



a passion for the Port Hills

Newsletter, Summer 2023–24

Protecting our special plant communities

The Port Hills and wider Banks Peninsula are renowned for their volcanic rocky bluffs and outcrops. Linda Woods Reserve and Ōhinetahi Bush are two notable examples.

The rocky bluffs in Ōhinetahi host a number of endemic and uncommon plant species, including the Lyttelton forget-me-not (*Myosotis lytteltonensis*), three species of filmy ferns (*Hymenophyllum spp.*), prostrate kōwhai (*Sophora prostrata*) and the endemic Banks Peninsula sun hebe (*Heliohebe lavaudiana*).

The Department of Conservation has classed the Lyttelton forget-me-not as Threatened—Nationally Critical. Ōhinetahi Reserve contains a small naturally occurring population of these small delicate flowers.

Weeds are the biggest threat to these native plants. Weeds do not attract the same level of attention and funding for control measures as predators but they are a dire threat. They spread easily and outcompete and smother native species. They can completely overwhelm our special plant communities and displace the native invertebrates, lizards and birds that rely on them. We desperately need a coordinated, collaborative, funded programme to contain and where possible, eliminate weed species that threaten our native biodiversity.

One such weed species is spur valerian (*Centranthus ruber*). The Summit Road Society has been undertaking a control programme for several years in the area south of Faulkner Bluffs to prevent it spreading throughout Ōhinetahi Bush and wider Banks Peninsula. Spur valerian has fine wind-dispersed seeds. The prevailing winds mean that spur valerian growing in Ōhinetahi can easily spread towards Diamond Harbour and further afield.

We have also been trying to raise awareness of the threat spur valerian and other weed species pose to our rare ecosystems through a public education campaign. This includes flyer drops in Governors Bay and around the harbour, newsletter articles and a

weed of the month feature on social media. Thank you to volunteer Murray Smith for his ongoing work on the weed of the month.

We have recently received the news that our application to the Department of Conservation's Community Fund has been successful. We will receive \$108,692 over three years for weed control in Ōhinetahi Reserve, focusing on spur valerian but also including other high-threat weed species such as Old Man's Beard (*Clematis vitalba*) and banana passionfruit (*Passiflora spp.*). We are over the moon; this funding is a game changer. We will continue our control programme south of the Faulkner Bluffs and extend this north. Control will be a mixture of abseil and ground control by contractors, helicopter spraying and ground control by volunteers in accessible areas.

We will also continue our education efforts. Spur valerian is rampant throughout the Harbour from Governors Bay to Lyttelton. It has also spread widely on the city side of the Port Hills. The community can help by removing spur valerian from private gardens—we recommend cutting off the taproot at the base and applying glyphosate 100ml/L. Spraying the entire foliage of each plant with a weed killer and wetting agent is also effective. Grazon 6ml/litre or Glyphosate 10ml/litre can be used. Lavender is a good alternative for the flower garden. It is pretty, fragrant and not prone to spreading. Or better yet, plant natives! Rauhuia or New Zealand linen flax (*Linum monogynum*) produces gorgeous shows of pure white flowers from late spring through to the end of summer. If you cannot remove spur valerian from your garden, please deadhead the flowers before they go to seed.

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MELISSA HUTCHISON

Banks Peninsula sun hebe (*Heliohebe lavaudiana*)



MARTIN FREEMAN

Eco Abseil removing spur valerian from the Faulkner Bluffs

Society members can also help by spreading the word about weeds—tell your friends and neighbours, share our posts on social media, write to your local Community Board and make submissions to Environment Canterbury and Christchurch City Council. And of course, spur valerian is only one threat! Other invasive weeds include Old Man’s Beard, banana passionfruit, cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster spp.*), boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*) and Darwin’s barberry (*Berberis darwinii*), just to name a few. Our native plant species are just as iconic as our birds and bugs and need just as much protection, attention and funding.

If you are keen to take a more active role, why not join a work party? There are now groups on a Monday (Eastenders), Tuesday (Ōhinetahi), Wednesday (Linda Woods Reserve) and Friday (Omahu).

Marie Gray



Lyttelton forget-me-not (*Myosotis lytteltonensis*)

MELISSA HUTCHISON

Local awards

Our outgoing Secretary, **Marie Gray**, received a Kiwi Bank Local Hero Medal for her conservation work on the Port Hills, in particular the Predator Free Port Hills programme. The brainchild of the late Jeremy Agar, Predator Free Port Hills has grown from a small programme of a few trappers in 2017 to 1700 households in 2023. Marie has also been active in supporting the growth and development of the Predator Free movement across greater Christchurch. Marie comments ‘I was stunned to receive this award but it is such an honour. I really want to acknowledge the thousands of people, volunteers and paid staff, who are working to protect and restore nature on the Port Hills, Banks Peninsula and wider Christchurch area. There is a lot of work to be done and it’s going to take all of us to get there’. Congratulations Marie! Congratulations as well to the indefatigable Hugh Wilson of Hinewai Reserve and Jade Humphrey of Predator Free Riccarton who also received local hero medals.



