



TAWHARANUI OPEN SANCTUARY SOCIETY INC.
Newsletter No. 36. March 2011



A native pigeon sits quietly on its nest in Ecology Bush.



A banded rail takes a bath in the stream beside the road to Anchor Bay.

Tawharanui Open Sanctuary is a joint project with Auckland Council.



Coming Events—Sunday in the park

<u>Sat 19 March.</u>	7 pm 'K Syrah' celebration dinner. Ransom wines. Don't miss this event! See page 6.
<u>Sun. 3 April.</u>	9.15 am. At the woolshed. Followed by a sausage sizzle. Speaker Sam Hill, tui vocalisation.
<u>Sun. 1 May.</u>	9.15 am. At the woolshed. Kahikatea trees to plant in wetlands. Followed by a sausage sizzle.
<u>Sat. 4 and 5 Sun. June.</u>	Saturday and Sunday. Big plant weekend. Follow directions into the park. Bring warm clothes, clean footwear, rain coat and a drink. Sausage sizzle provided. Free camping for those planters who would like to work both days. Campers contact Auckland Council 09 3662000 and book in the camp ground.
<u>Sat. 3 July.</u>	9.15 am. Follow directions to the plant area. Sausage sizzle provided.

Chairman's Report

The recent few months at the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary have been more testing than we might have anticipated. For those living in the Rodney District it will come as no surprise that the recent storm caused considerable damage within the park. The fence was extensively damaged and there have been a number of slips including in areas where we have recently planted. In addition conditions within the nursery have been trying with problems of germination and plant deaths from watering failures, some of which ironically were a result of flooding of the main pump during the storm.

Fortunately there has been a remarkable response and the fence was quickly made secure. The response was led by Maurice Puckett and the summer rangers, who were able to seek help from the stranded campers unable to leave the park. A continuing increased pest alert remains in place in case pests have entered the park as a result of the breach in the fence. Thank you to the volunteers who have helped the staff in the clean up.



The difficulties in the nursery will probably mean we will be planting around 17500 plants rather than the 20,000 we have achieved in the last two years. The recent slips underlie how important this planting will be in future years.

On a more positive note there are a number of projects that will be commenced in the next 12 months. Kevin Parker has a proposal for a Saddleback translocation to Tawharanui. Saddleback must rank as one of the top advocates for conservation in this country. They have been rescued from near extinction, they are easily seen and heard and have a distinct appearance. Roger Williams is leading the construction of new boardwalks in the lagoon and Mangatawhari wetlands. Alison Stanes and Sharon Kast are arranging the revamp of what will now be known as the Sanctuary Hut while James Ross is investigating the use of sound anchoring in the hope of accelerating the return of sea birds to Tawharanui. Steve Palmer TOSSI Chairman

Sunday in the Park Coodinator Report

The March 6 Sunday in the Park will mark the commencement of an initiative by TOSSI to build new infrastructure at Tawharanui Regional Park. Consent from Auckland Council has been given to build two new boardwalks giving access to the recently rehabilitated Mangatawhiri wetlands as well as a crossing of the lagoon which will form a link in the new Heritage Walk. This is a loop trail around the lagoon to Jones Bay, across the tidal zone and passing near the site of an early Maori settlement, returning through the farm paddocks and restored saline wetlands. This new initiative by Auckland Council is described in the Tawharanui Interpretation Plan and has a 2012 implementation date. The Mangatawhiri Wetlands boardwalk will enable people to cross this important area with minimal disturbance of the habitat in order to see the increasing bird life and development of this area which TOSSI undertook as one of the first projects after the pest exclusion fence was completed. Planting of this area is largely completed and regrowth is taking place at a satisfying rate. A birding hide will enhance visitor prospects to see the species taking in this critical wetland zone of the park.

