

Otatara
Landcare Group

PIGEON POST

*Newsletter of the
Otatara Landcare Group*

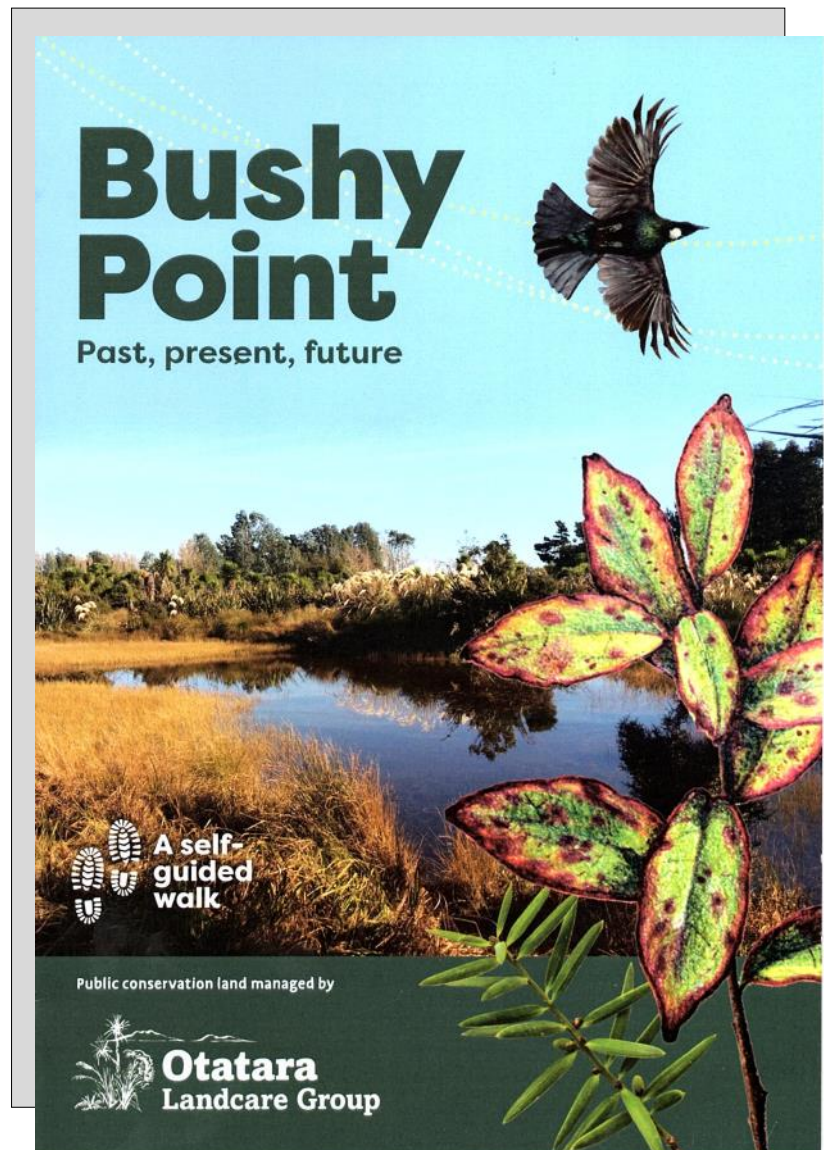
Issue 69 Winter 2023

In This Issue

Bushy Point annual report	2
Annual planting day	5
Estuary update	7
Protecting kereru	10
Story of Bowman's Bush	12
Birds and cats	15
Stead St project latest	18

The full colour version of this publication is available on www.otataralandcare.org.nz under 'publications'.

Right, a stunning new brochure has been produced for Bushy Point, available at the entrance in Bryson Road.



BUSHY POINT



Excerpts from the 2022/23 annual report

The full annual report for 2022/23 for the Bushy Point restoration project is available online at the Otatara Landcare Group website under 'Bushy Point'. Here are some highlights.

The aim of the Bushy Point Restoration Project:
The aim of the Bushy Point Restoration Project is to restore a 14 hectare area of rough exotic pasture between two remnants of nationally significant native tōtara forest to provide a habitat linkage for native birds and to enhance existing forest remnants and other ecosystems.

Also, to raise public awareness of the importance of native forest remnants and to provide a practical long-term ecological project for residents of Otatara and Otatara and Invercargill schoolchildren.

The project is progressively turning the area of exotic grasses into a functioning, self-sustaining native ecosystem with features and educational opportunities that can be enjoyed by the public of Otatara and Invercargill, for the future.

The project is managed by the Committee of

the Otatara Landcare Group, an Incorporated Society established in 1999. Bushy Point is a conservation area owned by DOC.

The Mission Statement of the Otatara Landcare Group is:

- To focus the attention of Otatara residents and others on the natural features and ecological values of the Otatara environment, especially native forest and wetland flora and fauna.
- To promote and, where possible, facilitate the protection, restoration and creation of such features in the interests of scientific appreciation and intrinsic worth and to encourage community appreciation of these values.

In the last 12 months, OLG members and volunteers:

- Planted 1200 locally grown native plants and covered with combi- guards for rabbit control.
- Maintained the previous 22 years plantings.
- Managed major pest control operation (six km of trap network for possums, mustelids and rats over 90 hectares) with volunteers every two weeks.
- Work on tracks continued throughout the year.
- Continued weed control (particularly gorse).

A grand total of 34,342 plants have been planted at Bushy Point since the year 2000.

Left, the Bryson Road entrance to Bushy Point, with its very informative information sign and free guides to Bushy Point.



