

June 2020



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 2020 are (COVID-19 restrictions permitting):

- 15 June, 20 July, 17 August
- 14 September, 19 October and 16 November

A note from the Treasurer

The Travis Wetland Trust financial year ends in June so we won't be requesting subscription payments at this time of the year. If, however, you wish to make a donation it will be gladly accepted. **The Trust account is Kiwi-bank 38-9018-0341728-00 but we are still able to bank cheques into a Westpac account.** Please help the Trust continue its work at Travis Wetland by paying an annual subscription and/or making a tax-deductible donation. Subscription forms will be sent out with the next newsletter, prior to the AGM in October.

Dave Evans

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Travis Wetland and COVID-19

– Dave Evans

The past couple of months have been quite extraordinary for all of us, but the wildlife at Travis Wetland has just carried on regardless. It looks less tidy without our ministrations, but aside from a few pest plants and animals that haven't been controlled you couldn't say that the place has deteriorated. It serves to remind us that the planet doesn't need us and isn't here just for us to exploit either.

I hope you and your loved ones have endured the lockdown and are now able to return to more normal operation. The economic effects of the virus have been extreme and I hope you are not one of those who has lost your livelihood. If you have may you find alternative employment soon. Rest assured that your Travis Newsletter won't be cut off if you are unable to pay a subscription until you're back on your feet.



Christchurch
City Council



Shrubby Tororaro

- Article: Dave Evans (with quote from Wikipedia, Images: Colin Meurk and Dave Evans)

On the February work day Colin noted that the Shrubby Tororaro bushes by the path were in flower. Shrubby Tororaro, or *Muehlenbeckia astonii*, is an interesting plant. As Wikipedia says: "Although common in cultivation around the world, it is extremely rare and threatened in the wild." You may have heard of recent disputes over irrigation and land clearance on Kaitorete Spit. *Muehlenbeckia astonii* was at the centre of the dispute because Kaitorete Spit is where most of the wild population of it lives. "Its former range is hard to determine, as the species was only recognised by botanists decades after most of New Zealand's dry scrublands had been cleared for agriculture. Its deep root system helps it survive in dry conditions." It has tiny flowers, which are quite fleshy, and through the winter they swell into tiny fruit. "These fruits are sugary and edible, eaten by birds and lizards (which disperse the seeds), and by mice (which pulverise and kill the seed)." Unusually for a NZ plant it is deciduous.



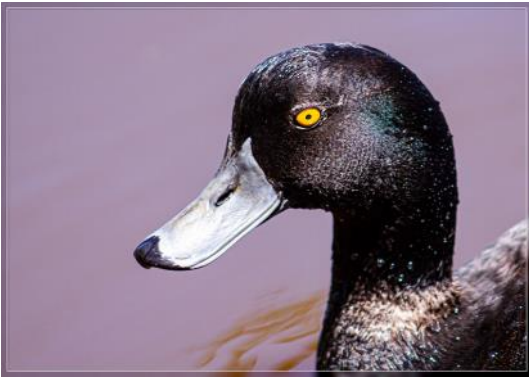
Looking at the way it grows in my garden it's hard to understand why it's rare in the wild. It's taking over. It's a great wind break and I love the way its flowers and fruit attract silvereyes. I used some prunings to mark a row of carrots and they are sprouting vigorously. It's a real battle to get the prunings into the green bin as it's strongly divaricating and very springy. "Three wild populations (at Cape Campbell, Balmoral Conservation Area, and Kaitorete Scientific Reserve) have legal protection and are undergoing restoration. Once threats are removed, wild populations of *M. astonii* appear to respond rapidly, so there is an excellent chance that this endangered species will recover."

Lizard Garden at Education Centre

- Article: Dave, Images Grahame and Eleanor

Last year, with advice from Eleanor Bissell and Colin Meurk, the rangers Kenny, Dave and Hannah constructed a lizard garden on the western side of the Education Centre. Initially it was made from the original Halswell Quarry piles taken from under the building when it had its earthquake repairs. Later more natural Halswell Quarry stone and driftwood from the beach was used to extend and naturalise the garden. Plants from the Travis shade house nursery and Trees for Canterbury were added to provide habitat, cover and food for the lizards. A skink has been seen there on a few occasions, but it's not yet overrun by lizards. Perhaps as the plants grow to provide better refuges from the local cats more lizards will move in.





