



CHAIR'S REPORT

The year saw many Covid cancellations of indoor meetings, field trips, and working bees. But tourist pressure on wildlife was significantly reduced by the pandemic, and the Otago harbour basin got a breather from cruise liners and their damaging emissions.



Increasingly energetic and changeable weather contributed to other cancellations. One notable weather event was the storm surge of May 2020 which washed away sizeable sand dunes on the north Otago coast, littering the remaining dunes with seaweed and driftwood.

Wild weather events during the year provided Forest and Bird volunteers with plenty of track clearing in our reserves. With appropriate permissions from authorities, Forest and Bird contractors were able to continue activities such as pest control during the lockdown.



Some planned events did proceed.

We made inspections of fire-ravaged areas from 2019: Flagstaff, Black Rock Scientific Reserve, and the eastern Lammerlaw Range. One year after wildfire, we observed regeneration of native species exactly as expected, but we also saw large areas where accumulated seedbanks of gorse and broom have already sprouted in the millions, exactly as expected.

We enjoyed good weather while crossing the Lammermoor Range to visit the recently protected Falconer Wetlands, part of the Upper Taieri Scroll Plain complex of ox-bows, bogs, braids, meanders and cut-offs in the Styx Basin.

We looked for rare plants on the nearby DOC Salt Reserve including the native cress *Lepidium sysimbrioides* pictured below.



We watched native grasshoppers camouflaged amongst the native broom.



Dunedin branch members joined an inspection day for the Dunstan Downs tenure review proposal, and later made submissions.

We found an undescribed *Melicytus* there, and were treated to iconic high country scenery.



On our final field trip for 2020, a bike trip on the east spur of the Lammermoor Range, we practised balancing in strong winds, and carefully carried ebikes across a cold river without immersion of electrics.



Our 2021 programme sees a slight change of direction.

While we intend to offer several weather-dependant trips during the year, these will be occasional and will be notified to members at the time.

Our main focus for 2021 is shifting toward work days of planting, weeding, pest control and other maintenance activities in our wonderful Forest and Bird reserves, with the goal of achieving biodiversity gains.

Our working bees are held regularly, and details are found in this programme.

Paul Smale

NOMINATIONS FOR BRANCH COMMITTEE NOW OPEN

Nominations for the Branch committee (chairperson, deputy chairperson, secretary, treasurer and committee members) are welcome and should be sent to the Branch no later than March 10th.

Nominations may be emailed to the Branch

(dunedin.branch@forestandbird.org.nz) or posted to Forest & Bird Dunedin Branch, PO Box 6230, Dunedin North, Dunedin 9059.

The committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 7pm.

Janet Ledingham

KIWI CONSERVATION CLUB (KCC) UPDATE

Quarantine Island

Jen took members on a short boat trip to Quarantine Island in October. It was a little cold and windy but they soon discovered the perfect sheltered spot for planting trees.

We also went on a cave and rocky shore adventure where they discovered lots of cool creatures.

Jim Fyfe from the Department of Conservation was also part of the trip and helped identify the exciting finds the tamariki made on the rocky shore.

Three island community members were also here to help the group find its way around the island.

They could have spent another few hours on the Island but had to leave as the tide doesn't wait!



Freshwater invertebrates

In November, Anne took KCC members to Bethunes Gully where they looked at freshwater invertebrates with the help of freshwater scientist Clement Lagrue.

After a quick demo, the tamariki used their nets to sample the stream themselves. They found lots of insect larvae, a few kura, some

amphipods – we talked about their adaptations and how some invertebrates are a good indicator of water quality.

The tamariki and their whānau had a great time despite the not so warm weather.



Rabbit Island

Beatrice took KCC members to Rabbit Island in January. The trip was originally planned for December but had to be cancelled due to heavy rain.

After crossing the estuary, the tamariki found all sorts of cool animals: sea star, snails, cockles, camouflage crabs. Nichola Salmond from the University of Otago helped identify some of the creatures and answered the many questions tamariki had about them and their features. They also found masses of squat lobsters, some still alive that they tried to 'rescue'.



JOIN THE FUN!

For over 30 years, the Kiwi Conservation Club (Hakuturi Toa) has been connecting kids to New Zealand's amazing wildlife and wild places.

KCC now has over 5,000 members throughout

Aotearoa New Zealand. Join in the fun! Membership starts at just \$24 per year and can be gifted.

