



Tāwharanui
Open Sanctuary
Society Inc

Newsletter 97 Spring 2026

Mark the date:

October 4

Sunday in the Park Work Day

All welcome

November 1

Sunday in the Park Work Day

All welcome

December 6

*Sunday in the Park Work Day
and Christmas Lunch*

All welcome



Toutouwai/North Island robin

Photo: Alison Stanes

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From the Chair

Spring has sprung and with it, lots of wind and rain. The wet stuff is good for our new plants but the wind, not so much!

On 6 September we hosted a Fathers' Day lunch after the usual *Sunday in the Park* work day. Some of the tasks were a tad harder than usual and there may be some sore muscles this week after gravel shovelling. My thanks to those who are willing to lead groups — you don't need to be committee members, just be willing to show up and help! I was pleased that the University of Auckland Tramping Club regularly sends a group out to help on our work mornings. We appreciate their strength and enthusiasm. If they had more transport options available, more would be keen to volunteer.

Our AGM on 6 September went smoothly and the Committee stayed largely the same but with a new recruit, Murray Davis, who is already proving himself to be a welcome addition. A list of committee members and their titles/positions is on page 8. The Annual Supplementary Performance Report will be sent out shortly to all members so that you can read what I summarised for those who attended the AGM.

Some new initiatives we're working on include a shade sail for over the stairs outside the Sanctuary Hut at Anchor Bay. This is intended to give visiting schools a base for having their learning sessions, to leave their bags while they go walking and to shelter out of the weather. We hope to have this erected this summer but it is dependent on finding funding.

More funding is also required for renewing the display cabinet inside the Sanctuary Hut. You will remember that the taxidermied birds were stolen from it at the beginning of last year. Planning is now underway to develop a new display which will explain why seabirds are so important to the biodiversity of the land and to showcase what happens underground. We need an electrician to help with putting up a solar panel so that light and sound can add interest to the display. Please contact me with 'electrical offers'!

Our big initiative is redeveloping areas of wetlands across Road Flats which are either side of the road to Anchor Bay and our subcommittee continues to work on the intricacies of that. I look forward to seeing lots of bitterns, spotless crakes, banded rails, native fish, and wetland invertebrates living there in future years. Speaking of invertebrates, a great cluster of cave wētā has turned up on the Ecology Trail. Watch out too for another introduction of wētāpunga early next year. Come and see these amazing critters when you can.

Sally Richardson



Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary is a joint project with Auckland Council



Nursery Report

We have now completed our first full season of wetland plantings and we are still learning as we go.

In June we planted 5,000 plants in Stockyard 1 paddock, a flat, damp exposed site next to the road to Anchor Bay, just beyond the Campground entrance. We planted 1,800 manuka, 1,200 harakeke (flax), 1,100 tī kōuka (cabbage tree) and 900 grasses including Carex, Cyperus and Isolepsis, as well as some mahoe and karamu on slightly higher areas. We had to cage all of the tī kōuka because the rabbits chew them, and many of the grasses because the pukeko pull them out and chew their tasty stems and roots.

In July we planted 6,000 plants in the adjacent Stockyard 2 paddock, which is a slightly higher, more sheltered site, so we planted mostly manuka (4,000), harakeke (400), tī kōuka (300) and 1,200 grasses.

In August we returned to the Workshop paddock, across the road from the Lagoon, which was half planted in August last year. Thanks to a wet summer all of last year's trees were thriving, many over one metre tall. We found gaps to plant 4,000 plants: 400 manuka and 24 kahikatea in slightly higher areas, 500 harakeke, 900 tī kōuka and 1,400 grasses. This time we only caged the tī kōuka as the grasses were interspersed with the existing rushes in very wet sites so hopefully will avoid destruction.

The Nursery group spent several sessions making the rabbit/pukeko-proof cages in preparation for the public planting days. They also helped with the setting out of plants on the Friday before each planting day under the direction of our botanist Brenda Osborne. As occurs every year, on the plant set-out days we were ably assisted by Fulton Hogan staff volunteers — 24 of them in August — who were invaluable carrying heavy crates of plants to their designated spots.

We couldn't have planted 15,000 natives without the valued help of Fulton Hogan, community planters and our enthusiastic Nursery volunteers. Fortunately our Nursery volunteer team has doubled in number over the past year, and we always welcome more.

Now there are only 1,140 plants left in our Nursery, and seed germination has begun for next year's planting season.

Susan Gibbings



The Nursery full of plants ready to go.



All available Park trailers get loaded up with crates full of plants to be transported to the planting sites.



Left, rabbit/pukeko-proof cages ready to go.

Below, the cages being placed around
tī kōuka plants.



It's easy to see why this is going to become a wetland!



