



TĀWHARANUI OPEN SANCTUARY SOCIETY INC.

Newsletter No. 62. September 2017



A handsome male native Australasian Shoveller in full breeding plumage with a female endemic Pateke on the lagoon.



Native Clematis is flowering all over the park at this time of year.

Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary is a joint project with Auckland Council.



Coming events

1. Sunday in the Park (wear sturdy shoes/gumboots; bring a bottle of water) BBQ lunch provided:
 - * 1 October
 - * 5 November
 - * 3 December
2. Conservation Week Event: 15 October

Volunteer Days

Tuesdays 9am **The nursery team meets at the Tāwharanui nursery.**

If you would like to join this dedicated team

Contact: Ray Blackburn 425 4995. magsandray@gmail.com

Thursdays 9am A small group of volunteers meet at the Vol Hole for interesting track and maintenance work.

Contact: Roger Williams 425 9127. port.williams@clear.net.nz

Volunteer checking (to be done in your own time)

See inside of the back page.

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Chair's Comments

The park has been very wet which made digging holes for planting trees relatively easy, so planting finished well before lunch time each day. We finished planting M16 and moved on to planting Cactus Paddock. Delivering the plants to the sites meant a greasy ride for mules and trailers. Volunteers enthusiastically pushed embedded vehicles out of muddy bogs. On a couple of occasions over 100 volunteers arrived for planting, with many first time visitors to the sanctuary. Fortunately our wonderful catering volunteers know what they are doing. They are flexible and can quickly adapt to provide a well-earned barbecue lunch for everyone.



The nursery team have gone on quietly planting on Nursery Tuesdays. The famous Kiwi Slip has been planted. Native coastal species are being planted around the grey-faced petrel sites on Takatu Peninsula and at Anchor Bay sand dunes. It is a delight, as one travels about Tāwharanui now, to see infill planting of pohutukawa, puriri, kahikatea, kowhai and tawapou thriving in corners that were once devoid of trees.

At the AGM on 3 September, three valued committee members retired. All three will leave with a sense of satisfaction that they have given generously towards repairing one special place on planet Earth. I am sure they will have grown from their experience and their journey with TOSSI. More than likely they will continue helping in the field.

David Stone joined the committee in 2004. He enthusiastically helped with Art in the Woolshed. He has planted many trees and taken on a trap line. As a lawyer he has contributed valuable guidance to the society having been Secretary for nine years. He has applied for grants and most recently initiated the development of an Education, Awareness and Appreciation Strategy Plan.

James Ross joined the committee in 2008. He too has regularly tramped trap lines and hopefully will continue with this. He has been Vice-Chair and Secretary, and taken on the role of Fauna Coordinator. His claim to fame will be his lead role with the return of the grey-faced petrel to Tāwharanui. He has led a successful programme attracting grey-faced petrel back to nest at Tāwharanui. On cold dark nights James Ross, Chris Gaskin and researchers can be heard literally hooting and hollering as they call in grey-faced petrel for identification banding at the end of Takatu Peninsula. When not working with sea birds, James helps Ranger Matt Maitland with catching takahē for health checks.

Ray Blackburn joined the committee in 2012 as Flora Coordinator. His involvement with the nursery has been monumental. Ray inherited the nursery coordinator role when Steve Palmer moved to Nelson. This noble man has quietly and generously given thousands of hours progressing the nursery and planting, leading the well organised team that it is today. There has been a small transition from bulk numbers of trees to more species for infill planting under his leadership. In addition to coordinating the nursery he is thinking a year ahead planning the range and number of trees that will be required.

We give an enormous thank you to David, James and Ray, and welcome on board three new committee members who will be introduced in the next newsletter.

Alison Stanes

Open Sanctuary Senior Ranger Update

I think it's about time I stopped being surprised every year by what seems the early onset of Spring. I love the fact that nature continues apace and while I'm busy thinking the world is wet and cold, the clematis pops into flower, black fluff-ball pukeko chicks appear in paddocks and everywhere you look forest birds have changed gear into breeding mode. It's always exciting and I love the promise of new life and new beginnings. So what's new and different in the open sanctuary?



