

Otatara
Landcare Group

PIGEON POST

*Newsletter of the
Otatara Landcare Group*

Issue 67 Summer 2023

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



Swamp harriers, kāhu, are being seen more frequently in Otatara, effortlessly gliding overhead in hunting patterns, looking for prey. Harriers, also known as hawks, are in general less abundant over forests and urban areas, so we are privileged to be able to watch these large raptors circle overhead. Apart from road kill, kāhu eat small birds, small mammals like rodents and rabbits, and insects. They have been known to take backyard poultry. Residents have noticed that when kāhu appears overhead, the bird song shuts down and the birds head for cover!

WEEDING OUT THE WEEDS



Helping our stunning native trees and plants to flourish

A weed ID ‘drop -in’ at the Education Centre

Saturday March 25 10:30am – 12:30pm

Rachel Jones and Walter Fieldes, biosecurity officers with Environment Southland, will be at the Education Centre at the Southland Community Nursery in Grant Road on Saturday morning March 25 to discuss any weed issues and challenges. They will also have a display of specific weed samples they regularly control for Southland. Bring along your weeds and have them identified by the experts and learn how to control them.

Learn about the Rance’s restoration area as well, also about New Zealand’s wonderful native plants, and how to grow them, and find out about local volunteering opportunities. There will be an opportunity to swap a weed for a local native plant seedling! Or learn more about what you can grow that is native to the local area.

Attacking Chilean flame creeper in Bowmans Bush

Can you help remove the very invasive Chilean flame creeper in the beautiful Bowmans Bush? Jesse Bythell from the QEII National Trust is leading a push to remove this weed on Monday February 13, 6.30-8.30 or any time you can spare. Bring gloves – hand pulling only to control this invasive vine.

Tree releasing at Bushy Point

Otatara Landcare Group is organising tree releasing sessions at Bushy Point each Wednesday in February and possibly into March, from 6.30-7.30pm, weather permitting.

More information on page 15.

Spotting sycamores around your property

Look out for sycamore trees emerging on your property. These extremely invasive trees are very good at hiding within established trees, shrubs and hedges until they are big enough to be noticed. It is best to pull them out or cut them out now, before they get too big and require expert tree fellers!



A total outdoor fire ban has been declared for Southland, including the use of fireworks. Sandy Point is in extreme fire danger. Gas-operated BBQs are permitted.

A ROGUES' GALLERY



Words by Sally Duston, design by Helen Stewart

war on weeds

Otatara Weeds to look out for

Here's a pretty line up. Do you have any of these in your bush or garden? Well, the bad news is they are BAD! (except the native clematis, of course) and now is the time to get rid of them. Like most unruly weeds, if left to their own devices, they will multiply with enthusiasm, with the help of birds and wind, and overwhelm many of our delicate natives, covering the canopy or forest floor, keeping out the light or swamping other plants and preventing native species from thriving.

To keep things simple, here are suggestions for dealing with these 3 menaces.

For 'proper' plant names, lots more information and heaps more weeds to watch out for, check out the **Otatara Landcare Group's website** www.otataralandcare.org.nz/otatara-pests/pest-plants/

Environment S'land's Pest Hub

<https://pesthub.es.govt.nz/?pwsystem=true&pwid=600&sort=alpha>

contains more detailed information on methods of eradication of weeds and herbicide safety procedures.

If you are unsure on identification (particularly the OMB/ clematis) then seek help – send a photo and any questions to

rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz

Happy weeding everyone and thanks for helping restore Otatara to its former glory.

Darwin's Barberry

Grub out (can be left on the ground to rot) or cut and paste or spray stumps. If stumps aren't treated they will resprout very quickly.



Chilean Flame Creeper

Pull out vines as close to the ground as possible. These vines can be thrown on the ground as won't take root again. Chip away about this time every year and you'll see the plants weaken.



Old Man's Beard (photos left) versus Native Clematis (photos right)

Look out for Old Man's Beard (left) NOW as it should be flowering quite soon. It is easily confused with native clematis (right) which has flowered already and has the fluffy seeds present at the moment. Old Man's Beard needs cutting at waist level then leave the hanging vines to dry out and die. Pulling down vines may damage the trees. Cut remaining vine at ground level, immediately followed by pasting with something like Vigilant or Cut'n'Paste, woody plant killer or herbicide spray in order to achieve maximum kill. Don't leave any ends on the ground as they will take root.

Old Man's Beard



Native Clematis



ORETI TOTARA DUNE FOREST



New information panels coming soon, writes Cathy MacFie

I live a short distance from Otatarā's newest protected area, the Oreti Totara Dune Forest, and it gives me the greatest pleasure to see how often cars are parked at its entrance. From the start, it has been a community project from volunteer involvement to generous donations. Those donations have funded interpretation panels that tell the human and natural histories of this fascinating site.

