



TĀWHARANUI OPEN SANCTUARY SOCIETY INC.

Newsletter 75. Autumn 2021



This summer looked like any other at Tāwharanui, as New Zealanders swarmed back to the beaches, putting Covid-19 momentarily out of their minds.

Even these tūturiwhatu (NZ dotterel) chicks didn't seem to notice any difference.

Photos: Alison Stanes



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.

- * April 4: Work Day (all welcome)
- * May 2: Work Day (all welcome)
- * June 6: Planting Day (all welcome)

Volunteer Days

Tuesdays 9.00am The Nursery team meets at the Tāwharanui nursery.

If you would like to join this dedicated team,

Contact: Ray Blackburn: magsandray@gmail.com

Thursdays 9.00am A small group of volunteers meet at the Vol' Hole for varied and interesting track and maintenance work.

Contact: Roger Williams: ropeworth@gmail.com

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

In this issue:

* Ranger's Update	3
* Activities in the Park	4
* Sunday in the Park	5
* Summer in the Park	6
* What's the Buzz?	7
* Pāteke Survey	8
* Petrel's Historic Return	9
* Nursery Report	10
* Sharing the Intrigue	12

Chairperson's comments

Volunteers at Tāwharanui are fortunate to have the opportunity to keep in touch with the natural world and adapt to the changes. And changes in nature can happen quickly. So as well as monitoring bird species, volunteers are now monitoring cat traps! Twenty-five cat cages have been set out around the Sanctuary to catch feral cats that have arrived with the invasion of rabbits. One might ask, how did all these pests slip under the radar? Rabbit numbers quickly exploded with less on-site management during Covid-19 lockdowns, followed by a number of other contributing factors. And according to the Department of Conservation; where you have rabbits, you have cats! Fortunately cats will eat rabbits before birds because they are easier to catch and provide a better meal. It appears that not only have cats sneaked around the ends of the pest proof fence, as seen by fixed, motion-sensor cameras, but they have also bred in the Park. Luckily Park ranger Maurice Puckett has adapted to change and become as clever and devious as the cats, by using a range of tempting baits from fresh rabbit meat to soft toys doused with male cat urine!



Auckland Council is having a plan prepared to eradicate the unwanted invasion of pests. Hopefully in the meantime action will continue on the ground, or the problems will grow bigger. Action, change and adaption to the change needs to happen as quickly as the problems occur. The longer they are left, the bigger the mess. This applies to animal pest incursions as well as weed break-outs.

Over the summer, volunteers at the Information Trailer have been helping Park visitors understand the complex intricacies and delicate balance of nature at Tāwharanui. We have engaged one-to-one with thousands of visitors again this year even though there were no overseas tourists. It was surprising how many of those visitors were international New Zealand residents. These families have had to adapt to a new culture and make changes without the support of immediate family, left behind in countries which are at present inaccessible.

This season a pair of tūturiwhatu (NZ dotterel) adapted by making a mid-season change of nesting territory. Their nest, near a beach access way that was quiet when set up, most likely became intolerable when weekend crowds of people arrived at the beach. They abandoned the site and shifted to Next Beach, a small bay along from Anchor Bay on the lower Ecology Trail. Here they successfully hatched chicks. They shifted again with their tiny chicks back around the rocks to the Anchor Bay tūturiwhatu enclosure. Fortunately the two pairs of tūturiwhatu from that enclosure already had fledged chicks and left the territory. There might be a battle over the enclosure next year when they all return to nest. It is all part of the evolutionary process. Throughout greater Auckland tūturiwhatu have adapted to non-coastal nesting sites that are always near moisture, such as in paddocks, sub-divisions and open spaces where invertebrates provide the food source. It could be that these breeding sites avoid the constant disturbances on hot sandy beaches from hundreds of human beach-goers. These novel sites also help avoid overcrowding in the usual tūturiwhatu nesting territories. Tūturiwhatu on these sites encounter a whole new set of nesting challenges to adapt to.

It seems that we too as a human race are going to be making some adaptations in the near future for the survival of the planet. Let's make those moves in time to make the planet sustainable. We can help in a small way by planting more trees. So please come along to our tree planting days on the first Sunday of each month starting in June. Check our TOSSI website for details: www.tossi.org.nz

Open Sanctuary Senior Ranger Update

A few years back Aucklanders gave the thumbs up to enhanced protection of our natural environment. The Natural Environment Targeted Rate (NETR) will collect and spend some \$311m over a ten year period (2018-2028). Gearing up for this increased level of expenditure has been gathering pace. There are four key streams of NETR expenditure: islands and marine; plant pathogens; expanding community action; and protecting green spaces.