The kids are growing up and leaving home! Our first takahē chick Tuakana is now difficult to distinguish from the adult birds in his M16 group. Only when you are up close do you see his bill still has a hint of black underneath the red. Tuakana will soon be on his way to Motutapu Island to hopefully pair up with a spare female there. This match-making exercise is a regular consideration for the Takahē Recovery team based in Te Anau. There is an additional impetus to the moving and match-making this year. With a new wild population of takahē to be established in Kahurangi National Park there is a big shuffle of birds happening around the country. The Burwood Bush captive rearing unit in Southland will provide most of the birds for the new wild population and Burwood in turn will be restocked with new genetically matched birds. Our own Douglas and Dampier are destined to head south for this, probably in the new year.

Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary is now home to New Zealand's largest native fish — they just need to grow from midgets to giants. 8000 giant kokopu fingerlings (as the name implies, fish about the size of your finger) were reintroduced into two streams at Tāwharanui on June 10. This project is a great partnership between community (TOSSI), iwi (Ngāti Manuhiri), private enterprise (NZ Premium Whitebait), a Crown research institute (NIWA) and two parts of local government (Auckland Council Regional Parks and Biodiversity). In an unassuming building in industrial Warkworth there is a quite stunning operation (NZ Premium Whitebait), led by delightfully mad scientist Paul Decker. Paul and his team have over the years honed captive rearing of whitebait (giant kokopu) for the restaurant trade. In doing so, they have identified opportunities to help native fish conservation through education and providing captive or farmed fish stock for reintroduction projects. It really is quite something to stand in a room with literally millions of individuals of a critically endangered species and to ponder the role that farming and commercial exploitation can play in conserving our heritage. This year is phase one of a two stage project. Next year we will add two and five year old fish to the same streams. The aim is to determine which life stage is best suited to act as founders of new wild populations. The question has some obvious resourcing impacts as raising thousands of fingerlings takes a few months in the farm, while raising adults takes proportionately more space per fish and most certainly years more captive care. The project also examines the suitability of restored wetlands and inline reservoirs as native fish habitat. Links have been made with AUT to study these fish over the next few years as they hopefully establish and prosper in their new home.

Lastly, what's big and green and opens up over two million times? The original pest proof vehicle gate installed in 2004, is what. Many of you will have noticed it looking a bit sad and shaky in the last year or so. A new dual gate system has been installed to keep us pest-secure and to cater for future visitor growth. Two gates will also give us greater operational flexibility in the event of one failing.

With kind regards

Matt Maitland.

I can be contacted at matt.maitland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz or 09 426 1200



Auckland Council staff, park rangers, TOSSI volunteers and other people involved in the project, helping to release the kokopu fingerlings at Tāwharanui.

Dune Restoration at Anchor Bay



A healthy sand face with Pinau grass (gold in colour) and Spinifex sending out runners. These capture windblown sand to restore gouged banks to a gentle slope.



An example of a muehlenbechia cap causing erosion as there are no runners of Pinau grass or Spinifex in the gut to hold windblown sand.



The clay crust is progressively being removed. Cecil Bowyer spent three days on the tractor with a trailer shifting sandy clay fill to the overflow car park.



On winter Nursery Tuesdays when activity is slow, the team has been out planting up the new rounded dunes with Spinifex and Pinau grasses.



Backed by a splendid sea view, Kerry McGee is on his knees planting Spinifex!



Roger Williams and Sharon Kast rebuilding the sand ladder access to the beach.

Dune 'Sea Face' Restoration

After storms when the dune face has been eroded to an upright cliff, the dangling long strands of Pinau grass and Spinifex trap windblown sand and gradually a gentle slope is reinstated. That was the key thing I learned at a Dunes Restoration Conference at Taipa in 2012. At the time, Tāwharanui's Ocean Beach dune faces were virtually three metre high cliffs, so I invited some of the experts back to have a look at them. My ulterior motive was to help New Zealand dotterel which were unable to get chicks up and down these high faces for protection from black-backed gulls. David Bergin, a "dune guru" of *Environmental Restoration*, turned up and so did more Auckland Council V.I.Ps than I had expected. We set off walking from the west end of Ocean Beach and in the interim period some sand had returned to make the dune face a more gentle slope. Imagine my embarrassment with all these "big wigs" on site, when slowly I was made aware that the dune face was working perfectly!

