



TĀWHARANUI OPEN SANCTUARY SOCIETY INC.

Newsletter 71. Summer 2019



This kereru often feeds on dune vegetation at Three Post Bay..... until it finds it is hard to get off the ground! Some humans may be able to relate after lunch on Christmas Day.



Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary is a joint project with Auckland Council.



Coming events

Sunday in the Park: meet at the woolshed at 9.00am (wear sturdy shoes/gumboots; bring a bottle of water) BBQ lunch is provided.

- February 2: Work Day (all welcome)
- March 1: Work Day (all welcome)
- April 5: Work Day (all welcome)

Volunteer Days

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

If you would like to join this dedicated team,

Contact: Ray Blackburn 09 425 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 09 425 9127. ropeworth@gmail.com

Predator Fence checking (to be done in your own time) See page 10.

In this issue:

* A takahē tale	3
* Activities in the Park	4
* In the Nursery	5
* Education in the Park	6
* Christmas in the Park	7
* Pateke in paradise	8
* Pest control	9
* Nursery Report	10
* Odds and Ends	12

Chairperson's comments

The TOSSI volunteer teams continue with their amazing work: nursery production, trap lines checking, weed removal, education, track and small structural maintenance, predator-proof fence checking, membership management, organising events, workday catering and bird monitoring. As well the TOSSI committee (including the secretary, treasurer, fauna and flora coordinators, education, IT and communication coordinators) volunteers all give time to help make the Sanctuary a success. It is lucky that passion drives us sometimes even further than employed workers might extend. So it's an enormous thank you to all those who have donated time to Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary.

Where would New Zealand be without its volunteers?

This year has had its up and downs! Takahē escaping and mustelids entering. Nursery watering systems failing and Matt Maitland breaking his hand. It's the same with the birds — some numbers increased and others declined. The large colony of tarapunga (red-billed gull) that nests on Comet Rock came and investigated the site, and then left for somewhere else this nesting season. A pair of poaka (pied stilts) that have nested persistently in the Mangatawhiri area disappeared after being harassed for some days by spur-winged plover (Australian). The ōi (grey-faced petrel) had a set-back with chicks mysteriously disappearing. However while looking for kiwi recently we heard large numbers of titi (Cook's petrel) chattering overhead as they returned to Hauturu a toi (Little Barrier Island) from feeding binges in the Tasman Sea.

Tūturiwhatu (NZ Dotterel) have increased from only five pairs 17 years ago to 20 pairs this season. Although Tāwharanui tūturiwhatu reach the sustainable target of each pair fledging one chick per two seasons, they have to make an enormous effort to achieve this, even in a protected sanctuary. This season we have been provided with four huntsmen cameras to watch their nesting activities. We have already lost 30 of the 68 eggs laid. One camera gave a perfect video of a pukeko stealing and carrying off a whole egg in its big red bill. Two other cameras gave us videos of a harrier hawk slowly devouring all three eggs in one nest (photos page 9). The tūturiwhatu afterwards removed egg shell, flying off to drop it somewhere else, an instinctive action to prevent notifying aerial predators that chicks are about. It seems that most bird monitors and Council staff at Tāwharanui have to be detectives, determining who or what took the eggs or chicks and if or what could be done about it? It is said that tūturiwhatu are dumb but I like to think they are just slow to adapt. The younger birds certainly make more mistakes than the older more experienced birds. One pair this season lost their nest to the lapping of higher tide. Not deterred they are still sitting on one of the eggs that is in the tidal debris about a metre along from the original nest. Now that shows determination. There are the surprises — a brood of three tūturiwhatu chicks turned up on Ocean Beach without any of the three monitors ever discovering the nest. One has to ask, do some tūturiwhatu pairs have fewer alarm behaviour patterns during nesting so that observers and avian predators don't even know they have a nest?

It is the determined volunteers and the determined birds that contribute to a wonderful asset for Auckland Council, to be enjoyed by the people of New Zealand, as well as visitors from around the World.

Have a very Happy Christmas, a restful holiday and a New Year that fulfils your dreams.

Alison Stanes



Open Sanctuary Senior Ranger Update

The photo says it all. Chasing and trying to catch run-away takahē can be treacherous. Due to Matt's injury, he has been excused from providing his Ranger's Update for this newsletter. But the story behind the injury is worth telling.

The exact time that the escapees got outside the Sanctuary is unknown. Monitors on 4 and 10 October failed to detect them but these birds had been fairly mobile within the Park and there are many hidden corners. Electronic sentries at the ends of the predator-proof fence detect the UHF transmitters (attached to the birds) 24/7 and had been functioning well, but had a glitch requiring a reset. This may have allowed the birds' departure to go undetected.