The plant pathogen stream has a focus on kauri dieback. A lot of the expenditure here can be described in terms of capital investment such as significant track upgrades and boot wash stations. This type of *one and done* spending allows for a targeted investment and then moving onto the next project. With good design, execution and maintenance, these investments should have lasting environmental protection benefits for these kauri forests as well as enabling access for recreation, appreciation of nature and *mental respite*. Recent upgrades to the Ecology Trail at Tāwharanui are an example of this NETR kauri dieback expenditure, and feedback shows these upgrades have been well received.

The other streams of NETR spending have a longer lead time and are not singular interventions but usually require initial investment followed by significant maintenance budgets. Over time there will be a swing in expenditure from the capital investment of the kauri dieback infrastructure type, to ongoing operational expenditure for other environmental outcomes in the other streams.

There has been a need for a significant increase in capacity within Auckland Council to guide this investment and a parallel increase in capacity to deliver on these designs via contractors and the community. The *protecting green spaces stream* will see increased investment in plant and animal pest control. We have already seen a lift in budget for both on park and buffer-zone weed control. The recent possum control on Takatu peninsula was a NETR funded project.

The resourcing and capability increases are timely. We have observed an increase in the number and difficulty of animal pest incursions into the Open Sanctuary over the last few years. Just why these are more challenging, we are unsure, but it seems that willier pests are breeding. This is despite the excellent community led pest control support in land buffering the Park, led by Takatu Landcare Group and The Forest Bridge Trust. Currently being scoped is NETR funded enhanced pest control outside the Sanctuary, enhanced surveillance within the Sanctuary, and a focus on cat and rabbit issues.

The resourcing demands on staff and volunteers have struggled to keep up with these pest pressures. These pressures mean continuous reprioritisation of our efforts, hard physical work and a significant mental and emotional toll which can be burdensome. We know our staff and volunteers have passion in bucket loads and when we can lift our heads and see the wood for the trees or hear the birdsong (over the noise in our head), we benefit from a wonderful workplace.

We do get a bit used to having Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary within our regional park assets but it does pay to reflect on it being one of New Zealand's two (the other being Shakespeare Sanctuary) most visited and accessible wildlife sanctuaries, closest to the country's largest urban centre. They are leaders in the integration of land uses and are home to wildlife not seen in greater Auckland or even the mainland, for decades or sometimes centuries. It is useful to reflect on the wise words of eminent kiwi philosopher John Clarke, aka Fred Dagg, "We don't know how lucky we are".

Matt Maitland

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

Activities in the Park



Teachers from the Maths department at Mahurangi College visited the Nursery to find out about propagation of native tree seedlings. They were shown how to collect and process the seeds of easily germinated native trees and then how to raise them. They plan to use this knowledge to raise seedlings as part of a maths project at the College.



In the heat of summer, cattle have learned they can *cool their heels* by standing in water troughs. Unfortunately this behaviour damages the troughs and the ball-cocks that control the water flow.

Solution: the Thursday work group have built these protective frames over a number of troughs on the Park.



Yet another ingenious solution: the Thursday work group constructed a cover over a culvert to widen the surface area so Park vehicles are able to drive safely along the predator fence.



Just like cattle, kiwi also felt the heat and dry conditions in the Park this summer. So volunteers (right) again went out weekly to put water in shallow troughs strategically placed where kiwi could find them and drink from. Of course, other birds such as takahē and pukeko also benefitted from the easy water supply.



Left, ranger Maurice demonstrates how to re-set a cat cage trap to the team of volunteers who are checking the 25 traps around the Park every day.

Sunday in the Park



One of the tasks for Sunday in the Park on 7 February was to fill the eroded sand ladders at Anchor Bay. Being Waitangi weekend, there was a large number of people enjoying their day at the beach. The work being done by the small group of five volunteers must have looked so attractive that several of the public spontaneously joined to give them a hand! The job was done in half the time. "Many hands.... etc" And (below) other groups of volunteers weeded the Koru (left) and tidied up the mulch pile (right).



Summer in the Park

New Zealand was one of the few countries to be able to enjoy an almost-normal summer, thanks to the efforts of the Team of Five Million.



The car park at Anchor Bay was full to over-flowing this summer, as Tāwharanui again proved to be one of the most popular beaches in the Auckland region.