We shifted to the Anchor Bay car park and walked on the adjacent beach. "Now," said David, "we have a problem here." A clay cap on the top of the dunes, most likely put there when the picnic area was laid out, had Muehlenbechia growing on it and the sea was undermining the whole face. With my lack of knowledge I had no idea that this was a problem dune although when it was pointed out it seemed very clear.

The Council, with the help of TOSSI, have set to and progressively removed the clay cap, and contoured the area. In June a digger arrived to complete the last section. A TOSSI volunteer Cecil Bowyer, who behaves younger than his age, was seen driving the tractor using his expert skills, towing a trailer back and forth for three days shifting unwanted clay and sand from the cap. This mixture was dumped in the wet area that is used as an overflow car park, to raise and drain it to prevent visitors getting stuck.

TOSSI nursery workers spent subsequent Tuesday mornings replanting the area with Spinifex and Pinau grass on the front edge, and Muehlenbechia and flax further back.

We look forward to seeing how the efforts of this work performs!

The Mid and Back Dunes

For many years now, volunteers have walked in waves across the dunes persistently removing yellow Lupin. The results are absolutely amazing as native grasses take up the extra space. It just shows what groups of volunteers can achieve with a little determination. Once we lowered the number of plants it was easier to remove seed pods and carry them offsite preventing seeds returning to the ground. The dunes will require an annual maintenance sweep to pick up stray seedlings. A big thank you to all those who took part in this exercise and a special thank you to Sue Hoyle and Mark Paterson who have returned on their own on numerous occasions and quietly removed lupin.

Apple of Sodom, a prickly weed with yellow fruit that grows happily in infertile ground, has also been removed. In fact, we could almost say eradicated. There were specimens as big as cars recorded in the Vol Hole diary. With some international volunteers many years back, I can remember picking so many fruit that we filled a trailer with rubbish bags full of the small yellow fruit. Again it shows what can be done with keen, vigilant volunteers and a little determination.

Now we can glance across the rolling acres of Lupin-free Muehlenbechia with pride. I have been fortunate to travel New Zealand extensively and I know of no other place where there are such broad sweeps of virtually weed-free Muehlenbechia.

Alison Stanes

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

If you would like to write a brief article about any activities you've been involved in, or an experience you've had in the Park which you'd like to share, please email it to me: mbvkgg@gmail.com
And if you have any good photos of interest, please supply a brief caption and email them to me.

Marguerite Vanderkolk
Editor.

Open Sanctuary activities



On the first Sunday of each month volunteers tuck into a barbecue at the Woolshed after a morning's work.



Paul Decker from NZ Premium Whitebait arrives at Tāwharanui with 8000 giant kokopu in the tank.



Karyn and Tony Hoksbergen releasing giant kokopu into Waikokowai/Ecology Stream.



Matt Maitland and family release giant kokopu in the Mangatawhiri wetland.

Out and about in the Park



While monitoring the takahē, Sally Richardson fends off the inquisitive farm cattle which pull packs and raincoats off the mule into the mud!

Right: Tuakana, our first takahē chick, held by Sharon Kast, has just received colour bands and a radio transmitter.



Above: the research team checking grey-faced petrel nesting boxes at Ngaio Bay.

Left: Kerry McKee watches researchers (circled) checking grey-faced petrels' natural burrows.

Below left: Manu Barry checks a tracking tunnel for mice and Duvaucel gecko footprints.

Below: photo by Mark Paterson who discovered this morepork feeding on a dead bell bird.



