

A PASSION FOR THE *Port Hills*



Remembering Bill Woods QSM

A life of quiet leadership and lasting legacy

*He aha te mea mui o te ao?
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.*

**What is the most important thing in the world?
It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.**

The Summit Road Society and the wider Canterbury community mourn the passing of Bill Woods QSM at the age of 82. His lifelong commitment to public service, conservation, and practical action leaves an enduring legacy across the Port Hills and beyond.

Bill joined the Summit Road Society Board in 1998, initially as a representative of the Selwyn District Council, and later in a personal capacity. He became President in 2009, a role he held with energy and vision until stepping down at the end of 2023. Under his leadership, the Society grew from a volunteer group reliant on small grants into a strategic conservation organisation, now owning and managing over 530 hectares of public land.

Bill was instrumental in acquiring the Omaha Bush and Gibraltar Rock reserves, negotiating their transfer for \$1 from the Gama Foundation and overseeing the construction of a deer-proof fence, also funded by the Gama Foundation. He helped design and build live-capture pig and deer traps, donated equipment, and worked alongside volunteers to implement practical solutions on the ground.

His most transformative contribution was the creation of the Linda Woods Reserve, a 234-hectare property purchased by the Society in 2017. He not only negotiated the acquisition but also donated \$600,000 of his own money to ensure its protection in memory of his late wife, Linda. The reserve has since

become a cornerstone of the Society's revegetation work and a powerful symbol of private generosity serving the public good.

A skilled handyman and tireless volunteer, Bill donated two Kubota utility vehicles to support work in the reserves. He was hands-on in the design and construction of "Bill's Shed," a work hub and Kubota shed at the Linda Woods Reserve, completed by volunteers shortly before his passing.

"I saw him as a very down to earth, practical gentleman whose vision and great generosity has brought our multi-faceted group together... there is much to be grateful to him for." — Volunteer, Linda Woods Reserve

Above the Society's Ōhinetahi Reserve is the John Jameson Lookout, a Society 75th anniversary project. The impressive Corten steel safety rail required a lot of on-site measuring, all done by Bill. On more than one occasion he commented on how cold the easterly wind was, funnelling straight up from the harbour. He also contributed to the design and construction of the steel plinth for the pou whenua Ōrongomai at the John Jameson Lookout, Ōhinetahi Reserve. The plinth remains but the carving was stolen during Easter 2024.

Beyond the reserves themselves, Bill was an enthusiastic supporter of the Summit Road Society's Predator Free Port Hills movement founded by the late Jeremy Agar. Bill also served as the Society's representative on the adjacent 236-hectare Mount Vernon Port Hills Park Trust Board and loaned substantial funds on trust for the purchase of adjacent land.

Born in Auckland, Bill began his career with New Zealand Rail, working as a steam engine driver. When the era of steam ended in 1962, Springfield became his final stop—and his lifelong home. There, he operated a general store, a poultry farm, and a

garage, while becoming active in local committees including those for Sheffield Waddington Township, Malvern St John, and the Glentunnel Museum extension. He built the St John's ambulance shed and replaced the vandalised Springfield Doughnut. He was a Selwyn District Councillor for several terms between 1989 and 2004, and Mayor from 1992 to 1995. He also volunteered in the Springfield community as Chairman of the Township Committee in 2009, assisting Springfield Library, the school and local Kowai Pass Domain, and was a member of the Malvern Community Board.

"Although I had served alongside Bill since 1998, it was only at his funeral I truly realised the depth and breadth of his commitment to others." — Paul Loughton, Summit Road Society Board Member

As Mayor, Bill quietly donated his salary to charity and was known for supporting local residents in financial need. He also served as a Justice of the Peace, and a marriage and funeral celebrant, and was President of New Zealand Sister Cities in 2010.

In recognition of his lifelong contributions, Bill received the Queen's Service Medal in 2022 and was made an Honorary Life Member of the Summit Road Society in 2024 – the highest award the Society can make.

Those who knew Bill speak of a man who combined humility with resolve,

generosity with discretion, and a strong sense of public duty with deeply personal motivation. After the loss of Linda, he seemed to dedicate himself even more completely to the community, especially through conservation. He gave much—and quietly.

Bill Woods showed what a life of purpose looks like. The reserves he helped protect, the structures he built, the funding he secured, and the people he supported are lasting testaments to his vision and integrity. He will be deeply missed and long remembered.