Tāwharanui is particularly attractive for large family groups, many of whom set up quite sophisticated day-camps for themselves. That requires bringing a large amount of beach equipment from the car park, piled onto the popular beach trolleys. (as seen below)





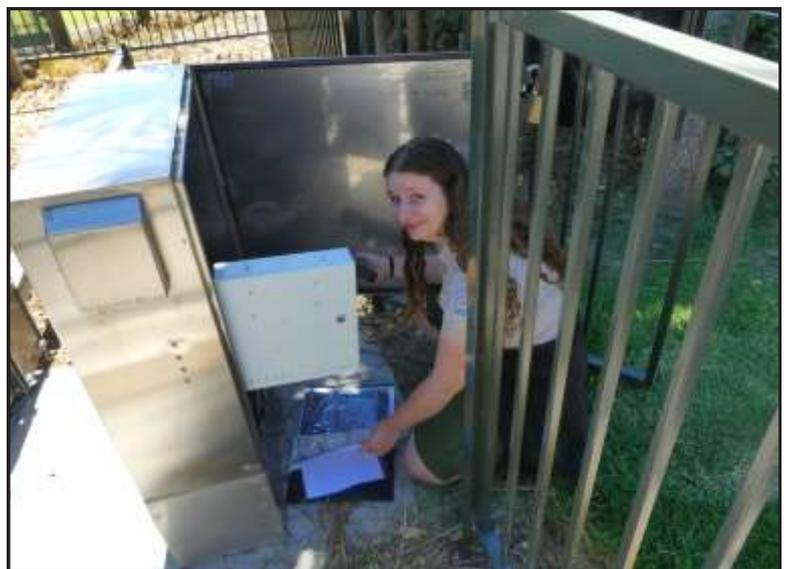
TOSSI had its wonderful Information Trailer at Anchor Bay again this summer, at weekends and on public holidays, from mid-December to Waitangi weekend.

A team of experienced volunteer guides provided helpful information about the Park and the Sanctuary, as well as advice on the walking trails and where to see the most bird-life.

Above, volunteer guide, Susan Gibbings, points out tracks on a map to a group of walkers.

Tāwharanui's popularity was increased by the unfortunate recurrence of dozens of other Auckland beaches being deemed as unsafe for swimming due to various types of water pollution.

The high volume of traffic flow in and out of the Park caused the automated gates of the predator fence to malfunction on one occasion. Right, ranger Amy consults the instruction manual to re-set the gates, while two TOSSI volunteers control the traffic for her.



TOSSI joins the Big Buzz

TOSSI's Information Trailer got an outing at the inaugural *Big Buzz* festival held at Matakana School on 14 February. It was a great advocacy and awareness raising opportunity at an event highlighting the impact of climate and environmental change on bees. It's hoped that this will be an annual event which TOSSI can be part of.



Pāteke Survey

The 2021 pāteke (brown teal) survey is complete, with a few rescheduling hiccups (due to a lockdown), but we got there and all sites were covered. A BIG thank you to Roger, Karyn, Kim, Susan, Alison and Cheri, our bush bashing and stream crossing volunteer team. Their efforts are appreciated, knowing how busy everyone is in and around the Park, as well as having other outside projects and family responsibilities.

In 2008 and 2010, 124 pāteke were released in four cohorts. For the first few years the pāteke generally stayed in the Park, but gradually reports were coming in that some brown teal had dispersed and were observed in Christian Bay wetlands and estuary area, and Omaha wastewater plant and storm water ponds. Today, we have three distinct populations, almost equally distributed.

This year's count was 102. That is 32 fewer than 2020, not including three dead pāteke (that we know of) at Christian Bay. 22 were counted inside the Park, and 80 outside. The table below shows the survey numbers, comparing the last nine years.

Thank you to Alastair Chisholm for opening the wastewater treatment plant at Omaha for us. You are doing some very good and interesting pest eradication around the wastewater treatment area. Keep up the good work!

Thank you to the pāteke team and I look forward to next year for the 10th annual pāteke survey.