Long term Society volunteer, **Alan Davey**, recently received a community service award from the Spreydon-Cashmere-Heathcote Community Board. Alan has worked on multiple reserves across the Port Hills for over twenty years. He is a volunteer with the Eastenders and with work parties in Omahu Bush and Linda Woods Reserve. He is also a volunteer at Mahoenui Reserve in Sumner, working with Forest and Bird North Canterbury, Sumner Environment Group and CCC rangers. Alan has supported the Arbor Day plantings with local school children on the Port Hills for decades. He is a quiet achiever and dedicated to the Port Hills. Congratulations Alan. You have made an extraordinary contribution to conservation.



Alan Davey

Helen Hills was recently awarded the Forest and Bird Te Tuhu Tī Kōuka award. This award recognises Helen’s significant contribution to the work of Forest and Bird North Canterbury. Helen has fingers in many pies—in addition to Forest and Bird, she is a volunteer with the Ōhinetahi work party, Ōhinetahi predator control group and Linda Woods Reserve work party. She grows plants for our reserves from seed she collected herself. She is a trustee on the Ōtamahua Quail Island Ecological Restoration Trust and a member of the working group for Te Kākahu Kahukura. Congratulations Helen!



Helen Hills



NICK MOORE

Award for the John Jameson Lookout

The Summit Road Society was delighted to receive a Christchurch Civic Trust award for the John Jameson Lookout in October. The citation says the Trust 'recognises the quality of landscape design and the contribution made to the public enjoyment of the natural Port Hills' environment'.

Since it opened in June, the Lookout has been very popular with the public and has encouraged many people to re-visit this iconic site and to learn about the history of the area. The Lookout sits beneath the peak of Ōrongomai and includes low stone walls, a pou whenua by Caine Tauwhare, interpretation panels and an accessible viewing area, all complemented by native plantings. In embarking on this project, the Summit Road Society set out to provide a safe and accessible viewing point over Whakaraupō Lyttelton Harbour, a site which weaves together the rich stories of this place and provides a gateway to the network of walking tracks on the Port Hills.

Our sincere thanks to Graham Densem who drove this project from a concept to reality. Graham worked closely with landscape architect, Nic Kaye (NK Landscape Architecture), engineer, Andy Hall (Davie Lovell-Smith), and Paul Loughton from our Board, to bring this project to fruition.

We would like to acknowledge Te Hapū o Ngāti Wheke for their support, advice and guidance throughout this project. Thanks also go to the Christchurch City Council, the contractors, our dedicated volunteers and everyone who helped make this project happen. Special thanks to the workers who braved bitterly cold conditions on site. Lastly, we are grateful to the generous funders who supported the development of the Lookout.

*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini.
Success is not the work of an individual,
but the work of many.*



Receiving the Christchurch Civic Trust Award—Paula Jameson, Marie Gray, Paul Loughton, Bill Woods, Graham Densem.

We started our walk at the top of Kennedys Bush Track on the Summit Road and followed Holdsworth Track to Ōrongomai Trail in Kennedys Bush. We walked downhill and followed the stream. I liked this walk as it wasn't too hard but it was very beautiful. As it had been raining earlier in the week, there were lots of little waterfalls and there was a curious fantail following us. After a break for snacks, we headed back uphill. We climbed the Lookout Rock and it had amazing views of Christchurch City. We walked up to the Sign of the Bellbird and looked around. Then we crossed the road to the new Lookout. We walked around the area, stopping at the pou whenua and reading the signage. The view of the harbour was beautiful. Then we headed back to our car on the Summit Road. We stopped and got an icecream on the way home. My favourite part of the day was stopping at the Lookout.

Alex Gray (age 13)

Kids Talk

Beautiful Kennedys Bush





100th covenant for Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust

Congratulations to the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust who recently celebrated their 100th covenant in the Banks Ecological Region since 2001. Over 1630ha hectares of land has been protected in perpetuity. The 100th covenant is located in Western Valley and is owned by Annelies and Kees Pekelharing. This protection is the latest addition to a rapidly expanding biodiversity hub of connected land for conservation stretching from Kaituna to Waipuna Saddle.

Graphic Designer

Janey Thomas is retiring as graphic designer for the Summit Road Society. Janey has been the designer for the newsletter, brochures and signage for 22 years. She has served on the Board and the Events & Promotions committee. Janey has gone above and beyond for the Summit Road Society and we have lost track of how many hours she has worked! Her creativity, dedication to conservation, attention to detail and helpfulness has been a huge asset. Thank you Janey for your many years of service. You will be missed.



We are now seeking a new graphic designer for future newsletters and other publications. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please send them our way.

Changing of the Guard

I will be finishing in early 2024 to undertake a Master of Teaching and Learning degree at the University of Canterbury, with the aspiration of working in environmental education. I will continue to support the work of the Society as a volunteer. It has been a privilege to be the Secretary of the Summit Road Society for the last six years and to work with such dedicated and passionate volunteers.

The Secretary's role has been replaced with two positions due to the growth of the Society's work programme. A warm welcome to Bill Martin, incoming General Manager for the Summit Road Society, and to Natasha McIntosh, incoming Predator Free Port Hills Coordinator.

Marie Gray

Bill Martin

Bill Martin is excited to be taking on the new General Manager's role for the Summit Road Society. He has over two decades of experience in the tertiary education sector, and for the past decade has been managing a charitable trust based at Lincoln University involved in tertiary education, research and community projects. Originally from a farming background, he lives at Taylors Mistake, and is a keen supporter and user of the Port Hills.