Two new panels, pictured on the opposite page, will be installed this summer, explaining just why this site is so exceptional and how its restoration is being managed. For those of us who are involved, it is far more than a simple information exercise. As the panels explain, it is an exciting development – so much that we are discovering, many unknowns; so much that we don't know.

The rewarding part of all this is the interest and commitment of nationally respected naturalists in the site. In future our interpretation may be based on new knowledge!

Compare and contrast!

Just a few kilometres distant is Bushy Point where the Otatarā Landcare Group is planting open space to join two forest remnants: totara and kahikatea. Unlike the Oreti Totara Dune Forest, its focus is on active restoration. Over a period of 20 years, thousands of community volunteers have planted over 30,000 locally grown native nursery species. These fast-growing plants are now providing shelter for natural regeneration to occur and the birth of a new forest. Despite the intense activity only a few hectares have been planted so, whether active or passive, forest restoration is a long-term commitment.

Editor's note: The new panels have been designed by Helen Stewart, a very talented graphic designer and artist, who has also designed information panels for the Oreti Totara Dune Forest, for Bushy Point and the recent new brochure for Bushy Point.

Cathy's background is heritage interpretation, which includes the research into and the wording for interpretative panels such as those at the Oreti Totara Dune Forest and Bushy Point.

The pump track

A 'thank you' note

Many thanks to the people from the community who have been helping keep the pump track weed free and rubbish free. While Parks and Reserves are responsible for the track's maintenance, staff are really struggling to keep on top of maintenance throughout the city at the moment so are very appreciative of our help. Keep an eye on the Ōtātara notice board facebook page for further working bees or just pop down for half an hour or so anytime and clear some weeds. Many hands make light work and it's really only the area closest to the roundabout that needs finishing now. Thank you! Penny Ivey.

Welcome to the national stronghold of a rare dune forest

It is remarkable that, despite a long history of farming, one of New Zealand's most vulnerable forest remnants has managed to survive on this land.

What makes the forest special?

Ōtātara and Sandy Point developed on a foundation of sand dunes, formed over the last 6,000 years. Tōtara thrived on the stabilised sandy soils and the ecosystem was once widespread on coastal dunes around New Zealand.

Today the Ōreti Tōtara Dune Forest is one of the largest remnants of this specialised forest type found both in Southland and nationally. It is also significant ecologically for its relationships with seasonally wet swales, shrublands and other forest types, illustrated in the artist's impression.



Mānuka



Kahikatea



Tōtara



Matai

Stick insects are common in the Ōtātara Dune Forest - but mostly hidden! Photo: Chris Rowe

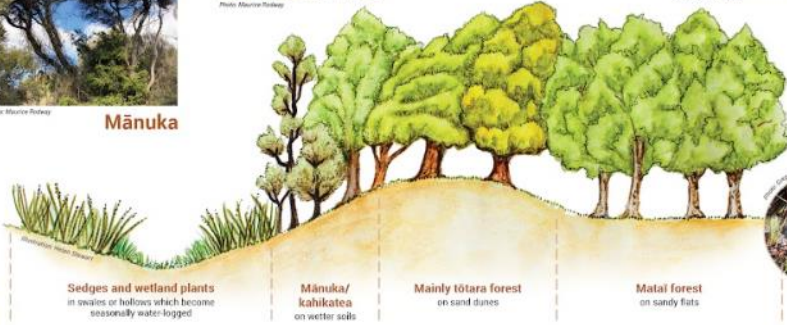
'Eye-spy' changes

As you explore the many walking tracks, you will notice that tōtara does not stand alone. A diverse range of trees and other plants reflect subtle changes in soil types and moisture. Cattle grazing has reduced the palatable species so it will be interesting to see what plants return now that the area is protected.

We discover new surprises as the forest regenerates, such as this vegeated orchid.



This orchid has been protected by government decisions from Bushy Point of the Ōreti Tōtara Dune Forest.



Sedges and wetland plants in swales or hollows which become seasonally water-logged

Mānuka/kahikatea on wetter soils

Mainly tōtara forest on sand dunes

Matai forest on sandy flats

A vine we love to hate

Within the forest, it is hard to miss the numerous trees and shrubs being engulfed and smothered by a thick carpet of vines. This is Muehlenbeckia or pōhuehue, a native vine. 'Why don't you take it out?', visitors often ask. Before you label this vigorous climber a 'villain', reserve your judgement for a moment!

There is more to Muehlenbeckia than meets the eye. *High Wilson*



The vine is the single richest host plant for native butterflies and moths in New Zealand, so it plays an important role in nurturing our biodiversity. Birds, in turn, are attracted by the insects and find safe nesting sites within its sheltering curtain.

Managing this precious forest remnant needs to balance the ecological benefits of pōhuehue against the risk of its overwhelming vulnerable native species. As a result, some vines are selectively removed.