For more information, (or to join) visit KCC's website (www.kcc.org.nz/about)

Bug hotels

In February, the tamariki and their whānau built cool bug hotels in the hope of attracting more insects to their gardens. We talked about how providing different types of material allow bugs to find room they like and prepare it as they wish. That solitary bees like to nest in hollow stems for the winter while ladybugs like to overwinter in large groups in pile of twigs, or how beetles, centipedes and spiders like dead wood and loose bark. After that, the tamariki ran around the park at Bethunes gully looking for materials (twigs, pine cones, leaf litter...) while their mums and dads built the bug hotels, hammering nails in wooden boards kindly donated by Mitre 10.

**Anne Besson, Beatrice Lee and
Jen Rodgers, KCC Coordinators**



JOIN KCC ON FACEBOOK!

We have a private Facebook group for Dunedin KCC to share trip reports, conservation stuff, and anything else of interest.

Please feel free to join – just go to www.bit.ly/kccdunedinfb

FOREST & BIRD RESEARCH GRANT NOW OPEN!

Forest & Bird Dunedin's research grant is available for conservation projects related to biodiversity outcomes in the Otago region.

In total, up to \$9,000 NZD is available over a three year period, which may be split amongst several applications.

Preference will be given to projects that align with Forest & Bird's Strategic Plan.

Successful applicants must provide a report within eight months of receiving the funds which may be made public and provided to interested parties.

HOW TO APPLY

For more information and to download an application form, please visit our website (forestandbird.org.nz/dunedin/research-grant).

If you have any questions, please feel free to email us directly (dunedin.branch@forestandbird.org.nz).

Applications are due by 5pm on Friday 19 March 2021.

Good luck!

Kimberley Collins



PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS

Mel Young (2018). "Coping with nutritional stress: diet, dispersal, and plasticity in the foraging strategies of yellow-eyed penguins/hōiho (*Megadyptes antipodes*)"

Cara-Lisa Schloots (2018). "The structure and future of wetland plant communities in the Mahu Whenua Covenants, Central Otago, New Zealand."

Max Buxton (2015). "The role of moths as pollinators on mainland New Zealand."

Scott Jarvie (2015). "Monitoring the re-establishment of tuatara at Orokonui Ecosanctuary."



SEA LION SUMMER

Last year I wrote about the continuing story of Patti, Aramoana's favourite Sea Lion Mum but this year it was Patti's 5-year-old daughter, my namesake Janet who dominated events at Aramoana.

Two days before New Year I saw her, obviously pregnant, emerge from the sea opposite the main track from the Pari St carpark to the beach and settle down in the middle of the track. We hurriedly organised some signs and closed the track.

The Aramoana Conservation Trust organised a clearance on the rather overgrown alternative track to the beach and we persuaded the surfers and other beachgoers to use that track instead and set up a roster to ensure she was left in peace from people and dogs.

On New Years morning I checked on her from the ridge above and there she was with a newborn female pup!

At Jim's suggestion we had cut another short track to the top of the ridge overlooking them so that people could observe them without disturbing them.

Six days after the birth Janet went fishing leaving pup hidden in the bushes.

After 22 days they left the track to the beach and settled in further along the beach in a secluded spot where they were eventually joined by Nuki and her pup who had been born at the end of the Spit at one of the houses there and by Zoe and her pup from Long Beach.



The sign pointing to the track for observing Janet and her pup



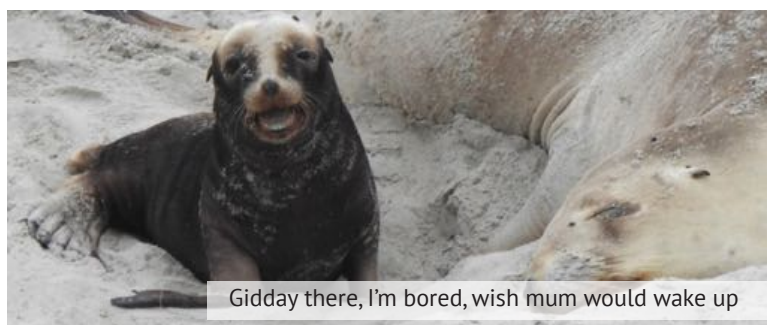
Pre New Year's Day



and on New Year's Day



Janet and her pup



Giddyay there, I'm bored, wish mum would wake up

The pups could and did play happily while their Mums were away fishing.

On February 6th there was one of several beach parties and Nuki and her pup left about February 10th and haven't yet been sighted over on the Peninsula.