Above, planting in the slightly drier areas of Stockyard Paddock.

Below, these two photos show the before and



.... after one year of growth in the Workshop paddock.





Left, planters filling in gaps in between last year's planting in the Workshop paddock.

Below, as they have done for several years, a group from the Alpha Phi Omega organisation in Auckland came to help on a public planting day.



Left, after the in-fill planting was done in the Workshop paddock, a group of planters who still had some energy put a few hundred muehlenbeckia in the ground above the beach at Jones Bay.

Below, when all the mahi is done, the planters are given a hearty BBQ lunch at the woolshed. The queue was literally "out the door"!



Activities in the Park



A group which often helps on *Sunday in the Park* (SitP) workdays and public planting days is the University of Auckland Tramping Club. On the September SitP, they moved a huge pile of gravel to spread along the muddy sections of Fisherman's Trail.



A new type of monitoring has been brought to Tāwharanui: audio recording devices have been installed to detect whether any native pekapeka (bats) are living in the Park.

Right, one of the Rangers hangs a recorder near a potentially suitable location.



Left, a group of students from China, where they are studying Tourism and Hospitality, visited Tāwharanui in August. One of the TOSSI educators led them on a guided walk from Anchor Bay through Ecology Bush. The students were amazed at the beauty, tranquillity and pristine environment of the Park.

Trapping Update

At the recent workshop Jon, Sally and myself covered park closure and rabbit control operations, a reminder of the animal, plant and landscape treasures we are protecting here and an update on current incursions and the response work taking place.

We also talked about the wide range of conservation tasks that volunteers lead or play key parts in, trapping and baiting bait stations of course but also

- Camera card swaps in the field and review in the office
- Takahē telemetry and supplementary feeding
- Kiwi monitoring
- Plant nursery work and planting days
- Fence checks to check our predator proof fence
- Weed control
- Building and park maintenance work

Right, volunteer trappers attending the trapping workshop.



Rabbit control operation

Rabbits harm revegetation work by eating the new plants, particularly the broadleaf species such as Coprosmas, pūriri, cabbage tree/ tī kōuka and grasses. Additionally they provide a food source for stoats and studies have shown that stoat numbers are mostly dependent on availability of prey (rather than presence of stoat predators or trapping efforts).

This is being carried out by contractors working for Goodwood Aotearoa. A number of the trapping contractor team are involved and they are staying on site at the Vol Hole.

Timing of the operation – this was chosen based on a couple of factors mainly the optimal time in rabbit biology, but also to fit around lambing and calving operations.

Incursions

As of this July update we have one or more stoats inside the fence and probably a handful of rats (*Rattus rattus* or *norvegicus*).

Its unfortunately not possible to accurately estimate numbers at such low densities as both rats and stoats could be using much larger than usual home ranges as they don't have much territorial competition.

A range of traps are in use, tailored to each site and baited or left unbaited as a run through if its part of an animal access way.

Persistence is the key to successful predator control.

Gillian Wadams
Conservation Coordinator
Northern Regional Parks

Odds and Ends



The Nursery volunteers took the opportunity on one of their weekly Tuesday workdays recently to hold a farewell morning tea for Larissa Cherrie-Bickers. She is sitting centre, holding a painting of white fronted terns, based on a photograph taken on Park by Alison Stanes. The painting by a TOSSI volunteer, Ray Blackburn, which was given to her along with a titoki grown in the Nursery. Sam Russell, crouching at the far left end of the front row, has replaced Larissa as Community Ranger.



At the AGM, former Senior Ranger, Matt Maitland was thanked for his service and farewelled by TOSSI. He was given a titoki grown in the Nursery. Left, Matt with Chair Sally Richardson.

TOSSI Committee members and their portfolios:
Sally Richardson - Chair, Park Activities, Education
Raewyn Morrison - Secretary
John Ronald - Treasurer
Mark Atkinson - Deputy chair, pest plants, Health & Safety
Susan Gibbings - Flora (Nursery)
Caryn Smith - Communications
Justine Sanderson - Fauna
Peter Beekman - Grants
Murray Davis - To be decided



Regular travellers on Takatu Road going to Tāwharanui may occasionally notice this lone emu in the roadside paddocks of Omaha Heights cattle farm, which borders Tāwharanui Regional Park. According to former Park Ranger, Colin Wards, about 30 years ago the owner of the property, then called Waimaru Farm, purchased 100 emu chicks to raise and sell. They were raised in the back of the old woolshed nearby. They were then to be sent to someone farming them for meat, oil, eggs and feathers. Some died from various causes, some were sold and about six were left to roam the farm. This emu is the lone survivor and is possibly close to 30 years old.

Photo: Sally Richardson