

Kārearea

Protecting a southern land

April–May 2017



Image: Craig McKenzie

Let's hear it for *liveable* rivers

Jane Young



Remember Forest & Bird's 2014 'On the Block' campaign? Just one more skirmish in the ongoing battle to save our natural resources, especially fresh water. More recent campaigns aimed at protecting fresh water have jumped on the 'Swimmable Rivers' bandwagon. But is this the objective that we should be stressing? Or are we just focusing on our own interests?

Lincoln University's study: 'Public Perceptions of New Zealand's Environment: 2016' showed that people rate our environment highly compared to that in other developed countries. They consider that we have adequate-good management of the New Zealand environment, especially of native bush and forests.

Although people saw climate change as the main global environmental issue, they once again identified water-related issues as the most important ones facing New Zealand. During the last six years, the number of people who perceive rivers and lakes as being in bad or very bad condition has steadily increased. And by 2016, 47.2 per cent of respondents thought that management of rivers and lakes was poor or very poor. More than half the respondents considered that farming is one of the main causes of damage to freshwater.

Ok, so people are becoming more concerned, but the Lincoln study shows that, over the same period, there was very little change in their actual participation in environmental activities such as being involved in consent processes, an environmental organisation or a restoration project. Perhaps this is partly because, although we recognise that there are problems with freshwater management, we tend to be much more

optimistic about the overall state of biodiversity, despite the fact that 45 of our 71 different rare ecosystems are classified as threatened. How many of us are aware that most of our vertebrate species, including 72 per cent of freshwater fish, are facing extinction?

Appealing to people's self-interest in order to change their behaviour has now become a big part of environmental advocacy: "If we don't halt climate change we won't be able to go skiing in the future." "If we use this bee-killing insecticide then our crops won't get pollinated." Or, "If we don't clean up this sludgy, polluted river our children won't be able to go swimming."

"Swimmable Rivers" may be a proxy for "ecologically healthy rivers", but there's the risk of narrowing the focus and making it easier for the government to get away with leaving the majority of smaller rivers and streams unprotected.

So let's not lose sight of "Liveable Rivers". Liveable for water snails and koura and mayfly larvae and lacewings and copepods and caddis flies and hydra and crabs and galaxids and amphipods and water fleas and eels and horse hair worms and stoneflies and flatworms and diving beetles and oligochaete worms and hydroids and sponges and rhabdocoels and bryozoans. And that's only the animals.

In this complex, fascinating, fragile world that we share with a multitude of other living things, we need to remember – it's not just all about us. ■

NB Closing date for submissions on the government's new Clean Water Standards is Fri 28 April. <http://forestandbird.org.nz/saving-our-environment/fresh-water/clean-water-submission>



Images: Landcare Research

Southland peat bog a special place

Jenny Campbell

A walk on a beautiful sunny day was perfect for seeing the inspirational 4.4 ha QEII National Trust covenanted raised peat bog on Jan and Graeme Appleby's Glendale property at Drummond.

In mid February, over 20 Southland Forest & Bird and Tramping club members were impressed with not only the Applebys' conservation ethic, but also their philosophy around how they manage their 260 ha dairy farm with 580, mostly Friesian, cows.

"We winter all our cows here on balage, swedes and fodder beet we produce," Graeme said. "We have the Waimatuku stream flowing through our property and other streams forming a network totalling 16 kilometres, all of which are fenced with a buffer zone, with riparian tree plantings to ensure run-off is kept to a minimum."

The peat dome was formed in a depression many

years ago and because of the acidity of the soil, the dead vegetation did not break down, so it built up with the centre of the bog area now being about six metres above the surrounding ground.

The Applebys came from Coromandel to Drummond in 2001, converted a deer farm to dairying, and purchased some more land which contained the peat block.