These two boardwalks will be constructed together thus saving duplication of contractor mobilization charges and enabling the utilization of a team of volunteers who have an interest in this construction activity. The first activity by volunteers this coming Sunday will be the filling with mulch of silt containing "socks" which will be placed into the lagoon to trap and remove silt caused by the contractors excavation and post driving activities to install the line of piles to support the walkways. Thereafter the trestles and deck boards will be built by volunteers in subsequent workday events. TOSSI intends to assemble a flexible working party of people interested in the construction and carpentry activities for this project under the leadership of Project Manager Roger Williams. If you are interested in helping with this construction project please email Roger Williams. port.williams@clear.net.nz. Steve Harrison Sunday in the Park Coodinator

Open Sanctuary Coordinator Update

Summer has come and gone and what a mixed bag it was. Early December the hills looked like they'd time travelled from February and we were officially in drought. We've now allegedly received a third of our average annual rainfall, most of this in just a few events and my rain gauge has been empty for most of February.



Cyclone Wilma may have lost most of her puff before hitting New Zealand but there was still plenty of energy left to cause a few headaches at Tawharanui. Overnight on 28 January 210mm of rain fell and we suspect that most of this fell in a short peak period. Loss of telephone lines and road access to Tawharanui Regional Park is not exceptional in extreme weather, but the sights that greeted park staff and overnight visitors demonstrated that this was no ordinary storm.

The usual post storm drill is to check the access, power, phone, pest proof fence, campers and livestock. **Already wet hills couldn't cope and in many cases let go as slips.** Unfortunately one of these slips released above the pest proof fence causing the mesh to rupture leaving several holes large enough to allow pest invasion. The height of the slip behind the fence reduced the effective height above ground, bringing the fence within the jumpable height of many pests. The upside to no road access was that as well as preventing access to the park it provided a pool of 'captive volunteers' that couldn't leave. Campers, staff, volunteers and neighbours banded together to do what could be done. The fence was patched as best as was able using our emergency repair materials. Sticky clay and topsoil was shifted to reduce the jumping height. By end of day we were again pest proof, after a fashion.

More fulsome repairs have been completed and a new fence constructed. As sanctuary coordinator I'm hardwired to think 'the fence must remain intact' so it took a little for my brain to accept that the 40m hole in the fence required for repairs was a good thing. Full credit to Rhodes for Roads, Xcluder Pest Proof Fencing and park staff for working together to remove the damaged fence, clear the slip debris, stabilise the hill, build the new fence and be pest proof again by nightfall. Whew!

The pest proof fence slip was the most pressing job but not the biggest. One that let go completely covered the West End access road, carrying with it a huge pohutukawa tree as if it were a mere twig. Other slips affected pasture areas, park tracks and the planted area of Twin Hills where unfortunately some of the volunteer planted trees are now at the bottom of the hill. One of these slips has caused a debris dam across the valley floor and has filled as a pond behind. A small brown flash observed from atop the hill suggests this newest pond on the park has already been found by pateke as a potential new home.

Wilma was a follow up to the lesser ex tropical cyclone Vania the week earlier which packed a fair bit more wind. The high swells altered the shape of the North Coast dunes. Sand ladders to protect dunes were undermined and needed reinstatement. Storm swells were also bad news for late season shorebirds whose nests were washed away or flooded. Nature is a dynamic beast and although we've removed the predators we can't control all threats our natives face.

Matt Maitland Sanctuary Coordinator

I can be contacted at matt.maitland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz or 09 426 1200

Photos of the slips and damage can be seen on the back page of this newsletter.



From the Editor

"You can make a difference" are the words down the side of the TOSSI brochure. At Tawharanui TOSSI volunteers make an enormous difference towards preserving New Zealand's wildlife. Big and small tasks all help. It is wonderful to see volunteers come into the woolshed once a month after a Sunday morning working, satisfied because they have done something worthwhile. Some even want to go out again in the afternoon to do more. Please let me know if you come into that category and we will soon find another task! The noisy chatter in an unlined woolshed is heartening as volunteers partake of the sausage sizzle, a reward those sizzling on the beach miss out on! Newsletters include news of 'Sunday in the Park' activities.