Continued on next page



Otatara Pestbusters

Otatara Pestbusters (which encourages pest control on private land by owners), was continued throughout 2022/23. This project (a sub-group of the Otatara Landcare Group) and run by Dallas Bradley has nearly 300 members, most doing pest control.

The project builds on the 90 hectares of control at Bushy Point and has been supported by Environment Southland funding which has enabled the group to supply traps and bait to property owners at a subsidised price.

Since 2013/14 Invercargill City Council Reserves at Otatara have been brought into Pestbusters and traps are being serviced by volunteers in those locations. In 2012 negotiations began to include Otatara South Scenic Reserve into intensive pest control. Department of Conservation funding ensured that this reserve has been intensively trapped for possums, stoats and rats since 2015/16.

Thanks go to local resident Peter Simpson for spearheading the pest control in Otatara South Scenic Reserve and now Chris Bowen and Colin Lawrence, supported by Pestbusters.

Weed Control

- Gorse, broom and blackberry control continued, particularly at the Bryson Road entrance to Bushy Point
- Hand weeding of plants by volunteers .
- Spot spraying of areas in preparation for Living Legends 2022 planting.

Infrastructure

- Bushy Point track mowed monthly as required, track improvements made.
- Track around pond maintained.
- Posts and track markers for self-guided trail.
- Posts for track alignment and interpretation signs.
- New picnic area constructed near pond.

Interpretation and public access

- The Bushy Point walkway continues to be used by individuals and groups.



Above, a great place to spot and reflect on the views across the estuary to the city and the hills and mountains beyond.

- Five interpretation signs maintained on-site, new brochures for Bushy Point walks produced by Cathy MacFie and Helen Stewart and placed at the Bryson Road entrance
- Geocaches including a multi geocache were placed in Bushy Point in 2015.

Volunteers and Public Involvement

- Number of hours for the year – 698 hours (over 18 702 hours in total for the project).
- An orienteering event was held in August 2022 with 90 individuals attending.
- Eight pest lines (over a 90 hectare area) maintained every two weeks by a group of dedicated volunteers.
- Douglas Black and Kathy Morrison held weekly evening weeding sessions in February.
- 21 July 22 visit by Number 10.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Department of Conservation, Environment Southland, Invercargill City Council, surrounding landowners and volunteers for their efforts in making 2022/23 another very busy and successful year for the Bushy Point Restoration Project.

GRATEFUL



By Linda

Happy Home

I count myself very lucky to live here in Otatara, able to enjoy free access to native bush reserves, open spaces, coastline, clean air & water, dark (ish) skies, little noise intrusion and a rich diversity of flora and fauna.

I am both conscious and grateful of the contribution of those who have worked to protect and enhance this exceptional place. Whether it's reducing invasive weeds and pests, improving native habitats, providing & maintaining local amenities, and supporting local networks, any positive engagement improves how our community functions.

My personal favourites; * Southland Community Nurseries - not just for knowledge & company - the morning teas are delish. * Otatara Landcare Group for the dedicated locals revegetating Bushy Pt, providing advice and products for pest control, caring for injured native birds, and working on best outcomes for our unique environment. * Watching my garden wildlife. * the free exchange stall up the road. * catching up with the neighbours. * being quietly in my garden.



BUSHY POINT PLANTING DAY



10am on Sunday September 10

This is our annual planting day when we will plant around 1000 native plants over about 0.2ha. At the moment we have one organised group coming with another one in the throes of organising themselves. We welcome families to come and assist as well. If people are arriving close to 10am we will then have the obligatory Health and Safety Briefing (Some people consider these a pain in the butt, but if it stops even a small amount of hurt then that is how we measure success).

This will be followed by splitting into groups under one of our appointed team leaders and then it is off to plant and place protectors around the newly planted plants.

Whilst in the past we have had really good weather, this cannot always be guaranteed so please come prepared. The area we are planting in is sheltered from the SE, through the SW to the NW and even a little bit of sun on the day can make this area quite warm.

Please bring gardening gloves, your drink bottles and a small narrow spade (if you have one). After we have finished planting we will be putting on a BBQ with good old Southland snags, onions and tomato sauce. No need to book, just turn up, we have never run out of sausages before and are unlikely to on this day!

If you need any more information you can contact me through the Otatara Landcare Group website.

Barry Smith

An appeal to look out for dopey ducks



Whilst the first weekend in May has been designated the opening weekend for Duck Shooting season, the first day of Dopey Duck season is Friday July 28. What is Dopey Duck season? It is the season of ducks in love, when they give up using the wings God gave them in favour of having a bit of a walk around.

It is the season where they do incredibly stupid things, like walking down the middle of the road - a 50km area, an 80km area or a 100km area, it makes no difference to them.

Dopey Duck season has been designated on this day because that was when I saw my first pair of dopey ducks wandering around our section. The results (to the duck) of Dopey Duck season

can be catastrophic. I still have a cracked plastic bumper on my ute from a few years back when I was travelling out towards the Catlins.

A goodly distance up front were a couple of dopey ducks, just walking down the side of the road. As I got closer one decided to be daring and be a bit of a show off, so it started flying, towards me. I was doing about 100km and the duck was probably doing 20 or 30km/hour.

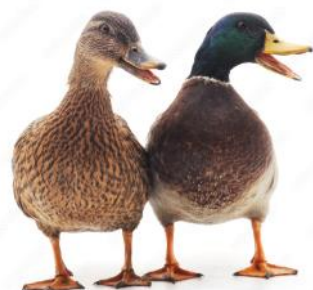
The collision was head-on and the duck shuttled off to Duck Heaven leaving the other dopey duck without a partner.

