



a passion for the Port Hills

Newsletter, Summer 2022-23



The magical Anne's Falls.

NADINE CAMPBELL

OMAHU BUSH—how far we've come

I am pleased to report that the perimeter fence of Omahu Bush, including the additional 600mm mesh around the base to make the fence even more secure from pigs attempting to invade the Reserve, has now been completed.

Four years ago, it was decided to replace a boundary fence as stock were entering the bush creating havoc to the understory. On completion of that particular section of fence, we knew that even though we managed to keep the farm animals out of that particular boundary, we had a wider problem with feral pigs and deer and a number of other old boundary fences. Feral pigs and deer are part of a group of animals called ungulates, along with goats, tahr and chamois. These animals cause significant damage to our native vegetation across the country.

When traplines were cut through the interior of Omahu, the full extent of the damage became evident. The Board decided to continue the replacement of a suitable fence to keep feral ungulates out and eliminate those that had made their home there, in order to protect the vegetation that was being severely damaged with their presence.

The task of fencing a perimeter of over seven kilometres was not a simple one. There was a mountain of work to be done beyond building a fence, including planning, design, preparation of the ground, removing old fences and, of course, financing.

All these tasks were willingly managed by Graham Corbishley, along with those who helped with the project. Graham also designed and built the pig traps to remove feral pigs from the Reserve.

Over the last few years, our predator control programme has also ramped up. Predators were not only having an impact on the vegetation of the bush but also on the birdlife and other animals such as lizards and insects. The predator control programme has been ably managed by Greg Gimblett and his team of helpers. This programme also required considerable planning and installation of equipment to suppress predator numbers and monitor progress. Over 1800 predators have been caught since records began.

This programme of work has also meant increased workload for the work party. Under the leadership of Ian Johnston, the work party has spent hours clearing and spraying gorse and other weeds along the fence lines, in addition to their ongoing work to maintain and improve tracks and control weeds.

In a few short years, the whole structure of Omahu has been changed for the better. Predators are now subject to a well organised system of intensive predator control and the feral animals have been almost eliminated. The number of pigs has been reduced from over 100 to zero. A small number of deer are left in the Reserve and these are planned for priority elimination. Even small numbers of deer can impact natural regeneration and enrichment planting.

There are still a few minor jobs to be completed such as securing suspect weakness in the fencing and installing monitoring equipment. Continuing surveillance and maintenance are also essential. We need to quickly detect any infiltrations into the Reserve and any damage to the fencing.

A big pat on the back to all our volunteers and especially to those who willingly took a major role in this success story that needs to be told, where the birdlife and song, plus the regrowth of the understory, is the proof of the pudding. Special thanks to the Gama Foundation for their unwavering support of Omahu Bush. Thanks also goes to the Selwyn District Council, Christchurch City Council, Pest Free Banks Peninsula and our many donors.

Once these last tasks are completed, our concentration will turn to other ways we can protect and increase the biodiversity of Omahu Bush. One of our next big projects is a management plan for Omahu Bush, setting out our long term vision for the Reserve.

A big thank you and that pat on the back for our Omahu volunteers.

Bill Woods

President



A pied fantail at Omahu Bush.

NADINE CAMPBELL

Kids Talk

Bowenvale is my favourite track. I love going there because it's so full of nature – trees and birds and blackberries. I like being able to walk up to Victoria Park to climb the trees. Sometimes we find some geocaches hidden in the rocks. I used to love it when the animals were hiding in the caves along the track but they aren't there anymore.

Leo Davies, age 6.

Editor's note: The animals Leo refers to are mini toy animals. During lockdown, people put toy animals in the little caves along the walking track.



EMMA JENKINS

Leo enjoying the walk at Bowenvale.

Social Media

For the second year in a row, we worked with University of Canterbury communication and media students to build our social media presence and content. Second year students Nina, Beth and Martina created four videos and 37 well-researched posts with images. They've done an outstanding job and we will be posting this content on Facebook and Instagram over the coming months. Check us out!



facebook.com/summitroadsociety



instagram.com/summitroadsociety



MARIE GRAY

Building traps with the kids at Lyttelton Kindy.