Alison Stanes Editor

2 January Sunday in the Park

The first Sunday in the Park for 2011 fell on the 2nd of January and not unexpectedly there was a lower than usual turnout. Despite the small group good progress was made on the way to eradicating the tree lupins from the sand dunes. We concentrated on the area adjacent to the campground, which had not previously been tackled. We were therefore able to have a slightly competitive approach with the largest lupin having a trunk diameter of approximately 12cm. The lupins have now been cleared throughout the sand dunes on at least one occasion. No doubt there are still viable seeds present but at least we are at a stage where future efforts will simply need a sweep through pulling small immature plants. Thanks to Sue Crawshay for taking the group down to the west end while the host returned to the woolshed to tackle sausages.

Steve Palmer TOSSI Host

6 February Sunday in the Park

After two weekends of massive rainfall it was a battered and bruised Tawharanui that awaited the 29 who responded to the call for volunteers. An excellent response given that it was Waitangi Day and there were probably many other options for people on what was a very pleasant Sunday morning.

The list of tasks available was long and we split into four groups. One group grabbed shovels and barrows and speedily repaired washed-out steps on the Ecology Trail. Another group set off along the predator-proof fence to cut back Manuka to allow access and clear culverts filled with soil and stones from the storms. The third team cut Manuka branches heavy with seed to spread on the many serious slips in the Twin Hills. A fourth group headed for the Information Hut to remove all the photos and posters in preparation for the painters and decorators. Meanwhile David Stone buzzed around in the mule providing back-up, transport and fetching tools. Jobs done – it was back to the Woolshed for a sumptuous feast prepared by our own “Harrison Catering” and a chance to compare notes.

The damage caused by the extensive January rain – especially from Cyclone Wilma – has been considerable. In the weeks following the storms, the rangers were pushed to the limit coping with stranded campers, a broken predator-proof fence, blocked roads and a myriad of slips. It was great to have a good group to support them in getting the Park back into shape. However, it will take many more months and some large workdays to carry on this effort.

Sadly the large slips in the Twin Hills have wiped out a large number of plants from this years epic planting season. Hopefully the Manuka brush will help stabilise these areas.

James Ross TOSSI Host



Manuka seeds are spread across the slips on Twins Hills.



Repairing washed out steps on the Ecology Trail.



Picking Manuka seed for the Twin Hills slips.



Heading off to worksites in the mules.



Enjoying the sausage sizzle.



Removing displays from the Sanctuary hut in preparation for an upgrade.



Removing a large Woolley Night Shade from Anchor Bay bush.

A great season for *coprosma* fruit at Tawharanui providing excellent food for the birds.





“K Syrah” Celebration Dinner

at

Ransom Wines

Valerie Close, Warkworth

Saturday 19 March 2011 7p.m.

A special evening to release

Ransom “K Syrah” 2008

&

to celebrate Ransom Wines'

sponsorship of

Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society/TOSSI.

\$75 per person includes \$20 donation to TOSSI

~ a complimentary glass of wine on arrival~ a sumptuous four course meal served on the terrace

~ a presentation by author, illustrator & NZ wildlife specialist Chris Gaskin *

Wine available for purchase by the glass or bottle

Limited spaces - bookings essential.

Email: info@ransomwines.co.nz

Phone: 09 425 8862

www.ransomwines.co.nz

* Seabird advocate and researcher Chris Gaskin will give an audio visual presentation about Hauraki Gulf seabirds and seabird restoration at Tawharanui. Chris manages a program of acoustic monitoring of seabird colonies in northern New Zealand. Recordings from islands such as Hen/Taranga, Mokohinau Islands, Little Barrier/Hauturu and Aorangi Island (Poor Knights) will provide an insight into what, one day, could become a rich and integral part of the Tawharanui environment.