A reported sighting from a member of the public on 11 October suggested the birds were on private land off Takatu Rd in the vicinity of Baddeley's Road.

On 12 October radio telemetry detected birds on the right of the estuary between Baddeley's Beach and Whitmore Road. The birds were sighted but were mobile and unwilling to be caught. The chase was abandoned as it was pushing the birds away from area.

13 October the search resumed. The birds had moved from the east side to the west side of Buckleton's Beach/ Whitmore peninsula. They were located on private land in the Bishop Hill subdivision. They were tracked in bush around a house near the beach. The birds responded to broadcasted calls initially but then lost interest. Feeder rattling and pellet shaking had their attention but they were cautious to approach the capture pen which had been set up. Eventually they moved away. The search was again abandoned as the birds became increasingly riled.

14 October: search resumed. They were found on the next property westward, near the beach on a small area of rank grass. There was an attempt to cut off their escape using scrim fences in preparation for a hand-held net or catching by hand. The birds then did an amazing sneak away during the process of setting the fencing. They remained mobile but localised for the rest of day. Three capture pens with feeders were set up.

15 October: search resumed. The birds had relocated south to Gin Point. They were tracked into a clump of bush but remained wary and evasive. The search was suspended. A feeder was set up but without a pen around it.

16 October: the birds were still at Gin Point. Four feeders with cameras were set up and the National Takahē Recovery team specialist support arrived. There was discussion about the possibility of night capture on a roost.

17 October: the birds were left to further settle but kept under watch.

On 21 October, after several days settling in nicely at Gin Farm, the team was feeling confident that today was the day! But not to be, as a telemetry check showed they'd upped sticks and relocated back to Bishop Hill! When they were finally located, a plan was hatched and with some scrim fencing, close telemetry, running and diving, the team at last had two birds in hand.

On Tuesday 23 October, Walter and Manaaki were transported to Motutapu Island and released. This from Ranger Hazel Speed who received and released them, "And they're off! Walter and Manaaki sprinted off to the new home in Central Gully, obviously keen to start their new life there. I checked them yesterday and they had eaten the food I left them, and were nearby. My new cunning plan is to keep them so fat and happy they won't want to go anywhere else! (haha)"

The adventure also gained some media interest. Check out these links:

RNZ National – afternoons with Jesse Mulligan. Tuesday 23/10. 5'46" audio

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/afternoons/audio/2018718804/escaping-takahe-to-be-exiled-from-tawharanui-peninsula>

RNZ National Morning Report. Wed 23/10. 2'13" audio

https://www.rnz.co.nz/audio/player?audio_id=2018718943

Auckland Council article including video of feeder habituation

<https://ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/articles/news/2019/10/the-bonapartes-of-tawharanui-return/>

Below: the two escape artists, Walter and Manaaki. The aerial photo shows where they came from, the red circle on the Park at the right hand end, and where they got to, the red circle bottom left. A distance of at least 10 kms.



Matt Maitland can be contacted at matt.maitland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz or 09 427 3270.

Activities in the Park



Above: Volunteers Roger, Karyn, Ron and Sharon (photographer), who are on the Thursday Construction team, knocked up this timber rack in a few days! Below: "Does that look ok, mate?" The predator-proof fence at the west end of the Park was repaired and had rusted netting replaced by fencing contractors.



Above: Ranger Juliane is preparing the batteries for the Galaxy tracking devices used to track the movements of the micro-chipped kokopu.

Because Tāwharanui is a working farm, lambs are destined to become Christmas roasts. Below: Rangers Evan and Colin drafting them to load onto the stock truck.



In The Nursery



After many years of volunteering in various ways at Tāwharanui, Cecil and Joy Bowyer (above and right) are retiring. The Nursery team had a ceremonial planting of two kauri trees in their honour. (below)



Above right, the Tuesday Nursery team plant dune grasses at Anchor Bay. Below left, Ray Blackburn plants a toropapa (*alseuosmia macrophylla*), a small shrub with strongly but pleasantly scented white flowers, which was discovered in the Waitakere Ranges in 2006.

Below right, the Nursery team are picking out plants.



Education in the Park



Auckland Zoo has returned to the Park to run its Conservation Education Programme during Term 4. To find out more, watch this video clip: <https://youtu.be/pWrsrDEyOKI>

Above: TOSSI's Information Trailer is utilised by the Zoo staff as an additional teaching resource.

School students on the Programme camp overnight in the Park's campground. Left: students from St. Cuthbert's College putting up their tents.