Whilst I was rather annoyed at the collision, it was one of those things that I couldn't avoid, a duck flying on the wrong side of the road without enough time to move over.

We all just need to be aware that there will be ducks wandering around the streets of Otatara over the next few months as they nest, lay eggs and raise a family and if they are lucky, maybe 10% will survive, with the others dying from predation or starvation or one of the many other things out there that get infant wild animals.

Barry Smith

Right, keep a lookout for ducks in love, often on the roads.



GETTING READY NOW



By Dallas Bradley

A Spring rat is a very good rat to catch!

Spring marks the start of the bird breeding season. Nesting time is when birds, their eggs and nestlings are most vulnerable to predation from various pests, rats in particular.

Unfortunately, Spring also marks the start of the rat breeding season. It coincides with a time when all rats are mature enough to breed - and they're hungry!

The situation could be viewed as a perfect storm from a native bird conservation perspective.

As such there are huge benefits in controlling rats at this time of the year, especially when you consider that each female rat can potentially have five litters of anywhere between three to 10 young between now and April.

On top of that, it only takes three months before a rat is sexually mature, so the early litters will be breeding themselves in late summer/early autumn.

It makes a lot of sense to nip this breeding in the bud and give the native birds the best possible chance of breeding and raising their young.

If you haven't already done so, it's a good time make sure your bait stations and traps are ready to go with fresh mould-free bait and lure. Strike now while the rats are at their hungriest.

If you're not already doing pest control on your property, do yourself and the birds a favour and give it a go. Remember everyone has rats from time to time and they can be equally destructive to your home, car and possessions as they can the birds!

Otatara Pestbusters, the pest control arm of the Otatara Landcare Group, provides traps, bait stations and bait at very reasonable prices – contact Dallas Bradley on 021 784962 for assistance.

For more information, check out the Otatara Pestbusters Facebook page or the Otatara Landcare Group website.



A tree pest to be tackled

While we are talking about pests, there is a tree pest that could destroy our beautiful native forest if not removed. This is the sycamore, a prolific exotic invader, which is frighteningly good at spreading its helicopter seeds. I have seen spouting that is sprouting miniature forests of seedling sycamores, and thousands germinating in the bush where the parent trees have been left to grow. It is alarming to see how many sycamores are growing in Otatara—so please, pull out the seedlings and remove the larger trees before they get huge.



ESTUARY FORUM UPDATE



By Sarah Thorne

The year is flying past and we thought it was time for a quick update on the work that the New River Estuary Forum Core Team have been working on. The 2022 and 2023 years have been busy for the New River Estuary Forum, and we really appreciated receiving some funding from Great South to help fund our Gateway Murihiku Project.

This project aims to re-create a snapshot of the biodiversity that once existed along the New River estuary's shores and to create a gateway to the rest of the region that Invercargill and Southland residents can be proud of.

As part of this work, we started building a great relationship with Otatara School. They did some stunning and moving pieces of work on the estuary through science, art and English, and this was an amazing part of the Gateway Murihiku exhibition at He Waka Tuia. It became a 'whole of school' focus, and the introduction they did to their kapa haka performance at Polyfest was very special.

As part of the Gateway Murihiku exhibition we had a consultation area with three simple questions covering three areas of past, present and future:

I remember...

Now our estuary is...

I want the estuary to be...

Key themes emerging from this feedback included positive memories of engaging with the estuary (walking around the estuary, seeing the birdlife), but also concern about its current state (mud,

smell and pollution). Hopes for the future included being able to restore the estuary to its original state (native vegetation and wildlife) and being able to swim in the estuary.

We also did an evening of talks based on our past, present and future theme. We had great speakers including Ngai Tahu Kaumatua Michael Skerrett QSM, Dr Jane Kitson, and Gillian Donnelly and students from Otatara School.

We were very lucky to be able to hire Bridgett Aiken to help us with the Gateway Murihiku Project. She submitted an excellent final report to Great South. We also had a very interesting Zoom call with Fiona Smith from AB Lime on landfill, which has started some interesting discussions, and we were part of the Mid & Lower Oreti Bus Trip organised by the Oreti Catchment Groups.

In June we spoke at the new Strategy & Policy Committee at Environment Southland (ES), met with Invercargill City Council and ES on their responsibilities to look after and improve New River Estuary, continued to support (as needed) Otatara School with their studies on New River Estuary, continued to work alongside the Oreti Catchment Groups; and continued to investigate opportunities to improve the health (and raise awareness of the health) of New River Estuary.

Sarah Thorne is from the New River Estuary Forum Organising Committee.



THE NO-BIRD BIRD COUNT



by Cathy MacFie and Arthur Holmes

On Saturday July 1 my grandson Arthur and I participated in what has become, for us, an annual event—the NZ Garden Bird Survey. I had earlier stocked the bird table with fruit, seeds and sugar water (note to self: invest in a feeder suited to native nectar-drinkers); then set up chairs, binoculars, identification books and notepads next to our bedroom window.

Normally we should spend the hour busily counting and identifying a dozen or more different species. But this year we picked a shocker of a day. Rain, sleet and gale force winds hammered the window (and the bush!).

We didn't even have the option to change our survey time as we'd left it until the last weekend. Not surprisingly, there was scarcely a self-respecting bird to be seen. An hour can be a long time when there is nothing happening, especially with an enthusiastic 11 year old primed to break bird-spotting records. And yet, remarkably, we still had the best of times!

