



## TĀWHARANUI OPEN SANCTUARY SOCIETY INC.

Newsletter 74. Summer 2020



Konini (banded rail) are rarely seen, secretive birds. This one was stealthily sneaking around the Lagoon soon after sunrise. They live in coastal wetlands and mangrove habitats.

Photo: 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.

- February 7: Work Day (all welcome)
- March 7: Work Day (all welcome)
- April 4: 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 varied and 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.

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## Chairperson's comments

Dear 2021.

*We don't want any trouble from you. Just roll on free of Covid-19, with comfortable temperatures, a good average rainfall and a sustainable, stable economy. Thank you.*



2020 will be remembered for providing a few challenges, but despite these the birds still sing heartily at Tāwharanui. Hearing the repetitive three-note summer chime of the korimako (bellbird) last week was magic. The first time I ever heard it was on Tuhua (Mayor Island) in the Bay of Plenty. At the time I never would have believed that we would hear it in the north Auckland region at Tāwharanui, along with tieke (saddleback), pōpokotea (whitehead), toutouwai (North Island robin) and kaka.

Kiwi also can be heard shrieking night after night as if they have got lost or can't find each other. Or do they do it just for fun? They can be heard anywhere on the Park. Recently a visitor videoed a kiwi trundling across a north coast paddock in broad daylight. A few pairs can also be seen in broad daylight on Stewart Island. It is believed this behaviour relieves night time territory battles on crowded sites where pairs are using the same territory; one pair at night and another during the day. Wouldn't it be fantastic if we got to the same situation at Tāwharanui? Although if Tāwharanui reached those numbers of kiwi, we would be releasing them to other sites outside the Sanctuary.

The TOSSI committee and some Auckland Council rangers took the opportunity after Covid-19 lockdowns to get together for a tour and picnic in the Sanctuary, catching up on ideas and sharing wish-lists (see photos on page 5). We visited Oponui Pa site outside the pest proof fence and Pahi Pa on the opposite headland above the Lagoon. We gazed down on wetlands and paddocks, trying to decide which should be planted. We stopped by the woolshed and discussed the possibility of a visitors' centre with a classroom and TOSSI barbecue area, somewhere near the Koru and opening towards the building known as the Vol' Hole. We visited Twin Hills and M16, from which we admired the growth of thousands of trees planted there. At West End we walked over the dunes to the coast and inspected the koru-shaped end of the predator proof fence. We also checked out the successful set-up of cat traps that ranger, Maurice Puckett has installed. The tour took us down the south coast to Tokatu Point where we walked the Ngaio Bay track, followed by the Teapot trail and the Elephant Point track, and travelled back on the north coast farm roads and up Cactus Paddock which backs onto the camp ground. Here we looked down at a site that is proposed as a wetland restoration area, being considered by a TOSSI sub-committee under the leadership of James Ross. Both the visitors' centre and the wetland proposal have been submitted to the Auckland Council in the first round of submissions for the 2020-2030 Parks Management Plan. In the wake of Covid-19 life goes on planning for the future — including at Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary.

Thank you to all the volunteers that make the Sanctuary function so well, despite all types of challenges. And an even bigger thank you to the trap line volunteers and rangers who have been tested by a number of incursions this year. May there be fewer challenges in 2021 for all of us. Have a very happy Christmas.

Alison Stanes



## Open Sanctuary Senior Ranger Update



For this newsletter I've been asked to cover some of the impacts of Covid-19 upon the Park and the Open Sanctuary. This requires remembering that it remains a very real thing and the rest of the world is firmly in the grip of the pandemic while we live relatively blessed lives. I, for one, go long periods without giving it much thought until I see a QR code at a business entry and fumble with my phone.

The first thing I note is that the world has become more biosecurity literate, a domain once left to 'the experts'. Pathway management and risk assessment are key to biosecurity management. If the organism doesn't have a way to the area or value of concern, then there is no impact. Where we can't isolate entirely, how do we safely allow movement and understand the risk and consequence of doing so? The parallels with the Open Sanctuary and conservation management are there to be found: the pest proof fence is our border and we must ensure its integrity, how and when we let people and goods through; sterigene spray in our kauri dieback stations is the forest equivalent of hand sanitiser, removing infectious material and damaging the structures of the organism; managed isolation is the equivalent of our containment zones as one of the phases of pest incursion management – ring fence it so it can't spread and manage it in situ.

