



North Canterbury Branch

**Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society
North Canterbury Branch
Annual Report June 2016 - May 2017**

Chairperson's Comment.

The 2016-17 year has been extremely busy. Thank you to the committee, a diverse and highly skilled team of people who work very effectively both individually and collectively to progress conservation goals. Thanks to all branch members and supporters as well as National Office staff who have assisted and supported branch activity through the year. Congratulations to the staff, the Board and all the branches for the excellent work the Society has been doing both regionally and nationally. The Department of Conservation is severely under-resourced but our organisation has been very much to the fore in helping drive a rising tide of awareness and concern around the country for our “precarious nature”.

Advocacy for nature can take many forms, all of which our branch has been involved with in the past year. It has included for us meetings where members speak or support others speaking or acting for nature; submissions, letters, media articles and interviews; and strategically planned and coordinated advocacy campaigns. These campaigns can be engaging, as with our campaign to make kea the NZ Bird of the Year, or more confronting, as in challenging Fonterra over their use of coal.

Sometimes though the best advocacy is done through relationship building, or work to maintain positive relationships. It is important to be aware of movements in community thinking. Time does not stand still and one campaign while it may inform cannot define all others. This is where branches can be such a strength in an organisation like Forest & Bird with people connecting through their communities and linking back to Forest & Bird.

This year Environment and Conservation Organisation (of Aotearoa NZ) (ECO) has established a regional network in Christchurch and this has been supported by the Environment Canterbury community partnerships staff facilitating complementary meetings and supporting ideas, including a

combined calendar of events and the progressing of the idea of re-establishing a physical environment centre, coming from the 'flax roots' groups. The branch has been pleased to be part of this conservation community networking.

Perhaps our strongest advocacy tool as a branch is our project work. We use our projects to leverage advocacy for 'big picture' conservation. For example, Calder Green Reserve is now a project which involves advocacy for the whole Heathcote/Opawaho river, including through the Opawaho Heathcote River Network, and earlier this year the 7 Rivers 7 Weeks walks. Projects provide us with constant outreach opportunities. It is so pleasing that the projects draw people from outside the branch, especially local community people, and a project team builds what Mark Hangar our National President might term an "outside in" approach. Our organisation is presenting a face to the community which is welcoming and draws people toward conservation in an enjoyable, empowering and hopeful way.

Colleen Philip
Chairperson

Climate Disruption

Two climate-related public meetings were organised by the branch this past year. One as part of the Forest & Bird climate roadshow and one as part of the 'Precarious Nature' exhibition at CoCA. Both were very well attended, constructive meetings. Our relationship with 350.org remains important to us and we look forward to working together again through 2017-18. The climate parade this year on April 29th was a smaller affair than the one before the Paris talks but Forest and Bird members attended and our flags were prominent.

Branch members attended the Coal Action Network conference in Ashburton in January. The branch are continuing a thread of activity which began there focussed on asking Fonterra to stop burning coal and thus supporting Bathurst mining.

KCC and Education

KCC is the primary channel for education work. However, branch members sometimes do conservation education in schools (thank you Shannon!) and with other groups. Greg Stanley and The Sanctuary project have proven invaluable in linking schools with opportunities for conservation education and activity when they have approached North Canterbury branch for assistance with this. This has in previous years been in the 'too hard basket'

for the committee beyond isolated instances due to workload issues so this development is very pleasing.

Thank you to Linda Goodwin and Beulah Pulukuri who briefly led KCC work in North Canterbury. Unfortunately neither could continue and now we have two other people currently 'in training' as KCC leaders. They will be running their first field trip on May 28th (at Middelmost) and we wish them well and hope they enjoy it so much they are keen to continue job-sharing the KCO role. We look forward to renewed activity for our KCC members and their families and a strengthening of the link between the branch and our local KCC.

Earthquake and Fire

This past year has seen the devastating earthquakes in the Kaikoura/Waiiau areas and the Port Hills fires. The North Canterbury branch was able to help the Kaikoura branch by funding a project they had in the pipeline but had with the quakes lost their source of funding for. We gave them some extra funds for other use. The grief we have all felt at the impact on the Huttons Shearwaters (and other wildlife) is mitigated slightly by the knowledge of how wise the Kaikoura conservation community were in establishing the peninsula colony; but we realise how devastating an impact the quakes have had and also know we must not turn away anytime soon. We will be approaching the Kaikoura branch again in the coming year to see how we can assist.