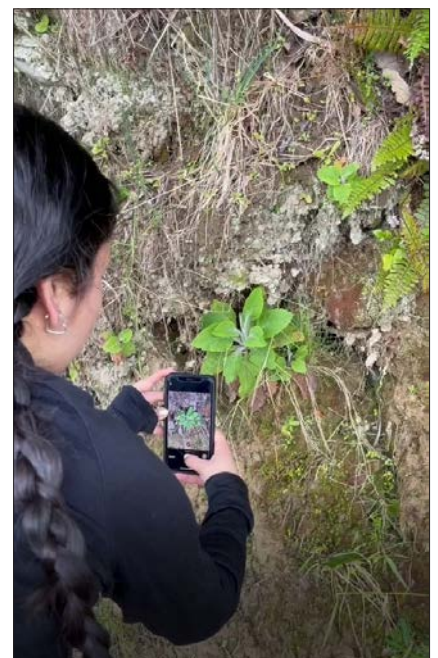
Predator Free Port Hills School programme

With support from Environment Canterbury and the Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Award grant, we have been able to extend our school programme. It is the kids of today who will carry the Predator Free 2050 vision into the future.

Covid-19 has been very disruptive, with schools particularly hard hit. Despite these challenges, we have been able to work with eight schools and preschools over the last year. Kids immediately grasp that our native birds, lizards and invertebrates need safe homes and plenty of food to thrive. To achieve this, we need to protect our existing biodiversity, restore biodiversity through planting and native regeneration, and give our native fauna the best chance of survival through predator control. And we can't forget weed control too. We need to control invasive weeds as they displace and strangle native plants. These are big long term goals and we all have a role to play.

As part of this programme, school children have been involved in monitoring predator numbers, checking out local traplines and building traps. High school students have assisted with preparing trapping materials for community trap building days too.

The UC students created media content on how to use I-naturalist.





Trapping workshop at Hillsborough with Greg Byrnes from Tūhaitara Coastal Park.

Predator Free Port Hills

We have recently passed the milestone of 1400 households signed up with Predator Free Port Hills. Each new household takes us one step closer to our goal of landscape-scale predator control across the Port Hills and Lyttelton Harbour.

With the challenges of Covid-19, we have concentrated on outdoor events and Zoom workshops this year. Highlights include six trap building days in various suburbs across the Port Hills and three trapping workshops. Our monthly stall at the Mt Pleasant Farmers' Market has continued throughout the year. This is held on the second Saturday of each month and is a great opportunity for the community to buy traps and get advice on backyard trapping. A huge thank you to our hardworking volunteers who take turns on the Market roster. We also publish a dedicated e-newsletter for Predator Free Port Hills. Please visit www.predatorfreeporthills.org.nz to subscribe.

With the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, community events have started to resume, and Predator Free Port Hills had information stalls at the Governors Bay Fete and Orton Bradley Spring Fair in October.

Our vision is for the Port Hills and Lyttelton Harbour to be predator free, with thriving native wildlife in our neighborhoods, local parks and reserves, farmland and bush areas. We are working with Conservation Volunteers New Zealand and the Christchurch City Council to extend trapping in reserves and parks.

We continue to support the wider Pest Free Banks Peninsula collaboration. In Kaitōrete, the team are now moving the traps further along the Spit. To prevent reinvasion from the Taumutu end, they are working closely with the Marae and surrounding community to maintain a network of traps. In addition, the team have installed a barrier fence with traps across the narrow end of the Spit. The possum knockdown operation in the extended Wildside area (Akaroa and surrounds) has commenced. Work has begun at Ōnuku and will be moving in a south-east direction towards Akaroa Heads and Pohatu in the first phase. Possums, watch out!

We are also supporting the newly established Predator Free Christchurch network. The network is informal at this stage, with new groups in Riccarton, Richmond, Waimairi Beach, Spencerville and along the Styx River.

The Predator Free groups are very keen to collaborate, learn from and support each other and coordinate efforts to fill the gaps.

Thank you to the volunteers, funders and supporters who make this project such a success.

Marie Gray & Jeremy Agar

www.predatorfreeporthills.org.nz

John Jameson Lookout

Following a tender process earlier this year, Maugers Contracting Ltd was engaged to complete the earthworks, wall foundations and paving. Southern Stone Ltd was appointed to complete the stone wall and steps. Construction began in May 2022 and the project is nearing completion. We have been hampered by heavy rain and disruptions related to Covid-19 and other winter illnesses but we are nearly there! Thank you for your patience and understanding while the Sign of the Bellbird carpark has been closed to vehicles. The lookout is looking amazing and we can't wait for the formal opening.