“Where are they hiding?” we asked ourselves. The bush edge is thick and sheltered. We thought we should have been able to see silvereye moving about within the tōtara... or at the very least, house sparrows which have set up a thriving community at the Macfie's place. But not a single one!

Our most exciting moment was when a lone tūi swooped between the trees, appearing from nowhere and disappearing just as quickly. One bellbird/korimako braved the weather to make a number of quick visits to the sugar water on the bird table but that was IT!

What we did see gave us food for thought. During one brief lull between showers, we counted an unusual number of blackbirds (nine) foraging on short grass. No thrushes, no starlings nor even

sparrows which also frequent the same space.

How come blackbirds tolerate the weather and not the others? Looking further afield to the estuary, Arthur counted 22 mallard ducks clustered along the shoreline. Not difficult to work out why they were there!

As our time ran out, we laid bets on whether we should see a swamp harrier hawk/kāhu. Several pairs live along the estuary and it's rare to look up and not see one or more. One minute to go ... and there it was ... a happy tick on our survey sheet.

The next day I was able to tell Arthur I'd counted 10 silvereyes on the apples and at least 20 squabbling sparrows on the bird table. But it didn't matter.

Right, this window has a spectacular view over garden, paddock and bush edge right down to the saltmarsh and estuary.



STRAWBERRY ALERT!



By Sue Johnson

I was recently chatting to a nurseryman from the North Island about strawberries. He warned me there is likely to be a shortage of new strawberry plants this year.

It seems the floods and mud devastated the strawberry fields of the North. The nurseries will be supplying the commercial growers before the domestic market gets a supply. Fair enough, considering the disasters they have been through.

The answer seems that we can make our existing strawberries last another year. I am trimming away all last year's dead leaves. You can lift and divide the crowns if you have enough room.

My strawberry plants have already been in the ground for two years and as there was no fall in the quality of the crop, I am going to leave them in the ground. Before the growth gets going, I will be mulching thoroughly, although keeping the crowns clear.

There will be a trip to a pine forest to collect pine needles for the best mulch for strawberries.



Pea straw tends to have fungus spores, which can make the fruit go mouldy. Barley straw works well but my first choice for strawberries is pine needles. Pine needles help acidify the soil and are also

very lightly antiseptic. You will need to boost the nutrition – Novatec and sulphate of potash are really good fertilisers. You can be quite frugal with it at the beginning of the season, increasing the dose as the plants develop more foliage.

Pacing fertilizer through the season is much more beneficial than a large application in spring. Spraying the foliage with a seaweed solution will certainly enhance flavour – and home-grown strawberries are all about flavour!

I have made a simple bamboo framework over my strawberry bed. When the fruit begins to ripen I throw bird netting over the top and hold it down with bricks at the edges. The blackbirds are skilled thieves and will find even the smallest gap!

Make sure your strawberries are well ripened before you pick them. They should be completely red for the most delicious taste!

TIME TO PRUNE ROSES AND FRUIT TREES

Once the roses and fruit trees lose their leaves it is time to prune. All roses except the climbing Banksia roses should be cut back. They will certainly be much better if pruned. Don't be afraid to give them a good hard cut—they recover very well. Once the shoots start to grow, a feed of fertiliser will give them a boost. Fruit trees in the home garden just need a bit of sorting out. Crossing branches, old wood and

branches that are crowding can be removed.

In the home garden, quantity is more practical than quality. Feeding and weed control will give the trees a better chance.

Pruning plants in winter will encourage growth. If you are trying to reduce the growth, summer pruning is more effective. And hooray—I see three crocus. Spring is on the way!

While the sycamore tree is an invasive pest plant in Otago,
SYCAMORE PRINT
is a valued supporter of Pigeon Post...
Call today with all your printing needs

SYCAMORE PRINT
The logbook specialists
73 Eye Street, Invercargill phone: 03 218 4657 cell: 027 466 9932 www.sycamoreprint.co.nz

miro
The logbook specialists
white quality matters



By Kathy Morrison

This is now the season when kereru start mating displays and become most at risk of injuring themselves in the process. Last year at our Bush Haven Native Bird rehabilitation facility we were brought 33 birds from all over Southland, 20 of which we were able to rehabilitate and successfully release.

That's the good news.

The bad news is that 23 of the injured birds (70%) came from Otatara alone, and at least 13 of those had hit windows. Five of these birds were killed by the impact. It's likely that several more than that hit windows, as many others were found on the ground, reason unknown.

Our unique combination of houses with (unbreakable) double-glazed windows in close proximity to native bush is clearly highly dangerous to kereru in the mating season from August to March.

To help prevent these birds being injured PLEASE make a real effort to block the reflections of trees and bush in your windows by hanging large deterrents like dream catchers in your windows.

We would love to see photos of your efforts to help prevent kereru hitting your windows. Please send your photos via our website and we will display them on our website, which is bushhaven.org and in a future edition of Pigeon Post.

Over the last year it was also noticeable that many of the young kereru brought to us were,

for the first time in our experience, on the ground without typical injuries from window strike but quite nervy, thin and hungry so we are wondering why.

Were their usual food sources late coming into fruit, were they scared and going to ground because of the numbers of hawks noticeably overflying the area? Last year we were called about 30 injured hawks damaged around here and Invercargill (we'd only had one or two in other years). Please let us know your thoughts on this, based on your own observations.

Tītī or sooty shearwaters had a hard time at the beginning of their annual migration this year with far more than usual landing on Ōreti beach,

Continued on next page

Below, a tītī, a sooty shearwater, bright eyed after tubing and rehydration.





in different parts of town and throughout Southland.