He is looking forward to meeting and working with all volunteers. He hopes to help the Society to grow its membership, and expand its liaison and education work related to the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the Port Hills.

Natasha McIntosh

Natasha McIntosh is an American expatriate who has spent over a decade in Australia and Aotearoa. After completing a Master of Science qualification at James Cook University, Queensland, Natasha worked with a variety of stakeholders in Australia to understand community connection to the environment. She is a firm believer that a 'whole system' approach to



conservation, which includes the needs of the people as well as the needs of the ecosystem, is the only way to reach long-term conservation goals. Without understanding and personal connection to the environment, we can never gain the support of the people who live on the land. Professionally, Natasha has worked with indigenous, commercial and recreational fishery stakeholders with additional experience in community outreach and education. At home her goals are getting her children as dirty as possible and photographing their adventures.



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Credit card donations can be made through the secure website:
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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



Trapping workshop at Orton Bradley Park

Predator Free Port Hills

It has been a very busy six months for Predator Free Port Hills. Highlights include our regular stall at the Mt Pleasant Farmers Market, trap building days in Avoca Valley, Purau, Halswell, Mt Pleasant and St Martins and stalls at the Governors Bay Fete and Orton Bradley Spring Fair. We have also run several trapping workshops, including a webinar with Te Korowai o Waiheke (who are seeking to eliminate stoats) and a hands-on session with locals at Orton Bradley Park.

With 1700 households already signed up, we believe we have already reached most of the keen conservationists. We are in a different part of the journey now and are engaging with people who know little about trapping or the Predator Free vision. However, once they understand the threat predators pose, they are keen to do their part to help. Our school programme has been a key component of this work. Over the last six months we have worked with Mt Pleasant School, St Martins School, Diamond Harbour School and Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Whānau Tahī.

We have been ramping up our social media communications. University of Canterbury social media students, Zach Dawson, Andrew Bournier and Taylor McLaren have created some fantastic graphic and video content for sharing on Facebook and Instagram.

We have also been supporting the development of a new regional initiative, Towards Pest Free Waitaha, which will focus on the area between the Rakaia and the Waimakariri Rivers. This programme will initially be supported by the project oversight group for Pest Free Banks Peninsula. It is an ambitious goal and will take many years to realise. The first step is to connect all the existing groups undertaking predator control across the region.

Tim Sjoberg of Pest Free Banks Peninsula shared his experiences with landscape-scale control on the Peninsula in a recent workshop for Canterbury community predator control groups. In other exciting news, Predator Free NZ Trust is funding a new role, a Predator Free Activator, to support community groups undertaking landscape-scale predator control across greater Christchurch. This is a one-year pilot starting early 2024.

Pest Free Banks Peninsula continues to go from strength to strength. They have successfully cleared hedgehogs from a section of Kaitōrete. It is believed this is the first time a proof of concept has been achieved on mainland New Zealand and outside of a fenced sanctuary. The possum knockdown on the extended Wildside area on the southeastern corner of the Peninsula is progressing at pace. Check out the Frank Film on the work of Pest Free Banks Peninsula www.frankfilm.co.nz. The two elimination programmes are important testing grounds. Lessons learned here will help inform the expansion of the elimination area in the years to come—including to Lyttelton Harbour and the Port Hills.



Trap building at Mt Pleasant School

Predator Free Port Hills is a key pillar in the Pest Free Banks Peninsula strategy, providing a buffer zone between Christchurch City and the Peninsula and building community enthusiasm and interest for the Predator Free vision. We continue to miss Jeremy Agar. He had a clear vision of what was possible and I know he would be so delighted to see how far we have come with Predator Free Port Hills, Pest Free Banks Peninsula and the new Towards Pest Free Waitaha initiative.

Many thanks to the volunteers who make this project such a success. Thanks also to our funders including Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City Council and private donations.

Marie Gray



EASTENDERS

The Eastenders work parties for the past six months have been a mixture of nassella tussock removal and track upgrading on the Port Hills.

The Society's Linda Woods Reserve has a stubborn reservoir of the noxious nassella tussock which is particularly prevalent on the eastern slopes of Horotane Valley. It took three work parties to ensure we covered the whole area and although more than 150 plants were grubbed, pockets are still known to remain. One mature seeding tussock can produce upwards of 120,000 seeds, the dispersal of which is primarily airborne. Given the propensity of the Port Hills valleys to funnel winds from all directions, it is not altogether surprising that its eradication may take some time.

Our other major project was remediation of the Cave Track at the back of Barnett Park in Redcliffs. This track, which branches off the Eastenders Track about half way up, had been closed since the quakes and was in considerable disrepair but is open again, with five work parties required to clear encroaching vegetation, reposition rocks, bench the track and open drainage channels. It is now a much easier (and safer) approach to the cave which has a new and substantial access staircase, making it a most worthwhile visit with a spectacular view.

Another work party upgraded the Huntsbury Reserve Track which has also had new steps fitted on the steeper sections. We completed upgrading the Kenton Track above Heathcote Valley after working on it earlier in the year.

A hard core of 8-9 volunteers on average turn up for the twice monthly Eastenders work parties, along with the cheerful oversight on Council land by Ranger, Simon Mangan.

Graeme Paltridge



Nassella tussock is a lookalike for silver tussock and requires a keen eye to spot!