Paula Jameson – SRS President



Bill receiving the Queen's Service Medal in 2022

Events & Community Engagement

As part of this year's Christchurch Heritage Festival, the Summit Road Society is hosting a special guided walk celebrating the legacy of Harry Ell — **conservationist, visionary, and champion of public access to the Port Hills.**

9:30^{AM}-1:30^{PM} SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER

HARRY ELL, ŌHINETAHI, KENNEDYS BUSH AND MORE



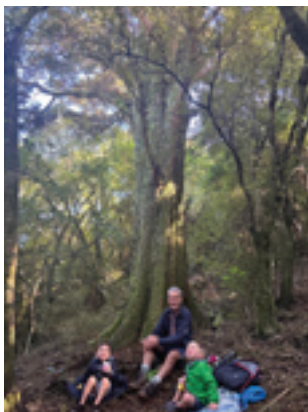
Led by Harry Ell's great-granddaughter Paula Jameson, the 7 km circuit begins and ends at the Ōhinetahi (Bivvy) Carpark and follows a scenic route along the Crater Rim Walkway, Holdsworth Track, and Ōrongomai Trail. Along the way, walkers will explore remnant podocarp forest, learn about the history of the Summit Road, and visit the new John Jameson Lookout — home to interpretation panels honouring two generations of conservation leadership.

This free event offers a unique chance to walk in the footsteps of one of Christchurch's earliest conservation advocates, surrounded by the landscapes he fought to protect. Numbers are limited and registration is essential. Full details will be available via the Heritage Festival programme and our website in early spring.

BANKS PENINSULA WALKING FESTIVAL

Visit to Omahu Bush Reserve

Walkers from the Banks Peninsula Walking Festival were once again welcomed to Omahu Bush this year. To offer something a little different, Bill McSweeney and Paula Jameson led a group of 24 walkers 'off trail' along the route of the proposed new Tōtara Grove Track.

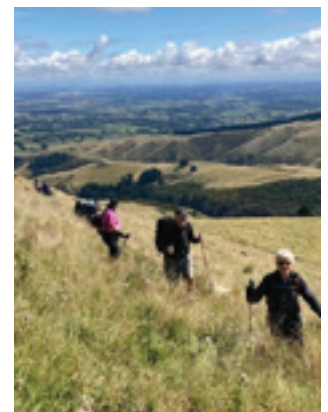


Morning Tea beneath the Omahu tōtara

Among the many treasures in Omahu Bush is a stand of mature tōtara trees—estimated to be between 100 and 200 years old—that have survived both fire and logging. As well as these magnificent trees, the group was delighted to see hundreds of young tōtara seedlings thriving in the undergrowth.

Morning tea was enjoyed beneath one of the large tōtara trees, accompanied by the song of the korimako (bellbird) and riroriro (grey warbler).

On the return journey to the car park, the group explored the north side of Gibraltar Rock, taking in the tall tussock grass and sweeping views across the Canterbury Plains.



Exploring the north side of Gibraltar Rock

For Summit Road Society members keen to visit the tōtara grove at Omahu Bush, we're pleased to say that a new track through the area is planned for construction in early 2026.

Bill McSweeney – Omahu Bush Reserve Honorary Ranger

Kids' Adventure at Sugarloaf

This summer, the Summit Road Society was proud to host a family-friendly walk around Te Heru o Kahukura (Sugarloaf). The weather turned on its best for the 2.5-kilometre trail, which wound through lush native bush before climbing to a rocky spur with spectacular views of Whakaraupō. Led by Predator Free Port Hills Coordinator Natasha S. McIntosh and SRS President Paula Jameson, the event brought together kids, parents, and grandparents alike.



To help tamariki connect more deeply with the environment, we handed out worksheets designed to engage all five senses. They were encouraged to taste the peppery zing of horopito, feel the papery bark of fuchsia, and notice the sights, sounds, and smells of the ngahere around them. Each task introduced the idea that noticing is the first step in conservation — and that scientists use all their senses when learning about the natural world.

A shared stop for fresh watermelon partway through capped off the day, with smiles all round and a few sticky fingers!

Natasha McIntosh – PFPH Coordinator

ARBOR DAY 2025

School Planting Event at Victoria Park

After heavy rain forced a postponement, this year's Arbor Day event went ahead on Wednesday 18 June in near-perfect planting conditions. Held at Victoria Park, the day brought together 120 enthusiastic students from Our Lady of the Assumption School and Cashmere Primary School.