Many died on the beach before they could be helped but others were picked up and brought for help—we suspect storm-damaged but also hungry and tired. What beautiful birds they are.

I feel that this large cull of the species before they have really begun their journey may become a familiar feature due to warming sea tempera-

tures and I am very keen to be prepared for next year with facilities and systems in place to help these birds.

The ones we and the vets rehydrated and then released into the New River estuary took their time in big groups to build up strength and then headed north en masse. It seems an ideal resting and feeding place to take pause for a week or two.

Otatara residents: HELP SAVE OUR KERERU!

- Check if your windows reflect bush, which could confuse excited kereru in flight.
- Check if a kereru could see through two windows/glass doors when lined up.
- Leave those windows dirty from now till March to reduce reflections of nearby bush.



- Hang window decorations to block any reflections of trees or bush.

**Let's aim for Otatara
kereru to be injury free
in '23!**

HISTORY OF BOWMAN'S BUSH



By **Richard Bowman**

My grandfather, Dr JG Macdonald, bought six and three quarter acres of land in Ruru Avenue for a family holiday home. The middle and southern sections comprising the bush were bought in 1918 and 1919 respectively and the third comprising open land to the north was purchased in about 1921.

At that time the family consisted of my grandfather and grandmother and four children. Edith was the oldest, followed by Gertrude and Gair while my mother Robin, the youngest, was just a baby at that time.

Several other properties in Ruru Ave were bought by doctors including Dr McAra on the southern boundary of my grandfather's place and Dr Barclay a couple of sections further down. Dr Ritchie Crawford also had a holiday home at the south end of the road.

The first building was a one room hut. This was sledged onto the property by a draft horse from all the way around the Bay Road. It was sited on a low rise formed by an ancient sand dune where the original house was later built. The first proper house was a three bedroomed cottage built in 1924.

The old hut was moved back to become a bunk house and later a laundry known by the family as the 'wash house'. That year the family stayed there for three months over the summer due to the polio epidemic.

In that year my grandfather bought his first car, a Dodge tourer. They were then able to travel back and forward from their home in Don Street in Invercargill via the Bay Road, a distance of about 10 miles.

My grandfather, who

was an ophthalmologist and ear, nose and throat surgeon, was able to work in this practice and still visit the rest of the family regularly when they were on holiday.

As soon as he bought the property my grandfather fenced it to keep out cattle and sheep which roamed the district. The fences also had to exclude rabbits which were very numerous. These animals had done considerable damage to the native bush on the property.

Miraculously the bush seems to have escaped milling which was probably still going on at that time. This may have happened because the trees were still relatively young and had not reached millable size.

Initially, three foot netting was used to fence out rabbits but it was not until a finer three foot six inch netting was dug six inches into the ground that they were finally excluded. My

Continued on next page

Below, the Ruru Avenue entrance to Bowman's Bush. Right, the Spencer Avenue entrance.





grandfather kept a number of fox terriers to catch rabbits and also used to shoot them.

Although he succeed in controlling rabbits some still managed to get in by squeezing through holes in the rabbit mesh or climbing up the strainer post stays.

Once the grazing animals were removed, the undergrowth plants regenerated quickly. A network of tracks was put in to provide access to most parts of the bush.

Drains were also dug to remove ponded water after heavy rain. My grandfather then collected native plants from many parts of Southland and New Zealand and transplanted them onto the property.

He successfully established a silver fern and six kauri from the North Island. One kauri reached canopy height but inexplicably died in the 1970s. The silver fern perished in the big freeze of 1996.

In the late twenties permission was granted by the Department of Internal Affairs to introduce weka. Six birds obtained from Stewart Island were released, one of which had only one leg. Initially they all thrived in their new home and bred successfully.

However, their numbers declined in the early

thirties due to predation and possibly some were poisoned by strychnine baits used for rabbit control on neighbouring paddocks. Eventually they all perished.

In the centre of the bush there was a grassy clearing known as the play area. This was used for picnics and my grandfather erected swings, seesaws, climbing poles and bars there. In his youth he was a keen gymnast and encouraged the children to develop their skills.

Not far from the play area a lookout mast was built extending above the canopy of large matai trees which provided views over the district. The remains of this structure can still be seen today.

An open area of nearly one acre was levelled and grassed in front of the house. One small, scrubby totara tree was kept on the southeast part of this area which has now grown into quite a sizeable multi-trunked specimen.

The lawn was used for playing games like cricket and football and for many years picnic day carnivals were held there by the Crippled Children's Society and similar organisations. Later a grass tennis court was built at the west end of the lawn.

My aunt Edith was 'horse mad' as a teenager and she kept ponies there. The children ranged

the district and swam and boated in the Oreti River. There were popular recreational areas on the east bank between the end of Rakiura Parade and the present Dunn's Road Bridge and large regattas were held there.

A Mr Morris who was a smallholder on Dunn's Road, near the river, supplied fresh milk. The children used to walk round the roads and through the

Continued on next page





bush to collect it and take it home. In 1934 the house in Don Street burnt to the ground and the family spent a whole year at Otatara while a new house was built. By the late 1930s the family had grown up and mostly left home.

My parents, Robin and Ian Bowman, met after the war in Nigeria where they had been posted by the British Army. They married in London in 1951 and returned to New Zealand to settle.

When they arrived in Invercargill they needed somewhere to live so they moved into the cottage at Otatara as a temporary measure. They liked it so much that soon after they decided to stay and bought the property from my grandfather in 1956.

My younger sister, Jane, and I arrived on the scene in the early fifties and once again it became a family home. Some of my earliest memories are being taken around the bush by my grandfather who did his best to teach me the Latin names of many of the native plants.