Restoring a forest is easier said than done

When the Native Forest Restoration Trust bought this property in 2020, it knew it would be unrealistic to mass plant more than 20 hectares of open farmland. Instead, it is helping the forest's recovery through a multi-faceted approach, including a practice called 'passive restoration'.

Quick wins

Since destructive grazing has ended, bare areas beneath the tōtara and mānuka trees are regenerating naturally. Birds also make a valuable contribution, bringing in and dispersing native seeds.



In 2020, bare ground was marked out so that new growth could be monitored. Photo: Chris Rowe

Thanks to them, palatable species like wineberry/makomako, tree fuchsia/kōtukutuku and broadleaf/kāpuka are making a welcome re-appearance, particularly where conditions favour growth.

"Distractive? Us? Surely not!"



'Eye-spy' changes

It was exciting to spot the first seedlings, just months after stock were removed.



Planting assistance may be needed

In some situations where natural regeneration is very slow, volunteers help to speed up the process. Selected areas (including lookouts and special ecosystems) are planted to increase the diversity of forest species and also to provide an additional source of seeds for natural regeneration.

Monitoring is important to document the recovery and decide where more active restoration techniques are needed.

Right: Lomlokiwood planted in 2020 and growing well.



The invaders!

Pest control is a vital part of the forest restoration programme. Rats, rabbits, possums and mice are among the animals that eat and destroy native plants or seeds. Their originally high numbers have been reduced significantly by trapping and poison bait. Similar control of hedgehogs and mustelids (like stoats and weasels) has also resulted in a noticeable increase of native birds.



Compare and contrast!

Just a few kilometres from here, take the opportunity to visit Bushy Point where the Ōtātara Landcare Group is planting open space to join two forest remnants: tōtara and kahikatea. Unlike the Ōreti Tōtara Dune Forest, the focus is on active restoration. Over a period of 20 years, thousands of community volunteers have planted over 30,000 locally grown native nursery species.

These fast-growing plants are now providing shelter for natural regeneration to occur and the birth of a new forest. Despite the intense activity only a few hectares have been planted so, whether active or passive, forest restoration is a long-term commitment.



Above: Setting a trap. Photo: Helen Brown
Right: Clearing feralia (trapper) is an aggressive invader that takes control of native plants. Photo: Jade Taitel

Some pest plants are removed, although weeds that provide a nursery cover for regenerating native plants may be left.



FIELD NOTES



By Lloyd Esler

Spotted shag colony

The Spotted shag colony that formed briefly by the Stead Street Bridge dispersed, no doubt disturbed by the recent redevelopment along the wall. Just recently however it has come back. A dozen or more shags are roosting just at the Otatara side of the bridge.

Plastic ingestion in birds.

A few years ago Lauren Roman from Tasmania spent some days in Invercargill dissecting sea-birds to see how much plastic they had swallowed. There is a fresh study looking at plastic ingestion in albatrosses, gannets and shags to see if colour makes a difference. The researchers are after reasonably freshly dead birds. I can store these until needed so keep a lookout. For the very large ones like mollymawks I might just keep the crop and gizzard to save space.

Keep an eye out for pest plants

There is a bit of concern about Southland's pest plants. Rashan the Buddy did sterling work helping me dispose of a patch of Nodding thistles that the council had landscaped around. He pretends



he doesn't enjoy weed control but he rather likes the challenge of man versus nature. In this case, the thistles were on the verge of seeding. Another pest plant is Chilean rhubarb or *Gunnera tinctoria*. The enormous leaves are a familiar feature in parks and gardens but it is quite invasive along the coast. The largest patch in Southland is on a cliff at Bluecliffs. I grub it out whenever I find it.

There have been a couple of recent infestations of Rough horsetail, *Equisetum hymenale* (pictured above). This is another invasive which should be reported to Environment Southland. In the past few years I have noticed Viper's bugloss and Skunkweed and a few other species getting more common. This could just be part of their expected natural spread but there is a possible impact of climate change where higher temperatures and milder winters favour their spread.

Beach Patrol Scheme

The Beach Patrol Scheme has been running for about 60 years. I've been coordinating it for the

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Above, the yellowhammer, an introduced bunting with its characteristic call—'a little bit of bread and no cheese'.

last 15 years but it has now moved online. This makes it a bit easier for people who are conversant with on-line stuff but a bit harder for those who prefer pen and paper. In the latter case I can accept written beach patrol cards which I can enter myself.

Here is how to get into it... Google 'Birds New Zealand'. This takes you to the Birds New Zealand homepage. Click on the Research button, Click National Schemes, then Beach Patrol Scheme. Click 'Submit a new beach patrol observation' and follow the instructions. Needs a bit of practice to work out which boxes you have to tick.