ŌHINETAHI



FIONA FENTON

Volunteers clearing blackberry at Ōhinetahi

Ōhinetahi Reserve Work Party

This winter we planted trees in the lower Faulkners Track area. That sounds too easy. Let's write that again. Over 3 days this winter, the team carried cages, stakes and trees up Faulkners Track to a planting area near South Boundary.

One day in September we put some 13 or so steps on Ngaio Track which becomes quite slippery in wet weather now that the trees planted in 2001 have shaded out the grass. This was a most satisfying team effort as those not putting in the stakes and boards gathered rocks for filling the steps.

Some of the large patches of blackberry along the edge of O'Farrells Track were cleared—not the most pleasant of tasks but we were able to preserve tree seedlings growing under the blackberry and hopefully next autumn and spring more seedlings will appear. One of these areas was planted out with seedlings raised by Helen Hills.

It was another wet spring with 3 days being lost to rain and consequently the grass has been growing fast and furiously. Dave and Merv have had the weed eaters buzzing

since mid-October and we are still not done. The rest of the team tidy the growth back from the edges of the tracks.

The bad news. A new weed has shown up in the Reserve just off O'Farrells Track in the area that was affected by the fire—*Cedronella canariensis* or Balm of Gilead. It grows to about 1.2m and has formed a dense patch of about 3 square metres with numerous seedlings popping up outside this main patch. It belongs to the mint family and is said to have healing or soothing powers—not that we would agree with that!

Anne Kennedy



The new invasive weed at Ōhinetahi —Balm of Gilead

Ōhinetahi Predator Control

Volunteer Hours for July–November 2023: 332
Predators caught: 164

This period has been very busy. The rat population has been high in Ōhinetahi and attempts to bring it down with a modified poisoning programme with Double Tap were not successful.

We are co-ordinating our efforts with neighbours at Living Springs and the Christchurch City Council Reserve at Kennedys Bush. Living Springs used Brodifacoum and Cholecalciferol has been used in Kennedys Bush. To complement the efforts of our neighbours, we deployed Brodifacoum toxin in bait stations throughout the whole of the Reserve, starting in early September and finishing in mid-November. The uptake has been high but especially in Faulkners Track at the north end of the Reserve and along O'Farrells Track above Governors Bay. Monitoring indicates that the programme has reduced possum and rat numbers in the Reserve. The residual trap catch (RTC) for the block fell from 6.7 to 1.7. The predator abundance index fell from 30% to 10%.

Poisoning has meant long hours for our volunteers who have willingly carried out this work in their usual cheerful fashion. Our 10 AT220s in the Reserve have been performing well with few technical hitches. Most of our trappers are now using the app to record the number of possum and rat kills in these traps.

As always, we are grateful to Pest Free Banks Peninsula who have given us funding to carry out this work.

Murray Smith

OMAHU

Omahu Bush Work Party

Another 6 months have gone by, with all the usual maintenance of spraying gorse and weeds from the fence lines and keeping tracks clear. New trail maps have been installed on our major junctions in the bush block to help with directions.

The wet weather caused several slips around the perimeter of the fence. Two of the smaller slips on Rhodes Track and an external boundary have been repaired by the work party. A larger slip on an external boundary risked undermining the deer fence. A temporary repair has been put in place until a more permanent solution can be found. The other large slip on the Summit Road has taken out about 50m of the old stock fence on the grazing paddock. This has been made into a one-lane section on the Summit Road. About 300 assorted native trees grown by Helen Hills were planted, as were 100 trees donated by Trees for Canterbury. These donations are very much appreciated.



Volunteer Bill McSweeney helping remove car parts at Omahu Bush

The work party removed the last big patch of gorse from the grazing paddock and the seedlings were spot sprayed. The invasive weed, Darwin's Barberry, is a problem on our southern boundary and needs continual attention.

A car body and 13 tyres were dumped over the edge of the Gibraltar Rock car park. The work party managed to recover the parts and dumped them at a scrap metal yard.

Thanks to all our volunteers for their help over the last 6 months.

Ian Johnston

Omahu Bush Predator Control

A dedicated group of eight members/volunteers continue to put in the mahi at Omahu in all weathers. The group's average monthly hours YTD 2023 were 70 hours, or 16 hours a week. Average age is 61 years young!

We regularly witness flocks of kererū and large numbers of korimako/bellbird, riroriro/grey warbler and ngrungiru/tomtit. Seasonally, the pīpiwharauoa/shining cuckoo pays us a visit.

Rat trap catch numbers continue to be high at 100 YTD, reasonably consistent with past years. However, following the annual winter poison in August/September, zero rats were encountered in our overnight tracking tunnel monitoring. By comparison, in April 2023, tracking tunnel interaction was 23%. Furthermore, no rat interaction was recorded on the 7-day chew card monitoring undertaken in early November. Very little rat activity has been seen on recent trail camera footage. We continue to target rats primarily because of their ability to climb trees and predate on eggs and chicks. Our winter poison campaign is critical in lowering rat numbers for successful bird breeding outcomes.

Possum numbers are more interesting. Since the introduction of the AT220 automated traps in 2022 on the lower boundaries of the Reserve, we have seen a reduction in the possum catch numbers in the upper half of the Reserve. The 2023 catch for the 'upper' Rhodes trap run was 9, versus an average of 44 for the years 2019-2021. Eighteen were caught in the year 2022.