As children the bush made a wonderful playground and provided many adventures for us and our neighbourhood friends. There was a large and motley crowd of us including Easons, Eades, Burns, Wilsons, Hill-Smiths, Daltons and others from further afield.

Ruru Ave was then a gravel road which was often potholed until the County grader came along. Matua Road was known as the 'grass track' because that is what it was. Our neighbour to the west was a bachelor farmer, John Pater-son, who for many years drove cows back and forth across the property for milking.

Jim McClelland, who lived on the corner of Rakiura Parade and Ariki Ave, used to come around and cut the lawns and hedges and do other work on the property for both my grandfa-ther and my father for many years.

He had a wonderful range of practical bush skills, like tree felling and fencing, and he passed on many of these on to us. From time to time

Jim and my father would take out dead manuka trunks and cut them up for firewood with a tractor-driven circular saw. By the 1970s we the children had grown up and left home while our parents stayed on.

My father died in 1984 and my mother, who was faced with selling the property, also wanted to protect the native bush. Although the Otatara Community Board was keen to see the bush pre-served the then County Council was reluctant to meet the purchase cost. In February 1986 Roger Sutton, the regional representative of the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, became involved and he championed the cause.

Finally in December 1986 an agreement was reached where the Trust was able to purchase the 1.28 hectares of land for a QE11 covenant with financial assistance from the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of NZ, the County

Council, the Otatara Community Board and private donations.

In 1992 my mother was made a Benefactor Member of the Na-tional Trust and the area was opened for public access. Today Bowman's Bush is maintained by

the Invercargill City Council's Parks and Re-serves Department under a management plan administered by the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust.

This small piece of bush is a just a tiny rem-nant of a former landscape once dominated by great lowland forests comprising matai, rimu, kahikitea, miro, totara and pokaka. These are becoming increasingly rare in New Zealand. It is very important to keep as much as we can of what is left in the best possible condition for fu-ture generations to know and value.

PS. This account benefited greatly from oral his-tory provided to me by my late uncle Dr Gair Macdonald and my aunt Mrs Gertrude Holmes.

Richard Bowman

“It is very important to keep as much as we can of what is left in the best possible condition for future generations to know and value.”

CATS AND BIRDS



Keeping both safe

An Otatara resident has contacted the committee of Otatara Landcare Group to challenge us all about the issue of cats in the Otatara area. In part, the long-time resident writes: “I am sick of seeing my neighbour’s cats every night walking through our property.

“In fact, just the over the last three months I have seen three dead birds. I saw one cat with a tui in it’s mouth and another with a bird I could not make out. Then another night I found feathers all over the place from I would say was a wood pigeon.”

The committee of the Otatara Landcare Group discussed this issue at length, and felt the way forward was to raise awareness of the issue and encourage responsible cat ownership.

The issue of cats provokes strong emotions, but what is true is that New Zealand has a serious problem with feral cats in particular, with a population of potentially more than a million, eating their way through birds, geckos, skinks and insects.

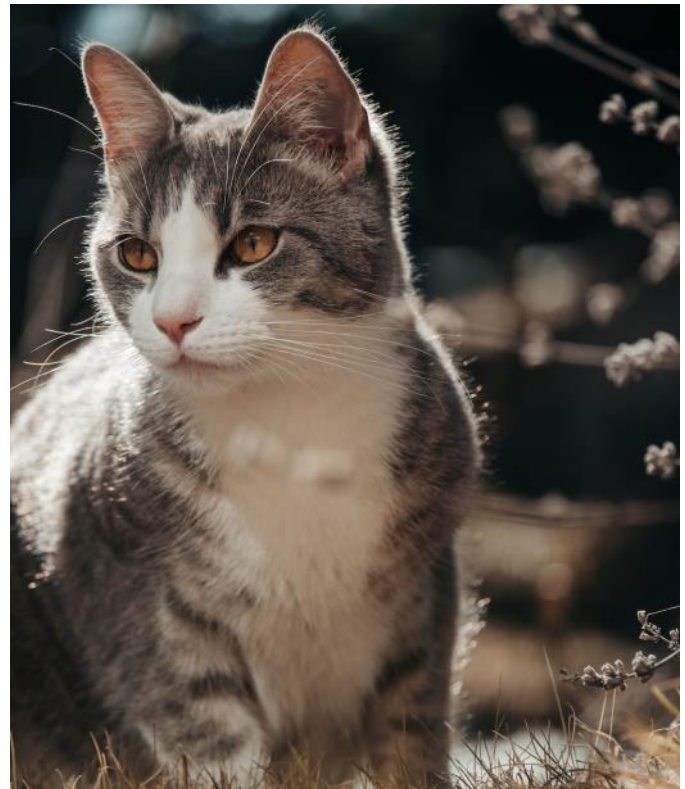
This is not confined to New Zealand – feral cats are a huge problem in Australia. In February this year, Australia’s federal parliament released a report that confirmed that cats were the primary drivers of mammal extinctions in the country.

There are feral cats on the loose in Otatara too, often the progeny of cats cruelly dumped when unwanted.

Domestic cats are hunters by nature, and they do it very well. Estimates are that domestic cats kill tens of thousands of birds a year in New Zealand, along with skinks and geckos. Domestic cats are also much-loved companions and bring joy and comfort to their owners. How then can domestic cats and our unique natural world co-exist in Otatara?

Here are some suggestions for what is called ‘responsible cat ownership’.