Sharon Kast
Coordinator

Pateke Survey									
Tawharanui, Christian Bay, Omaha Storm Water Ponds									
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Location	22-Feb	10-Feb	12-Feb	12-Feb	17-Feb	21-Feb	13-Feb	11-Feb	22-Feb
Tawharanui									
Mangatawhiri/wetland/lagoon	5	6	7	7	17	21	15	11	2
Camp wetlands/roadside drains	0	0	0	0	0	7	3	0	0
Hayter's wetland/Lagoon stream	2	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Anchor Bay road drains	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Waikokowai (Ecology) Stream/stock dam & gullies	13	16	20	16	22	8	21	24	12
Waimaru Farm (Hubbard's) pond and stream	12	2	7	16	11	13	25	19	8
Total Tawharanui	32	25	41	39	50	49	64	54	22
Other Sites									
Christian Bay/wetlands, lodge area	*0	22	31	10	36	17	37	21	19
Omaha Storm water ponds	*0	21	31	16	26	38	15	48	48
Omaha Wastewater	0	0	0	7	32	30	25	7	13
Total Other Sites	0	43	62	33	94	85	77	76	80
Total All Sites	32	68	103	72	144	134	141	130	102



Pāteke photos: Alison Stanes

Cook's petrel chick at Tāwharanui

In a major first for the Open Sanctuary, a pair of Cook's petrel has successfully raised a chick at Tāwharanui. The chick was observed with a burrow-scope about 90cm down a narrow and twisting burrow in forest on the South Coast.

The burrow was discovered in 2019 by Ranger Amy Waldmann and Juliane Mommert while checking for stoats. They found an egg abandoned outside the burrow and subsequent investigation by Edin Whitehead and myself revealed a dead Cook's petrel inside. Trail camera pictures showed that a pair of Cook's petrel had adopted the burrow and hopes were high for this season.

This year the trail camera and a dog trained to find petrel, confirmed the burrow was in use, and was being visited in a routine that strongly suggested an egg had been laid and then subsequently hatched. But getting the final proof was tricky!

Cook's petrel are small grey-and-white petrels. Their goat-like calls (*kek-kek-kek*) are often heard at night north of Auckland as they return from feeding in the Tasman Sea to their burrows on Hauturu/Little Barrier Island.

Cook's petrels formerly bred throughout both the North and South Islands, on mountain tops and ranges. After hundreds of years of predation by introduced mammals, they became confined to just three islands. In the north the largest colony (over a million birds!) is on Hauturu, with a small number on Aotea/Great Barrier Island. In southern New Zealand, several thousand Cook's petrels breed on Codfish Island. Control of cats and kiore on Hauturu has led to a significant increase in seabird numbers in the past 15 years.

This chick is the first known Cook's petrel chick on the mainland of New Zealand for over a century.

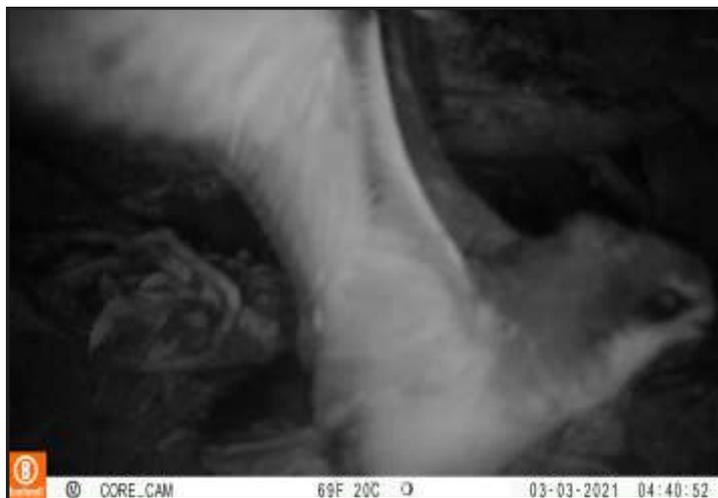
After a week of exercising its wings, the chick left its burrow for the last time on 9 March. It will now fly across the Pacific to feed off the coast of California before returning to New Zealand in September.

James Ross

Right, an adult Cook's petrel in flight near the Mokohinau Islands, Hauraki Gulf, January 2012.
Image © Philip Griffin www.philipgriffin.com



Below left, an image from a trail camera shows an adult Cook's petrel returning to the burrow to feed its chick. And right, the Cook's petrel chick exercising its wings.



Nursery Report

We have been fortunate that sudden lockdowns have not unduly affected the nursery this year, thanks to the valuable help campers staying in the Park's campground gave us this January. It meant that when suddenly all the seedlings needed bagging, we had the workforce to do so rapidly.