The Summit Road Society lost around a quarter to a third of their valuable restoration work at Ohinetahi, a lesser proportion than the land burned. This is again hardship on our back door-step and we are currently deciding how best to help with recovery work.

Newsletter, Facebook

Monthly electronic newsletters are produced by Michael Godfrey. Thank you Michael for the continued high standard. It is impressive the amount of information contained in a compact format. A printed newsletter is sent out to mail-only members twice per year.

Facebook is increasingly important and the Canterbury regional Forest & Bird Facebook group was established in 2016. We are currently looking for someone to run our branch Facebook presence as we are aware that we could be utilising this medium more than we are at present.

Membership

The Face to Face teams have continued canvassing Christchurch all this past year. It is important to acknowledge the support of people who agree to regular financial contributions to Forest & Bird through this programme; but we would emphasise the need for branches to have active members who give their time and energy and skills and thus a “price-less” contribution to the organisation.

The membership fee to join Forest & Bird remains at \$57. Our congratulations to the National Office team for the excellent new brochures which emphasise membership and will be able to be used most effectively by us on stalls, and at meetings and other events.

Youth Sponsorships

Our branch youth sponsorship scheme, started this year, has been very successful. Sponsorships have gone to Sophie Allen and Greg Stanley (project managers); Rebecca Thompson-Looij, Ailsa Philip (project volunteers); Shannon Gilmore and Elizabeth Guthrey (committee and climate); Beulah Pulukuri (KCC); Courtney Hamblin (recently sponsored). We have agreed to 10 sponsorships per year paying the membership of young(er) people willing to participate in some branch activity. If you know of a young person who might be interested in this please speak with them and contact a committee member to progress it.

Kea Conservation

The North Canterbury branch has been assisting the Kea Conservation Trust (KCT) with the Arthur's Pass project led by Dr Laura Young and Mark Brabyn. We have purchased the naming rights of three kea – 'Chaos', 'Captain Sanderson' and 'Kaha'. George Moon who is a KCT member as well as on our committee has been doing the IT work involved to get ready for the opening of the citizen science monitoring which will allow members (and the rest of the public) to follow the progress of 'our' kea and others in the wild. Go to the KCT website for more information on the project.

The Arthur's Pass project triggered a lot of media exposure for kea in September last year. This led to the branch leading the campaign, with Colleen managing and George Facebooking, to have kea named NZ Bird of the Year. Despite being neck and neck with kokako for nearly the whole time kea came second. However, the media coverage both during and subsequent to the Bird of the Year featured kea as much as kokako overall, and the gains in public awareness about the situation kea are in made the campaign

extremely worthwhile.

Several members attended the Kea Convention in Arthur's Pass April 28th and 29th. The best news from that is that DOC intend to step up and develop a recovery plan for kea. We need to put pressure on for this to be adequately resourced.

Calder Green Reserve

We have focussed this year on maintaining existing plants rather than extending planting. Growth has been good due to weather conditions. We received a grant from ECan to build an island roost and that is being project managed by Greg Byrnes and Rick Robinson.

Bird surveys continue regularly (4 times per year) and results can be found on Ebird. Surveys are now coordinated by Michael Godfrey (mgodfrey@xnet.co.nz)

Sea lavender has reduced in density particularly on the islands but remains a problem being spread by disturbance to new areas.

Volunteer hours: plant care 76.5; bird surveys 36; other including rubbish-cleanup 100

Mahoe Nui

Mahoe-nui bush looks more established each year, with volunteers being treated to the sounds of bellbirds and fantails while they work. Two hundred trees are planted each year, and two releasing sessions are held each spring and autumn, so the young plants can get their heads above the long grass. This has entailed about 230 hours work by volunteers from Forest and Bird and the Sumner Environment group. We were very grateful and delighted to have help from students, parents, and teachers from Ladbrooks school and the Riccarton High School Enviro group.