Ranger Di Carter welcomed the group and offered special thanks to the Eastenders Work Party for preparing all 400 planting holes in advance — a tremendous effort that helped the morning run smoothly. The students wasted no time getting their hands dirty, and with support from Allan Davies, Anne Kennedy, Wren Bracegirdle, Bill Martin and Paula Jameson, all plants were in the ground before lunch.



The energy and care shown by the tamariki were a credit to their schools and a reminder that Arbor Day is about more than planting trees — it's about growing a lifelong connection to the land.

Bill Martin – SRS Manager



Photo: Kākā by Tony Stoddard on Unsplash

Time for a large eco-sanctuary in Christchurch

The recent all-day trapping hui in Christchurch was not only inspirational to hear the work being done by Predator Free Wellington but also a great opportunity to mix with like-minded people and swap ideas.

Christchurch has not yet established a large eco-sanctuary in developing a large predator-proof fenced sanctuary close to the city.

The first of these was Zealandia in Wellington in which 225 hectares were fenced on the old Karori Reservoir site in 1999. It is now home to kākā, kākāriki, takahe, tīeke/saddleback, hihi, and tuatara. Some of these species are now commonly seen in the city and, more importantly, it has galvanised the population to create

a predator-free area on the Miramar Peninsula. In the Waikato, a huge 47 km fence enclosing Maungatautari was started in 2002 and predator-free by 2006. It is the largest in the country.

In the South Island, Ōrokonui in Dunedin at 307 hectares was started in 2007 and the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary in Nelson at nearly 700 hectares was established in the early 2000s and reopened in 2018.

In contrast, Christchurch has only the 12-hectare Riccarton Bush, the sole remnant of old podocarp forest in Canterbury.

There is clearly a need for a much larger eco-sanctuary in Christchurch. Current trapping has resulted in markedly increased bird numbers in the Summit Road Society Reserves and adjacent Living Springs, and the Whaka Ora project has resulted in large numbers of traps throughout the Port Hills. All these organisations are coordinating their efforts, which adds to the effectiveness of their trapping.

But the results in Zealandia and the other bird sanctuaries throughout the country are there for all to see. Establishing these sanctuaries has been no small undertaking.

“Success factors include a long-term vision and an initial charismatic project leader; predominantly natural ecosystems established within and around the eco-sanctuary; strong sustained relationships with the local community, iwi and agencies (such as DOC); effective long-term governance structures including sound business planning, and (usually) the ability to fundraise.”¹

All the community-based sanctuaries have taken up to 10 years from conception to completion. The 1.8 metre predator-proof fence cost varies between \$200 to \$500 per metre depending on the terrain. The establishment costs are massive, but the long-term gains are also huge. These sanctuaries are looking at 500 to 1000-year time frames.

The benefits are not only seen in the increasing numbers of native birds but also the return of native flora and fauna which has a chance to re-establish without interference from mammalian predators and browsers.

There is no doubt trapping in unfenced sanctuaries helps to increase the numbers and diversity of native species, but the effort and cost of this ongoing work probably exceeds the costs of an eco-sanctuary in the long term.



Photo: Tūi in a kōwhai tree by Toby Hall on Unsplash

A Waitākiri Sanctuary near the old QE11 site of 180 hectares has been proposed to include the existing Travis Wetland and 30 hectares of red-zoned land. This would be large enough to provide a pest-free home for birds. The Port Hills and urban trapping programmes would assist in the expansion of species beyond this area and bring the dawn chorus back to Christchurch.

The task to develop an eco-sanctuary in Christchurch is huge, but other areas of New Zealand have shown it is not impossible.

Murray Smith – Ōhinetahi Predator Control Coordinator

¹ - New Zealand ecosanctuaries: types, attributes and outcomes
– Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand, Vol.49(3), 2019.

Summit Road Society Reserves Update

Highlights & Volunteer Opportunities

Omahu Bush Reserve

Omahu Work Party

We had plans to upgrade several of the Omahu tracks over winter, but unfortunately, Mother Nature had other ideas! A major storm on May 1st and 2nd brought over 200 mm of rain – reported by a neighbouring property owner to be the heaviest downpour in over 20 years.