Covid has taught us the value of our community partners and volunteers. With our ranger team being the only people legally allowed to manage the Park and Sanctuary, we keenly felt the loss of the many hands that make life easier and deliver great outcomes. A very big thank you to the ranger team who stepped up during this time to keep the critical functions of wildlife management, pest security, farm operations and enabling the 'local use' of parks as key spaces for mental and physical respite. There were some very generous interpretations of 'local' out there....

The rangers' field activities were restricted to 'essential work' and then later 'safe work'. Pest work in some of the further flung corners was curtailed due to risk of injury requiring unintended contact between victim and rescuers. We had some pest incursion underway at the time and this did challenge our ability to manage them fully. These are still ongoing but largely in check. A backlog of work accrued and this is still taking time to clear.

The Auckland Council, like many businesses, had a significant financial impact as a large chunk of revenue is from non-rates sources and these funds were reduced. The 'emergency budget' was passed and funding levels secured but we continue to look for savings. Time lost to Covid and the budget approval process and then some new processes for using money wisely, have constrained the pace and nature of some of our spending and we continue to work through this.

Lockdown One drove us to respond quickly to secure parks and facilities to reduce opportunities for person-to-person and surface-to-person transmission. We reacted rapidly and achieved this in the original 48-hour notice period. We identified things that would make this easier next time such as lockable facilities, isolating valves for shared taps, etc. We've tried to map out what future events might look like, once we all shake off the involuntary shudder of potentially having to do so in the peak of summer rather than the quieter time of autumn and winter.

One of the key outcomes of the year of Covid is seeing the place that our parks hold in the hearts of the public. As soon as people could, they returned to the parks and open spaces for their mental and physical health. The absence of international tourists is hard to see at a glance as the parks are busy and popular. Domestic tourism and holidays are alive and well, campground bookings are as busy as ever. It makes me very proud to be part of something so important to the health of our society and I thank our ranger team and TOSSI partners for helping make it so. Enjoy and celebrate nature every day!

Matt Maitland

Matt can be contacted at [matt.maitland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:matt.maitland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) or 09 427 3270





## Activities in the Park



The Thursday construction team, led by Roger Williams, spent several days installing erosion prevention steps along the outside of the pest-proof fence, where the terrain is very steep. The steps will be back-filled with gravel to slow the flow of water running down the slopes during heavy rain. This will prevent the soil being eroded away from the fence netting which needs to remain buried underground, to stop rabbits burrowing under it. The back-filled steps can be seen on the other side of the fence.

If you'd like to join this team of volunteers, contact the TOSSI secretary: [secretary@tossi.org.nz](mailto:secretary@tossi.org.nz)

Photo: Sharon Kast.



### Sunday in the Park

TOSSI members and volunteers enthusiastically show up on the first Sunday of every month to help with the Sunday in the Park workdays. A huge variety of tasks are completed in three hours before enjoying a BBQ lunch provided by the TOSSI committee. Above, ranger Amy being assisted by new TOSSI members, Dennis and Kerry, disassembling the temporary *takahē* pen in M16 at the October Sunday in the Park. The kikuyu had grown through the mesh and made it very difficult to remove. Left, volunteers on the December workday attack thistles before the weed goes to seed and spreads around the Park.

Photos: Karyn Hoksbergen and Jackie Russell.





## Out and About on the Park



James Ross (on the left in both photos) explains the layout of the proposed wetlands restoration project to a group of TOSSI members keen to find out more.

Right, during their post-Covid-19 lockdown tour of the Park, the TOSSI committee received an update from ranger Maurice Puckett, left, on the ōi (grey-faced petrel) nesting site. The lids of their nest boxes can be seen on the ground. In the background, upper right in the photo, is the sound system with its speaker which plays the ōi call to attract the birds to land and investigate the site.



Roger Grove, above right, also gave a talk about the Duvaucel gecko project.

The committee stopped for lunch overlooking Jones Bay and the Lagoon.

Photos: Alison Stanes







## Christmas in the Park



After a morning's work, volunteers enjoy a special Christmas lunch provided by TOSSI.



The Three Pestketeers, from left, Maurice Puckett, Alison Stanes and Matt Maitland, are still laughing at the end of a challenging year.



