



TAWHARANUI OPEN SANCTUARY SOCIETY INC.
Newsletter No. 54 Sept. 2015



This spotless crane was observed feeding recently in the Mangatawhiri stream. Spotless crane are a protected native species. They are secretive and not often seen. They can be identified by their red eyes and pink legs.



New Zealand dotterel are back on their breeding territories ready for the season. These three birds have been returning from their winter flocking site at Omaha to Tawharanui for the last seven years. From left are males OB-BY and YG-WG who nest with their mates in the Anchor Bay dotterel enclosure and right is OW-BO whose territory is at Blue Bell Point.

Tawharanui Open Sanctuary is a joint project with Auckland Council.

Coming Events

Come and enjoy a day in the park and go home feeling you have done something worthwhile. Bring sturdy footwear, rain coat and a drink for morning tea.

Sun. 4 October. 9.15 am. Sunday in the Park. A range of tasks across the park. BBQ provided.

Sun. 1 November . 9.15 am. Sunday in the Park. A range of tasks across the park. BBQ provided.

Sun. 6 December. 9.15 am. Sunday in the Park. A range of tasks followed by BBQ Christmas party.

Christmas BBQ Party Sun. Dec. 6 at 12.30 pm. at the Woolshed. (after Sunday in the Park)

All TOSSI volunteers are welcome: Nursery volunteers, Fence checkers, Trap line volunteers Planters and Takahe monitors. Welcome to the party and get to meet other TOSSI members.

Volunteer Days

Tuesdays 9am. The nursery team meets at the Tawharanui nursery. If you would like to join this dedicated team:
Contact: Ray Blackburn 425 4995

Thursdays 9 am. A small group of volunteers meet at the Vol Hole for interesting track and maintenance work:
Contact: Roger Williams 425 9127

Volunteer checking (to be done in your own time)

Pest Proof Fence Checking. Contact: Jenni McGlashan 422 3733 (See page 11 for more information.)

Trap lines. Contact: James Ross 422 6760 (See page 11 for more information.)

Chair's Report



You can tell it is Spring because the plant nursery is empty. Another 20,000 plants in the ground this planting season, making two hectares of new habitat for birds and animals. A great team effort to which every member of TOSSI has contributed, one way or another.

Recently the pigeons that live by the Vol hole were definitely showing signs of Spring behaviour. This led me to pondering on the challenges of raising a family, and one of my proudest moments as a parent, when our eldest son calmly and rationally presented his viewpoint on the sometimes contentious issue of paying board when you return home. "We have raised a fully-functioning adult," I thought to myself with (fleeting) satisfaction. I hope 'our' birds – the dotterels, kiwis, pateke, robins, petrels and maybe even the takahe, and of course all the rest, get to experience the same satisfaction this breeding season.

TOSSI is a kind of big family. The committee, representing the wider membership, is something of a funnel through which the hopes and dreams of the rest of you are filtered, and out the bottom comes another year of plant propagation, fence checking, pest monitoring and extermination, and bird minding – the bones of what we do at the park.

There are other initiatives, one-offs that have their moment in the spotlight. Maggie's recently completed history of TOSSI is an example of such a project. In her calm, competent way, Maggie just got on with it. The history booklet will be launched with due ceremony at the *Christmas Party*. Yes, we think it would be nice to have time to relax together and so the (first?) TOSSI Christmas Party will be held after the December 6th workday. BBQ provided, BYO liquid refreshments. Be nice to see you there, particularly those members of the teams that work away unseen. All we know of you is names written on the board when you are on the Park. And remember that if anyone has any bright ideas to improve what we do and how we do it, let the committee know.