Pest control is also carried out at Mahoe-nui with various traps by a group led by John Cook. Di Carter-our wonderful and dedicated Port Hills Ranger oversees all the work and provides the plants, tools and expertise. The branch purchased 6 sets of clippers for use at Mahoe Nui and other project sites.

This coming winter we are not planting at Mahoe-nui. Instead our plants and volunteers are going to help with restoration planting of areas damaged by the recent Port Hills fires.

Vanessa also organised a session of flax cage removal in a gully on Richmond Hill - 4 hardy souls on a wet morning, 8 volunteer hours

A big thank-you to Vanessa Green (Forest and Bird) and Peter Hansen (Sumner Environment group) for all their hard work organising the volunteer days for over 5 years, since the beginning of the project. Both are leaving Christchurch and will be greatly missed. Their work will be continued by Helen Hills (F&B) and Vicky Southworth (SEG)

Stocker Scholarships 2016.

The North Canterbury branch of Forest and Bird offers an annual scholarship for postgraduate research in conservation and the environment in Canterbury. The Stocker scholarship is worth up to \$3000. Usually two scholarships are awarded (\$1500 each). In 2016 the scholarships were awarded to Jennifer Schori and Roland Eveleens.

Jennifer Schori is researching a Phd focussing on the nationally endangered braided river robust grasshopper, endemic to the Mackenzie Basin and currently in decline.

Roland Eveleens is doing an honours degree with the Freshwater Ecology Research Group at Canterbury University, and will be looking at braided rivers and the connections between aquatic invertebrate communities in different habitats and how this affects their resilience.

Bird Rescue at Parklands

Jackie Stevenson has been running the Bird Rescue Rehabilitation Centre for the last 17 years and is a long standing member of the Forest and Bird North Canterbury Branch. This year, particularly over Christmas and the New Year, was incredibly busy for Jackie – the high winds caused many injuries and many fledglings were blown out of nests. NC branch decided to assist Jackie's work by supporting Penny Wright, a retired vet and NC branch committee member, to assist Jackie and the rescue work.

Jackie works (and now so does Penny) with both native and exotic birds. Natives dealt with this year alone are many and include kereru, kingfishers, royal spoonbills, shags, prions, teals, pukeko, heron, scaup, petrels and albatross.

Wilding pine removal, Craigieburn Forest Park

On March 18th and April 9th, 20 Forest and Bird volunteers, in a joint effort with University of Canterbury Tramping Club volunteers, cleared a substantial area of *Dracophyllum* and hebe shrubland alongside state highway 73 either side of Craigieburn Skifield Road of 1000's of small wilding pines. Every tiny seedling had to be pulled out and larger plants cut off at ground level as even one green needle left can lead to a new tree. It is physical but very rewarding work as the results are clearly visible immediately. Now that the seed source trees have been removed from ridges and from Helicopter Hill within the park and the spray "Xtree" is highly successful at killing large areas of densely covered pine, the work of many volunteers over many years to hold the wilding pine spread within the Craigieburn Valley is at last drawing to an end. If you haven't been through the valley recently the change is dramatic. Forest and Bird volunteers will continue to work within the Forest Park and other DOC areas for the next few years until all wilding pines are eradicated.

Other Outreach Events.

"Precarious Nature" exhibition, the Centre of Contemporary Arts (CoCA), Gloucester St Christchurch, November 2016 - February 2017. NC branch joined a number of other conservation related groups and organisations in the community engagement section of the exhibition. Steve Attwood provided bird photos. Three large ones were in the cafe area, smaller ones were in the restrooms (a surprisingly good space to enjoy artworks!) Elizabeth Guthrey made a video of The Sanctuary project which played on a monitor as part of a loop of videos throughout the exhibition period. We provided display material including magazines and copies of the climate disruption booklet "Nature Needs Our Help". Steve gave a talk on braided river birds. Geoff Keey (Strategic Advisor) and Colleen Philip (branch Chairperson) were the speakers at the NC Forest & Bird climate meeting in February as part of the programme for the exhibition, and a panel including representatives from 350.org, Climate Diet Aotearoa, and Generation Zero completed the line up for a very successful meeting. CoCA staff were delighted with the overall success of the exhibition and convey their thanks for our involvement.