Microchip and de-sex your cats –de-sexing and microchipping can make a real difference to



Cats are loved companions and family members but also extremely effective predators.

animal welfare. By de-sexing your cat, you’re ensuring you don’t get any unwanted litters. Other benefits include reducing your cat’s likelihood to roam, meaning it will be safer and have an increased lifespan, and also reduce scent marking by males.

While it’s not mandatory everywhere in Aotearoa New Zealand to microchip your cat, this is also a good idea and acts as an added layer of protection should your cat go missing.

Fit your cat with a brightly coloured collar and bells – the more bells the better. It gives the birds early warning of a cat on the hunt. Bright, ‘scrunchie’ collars fitted with bells have been shown to reduce hunting, as the birds can see the colours and hear the bells.

Spotlight has some excellent fabrics for cat collars, and little bells can be purchased from pet supply stores, which also sell little collars.

Continued on page 17

Committed to Improving Network Reliability for the Ōtātara Community



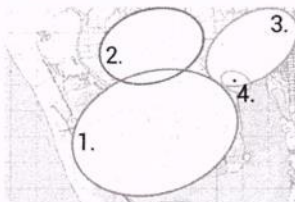
THEPOWERCOMPANYLTD

What We're Doing to Improve Ōtātara's Power Supply

Focused Maintenance

At PowerNet, we carry out visual inspections of all network assets across Southland and Otago every five years to identify where our assets need maintenance or replacement. Because of the number of outages being experienced by our customers in the Ōtātara area, we diverted our asset inspectors to the region to conduct an out-of-cycle inspection.

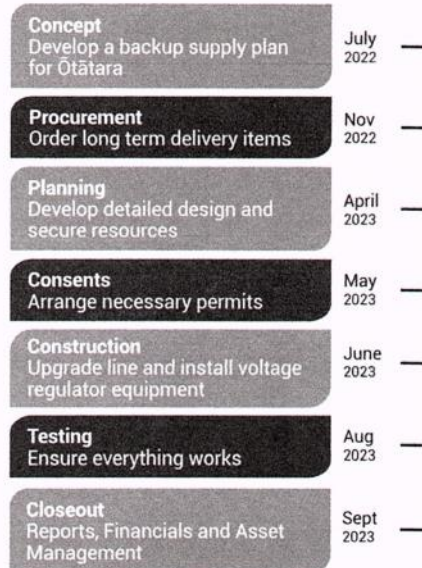
As a result, we have now inspected 1,370 poles, 35 transformers and 14 overhead switches. This has helped us to identify defects and to make plans for any maintenance, renewals or replacements needed. Our asset maintenance programme is now underway, and, once work is completed, it will contribute to ensuring the network meets the needs of the Ōtātara community now and into the future.



Map Key

1. Ōtātara Customers.
2. The existing main power line to Ōtātara which is supplied from the Waikiwi Zone substation.
3. The upgrade project to install a backup power supply from the Leven Street Zone substation via Bond Street.
4. Installation of an 11kV voltage regulator at the Ōtātara end of the Stead Street embankment.

Ōtātara Back-up Supply Voltage Regulator Installation



Ōtātara Network Stats

11kV Line Length
111km

1,414
Active Customers

Consumer Density
ICPs/km*
13

Unplanned SAIDI in last 12 months
10.95mins

50
Faults in last 12 months

Unplanned SAIFI in last 12 months
0.17times

Note: Two reliability measures are commonly used by our industry: SAIDI and SAIFI.

SAIDI (System Average Interruption Duration Index) is the average duration of interruptions for each customer in minutes per year.

SAIFI (System Average Interruption Frequency Index) measures the average number of interruptions for each customer per year.

The SAIDI and SAIFI listed in the Network Stats are the Ōtātara contribution to the whole TPCL network, is divided by 37,553 ICPs.

*Installation Control Points (ICP)

Upgrading the Network

To improve the security and resilience of the power supply to the Ōtātara region, we have a \$400,000 upgrade project underway to the backup power line, which is supplied from the Leven Street Zone substation (via Bond Street) and the power cable under the new Stead Street embankment.

The upgrade project involves re-conducting the supply from Bond Street and installing a voltage regulator at the Ōtātara end of the Stead Street embankment. This will increase the backup power line capacity and, once completed, will mean we are able to maintain supply if there is an outage on the main power line (which is supplied from the Waikiwi Zone substation via Ōtātara Road – Bay Road). While there has been a long lead-time on overseas equipment for this project, we are now on schedule to have this upgrade completed in September 2023.

This investment will significantly improve the reliability of Ōtātara's power supply and support future growth across the region – helping to ensure we are doing everything we can to provide a safe, efficient and reliable power supply for our customers.



This is a voltage regulator site.

Safe | Efficient | Reliable Power to Communities



Continued from page 15

Patterns for 'scrunchier' and brighter fabric collars can be found online.

Many people keep their cats indoor at night—GPS tracking has shown how far a cat can range at night, much to the surprise and alarm of their owners, who had no idea their loved cat had been out and about to such an extent, a risky activity.

Some people keep their cats indoors during the day time, or in specially-built appropriate enclosures or 'catios'. This does prevent the heartbreak

when a cat out in the neighbourhood is struck by a vehicle, hurt in a fight with another cat, attacked by a dog or just vanishes.

And maybe consider not replacing your cat when it passes away.

Some helpful information is contained in this website, from which the information on de-sexing and microchipping was taken:

<https://predatorfreenz.org/toolkits/know-your-target-predators/cat/>

Some ideas to help keep birds away from windows

With Spring approaching, and bird breeding season soon to begin, Kathy Morrison at Bush Haven has urged Otatara people to look at ways of discouraging birds, kereru in particular, from flying into windows. (*Pages 10 and 11*).