I've been lurking at the park recently assisting with the upgrade of the interpretation koru. This week, while Roger and I were pottering around, Maurice apologised because he had more urgent things to attend to: a weasel caught in a trap, and a hedgehog bumping around the campground. Meantime, all the rangers that could be had been called to urgent work in the Hunuas, the message including a text telling them to bring toothbrush and sleeping bag. Upon investigation I discovered that 14 rangers look after the eight Northern Regional Parks – a total of 2,420 hectares of land. I find it hard to believe that it is humanly possible to look after the parks with so few staff on the ground. Auckland Council staff are always very quick to thank TOSSI for our contribution to the Open Sanctuary.

What we hardly ever do is acknowledge the Auckland Council Rangers, many of whom contribute far more than their legal requirement as Council employees, to make our work possible. Despite all the things they are 'supposed' to do, it seems they get dragged into all sorts of things we need help with. Certainly in my experience at the Koru site there has been mulch dumped on request and more recently piles of sand appeared as if by magic. On a basic level there is always milk in the fridge and a hot cup of tea available. Once I even got given chocolate because the ranger "thought I looked like I needed it" which is a frightening thought?

Today is the day the news broke of the accidental shooting of four takahe on Motutapu Island. A tragedy for the species, and a tragedy for DOC, struggling to make ends meet on an ever-decreasing budget, which I suspect is one of the reasons the cull was a shoot, and the shooters were members of the NZ Deerstalkers Association. Effective and cheap. Something has gone badly wrong. Notwithstanding that we have probably all confused pukeko for takahe, I'd like to think that if it was with a finger on the trigger of a shotgun we would make doubly sure.

This event reinforces how fortunate we are to work with a team of dedicated, professional rangers, who somehow navigate through all the rules and regulations to make the park function. You could describe the relationship between TOSSI and the Auckland Council as something like an arranged marriage but like a lot of such marriages, we are all happy most of the time, and we are most definitely a family unit. Thanks to all of the Ranger team. See you at the Christmas Party. Cheers Ngaire Wallen

Open Sanctuary Coordinator update



Reintroducing whitehead or popokatea to Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary was one of the first active restoration activities I undertook in my new role as Open Sanctuary Coordinator with the then Auckland Regional Council in 2007. In the years since we have seen these endearing wee forest birds spread throughout the park and have even been fortunate to have this population found by the native brood parasite the long-tailed cuckoo (as best we know this is a first for a translocated whitehead population). So it was very gratifying to source 20 Tāwharanui whiteheads to reintroduce this missing species to Shakespear Open Sanctuary, the other half of my role and at an earlier stage in their restoration trajectory.

I chuckled at the irony of consulting with myself as the source and release site manager for this translocation, as required by the rules governing wildlife movements. This obvious conflict was easily avoided by deferring to TOSSI as our community partner on their views of the appropriateness of this request. I'm often impressed by the professionalism of your TOSSI committee across a range of issues. In this case they were able to focus on 'what is good for conservation' rather than being overly protective or precious about 'our' birds. Being on the receiving end of previous translocations no doubt influenced this view and provided the context of how modern ecological restoration happens. Whitehead are not the first Tawharanui wildlife export, shore skinks and bellbirds both being harvested in the past, but it is the first cropping of a translocated population. Appropriately the committee asked the obvious questions about the security of their proposed new home and the ability of the Tāwharanui population to sustain such a harvest. As it turned out the 20 birds were collected in a morning from the Tokatu area, which is probably the best indication of a robust population. (Photos of this translocation can be seen on the back page of this issue.)

Nowadays many mobile animals can move between the protection afforded by mainland islands and pest free island sanctuaries, good examples being kaka, kereru and pateke. Biologists call these metapopulations... groups of populations.... separated by space..... with movement of individuals between them - which leads to improved genetic diversity and some insurance in case of mishap befalling any one population. We see this metapopulation model occurring in the social dimension too, with many TOSSI members being members of other sanctuary groups, or at the least sympathetic to and supportive of their causes. With this common interest comes sharing and interchange of ideas and knowledge to the benefit of conservation in general and these sites specifically. A small but recent example of this was the advice of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi influencing the release groupings of our latest three takahē arrivals, based upon their intimacy with these particular birds and the known strength of their parental and sibling bonds.