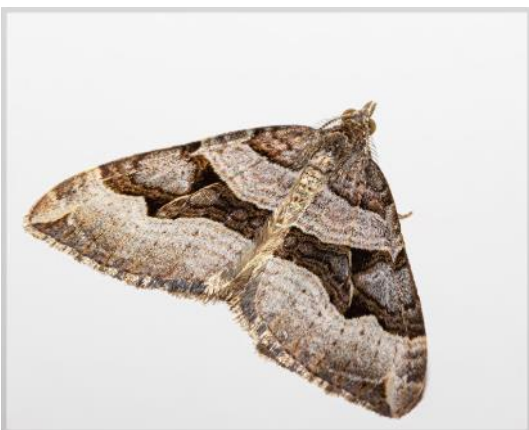
Male Scaup



Common Skink



Black Swans



Xanthorhoe semifissata

Images: Grahame

Scotch Thistle Gall Fly

- Article and images: Grahame

In the late 1990s a farmer from Wellsford – the late John Foster – led a campaign, via the local beef and lamb monitor farm group, to introduce into New Zealand an insect parasite to control scotch thistles. It was eventually released in Northland just before Christmas 1998, then later on in Canterbury, Marlborough and Southland.



This insect, known as the scotch thistle gall fly – *Urophora stylata* – is somewhat smaller than a house fly, deposits its eggs on the buds and flowers of the thistle. Upon hatching, the larvae bore into the centre of the seed head and devour the developing seed.

Urophora stylata is a species of gall fly in the genus *Urophora* and is a biocontrol agent of the thistles in genus *Cirsium* or *Carduus*. It prefers the Scotch thistle *Cirsium vulgare* but occasionally attacks the flower heads of the Californian thistle but does not produce a gall. It joins the Nodding thistle gall fly and the Californian thistle gall fly as a biocontrol agent in the battle against thistle in NZ.

As with most thistles, Scotch thistle decreases animal production by reducing the amount of pasture that livestock are prepared to eat as they avoid eating grass beside the spiny leaves, and also the spiny vegetation and seed pappus can decrease the quality of wool if they get into the fleeces of sheep. The cost of California thistle in lost pastoral farm revenue each year in NZ has been estimated to be around \$700 million per year.



Daphne Banks

- Article and Image: Eleanor Bissell

Last November Travis Wetland Trust life member Daphne Banks passed away peacefully. Daphne had been active at Travis Wetland over many years and many of the photographs on the walls of the Education Centre, from the early



years of the Trust, are hers. Here Eleanor Bissell shares some poignant memories of Daphne.

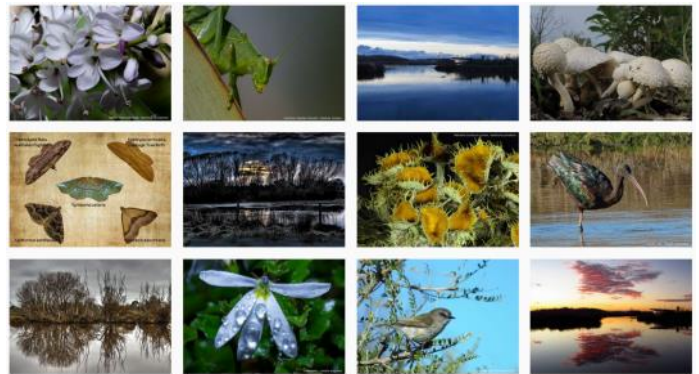
Daphne joined the Travis Mānuka group in 1996. She loved to be involved, not only with the native plants, but weed clearance. This involved grubbing, chopping, sawing, digging and pulling at blackberry, gorse, broom and young willows; all done with alacrity for the benefit of the native plants at the Wetland. She would point out multifarious precious species and with gentle finger & thumb weeding carefully eliminate 'unwants'. She was never too tired to photograph our work progress and the plants. Her camera was her constant companion.

Always ready when I called to pick her up, she was usually 'weeding' along her driveway while waiting! On the way we discussed plants of course and our next action plan. Caring for those special plants and increasing their numbers was Daphne's passion, obsession? All our special ones were her favourites. She collected seed raised them at home and then planted them at the Wetland.

Daphne had an adventurous spirit which guided her gumboots into areas where I wouldn't venture! [I did cautiously follow!] One foray took us into the middle of Travis as she & Colin Meurk had previously spotted remnant *Ranunculus glaberrimus*. We gathered several small pieces, which she took home and lovingly grew on, before returning them as healthy well grown specimens. Now the plant pops up in various locations – a welcome reminder of Daphne.

Travis 2021 Calendar

Grahame has selected some of his best images of Travis Wetland for a 2021 calendar. This is to raise funds for the Trust. We plan to have it available for posting out by September this year, in plenty of time for you to receive it and post to friends overseas for Christmas. We'll be taking orders for the calendar, as printing more than we can sell would be a drain on funds, rather than a fund-raiser. Cost will be \$20 each plus post and packing within NZ. Collection at a Trust work day will also be an option. To get a better look at the beautiful images and to order calendars look for the Calendar page under Products on the website (traviswetland.org.nz), or if you don't have Internet access call Dave Evans on 366 0628.



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.

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