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The AT220 autotrap in the field

Recent chew card monitoring also showed zero possum interaction in the central part of the Reserve. This suggests that we are likely intercepting possums at the boundaries. We have witnessed their greater interaction with the auto trap (that dispenses mayonnaise on a daily basis) via our trail cameras, than with our static Sentinel traps. By comparison, our catch for the Kirks trap run (lower part of the Reserve) has gone from an average 75 for 2019-2021, to 108 YTD 2023. Positioning the traps where they are visible to invading possums, and not visible to members of the public, has proved highly successful. This strategy has also been employed at Living Springs with similar positive results. One of our best trap locations, on the deer fence next to open pasture, has an average annual catch rate of 1.5 possums per month. It's not unusual to see a pile of 5 possums when we do the monthly trap run. Our mustelid capture for YTD 2023 is fairly consistent with the three-year rolling average of 22.

Whilst undertaking our observance of the AT220 traps, we have seen first-hand the presence of feral cats in the Reserve. In the past we have confirmed cat presence through the predation of possum carcasses, but now we are able to see individual cats making multiple visits. We continue to set our network of Timms traps, but they have proved less successful than in previous years. We are looking into the use of live capture traps and all that they entail to improve our control measures.

For the past two years we have been the grateful recipients of grants from Pest Free Banks Peninsula. This has funded our operations, our 15 AT220 automated traps, and enabled us to include part of the grazing block to the north of the main Omahu Bush into our trapping network. With future funding, it is planned to add more AT220 traps to our network, given the positive results.

Recently both Omahu and Ōhinetahi have interacted closely with the Christchurch City Council, and Living Springs predator control teams to coordinate larger scale operations to improve overall outcomes. We are all part of Te Kākahu Kahukura project area so it is gratifying to see cooperation, which will hopefully multiply the benefit of our individual efforts.

Greg Gimblett

Omahu Feral Ungulate Control

The hybrid perimeter fence around Omahu Reserve has been performing really well. The 'rebound' in regeneration and understory regrowth is very apparent. There is a process underway to remove any remaining feral deer and pigs within the fenced enclosure. This is not as easy as it sounds.

While there is no evidence of deer infiltrating the fence, we need to improve several of the weakest links in the perimeter:

- ▶ Make sure that 4WD access gates are always kept locked. The infiltration risk is heightened when the gates are left open or unlocked - even for short periods of time. Self-closing pedestrian gates have been performing satisfactorily.
- ▶ Some creek crossings have eroded slightly over winter and while temporary measures have been put in place to seal the boundary in those locations, more permanent repairs will be undertaken shortly.

- ▶ Discouraging vandalism is an ongoing challenge. Some deer fences in the Otahuna and Omahu Reserves have been vandalized and this completely compromises the 'ungulate barrier'. It is not an easy problem to solve. Vigilance and prompt reporting is key.

While we have various types of cameras within the Reserve for helping to detect animal infiltrations, thermal imaging and use of detection dogs have also been utilized for monitoring.

I have been engaging with Te Kākahu Kahukura (TKK) to assist with developing control strategies for feral ungulates to help protect the investments in native forest revegetation and restoration on the Southern Port Hills. Some tōtara have been planted in Omahu under this initiative.

New seedlings can be easily targeted by feral deer and goats, and this can result in significant seedling losses. Many areas in New Zealand where new native plants have been established have suffered from feral ungulate browsing. Some nationally funded control work has been initiated, but not enough.



Volunteers repairing one of the minor slips on the boundary

IAN JOHNSTON

I've also been managing a feral goat and pig control programme over an area immediately adjacent to some of the Society's assets. This is a landowner-led and agency-funded initiative and should help to reduce the risk of spread of goats and pigs into the Southern Port Hills from a 20,000 ha area to the southeast of Gebbies Pass Road.

It's very rewarding to participate in protection and enhancement of the rare podocarp remnants and new areas of native regeneration on Banks Peninsula and the Southern Port Hills. To have assets like this on the back doorstep of a growing city is magic. Animal pest control is vital to help protect those assets for the benefit of present and future generations. For Omahu Reserve, the generosity of the Gama Foundation, agencies and key volunteers is paying big dividends now.

Graham Corbishley

LINDA WOODS RESERVE



NICK MOORE

The transformation of Linda Woods Reserve continues. The Jobs for Nature restoration project is coming into its third and final year. We planted 15,000 plants this winter. We held several volunteer planting days. Staff from Wai-ora Forest Landscapes planted the balance.

Plant survival has been high, thanks to two wet summers. We are now preparing for a long dry summer. A fire break has been created in the lower valley to help mitigate any potential fire risk.

GPE Groundworks undertook some maintenance work post-lambing, including clearing minor slips along the tracks, improving drainage, spraying thistles and removing hazardous fencing. We have also created a new more accessible pedestrian entrance at the top of Duncan Park.

We now have two traplines installed in Avoca Valley and plan to add more over time as the vegetation develops. Neighbour, Ross Radford, is coordinating the predator control programme, with support from Murray Smith from Ōhinetahi and Brent Barrett from Boffa Miskell.

Planting will continue in 2024 and beyond. However, the programme will be much reduced as we also need to be able to maintain the plants for at least two years after that. Our Jobs for Nature funding ends in September 2024.