Matt demonstrates how to unlock the boxes containing male takahe from Tiritiri Matangi.

With kind regards Matt Maitland.
I can be contacted at
matt.maitland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz
or 09 426 1200

Volunteers help out at Tawharanui



A clay cap is to be progressively removed from the dunes at Anchor Bay as it enables the sea to erode beneath it. Volunteers plant the first section with spinifex to prevent erosion.



Karyn Hoksbergen TOSSI committee sets out with Mrs Dunn from Tomarata Primary School and 60 children for a guided tour of Ecology bush.

MOU Signed



A new Memorandum of Understanding is signed with the Auckland Council. From left is Matt Maitland AC Ngaire Wallen TOSSI and James Ross poised with the TOSSI seal to stamp the MOU.

Takahe Update



Following the loss of Minaret, all the takahe at Tawharanui were caught and given a vaccination boost for erysipelas. James Ross holds Douglas and Matt Maitland weighs Maaka in the area known as M16 at the west end of the park.



Three male takahe arrive at the park from Tiri Tiri Matangi. Ngarie Wallen carries one to the release site.



The Ecology release site.

Takahe older siblings look after younger siblings and so brothers Pukekohe two years old and Mohio one year old were released together by the Ecology stream.

Te Mingi their father was released at Mangatawhiri wetland.



Pukekohe and Mohio

Flora Report



Wahoo – we did it!!!!

All major plantings for the year are now behind us. Over 20,000 trees and grasses are now in the ground. A huge 'thank you' to all who took part in whatever capacity. We're really making progress. Only fifty years to go.

As well as growing plants throughout the season the nursery team have infill planted kowhai, broom, nikau, karaka and puriri and planted in Mangatawhiri and Hayter's wetlands. The plants were carefully surrounded with mesh to protect them from rabbits.

A special 'thank you' to the nursery team who produced such a great crop of strong, healthy plants. They are a truly inspirational group of people and an honour and privilege to be a part of.

Meanwhile back at the nursery.....next year's plans are under way with seeds sown and seedlings emerging. Pricking out seedlings into pots has begun. Infill planting continues on a weekly basis until we run out of plants.

On Tuesday 4th August, Billie Elliot and Wayne Dymond from the Botanical Gardens paid us a visit. The purpose was to discuss the new National Standards of Best Practice in running a nursery. It seems we're well up there with just a bit of extra housekeeping to be done around moss and lichen control and some minor alterations to do over the next year or two. We were also visited by a team from Atiu Park in the Kaipara, picking our brains about working a nursery.

As always, there is an open invitation to anyone who cares to join the nursery team. We meet at the nursery every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. unless indicated otherwise. There is car pooling from the Omaha roundabout. Generally we're finished by 12:30 or 1:00pm. Bring a lunch if you wish. Cheers, Ray Blackburn.



Planting trees in Mangatawhiri wetland are Mel Wilson and Maggie Cornish and Roger and Kim Grove.



From the nursery large pohutukawa are loaded on the mule and trailer ready for planting around the camp ground surrounding bush areas.



New magnetic logos are available to attach to the side of volunteer cars that are sometimes required to park beyond gates, providing officialdom.



Four planting days and 20,000 plants are in the ground in the gully named M16. And the nursery coordinator Ray Blackburn was heard to say, "The nursery looks sad with no plants in it." So now the fabulous nursery team starts all over again for next season.



Ngair Wallen TOSSI host for the day says a big thank you to hundreds of volunteers for getting all the plants in the ground.



A spokesperson for the Amma representatives from the youth wing celebrating their Indian Saint with a day out empowering women into green initiatives and planting trees.



Volunteer planters return from the field in M16 walking beside the previous year's planting. Fortunately the capable barbecue lunch team were well prepared as over a hundred people arrived at the marquee for lunch all at the same time.



