

Aerial view of Travis Wetland, 2013

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 9am 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.

Work day dates for 2015/16 are:

- **19 December 2015**
- **16 January 2016**
- **20 February 2016**
- **19 March 2016**
- **16 April 2016**

A note from Treasurer Dave Evans

The Travis Wetland Trust financial year begins in July and those who have not paid a subscription in the past few months 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 are sure you have paid, but receive a form all the same, then contact the Trust treasurer Dave Evans and he will correct his records.

Dave Evans
Treasurer
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Welcome Swallow, *Hirundo tahitica*

- Grahame Bell



The open wetland of Travis and abundant small flying insects make for a perfect habitat for these elegant birds. With their orange face and metallic blue wings they would be one of the easiest of the wetlands permanent residents to spot. Before the late

1950's Welcome Swallow were rare vagrants to New Zealand. The first known birds to breed in NZ was in 1958. Spring is breeding time and their mud and grass cup shaped nests are a common site attached to man made structures. Have a look round the roof and outside corners of the bird hide next time your in there and you'll be sure to spot a few of their nests. If your lucky you may see them arrive with food for the youngsters or bills full of mud to patch up or build their nests. Breeding season is from August - March. During this time they can raise up to 3 broods with an average of 4 eggs laid each time. The fledging period averages 21 days. Welcome Swallow probably breed at 1 year old with New Zealand's oldest recorded bird being 6 years old.



"Wetland Ecosystems in a Changing World" Professor Angus Macintosh

Following the recent Travis AGM, Professor Angus McIntosh, Deputy Head of School at Biological Sciences at the University of Canterbury, gave a fascinating talk on "Wetland Ecosystems in a Changing World". Of particular relevance to Travis was the work of Angus and his students on brown mudfish (waikaka/hauhau, *Neochanna apoda*). This species of mudfish is found on the West Coast and survives best where their predators can't reach them. In Saltwater Forest, South Westland, this turns out to be the isolated pools created when a large tree topples and its root ball erupts from the swamp. Although mudfish are rare and endangered, they can be present in large numbers in these pools.

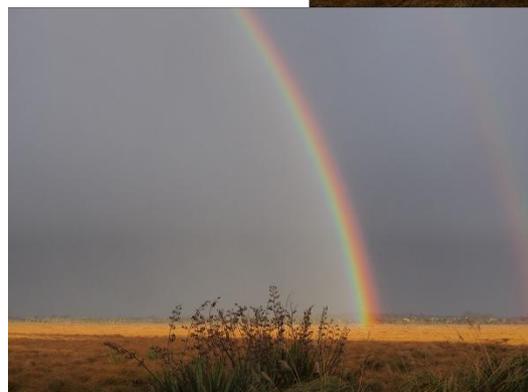
Mudfish can survive in water with extremely low dissolved oxygen, much lower than that tolerated by other fish – most notably the eels and other fish that predate upon the mudfish. They can also survive periods of drought by respiring through the skin of their bellies. However, they won't thrive and reproduce in such conditions and it's estimated that a significant proportion of the brown mudfish population perished in the severe drought on the West Coast in the summer of 2012/13. Times of major flood can also be good and bad for mudfish. When the forest floods mudfish can spread out and colonise new root-ball holes, but it also means that the eels can reach the mudfish strongholds and gobble them all up.



Adult non-native mosquito, *Aedes notoscriptus* photographed in Christchurch

What is the significance of this for Travis? Canterbury mudfish (kōwaro, *Neochanna burrowsius*) were reintroduced into Travis Wetland in 2011, but no survivors have been found here over the past couple of years. This could be because we are looking in the wrong location, but it is also likely that they have been eaten by eels. To minimise the possibility of this we need to separate them from eels with a physical barrier that can't be overtopped in a flood. It must also be a body of water that dries out as infrequently as possible, so should be relatively deep. The Canterbury mudfish is Nationally Endangered and suitable habitat on the Canterbury Plains is being lost through the spread of intensive farming. It would wonderful if we could provide a refuge for them at Travis.

Images from Travis Wetland



A new Podocarp forest in the east.

Imagine a new Riccarton Bush on the east side of town. Since 2006 the Travis Wetland Trust, Trees for Canterbury and Christchurch City Council rangers have been creating what will become a lowland podocarp forest similar to Riccarton Bush. Four hectares of the planned six hectare forest has just been completed. More than 36,000 plants have been planted at this site between 2006 and 2015. In time this area will be wonderful habitat for our native bush birds, invertebrates and lizards.

On September 19th forty-five people were on-site despite the cold southerly wind and rain. The volunteers included families with young children and for some people this was their first experience of a planting event! It was great to see the children out planting. Everyone worked steadily so that in two hours we had planted 1300 plants after which we warmed up with a barbeque lunch.

A big thank you to Trees For Canterbury who have provided ongoing support for this project, this weekend donating 930 plants to match the Council's contribution.

If you are interested in getting more involved with parks and other volunteer opportunities go to www.ccc.govt.nz/parks-and-gardens/get-involved-with-parks/



New Trust Website

Currently the Travis website is under going an update bringing us into line with current best practices.

The new site is based on a "responsive" code base ie whatever resolution or type of device you view it on it will automatically rescale itself and the images to fit the device.

The Travis field guide book is being incorporated into it with the intention of using QR codes on the numbered posts around the track to link to the website pages.

Currently the site is in the process of being moved to a new host, this will allow us to store more content than with the current host and hopefully provide more reliability. This move will not be noticeable to users.