Caine Tauwhare, master carver from Te Hapū o Ngāti Wheke (Rāpaki), is creating the pou whenua for the site. Pou whenua are used to mark territorial boundaries and places of significance. The concept design has been endorsed by the rūnanga and Maui Stuart from the hapū has blessed the site. Interpretation panels on the history and significance of the site are also being developed. Volunteers will plant native shrubs around the lookout in winter 2023.

Andy Hall of Davie Lovell-Smith, along with landscape architects, Graham Densem and Nic Kay have been responsible for the design process. We also appreciate the support of our funders: the Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust, the Rātā Foundation, the JD Stout Charitable Trust, the Christchurch City Council, the Lotteries Environment and Heritage Fund, the Lyttelton Port Company and donations from individuals and families.

Marie Gray



Our thanks to Maui Stuart from Rāpaki for blessing the site of the pou whenua. Concept drawing of the lookout (below).



Walking in Harry Ell's Footsteps

As part of the Christchurch Heritage Festival, Paula Jameson, Board Member and Harry Ell's great-granddaughter led a guided walk from the top of Kennedys Bush to the Sign of the Kiwi via the Crater Rim Walkway. Kennedys Bush was a special place for Harry Ell. He lived in Halswell and spent much of his youth exploring Kennedys Bush and the Port Hills. He was instrumental in the creation of New Zealand's first scenic reserve in 1906 - twenty hectares (49 acres) of Kennedys Bush. Paula gave a talk at the Sign of the Kiwi on Harry Ell's unique character and achievements. It is thanks to Harry Ell's stubborn determination that we have the network of reserves on the Port Hills, the Summit Road and the rest houses. It was a very interesting and enjoyable walk, a bit windy in exposed areas but spectacular views of both the harbour and city.

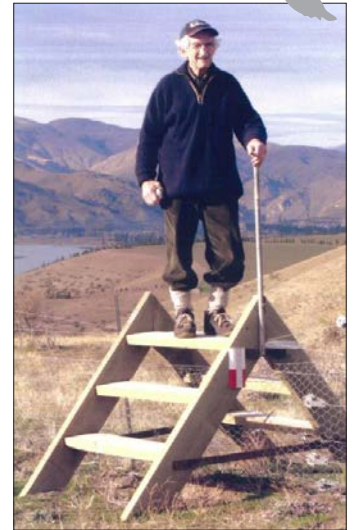


MARIE GRAY

Following the Crater Rim Walkway to the Sign of the Kiwi.

Dr Brian Molloy

Dr Brian Molloy sadly passed away in July 2022. Dr Molloy had a long and varied life. He was a highly respected ecologist, botanist and orchidologist and, in earlier life, also an All Black and rugby coach. Dr Molloy was a member of the Summit Road Society Board and Honorary Botanist for over twenty years. He was nominated by the Society for the QEII National Trust and was a Trust Director from 1989-1998, QEII National Trust South Island High Country Representative 1998-2012, and ultimately a QEII National Trust Life Member.



Dr Brian Molloy in the field ca. 2012.
Photo thanks to Sue Molloy

In 1974, the Summit Road Society convened a Planning Subcommittee and Dr Molloy, along with others, composed countless submissions, attended innumerable hearings and earned the Society its reputation as 'Watchdog of the Hills'. Dr Molloy strongly supported the Society's opposition to the building of the Gondola, writing that it would have a major effect on the botanically significant Mt Cavendish Reserve. Dr Molloy made an extraordinary contribution to conservation in Canterbury and was appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 1997 for his services to conservation.

Nedra Johnson

Nedra Johnson passed away in September 2022. She was a long-time supporter of the Summit Road Society and along with her husband Johnny, would host the Christmas get-together for Society volunteers at her house. Johnny loved working on the tracks and Nedra had fond memories of the camaraderie the Summit Road Society offered. Mrs Johnson received a QSM for her extensive services to the community and education earlier this year in the Queen's Birthday Awards. Among her many contributions, Mrs Johnson was a member of the Canterbury Education Board and its representative on the Christchurch Teachers' College Council and the first female member of the Planning Tribunal and later an Environment Commissioner.