One highlight is a partnership with Eco-Action Nursery Trust and Cashmere High School. Eco-Action Nursery Trust works with schools across Christchurch to grow thousands of seedlings for the Red Zone. Cashmere High School is the first site to produce seedlings for the Port Hills. The students are growing 2000+ trees for Avoca Valley in 2024. We are keen to get the students out to help plant too!

We are making excellent progress with the track network for the Reserve. The work party has been busy building a new walking track, 'Harakeke Track'. The Track follows the Avoca Valley Stream for much of the way and, once established, will have prominent harakeke plantings along the route. The work party has also spent many hours supporting the restoration project, releasing new plants, fixing and removing guards and controlling weeds.

University of Canterbury summer student, Amber Kouwenhoven, has developed a citizen science monitoring plan for Avoca Valley focusing on freshwater and terrestrial biodiversity. She has been working closely with local residents Brigid Casey and Jane Radford. A bioblitz is planned for April 2024.

In Horotane Valley, volunteers planted 3000 kākūka in grazed areas thanks to a donation from neighbours Tim and Rachel Mundy.

Planning is now underway for a mixed species planting in a fenced area in 2024 in the lower valley. Eco Abseil has also remediated a dangerous boulder that had been trussed. The shed at the bottom of the valley is nearing completion thanks to the efforts of Society President, Bill Woods. The shed will be used to store equipment and tools.

Permanent safety signage is being installed this summer and the first tranche of interpretation boards will be installed in early 2024. The Reserve is slowly but surely taking shape.

We are very grateful to the funders who have supported the work in Linda Woods Reserve including the Department of Conservation's Jobs for Nature programme, Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City Council, Million Metre Streams, Rātā Foundation, Trees that Count, Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust, Meridian, Boffa Miskell and donations from individuals, families and local businesses.

A huge thank you to the staff of Wai-ora Forest Landscapes and our dedicated volunteers for their efforts on the Reserve. Special thanks to John Marsh for his work on the management plan for the Reserve and the restoration of Avoca Valley.

Marie Gray



JOHN MARSH

The Linda Woods Reserve Work Party building the new Harakeke Track.



MURRAY SMITH

Volunteer trappers Ross Radford and Earl Tutty braving the winds to check traps in Avoca Valley.

Many Hands Make Trees Grow & Birds Fly



The Summit Road Society was formed 75 years ago and members have been planting trees for all that time. Preserving what was already there and adding to it with planting has provided a large haven for native birds close to urban Christchurch. The Summit Road Society is now part of Te Kāhau Kahukura, a collaboration of volunteer and private landowners on the southern Port Hills extending from Dyers Pass through to Gebbies Pass and including Ōtamahua/Quail Island. The vision is that by 2050, the southern Port Hills will be a thriving and resilient indigenous forest supporting an abundance of native birds and invertebrates. Te Kāhau Kahukura aims to plant 10,000 tōtara on the southern Port Hills over five years. This is already well underway.

The initiative grew out of the 2017 Port Hills fire. Volunteer groups such as the Summit Road Society and the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust, and agencies like the Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury, were committed to restoring burnt land. The project also supports the Banks Peninsula Ecological Vision 2050, in particular the goal of protecting four core areas of 1000 ha of indigenous bush across the Peninsula and Port Hills.

The Port Hills act as an important reservoir for native birds and now that reach is extending out onto the Canterbury Plains.

Research by Dr Colin Meurk and others in the early 2000s showed that 'green dots' could extend the habitat for native birds. Green dots are native areas consisting of anywhere between hundreds to thousands of native trees. They allow birds to extend their feeding and breeding range. The concept appears simple but requires input from ecologists and local sourcing of plants. The plants need to be nurtured by weeding around them to prevent them being choked by grasses and weeds.

Less than one percent of the Canterbury Plains supported native habitat when Te Ara Kākāriki started the Green Dot Project in 2009. Since that time, Te Ara Kākāriki has created 133 'green dots' on both public and private land between the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers, extending up to Springfield. Te Ara Kākāriki was also successful in gaining Jobs for Nature funding. It took 11 years for Te Ara Kākāriki to plant 100,000 trees but only another three years to plant the next 100,000. Jobs for Nature has been transformational for the Port Hills, Lyttleton Harbour and the wider region. This has resulted in native birds such as tūi being seen in areas where they have been absent for years. Such sightings will no doubt become more commonplace as further patches of bush regenerate.

The collaboration seen among volunteer groups in recent years has resulted in rapid and sustainable gains in reforestation of native trees and bird habitat in Canterbury and throughout the South Island. The Predator Free Port Hills initiative is also making good progress in getting urban dwellers into trapping and thus helping to bring bellbirds, kererū, tūi and other native birds back into Christchurch City. Volunteer trapping groups are also in the process of linking up to share knowledge and strategies for controlling predators to further protect the fauna and flora which have been established. The discussions between these groups and the shared sense of purpose means the future can be faced with optimism.

Murray Smith



HILL RESERVES

FURTHER ACQUISITIONS CONTEMPLATED. SOME VERY DESIRABLE AREAS.