TOSSI's "United Nations nursery"

Our nursery team has been extremely busy over the last three months, meeting every week to sow seeds, prick out seedlings and bag plants. It's always heartening to receive so much extra volunteer support during our busiest season, in fact we couldn't achieve our target of 20,000 plants without it.

Our regular team members have been joined by a veritable United Nations of helpers with representatives coming from the United States, Canada, Germany, Belgium, England, Wales, Turkey and Australia to lend a hand. Why do people come from all over the world to help out in TOSSI's nursery? Because it's a great cause and because it's good fun, or perhaps it's the catering and the camaraderie. Whatever the motivation, we can always do with more help so please consider joining us.

There are lots of people who have pitched in during the last three months and who I'd like to thank - Penny & Garth Allen, Shawn Bishop, Maggie Cornish & Ray Blackburn, Joy Bowyer, Christine Brockes, Elizabeth Clark, Jim Clarke, Dorothy Cooper, Lesley Cornwell, Sandra & Stephen Dorafaeff, Barry Ferguson, Barbara Folkard, Steve Harrison, Lynsey Humes, Sheila Jenkins, Tony Keane, John Lowe, Kerry McGee, Kevin McGee, Jenni & Jim McGlashan, Pixie Jones-Merredew, Annette & Bill Meyer, John Millett, John Pascone, Penny & Steve Palmer, Barbara and Vanessa Pinfold, Jill Ronald, Gill & Colin Sargent, Clive Sowten, Alison Stanes, Ann Sweeny, Anna and Briar Thompson, Sheila & Rhys Thompson, Ashlee Whalan, Pat and Roger Williams, Deanna Yarndley, numerous campers, the CVNZ volunteer groups, the Master Gardeners from Texas and Park Rangers Maurice, Colin, Lois and Beckie.

To say "YES, I want to join the team" please phone Paul on 09 425 9877 or email secretary@tossi.org.nz with your contact details.

Shining cuckoo behaviour.

Last summer in blockhouse Bay we had been hearing this insistent peeping for days, and eventually tracked it down to this shining cuckoo hassling its poor adoptive parents who were feeding it constantly. They fly in fast, feed the cuckoo and are gone in an instant, back looking for more food. (Poor little buggers).

Then it sat in a pohutukawa tree right by the house that my arborist brother-in-law had just pruned for us (not much foliage to get in the way) and I got my trusty old digital canon SLR with a bit of a lens on it, and focused on the cuckoo. I then asked Debbie to tell me when she saw the warbler coming in, and as she said 'now' I took the photo. My reflexes would have been too slow if I had waited till I saw the warbler - they are that fast!!

Any way, hope that you enjoy them.

Peter Woolford TOSSI



A tiny grey warbler struggles to feed the shining cuckoo.



A very satisfied shining cuckoo chick.



A forest weta retrieved off the track, "great kiwi food" says Chirs Wedding and returns it to a tree.

Upper left. A green female stick insect has the smaller brown male attached to her back while impregnating her.



Green gecko.



Measuring.



Forest gecko.



Honey dew droplets produced by scale insects.



Pigeon on nest.



Fresh water mussel recently opened and eaten!

Sanctuary experiences with experts!

On an extremely dark moonless Saturday night, I had the opportunity to go into the bush at Tawharanui with Chris Wedding, who is researching gecko populations, and four others. Chris stopped us at walls of manuka, and kanuka where his experienced gecko eyes quickly spotted gecko, and told us to find these camouflaged little creatures for ourselves! Once everyone had sighted the gecko he set about gently retrieving them. Both green and forest geckos undertook the traumatic indignity of being sexed, weighed, measured and identification photos taken. We were given opportunities to hold these delicate velvety creatures and release them back on to the branches where they had been removed.

Other wildlife added to the experience. Kiwi footprints on a soft muddy patch with pukeko footprints nearby to make comparisons. There were male and female wetas, spiders, stick insects copulating, moreporks and the back side of a kiwi as it disappeared into the undergrowth. By 1 am. we returned tired and satisfied with the Saturday night life at Tawharanui.