Nedra Johnson.
Photo thanks to
Karen Norris.

Our sincere condolences to both families.



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Summit Road Society: 03-0802-0104055-00

Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust: 03-1592-0321653-00
Credit card donations can be made through the secure website:
<https://givealittle.co.nz/org/summit-road-society>

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Banks Peninsula	To be confirmed	
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Eastenders work party	Graeme Paltridge	384 3592
Ohinetahi work party	Anne Kennedy	337 0364
Omahu Bush work party	Ian Johnston	332 8319
Linda Woods Reserve WP	Graeme Paltridge	384 3592

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 and corporate sponsorships, bequests, participation in work parties (non-members welcome—but why not join us as well!)

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

EASTENDERS

The Eastenders have had eight active work parties over the past six months. A ninth session was cancelled because of July's heavy rain. We did not work two Mondays due to public holidays.

Two sessions involved tree planting on the Taylors Mistake Track where locals had prepared much of the cliff frontage by clearing boxthorn, boneseed and tagasaste (also known as tree lucerne) for us to plant several hundred native trees. Whereas tagasaste, endemic to the Canary Islands, can be an important stock food and its spring flowers are beloved by bees, it is a rapid grower and prolific seeder, crowding out slower-growing native trees. The annual mandatory nassella tussock sweep on the Linda Woods Reserve took another two sessions where a good 75 noxious tussocks were grubbed out. This sounds quite a number compared with past years, however, the team now has 'got its eye in' for identifying these plants and I feel we are on top of it spreading. The Eastenders Track at the back of Barnett Park in Redcliffs was given its annual maintenance on two occasions. Drains were cleared, a large under-runner undermining the track was filled in and a box drain installed to help prevent further scouring. We also had another couple of sessions on the Linda Woods Reserve. In the Avoca Valley, we removed a crack willow and a large tree lucerne as well as removing an old disused fence line. We also reinstalled plant guards around some of the recent tree plantings that had been damaged by July's rain storm. At the entrance of the Horotane Valley, we re-benched the track that leads into the Reserve, removed old fence wire and cut back overhanging vegetation.

The average attendance was 8.6 members per work party (maximum 14, minimum 6). There are currently 59 persons on my mailing list.

Hamish Masters, our accompanying Christchurch City Council parks ranger for many years, left the position in September. We wish him well with his future endeavours. His replacement is Matt Rose.

Graeme Paltridge



GRAEME PALTRIDGE

The Eastenders undertaking maintenance on the Eastenders Track.

OHINETAHI



HELEN HILLS

Merv weed-eating Trig V track at Ohinetahi.

Ohinetahi Work Party

Work on Ohinetahi has continued over the winter and spring at a steady pace. We have tidied tracks, planted trees, relocated flaxes, cleared slips and killed weeds.

The trees we have planted have mainly been supplied by Helen Hills who collects seed from the Reserve and grows the trees. The flaxes are cut back from tracks and the divisions planted out in the Reserve. We had a couple of slips after the heavy rain in July and we planted flax on one of them.

The usual battle continues with weeds – with spur valerian and passion vine being the main ones we have tackled over the past six months. If you have spur valerian in your garden, please deadhead it before it sets seed even if you do not live near the hills. The windblown seed can travel far.

David, Merv and Helen have been the main operators of the weed eaters on the tracks this Spring. With this late spring rain, they may have to get buzzing again before long. Still, the rain was most welcome for the trees. Anything is better than a drought!

Many thanks to all work party members who cheerfully tackle all this work.

Anne Kennedy

Ohinetahi Predator Control

Over the last six months, 150 predators have been caught. Trap numbers are now 290 with 30 new traps added since the end of June. This compares to 226 traps last year.

Increasing trap numbers has led to markedly increased predators caught, especially rats. Poisoning was carried out in September/October for rats and possums and, judging on baits taken, this was reasonably successful, particularly for possums in lower Waiti and Orongomai. A mild winter has resulted in large numbers of rats and trap numbers have been increased to help deal with this.

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Our new AT220 self-setting traps have had some teething problems, with the bait coagulating in the bait reservoirs, but this is being worked on by Greg Gimblett, Ian Grant and David Knoef. These traps show a lot of promise, and work by the Summit Road Society trappers will benefit users of these traps throughout New Zealand.

