



Forest & Bird

TE REO O TE TAIAO | *Giving Nature a Voice*

MARLBOROUGH-WAIRAU NEWSLETTER

TWIGS AND TWEETS

CALL FOR HELPERS TO KEEP EYE ON TAYLOR PLANTING

Volunteers released 600 plus seedlings, at Forest & Bird Marlborough's Taylor River planting on November 1. A special thanks to the Leo volunteers from Marlborough Boys' College, above, who helped dig and grub out weeds including couch, yarrow and marshmallow. Suckers from the mature poplars that once grew here, will later be cut and painted with herbicide.

We are pulling together a team of people happy to to keep an eye on the planting, maybe some weeding and watering and alerting Forest & Bird when a working bee is needed. Let Helen Braithwaite, secretary, know if you'd like to help out marlborough.branchforestandbird.org.nz

LIZARD SURVEY PLANNED

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Herpetologist, Carey Knox, will carry out a 5-day lizard survey of the Wairau Lagoon in February 2025. The highly regarded herpetologist is happy to train up volunteers on skink and gecko identification and survey methods.



PLUS MORE INSIDE ...

BIODIVERSITY

➤➤➤ LIZARD SURVEY PLANNED AT WAIRAU LAGOON

Ten volunteers helped trap plague skinks at Riverlands from November 9 to 14.

For five years, Forest & Bird Marlborough has been controlling plague skinks - the only non-native species of lizard in New Zealand - in the Riverlands area just south of Blenheim. The aim is to prevent the invaders spreading from the Riverlands/Cloudy Bay industrial area to land surrounding the Wairau Lagoons, displacing natives.

Unfortunately, numbers trapped seem to be increasing, with the catch especially high when the sun was shining.

Respected herpetologist, Carey Knox, has been contracted to carry out a five-day lizard survey in the Wairau Lagoon area in February next year. This is thanks to a welcome donation.

“This should give us a good idea of what sort of lizard life is present and give anyone interested a chance to learn more about our native lizards,” says branch secretary, Helen Braithwaite. “We can’t get rid of plague skinks from the industrial area but want to stop them spreading and displacing native skinks and geckos.

Carey is happy to train volunteers on how to identify skinks and geckos, and on survey methods.



Adult plague skink. Image: Tony Whitaker, reative Commons

**To join the native
lizard survey
contact Helen;
marlborough.branch
forestandbird.org.nz**

➤➤➤ AUTO-TRAPS IMPROVE BAT PROTECTION AT TE HOIERE-PELORUS

The Forest & Bird bat project team is switching to game-changing AT220 traps that reset and rebait automatically, at Te Hoiere/Pelorus Scenic Reserve. As coverage with these traps increases, it should be possible to reduce volunteer hours. Servicing will be needed only every 5-6 months plus a wider range of pests is caught.

Unfortunately, auto-traps aren’t cheap, at \$535 each. With help from generous donors, Forest & Bird has bought 64, intensively placed around roost trees in November.

Following heavy rain over Labour Weekend, flood debris first had to be cleared from new Forest & Bird plantings, in nearby Ronga Reserve. More traps are needed to extend coverage in roost tree areas.

Want to help? Contact Helen Braithwaite, secretary, for a donation slip - marlborough.branchforestandbird.org.nz



WAIRAU NATURE NETWORK AIMS TO CONNECT LANDSCAPES

By Julie Buunk

Wairau Nature Network is a new ecological corridor project that aims to connect fragmented ecosystems, riparian margins, hedgerows and unproductive corners across the Wairau catchment.

We are building a comprehensive database of restoration projects. This data will be published on an interactive map showing current areas of native vegetation in the Wairau catchment. This will help identify and prioritise future restoration efforts. By connecting landscapes, we're not just supporting biodiversity. We're fostering collaboration and a shared commitment to protecting our environment," says Angela Wentworth, working group member.

Ecological corridors are essential not only for wildlife. They also benefit people, providing landscape appeal, increasing recreational values, and absorbing carbon. Corridors don't need to impose on productive land. In fact, they can enhance productivity by supporting pollination, protecting waterways and providing shelter for crops, stock and people.

