

October 2020



Ōruapaeroa / 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):

- 17 October, 21 November and 19 December
- 16 January, 20 February and 20 March 2021

A note from the Treasurer

The Travis Wetland Trust financial year ends in June so subscriptions for the 2021 year are now due. A subscription renewal form will be included with this newsletter if you have not already paid for this year. **The Trust account is Kiwibank 38-9018-0341728-00 and we are still able to bank cheques into a Westpac account. Subscriptions may also be paid by credit card on the website page "Contact/Membership Form".** Please help the Trust continue its restoration work at Travis Wetland by paying an annual subscription and/or making a tax-deductible donation.

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Damage to Vegetation

In August a letter was sent to the residents of the houses that border on the wetland along Travis Country Drive. There had been an increase in damage to the plantings that act as a buffer between the houses and the wetland. The letter reminded the residents that any unauthorised or unconsented cutting of vegetation within Ōruapaeroa / Travis Wetland Nature Heritage Park is an infringement of district plan rules.

The purpose of the rules is to ensure that an ecological buffer zone of vegetation exists between the houses and the reserve to offset visual effects of buildings and ensure plants, animals and other natural features remain undisturbed.

Residents requiring information on pruning vegetation bordering a park or reserve should contact the Christchurch City Council on 03 941 8999, who will put you in touch with one of the rangers to discuss any concerns with the vegetation.

John Skilton - CCC Ranger

The Trust board was very sad not to be able to celebrate in April the 20th anniversary of John Skilton's arrival as ranger for Travis Wetland. This coincided with a significant birthday for him and we sent special messages from the board along with a collection of images from the past two fantastic decades for Travis Wetland. Trust president, Colin Meurk, wrote:

"Travis Wetland Trust (and his CCC employers) have been truly blessed to have such a dedicated, wisely competent ranger as John Skilton as our partner on the Ōruapaeroa journey. We have never seen him as a mere council functionary; rather John has been one of us, a true friend. He clearly shares the joy in working on this wonderful project with us; it never seemed like it was a chore to John, but a labour of love. Always willing to go the extra mile to make things happen, we know that behind the scenes there is so much he does to produce conservation outcomes and user experience that to many will be taken for granted."

Christchurch
City Council



New Bird Identification Panels in Bird Hide

- Article: John Skilton

New identification panels for the birds found at Ōruapaeroa / Travis Wetland are in place at the bird hide. The drawings are by Dave Gunson, from the book "Which New Zealand Bird?" by Andrew Crowe (Penguin Books). His drawings are wonderfully clear and accurate. Ngāi Tahu names have been used as many birds are Taonga species. These may be different from names in common use e.g. Raipo (NZ Scaup), Pākura (Pūkeko). The birds have been grouped according to their species assemblage and the panels have a colourful graphic background which indicates their habitat.

The new panels show off some of the native birds including birds that are rarely seen but which have colonised Ōruapaeroa as restoration has improved habitat. This includes the globally endangered Matuku hūrepo (Australasian Bittern) and a seasonal visitor to the wetland, Pīpīwharau (Shining Cuckoo), which may be heard in Spring when they are searching for Riroriro (Grey Warbler) nests to lay their eggs in.

Thank you to Dave Gunson for allowing us to use his images.



Dripping Bore at the Education Centre

- Article: Eleanor Bissell, Images Grahame and Eleanor

We decided it was time to feature a prominent farm relic which has survived! We loved the rusty old pipe at the Beach Rd entrance, from which drips underground water. 2018 saw Rangers Kenny, Dave & Summer-worker Hannah bringing in hefty logs not only to feature, but to protect our very special wetland plants. Logs now form a protective barrier around the edge as best we don't trample there.

Silverstream [near Kaiapoi] volunteers gave us a plant of *Gratiola sexdentata* a first for Travis Wetland. To make this an interesting thriving community we have added tiny mostly overlooked species. So take a few minutes to see how many different plants you can spot. A native buttercup with a pretty yellow flower in early summer, a native orchid, a native lily, rushes, and some dryland 'tinies' nearer the large information sign. Of course you will spot 'weeds' too — we are working on them!