Janet had left before mid February and was next seen over on the peninsula in the same spot where Zoe ended up. I saw her over there recently with her Mum Patti. Nuki left us about February 8th and hasn't been sighted since. She is likely to be over on the Peninsula as well.

This season has been a successful one for the Sea Lions. We had 18 pups in Dunedin, one of which was stillborn. Some Mums have picked interesting birthplaces, eg Hiriwa on the 10th hole on Chisholm Park golf course. Three pups have been confirmed for the Catlins.

Grateful thanks once again to the Volunteers from the Aramoana Conservation Trust and friends, the Sea Lion Trust and of course Jim Fyfe and others who helped make sure they were safe at Aramoana. It all takes time but Sea Lion watching can be very rewarding. Thankyou also to the surfers and walkers who obeyed the signs and avoided disturbing Janet and Pup.

Remember when you meet them, keep 10 metres away, ideally 20 metres, dogs on leads 20 metres. Give them space and you can be rewarded by seeing natural sea lion behaviour. They are endangered animals and we do want to keep them coming to our Otago beaches to breed.

Please report any instances of sea lion harassment to DOC (027 432 0777) or dog issues to DCC animal control (03 477 4000).

Janet Ledingham



The track clearing crew, Jess Elliott, Bradley Curnow



We were practising our dune climbing



Nuki & pup en route from the Spit to Big Beach



Nuki & her pup

A NOTE ABOUT THE LATE DECEMBER ANTICS OF PATTI, MOTHER OF JANET.

She was around the Keyhole Rock area and the far end of Big beach quite a lot and finally climbed up to the top of the dune where she pupped last season.

Her actions convinced us she was going to pup up there again and the 'keep off the dune' notices went up and we policed that at peak times. However at the end of the month she disappeared and finally had her pup on one of the more isolated Peninsula beaches.

SUE MATURIN RETIRES

After 29 years of tireless work, Forest and Bird's Southern Regional Manager Sue Maturin has passed on the baton to her successor Rick Zwaan.

Sue is currently on holiday on the West Coast, enjoying some of the areas that her work has helped to protect.



Armed with a masters degree from Lincoln University and with work experience related to ecology and wildlife, Sue began her Forest and Bird career as the southern regional field manager responsible for the sub-Antarctic islands and the high country.

A long-term environmental activist, she relates the following incident, part of an anti set net campaign. "We took a dead seal into the Octagon", she says. "One that had been caught in a set net. That was one of our more colourful events."

She lists an impressive series of significant conservation wins that her work has contributed to, from landscape-scale vine control in the Vatthe Conservation Area in Vanuatu, through protection of the former Waitutu State Forest, to the creation of a series of high country Conservation Parks. At local government level, her work has influenced district plans and regional policy statements via council processes and the Environment Court.

In recent years Sue has worked on the South-East Marine Protection Forum, battling for local marine reserves. She laments the slow progress that has been made in this area, critical to the survival of so many rare and iconic species,

including Hector's dolphin.

Sue says that it was a privilege to work for so long for Forest and Bird and to achieve so much. Although she has retired from a paid position within the organisation, she hasn't retired from environmental activism, and continues to be a volunteer in the conservation cause. "To make headway in conservation work", she says, "the important things are to work as a team, and never give up."

Paul Smale

WELCOME RICK ZWAAN!

Introducing Rick Zwaan, Forest & Bird's new Regional Conservation Manager for Otago and Southland.

Rick previously worked as press secretary and political advisor for the former Minister of Conservation Eugenie Sage. This gives him an excellent overview of conservation and environmental issues that we're sure to benefit from! He brings a background in advocacy and campaigning, along with his passion for looking after nature.

Having grown up surrounded by the beautiful bush and beaches of Coromandel, he is delighted to make the move south to explore the magnificent mountains, marine life and beautiful coastlines that Ōtepoti/Dunedin and the Otago region have to offer.

Already, Rick has been busy – meeting with branches (including our own), visiting the Lenz Reserve and helping Graeme Loh check the Fairy Prion nests on the cliffs just south of Dunedin.



BRING BACK THE SEABIRDS

Sandymount

Following two years of no tītī (sooty shearwater) fledging at Sandymount, the remnant colony on the Otago Peninsula, it was great news that at least 30 chicks successfully fledged in May 2020. This is the first successful fledging we have recorded since Forest & Bird started working there in 2016.

Another six chicks fledged from nest boxes inside the St Clair Cliffs fence and chicks from all four monitored burrows fledged at Seal Bay Irahuka, Long Point.

