



October 2019

Travis Wetland News

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: Third Saturday of every month 9am to 12.30pm.

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 2019/20 are:

- 19 October, 16 November and 21 December
- 18 January, 15 February and 21 March
- 18 April, 16 May and 20 June

A note from the Treasurer

The Travis Wetland Trust financial year began in July and those who have not already paid a subscription for the 2019-20 year will have a subscription form posted to them. **Note that the Trust has moved its account to Kiwi-bank 38-9018-0341728-00** . 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 your subscription, but receive a form all the same, then contact the Trust treasurer so he can correct his records.

Dave Evans

dave.evansii@gmail.com

366-0628 (H) 021-0437128

Spring Planting Day

– Dave Evans

After three wet work days in a row we were very pleased to get a beautiful day for the big Spring planting day in September. Trees for Canterbury donate many plants for this day and promote it to their network of supporters so there is always a really big turn out and this year was no exception.

The rangers and helpers from the Trust had set out the plants over the days before the event, so that was a task that didn't have to be rushed on the Saturday morning. That was great because it was really hectic as the 250+ volunteers poured onto the site from just before 10am.

The planting was over with pretty quickly and the hungry workers headed back to the Education Centre for a BBQ. Many thanks to everyone who helped make the day such a success and especially to Trees for Canterbury for the donation of so many fabulous plants.



Christchurch
City Council



Grey Teal, Tētē

- Article: Dave Evans (with help from NZ Birds Online), Image: Grahame Bell

The grey teal is a native dabbling duck that self introduced from Australia. (Dabbling means that they feed by moving the bill back and forth just below the surface or on the bottom in shallow water.) It is considerably smaller than a mallard and is mostly grey-brown. The eye is bright crimson and the bill dark grey. They are common in Canterbury, especially at Te Waihora / Lake Ellesmere where typically 10-20,000 of them are counted in February each year. They are fully protected, but even so it has been found that two thirds die in the first year of life. Even though they are protected at least 6% of the population are shot during the duck hunting season. Non-human predators take their toll too.

Grey teal are normally nocturnal feeders but are frequently seen foraging at dawn or dusk. The bulk of their diet is plant material (mostly seeds), but they also take insects, molluscs and crustaceans. Grey teal can be seen at Travis all year round, though their number does tend to fluctuate. The best place to see them is from the bird hide. Look on the logs to either side of the hide and most of the birds on the logs are grey teal. They love the new log recently added by the rangers (see p4).



Swamp Harrier, Kāhu

- Article: Dave Evans (with help from NZ Birds Online), Image: Grahame Bell

Have you seen the swamp harriers (hawks) flying over the wetland recently? For me they are a sign of spring as they circle lazily, high overhead and calling intermittently. Their call is a series of same note, high-pitched, short, sharp “kee-o kee-o.” At other times of the year they are generally silent. Courtship displays continue through this month and eggs are laid between October and December. Incubation is done solely by the female and I read that food is passed from male to female in dramatic aerial manoeuvres where the female turns upside down to take the food from the male.

Swamp harriers breed at Travis Wetland and their nest has been found out in the middle, beyond the central willows. They are one of the birds that has increased in number due to the arrival of Europeans and their land clearance. Although carrion is a major component of the harrier's diet, it also actively hunts live prey such as small birds, mammals and insects.



KCC Kids Outing at Travis

- Article: Eleanor Bissell Images: Fiona Miller and Eleanor Bissell

Kiwi Conservation Club Kids set out on a sunny afternoon along the trail to Mairehau Rd to learn more about the birds at Travis. [Kids were quick to spot several cats along the way.] Goldfinches enjoying the tiny fruit of the Tororaro flew as the group approached. Tucked in a sheltered corner on shrubby bushes of Tororaro, bag moths, katydids and mantis were making the most of the end of warm summer sun. Bag moths fed on the leaves and several mantis cases were spotted on the branches. Some crane flies that had avoided being bird food rested there.