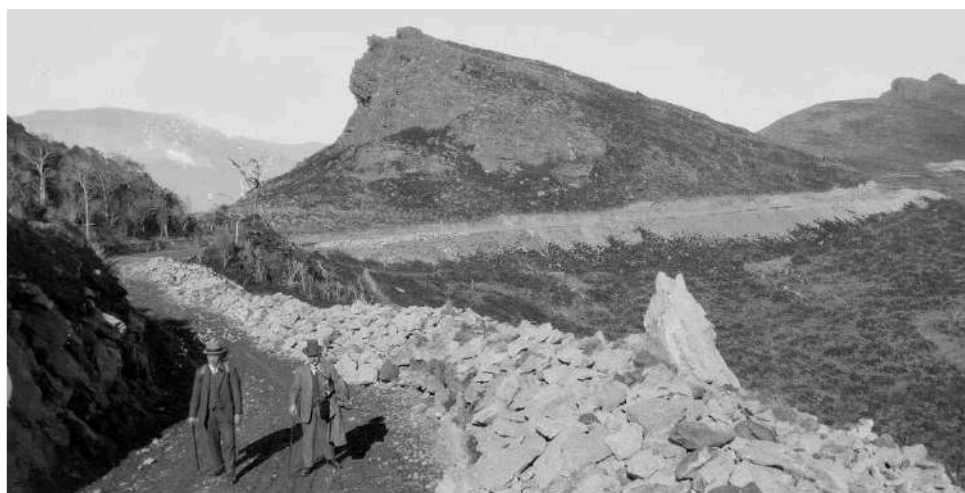
On the eastern side of Hoon Hay Hill, in the Cashmere Hills district, there are about forty acres of pretty native bush which, it is felt, should be acquired for the public. There are also the remains of an area of bush that once covered the head of Hoon Hay Valley. This valley is seen by those who go along the road to Kennedy's Bush, and it is to them a great delight. West of Kennedy's Bush there is Baker's Bush, another very pretty piece of native vegetation. It is now in the possession of Colonel R. H. Rhodes. As long as he is in charge of it there is no fear that it will not be cared for, but it should be included in the public reserves in order to ensure its preservation for all time.

On the western side of Kennedy's Bush Road, close to its junction with the Summit Road, there is a low tussock-covered hill. This should be included in order to enable a new pathway to be made to Kennedy's Bush. This pathway will provide a delightful walk or drive. When a visitor passes round the north-west side of that hill an extensive view is obtained of the coast line, north and south. Where the pathway turns south on its way along the northern side of Kennedy's Bush Valley, there is a pretty view, and the visitor passes through some native bush. This track would join the old bullock track, which runs past the accommodation house at

Kennedy's Bush, and up to it. It is felt also that walking tracks should be formed round the south side of Cockayne's Cairn, along and through the bush under Cass's Peak, and round the east side of Hoon Hay Hill, where the pathway would go through bush for nearly half a mile and link up with Ella's Track, near the starting place of that pretty way into Kennedy's Bush.

When all these areas have been acquired for the public, there will be a hill-top reserve of 500 acres to hand down to future generations as their splendid heritage. Much work and some sacrifice will be necessary in order to bring this about, but it is believed that it is well worth while. The whole of the profits of Kennedy's Bush House, after providing for wages and bonus, now go to extinguishing the debt on the house, furniture, waggonette, harness, horses and cows. The whole of the plant required to conduct the institution as a refreshment room and place of accommodation is the property of the public, subject to the liabilities on it. A debt on the house, due to a generous citizen, who was good enough to advance money to erect the building, has to be paid. In addition, there is money owing on the reserve, and on areas purchased in order to include in the reserve all the remnants of bush in the gullies and in folds of the cliff faces on the harbour side of the hills.

SOURCE: LYTTTELTON TIMES, VOLUME CXVII, ISSUE 17623, 30 OCTOBER 1917, PAGE 7, PAPERS PAST, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NEW ZEALAND, TE PUNA MATAURANGA O AOTEAROA





Extracts from Harry Ell's letter of reply, 28th April 1924, to the editor of The Press...

It would not be fair to Mrs Ell to pass over the letters of your correspondents, 'M' & 'N'. The Sign of the Kiwi (Kiwi) is not conducted for private profit, but for the benefit of the Port Hills-Akaroa Summit Road.

Mrs Ell offered to go to the Kiwi with me in August, 1921 to help make the Kiwi earn as much as possible to discharge the debts connected with the Summit Road scheme, which the public of Christchurch had been told I was entirely responsible for creating. Mrs Ell has paid over more than one thousand pounds (\$2,000) in net profits since towards paying off the debts referred to.

The Kiwi was built and furnished, as an endowment for the benefit of the Summit Road and reserves, a work on which I have laboured for the best years of my life. **But if all who patronize the Kiwi did what your correspondents did, bring their own food and spend 6 pence (5c) each on tea, there would be little profit for the benefit of the Summit Road scheme.** One party, I do not know whether it was 'N's party or not, walked in and sat down at one of the tables, and asked for tea for three, the tea-room being then well filled with ladies and gentlemen partaking of the tea and food refreshments supplied. The teapot, with cups, saucers, milk, sugar, and jug of hot water, was brought, when my niece found the party with their own sandwiches and tomatoes spread out on the table linen. They did not ask for plates. Mrs Ell objected to this procedure. I resent very strongly the way Mrs Ell was treated and spoken to. No one is working harder for the Summit Road, and Mrs Ell's services are worth a great deal to this very valuable and useful public work, which is being built up for the benefit of the people of Canterbury.