A few days later Dr Tim Lovegrove, Senior Regional Advisor (Fauna), Auckland Council Environmental Services said he would identify a creeping plant for me, as I was concerned that it might be an unwanted weed. I was a little embarrassed to be told that it was native spinach growing flat across the forest floor in shade when I would have expected it to be in full sun on coastal rocky outcrops!

The journey continued as Tim had a North Island robin chick to band. Tim who is known for being nimble and fast through untracked bush, also has ears finely tuned to every sound and eyes that see more than most! In no time we were hearing a flock of whiteheads and quickly had them sighted. On manuka trunks and twigs there were the finest web like strings with sweet globules of honey dew hanging on the ends, produced by scale insects associated with black fungi. "Bellbirds love feeding on this honey" he said.

On the ground nearby were crushed fresh water mussel shells. "Who is eating these?", said Tim as we studied broken pieces wondering who could break the thick shell. The call of kakariki distracted us and took us across a wet area beside a stream where a spotless crane made its presence known with a sharp intermittent singular calls. A pair of kakariki were observed flying into a large puririi tree but the spotless crane remained elusive.

On the track towards the robins nest we discovered a large wood pigeon sitting quietly on a rough nest slung on branches, under the shelter of a fallen trunk.

The adult robins soon greeted us welcoming a treat of meal worms provided by Tim. One stacked four in it's beak and quickly headed to the nest to feed the chick. "That's a good sign," said Tim, "the chick must still be in the nest." At the nest site Tim scampered up the side of a large puririi trunk and gently retrieved the chick from a nest in the fork of one of the branches, while the adults flew at him and then quietly settled. "They should know me," he said. "This is their third nest for the season and I banded all five chicks." As soon as the chick was back in the nest, the parents were ready to accept more meal grubs to deliver to the nest.

On returning home the aching shoulder from sawing woolley night shades was well out weighed by the privileges I had experienced with the experts. Tawharanui Open Sanctuary is full of surprises night and day!

Alison Stanes



Bird News

New Zealand Dotterel. From 34 eggs, 9 chicks fledged. 15 eggs were lost and 10 chicks lost. Eggs and chicks are vulnerable to high tides combined with storms and black backed gulls. Over five years it is clear that the South Coast dotterels fledge more chicks than those on the North Coast. At Jones Bay and Bluebell Point on the south Coast are rocks and beach pebbles to feed among day and night where black backed gulls do not see the chicks. On the north coast sandy beaches chicks are exposed to black backed gulls unless they can climb the banks into the dunes. Here they shelter in day time and only come out at night to feed making their growth rate slower and vulnerability greater. New Zealand dotterels on both coasts cope with human activity during nesting.

Variable Oystercatchers. From 23 eggs, 13 chicks fledged, 6 eggs were lost and 4 chicks lost.

North Island Brown Kiwi. Geo and Hercules the two kiwi with radio transmitters incubated for the full term with the first clutch for the season. Hercules did not return to a nest, most likely because of dry conditions causing food shortages on the Tokatu Point. On the south coast the radio transmitter indicated Geo was on a second nest. However, the signal terminated before the incubation period was complete. There is a possibility that his nest got flooded during cyclone Wilma.

North Island Kaka. These birds are nesting in the park. This was confirmed by the sighting of a kaka chick on the ground not far from possible nesting sites in ancient puririi trees.

Whiteheads. Young whitehead in flocks with adults are evident throughout the park. Their presence may attract long-tailed cuckoo. One was sited recently. Hopefully it will be tempted to visit for nesting in the host whitehead nests in the future.

Kakariki. Sightings are recorded in the TOSSI diary in the Vol Hole. A pair are regularly seen near the Maori Bay Track intersection and another pair on the Ngaio Bay Track.

North Island Robin. 51 chicks fledge this season. 48 of these were banded.