Yellowhammers

Seems to be a bumper time for yellowhammers. Never noticed so many. Good breeding season, perhaps pest control and an abundance of seed. 'A little bit of bread and no cheese' my grandmother would repeat when she heard one singing when we stayed at her home in Governor's Bay. She would point out the singer but she got confused and it was the more social chaffinches that she thought made that song. The yellowhammers keep their distance. I've seen them on my lawn but they like the wide open spaces. They are buntings, not finches. Nor are sparrows finches,

but weaver-birds. They all sort of look like they should be finches. Yellowhammers nest on the ground in rough pasture and along roadsides but the nests are very hard to locate. Food is seeds and invertebrates.

The Bookseller at the End of the World

I've just finished reading this remarkable book. It is the autobiography of Ruth Shaw who has a bookshop at Manapouri. For many years Ruth and husband Lance operated the tour boat Breaksea Girl out of Doubtful Sound. Ruth describes her amazing life, overcoming all sorts of tragedies, until she has got to a good place in life. Well worth a read.

Leopard seals

Leopard seals seen to be on the increase. I've been seeing two or three a year on our beaches. It is no longer a rare sight. Their presence might have something to do with the decline in Yellow-eyed penguin numbers. Last year I found a jaw, pictured below, in Waikawa Harbour – it's from a large Leopard seal. The tri-cuspid teeth are very obvious. The Leopard seal pictured was on Surat Beach on December 28 last year.



PROTECTING BIRDS AND HOMES



by Dallas Bradley

An email from Pigeon Post editor Richard soliciting articles for this edition was initially met with a sense of dread – what am I going to write about, I thought - it's hard to come up with something fresh. However, a bit of head scratching and a couple of interesting occurrences in particular soon changed that.

As I was mucking around in the paddock the other day whilst transitioning it from a paddock to a lawn of sorts, I was alerted by a loud raucous screeching from a tui in the pear tree.

On closer inspection I spotted a nest and even closer inspection revealed a tui either making the nest or tending something within. Even closer subsequent inspections involving a ladder revealed a tui sitting on the nest, and when not sitting, bringing insects to its four permanent occupants.

How cool is it to have a tui nest in the garden – reward perhaps for all that sugar water feeding over winter and a reasonably pest-free environment.

Tui chicks in their nest, so vulnerable to predation by rats. Photograph by Dallas Bradley.



Contrast that with my second experience later on the same day. Whilst visiting a friend's property to feed his hens and trying to catch the young rats that were frequenting his hen house, I scanned the nearby trees with my thermal monocular, a device for detecting heat sources that is particularly useful for spotting small animals, day or night.

I soon spotted a large rat moving up, down and all over various branches high in a tree. The thought occurred to me "what chance would my tui nest have of succeeding in an environment like that?" Sooner or later the eggs or chicks would be rat tucker.

So that brings me back to the Otatara Pestbusters' and why the Otatara Landcare Group (OLG) set it up – "To help save our birds" – it's in the logo! Most of you will know that to achieve that aim, Otatara Pestbusters encourages Otatara residents to undertake pest control on their own property.

This is facilitated by the OLG selling rodent control traps, poison, and bait stations at very cheap prices plus offering advice. This property based pest control complements the extensive efforts of about a dozen Otatara Pestbuster volunteers who undertake pest control in all of the City Council reserves in Otatara.

That brings me to the common theme of several recent bait (poison) purchases, that being rats in the space between the two levels of split level or multi-storied houses. This space is often difficult for owners to access but the rats seem to find a way.

In such situations we firstly recommend blocking the rat access if you can find it – easier said than done sometimes. Secondly, we recommend trapping rather than poisoning to avoid the risk of

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Protecting birds and homes continued

the rats dying in the ceiling or wall space with subsequent odour issues.

Thirdly, we recommend using pet-proof traps or bait stations around the property to try and intercept the rodents before they take up residence in the comfort and warmth of your home. Finally, it takes persistence because there is always a certain amount of reinvasion.

Everybody has rats on their property from time to time and you hardly ever see them. You may see where they've been and if you are lucky, it's only a bit of poop, nest in your wood heap or a urine smell but there are quite a few horror stories about the damage they cause.

So there you go, two good reasons to undertake pest control – saving our birds and your property. Rodent control around your home can be challenging but satisfying too. I am always amazed at

the amount of pleasure people get from the presence and antics of birds, especially our native species. Wouldn't it be nice to see or hear more kaka, bats and moreporks though. We get the occasional reports of them but not enough to suggest they are resident. If you do see or hear of them, please let us know.

Finally, given that this is the summer edition and given that like last summer it is hot and dry, then like last summer and autumn, there could be an explosion of rats and mice, particularly the latter. Better to try and nip the problem in the bud rather than wait for the 'scuttling' to occur!

For your pestbusting supplies, contact Dallas Bradley, Coordinator, Otatara Pestbusters on 021 784962, 03 213 0234, amberg2@gmail.com or call in at 120 Oreti Road, Otatara.