Covid-19 lockdown prevented thorough monitoring during the month prior to fledging and it was great that people were able to get back into the field straight after restrictions were lifted – allowing them to confirm the successful fledging. Thanks to Graeme Loh and Yellow Eyed Penguin Trust Irahuka field ranger Sarah Irvine for all the work during this period.



Currently the tītī breeding season is underway again with growing chicks sitting in burrows and another seven chicks in nest boxes at the fence (highest number to date) not due to fledge for another month.

Conservation dog surveys with certified handler and dog team Paul Gasson and Dillon conducted prior to Christmas have identified a subset of active burrows at four sites (Sandymount, Seal Point, Seal Bay Irahuka, Papatowai) and to date all burrows are still active.



However knowing the damage that one single ferret can cause (following the tragic loss of all late stage chicks at Sandymount in 2019 to one single ferret) we cannot relax and footage from previous seasons of stoats running in and out of nest burrows keeps us on edge.



Thanks to the ongoing support of volunteers who ensure that regular trap line checks are continued until the chicks fly away. We have also initiated increased monitoring with our Wildlife Act application to capture and mark tītī having been approved and we are looking forward to a second season of this to help give us a better understanding of the long term dynamics of these remnant mainland colonies.





Lawyers Head

This past spring and summer has been the most successful to date at Lawyers Head with tarapunga, red-billed gulls, tara, white fronted terns and parekareka, spotted shags all having nested and fledged chicks.

While only small numbers of tara and parekareka bred at Lawyers Head this is still exciting following the preceding three seasons where neither of these species nested there (all have been recorded breeding at the site in the past).

Increased nest monitoring with both trail cameras and regular observations involving several volunteers showed that nest predation did occur however the species responsible were not identified and each species still managed to successfully rear chicks.

The high number of tarapunga chicks that were lost to predation in the first week following hatching on the inshore cliff is of concern and since the nests were not possible to monitor with trail camera we are none the



wiser as to how we can better protect the chicks at this site.

Meanwhile the outer cliff nests had considerably higher success.

Year round trapping, led by a dedicated volunteer, has shown that weasels are regular all year round with peaks in stoat captures.

The Dunedin City Council continues to support our work at the site and we look forward to spring activity this coming year and working with another dedicated team of trap line and nest observing volunteers.

Francesca Cunningham



TAUTUKU RESTORATION

This project, supported by Dunedin, South Otago and Southland Branches has had a successful year continuing to build on our previous work.

Gavin White, the project's principal contractor, has maintained and run the trap lines which now cover close to 3000 ha of lowland mixed kamahi/podocarp forest in the wider Fleming Valley.

Following the wider area's inclusion in the Department of Conservation's Tia Kina ngā Manu (Battle for our Birds) aerial 1080 broadcast, our effectiveness maintaining introduced predators at low numbers is significantly increased.

However, the on-going damage from deer and pigs continues to be evident and is a key part of our future planning for effective restoration of the forest. Significant volunteer time has gone into better understanding the pig dynamics in the Fleming Valley and trapping trails are well underway, however until financial support can be secured wide scale effective control for both deer and pigs will not be possible.



Native species monitoring has continued to reveal surprises with the first record of a matuku hūrepo (Australasian bittern) within Forest & Bird's Lenz Reserve adding to an observation in 2019 of one on the roadside at Tautuku.

Kārearea (New Zealand) falcon successfully reared three chicks at a forest nest site with the chicks fledging only days before a large black pig found the nest.

Kororā (little blue penguin) are fledging and chicks are using nest boxes we installed only a few months prior.



Herpetologist Carey Knox (from Wildlands Consultants) has found further records of the Tautuku forest gecko both within and beyond our area of interest.



This summer our key monitoring project has been with pekapeka, long-tailed bats following records of them in the lower Fleming Valley in late summer 2020. Work this summer led by bat specialist Jono More has identified roost sites in both the Beresford Range and Tahakopa Valley which is key information to better understand the population size and be able to better protect this species in the wider project area. Our recently granted 10-year Wildlife Permit enables us to better study pekapeka in the area for the next ten years. Special thanks to the Lenz Reserve Management Committee for financial support for this work.



It continues to be a pleasure to work with an increasing number of collaborators, the first Southern Institute of Technology (SIT) Environmental Management student field trip was run in October 2020 based in the cabins at Lenz Reserve.

Second year students gained hands on experience with 5-minute bird counts and tracking tunnel monitoring and this field trip is now to become an annual event.