Through a unified effort from community groups, industries, and landowners we can increase native vegetation in the Wairau catchment to at least 15%. The network aims to create a hub of information to make it easy for people to obtain the technical knowledge towards achieving or surpassing this target.

To tell us about your restoration project or to join our mailing list please email wairaunaturalnetwork@gmail.com



Riparian forest beside the Opaoa River near central Blenheim, restored and maintained by Marlborough Forest and Bird with help from Marlborough Boys' College Leo volunteers.

THE GOOD NEWS



WINE GIFTS WELCOME

Thanks to Spy Valley Wines for their donation of wines as gifts for Forest & Bird speakers. The company is committed to conserving, preserving and protecting its Waihopai Valley vineyard.

MARLBOROUGH ENVIRONMENT AWARDS ENTRY

Marlborough Forest & Bird has entered the [Port Marlborough-Marlborough Environment Awards](#) landscape and habitat category, with its Taylor River planting. There are 32 entries in the 2024-2025 Awards being judged across eight categories. Winners will be announced in May next year.

WAIRAU BAR CLEANUP

It was good to see the community come together including Regional Seasonal Employment workers, at a Wairau Bar-Te Pokohiwi o Kupe cleanup in October. Marlborough-Kaikōura Greens organised the event, which gathered 8 cubic metres of waste. Among the aluminium cans were fish hooks and lines, a tractor tyre and even a homemade blowtorch.

PLANTING TO FEED THE BIRDS YEAR-ROUND

[Picton Dawn Chorus](#) (PDC) recently put 600 carefully chosen and eco-sourced native plants in the ground at Victoria Domain in a collaborative planting project supported by [The Nature Conservancy](#) and Kotahitanga mō te Taiao. The streamside planting is just one phase of the Ngāhere Planting Plan developed by PDC (now incorporating Kaipūpū Sanctuary) to enhance native flora and fauna and provide a year-round food source for native bird populations, on the increase thanks to PDC predator control.

BLUE COD FEEDBACK SOUGHT

Fisheries NZ is seeking [feedback and ideas](#) on its proposal to extend the blue cod seasonal closure in the Marlborough Sounds, now running from September 1-December 10 every year. This is to reduce overfishing and increase cod abundance. Other potential measures include lowering the combined dail bag limit from 20 finfish per person including two blue cod to 10 or even 5 finfish. Submissions close at 5pm on December 1.





WILDING WOES

The Marlborough Sounds Restoration Trust continues to make significant steps removing unwanted radiata pine from the Marlborough Sounds, thanks to contributions from landowners, the Marlborough District Council (MDC), Rata Foundation and \$85,000 of Government National Wilding Conifer Control Programme Funding.

But it's a different story elsewhere. The 2024/25 Government contribution to the Marlborough programme sits at \$1.21 million for 2024/2025, says the MDC environment committee November agenda. There is an approximately \$7 million shortfall for deferred maintenance this year. This has reduced capacity to effectively manage the spread of wildings in the Waihopai catchment and at Molesworth Recreation Reserve.

STOP THE WAR ON NATURE

Current Forest & Bird campaigns include opposition to Government's Fast Track Approvals Bill. This anti-democratic, anti-nature law will override the purposes of the Conservation Act, Reserves Act, and Wildlife Act, as well as the RMA and law governing the Exclusive Economic Zone. It also prevents the usual consultation required under those laws, so that people would no longer be able to have a say in their communities.