Species included were: porcupine plant (*Melicytus alpinus*), karamū (*Coprosma robusta*), creeping pohuehue (*Muehlenbeckia axillaris*), lemonwood (*Pittosporum eugenoides*), shrub daisy (*Olearia paniculata*), sticky seeds (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*), toetoe (*Austroderia richardii*), false fingers (*Pseudopanax* sp.), pretty red berries (*Lophomyrtus obcordata*).

Back at the Education Centre playing a predator prey game [especially as some of the parents were the predators] demonstrated difficulties birds face while nesting, feeding and even when resting; the reason for predator control. Examples of the predators were shown; a weasel, ferret & hedgehog. [Thank you Bottle Lake H. Q. for the loan of the specimens.] Fiona raced around pretending to cut trees with a model chainsaw. This reminded all that lots of places like Travis Wetland are needed for the birds and their continued existence.

Children then examined various bird nests, felt how cosy & warm the linings were for the baby birds, some nests with feathers & others with moss and wool. Examining bird feathers including some penguin feathers [after moulting] given by Kristina & Thomas. Deciding what their purpose was proved interesting and informative. Flight feathers so different to downy ones that keep the bird warm. Any other creatures with feathers? Why do birds moult? Are feathers alive or dead?

The programme finished with a walk to the Bird Hide to watch swans ruffling their feathers & calling to one another, shoveler ducks and other water birds flying and feeding.

Thank you Travis Rangers & C. C. C. for the use of the Education Centre.

Kids were able to examine the adaptations of bird legs & feet when they unwrapped parcels of preserved sets of legs complete with feet. Hawk legs with feet so different from pūkeko and other water birds; a furry rabbit foot to compare!

Tongs, pliers, chop sticks, spoons. They quickly figured out food types for birds from the assemblage of kitchen tools used to demonstrate beak adaptations.

The kids also made 'birdie pizzas' from the seeds & fruit at Travis.



Enhancements at Travis

- Article: Dave Evans, Images: John Skilton and Grahame Bell

In early May new bird perching logs were dragged into place in the main pond. Rangers Kenny, Hannah and Dave showed great ingenuity in using mussel farm floats salvaged from the coast adjacent to Bottle Lake Forest to move the heavy logs out into the middle of the pond. This will please the water fowl greatly as the logs they have been using for several years have decayed and slowly disappeared below the water's surface.



The Beach Road entrance and car park were sealed in early April. It's a massive improvement from the bumpy, pot-holed road we had when they started work.

Early in May a new entrance sign was installed at the Beach Rd entrance to Travis Wetland. It includes the name Ōruapaeroa, which refers to the village established by Māori adjacent to



Travis Wetland about 750 years ago, on the site of the current Queen Elizabeth II Park. The swamp served them as a mahinga kai – a site providing sustenance for body, mind and spirit. Waterfowl and weka gathered at the wetland fed the people and could be traded throughout Canterbury.

Memorial Seat Installed

- Article: Dave Evans, Image: John Rice

At a ceremony on Saturday 11 May a seat by the main pond was dedicated to the memory of long-time Travis volunteer and Trust member Charlie Catt. The seat is on the south-east edge of the pond, adjacent to the walkway and not far from the old stock yards. It provides a delightful place for quiet contemplation of the bird life on the pond and is surrounded by youthful forest giants – a kahikatea, a mataī and a tōtara.



Travis Wetland Trust Meetings

The Travis Wetland Trust board meets monthly on the Thursday 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.

Travis Wetland Contacts

John Skilton, CCC Park Ranger, Travis Wetland
Phone: 941 8999

Email: john.skilton@ccc.govt.nz

Sean Ward, Chair, Travis Wetland Trust

Phone: 388 5431

Email: wardos365@gmail.com

Mail:

The Secretary
Travis Wetland Trust
280 Beach Road, Burwood
Christchurch 8083

Travis Wetland Trust Website: www.traviswetland.org.nz

Email: info@traviswetland.org.nz

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TravisWetland

Twitter: If you are a Twitter user, follow our tweets!
<https://twitter.com/TravisWetland>