The Ohinetahi catchment has been identified as an area of special interest by the new Whaka-ora Healthy Harbour pest control strategy. We will be receiving some professional advice on how to improve our trap network.

As always, our hardy group of volunteers continue to be the backbone of our programme and deserve a massive vote of thanks. Volunteers worked 434 hours in the last six months alone. Denise Stroud and Rachel Tutty have been trained as trappers, and they will be assisting with the trapping programme getting underway in the Linda Woods Reserve.

Murray Smith



Murray showing new trapper Denise the ropes at Ohinetahi.

OMAHU

Omahu Bush Work Party

The last six months have been busy, with Covid and wet Fridays disrupting progress.

Another 100 tōtara trees from Te Kāhahu Kahukura were planted, as well as 200 mixed native plants donated by Helen Hills. The area with the natives is looking good. TTK is looking at an assortment of podocarps for future years.

A new box-drain to divert water from the track and steps was installed on Kirks Track below the Rhodes Track crossing, on a very muddy section. A lot of buckets of fill were carried down to the new steps.

The new fence lines require a lot of weed eating and spraying to keep them clear of gorse and weeds. The spraying needs to be carried out at least annually.

Keeping the gorse out of the grazing paddock and off Gibraltar Rock is a never-ending job.

More redundant fences have also been removed from the lower grazing block.

Thanks to our regular 6 to 8 volunteers who turn up every 2nd Friday to help spread the load.

Ian Johnston



Volunteers removing redundant fences at Omahu.

Omahu Bush Predator Control

We welcome three new volunteers to the Omahu predator control team, Peter Moore, Chris Milne and Ian Grant. The volunteer group currently has 12 members.

During the winter months we undertook our annual poison pulse mainly to lower rat numbers but also possums prior to bird breeding in October/November. Our monitoring suggested a minor impact on rats (Interaction with tracking tunnels down from 15% in April to 10%). However, our target of 5% was not reached! The possum RTC measure appeared to go up from 2.5 in April to 7.9. Reinvasion may explain this as many of the recent trapped possums are young males, who typically leave the home range of the parent to find food and mate.

Feral cats have been a focus for us this winter with increased presence noticed, and various methods have been trialled to increase capture. The use of our trail cameras has been very helpful in this endeavour.

Our new AT220 traps have been performing well with most recording multiple catches of both rats and possums. Currently Ian Grant is trialling for the trap manufactures a mixture of different lure types, and have replaced the lure canisters to improve lure shelf life. A number of improvements are being trialled with the software. Ian is experienced in the use of these traps and has added greatly to the way we will use these traps in future.

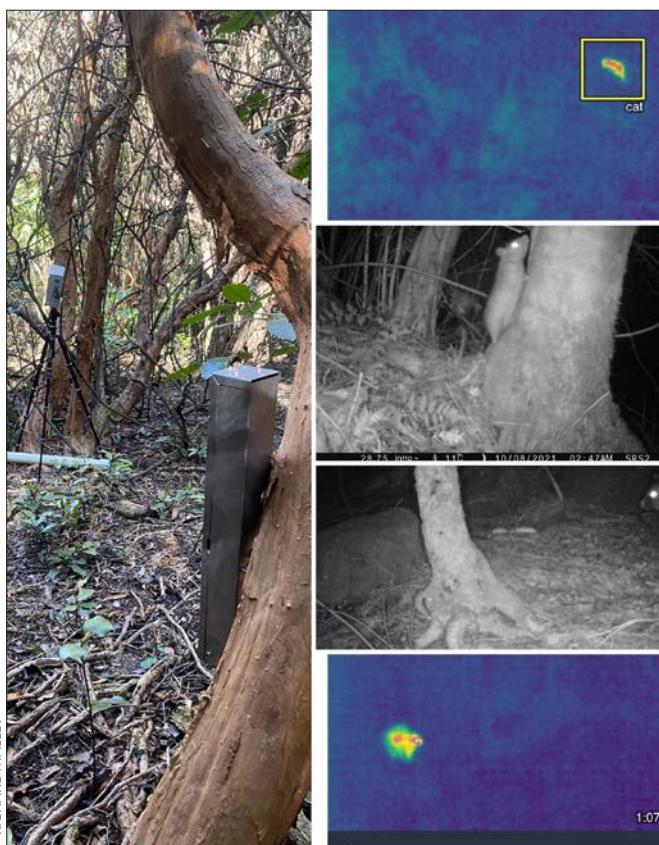


The trap network is extending to Gibraltar Rock and the grazing block.