Since then, work parties have been kept busy repairing two sections of the 7 km deer fence that were damaged in the storm. Walking access down Rhodes Track has been restored after a major slip, although more work will be needed in the summer. Several smaller slips on other tracks still require attention from our dedicated volunteers.

The good news is that bird life remains as abundant as ever, and forest floor regeneration is thriving – thanks to the excellent work of our predator control team.

Bill McSweeney – Omahu Work Party Coordinator



JOIN OUR OMAHU WORK PARTY!

Meets twice a month on Fridays.

Work includes track maintenance, weed control, and plant care.

CONTACT: Bill McSweeney - 027 438 7194
bill.margaret@xtra.co.nz

Omahu Predator Control

With winter now upon us, we have seen the expected seasonal increase in rodent catch (five months year-to-date, YTD). Mice have increased to 112 YTD as compared with 54 in 2024.

This is in part the reason for the increase in weasel numbers: 31 YTD vs. 7 in 2024. Only 3 other mustelids (stoats) were caught in that five-month period. Six-year average to 2024 is 23. Rats remain consistent at 114 YTD vs. 128 in 2024. For the last two years, we have seen a large catch rate for these summer months.

Although the April monitoring showed rat presence at < 5%, we will again be ensuring the best outcome for bird breeding with our annual winter toxin program (Cholecalciferol) in June/July. This, for the second year running, is being done in conjunction with Christchurch City Council (CCC), Ōhinetahi Reserve, and Living Springs.

Possum numbers are reasonably constant at 65 YTD vs. 71 YTD in 2024. The vast majority are being eliminated at the boundary as a result of the automated AT220 trap placement, so that is very pleasing.

Over the past three months we have been reorganising the trap network with a more logical identification numbering system, together with logging (GPS) each trap. This has been a laborious but necessary task to make the process of trap checking easier to follow for volunteers.

Camera surveillance of the remnant deer population, that had escaped past eradication attempts, has consumed a lot of time for the past eight months. An attempt has been made to quantify the numbers and confirm that the population is stable – no incursions. A planned cull using specialists is planned this winter.

Greg Gimblett
– Omahu Predator Control Coordinator

INTERESTED IN PREDATOR CONTROL?

Our team of seven volunteers runs four monthly trap checks—we welcome more hands to help!

CONTACT: Greg Gimblett
greg@craigieburnproperties.co.nz

Ōhinetahi Bush Reserve

Ōhinetahi Work Party

As December rolled along things were beginning to dry out badly on the Reserve and we were fearing for the survival of our plantings. But on 31st December we had to cancel because of rain and it has not stopped since. We have had to cancel two further work days and on three days we have departed early as rain set in.

The trees planted as green firebreaks at the north end of Ellas track and off O'Farrells track at the bottom of Totara Log ridge have had a 99.9% survival rate. The plantings in the middle of Totara Log ridge have not done as well but they have not yet been fully assessed as we wait for fine weather so we can get down to spray around them. We have been hoping for the last four weeks to do that. A small group went out in desperation one Monday and made a start.

A big patch of elderberry was cleared on Wai-iti track and old man's beard and passion vine have received attention.

Bush Rd, Ellas track and O'Farrells tracks have been cleared. The work party has been working in some rather marginal weather as they try to ward off cabin fever.

Anne Kennedy – Ōhinetahi Work Party Coordinator



David and Robert Knoef rebuilding steps Bivvy Track

Ōhinetahi Predator Control

From January 1 to May 31 this year, our predator control efforts at Ōhinetahi have resulted in 537 recorded kills — over half of these were rats. This figure reflects improved reporting accuracy, as we are now including unspecified AT220 trap triggers, which were not counted last year.

By comparison, the same period in 2024 saw 390 predators removed. Possum numbers have remained steady year-on-year, stoat catches are slightly down, and weasel catches have halved.

Volunteer commitment remains strong, with 394 hours logged over the five-month period — up from 318 hours in 2024. Last year's total was affected by restricted access due to the February fire.

We've installed extra bait stations across the reserve, and a fresh round of poisoning is planned for July. We're also pleased to welcome Alicia Warren as a new trapper to our dedicated team.

Collaboration with other predator control groups around Whakaraupō / Lyttelton Harbour has increased significantly. Regular meetings are now planned, strengthening coordination and sharing of best practices across the region.

**Murray Smith
– Ōhinetahi Predator Control Coordinator**

JOIN THE ŌHINETAHI WORK PARTY!