New Zealand is fortunate to be one of the few places in the world currently where a large crowd can celebrate Christmas without social distancing and mandatory mask-wearing. (Although Santa's elves look like they didn't get the memo!) Above left, TOSSI Chairperson, Alison Stanes, takes the opportunity to share her Open Sanctuary Wish-list with Santa. Above right, volunteers who organised the workday and prepared the Christmas lunch swelled the ranks of Santa's helpers.



## Birds of a Feather...



Above, a poaka (pied stilt) nesting near a drain in a paddock. Poaka have not nested at Tāwharanui for a number of years so it is good to see three pairs have returned to nest.

One pair has two chicks in a drain near the Anchor Bay Road.

Above right, torea-pango (variable oyster catchers) often take shelter in the pohutukawa roots to nest.



Spot the Dotterel?! Two females in their well camouflaged nests.



Another well camouflaged tūturiwhatu nest.



Above, three juvenile pāteke hover feeding at the Anchor Bay stream.

Photos: Alison Stanes

## Times get tougher for **tūturiwhatu** (NZ dotterel)

Between 2006 and 2013, colour bands were put on **tūturiwhatu** at Tāwharanui, making it possible to get accurate observations of behaviour patterns. Seven of those birds are still in the Sanctuary.

A **tūturiwhatu** with colour bands Yellow, White-Red, Blue, YW-RB, was banded in 2007. She became known as Mrs. GO-YO because her partner was Green, Orange-Yellow, Orange, GO-YO, and YW-RB was difficult to pronounce. They worked well as a team, nesting early and raising chicks before gulls and harrier hawks were hunting for extra tasty morsels to feed their own chicks. Over their partnership of six years GO-YO and Mrs. GO-YO fledged 16 chicks at Jones Bay. For three consecutive seasons, 2008, 2009, 2010, they fledged three chicks each season. Such success has never occurred since. During 2013 GO-YO died, possibly as a result of an altercation with a cock pheasant, observed by dotterel monitor Sharon Kast. His colour bands were handed in by a fisherman, leaving Mrs. GO-YO as the bird who has fledged the most chicks at Tāwharanui.

Mrs. GO-YO's next partner was banded GO-KO. They made three unsuccessful attempts at nesting during the 2014/15 season, as GO-KO proved unreliable. He had a habit of disappearing during the day, maybe to go and feed at Omaha, leaving his Mrs. on the nest with no warning calls of imminent danger. As a result they split up and took on new partners for the next six seasons.

However, this season Mrs. GO-YO, as she is still known, is back with GO-KO. Hopefully he is older and wiser, and the union is more successful. Their current nest site is the result of years of experience. It is on the south coast perched one and a half metres up on a rock, avoiding king tides and hidden from overhead predators by a small flax bush. Mrs. GO-YO peeps out at passers-by who mainly don't even notice she is there. Now we wait to see the outcome.

Each **tūturiwhatu** breeding season brings fresh, new challenges. This season, birds nesting on Ocean Beach are choosing to nest near the tide line. Why? We are wondering if the sand there is cooler than the scorching sand further up the beach. But then if they nest too near the tide line, the spring tide gets the nest. This season four nests have already been lost to the wind blowing waves higher up the beach. Others have happily nested in shady grasses next to beach access tracks, finding that on sunny weekends their dream nest sites have been bad decisions. **Tūturiwhatu** with good nesting sites return early from Omaha to make sure no other breeding pairs steal their territories. Location, location, location!

This season WR-OY, who was banded in November 2007, has not returned. **Tūturiwhatu** can live up to twenty-two years old. WR-OY, being an adult when he was banded, could be well over the thirteen years his colour bands would suggest. He is missed because he was always at the bottom of the steps at Comet Rocks, dashing back and forth, his warning chirps announcing our arrival. Although a fairly successful breeder, when he had chicks he had a habit of squealing at black-backed gulls wheeling high over head. Often we would say, "Don't you realise that you are telling the gulls you have chicks?"

The progression to tougher times for **tūturiwhatu** at Tāwharanui clearly shows on our records: in 2007, seven pairs produced 21 eggs and 13 fledged, compared to last season when 20 pairs produced 96 eggs and only 11 fledged. The years in between have been a mix of good and not so good but generally the trend has been downward. Suspected causes have been strong winds and big tides, predatory gulls and harrier hawks, and more people on the beaches.

