

Ōruapaeroa / Travis Wetland News

April 2026



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 other 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: 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. sun-hat, raincoat, warm hat.

Saturday Work day dates for 2026 are:

16 May, 20 June, 18 July, 15 August, 19 September, 17 October (Trees for Canterbury planting day), 21 November, 19 December (Xmas BBQ).

A note from the Treasurer

The Travis Wetland Trust 2027 financial year begins on 1 July. A subscription renewal form will be included with this newsletter if you have not already paid a subscription for the current 2026 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.

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Butterfly Habitat

In winter 2022 a butterfly habitat was created between the Travis information centre and the car park. The habitat comprises a lot of stones and the creeping vine *Muehlenbeckia axillaris*, which is essential to the life cycle of the beautiful endemic *Lycaena* butterflies that have been introduced to the habitat.

Unfortunately in recent months the habitat has been attracting too much attention from other species, notably *Homo sapiens*. Some people have been picnicking on the stones and even building little cairns and rings of stones. Could it be a social media sensation? We certainly hope not. We would rather people kept off the stones and creepers and left them for the butterflies that are rather more pressed for welcoming spaces than we are.



World Wetlands Day Walk

Article and image: Dave Evans

On the evening of Sunday 1 February thirteen of us met at the Education Centre to celebrate World Wetlands Day the following day. There was a chilly breeze (for February) but the evening light over Ōruapaeroa was, as it often is, breathtaking. As we gathered Eleanor spotted a small green stick insect in the kānuka by the car park so we stopped to admire that before moving on to the lizard garden on the sunny side of the Ed Centre. All the lizards were tucked up among the sun-warmed rocks so we proceeded along the track parallel to Mairehau Rd.

We tried to ignore the ever present weeds down the bank and looked over them to the wind tossed waves on the sea of Raupō. The growth of the bushes on the dune at the northern end of the wetland is amazing, though it is actually quite a few years since they were planted by pupils from Waitākiri School.

When we reached Anne Flanagan Dell in the NW corner of the wetland we stopped to remember Anne Flanagan, who fought to preserve the wetland while also fighting cancer. Trust board member Carol Ryan, who is Anne's daughter, spoke of how much energy Anne put into the cause at a time when Anne didn't appear to have much energy to give – but she did it all the same. One of the boards of the walkway in the dell is inscribed with the words: "A Reward for Anne after years of Dedicated Service". She truly gave her life to Travis Swamp.



Mountain Wineberry (*Aristotelia fruticosa*)

Article and images: Sue Britain

This endemic shrub grows up to 2m with dense divaricating branches. Its adult leaves are small, tapered and shiny dark green in colour.

During our recent World Wetland Day walk we



stopped to admire its tiny black berries. These may vary in colour from white through to red and black, following on from similarly variable small white to red flowers. Our plant was also bearing dangling specimens of female bag moths (Liothula omnivara) in their conical homes.



The shrub provides shelter and food to other native species and its berries are especially valuable food for birds during autumn and winter.

Mountain wineberry, sometimes known as Makomako along with other wineberry species, had many uses for Maori. Its light wood was perfect for making bird spears and net floats, while its rongoā uses included relief for skin, eye and joint ailments. Early Pākehā used the berries for making jam and named the plant for its use in wine making.

Bag moth on wineberry



Korimako, bellbird



Cicada "cracking" its wing while warming up



Spur-winged plover

Images: Grahame

Fungi and Slime Moulds

Article: Dave Evans, images: Eleanor Bissell

A good place to look for fungi is on tree mulch and that's where Eleanor came across a fine example of what is imaginatively named Dog Vomit Slime Mould.



"The term slime mold is something of a misnomer, for these creatures aren't molds or fungi at all." "Slime molds reproduce in the way that fungi do, by producing spores. But their cellular structures are very different from fungi." "While they possess no legs, wings or other limbs to propel them, slime molds can move, although they generally won't break any land-speed records doing it. Once it's on a surface, the blob-like slime molds have pseudopods that allow them to creep along at a rate of about a millimeter per hour." - Quotes from Discover Magazine.

Another imaginatively named fungus is Gandalf's cap (*Saproamanita galerungandalfi*) a member of Amanita Mushrooms and Allies. It seems that this name for a NZ species has been proposed by Jerry Cooper a kiwi fungi specialist, but is not yet internationally official. It seems like a fitting name to me. *Saproamanita* fungi are found in many places around the world, including Ōruapaeroa Travis Wetland.



Unarmed Stick Insect

Article: Dave Evans, image: Eleanor Bissell

At the end of January a large stick insect was found on the window of the IDEAS cottage near the Education Centre. Eleanor writes: "Cherie carefully removed it after taking her picture. The nearest tree was a large *Plagi-anthus*, it was possibly blown from there onto the building which is close by. Maybe it transported itself? It was totally intact. We returned it to the tree." Eleanor posted an observation to iNaturalist and it was identified by weekend_insect_hunter as an Unarmed Stick-Insect (*Acanthoxyla inermis*). Wikipedia says: "This species is native to New Zealand but has been unintentionally moved to Great Britain where it has grown a stable population and is the longest insect observed in the UK, and the most common of the stick insects that have established themselves on the island."



Kōhia, NZ Passionflower

Article: Dave Evans and image: Sue Britain



Early in December a kōhia was seen flowering along the Beach Rd path. Kōhia (*Passiflora tetrandra*) is the only species of passionflower native to Aotearoa. It is a forest vine, climbing up to 10m.

Flowers are small, white to yellow, in groups of 1–3 in the axils of the leaves. Flowers appear between October and December. Plants are dioecious: fruit may not be produced without female-flowering plants being fertilised with pollen from separate male-flowering plants.

Lemon-shaped, orange fruits up to 30 mm (1.2 in) long can be found from summer to autumn. The fruit can be eaten by people and is a traditional food for Māori: the gum from the stem was also chewed. The seeds have a peppery taste. It occurs throughout the North Island and in parts of the South Island as far south as Banks Peninsula.

(Information from Wikipedia)

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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