RICHARD MALLET

A second grant from Pest Free Banks Peninsula will enable us to replace many of the worn out corflute boxes that house our Victor rat traps (the original trap network), replace old DOC 200 traps, and extend the network further in the grazing block. With the summer months now upon us, our work will increase to complete the various tasks, in addition to the monthly trap checking.

Greg Gimblett



Camera monitoring at Omahu Bush.

Ohinetahi and Omahu are important bush areas in Te Kāhahu Kahukura, a large-scale collaboration led by the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust to restore and connect 1000ha of native bush on the southern Port Hills. Pest Free Banks Peninsula is supporting a wider programme of work to suppress predator populations in Te Kāhahu Kahukura in order to aid restoration efforts and provide safe habitat for native birds, lizards and insects.

Omahu Bush Feral Ungulate Control

The perimeter deer fence around Omahu Reserve was completed in March this year and is performing exceptionally well. July was a very wet month. There are many locations where the fence crosses water courses or drainage paths. The drainage works that were installed during construction of the fence performed very well and there were no compromised sections in the perimeter fence as a result of erosion or slips.

The fence has created a new maintenance workload and a simple manual is being prepared with a database map that will outline regimes for regular inspection and maintenance. Maintaining vegetation suppression and checking culverts and creek crossings adjacent to the fence are examples of ongoing workload. The fencing contractor has completed some enhancement work to install a layer of equine mesh around the base of the perimeter



GRAHAM CORBISHLEY

The perimeter deer fence at Omahu Bush

fence. This will provide more resilience over the medium to longer term to minimise the risk of feral pig infiltrations. Surveillance equipment is being installed to monitor performance of the fence over time and to give early warning of any potential breaches by feral pigs or deer.

The focus is now on removing the small number of residual deer in the Reserve and detecting and managing potential infiltrations in the future. All planning is being undertaken in collaboration with CCC Rangers because of the proximity of Otahuna Reserve.

There is a growing challenge throughout New Zealand to protect sites of ecological significance and new areas of native planting from feral ungulates. The Government has set a goal to plant a billion trees by 2028. Unfortunately, feral ungulates have been browsing on a lot of the newly planted seedlings in certain

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zones. The Department of Conservation has just commenced more than \$20 million of control work around New Zealand. There are also increasing occurrences of feral pigs, goats and deer living in the fringes of our urban environments. Wellington's experiences have been published on numerous occasions. In some areas, feral pigs have been illegally released for future recreational hunting and one of the more recent examples of this was in South Westland in an area where a population of endangered rowi kiwi exist. It's very difficult for those interested in protecting native biodiversity to comprehend this type of behaviour.

Feral pigs are one of the world's most invasive species. In New Zealand, there is very little national or local government assistance to control feral pigs. There was a common belief that recreational hunting would control feral pig populations, but it's already clear that recreational hunters aren't effective at controlling any feral ungulate populations. Their objectives are different. Aggressive organic growth rates (given abundance of food sources) means that feral pig populations can quickly expand. A sow might produce 4 to 6 piglets twice a year and juvenile sows can start breeding 6 to 8 months after birth.

I have also seen many examples where the litter sizes are between 8 and 13. In Australia, feral pigs are now declared a national pest. There are estimated to be more than 20 million of them. There are national plans and resources available to control them, but the control task is now huge. Australia's National Feral Pig Action Plan has been developed in response to the significant threat that feral pig populations impose on Australia's environmental, agricultural, cultural and social assets. Moderate to large populations of feral ungulates in New Zealand have an obvious adverse impact on our native biodiversity.

We're very fortunate to have had the support of the Gama Foundation and two agencies to help protect Omaha Reserve from feral ungulates. There is clearly a lot more work to do to raise awareness of the growing feral ungulate threat to our precious native biodiversity, but a lot can be done in a local environment with the right balance of consultation and remedial measures. An example is the initiative to eradicate feral goats on Banks Peninsula. Many of the goats originated from goat farms which became uneconomical. The eradication efforts are almost complete and this would not have been possible without passionate leadership and strong landowner and agency support.

