient to repel raccoons and mountain lions. Could the same thing work for cats in NZ? The project started with feral cats in a large pen and 4 different sound cues. The cues were people talking, a dog barking, a noisy cat confrontation and crickets chirping. Results showed that people's voices were best at deterring cats, followed by the cat confrontation, the dog barking and least of all the crickets. Cats were deterred from returning once they had experienced a sound that scared them away.



The next project phase is monitoring of the reserves using a trail camera to measure cat intrusion rates. Over six sites at Travis at least 31 cats and 150 encounters were recorded. Four cats ranged widely enough to be recorded at multiple widely spaced sites. Analysis of the data is still proceeding.

The third phase was a field trial to test the effectiveness of the sound cues from the first phase. When the trail camera is triggered at night by the presence of an animal (usually a cat) a selected sound cue is played over an adjacent speaker. Early results are positive, but testing and analysis is continuing. Ideally the sound cue would not only scare the cat away, but also deter it from returning to the area. One encounter showed that Paradise Shelducks were not very alarmed by the cat confrontation noise.

## October Planting Day

Article: Sue Britain, images: John Dunlop

This was our big planting day for the year and it was a real team effort. Trees for Canterbury generously provided the plants, plus some more from the Travis Wetland budget. A hardy team of Travis volunteers turned out in the wet and cold on Friday morning to put plants in place at the northern edge of the southern woods.



Saturday morning dawned fine and sunny and more than 60 people came to help with planting. Trees for Canterbury, rangers and Travis Wetland Trust volunteers did a fine job to make the morning run smoothly at the planting site. Conditions were soggy underfoot in places, though sunshine and views of fresh snow on the mountains lifted spirits. It was pleasant planting in small clearings with some shelter from flax and small shrubs. Over 1000 specimens were planted including sedges, flax, mānuka and small-leafed shrubs. Travis Wetland Trust volunteers provided tasty BBQ food to hungry planters at the end of the morning. Unfortunately we ran short of sausages at the very end, our sincere apologies if you missed out.

On Monday morning a team of wetland volunteers and members of our regular IDEAS team worked hard to get all excess plants into shade houses with a regular water supply. Travis volunteers will plant these out in suitable spots over the coming weeks. Great work everyone!



## Bug Hunting at Travis

Article and image: Denise Ford

The Canterbury Branch of the Entomology Society of New Zealand had their first event for the year at Travis Wetland on the 27th of February. A range of people, young and old showed up and went searching for all sorts of bugs. One neat find was a population of stick insects, with at least 15 on one narrow-leaved Lace-bark tree!

Then a bunch of cool flying insects came to the light trap once it was dark. One moth of particular note was *Proteuxoa sanguinipuncta*. The species name for this moth *sanguinipuncta* means blood spotted noctuid, due to the distinctive red spot in the middle of its fore wings.

The evening was a great success and was enjoyed by everyone. It is always exciting to get out and see the amazing diversity of bugs there is.



### 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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