All Saints' Scout Group from Birkenhead in Auckland recently spent a weekend camping with their families at Tāwharanui. They learned about the Park from looking at the Information Trailer (above) and about trapping pests by seeing at how traps work (right). They were thrilled to see two kiwi during their night-walk through Ecology Bush.



Christmas in the Park



Ranger Maurice got what he wanted for Christmas — a dead stoat!

Santa Claus and Mrs Claus turned up at the volunteers' Christmas lunch, looking a little worse for wear! The contents of the bottle hidden in the brown paper bag may have been to blame? Fortunately Santa was still in a fit enough state to hand out presents to volunteers (right). Then things got very merry with the catering crew! (below) Contents of the bottle remain unconfirmed.



Before the lunch, the usual workday tasks still needed to be done. Right: a team of volunteers released young trees from the grip of kikuyu grass beside the rangers' office car park.



Pateke in the Park



Signs that pateke are thriving in Tāwharanui: above, 28 pateke on the pond at the western end of the camp ground.

Below: a pair of pateke with their ducklings near Thompson's Loop track.



Right: This duckling seen here 'walking on water' has been christened Jesus (in the spirit of the Christmas Season)

Photos: Jackie Russell



Pest Control

Pest control is a constant battle at Tāwharanui, as it is everywhere in New Zealand. It is particularly challenging at the moment as this is a 'mast year', which has native trees and plants flowering abundantly and producing prolific amounts of seed. These become an easily accessible food supply for rats, which boosts their breeding. However, when the seeds run out, rats turn to eating birds, their chicks and eggs. This can lead to bird populations being decimated in a very short time.

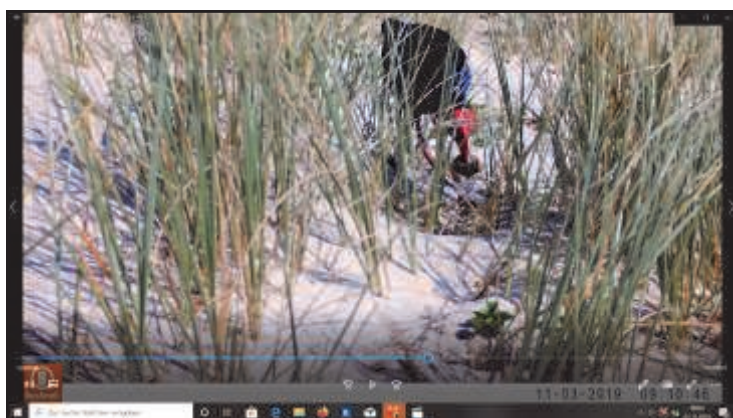
Trapping and poisoning are currently the most widely used and most effective tools for pest control. But unfortunately predators seem to be getting smarter, becoming increasingly 'trap-shy' and avoiding traps, or storing poisoned bait rather than eating it.

So we humans need to get smarter too! To this end, considerable amounts of time, effort and money are being pumped into research and development of technology and science. To find out more go to: <https://pf2050.co.nz/news/new-generation-tools-for-predator-free-2050-effort/>



Stoats, weasels, rats and possums (above) are the most common predator pests in New Zealand and are a serious threat to native wildlife in Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary. Even though it has a predator-proof fence, pest incursions can still occur. Above right: a stack of new DOC200 mustelid (i.e. stoats and weasels) traps ready to go out into the Park.

However, predators in the Park are *not* just the cute furry variety! There's also the feathered variety. The screen shot below left is from a camera set up near a tūturiwhatu nest at West End, in an attempt to catch (on film) what had been eating the eggs in the nest. The culprit — a pukeko! Although usually vegetarian, they are known to eat ducklings and, obviously, also eggs!



Unfortunately harrier hawks and black-backed gulls also prey on tūturiwhatu nests. Cages and wooden "tents" (above right) are used to protect nests, but hawks managed to squeeze into the cages. Two nests each had three eggs which were all eaten by hawks, as caught on camera. Netting has now been put around the bottom half of the cages with a small hole for the tūturiwhatu to use.

Nursery Report

Since our big winter planting programme on the first Sunday of June, July, August and September, the Nursery volunteers have been busy planting as many of the remaining trees in the nursery as we can. The campground hillside became home to puriri, mahoe, flax and cordyline trees. We caged most of the trees to prevent them being eaten by rabbits but thought the flax and cordylines would be safe from browsing. We were wrong but we think the plants will survive. Our next planting site was the Anchor Bay dunes where we put in pingao, Muehlenbeckia and 500 coastal grasses supplied by Auckland Council. Planting in sand is definitely easier!