Graham Corbishley



LINDA WOODS RESERVE



The Wai-ora team taking a break from planting at the top of the valley.

It has been an extraordinary year for Linda Woods Reserve. Volunteers and Wai-ora staff planted nearly 28,000 trees and plants in Avoca Valley. Since we started our planting programme in May 2021, we have planted 36,904 plants in the valley, with 34,404 of these planted under the Jobs for Nature programme. We are intending to plant 10,600 more in 2023—and a further 40,000 or so over the next decade.

We held a number of community planting events in the lower valley, involving the wider public, the Student Volunteer Army and Conservation Volunteers. We held a school planting day with Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Whānau Tahī to celebrate Matariki.

Wai-ora staff focused on planting the more difficult terrain. Planting Avoca Valley has not been an easy task. The terrain is steep, with holes and under-runners. The valley is considered medium risk for rockfall, similar to other rocky areas of the Port Hills. As per advice from geotechnical experts, this means a stand-down period of 48 hours for any work in the valley following heavy rain.

And did we have rain! July 2022 was the wettest month in Christchurch since records begun. We had multiple slips across the Reserve. Around 250 plants were washed away. Tracks and fencing were damaged and further rock remediation work was required. Shout out to the Wai-ora team for persevering in such challenging conditions. The team had to adapt rapidly. Planting plans and work schedules were shifted around, plants were brought in on a UTV and by hand. Wai-ora staff got stuck in shovelling the silt from the slips off the tracks.

Meanwhile our new Linda Woods Reserve work party has been hard at work supporting the planting project and wider reserve maintenance. Work has included planting, releasing, removing and recycling guards, saving plants that had been buried by the silt, removing invasive weeds, clearing out old tyres and removing obsolete and damaged fencing. There is a lot to do but the work party has responded to the challenge with good humour and dedication. The team is now meeting weekly and since July 2022 has clocked up nearly 300 hours. Anyone interested in joining this group on a regular or occasional basis please email on graeme_sue@slingshot.co.nz

We welcomed the help of the Ohinetahi work party who planted 400 tōtara donated by Te Kākahu Kahukura in the upper valley and the Eastenders who removed old fencing and helped clean up plant guards after the stream flooded.

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In spring, the digger returned to clear the slips along the 4WD tracks and the thistles were sprayed.

A highlight was hosting the new Minister of Conservation, Poto Williams in Avoca Valley as part of Conservation Week. The Jobs for Nature programme has been a game-changer for conservation in Canterbury and it was a privilege to show the Minister the great work underway.

Our Avoca Valley steering group continues to meet quarterly. The steering group includes experts in ecological restoration and representatives from key partners and the Avoca Valley community. With support from Environment Canterbury and Dr Angus McIntosh from the Waterways Centre for Freshwater Management, we are setting up a citizen science monitoring



JOHN MARSH

The Linda Woods Reserve work party installing plant guards in Avoca Valley.

programme to monitor changes in the stream over time. We are also rolling out a predator control programme in the valley.

Thanks to funding from the Christchurch City Council Biodiversity Fund, Martin Freeman from Eco Abseil has been undertaking weed control in areas of high biodiversity value with a focus on boxthorn.

In Horotane Valley, the Eastenders completed the annual sweep for nassella tussock and tidied up the entrance way. President Bill Woods, the work party and local neighbours have been busy constructing an extension to the shed. Wai-ora staff planted one of the slips.

Planting is the most effective action we can take to stabilise the erosion-prone loess soils and reduce sedimentation into the stream.

We have recently received a significant donation for planting in Horotane Valley. We are now planning for a small-scale planting programme with kānuka in Horotane Valley in 2023. Kānuka is unpalatable to sheep.

We are very grateful to everyone who has helped support the development of the Reserve, either financially or through a gift of time. Our volunteers are amazing! Special thanks to John Marsh for his work on the management plan for Linda Woods Reserve and the restoration of Avoca Valley.

The Avoca Valley restoration project has been supported by a number of generous funders: the Department of Conservation Jobs for Nature programme, the Christchurch City Council, the Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust, Million Metre Streams, Trees that Count, Environment Canterbury, Meridian, Boffa Miskell, Prima Roastery and donations from individuals, families and local businesses. We do still have a shortfall to find, plus there's a long list of other work to fund such as the track network, signage and weed control. Please get in touch if you are keen to make a donation. Every bit helps.

