

Ōruapaeroa / Travis Wetland News

October 2023



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 2023/24 are:

28 October (TFC planting day), 18 November, 16 December with Christmas BBQ, 20 January, 17 February, 16 March, 20 April and 18 May

A note from the Treasurer

The Travis Wetland Trust 2023 financial year began in July. A subscription renewal form will be included with this newsletter if you have not already paid a subscription for the 2023 year. The Trust account is Kiwibank 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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New Species for Travis

Image John Skilton

At the beginning of winter a pair of a new species of Pūkeko (*Porphyrio cortenii*?) appeared at Travis. Rather than flesh and blood these birds are made of Corten steel and are the work of Simon Max Bannister, a sculptor whose studio is in Lyttelton. Corten steel is a group of steel alloys which were developed to eliminate the need for painting, and form a stable rust-like appearance after several years' exposure to weather.

The curious pair capture the attitude of Pūkeko perfectly and are right at home, walking on water, between the Information Centre and the main pond.

Simon excels at creating sculptures of birds in bronze as well as steel. You can read more about him and his work on his website

<https://www.simonmaxbannister.com/>

We are very grateful for the loan of the artful Pūkeko to Travis Wetland.



Christchurch
City Council



Tauhou (Silvereye)

Image and article curated by Grahame

One of the commonest birds in our gardens and at our feeders during the Christchurch winter is the native silvereye/tauhou (*Zosterops lateralis*). It is a small, olive-green forest bird with a white ring around its eye. It is found throughout New Zealand, and is one of the most common bird species in the country. Silvereyes are slightly smaller than sparrows, and have a fine, tapered bill and a brush-tipped tongue. They are insectivores, and their diet also includes fruit and nectar.

Silvereye nests are in the outermost branches of trees, shrubs and tree ferns, mostly more than 8 metres above the ground, and are well-built, delicate cups woven into small branches and comprising moss, lichen and small fine twigs. The female lays 2-4 eggs, which hatch after about 10-12 days. The young birds fledge after about 9-11 days.



Silvereyes are very adaptable birds, and they can live in a variety of habitats, including forests, gardens, and urban areas. They are also very resilient, and they have been able to survive in New Zealand despite the introduction of predators such as rats and cats.

The silvereye is an important part of the New Zealand ecosystem. They help to control insect populations, and they also pollinate plants. Though on the flip side they can also be pests in orchards and vineyards. They are also good at spreading native trees and shrub seed but unfortunately also weeds.

Silvereyes were first recorded in 1832 and arrived in greater numbers in 1856, it is assumed that a migrating flock was swept eastwards from Australia by a storm. The silvereye's Māori name, tauhou, means "stranger" or "new arrival."

Silvereyes are an important food source for native birds of prey, such as the New Zealand falcon / kārearea.

Crossing the Swamp

Article: Denise Ford, image: Phil Teague

On a sunny but slightly cool autumn day two intrepid Travis Wetland Trust committee members followed the President Colin Meurk into Ōruapaeroa/Travis Wetland to investigate the route of a possible predator proof fence. The Trust is looking to support a feasibility study, which will investigate the possibility of a fence being placed around part of the wetland. This is proposed to be part of an eco-sanctuary that would also include an area of the red zone between the wetland and the Ōtākaro/Avon River.



Colin has been promoting the idea of a predator proof fence around Ōruapaeroa/Travis Wetland for at least 20 years. In fact you can see an sample of such a fence between the car park and Ed Centre – the technology of predator proof fences has improved immensely since this sample was build.

The trio worked their way carefully across the centre of the wetland managing to avoid the deepest holes (probably through luck more than good management!) However, there were many challenges including negotiating over and around large *Carex secta* sedges and pulling themselves out of mud that came up well above their knees. Once the central willows were reached it was a reasonably easy traverse back to the walking track.



Black Swan (Kakiānau)



Eel (Tuna)



Two male and one female Scaup (Pāpagno),
Grey Teal (Tētē) in background



Small Hoverfly

Images: Grahame

Joe's Corner

Article Dave Evans, image Grahame



Joe Greenaway is a life member of the Travis Wetland Trust and he came along to the July board meeting to let us know that he's now living in a cottage at Windsorcare in Shirley. Thirty years ago when the Travis Wetland Trust was formed Joe was one of the people deeply involved. Joe lived next to Travis Wetland at the end of Allstone Place and adjacent to Sanctuary Villas. Not only did Joe coordinate the work days for the Trust, but he also put a lot of time into enhancing "Joe's Corner" of the wetland. There was no hard boundary between his garden and the wetland and he planted appropriate natives from the edge of the swamp up the slope to the start of his lawn. He took great pleasure in the birds that the natives attracted to his garden as well as the wetland. He repelled the encroaching willows and controlled the blackberry and Tradescantia.

At the foot of the slope is the imaginatively named Western Drain that runs from Joe's Corner down the edge of the western dune to Kōtuku Basin adjacent to Clarevale Park. On one occasion, when out for an evening amble, Joe observed a large shoal of native fish in the drain. Originally the spring-fed drain was "boxed", but it was naturalised about 20 years ago. We really must think of a more attractive name for it.

Travis was a completely different place back in the 90s. When I first went to the area next to Clarevale Park we found only one native plant of a significant size – a single cabbage tree. We've all done our bit to restore parts of Travis and Joe has done more than most. We'll keep an eye on Joe's corner to make sure it stays looking good.

Predator Control

Article and image Kenny Rose

At the May Trust board meeting CCC ranger Kenny Rose reported on pest control for the past trapping season (Oct 22 – May 23). A total of 151 predators were trapped using 164 traps, as shown in the table.

Rat numbers have been trending down over the years. The peak predator numbers are in summer and caught in greater numbers around the edges. Ship rats are found mostly in drier areas and especially where there are trees, Norway rats occur everywhere and hedgehogs almost exclusively on drier edges. One stoat and one weasel were also trapped.

Diphacinone bait is used in a single pulse of poisoning. The amount of poison taken at each station is recorded to give an indication of predator density variation.

Tracking tunnels showed mouse numbers, as well as lizards, are strong over the summer.

Results from the 2022-23 season

Month	Hedgehog	Rat	Stoat	Weasel	Total pests
Oct 2022	0	17	0	1	18
Nov 2022	1	19	0	0	20
Dec 2022	1	31	0	0	32
Jan 2023	5	18	0	0	23
Feb 2023	8	9	0	0	17
Mar 2023	5	11	0	0	16
May 2023	1	23	1	0	25
Total	21	128	1	1	151

Passionflower (Kōhia)

Article and image: Grahame

The New Zealand passionflower, scientifically known as *Passiflora tetrandra* or kōhia in Māori is an intriguing climbing vine that is endemic to New Zealand. It is the sole representative of the passionflower family in the country. Finding the fruit is another notable first for Travis Wetland / Ōruapaeroa.



Owl Nesting Boxes

Article and image Kenny Rose

The rangers have built and erected a number of nesting boxes around Travis Wetland with the aim of attracting breeding pairs of Little Owl (*Athene noctua*). Last season an owl family were very visible near the Beach Road carpark but the tree in which they had nested succumbed to the elements. A nest box has been erected near to this site and a pair have already been seen and heard nearby.

Breeding occurs between October and January, with the chicks leaving the nest after around 33 days. Little Owls can often be spotted perched out in the open in late afternoon so keep your eye out for one of the nesting boxes and you might just spot a Little Owl.



Ranger Darcie installing owl box

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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