We have completed the bagging up required for our winter planting programme. Ten thousand mānuka and kānuka have been pricked out into moulded recyclable plastic trays, called T28s, each holding 28 tree seedlings. We have a further 3000 kānuka in PB3s. Other species include 489 māhoe, 360 cordyline, 354 flax but only 61 Coprosma robusta. We usually raise many more Coprosma but because we have to cage each tree to protect it from rabbit browsing, it becomes too expensive and labour intensive to do so. Once we are on top of our rabbit problem we should be able to raise more Coprosma once again because they are so easy to germinate and are an excellent food source for birds. We tried unsuccessfully to germinate karo and matipo from seed and found out later that matipo can take more than a year to germinate. We also tried to grow these two from cuttings but that didn't work either. However we did bag up 312 karo seedlings that pop up readily on the Park.

We have finally had some success growing Pomaderris hamiltonii, potting up 84 in solid clay. This species of kūmarahou only grows in North Rodney on clay banks. Its flowers are cream rather than the bright yellow of the more ubiquitous golden kūmarahou. We will be able to plant these on the slips in Slip Gully in the winter.

While we wait for the winter planting season we will continue tidying the nursery, weeding the seedlings, collecting, processing and sowing seeds.

Susan Gibbings



TOSSI turns 20

In 2022, TOSSI will officially be 20 years old. Yes! We can't believe it either.

A sub-committee is planning how to celebrate two decades of accomplishments and if you are keen to contribute, please email Sally Richardson: salizrich@gmail.com or phone 021 122 7174.



TOSSI on Social Media

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/>

Follow the page to get notifications of upcoming events.

Find us on Instagram: [tossi_nz](https://www.instagram.com/tossi_nz)



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!

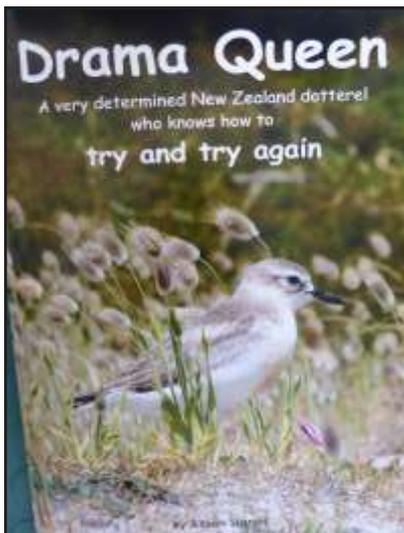
Full training and advice will be provided.
If you are interested please contact
James Ross: jjross801@gmail.com



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 New Zealand 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
	Jackie Russell	027 570 8971
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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 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.



Far left, volunteers stand in front of a huge curtain of kōhia (*passiflora tetrandra*), a member of the passion fruit family, endemic to New Zealand. Left, ranger Maurice shows how thick the old vine is and it's glossy leaves. Above, the seed pod is small and orange, and has seeds inside just like a passion fruit.

Sharing the Intrigue

My father had a bumper sticker that read, "If I knew grandchildren were this much fun, I would have had them first." He was right. For more than three years I have eagerly awaited the moment when I could show off Tāwharanui to my grandchildren and at last, it happened this summer. Backpacks were loaded with kai, a front pack contained the baby, and three generations of Russells were on their way to explore Ecology Bush.

Seeing takahē and comprehending what you are looking at is tricky at the age of three but there was definitely an awareness that it was something special when everyone made a shooshed fuss. Listening for fīeke proved equally puzzling but hearing the sound for the first time may be the initial step towards protecting the taonga. A toutouwai played hide and seek, flitting in and out of branches and proved elusive to young but enthusiastic eyes – no matter how hard I pointed to the cheeky bird.

Little legs effortlessly strode along the trails and conquered the steps, and when the big people needed a breather there were kauri cones to be inspected. Then there was fun to be had climbing on a fallen tree trunk in bush surroundings, while the baby brother was given a quick feed to keep him content.

Windy weather greeted us when we emerged at North Coast Track and it was time to run wild across the fields before stopping to inspect a cow poo – perfect toddler entertainment.

This little kid and her brother are growing up with a strong connection to Papatūānuku, fostered by generational awareness and an enthusiasm to learn and muck in.

What a great experience for us all and how chuffed I was when my son said: "Wow, Mum, I didn't realise this place was so big and so amazing." He obviously hasn't been listening to me.

Jackie Russell

Below, Jackie and her granddaughter enjoy the intriguing wonders of the Sanctuary.

(Photos: Russell whanau)