Bird Reports

While monitoring takahē, there were other sightings: Banded Rail seen on the edge of Ecology Stream upstream of the Pump Shed; Spotless Crake heard in the drainage line west of the Information Hut and up near the boot wash station at Ecology Stream; and a rare visitor, an Australasian Bittern, in the wetland opposite Kiwi Slip.
James Ross

While doing our trap line on the south coast I heard a rustling nearby and then a kiwi dashed out in broad daylight across the path in front of me. I called Kim who was further up ahead. She came back but she missed out and never saw it.
Roger Grove

While out with the grey-faced petrel team recently we set out from Ngaio Bay around the rocks to Takatu Point. James Ross said, "pizzas would be nice." As we had started out at 3.30pm, checked all the nesting boxes at Ngaio Bay and still had a long evening ahead banding birds in the dark, pizzas sounded fantastic. But impossible considering our remoteness. I nearly said, "Well, we would need a helicopter for that." The sun was going down when we finally scrambled up a tricky coastal ridge to Takatu Point. To our surprise there was Chris Gaskin with his wife Karyn, accompanied by Kerry McKee their mule driver, holding six large boxes with warm pizzas! That set us up for a long evening! The team put identification bands on 30 birds. Another seven that landed already had identification bands.
Alison Stanes

Flora Report

Welcome to my final report – "Yeah baby!"

The planting season is largely complete with some 20,000 trees and grasses in the ground. There's still about 2000 to go, mostly going into the top of the Kiwi Slip. Planting some muehlenbeckia and prostrate manuka out on the headland as petrel scrub. There's still Ngaire's smaller project at the Lagoon entrance that needs some attention. Did I mention the kohekohe and karaka that still need to find new homes before it gets too dry? Our several hundred Pseudopanax are still too small to go out and will be carried over to next year.

Many thanks to everyone for their efforts during this period. It's a big task and we at the nursery appreciate all the help that we get. The different approach to the putting-out days led to much better outcomes for all. At times it may have seemed as if we had too many people on the hill but too many sure beats not enough. Special thanks to Matt and his crew for their technical support throughout. The wet winter guaranteed we would experience some frustrations but all was handled with skill and humour. The additional help from CVNZ, mp2 and the Mahurangi College Hockey team all added to the overall success and gives us a good number of choices for next year in Slip Gully.

To date no one has put their hand up to replace me as Nursery Coordinator so I guess it's business as usual. Sally, bless her, has agreed to be the liaison person between the committee and the nursery, and to write the necessary dreaded reports. In the meantime I will continue to attend the TWG meetings and so foresee very little in the way of significant change to the revegetation programme in the near future. Meanwhile there's probably a title up for grabs — Flora Coordinator — any takers?

Thank you to all Committee members past and present for your support and encouragement over the past five years. It's been quite an enlightening adventure for me. Not exactly my natural environment. Certainly something I've never contemplated before. I hope I haven't embarrassed myself or anyone else too much during that time.

Ray Blackburn



Above: This fluttering shearwater was found in a nesting box at Tāwharanui during the evening inspection last month. This is very exciting as it is the first in the Park and it means the sea bird project is well under way with a range of birds arriving to nest in the colonies at Takatu Point.

Below: While Edin Whitehead and the sea bird team were checking burrows for shearwater or grey-faced petrel, a burrow was found with a kiwi and its chick inside.



Planting Cactus Paddock



Volunteers honoured

Three TOSSI members were amongst 40 volunteers recognised recently by the Rodney Local Board (part of Auckland City) for their service to the local community. They were Roger and Patte Williams, and Ray Blackburn. They received a certificate and (appropriately!) a native plant. Board Chair Beth Houlbrook said the Rodney district is lucky to have such willing volunteers who devote so much time and energy to improving their communities [and the environment]. TOSSI also feels very fortunate to have these three volunteers amongst us.



At the Information Hut, volunteers building the stairs take a lunch break.

Remembering Barry Lett

Barry Lett, a renowned New Zealand artist and a founding member of TOSSI, died in June. In 2003 Barry suggested to the newly formed TOSSI committee that he could run an art exhibition in the Woolshed at Tāwharanui. Barry exhibited artworks in the five art exhibitions which followed in the Tawharanui Woolshed. These set TOSSI up with a capital investment fund that keeps our organisation sustainable. As well as the art exhibition initiative, Barry planted trees at Tāwharanui and encouraged birds to his nearby property. The first kaka known to nest back on the mainland was in an old puriri on Barry's property. Council staff assisted in protecting the tree from predators by installing a stainless steel sleeve around the tree. His spectacular art pieces and his contribution to the natural world will be remembered.