"At that stage it was four metres high in gorse, other weeds and large eucalypts, so after consultation with local iwi, the Department of Conservation and Environment Southland (ES) we reached a compromise of being able to develop some areas for farming and left the 4.4 ha for covenanting," Graeme said. "We got rid of the gorse and eucalypts by cutting, spraying and mulching and I continue to spray the small gorse seedlings annually which appear in the peat area, but generally we are just leaving mother nature to revegetate with the plants which find this a natural habitat."

Members of the group, led by the Applebys, found special native plants including *Dracophyllum*, sun orchids, tangle fern, wire rush, manuka, flax, snowberry and the insectivorous sundew plant *Drosera spathulata*.

"In our streams we have found sole and eels, which are harvested commercially about every three years, as well as seen many birds, especially bell birds in the winter coming to feed on the nectar from our eucalypts and even two very rare Australasian bitterns in the peat area," Graeme said. "I find Environment Southland good to work with and their staff have done a Farm Environment Plan with us with recommendations and good management practices focusing on soil, riparian plantings, winter grazing and nutrient management, all to improve water quality."

For their efforts and leadership the Applebys were given the Farm Stewardship award at the 2015 Ballance Farm Environment Awards, which is an acknowledgment of their commitment to conservation, sustainability and community leadership. ■

Southland Forest and Bird and Tramping club members watch as Oskar and Poppy McIvor from Invercargill are shown the seed head of the sun orchid by Graeme Appleby at his QE11 National Trust Covenanted peat bog.



Enjoying conservation

At a recent South Otago Forest & Bird committee meeting, chair Roy Johnstone suggested that we should have a Strategic Plan. Thankfully, he kept it brief: "Have fun!"

Roy's report to the branch's recent AGM included examples of the many ways in which members can enjoy working for conservation.

■ Another very successful year for the branch

with our active team all contributing significantly to the good outcomes for our projects and to the smooth running of the branch. Our involvement in conservation activities has increased significantly this last year but with key project lead roles being taken on by various members we have not compromised our older projects."

Long term projects

- **Otanomomo Scientific Reserve:** Weed management, *Olearia hectorii* restoration and predator trapping. New clearings established and planted, significant predators caught, six new traps funded by the branch. Chilean Flame Creeper still a major problem. Richard Schofield does a wonderful job with 5-minute bird counts at Otanomomo and nearby Awakiki Reserve
- **Predator control and wildlife monitoring at the Yellow-eyed Penguin reserve at Long Point.** About 80 predator traps serviced every four weeks. Participation in the 5-yearly monitoring of nest sites in the Catlins.
- **Predator control at the Yellow-eyed penguin breeding DOC Reserves at Penguin Bay and Owaka Heads.** Ongoing with many predators caught. Increase in cat numbers a worry.
- **Participation in the Lenz Management Group for the Forest & Bird Lenz Reserve at Tautuku.** Lenz predator trapping (68 traps) and track maintenance on the Long Track.
- **Running an annual volunteer week at the Lenz Reserve.** Focuses on maintenance of the buildings and surrounds, the track network and wildlife monitoring.
- **Native plant rearing and native plant sales.** Nurseries run by Wilma and Ian McDonald, and Jane and Jim Young. Two successful sales and significant funds raised.
- **Support for the Catlins Bat Project, organised by member Catriona Gower.** Participation in annual community bat surveys January and February at several Catlins locations.
- **Support for DOC keeping a watching brief on sea lions** at Surat and Cannibal Bays, and guiding educational groups to visit the sea lions.
- **Running stalls** to maintain awareness of Forest & Bird, and our activities in South Otago.
- **Karearea Newsletter.** Jane Young is always keen to get contributions.

New developments

Nature Link Track – Lenz Reserve. A new track at the Lenz Reserve was built last year and officially opened for use in December. Jim Young led the project and a route was established between the existing Nature Loop track and the Traills Tractor site which is open to the public. The concept was to provide a track for the public to gain access to the Nature Loop Walk so that they can experience the wonders of the bush at Lenz. Funding for a boardwalk section was provided by the Barclay Trust through the Dunedin Branch and Martin Stott provided gravel for surfacing the track. Thanks also to the local volunteers and Owaka Lions who helped with track construction, and to Fergus Sutherland for designing the signage.