Alison Stanes





## Volunteer Skills



Auckland Council ran a first aid course to keep volunteers safe when they're working on the Park. Left, Ray Blackburn is tended to by Ngaire Wallen in a mock car crash.



When Ray is not doing an Oscar-winning performance, he's putting his Kiwi number 8 wire ingenuity to good use for all manner of purposes at Tāwharanui. Right is the cat trap he designed and built to catch feral cats, which have been an increasing problem in the Sanctuary.

Photos: Alison Stanes



Tāwharanui Nursery volunteers put their considerable skills to good use recently to help out at Ātiu Creek Regional Park near the Kaipara Harbour. Due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, the usual international volunteers weren't available this season for the essential task of pricking out and tubing seedlings at the Ātiu Creek nursery.

Above, the combined teams ready to get stuck in, undaunted by the huge task!

Left, enjoying sweeping views of the Kaipara at the end of a satisfying day.

Photos: Sally Richardson



## Nursery Report

Spring is the season when the propagation of trees for the 2021 planting season becomes the highest priority. Most of our mānuka, kānuka and some broadleaf species are germinated for us at the Auckland Botanic Gardens. When the trays of one- to two-centimetre high seedlings return to us, pricking out begins. So far 3300 kānuka, 540 mahoe, 420 cordyline, 360 flax and 40 putaputaweta have been pricked out into small tubes. Later on (January to March) these will be potted into PB3s. The 10,000 mānuka we will need are going to be pricked out directly into trays of 28 which will not need double handling. This means much less labour is required of Nursery volunteers and probably less need of campers assistance in January. So that the mānuka in 28s don't become too root-bound, they are pricked out later and that process has just begun. So far, 1008 have been done.

We want to plant several hundred karo next year but we have real problems trying to germinate karo seed, so this year we tried to take karo cuttings. Unfortunately these failed but on the Park karo seedlings pop up everywhere so we have found 320 to put in PB3s.

Only 60 Coprosma robusta have been tubed this year. Firstly not many seeds germinated and we didn't try any more because of their vulnerability to rabbit attack when planted. Last year we planted several hundred but it was a very expensive exercise in terms of time and money. Purchasing netting, cutting to size, making steel pins, assembling the cages and then installing them made it a big commitment. The cages are better used to protect our specimen trees such as kowhai, puriri and kohekohe. Many of these have been repotted into PB8s and kept for several years before planting.

A visit from Amee, from the nursery at Ātiu Creek Regional Park, prompted a party of 10 of our Nursery volunteers to come to her aid last week. She normally relies on overseas conservation volunteers to labour in the nursery and was desperate for help. Our crew helped prick out 3,444 kānuka seedlings into 28s in one session. A tremendous effort, and it was satisfying to reach out to another Park and assist with their endeavours. (see photos on page 9)

Susan Gibbings

The Nursery team are a friendly, social bunch of volunteers. Right, Liz Clark's birthday was celebrated recently with a cake.

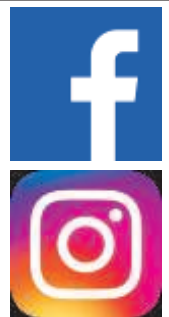


### TOSSI on Social Media

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](mailto: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](mailto:jrross801@gmail.com)



### 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
	Marguerite Vanderkolk	027 528 4658

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E-letter Jackie Russell

Website [www.TOSSI.org.nz](http://www.TOSSI.org.nz)

Correspondence Chairperson or  
Membership Secretary  
PO Box 112  
Matakana 0948



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

### 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.



Above, early morning mist over the dunes nourishes the dune plants with welcome moisture from the dew.

Below right, at the recent Sunday in the Park, ranger, Matt Maitland was clearing the Ecology Trail with a leaf blower. Keeping the track dry and free of heavy wet leaves will reduce the possibility of the kauri die-back fungi spreading. If anyone is interested in a light easy task such as leaf blowing Ecology Trial on a monthly basis, please contact us at [secretary@tossi.org.nz](mailto:secretary@tossi.org.nz)

Photos: Alison Stanes

Being one of the most popular tracks in the Park and having the most kauri, Ecology Trail track has had a considerable up-grade. Below left, the only way to get gravel into the track, was to have it lifted in by helicopter.

Photo: Karyn Hoksbergen