Among the suggestions was hanging up dream catchers, which when hung inside a window, may help discourage a bird from hitting a window.

I went and saw what might be available, and Diacks has a wide range of dream catchers, large and small, as well as other mobiles, hangings, and décor items that would work.

Hayes giftware shop has a good stock of wind spinners, mobiles, dream catchers and butterflies

to hang in a window.

Sue and I found a shiny silver circular 'wind spinner', as it is called, which is highly reflective and also very attractive.

When hung away from the glass in a window, it will rotate in even the lightest movement of air, sending flashes of light out into the garden.

Nichols has them in stock, in larger circular or smaller oval versions. The smaller oval versions are stocked by Diacks, Mitre 10 garden centre and Hayes giftware.

We have a round coloured leadlight artwork placed in the centre of one window, and that also seems to work well.

As Kathy writes, it would be helpful to hear what others have found useful, to help birds avoid windows.

Richard Johnson

Left, a wind spinner. There is also a tui option,



STEAD ST PUMP STATION



Progress update from Environment Southland

Work continues with replacing the aging Stead Street Pump Station with a new efficient, fish-friendly facility. In our last update, it was evident that the building was taking shape, and work had commenced with laying the outlet pipes from the new pump station to Kōreti New River Estuary.

Why is the pump station being replaced, and what are the benefits? Replacing the Stead Street pump station is being driven by the age of the existing infrastructure, which was installed in the early 1960s, and a need to build greater resilience for Waihōpai Invercargill – our communities and critical infrastructure - to the effects of climate change. In 2020, Environment Southland secured \$2.25 million of funding from central government as a contribution to assist in replacing the pump station.

Unlike the original pumps, the new pumps allow for the safe passage of native fish, including large tuna or freshwater eels. Their design is based on Archimedes screw pump technology, where fish are transported up through the pump without harm. They are very light, don't require much power to operate, and are simple, requiring much less maintenance.

Progress with outlet pipes and the latest on traffic management.

By early July, Fulton Hogan had completed laying the outlet pipes to the centre line and reinstated the eastbound lane for traffic. From July 5, they began working from the centre line to the estuary, and in late July started on the viewing platform, which will extend out from the shared cycle and pedestrian pathway.

A section of this pathway adjacent to the works is now diverted around the site via a temporary path whilst Fulton Hogan com-

pletes the final section of the outlet pipes and constructs the viewing platform. Please exercise caution when using the concrete ramps to get on and off the temporary path.

With these changes in place, Fulton Hogan has reviewed its traffic management plan and found that the necessary space required for two lanes of traffic and the shared cycle and pedestrian pathway at the site is unavailable. This means the existing traffic management plan for one lane managed by traffic lights will be in place through to the end of September when the road aspects of the pump station replacement will be complete.

This decision hasn't been taken lightly, and we have investigated all alternatives that could have allowed two lanes of traffic. However, the current traffic management plan is the only option to ensure the ongoing safety of drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and the on-site team.

Several instances of poor driving behaviour in this area over the last month have also played a part in this decision. We appreciate this work's impact on commuters travelling between Invercargill and Otatara and want to thank many road users for their patience and good driving behaviour.

Below, work is underway laying the pump station outlet pipes from the centre line of Stead Street toward the estuary



Otatara Landcare Group Membership



If you are not already a member and would like to help support the work of the Otatara Landcare Group, just fill in the form below and come and join us. We appreciate all our members both for their contributions of time and financial support. We can't do it without you.

Membership Form

Please complete form for membership or if you require a receipt for any donation and email to otataralg@gmail.com.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Numbers: (Hm) _____

(Mobile): _____

Email: (for newsletters and events) _____

I give permission for my contact details to be retained exclusively for the purposes of communication in relation to the activities of Otatara Landcare Group.

Subs:

Subscription for Life Membership \$50

Donations: also welcome! *NON-PROFIT CHARITABLE ORG. INC— CC47928*

All donations of \$5 and over are tax deductible within allowable limits.

Donation: \$ _____

OLG bank account **03 1355 0805312 00**

Please use your surname and "olg subs" or "olg don" in reference boxes.

Alternatively, send completed form with cash to our treasurer

Lloyd Esler – 15 Mahuri Road, Otatara

Otatara Landcare Group:

Chair, Richard Johnson 021 124 2746; Secretary, Chris Rance: 03 213 1161 ; Treasurer, Lloyd Esler: 03 213 0404, Pigeon Post editor, Richard Johnson 021 124 2746 , richardsueinvercargill@gmail.com

Committee Members:

Brian Rance, Sally Duston, Barry Smith, Graeme Childs, Linda Jackson, Ray Jackson, Geoff Dembo, Cathy MacFie, Dallas Bradley, Lloyd Esler, Maurice Rodway, Kathy Morrison, Douglas Black, Chris Rowe.

Additional Contributors:

Please contact the Otatara Landcare Group if you have any questions, suggestions or problems relating to the Otatara and Sandy Point areas: otataralg@gmail.com



Published for the community by Otatara Landcare Group © 2020

With the support of Invercargill City Council 's Community Wellbeing Fund.

www.otataralandcare.org.nz, Email: otataralg@gmail.com

Unless otherwise stated photos are copyright to the Otatara Landcare Group or the group responsible for the article.

The articles contained herein represent the views of the contributor and are not representative of the Otatara Landcare Group as a Society.

Printing by Sycamore Print: www.sycamoreprint.co.nz

Pigeon Post is distributed by the Otatara posties, free of charge, which is deeply appreciated.