Tautuku Restoration Project. Francesca Cunningham has been funded by the Dunedin Branch to manage this project. She has secured some funding from the Speights Foundation and trapping materials are being assembled.

Long Yellow Ribbon. Owaka River kowhai seed has been gathered and propagation has started to raise seedlings for riparian plantings along the river. There are several farmers who are keen to be involved with this initiative and have also shown interest in predator trapping. The branch has purchased some traps to be loaned out. A bioblitz of the river and surrounds was undertaken as part of the Catlins Summer Programme to provide some baseline information on the ecosystem.

Catlins Summer Programme. Jim Young organised a very interesting range of talks and field trips in the Catlins in January in association with the Owaka Historical Society. Attendance was variable but there was sufficient interest from locals, and both domestic and international visitors, to decide to do it again next year.

Local Schools Native Plantings. The Catlins Area School has an initiative to plant and protect the stream running through the school. Plants from our nurseries were provided and assistance given by members on planting days.

Our Kiwi Conservation Club (KCC) activities have been curtailed this year due to the arrival of twins and employment outside the district. However we have maintained contact with school age children with the plantings at local schools and through activities associated with the A & P show stall. We are hopeful we will have more KCC activities in 2017.

From around the country



Swamp kauri exports declared legal

In a blow to the Northland Environmental Protection Society, Justice Kit Toogood found that export of swamp kauri could continue because it was not illegal under current legislation. Critics said that exporters had been getting around the law by, for example, superficially carving large slabs of kauri and claiming they were Maori artworks. Although the swamp kauri trees had been preserved for the last 50,000 years, they didn't qualify as fossils that would otherwise be protected. Kauri export doesn't only squander a precious taonga; it also destroys some of the pitifully small remnants of Northland's wetlands – just 7.7% of that originally present. Justice Toogood's decision is under appeal.

Logging native trees

The Grey District Council is seeking public submissions to allow logging of indigenous podocarp forests on three blocks of council land. Mayor Tony Kokshoorn believes that more productivity should be extracted from council land and that it is possible to carry out sustainable logging of native trees. Forest & Bird field officer Jen Miller commented: "It seems insane to consider deforestation for financial gain. I thought we had won that battle." (In May 2000, the Government agreed to pay \$120 million in compensation to assist the West Coast economy when it ended native timber logging.) Submissions close on 5 May.



David and Goliath at sea

Greenpeace's newest boat *Taitu* is heading off to sea to confront the 125m *Amazon Warrior*, which is searching for oil off the Wairarapa Coast on behalf of Statoil and Chevron. In her former lives, 15 metre-long *Taitu* was a pilot boat, then delivered post in the Marlborough Sounds. Her purchase by Greenpeace was made thanks to a crowd-funding campaign that raised \$100,000 in seven days. At *Taitu's* naming ceremony in March, Greenpeace NZ director Russel Norman said that due to climate change the planet could not afford to burn its existing oil reserves, let alone find new ones; plus the seismic testing used to find oil below the sea floor was extremely disruptive to marine mammals. (*Taitu* means to hinder, impede, deter, and thwart an enemy, plus to stand with strength and a warrior spirit.)



Killing of sea lion pup

The threat status for NZ sea lions is nationally critical, the highest threat classification in New Zealand. In 1993 the first pup was born on the mainland for more than 100 years. Two decades later, over 150 sea lions live on the mainland but most of them are males. Every breeding female is precious – just 11 pups were born on the Otago Peninsula last year. Which made the senseless slaughter of an 11-month-old female pup, Rua, all the more tragic. A 53 year-old man has recently been charged with taking a NZ Hooker sea lion, wilfully ill-treating an animal causing it to die and attempting to pervert the course of justice.