Meets weekly on Tuesdays.

Work includes track maintenance, weed control, predator control, and some planting.

Transport available from the Sign of the Takahe if needed.

CONTACT: Anne Kennedy - 03 337 0364

kennedyz@xtra.co.nz

JOIN THE PREDATOR CONTROL TEAM AT ŌHINETAHI!

We're always looking for more volunteers to assist with trapping efforts.

CONTACT: Murray Smith

021 159 6563

manager@summitroadsociety.org.nz

Linda Woods Reserve

LWR Work Party

After three years of activity, mahi for the LWR work parties has started to develop a seasonal pattern. Late summer and autumn is about revegetation releasing, invasive weed control, revegetation planting prep and track maintenance. There's also a Bioblitz session - biodiversity monitoring - that is becoming an annual event.

Fencing contractors have also been installing stock fences around two revegetation areas in Horotane Valley, in time for the winter planting season.

Our plan for revegetation work in Horotane has been to first plant kānuka around the main pockets of gorse and in eroded gullies then, as funds allow, fencing these areas from stock and enriching the kānuka with a broader range of species. We are moving on to the second phase planting in some of these areas this year.

With our wetter autumn, soil moisture has allowed us to bring the start of planting work forward a few weeks to mid-May and there will be 2300 new trees in the ground by mid-June. These were planted by our Friday and Wednesday work teams boosted by volunteers from Fletcher Living, Borrmeister Architects and Groundline Engineering, as well as supporters from the community at our first weekend event. We aim to have 7000 new trees planted this season.

Behind the scenes, the planning and management group has been working through a long list including funding for next year's fencing and planting, interpretive panel signs, track route descriptions, photo point mounts for revegetation monitoring, walking and bike track routes and more.

Thanks to all our volunteers for their support, time and talents as we start to rewild these two valleys.

John Marsh – LWR Work Party Coordinator



Track sign installation gang, Avoca Valley

JOIN THE LINDA WOODS WORK PARTY!

Meets weekly on Wednesdays.

Work includes weed control, track maintenance, and revegetation support.

CONTACT: John Marsh - 0274310 182

jmarshtree@gmail.com

LWR Predator Control

The first half of 2025 has seen steady progress in predator control efforts at Linda Woods Reserve. Between January and June, volunteer trappers recorded 13 possums, 12 hedgehogs, 10 rats, 6 weasels, and 3 feral cats caught across the reserve.

Winter usually brings a drop in overall catch numbers, with rats being the notable exception. Two additional AT220 self-resetting traps were installed during this period and have already proven effective – one trap caught three possums in a single night!

As always, we remain grateful to our committed team of volunteers who continue to check traps regularly across the valley and contribute data via the Trap.NZ platform. Their ongoing efforts make a real difference in protecting the native biodiversity of this special place.

While cat control can be a sensitive topic, it's worth noting that the cats caught were feral animals located far from any residential area. Unfortunately, dumping of unwanted cats continues to be an issue at the top of the valley.

Thanks to all who are helping with the trapping programme – your efforts are essential to the health of the reserve's ecosystems.

**Ross Radford
– LWR Predator Control Coordinator**

JOIN THE PREDATOR CONTROL TEAM AT LWR!

We're always keen to have new volunteers assist with trapping efforts.

CONTACT: Ross Radford

027 360 6629

rossradford90@gmail.com

Eastenders

Eastenders Work Party

This has been a year of changes. Work party numbers have slowly increased to a core group of five or six — and this year the total number of volunteers attending at least one workday was 10. The average number of participants was 4.7, and the number of hours worked was 98.

We've welcomed several new volunteers, which has been refreshing and has brought new energy and enthusiasm. The largest change has been a shift in location. Since mid-2023, the work party has focused on maintaining tracks and controlling weeds in the new Linda Woods Reserve. This has been rewarding work for several reasons. The area is very accessible, there is a clear need for weed control, and our work is having an immediate impact.

The main tracks are gradually being brought up to a higher standard, and weed control has made tracks

more walkable. This area is of particular botanical interest because the remnant native vegetation is being actively regenerated and enhanced. The bush is remarkably diverse in places, and rare species have been recorded, so we need to be particularly careful with our methods and choices.

The group works in a great spirit of cooperation and camaraderie, and our regulars are doing an outstanding job. Everyone is encouraged to join in!

