



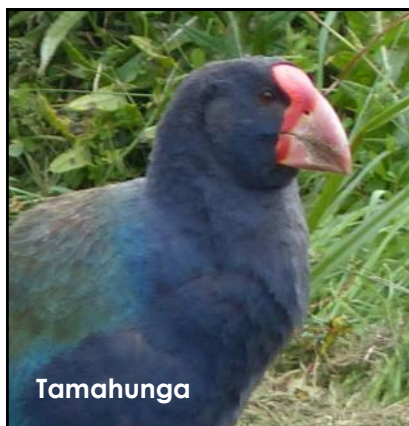
**TAWHARANUI OPEN SANCTUARY SOCIETY INC.**  
**Newsletter No. 56 March 2016**



Tawharanui Tui



Whito



Tamahunga



Joan

Takahe at Tawharanui get their annual health checks.

Tawharanui Open Sanctuary is a joint project with Auckland Council.

## Coming Events

Sun 3 April 9.15am. Sunday in the Park. A range of tasks followed by BBQ.

Sun 1 May 9.15am. Sunday in the Park. Planting will begin with range of tasks followed by a BBQ.

Sun 5 June 9.15 am. Sunday in the Park. Planting following by a BBQ.

Sun 3 July 9.15 am. Sunday in the Park. Planting followed by a BBQ.

## 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 magsandray@gmail.com

**Thursdays 9am** A small group of volunteers meet at the Vol Hole for interesting track and maintenance work:

Contact: Roger Williams 425 9127 port.williams@clear.net.nz

**Volunteer checking (to be done in your own time)**

**Pest Proof Fence Checking.** Contact: Jenni McGlashan 422 3733 jim.jenni@xtra.co.nz

**Trap lines.** Contact: James Ross 422 6760 jamesross@paradise.net.nz

## Chair's Report



We did our 'rat run' today, and got home just ahead of a change in the weather (It is now pouring). It has been too hot for my liking in recent weeks; I find it difficult to sleep and that has a trickle down effect.

The cooler weather ahead will be a blessing for the TOSSI committee, who are gathering together at the end of April for an 'away day' or 'strategic planning session' if you prefer.

Such events, basically stepping out of the comfort of the day to day and meeting, often in a confined space but sometimes in a luxury resort, have been popular in the corporate world since the heady days of the 80's. Rest assured we are not spending TOSSI funds meeting at Huka Lodge, although that would be one quick way to spend our accumulated

cash. Instead we are meeting for an afternoon at my house, complete with paper, pens, lollies, and suitable refreshment afterwards.

The current committee have many skills and years of experience between us, both within TOSSI and in the wider community in a variety of roles. We will be (metaphorically speaking) taking a step away from the entity that is TOSSI and looking at what it is we do, how we do it, and what we might do in the future.

We are working within the parameters of two documents – firstly our Memorandum of Understanding with Auckland Council, which effectively gives us permission to 'work' at Tawharanui Regional Park, and secondly our Constitution, which creates our separate identity and sits beside the MOU. It is highly unlikely, but these documents can be amended if necessary. The MOU requires us to provide an annual work plan, which we (possibly for the first time ever, last year) matched with our financial budget. The Annual Work Plan is subject to change and review as desired or necessary.

However, TOSSI is not just a committee, nor does your committee have a monopoly on ideas. I encourage all members to have a say. Like the flag referendum, ask yourself, and tell us, "What does TOSSI stand for?" "What is it about TOSSI that makes me rejoin every year?" "What is it that stops me from being an active member of TOSSI?" "What would I like to do at the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary that I don't see happening?"

Email me: [wallen03@gmail.com](mailto:wallen03@gmail.com) All thoughts and ideas will be most gratefully and respectfully received, tabled and considered.