Rua entertaining campers at Warrington John Burke

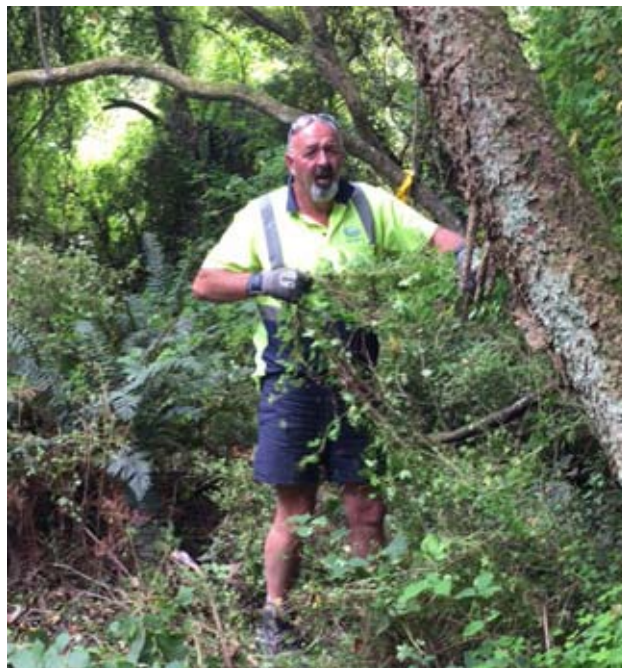
NATIVE PLANT SALE

Thursday 6 April 3–5pm
& Friday 7 April 9am

Balclutha Mitsubishi
79 Clyde Street

Akeake, Broad leaf, Cabbage tree, Coprosmas, Carex, Flax, Fuchsia, Hebes, Jasmine, Kahikatea, Kanuka, Kowhai, Lancewood, Lemonwood, Mahoe, Marbleleaf, Matai, Miro, Pate, Pittosporum, Rata, Rimu, Pepper tree, Red mapou, Totara, Wineberry and more

Contact: Ian & Wilma McDonald (03) 418 0606
Jane & Jim Young (03) 415 8532



A joint effort

Volunteers from the Stirling cheese factory get together with South Otago Forest & Bird members to tackle weeds at the Otanomomo Scientific Reserve

Southern Events

Thurs 6 April 3–5pm & Fri 7 April 9am

South Otago Forest & Bird

Native Plant Stall

Balclutha Mitsubishi 79 Clyde St



Thurs 13 April 3–5pm South Otago Forest & Bird

Fungal Fruiting Walk Awakiki Bush

Penelope Gillette Meet at the car park sign



Thurs 20 April 3–5pm South Otago Forest & Bird

Fungal Fruiting Walk Surat Bay Totara bush

Penelope Gillette Meet at the car park sign



Sun 23 April/ Sun 28 May 1pm

South Otago Forest & Bird

Weeding & revegetation at Otanomomo



Mon 24 April 7.30pm South Otago Forest & Bird

The Continent of Zealandia – and its biological cargo

Nick Mortimer St Andrew's Church Hall Balclutha



Mon 15 May 7pm Southland F&B AGM

Speaker: Jan Riddell

Federated Farmers Building



Weekend 20/21 May Southland Forest & Bird

Tautuku Working Weekend

Bookings to Dawn Patterson dpatt@xtra.co.nz



Mon 22 May 7.30pm South Otago Forest & Bird

Pathways for the Pomahaka

Lloyd McCall St Andrew's Church Hall Balclutha



Wed 24 May 7.15 for 7.30pm **Public Talk
Environment in crisis – heroes needed**

Kevin Hague – CEO Forest & Bird

Southern Institute of Technology B1-10

Southland Community Nursery

Waikiwi Kindy Family Night



Contact Details

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Conservation Volunteers Coastal Otago

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Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust

www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz

New Zealand Sea Lion Trust www.sealiontrust.org.nz

Kārearea: protecting a southern land

Contributions welcome. Copy for **June** is due on **31 May**.

Editor Jane Young: janejimyoung@slingshot.co.nz



Polar explorer and environmentalist Robert Swan

Our thanks to Telford for sponsoring the printed version of this newsletter.



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