The Eastenders work party has been running for over 30 years and focuses on track maintenance, weeding, and planting across the eastern Port Hills.

Graeme Paltridge – Eastenders Work Party Coordinator

JOIN THE EASTENDERS WORK PARTY!

Meets twice a month on Mondays.

CONTACT: Graeme Paltridge - 03 384 3592
graeme_sue@slingshot.co.nz



Linda Woods Reserve, looking towards the estuary

Predator Free Port Hills



As we reach the midpoint of the year, we're filled with gratitude for everyone who has contributed to Predator Free Port Hills' success. We have seen significant strides towards our goals - all thanks to the collective effort of national and local community groups.

The first major event of the year was the Predator Free Waitaha Regional Hui, held at Aldersgate in the Central City and co-hosted with the Predator Free New Zealand Trust and MC'd by Ruud Kleinpaste. Speakers included the legendary Cam Speedy and James Wilcox from PF Wellington. The hui brought together trappers from across Canterbury to learn about the future of the predator free movement and find new ways to reach their goals. However, the real strength lay in connection, with over 150 attendees, where networking and knowledge sharing were paramount. If we hope to achieve our PF 2050 goal, we need to work together.



One of the standout moments of 2025 has been the growth of our school programmes. In partnership with Te Raekura Redcliffs School, PFPH delivered a five-week immersive experience for twelve students, built around the questions: What's in our environment? How do we protect it? With support from volunteers at Barnett Park and the Avon Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust, students ventured into the bush to witness conservation in action. To celebrate their efforts, Christchurch City Councillor Sara Templeton presented the students with badges and certificates at an end-of-term assembly.

We also teamed up with Enviroschools and Te Ara Kākāriki to bring the predator free kaupapa to a wider student audience. At the Kids Discovery Plantout Day, over 100 tamariki planted 420 eco-sourced seedlings, while PFPH ran interactive sessions on trapping and pests. Keeping that many tamariki engaged is no easy task - but with support from Genera Biosecurity, we developed hands-on education materials, including monitoring card games and specimen skulls, to enrich learning and spark curiosity.



Our Trap Building Days remain a community favourite, thanks to the in-kind generosity of Blokhaus and Scarlett Hydraulics. First, we were in Tai Tapu, which raised an important question: How do we meet the trapping needs of every community when those needs are so different? Lifestyle blocks in Tai Tapu require a very different approach from urban backyards.

Next, we tried something new: targeting an entire ecosystem. In partnership with the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network, PFPH hosted a trap build focused on boosting trapping efforts along the river corridor. This event helped raise awareness of OHRN's upcoming trapping work on public reserves and inspired new volunteers keen to contribute.



Together, these efforts show what's possible when communities, schools, and organisations come together with a shared purpose. As we look ahead to the rest of 2025, we're excited to keep building on this momentum — one trap and one conversation at a time.

Natasha McIntosh – PFPH Coordinator



Photo: View from the John Jameson Lookout by Marie Gray

Get Involved!

If you'd like to join any of our work parties or predator control teams, please reach out to the coordinators listed above. No experience is necessary—just a reasonable level of fitness and enthusiasm for conservation.

For more information, visit
www.summitroadsociety.org.nz.

New members welcome!

Our annual membership is \$25, which includes two newsletters per year and invites to special events. Your support helps us protect and preserve the Port Hills.

Sign up here:
www.summitroadsociety.org.nz/join/membership-form



Summit Road Society

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CHARITABLE TRUST NUMBERS:

Summit Road Society: CC 27184
 Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust: CC 27183

CREDIT CARD DONATIONS CAN BE MADE VIA:
givealittle.co.nz/org/summit-road-society

We are a voluntary society working to enhance, preserve and protect the natural environment, beauty and open character of the Port Hills of Banks Peninsula for people to enjoy. We need and welcome contributions to our work through memberships, donations, corporate sponsorships, bequests, and participation in work parties (non-members welcome—but why not join us as well!)



Follow us on Facebook & Instagram for regular updates
 Summit Road Society & Predator Free Port Hills

Thank you to John Clemens for proofreading

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	Dylan Steeples	021 144 7013
PFPH Co-coordinator	Natasha McIntosh	022 159 5665

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Linda Woods Reserve	John Marsh	027 431 0182

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Ōhinetahi	Murray Smith	021 159 6563
Omahu Bush	Greg Gimblett	027 492 1330