'Top crops and flop crops' in the veggie garden

Each year in the veggie garden is different and all bring their challenges and successes – here are some of ours. This year the hot dry summer has meant that some crops have done particularly well – potatoes well before Christmas, great garlic, zucchini, beetroot, carrots and parsnips, and sweetcorn and onions don't look too bad. Potatoes now look sad from lack of water and peas got eaten yet again by sparrows!

On the fruit front, strawberries have been exceptional, as have black and red currants; the new damson plum is looking good and the sanguine peach has a heavy crop again. The apples, although looking very dry, have another good crop of fruit. Others on the flop front are brassicas – my biggest cauliflower was the size of a ping pong ball and despite in-



vesting in cloth to keep the cabbage whites out, other brassicas were poor too. I look over the neighbour's fence with envy but I also marvel at the produce we are able to buy – how do growers grow those perfect looking tight cauliflowers, cabbages and celery? They are a thing of beauty and if you try to grow and fail then you can't complain at the price you pay for that perfect shop-bought item.

But as with last year my most impressive vegetable has been the climbing Zucchini (*Zucchini rampicante*) (*pictured left*). At the time of writing it is already over half a metre long and still growing! I am still aiming at Bronwyn's 800mm long speci-

men – not that it's a competition or anything!!
Chris Rance

LITTER INTELLIGENCE ACTION



Update January 2023 by Bronwyn Graham

Otatara School repeat-surveyed the Noki Kaik survey area on 29 November 2022 making it the eighth survey at this site.



Surveys are held four times a year, or once a term.

The litter density (items per 1,000m²) was 284, down from the highs recorded at this site in September 2020 (1,876 litter items per 1,000m²) and September 2022 (1,866 litter items per 1,000m²). 88% of the litter was plastic, including strapping bands and tape, rope, clothes pegs, straws, shot gun wads, bottle lids, food wrappers, buoys, utensils, bottles and more!

During 2022 both the Pōkākā and Tarata classes participated in the Litter Intelligence Education Programme. The students reflected on the importance of the coast and oceans, all those that rely on the moana and how litter is impacting on our special places. They investigated the life cycle of plastic and undertook a mini household mission to see what possible solutions there are to plastic pollution.

Yvonne Green, teacher at Otatara School, said “it would be great to see more parents getting involved and if parents have an interest they could help by carrying out a litter survey each year”.

Contact Yvonne or Georgia at Otatara School or Bronwyn if you are keen to support the school.

Litter Intelligence around Southland

The Litter Intelligence Engagement Workshop held on 12th November at the Southland Community Nursery saw new lead citizen scientists trained. A great day at the beach!

Register with Bronwyn at bronwyn@sustainablecoastlines.org.nz or 021 152 1857 if you'd like to be involved or would like to attend a future workshop.

Surveys have been carried out across Southland – Jacobs River estuary, Riverton beach, Ōreti Beach, Haldane bay and estuary, Waituna lagoon, Toetoes bay, Gemstone beach, Monkey Island, Milford Sound, Greenpoint, Omaui and we even have a freshwater lake beach site on Lake Te Anau.

We have great people involved from schools, the community and Te Pukenga (SIT). South-

Continued on next page

Below, Ōtatara school students surveying the Noki Kaik site for litter density and type.



Noki Kaik Litter Intelligence Survey Site

Litter intelligence continued



lands efforts during 2022 have been noted in the Sustainable Coastlines annual report, highlighting how we are contributing to making Litter Intelligence a truly nationwide programme – <https://sustainablecoastlines.org/app/uploads/2022/12/Annual-Report-FY22-Sustainable-Coastlines.pdf?>

Get in contact...

If you are interested in becoming a citizen scientist, forming a group to collect litter, or are an educator wanting to find out about the Litter Intelligence Education Programme (LIEP) please contact Bronwyn Graham at bronwyn@sustainablecoastlines.org.nz



Above, Otatara chool students sorting litter from the Noki Kaik survey site.



Left, congratulations to the Pōkākā class for completing the Litter Intelligence Education Programme Journey.

Update from Environment Southland on the Stead St pump station

Works are continuing at the Stead Street Pump Station as the 70-year-old facility is replaced. The contract, being delivered by Fulton Hogan, involves constructing a new pump house alongside the existing pump station. The new pump station will house two Archimedes screw pumps, which provide safe fish passage, energy efficiency and reduced maintenance.

Progress has been smooth so far, with minimal disruptions for road and cycleway users. However, the next phase will mean Stead Street is down to one lane as the contractors carry out construction from the pump station to the centreline. There will be reduced speed and a stop/go in place for traffic in both directions, meaning short delays for those travelling between Invercargill and Otatara. This stage will start from mid April.