Yours—H.G. Ell



SAMUEL HEAD COLLECTION, ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY

Tea at the Sign of the Kiwi, 1900-1920s

101 years on the Society requires a lot more than "six penny cups of tea" to function... Please consider a monthly \$10 or \$20 'cup of tea' auto payment to the Harry Ell Trust's Westpac account: **03-1592-0321653-000**

Donations qualify for the 33% charitable tax rebate. Please also consider a lasting legacy in your will in favour of the **Harry Ell Summit Road Memorial Trust.**

Paul Loughton, Honorary Treasurer.



**HARRY ELL
Summit Road Memorial Trust**

UC Social Media Project

For the last three years, we have worked with University of Canterbury social media students to develop content for Facebook and Instagram. This year, Zach Dawson, Andrew Bourner and Taylor McLaren created some unique graphic and video content for Predator Free Port Hills. A highlight has been a series of 'bird of the week' graphics to highlight some of our special native birds.

BIRD OF THE WEEK

TŪI

TUI MIMICS OTHER BIRDS AND VARIOUS SOUNDS FROM THEIR ENVIRONMENT.

PREDATION BY INTRODUCED SPECIES IS A MAJOR THREAT, PARTICULARLY BUSHSTICK POSSUMS, CATS, STINKS, THE COMMON MYNA, BLACKBIRDS, AND RATS.

BIRD OF THE WEEK

TAUHOU - SILVEREYE

TAUHOUS MIGRATED NATURALLY TO AOTEAROA, SO ARE CLASSIFIED AS A NATIVE SPECIES.

THEY PERFORM A VALUABLE SERVICE IN GARDENS, EATING HARMFUL INSECTS INCLUDING APHIDS, SCALE INSECTS, AND THE DIAMONDBACK MOTH.

BIRD OF THE WEEK

RIRORIRO - GREY WARBLER

GREY WARBLERS ARE COMMON IN AROUND NEW ZEALAND BIRDS IN BUILDING A NEST - TYPICALLY NEAR THE WIND A SIDE OVERHANGING NEAR THE TOP.

MAORI CULTURE STATES THAT A GREY WARBLER WILL BUILD THE NEST ENTRANCE IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION TO THE PREVAILING WIND.

BIRD OF THE WEEK

PŪKEKO

THE COLOUR RED HAS A SYMBOL OF POWER BY MAORI IN NEW ZEALAND, SO THE BIRD HAS HELD AS A CHIEFLY PET BECAUSE OF ITS RED BEAK AND LEGS.

THIS IS ONE CLUMSY SWAMPHEN WHEN THREATENED, PŪKEKO FLAP THEIR WINGS AND SHOW OFF THEIR POWERFUL BEAK.

BIRD OF THE WEEK

KERERŪ - NZ PIGEON

OCCASIONALLY, KERERŪ FEELS THEMSELVES UP WITH A FAIR AMOUNT OF FERMENTED FRUIT AND HAS BEEN KNOWN TO FALL OUT OF TREES.

KERERŪ POPULATION HAS DECLINED SIGNIFICANTLY DUE TO A DECREASE IN HABITAT AND INTRODUCTION OF PREDATORS.

BIRD OF THE WEEK

KŌTARE - KING FISHER

THE SACRED KINGFISHER HAS A WIDE DISTRIBUTION AND THE POPULATION TREND IS INCREASING DUE TO HABITAT REHABILITATION AND TRAPPING EFFORTS.

KŌTARE USE THEIR DAGGER-LIKE BEAKS TO TUNNEL INTO SOFT TREE TRUNKS OR CLAY BANKS TO BUILD NESTS.

BIRD OF THE WEEK

KORIMAKO - BELLBIRD

POPULATION DECREASE IS DUE TO THE INTRODUCTION OF PREDATORY SPECIES LIKE HAWKS.

CAPTAIN COOK DESCRIBED THEIR SONG AS SOUNDING LIKE 'SMALL BELLS EXQUISITELY TUNED'

BIRD OF THE WEEK

PĪWAKAWAKA - FANTAIL

NESTING ADULTS, EGGS AND CHICKS ARE PREYED UPON BY PARTICULARLY BY SHIP RATS.

IN MAORI MYTHOLOGY, THE PĪWAKAWAKA IS A MESSENGER, BRINGING NEWS FROM THE GODS TO THE PEOPLE.

BIRD OF THE WEEK

MIROMIRO/NGIRUNGIRU - TOMTIT

MIROMIRO IS CURIOUS TOWARDS HUMANS, SO MUCH SO THAT THE MAORI CALLED THEM 'TOROTORO', AS THEY APPEAR FROM NOWHERE IN THE FOREST LIKE SPIES.

TOMTITS HAVE BEEN RECORDED OCCASIONALLY ON WELL-TREED FARMLAND, AND IN SUBURBAN PARKS AND GARDENS.

BIRD OF THE WEEK

PĪPĪWHARAU - SHINING CUCKOO

MAORI WELCOMED PĪPĪWHARAU WITH THE PROVERB 'KA TANGI TE WHARAU, KA NEA KA KŌREKA A HAUHU', WHICH MEANS 'IF THE SHINING CUCKOO CRIES, IT IS THE MESSENGER OF SORROW'.

SHINING CUCKOOS ARE COMMON IN SEASON THROUGHOUT HAUHUA AND NEW ZEALAND, REVEALING THEIR PRESENCE BY THEIR CHARACTERISTIC CALL.