Representatives from the Kingfishers Surfcasting and Angling Club, who fished Anchor Bay at Tawharanui many years ago arrive at the plant day with a surprise. Hugh McKee and Michael Jorey present TOSSI Chairperson Ngaire Wallen a cheque with the left over funds as their club is no longer operating and their old fishing ground is now a Marine Reserve. A big thank you for the donation.

Sea bird monitoring

Last year we were thrilled that grey-faced petrel reared six chicks at Tawharanui; three were in nest boxes installed to improve breeding opportunities for seabirds.

While not threatened, grey-faced petrel and other seabirds once bred in enormous numbers on the mainland of New Zealand and played a crucial role in the formation of our fertile soils. Because of the density of the original seabird population - before people and rats, stoats, cats and dogs arrived and ruined their breeding habitat – the droppings scattered over the forests as they returned from days at sea provided essential nutrients that fed the trees that protected the birds and housed the lizards and so on. You might say our verdant forest landscape is a result of seabird evacuations.

The significant benefit our seabirds have on habitat is something that we are keen to reinstate at Tawharanui, and so we have installed solar-powered bird callers and nest boxes and have made considerable progress towards restoring colonies of grey-faced petrel, fluttering shearwater and diving petrels.

In May this year we were surprised to find one of the nest boxes occupied by a pair of little penguin – also known as little blue penguins, or *korora* - a threatened species in New Zealand.

Conventional wisdom suggested that the much larger petrels would see them off. We were shocked to find a dead grey-faced petrel with nasty head injuries in the nest box the following week. Even worse was to follow when we later found a second dead petrel with similar injuries at the entrance to the box.

There was obviously some alarm when the dead birds were found. One bird was identified by its leg band as having previously bred at Tawharanui. Could penguins really have done this or was there a more sinister scenario? Investigations were made. Questions asked. Game cameras, tracking tunnels and rat traps installed and one bird was sent to Massey University for an autopsy. And the outcome?

Little penguins, those cute and much loved creatures, have a dark side. Approach with caution! Having set up home in the nest box, all evidence points to them literally pecking the petrels to death.

Such is the challenge of conservation projects; unintended consequences that in themselves are good can have a negative outcome for another species. Last year we were delighted to find a little penguin nest in the same vicinity as the seabird nest box sites. We didn't anticipate penguins occupying a nest box, with fatal consequences.

We can nurture species and keep them safe from predators it seems, but not from nature.

There is a good outcome, of course. The penguin pair are incubating an egg and we have several grey-faced petrels on eggs in nest boxes and natural burrows nearby.

On dark cold wintery nights Chris Gaskin, Megan Friesen and a team of volunteers have been monitoring grey-faced petrel near Tokatu Point. Some evenings the sky was full of wheeling, squealing seabirds. 85 were caught and checked including 19 that had been previously banded at Tawharanui. Tawharanui's seabird population is thriving. Ngair Wallen & James Ross



Fluttering shearwater have been attracted to the seabird sound systems at Tokatu Point and are taking up residence in nest boxes.



James Ross checks a grey-faced petrel nesting box. Adult grey-face petrel are already incubating eggs.

Grey-faced Petrel



Two little blue penguin have taken over one of the grey-faced petrel nesting boxes.



The two penguin have ousted a pair of grey-faced petrel from their nesting box and most likely have caused their demise.



On three dark cold winters nights Chris Gaskin, James Ross and Megan Friesen were assisted by volunteers banding and checking grey-faced petrel. This photo was taken one night in June when everyone was busy as 30 grey-faced petrel were called in, processed and banded.



One of the birds decides to check out Sharon Kast's warm hat while she was recording information.

Bird notes

Pateke. Five ducklings and parents were spotted in the drain 100 metres before the Anchor Bay car park.
Kiwi. A kiwi was sighted, on a huntsman camera video, visiting inside the rabbit proof fence at the nursery.
Quite a mystery as to its access into this closed area.
Pukeko. Tiny pukeko chicks are already on the park dashing for cover when disturbed.
Bellbird. Their beautiful repetitive spring chime can be heard throughout the bush lands.