By Chris Rance



Watering, watering, watering! That's been the reality over a summer like no other. When you are running a nursery a lack of water can be a disaster and as with everyone in Otatara we are on tank water supply.

That means watering by hand as we cannot afford to scatter water where it is not needed. We do this regardless of the season as water is a precious resource.

We also have a system called irrigating beds where we have raised beds with plastic underneath them and we can put the plastic up or down to keep water in the bed, rather than it draining away. It's a simple way of retaining water as well as the raised beds making weeding for

The rain dance worked!



volunteers so much easier. However, on a nursery Friday volunteer morning on January 20, we all did a rain dance and nature finally obliged!

As it has been so dry, nobody has wanted to plant so we have a good supply of shelter species, toetoes and other shrubs ready to be planted in autumn. It is important to plant the right plant in the right place as some plants tolerate dry (or wet) areas better than others.

Some good species for dry areas are totara, broadleaf, Pittosporums, and those tolerating wetter areas are cabbage trees, flax, koromiko (*Hebe salicifolia*), mingimingi (*Coprosma propinqua*) and manuka.

There are lots of ideas and advice specific to Southland plants and conditions on our website www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/restoring-your-patch/, but feel free to call or come along to the nursery if you want free advice for your own planting area -

rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz

Chris

Looking after your roof tank water

There were a number of comments about the articles I wrote in the last two issues of Pigeon Post.

Thank you to those who commented. It shows that at least a number of you are aware of the significance of your whole water system from the roof to consumption. Well done, people!

Barry Smith

OTATARA JOY



By Linda

Living Well, Simply



Otatara offers so many places to walk, fish, swim, picnic, play, stargaze & forage, all accessible without motorising, a huge advantage to enjoying the outdoors simply. 🍅

I value the generosity of volunteers planting & maintaining community spaces, caring for our local birds & undertaking regular pest control, sharing resources & watching out for all of us. People contributing in whatever way they can adds up to the strong cohesive community we share.

It's been hard, impossible really, not to share (boast!) about this summer's successes in the garden with northern mates who count their fine days on one hand. Outdoor tomatoes, berries, garlic, onions & beans along with an abundance of all the usual veges, with pumpkins, apple & peaches still to harvest. However, extra water storage & contending with more garden pests seems the new norm.

Another need arising with long hot days is a breezy, shaded spot to relax, out of sight from jobs on the 'todo' list, plus extra ice cube trays in the freezer.

Here's to 'Simply Living Well.'

L. Jan 2023

A NEW LIFE TO RESTORE LIFE



A restoration project

Andrea and Kevin Maloney of Otatara recently featured in the *Forest & Bird* magazine, about their restoration project in Otatara.

Five years ago, the Maloneys, who are *Forest & Bird* members and supporters, bought three hectares of land, about half of which was remnant bush and the rest in pasture. Most of their property is covenanted under the QEII National Trust, which helped them draw up a plan to ensure the health of the bush and restore most of the pasture into ephemeral wetlands.

The remnant bush includes totara, kahikatea, rimu, miro, climbing fuchsia, muehlenbeckia, and a diverse understorey, attracting many native birds. They started by landscaping to restore wetlands, trapping, and establishing a shelter belt.

All this work was made harder by having to make flying visits to their land from their Wellington home. Last summer, the Maloneys took the plunge and moved to their newly built home on the property with their sons, Nicholas and Lee.

Andrea is a hydrogeologist and Kevin is an IT architect, and they are able to work remotely from their new home. “We count ourselves very lucky we could move out of Wellington to a place with a chunk of land to look after and take our jobs with us. We’re at least as productive here, and healthier and happier,” says Kevin.



Andrea had to give up her second job as a landscape designer to focus on the restoration. “I don’t miss the landscaping because I’m doing so much work here. I want to use my energy here,” she says.

They plan to put in another 3000 plants on the property, many of which are sourced from the nearby Southland Community Nursery. Andrea volunteers at the nursery on Friday mornings when work commitments allow.

Kevin and Andrea have put in a total of 15

Goodnature 24 rat and stoat traps and nine Goodnature 12 possum traps. Over the five years they have recorded more than 153 rat and stoat hits and 30 possum hits.

Above, Andrea and Kevin; left, the ephemeral wetland they created.

Thank you to Forest & Bird for their permission to reproduce, in part, this article.



TREE RELEASING



Help our tree seedlings escape the grip of grass

Our regular working bee this month, on Sunday 19 February from about 1 till 3pm, is devoted to releasing trees planted at Bushy Point in September last year which may need releasing from competing grass and bracken growth, now well underway.

We are also organising tree releasing sessions at Bushy Point each Wednesday evening in February and possibly into March, from 6.30-7.30pm, weather permitting.

Meet at the Bryson Road entrance to Bushy Point for all these events.