We had a University of Otago postgraduate Wildlife Management student assist us with pekapeka monitoring and Manaaki Whenua

OTAGO SCIENCE FAIR

Despite the difficulties that lockdown presented, a number of students took the time to participate in the annual science fair. Congratulations to all of the students who put in the effort of entering, especially those that earned a Forest and Bird commendation.

The Effects of Weather on Chick Feeding in Fairy Prions, Max Cunningham and Vinnie Gasle (Year 11, Otago Boys High School)

Have we Cockled Up? Thomas Grayson (Year 13, Otago Boys High School) explored the impact of ocean acidification on cockle feeding.

Variations of Chiton Length Across Intertidal Zones, Benjamin Tucker and Aaron Alexander (Year 11, Otago Boys High School)

Rodent Density on the Otago Peninsula, Theo Nicholson (Year 11, Otago Boys High School)



Landcare Research are using data from the trap lines and tracking tunnels to assist with a nationwide study, something we are delighted that the data we collect can be part of.

Overall it has been a successful year and we look forward to the coming months and working directly with local F&B branch members. Thanks to all of you for your ongoing support of these projects and if any of you are keen to get involved and volunteer do not hesitate to contact us.

Francesca Cunningham

f.cunningham@forestandbird.org.nz

Coprosma robusta, Tom Spek and Abdul Obaidullah (Year 11, Otago Boys High School)

Micro & Macro Plastics in Dunedin Harbour, Nathaniel Williams (Year 11, Otago Boys High School)

The Ngaio Tree, Jomana Mohassam (Year 11, Otago Girls High School)

Microscopic Beasts, Cerys Thomas (Year 8, Totara School) looking at the invasive diatom Didymo or rock snot.

Windpower, Alex McKeever (Year 8, Tahuna Normal Intermediate).

Who's Rustling Out There? Rose Oats (Year 8, Tahuna Normal Intermediate).

Monkey Sea Monkey Do, Nate Wilson (Year 8).

Dannie Hawkins

PROJECT KERERŪ

Last year continued to be busy. Working with the team at the Wildlife Hospital has changed things immeasurably, and Project Kereru continues to be mostly rehab only although I now have in place a VOI (Veterinary Operating Instruction) with pain relief on hand should I have any Kereru come in after hours so that I can give them initial first aid prior to taking them to the Wildlife Hospital.

There was a mix of localities for Kereru last year. Most were from Otago, of the 46 Kereru through, 34 were from Otago (including Clutha region) and 12 were from Southland.

11 of these were from Te Anau and I am continuing to rehab for the Te Anau Bird Park and Queenstown Bird life park as required.

With Covid happening as it did, I had to scramble a little to release some of the out of town birds before Level 4, and one of the rides I had for a Queenstown bird fell through at the last minute, so we ended up releasing it in Te Anau with two of the other birds that were going back. Not quite the way it should have happened but the only thing I could do under the circumstances.

Of the 46 Kereru, 42 were successfully released. 2 died from Aspergillosis, but a link has been found by the team at the hospital between this awful disease and badly fractured and displaced coracoid bones (from impact injuries) – when the bones fracture badly, it causes the muscle surrounding the bone fragments to die and then the asper developed, so birds with these injuries are now euthanased.

2 others were euthanased due to their injuries shortly after arrival. 91 % release rate in total.

Nik Hurring



MOORE'S BUSH RESERVE

We had a wonderful year at Moore's Bush, with a number of working bees despite Covid-19. These saw us remove invasive blackberry, broom and other weeds – topped off with another planting day to re-vegetate the northern slope.

It has been exciting to meet so many new people – mostly students from the University of Otago who are looking for a way to get involved with conservation. All thanks to our collaboration with Students for Environmental Action (SEA).

Each working bee is followed by a walk through Moore's Bush with Paul Smale pointing out interesting plants and animals, and all of us enjoying all that nature has to offer!

We continue to have our working bees on the third Saturday of each month from 1pm. This year, we're excited about the prospect of working with the Halo Project and Predator Free Dunedin to host some rat traps and carry out monitoring in the reserve.

forestandbird.org.nz/dunedin/moores-bush

Kimberley Collins



HAVE YOU VISITED MOORE'S BUSH?

Explore this beautiful forest with a walk along the loop track. Moore's Bush is just a 10 minute drive from the city. Head up Leith Valley Road and turn left on Thompson Rd. Look for the beautiful new sign at the entrance - made by Paul Smale! You can also enter "Moore's Bush Reserve" in Google Maps!



STAY IN TOUCH

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TE REO O TE TAIAO | Giving Nature a Voice

Compiled by Kimberley Collins.