Go and have a look the new version of the site, www.traviswetland.org.nz

Pōkākā (*Elaeocarpus hookerianus*)

- Dave Evans

Pōkākā is not a tree that gets a lot of coverage. It's a "cousin" of the better known Hinau, which grows as far south as Christchurch, but no further. Perhaps Hinau is better known to me only because I come from the North Island where it is more common than it is around Christchurch. Pōkākā tolerates colder conditions than Hinau and is found at higher altitudes and over the whole country. It's not an uncommon tree, but never dominates the forest. I've often seen it in the Canterbury foothills near Oxford and remember one occasion when I thought I'd found a place where deer had been loitering, but it was actually Pōkākā fruit scattered over the track beneath the tree. That was on the track between View Hill and Coopers Creek. Incidentally, this is an area well worth visiting as there is a wide diversity of native trees growing there and some are still labelled as they were in the NZ Forest Service days. One day there will be a corresponding diversity of mature native flora at Travis Wetland!

Pōkākā would have grown naturally at Travis and some have been planted and done well here. The image of a Pōkākā shown here is of a tree growing in the Millenium Forest, by the path to the bird hide. It clearly shows both the juvenile foliage on the lower part of the tree and the adult foliage on the upper part. This is a common habit of NZ trees: the juvenile tree is divaricating and has small leaves and the larger adult leaves only appear once the tree is gaining some height. This may be an adaptation to browsing by Mōa, but this theory is in dispute and hard to test. Divaricating foliage also often persists on the windier side of the tree. For the tree pictured the juvenile foliage is actually fairly evenly distributed.



I've not yet seen them, but the lacy white Pōkākā flowers come in attractive sprays and appear from late spring to early summer. I must regularly check this tree out for flowers in the near future. The fleshy drupes are dispersed by frugivory, which is a cool way of saying that fruit eating birds spread the seed.



I have read that Pōkākā is becoming popular with landscapers for its intricate and multi-coloured juvenile foliage. It deserves wider planting as it can grow into an attractive tree up to 15m tall. It prefers deep, moist soils.

Thanks to Grahame Bell for the images and the NZ Plant Conservation Network for information on Pōkākā.

T-shirts



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

Check the website www.traviswetland.org.nz for details and ordering.

Travis Wetland – a vital biodiversity cameo in the Christchurch 360 Trail

- Colin Meurk

The *Christchurch 360 Trail* (<http://christchurch360trail.org.nz/>) was launched on 3rd October at Bexley, overlooking wetlands and wading birds. Deputy Mayor, Vickie Buck cut the ribbon and a few dozen people headed off on the first (part) segment to *Travis Wetland* – sharing stories about the natural and cultural history of the lower Otakaro-Avon River, learning along the way about *Greening the Red Zone* (<https://www.facebook.com/GreeningtheRedZone/>) and the *Waitakere eco-sanctuary* proposal that will provide for a predator-proofed haven for iconic and locally extinct wildlife. About 25 people carried on to *Travis Wetland* where Phil Teague and fellow-travellers provided a welcome coffee and biscuit stop before we finished up at the bird hide, information kiosk and education centre. I stayed on to the next morning when another bunch of walkers accompanied us through to Spencer Park – one of three guided walks on the 360 trail provided for the *Christchurch Walking Festival*. CCC, Rotary and Canterbury Horticultural Society have been important sponsors for this project – which has had almost a quarter century gestation! These partial legs of the 360 Trail were the beginning of a 9 day walk with friends around the entire 140 km perimeter of the City. The whole point of it is to capture the major natural features, landscapes and habitats in and around the city – to show case our immense diversity, not just a flat English parks and homes, but with crashing seas on coastal cliffs, harbour views, beaches, estuaries meandering braids of mighty rivers, wetlands, gardens and parks – in the Avonhead-Ilam sector. Natural and Gondwanic elements (Riccarton Bush) are interwoven with the cultural history – stretching back to the first peoples of the land (tangata whenua), European settlers, tracking through to wartime gun emplacements guarding the harbours, on to the contemporary fusion. So many metres, so many stories. Travis is one of those precious gems that under-scores our claim to being an eco-city. The natural history of Travis is abundantly displayed through the lens of <http://naturewatch.org.nz/projects/travis-wetland-nature-heritage-park> or should I say Grahame's superb lens; and the 1500 additional observations for the whole perimeter can be seen on the 360 Trail website. We are making a difference and contributing so much to the natural character of the City – not just as a home for the plants, animals and fungi resident in the wetland, but as a food source and stepping stone for wildlife cruising further afield.

BNZ – Closed for Good

For one day each year the BNZ closes its doors 'for good' so that BNZers can lend a hand and make a difference in the community. So on the 2nd of September this year a crew of 10 from the BNZ came to do some planting and plant maintenance. We were lucky with the weather and had a fine, warm day in a week that was generally wet. CCC ranger staff and a few Trust board members were on hand to direct and join in the work. Excellent progress was made planting and releasing near Beach Rd. We're very grateful for the massive effort of the team and it was a great start to our spring planting season. We'll be



Travis Wetland Trust Meetings

The Travis Wetland Trust board meets monthly on the Tuesday following the work day, from 6.30 pm – 8.30 pm at the Travis Wetland Education Centre. The board extends a welcome to all who wish to attend.

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Twitter

Travis Wetland is now on Twitter! If you are a Twitter user you can follow our tweets on <https://twitter.com/TavisWetland>.

JADE

Recently a group of staff from JADE were able to help us complete the fitting of the combi-guards around the new plants at totaramatai forest. This help was very timely as it enabled us to complete the seasons work at this site before the norwesters arrived. Thanks to Volunteering Canterbury for organising this and we look forward to this support from JADE being an annual event.

The bird above is in breeding plumage as shown by the plumes on the head and the faint yellow wash across the breast.