The last of our big trees (some up to four years old) kauri, kahikatea, puriri, rewarewa and taraire found homes in light-wells in the manuka canopy of the Mangatawhiri wetland. These trees were all caged. Because we cage so many of our planted trees, we have had to purchase a large amount of netting and a huge number of steel pegs had to be made from fencing wire. Cecil Bowyer deserves a huge thank you for cutting the netting to size and making so many pegs.

By the end of October the Nursery was virtually empty. Now the seedlings in seed trays need to be put in tubes. Thousands of kanuka and other species have already been pricked out. Vigorous tubed plants have been put into PB3s. We will be very busy for the next few months tubing and potting up into PB3s. We look forward to the annual assistance from the campers in January.

Susan Gibbings

Join the Fence Team

We are calling for Predator Fence Checkers.

You would be joining a team of 20 others who work in pairs, one each side of the fence, taking a turn every 10 weeks and choosing a day in the week as rostered, starting from Wednesday through to the following Wednesday. You will be introduced to the procedure of recording your time in the Park, the gear you take on your check and recording your observations. You will then be walking approximately three kilometres over a three hour period, checking the fence which includes the buried skirt, cap and netting; checking that culverts are clear; posts are erect, etc.

This offers a great opportunity to enjoy Tāwharanui Regional Park while ensuring the reintroduced species are protected to the best of our ability.

For more information contact:

Roster Compiler

Richard Taylor

021 102 1065

rb.taylor@auckland.ac.nz

TOSSI on Facebook

TOSSI is on Facebook. You can find us by searching 'Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary Society Incorporated' or using the URL <https://www.facebook.com/TOSSI.NZ/>

Please feel free to post photos and other updates that you feel followers will be interested in. Follow the page to get notifications of upcoming events.

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 enjoyed in the Park which you'd like to share, please email it to me: editor@tossi.org.nz
And if you have any good photos of interest, please supply a brief caption and email them to me.

Marguerite Vanderkolk

Editor.

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: jrross801@gmail.com



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*

A delightful story about a NZ Dotterel (tūturiwhatu) that lives at Tāwharanui. Excellent birthday or Christmas gift.

Cost: \$20

Contact: 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
	Justine Sanderson	021 654 554
	Susan Gibbings	09 422 6328
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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:

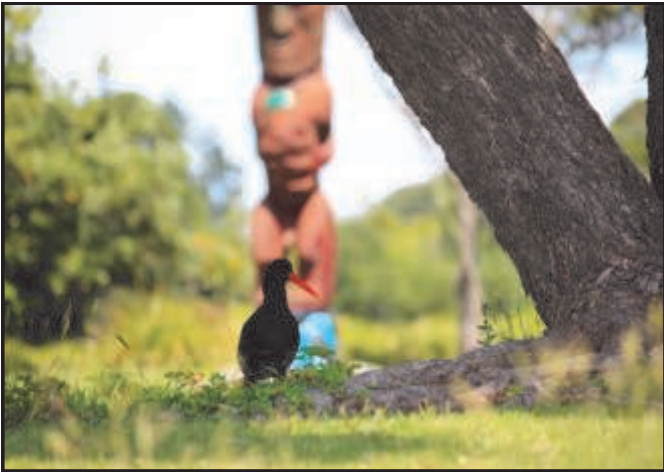
ANZ 06-0483-0072390-00

The membership name should be clearly referenced especially if the payee name is different to the membership name, e.g:

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

If making a donation with membership, please reference clearly.

Odds and Ends



An oyster catcher, perhaps trying to imitate the statue behind it in an attempt at camouflage, stands by its nest with very well camouflaged eggs.

Photos: Jackie Russell

Right: Brown quail in the camp ground taking a dust bath. They were introduced widely in the North and South Islands in the 1860s and 1870s from Australia, but now only survive in the North Island. They can be seen at Tāwharanui dashing between scrub cover or out feeding. They will fly short distances when stressed or disturbed.

Photo: Alison Stanes



Kumarahou pomaderiris hamiltonii

Is the less common pale flowering kumarahou that only occurs around Warkworth, Kaiaua, and on Great Barrier Island. At Tāwharanui, passionate volunteers have planted out specimens in vast clay banks where it likes to grow. This delightful flowering specimen was found beside the farm road to West End near the slip known as Kiwi Slip.

Below right: The two more golden bushes near the middle of the photo are the only known original *hamiltonii* examples at Tāwharanui. They were discovered after the project of establishing this rare plant was started.

Photos: Alison Stanes