Volunteers help out around the park



International Volunteer Students (ISV) help out for a full day removing the last lupins from the western end of the dunes for the season. Now only occasional lonely random seedlings remain throughout the dunes.



Installation begins on the new garden and interpretation panels at the entrance koru.



Darren Gash and Patricia Ip-Wo-Hing, new volunteers monitoring the takahe.



A new chemical shed arrived to go in the workshop yard. Roger Williams and Sharon Kast assess the situation as the truck gets stuck, the chemical shed is placed on the access road and the farm tractor is employed to get the truck moving again.

Keeping our threatened species safe

Fence Monitors Wanted

The fence monitoring team would love to hear from anyone interested in joining the fence checking team. We work in teams of two, one walking each side the length of the fence, a distance of approximately 6 kms. The purpose is to check the integrity of the fence for the safekeeping of our endangered introduced birds. Full training is offered and initially new volunteers will be on standby to fill in for teams unable to do their turn. Teams are on an 11 week roster and have a week, Wednesday to Wednesday to complete the fence check and to enjoy a walk in the park. For more information

Contact: Jenni McGlashan 09 422 3733

Trapline Volunteers Needed

Trapline volunteers help maintain the network of traps and bait stations throughout the park. They serve a crucial role in detecting and eliminating pest predators that have somehow managed to get into the sanctuary. Volunteers adopt a line which they usually service once a month. You can do this alone or with a friend to help share the load. The lines vary in length and difficulty: some are physically demanding, others are literally a walk in the park! If you are interested please contact:

James Ross jamesross@paradise.net.nz. Full training and advice will be provided.

From the membership secretary

"Subscriptions - we have gone digital." Your receipt will be sent to you by email from Janet, our new Membership Secretary, with the subject 'TOSSI Receipt'. You will need to print it off and keep it safe. You can get another copy if you lose track of it. Janet Barruel: jagiba10@gmail.com

Help TOSSI by making a gift

The gifting of funds to TOSSI in your will is something you might like to consider. In our family, we only get to charity in the, "What if we are all dead?" option. It is easy to be a bit less dramatic and include a cash bequest to TOSSI, because the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary is a place that has been very special to you or a loved one.

If you would like some advice on how to effect such gifting,

Contact; David Stone, TOSSI Secretary, 09 422 9415.

TOSSI Committee

Chair Ngaire Wallen. 09 627 1526
Vice Chair Alison Stanes. 09 524 0291
Secretary James Ross. 09 422 6760
Treasurer Karyn Hoksbergen. 09 5851315

Committee Ray Blackburn. 09 425 4995
David Stone. 09 422 9415
Sally Richardson. 09 425 0161
Roger Grove.

Newsletter Editor Alison Stanes 09 524 0291
Membership Secretary Janet Barruel
Email: secretary@tossi.org.nz
Website: www.TOSSI.org.nz
Correspondence: Chair or Membership Secretary
P.O Box 112 Matakana 0948

Application form for NEW MEMBERS Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Soc.Inc.

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
 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: _____

Address: _____

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

Whitehead translocation from Tawharanui Open Sanctuary to Shakespeare Open Sanctuary



Photos by Tim Lovegrove AC



Alison Sapwell a volunteer from Shakespeare Open Sanctuary assists Richard Chambers, from the Auckland Council with removing whiteheads from the mist net at Tawharanui.

One of the 20 whitehead on the move to a new home.



Kevin Parker, the translocation coordinator closes a crate holding whiteheads.



Whiteheads at Shakespeare Open Sanctuary are delivered to their release site.

Fur Seals at Tokatu Point



At Tokatu Point four fur seals were photographed recently sunbathing on the rocks. Can you spot them?