Now not only ducks & pūkeko enjoy the water but our bush birds have joined the queue waiting for an opportunity to bathe, especially on those hot days we had last summer. The sparrows queue, splash, then go & roll in the dust bowls! We have even watched at close range a bellbird cooling off!



Australasian Bittern



Birds Nest Fungus



Kowhai

Images: Grahame

Australasian Bittern

- Article and images: Grahame

In April and May a Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) was seen at Travis several times by folks walking round the track. This is unusual as Bittern are secretive birds and not generally seen out in the open. Bittern are masters of camouflage with their cryptic plumage blending into their usual habitat of Raupō and reeds along pond and stream edges. They also stand with their heads pointing at the sky necks slowly waving in the breeze in time with the surrounding foliage.

While Bittern are found throughout New Zealand, as well as parts of Australia and New Caledonia, they are in no way common. These native birds are listed as Threatened—Nationally Critical, the highest rating on our scale of threatened species. The New Zealand population of these birds is less than 1000, possibly way less. When Europeans first arrived in NZ they were reasonably abundant, unfortunately we have lost 90% of our natural inland wetlands since the mid 1800s. In addition, 74 percent of our remaining wetlands are less than 10 ha in size, foolishly we are still continuing the practice of draining our wetlands.

This amount of habitat destruction makes areas like Travis even more important both as habitat for wetland critters and the filtration it provides to the water flowing through it. This can make Bittern an indicator of wetland health because they are dependent on the presence of high quality and ecologically diverse habitats and rich food supplies. As well as habitat loss Bittern face pressure from predators like ferrets, stoats and feral cats.

At one stage it was thought that Bittern didn't move far from "home" but results from recent tracking studies show they move over large areas traveling from patch to patch of usable habitat. Currently the longest known migration of a Bittern is one of 330 km, a male that flew from Te Waihora / Lake Ellesmere to Blenheim. Those of you that have been reading the newsletters for a few years may remember the pair of Bittern that had a couple of youngsters at Travis in 2015. Unfortunately the young ones went walkabouts and were taken into care and released at sites other than Travis.

So on your next wander around Travis keep your eyes open for this elusive and secretive bird (it has been observed this Spring too). Even if you don't see it take a moment to reflect on how lucky we are to have such an important resource in the middle of an urban area.

IDEA Services Team

- Article and Images: Eleanor Bissell

IDEA Services (a part of IHC) have a Conservation Team based in the cottage adjacent to the Education Centre at Travis. Careful supervision by Craig, the IDEA Services supervisor, ensures that all of his clients reach their full potential and enjoy every day they are at Travis working at tasks within their capabilities.



The group contributes so much to the work being carried out at the Wetland. We do appreciate and thank IDEA for their ongoing support of these very diligent and enthusiastic workers.

As you can see they assist willingly with many everyday jobs. They like to carry & empty water on to needy plants, use the wheel barrows to add bark where it is needed, mow lawns, carry trays and weed and pot new plants at the shade houses. They have a great 'home grown' vegetable garden on site, but they have to compete with the pūkeko for the veges!



The IDEA team enjoy interaction with the Wednesday Volunteers and the regular workers. [As do the pūkeko!!!]

Threatened Plants

- Article: Luke Martin, Image: Grahame

Two threatened plants were recently planted beside the boardwalk in Travis Wetland for the public to view. These are *Drosera binata* – a carnivorous plant that eat insects and a swamp daisy *Celmisia graminifolia*. Both of these are only found within Christchurch in Travis Wetland and only grow in one small location. Propagating these plants and starting a second population is a significant step in the conservation of these species within Christchurch city.

This was a significant day that marked many years of hard work by volunteers, propagation by the Botanic gardens and preparation by the CCC Parks team. Botanic gardens staff, CCC rangers and volunteers have all enjoyed working together to protect these plants and look forward to further increasing the size and spread of these plant populations in the coming years.



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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