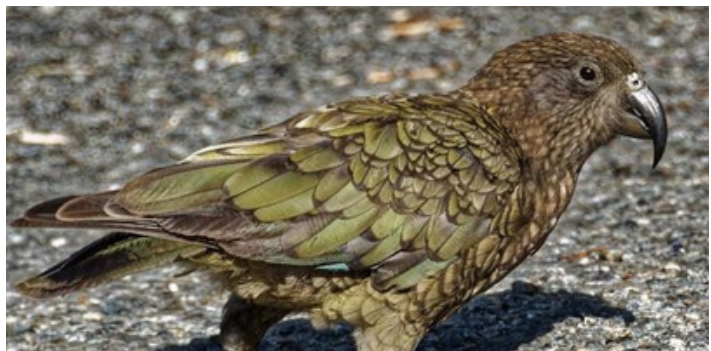
Go the [Forest & Bird website](#) to find out about this and other campaigns. These include Protect Our Freshwater, Room for Rivers, Seabed Mining, Sea Lions, Protect our Penguins, Marine Protected Areas, End Fossil Fuels, Adapting to the Climate Crisis and Stewardship Land.

MARLBOROUGH SCIENTIST TRACKS KEA DECLINE

Predators are the main threat to kea, said Dr Laura Young of DOC at Forest & Bird Marlborough's October talk. The population of about 3000 was likely declining. Adult survival of 70 to 90% crashed below 60%, in 200-21 - a beech mast year when stoat and feral cat numbers boomed.

Laura attached GPS collars to mountain-dwelling cats then tracked their movements.

A super-sized moggie "alpine specialist" had an over 2000ha range. Funding for Laura's kea work ends in March next year.



FIND OUT MORE OR HELP at the [Kea Conservation Trust website](#).

COMING UP

LOVE OUR BITTERN

Learn about endangered bittern in our wetlands and surveying techniques from bittern expert, Wendy Ambury of the Love Bittern Project, who is running workshops for juniors and grown-ups.

Love our Bittern (Junior Landcare) Thursday 5th December, 6 - 8:30pm. Games and activities, explore the lagoon at dusk and learn survey techniques. [Register here](#)

Bringing back Bittern - Friday 6th December, 6-9pm. What's happening nationally and features of an intact bittern habitat. Then head out to the Grovetown Lagoon to practise survey techniques. Network with others restoring wetlands and if desired, create a wetland forum. [Register here](#)

*Both workshops will be held at the Wairau Rowing Club on Steam Wharf Road. A light supper of pizza will be provided so **registrations are essential.***

F&B SPEAKERS, NOV 2024 - MARCH 2025

DATES TO PUT IN YOUR DIARY

All talks held at the Blenheim School Hall, note new 7.00pm start in 2025.

| Gold coin donation

JODY WEIR, DOC | SEAL DEATHS

Thursday, 21 November 7.30pm

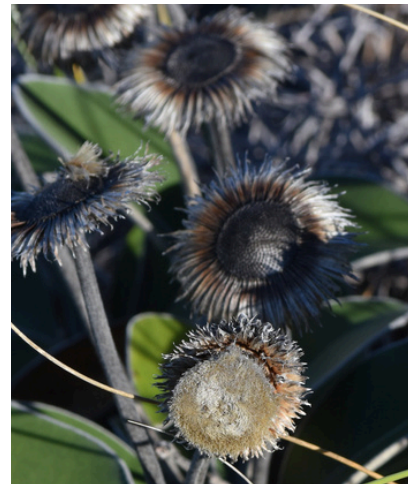
Over 1000 seals, mostly pups, have died along the Kaikoura coast since September last year. It has been confirmed starvation was the cause. What does this reveal about the marine environment?



MIKE AVISS | SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS

Thursday, 20 February 7pm

Marlborough District Council biodiversity coordinator, Mike Aviss, oversees the SNA programme that identifies ecologically significant areas and encourages their protection. Thirteen new sites were added to the database IN 2023-24, ranging from beech and podocarp forest to coastal broadleaf and wetlands.



DEBS MARTIN | KOTAHITANGA MŌ

TE TAIAO

Thursday, 20 March, 7pm

Te Taiuhu/Top of the South conservation efforts are being pulled together under the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao alliance. Programme manager, Debs Martin, will catch us up on what's happening in Marlborough.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Shop for Christmas presents at [Forest & Bird's online shop](#). Your purchase will help raise vital funds used to speak up for native species and the incredible places on land and at sea they call home.