Trapline Volunteers Needed

Trapline volunteers help maintain the network of traps and bait stations throughout the park. They serve a crucial role in detecting and eliminating pest predators that have somehow managed to get into the sanctuary. Volunteers adopt a line which they usually service once a month. You can do this alone or with a friend to help share the load. The lines vary in length and difficulty: some are physically demanding, others are literally a walk in the park! Full training and advice will be provided.

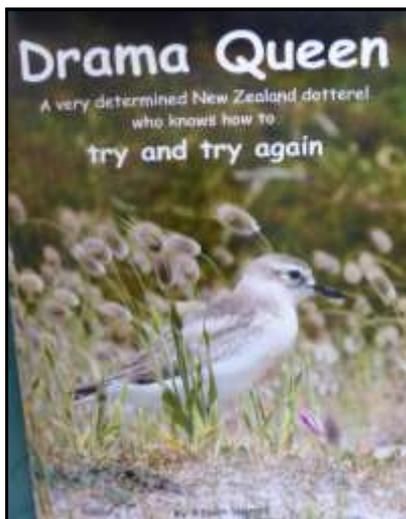
If you are interested please contact:
James Ross jamesross@paradise.net.nz



TOSSI monogram patches are available for sale with black or white surrounds, to sew on garments — hats, shirts, fleeces etc.

Cost: \$15

Contact: Sally 09 425 0161



Children's Book: *Drama Queen*

At last a reprint is available!
A delightful story about a New Zealand dotterel that lives at Tāwharanui. Excellent birthday or Christmas gift.
For sale: \$20
Phone Alison 09 524 0291

TOSSI Committee

Chair	Alison Stanes	09 524 0291
Vice Chair	Roger Grove	09 422 3459
Secretary	Karyn Hoksbergen	09 585 1315
Treasurer	Kim Grove	09 422 3459
Committee	Sally Richardson	09 425 0161
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Email secretary@tossi.org.nz
Website www.TOSSI.org.nz
Correspondence Chair or
Membership Secretary
PO Box 112
Matakana 0948

Application form for NEW MEMBERS

Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary Soc. Inc.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone No. _____

Email _____

Membership fee:

\$20 single membership	\$ _____
\$30 Family membership	\$ _____
Additional contribution (optional)	\$ _____
(Donations over \$5 are tax deductible)	
Total amount enclosed	\$ _____

Membership as a gift to family or friends:
A gift membership will be sent to you.
Recipient's name: _____

Recipient's address: _____

Please make cheques payable to Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary Society Inc. and return to:
TOSSI Membership Secretary
PO Box 112
Matakana 0948

You can also pay by bank transfer to:
ANZ 06-0483-0072390-00
The membership name should be clearly referenced if the payee name is different to the membership name, e.g:

Payee	Payment details	Membership
Bloggs, J.	\$20/\$30	Bloggs Family

If making a donation with membership, please reference clearly.

Stinkhorn fungi - Family Phallaceae

This family is one of the most strange in the fungus kingdom. Its members attract flies for spore dispersal, and mimic the appearance and smell of dung or carrion. These may be seen in Ecology Bush on the forest floor during the winter when the soil is wet and triggers their growth.



Basket Fungus. *Ilecdictyon cibarius* Tul. Lattice fungus. It is a spherical white net with the brown gleba smeared all over the inside of the meshes. The basket can break free and be rolled away some distance from where it hatched out of a capsule. The Maori explained the sudden appearance of these fungi by saying they were ghost droppings.



Flower fungus. *Aseroe rubra* La Bill. It has a receptacle like a flower or sea anemone, with a white basal stem crowned by a circle of horizontal, spreading arms forked at the tip. The brown gleba is borne on a ring formed by the bases of the arms spreading outwards. Both sight and smell create a bush surprise, the former pleasing and latter not so much!



Barrie Ferguson, a TOSSI member, photographed these plump native kereru in his Warkworth garden. Kereru being fruit eaters have adapted well to urban living. They will travel in flocks to good feeding sources especially seeking out large puriri trees, such as in Tāwharanui.

We acknowledge with thanks Warkworth Digital Design and Print for their assistance with the printing of this newsletter.
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