If you were involved in our very successful Planting Day in September, this provides some great opportunities to see how the trees you planted are progressing, and give them a helping hand to ensure they can survive - and thrive!

About 1000 trees were planted that day, but not all will need to be released – tussock probably won't, and in other cases, the grass may take some time to re-establish after it was sprayed prior to tree planting in the area.

However, there will definitely be some tree seedlings from previous years which will need help, and that may well be more challenging.

Appropriate methods for releasing the young trees will be demonstrated at the start of the working bees, so no previous experience is necessary. In some situations, sharp garden shears may be needed, so please bring a pair if you can. Safety or sunglasses are recommended, and garden gloves will probably be helpful. Sun protection will hopefully be essential!

Children can play a valuable role in this too - they can search in the grass for seedlings which need help, and mark them with coloured tape (supplied) so adults can quickly locate and re-

lease them. This work is surprisingly rewarding, and children (of all ages!) really enjoy the challenge of spotting little tree seedlings well-hidden by choking grass or bracken.



Grass choking out a young tree – releasing it will help it thrive.

Finding and releasing a tree can take a wee while, and sometimes as few as only six trees can be released in an hour, depending on how overgrown a particular area has become. So, the more people who come, the more successful our efforts will be, and more trees will be saved from the deadly clutches of their arch-rival, grass.

To find out more, or to register for a particular date in February, please text Douglas Black on 022 104 8661, or email otataralg@gmail.com and mark it for my attention.

Please bring:

- shoes or gumboots suitable for working in long grass
- gardening gloves
- clothing suitable for the expected weather conditions
- a face mask if you are allergic to dust or grass seeds
- safety (or other) glasses to protect eyes when weeding amid tall grass stalks
- optionally, a pair of sharp garden shears suitable for cutting grass.

Please contact Douglas Black on 022 104 8661 for more information or to find out where we are working on the night.

Douglas Black

THOUGHTS ON NATURE



By Barry Smith

When we initially setup the Bushy Point Habitat Restoration Programme back in 1999 the sole aim was the rehabilitation of lost forest for the benefit of native birds, animals and insects. Since then the focus of the project has shifted, or perhaps I should say, been added to by things that have become more prominent since we started.

The first has been carbon sequestering and I'm please to say we are making a small amount of difference. With the work we are doing in Bushy Point we are emitting about 600kg of carbon into the atmosphere a year, however this is offset by the native plants we have planted which are currently sequestering about 36,000kg of carbon a year.

This amount is increasing every year as the result of two factors - firstly we are planting more plants and increasing the area of planting, secondly, as the age of the forest increases, its ability to suck up carbon accelerates, so we end up with a double win.

The second additional benefit that we have noted came about in a really strange way. Personally, my original thoughts were that we would totally plant out the 14.9 hectares we have a concession from DOC in which to operate.

However, someone said to me one day "have you thought of the value of open spaces to someone from the city?" This directly relates to mental wellness. We all have very busy lives, working,



Bushy Point, a great place for decompression!

looking after family (young and old) and sometimes we just need a bit of a break.

So the concept of going for a walk through the bush that we have planted and then coming across an open space from where there are vistas to be seen started to form in my mind. That is one of the things we are considering with the work we are doing with the addition of rest areas and picnic places.

In addition to the R&R value of the above I have a five km circuit around Otatara that I regularly walk or jog (depending on how I'm feeling and what I was up to the day before), and it is really great to see others out and about doing the same thing.

Also, whilst I remember, thanks to the many motorists who give us a wide berth when they see us, this is greatly appreciated. These walks/runs I time and can log against my registration in Parkrun as a "Notparkrun".

However come Saturday mornings Robyn and I head into Queens Park to complete the five km Invercargill Parkrun Circuit. Registration for this event is a good idea and it is totally free, apart from your time and we may ask you to assist at times in one of the many volunteer roles.

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Continued on next page



Your barcode is valid at any Parkrun event world wide and there are currently some 40 events in New Zealand which locally include Te Anau, Queenstown, Wanaka, Balclutha, Gore and Dunedin, and other local areas are pending. Start times may vary between centres so check their websites before attending.

The Parkrun Concept started near London in October 2004. Fourteen years later in 2018 there were nearly five million runners registered around the world, three and a half years later in mid 2022 there were eight million people registered in the 22 countries Parkrun currently operates in, that is an increase of just over 2000 people a day and there are over 2000 events.

Registering gives you a bar code which can be used at any Parkrun worldwide. Crossing the finish line you get a place tag, this is scanned along with your personal bar code. All the information is uploaded into the great....?????(Hole in the Universe). Later in the morning the 'Hole in the Universe' (who personally knows you) sends you an email with your time and place and some other stats as well.

What is encouraged here is participation rather than trying to win. Run if you must, jog if that is your thing, but by far the most popular way is to walk. In fact Parkrun International is trying to promote the walk rather than the run and during October 2022 they promoted it as Parkwalk month.