'7 Rivers 7 Weeks' was a campaign led by Walk for the Planet (March 1-April 16). The branch played a significant role on three rivers – the Heathcote/Opawaho, the Rakaia and the Waimakariri. A documentary film of '7 Rivers 7 Weeks' is being made by Gaylene Barnes and Kathleen Gallagher. Watch for its release later this year, probably August.

The **seaweek cycle ride** from Ferrymead bridge to Sumner by 'Forest & Bird and Friends' was held again on 26/2/17 as part of the NZ Association for Environmental Education 'Seaweek'. Steve Attwood gave a well received talk on the birds of the estuary as part of the educational component of the event.

Stalls were organised and staffed by branch members at Tuhaitara Open Day 6/11/16, the Estuary Festival 4/2/17, and the Oxford Farmers' Market 19/3/17.

NC branch partnered with the Avon Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust to bring Keith Woodley, manager of Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre, to Christchurch on June 25th 2016, to speak about bar-tailed godwits and the SE Asian flyway and safe havens in China.

Conferences

- **National Forest & Bird conference, AGM and council meeting.** June 25th & 26th 2016. The branch councillors for this past year have been Colleen Philip and Penny Wright. The branch sent two observers Lesley Shand and Valerie Campbell. We had put a remit to council “that Forest & Bird withdraw from the Land and Water Forum”. As a team we argued our case and the remit was passed in an amended form which ensured the Board would continually monitor the situation and withdraw if real progress was not being seen to be made. As you will be aware Forest & Bird withdrew in February, 2017. The reasons were well explained at the time but if you wish to read about this event please see our March 2017 newsletter.
- **Forest & Bird South Island Gathering:** Geraldine, October 28th -39th 2016. Several NC branch members attended.
- **Coastal Restoration Trust Conference.** Christchurch. 22 - 26th March 2017. Four out of the five days were field trips to various parts of coastal Canterbury. This was an amazing networking opportunity as well as very informing for the two committee members attending (Colleen Philip, Rick Robinson) of the coastal environmental issues around the country but particularly for Canterbury.
- **Kea Convention,** Arthur's Pass, 29th -30th April 2017. Four committee members attended (as well as other branch members).

Officers and committee June 2016 - May 2017

Chairperson: Colleen Philip

Treasurer: Ainslie Talbot, John McLaughlin (relieving treasurer)

Secretary: Frances Wall

KCC: to be confirmed

Committee: Steve Attwood

Valerie Campbell

Michael Godfrey

Helen Hills

Lesley Shand

Hugh Thorpe

Penny Wright

George Moon (from July 2016)

Elizabeth Guthrey (from August 2016 to March 2017)

Shannon Gilmore (from February 2017)

Rick Robinson (from February 2017)

Public Meetings

- *June 2016* : The battle for our birds. Dr Graeme Elliot
- *July 2016* : Wilding spread in the Flock hill/Craieburn area.
Nick Ledgard
- *August 2016* : What is living under the surface of Canterbury waterways? Sjaan Bowie & Sophie Allen
- *September 2016* : Plant treasures on the edge of Christchurch and biodiversity of the Rakaia river terraces.
Alice Shanks and Jason Butt
- *October 2016* : The amazing sub-antarctic islands. Dr Rodney Russ
- *November 2016* : Sustainable dairying. Mark Slee
- *February 2017* : Getting beyond the talk on climate. Colleen Philip, Geoff Key and others.
- *March 2017* : Drylands of Christchurch. Brian Patrick
- *April 2017* : 2015 Stocker Scholarship Winners.
Rebecca Dollery, Eimear Egan

Field trips (organiser in brackets.)

- *August 2016* : Rhodes Reserve and Governors Bay guided walk.
(John Thacker)
- *October 2016* : Birding trip to Ashley/Raukura River. (Steve Attwood)
- *December 2016* : White flippered penguin colony visit. (Lesley Shand)
- *February 2017* : Seaweek cycle (Colleen Philip)
- *April 2017* : Ohinetahi (Helen Hills)
- *May 2017* : Guided tour of Botanical Gardens (Valerie Campbell)

Supplementary documents:

Boyle Base report - Lesley Shand,

Middelmost Mudfish Project – Sophie Allen

The Sanctuary – Rick Robinson