Little Blue Penguins. Numerous sea birds are running short of food because of La Nina. It is a natural event and we are told birds will replenish in future seasons. Many Blue Penguins were washed up dead, under weight on Ocean Beach.

Grey Faced Petrel. Not all the burrows discovered proved to be active. Two chicks developed. One fledged. We are awaiting news of the second chick.



Above. Steve and Penny Palmer hold Grey-faced petrel chicks ready for weighing and measuring by Chris Gaskin sea bird advocate and researcher.

Left. A large ancient puririi near the bridge on the Ecology trail broke in half during high winds. It lies parallel to the track. Another ancient puririi beside the bridge has continued to grow in a horizontal position so it will interesting to see if this tree does the same.

Apology

The unpaid editor wishes to apologise for a geriatric dyslexic spelling blunder in the last newsletter. Orakito Lagoon on the west coast of the South Island was supposed to read Okarito Lagoon. How could I have expected an excellent volunteer American proof reader to pick that up?

Alison Stanes



'Calling all adventure enthusiasts! Auckland will host New Zealand's first ever Kathmandu Adventure Series race on Saturday, 2 April 2011, allowing Aucklanders of all fitness levels, to enjoy the great outdoors.

Designed for teams of two, the course consists of 15 - 25kms of mountain biking, 5 -10kms of rugged trail running/trekking and 2 - 4kms of kayaking with the multiple legs in each discipline promising an exciting race! The event requires basic navigation skills with all checkpoints reachable via tracks and paths – or for the adventure hungry, it may be faster to go cross-country! The location has been announced and will be held at the breath taking Tawharanui Regional Park only 80 mins North of Auckland

Set on a remote peninsula, Tawharanui Regional Park boasts some of the Auckland region's most beautiful white sand beaches, rolling pastures, shingled bays native coastal forest and regenerating wetlands.

The 588-hectare park is New Zealand's first integrated open sanctuary (mainland island) where farming, public recreation and conservation of native species combine. Entries are filling up fast so be sure to get your team registered today. To enter, visit www.kathmanduadventure.co.nz, phone 0403 820 282 or email info@maxadventure.com.au.

A big thank you to sponsors who make the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary project possible.

- Auckland Council
- Pub Charities
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- Southern Paprika
- ASB charitable Trust
- A K Franks Charitable Trust
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- BNZ Save the Kiwi trust
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P.O Box 112
Matakana 0948, New Zealand

Email secretary@tossi.org.nz
Website: www.TOSSI.org.nz

Application form for NEW MEMBERS Tawharanui Open Sanctuary

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone No. _____

E-Mail _____

Occupation _____

How did you hear about TOSSI?

Please tick how you would like to help:

- Planting/workdays
- Bird Counts
- Fund raising
- Administration
- Monitoring Pests
- Nursery
- Predator fence monitoring
- Environmental educational
- Publicity/promotion
- Art in the Woolshed
- Other _____

Membership fee:

\$20 single membership \$ _____

\$30 Family membership \$ _____

Additional contribution (optional) \$ _____

Donations over \$5 are tax deductible

Gift Membership:

Please send membership to

Name: _____

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Amount of Gift membership(as above)\$ _____

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Please make cheques payable to Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society Inc. and return the completed form to:

TOSSI Membership Secretary
P.O.Box 112
Matakana 0948

Cyclone Wilma 28/1/11

210 mm of rain arrived in a few short hours causing watery overloads!



Cyclone Wilma slams the Warkworth area and sends a slip on to the pest proof fence causing a serious breach.



Tawharanui access is blocked by slips on the Tawharanui road. A those people trapped in the sanctuary were rallied by residence ranger Maurice to help with temporary repair.



Above. For nearly a week the impressive temporary repair protects the sanctuary from predator incursions.

Right. A big digger arrives to clean up. Xcluder who originally built the fence complete the re build.



A massive slip smashes down a giant pohutukawa closing the west end farm road.



A digger clears the road to Twin Hills.