A few weeks later they encouraged people to bring their dogs with them by promoting Barkrun or Barkwalk.

One of the best things about this event is that a number of us head off to the Cheeky Llama Café, where, on presentation of your barcode

you will receive some discount on your purchases.

Parkrun Invercargill will be five years old on February 10 this year . During the late spring, summer and early autumn the start time is 7:45am for the briefing and an 8:00am start. When daylight saving ends we go to a 8:45am briefing for a 9am start.

The gathering place is the Queens Park Cricket grounds car park in Queens Park, just into the park from the Burt Munro Statue. Invercargill Parkrun Website: <https://www.parkrun.co.nz/invercargill/>

The reality is that a walk around Bushy Point or Parkrun are just two of an extremely large number of options designed to help you relax, remain active, increase the quality of your life and add to your longevity. If you don't like these options then how about a walk around your own garden a few times a week.

For those who would like to explore this more, there is plenty of information on the internet, including this excerpt from- www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/nature-and-mental-health/how-nature-benefits-mental-health/. Thank you Barry for your article! *Editor*.

Spending time in green space or bringing nature into your everyday life can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. For example, doing things like growing food or flowers, exercising outdoors or being around animals can have lots of positive effects.

It can:

- *Improve your mood*
- *Reduce feelings of stress or anger*
- *Help you take time out and feel more relaxed*
- *Improve your physical health*
- *Improve your confidence and self-esteem*
- *Help you be more active*
- *Help you meet and get to know new people*
- *Connect you to your local community*
- *Reduce loneliness*
- *Help you feel more connected to nature*
- *Provide peer support.*

NATIVE MISTLETOES



Beautiful but threatened

Over the Christmas holidays we had the delight of seeing some of the largest and most impressive mistletoes flowering at Piano Flat. Mistletoes in New Zealand are almost all rare and threatened species and Southland and the West Coast are strongholds in the country for these magnificent plants.

Generally, in the North Island they are very rare due to possum browsing and individual trees are usually protected by placing a band of steel around the trunk!

Mistletoes are semi-parasitic, meaning they can photosynthesise through their green leaves but also gain nutrients from the tree. Because they don't get all of their energy from the tree they generally do not harm the tree. They are also some of the most beautiful flowers in the New Zealand flora.

While there are exceptions they are usually quite host-specific – for example, the red and crimson flowered mistletoes (*Peraxilla colensoi* and *P. tetrapetala*), those found at Piano Flat, are usually specific to silver beech.

The yellow flowered *Alepis flavida* (common at Manapouri) are normally found growing on mountain beech. Occasionally mistletoes have a number of hosts – the common mistletoe found in Otatara (*Illeostylus micranthus*) has lots of different hosts but is most often found on *Coprosma propinqua*, and *Tupeia Antarctica* (also found in Otatara) is commonly found on lowland ribbonwood. The smallest mistletoe in the world (also found in Otatara) is often found on manuka – *Korthalsella salicornioides*.

The photographs below show a few of the species – they evolved in New Zealand with New Zealand birds as pollinators. The red flowered mistletoe needs tui and bellbirds to twist the end of the flower for it to open and release its pollen so it is a good example of where good numbers of native birds need to be present with these special plants in order for them to set

seed. If you see the flowers opened from the bottom then something else (ie, a starling) has robbed the nectar often without pollinating the plants.

We would be keen to hear from you if you think you have a mistletoe growing at your place – email:

rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz

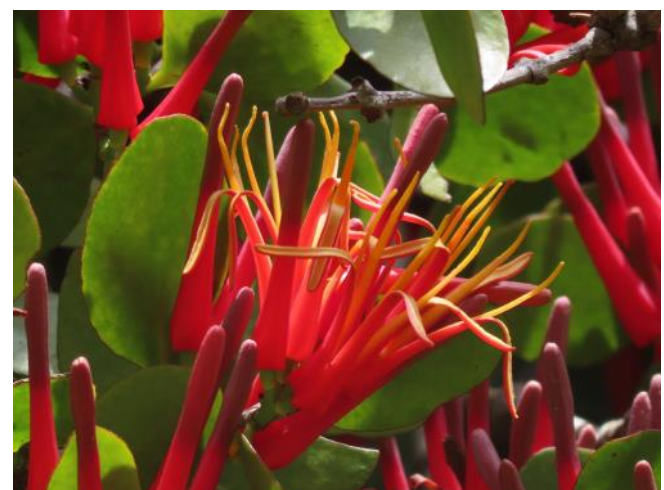
If you want to find out more about native mistletoes or other native plants the best place is the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network website <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/>

Chris Rance



Above, Alepis flavida, the yellow flowered mistletoe.

Below, Peaxilla colensoi mistletoe, the red flowered mistletoe.



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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.

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

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