Marie Gray

Linda Woods Reserve Predator Control

An enthusiastic group of local residents in Avoca Valley are driving the rollout of our new predator control programme in Linda Woods Reserve.

Boffa Miskell have made a generous donation towards traps and are providing pro bono time for predator control expert, Brent Barrett, to set up the programme. Predator control will focus on Avoca Valley to support the restoration programme. In time, we hope to extend this to Horotane Valley. The tracking tunnels have been installed through the Reserve. The group's first task is putting the tracking cards out and retrieving them the next day to gauge the type and number of predators in the Reserve. Traps will then be put in the field in early 2023.

Volunteers include recruits from the Ohinetahi predator control team and Avoca Valley residents. We are also partnering with the Christchurch City Council to set up volunteer trap lines in the adjacent red zone land and Duncan Park. And of course, our community trapping programme, Predator Free Port Hills, is supporting local residents to trap in their backyards. We have a real opportunity to take a catchment-based approach to predator control with this programme.

Predator control will help to protect plants and encourage populations of birds, lizards and insects to thrive in the Reserve.

Marie Gray



MARIE GRAY

Scoping monitoring and trapping lines in the valley with Brent Barrett from Boffa Miskell, Society volunteers and Avoca residents. Yes, we asked them to carry plant guards while they were there!

Spur Valerian in Ohinetahi Reserve

Spur valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) is a Mediterranean plant that likes rocky and coastal habitats. It has white, pink or magenta coloured flowers. It has fine wind borne seeds which disperse easily.

Spur valerian is a particular threat to the flora on rocky outcrops and coastal cliffs. Spur valerian forms dense thickets which then displaces a number of endemic and threatened plant species.

The Christchurch City Council is leading a programme to contain the spread of spur valerian and hence protect the wider Peninsula. The Summit Road Society is contributing to this wider effort with a sustained programme of control in Ohinetahi Reserve. Eco Abseil are controlling spur valerian on the steep Faulkner Bluffs and volunteers are removing spur valerian in accessible areas.

In 2020, we produced a brochure on spur valerian and this was delivered to residents of Governors Bay. It proved so popular that we then partnered with Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust, Environment Canterbury and Whaka-ora to adapt and distribute the brochure across the wider Lyttelton Harbour catchment.

You can also help control the spread by dead-heading any spur valerian in your garden before it goes to seed. If you would like to remove it permanently, cut the root at the base and treat with a chemical gel or spray the foliage with suitable weedkiller such as glyphosate.

We would like to acknowledge WWF Community Conservation Fund, QEII National Trust Stephenson Fund, Christchurch City Council and Whaka-ora Healthy Harbour for their financial support of this programme. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find funding for spur valerian control so please get in touch if you would like to donate to this important programme.

Marie Gray



Abseil control of spur valerian on the Faulkner Bluffs.



The lantern illustrated above stood alongside Harry Ell's Toll Gate on the Summit Road, adjacent to where the present cattle stop is below the Sign of the Kiwi. The purpose of the toll was to raise money for work on pathways and the Summit Road between the Kiwi and the Sign of the Bellbird. Although its establishment was authorised by the Heathcote County Council in 1922, the same Council acting under public pressure ordered its removal in 1932. Not to be beaten, Harry moved the toll gate a mile along the Summit Road into Halswell County Council territory where it remained until his death in 1934 and the Main Highways Board became responsible for the Summit Road's upkeep.

The purpose of the Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust is to raise and ring-fence money for the purchase of Port Hills land for conservation in perpetuity or to assist the Society with one-off unexpected and urgent costs.

How can you help financially? Like all charities, funding is critical. Please consider a donation now or leaving a legacy to the Trust. Substantial gifts can be ring-fenced for the purchase of Port Hills land for conservation in perpetuity. Where possible the trustees will consider appropriate naming rights for conservation land purchased through such funding.

Please consider a monthly "Harry Ell Summit Road toll" of \$5 or more via an automatic bank payment to the Trust's account (03-1592-0321653-000). This will qualify for 33% charitable tax rebate. Automatic bank payments are easy to set up online and, at the end of each tax year, the Secretary will email a receipt. Make sure you insert your name and contact phone number or address in the details fields. I'm always happy to discuss these matters.

Paul Loughton

Honorary Treasurer

Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust