



Mark the date

April 6

Sunday in the Park
work day. All welcome.

May 4

Sunday in the Park
work day. All welcome.

June 1

Public planting day.
All welcome.

Ōi/grey faced petrel

Photo: Erin Whitehead

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From the Chair

I hope you enjoyed the lovely summer we've had — north of Auckland at least. Tāwharanui is rather dry now but everything still seems to be flourishing.

Last week I spent a few days with friends camping in the park. We have been camping every year for over 40 years — not always but often at Tāwharanui. The water was calm and clear. The bellbirds were abundant. I reflected on how lucky we are to have this Park in our area, and that we can help it to thrive. We need to take time to enjoy it as well as doing the mahi.



We were saddened to discover just after New Year that some low-life had broken open a locked display cabinet and stolen our taxidermied native birds from the Sanctuary Hut. The birds had been on display for 12 years, helping people to recognise some of the species able to be seen in Ecology Bush. We are in the process of deciding how to go about refurbishing the display. Maybe 3D printing? Maybe cut-out photographs? Your ideas are welcome.

The wetlands restoration project event, held after the February *Sunday in the Park* work day, was a success (find out more on page 2). The Nursery team is busy growing suitable plants and the areas will be a whole lot easier to plant in than the hilly terrain worked on over recent years. It will be great to see more bittern, banded rail and spotless crake wandering around. Speaking of birds wandering, our takahē seem to wander far and wide each day. Please watch out for them crossing the road.

Another 20 of our kiwi have gone off to Mt Tamahunga where those translocated last year are well settled (find out more on page 3). It's a tough habitat in which to do predator control and monitoring, so I acknowledge the Tamahunga Trappers who do both effectively enough that kiwi are already breeding there.

See you in the Park.

Sally Richardson

Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary is a joint project with Auckland Council



Wetland Restoration Project

Sunday 2 February 2025 was World Wetlands Day — an entirely appropriate choice of day to start the fundraising phase of the Wetland Restoration Project. The project was officially launched at the TOSSI 20th anniversary celebrations in 2022. Since then there has been substantial effort to refine the design, meet Council requirements, liaise with Ngati Manuhiri and other parties. A time consuming but necessary process to settle on a budget we are reasonably confident is achievable, and to improve the design and clarify what we can and cannot do when. Now time is rapidly approaching to get 'hands-on'.

The Wetland Restoration Project is aiming to restore most of the paddocks (eight hectares) between the Campground turnoff and Anchor Bay (excluding the overflow parking areas) back into freshwater and saline wetlands, with some permanent ponds. It is basically a 'cut and fill' exercise. Material dug up for the ponds will be used to fill in the existing drains and build a few islands. The whole area will be planted with more than 100,000 wetland species of plants, such as kahikatea, grown by our outstanding Nursery team. It should take about five years to complete. We can start planting next year in areas that do not require earthworks, and in the meantime raising the funds to complete the tricky bits where fresh and salt water meet.

The project builds on TOSSI's previous wetland restoration projects that have been undertaken on and off since 2005, like the Mangatawhiri wetland. It is ambitious — it is more expensive (estimated to cost \$1.26 million) than the predator fence and it is the next big project. It is accessible and it is visible. It is doable.

Wetlands are an important part of the environment's ecosystem. Not only do they provide unique habitats for flora and fauna, they also mitigate the effects of climate change by acting as a buffer during extreme climate events and filter water moving from land to sea, much like the kidneys in the human body.

Wetlands are very efficient at sequestering carbon out of the atmosphere. Globally, peat wetlands hold twice as much carbon as all of the world's forests combined, even though they cover less than 3% of the Earth's surface. Unfortunately, vast areas of wetlands across the world have been drained to increase land area for expanding human habitation and agriculture. Aotearoa/New Zealand has lost 90% of wetlands since European settlement. 95% has been lost in the Auckland region alone. The original wetlands at Tāwharanui were drained nearly 100 years ago by the colonial settlers who bought the land for farming.

This will be TOSSI's fifth wetland restoration project and it will have a significant impact on the biodiversity of the habitats to be seen and enjoyed at Tāwharanui. To donate to help with this important project, go to TOSSI's website: tossi.org.nz. Donations over \$100 you can select a sponsorship 'cell' in the type of wetland you prefer.

Ngaire Wallen

Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary Society Inc

Tāwharanui Wetland Restoration

Starting 2026; lasting forever

Donate now!

Sponsorship cells

- Saline wetland
- Kahikatea swamp forest
- Freshwater wetland
- Open water (in freshwater wetland)
- Dryland planting (in freshwater wetland)

Tell us where you would like to make your mark

For donations over \$100, tell us your preferred choice of wetland habitat

- = kahikatea swamp forest / saline wetland / freshwater wetland - as a banking reference and we will assign you a wetland cell to call your very own. Limited to 1,250 cells.

For more information email wetland@tossi.org.nz

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NGATI MANUHIRI
In partnership with the Ngati Manuhiri

Another Kiwi Translocation

Tamahunga Trappers led the final translocation of 20 kiwi, a mix of males and females, from Tāwharanui to Mt Tamahunga with support from TOSSI, Ngāti Manuhiri and local conservation groups. Each kiwi underwent a thorough health check and had a microchip inserted under the skin so that when caught, each bird can be individually identified. On the morning of 2 March Ngāti Manuhiri held a blessing for the departing birds at Tāwharanui. These birds join kiwi released in 2023 and 2024, which are thriving under the protection of Tamahunga Trappers' extensive predator control efforts. Thanks to this immense and ongoing mahi, kiwi are not only surviving on Mt Tamahunga but beginning to spread into surrounding areas. The March *Sunday in the Park* work day coincided with transporting the birds that morning to the maunga. Volunteers who had arrived for the work day were privileged and thrilled to be able to see four kiwi up close. Below left, Dave Wilson, Chair of Tamahunga Trappers (in the dark green t-shirt), holds a bird for people to look at. Below right, the fascination on the boy's face says it all.

Photos: Justine Sanderson



Left, 10 of the birds had a transmitter taped to one of their legs so they can be monitored using telemetry equipment which picks up the radio signal given off by the transmitter.



Above, Sally Richardson holds one of the kiwi. Its white feathers are due to the condition called leucism which prevents pigment being sent to some of the bird's feathers. Various bird species have this rare genetic anomaly. They are not albino because their eyes are dark but some of their feathers lack pigment.

Driving away from the Park after the kiwi had been caught, Sally stopped for this kiwi crossing the road up the hill from Jones Bay. It is a reminder to watch out for them as many now live outside the Sanctuary fence.

A Shout out to the Seabirds

When you think about birds at Tāwharanui, what immediately springs to mind? Kiwi or takahē? Tūturiwhatu/NZ *dotterel* or torea/oyster catcher? Kaka or korimako/bellbird? There is also some very successful seabird breeding going on around the peninsula, helped along by some very dedicated volunteers and rangers.

Ko te Pātaka kia o Tikapa Moana (The Hauraki Gulf) which Tāwharanui extends into, is an area of international significance for seabird diversity. Out of the 370 species in the world, 70 breed, forage or visit this little corner of the world and five of them only breed in the Hauraki Gulf, and nowhere else in the world. There are now nine species of seabirds breeding at Tāwharanui and we have people monitoring them regularly. Other volunteers check trap lines for predator control, and nest boxes and shelters get built.

The īi/grey faced petrel returned to the Park to breed after predators were removed. Seabird sound speakers and nest boxes were installed, and numbers have dramatically increased around the headland. The latest news is that 18 chicks hatched this year.

Pakahā/fluttering shearwater have had similar success with sound and nest boxes. Also now reported to be sightings of chicks.

Kuaka/diving petrel, feed here and breed in small numbers.

Koroā/little blue penguin nest all around the coast and again, chicks have been sighted this year.

Karoro/black back gulls, tarapunga/red billed gulls, tara/white fronted terns all nest on cliffs and rock stacks. Tarapunga/red billed gulls have also been seen nesting at Anchor Bay.

Kāruhihi/pied shags, are back nesting again after a long absence.

There has been confirmation of a single pair of titi/Cook's petrel, raising a chick for the past four years – the only known mainland pair of the species, as they have previously only bred on Hauturu (Little Barrier Island).

There are also many regular visitors to the waters around Tāwharanui: white faced storm petrels, Buller's shearwaters, Australasian gannets, little shags, Caspian terns. And just recently, two eagle-eyed TOSSI volunteers were out kayaking around the coast and spotted the very first gannet nest with a chick.

As with all our native species, they must overcome many threats to survive. On land they are impacted by mammalian predators such as rats, stoats, dogs and cats, as well as human activity. At sea, their food sources are impacted by fishing, climate changes, pollution, sedimentation. At least at Tāwharanui, and other places like it, some sanctuary can be found to give them a fighting chance.

For a comprehensive look at threats to our seabirds, check out <https://www.nzseabirdtrust.com>

Lyn Hamilton-Hunter

Tūturiwhatu/New Zealand *dotterel* have had a successful season, fledging 13 chicks from 44 eggs. This has not been achieved since the 2019-20 season. Generally the winds coming from the south-west combined with high tides, significantly damaged nests on the south coast but protected the nesting areas on the north coast. This season lack of northerly winds meant no up-drafts off the dune cliff-faces for the black-backed gulls to ride to survey dotterel nesting territories. Previously, this has resulted in the taking of eggs and chicks.

A big thank you to dotterel monitors, Sharon Kast, Cheri Crosby and Jan Velvin for giving hours of time monitoring our dotterel throughout the season.

Alison Stanes



Ōi/grey faced petrel Photo: EW



Pakahā/fluttering shearwater Photo: nzbirds



Kuaka/diving petrel Photo: nzbirds



Koroā/little blue penguin with chick Photo: nzbirds



Tara/white fronted tern Photo: AS



Kāruhihi/pied shag Photo: AS



Titi/Cook's petrel chick Photo: nzbirds



Tūturiwhatu/dotterel with eggs Photo: AS

Activities in the Park

Anthony Morris, of the local pottery company Morris & James, was a frequent visitor to and lover of the Park. He created and donated a beautiful mosaic sign which was displayed at Anchor Bay for many years. The Thursday work group has re-installed it beside the Sanctuary Hut for all to admire. Below left, the frame for the sign is built. Right, Roger and Ron with the sign in place, in all its colourful glory.



Education in the Park



Senior students from Kristin School in Auckland spent a week camping at Tāwharanui in February. TOSSI was included in their outdoor education programme. Above left, Sally Richardson showed them the education trailer and talked to them about the Sanctuary.

Above right, Karyn Hoksbergen gave a show-and-tell about predators and trapping.

Two other TOSSI volunteers led groups on evening kiwi-spotting walks through Thompson's Loop.

Eight kiwi were seen one night and several male kiwi were heard calling each night.

The majority of the students had never seen or heard kiwi before.

Dolphins' Delightful Display

Whilst completing his trapline route along the South Coast, a trapper was accompanied by 40-50 common dolphins, a mixture of juveniles and adults. Park Rangers Ash and Sophie had the pleasure of joining him for about half an hour, admiring the pod at Maori Bay as they put Cirque de Soleil performers to shame. A picture-perfect moment as the adults taught their young to jump and spin out of the water, then demonstrate more practical skills such as fishing techniques. Apparently they were on the coast all morning. When a boat approached them, some followed it playfully. Then they dispersed away from the shore. How special to witness the moments of learning and fun that make you pause and appreciate the beauty of nature.

Annual Pāteke Count

Pāteke are the fourth rarest duck in the world and only found in Aotearoa/New Zealand. We have come a long way since 2008 when 24 pāteke were released into the wetlands at Tāwharanui. That year funding was secured from Wetlands Care NZ, along with money donated by Banrock Station Wines, to supply wetland restoration materials for propagating plants at the then new TOSSI Nursery. Between 2008 and 2010 another 124 birds were released in four cohorts. For the first few years the pāteke generally stayed in the Park. Gradually reports were coming in that some had dispersed and were observed in nearby Christian Bay wetlands and estuary area, the Omaha Wastewater plant and storm water ponds and Omaha Heights Farm (previously called Waimaru) ponds. In 2013, Tāwharanui was invited to participate in the national pāteke count/flock survey.

This year marks our 13th annual survey. We had our usual fun, the team worked very hard and finished by 3:30pm. It was hot, hot, hot and at some sites even dusty. The weather was calm and sunny with some streams almost not flowing at all and stagnant in places. There were many fallen mānuka across some streams blocking the flow of water. Some ponds were totally dried up and it made us wonder where the pāteke were finding water and shelter from the heat of the sun. We had a 'dream team' of volunteer counters. Thank you Maggie & Ray Blackburn, Susan Gibbings, Sheryl Corbett, Alison Stanes, Cheri Crosby, Roger Williams. Also thanks to Kim Grove for creating the survey table.

Sharon Kast

The table below shows the numbers in 2013, when counting began, compared to the last five years.

Right, a pāteke.
Photo: Alison Stanes



Pāteke Survey
Tāwharanui, Christian Bay, Omaha Storm Water Ponds

Location	2013 22-Feb	2020 11-Feb	2021 22-Feb	2022 8-Feb	2023 7-Feb	2024 13-Feb	2025 11-Feb
Tāwharanui							
Mangatawhiri/wetland/lagoon	5	11	2	9	9	0	0
Camp wetlands/roadside drains	0	0	0	0	16	15	0
Hayter's wetland/Lagoon stream	2	0	0	0	29	4	0
Anchor Bay road drains	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Waikokowai (Ecology) Stream/stock dam & gullies	13	24	12	16	23	22	10
Waimaru Farm (Hubbard's) pond and stream	12	19	8	23	21	34	8
Total Tāwharanui	32	54	22	49	98	75	18
Other Sites							
Christian Bay/wetlands, lodge area	*0	21	19	35	46	56	38
Omaha Storm water ponds	*0	48	48	23	35	24	11
Omaha Wastewater	0	7	13	31	6	40	41
Total Other Sites	0	76	80	89	87	120	90
Total All Sites	32	130	102	138	185	195	108

Odds and Ends



Late in November last year one of our two takahē pairs successfully hatched a chick which is now thriving. It will be banded and named in late March. Above, at their feeder, 8 year old female Heaphy in front and 8 year old male Rochfort behind her. The chick's feathers are starting to colour up.

Photo: Justine Sanderson, taken on 4 March.

Above, Tāwharanui was as popular as ever over the summer, with huge crowds on all the beaches every weekend and public holiday.

Left, birds such as this kaka, enjoyed the bountiful summer flowers in the Park.
Photo: Karyn Hoksbergen



Above, a kahakaha/*Collospermum hastatum* in flower. Commonly known as perching lily, it is the largest and most magnificent native epiphytic plant. It is often seen on large trees, but can also grow on the ground, fallen trunks, rocks and cliffs.

It was called the 'widow maker' by the early New Zealand timber men because of the potentially fatal danger from it falling on them when they were cutting down the native trees that hosted them.

Photo: Alison Burt