Dictionary.com defines strategy as *the science or art of combining and employing the means of war in planning and directing large military movements and operations* and also clarifies the difference between strategy and tactics:

*Strategy is the utilization, during both peace and war, of all of a nation's forces, through large-scale, long-range planning and development, to ensure security or victory. Tactics deals with the use and deployment of troops in actual combat.*

In the business world, this is often separated as governance (strategy) and management (tactics). We do not have the luxury of separating these two functions - the TOSSI committee deals with both. Our 2-monthly meetings are the only opportunity for discussion and debate, with some overlap on tactics (killing rabbits, weed control, planting plans) at the Tawharanui Working Group meetings held at the park on the alternate months. Cont.



During my time on the Committee we have rejected significant governance change and instead clarified the structure of the committee and key roles, some of which are outside the committee. Maybe all that should change too? Who knows, but it all starts with ideas, and your ideas are as valid as anyone else's.

As an organisation, we are not big, we are not complicated, we don't face external competition, we operate in a very benign, safe community environment (I've just been in Port Moresby – safe has taken on a whole new meaning), we have resources to apply to what we want to do.

The big question is, what exactly is that? **Ngair Wallen** [Wallen03@gmail.com](mailto:Wallen03@gmail.com)

## Senior Ranger Open Sanctuary Open - update



So much for the big dry forecast! The park is lush with grass and tree growth and waterways are still flowing or at least damp keeping livestock and wildlife sustained and healthy. Please can someone forecast a drought every summer?

Last week I had cause to venture into the M16 wetland planting, the planting area for these last three seasons. Our mission at the time was to locate and attempt to catch one of several resident takahē in there. Boldly we hatched a plan to follow the radio signals and circle around the birds from different angles and encircle the bird and with luck net him. Well, the best laid plans of mice and men they say..... This plan had merit from the fence outside the planting, but once inside we discovered that TOSSI nursery raised and planted seedlings have quite some vigour! Before we could venture far the three year old 'seedlings' were well above head height and only the odd glimpse of a telemetry aerial held aloft could be glimpsed. So we blundered on and eventually our

quarry took cover in a small area of sedges and carex – again lush, vigorous and nearly impenetrable. Here we were outsmarted by the bird quietly sneaking out via hidden tunnels in the swamp grasses while we remained in a tight circle. Defeated, we trundled back to the Mule where I picked up my phone to find a voice message saying that takahē Whito had obliging wandered into the Vol Hole garden and was trapped and ready for us by means of a simple close of the gate. Much laughter ensued as we worked out who is really in charge.



Coming up shortly is a reptile survey of the park are routinely monitored by visual encounter surveys and checking artificial refugia against tree trunks. Skinks are surveyed using pitfall traps (buried buckets that skinks blunder into and can't climb out of) across a range of habitats. We have never formally baseline surveyed for skinks, our knowledge comes from mostly incidental observations or species specific monitoring such as that for shore skinks. The purpose of this is to understand and describe the reptile fauna following 11 years without pests except mice and the odd incursive rat, stoat and hedgehog. There is a rule of thumb for island and sanctuary restoration projects to wait five to ten years following pest eradication to allow 'cryptic' species to build up in number to a point where they can be observed. This in turn informs what species we have and which are missing. We have an excellent reptile restoration plan that identifies which species should or could be at Tāwharanui based on historic range and habitat suitability.

Some animals can't wait for formal surveys to make themselves known. Volunteer fence checker Richard Taylor discovered a forest gecko clinging to the pest proof fence in an area well away from known remnant and reintroduced populations. This indicates a previously unknown individual or group and is further evidence of the restoration of the site. I love these incidental records as they increase our understanding of the open sanctuary and show that wildlife is becoming more abundant and obvious. If you see things, both good and bad that are unusual or new to you, please report them as you never know when you will make the next big discovery. As I quickly tot up on my fingers I can see that at least ten of our 'first records' of recovering or self-introduced missing fauna and flora have been pleasant unplanned surprise encounters.

Planting season looms nigh! The TOSSI nursery crew do a marvellous job producing thousands of high quality plants and TOSSI and public volunteers happily get these in the ground. A gap in this excellent production line is getting the plants out on the hill ready for the planters. If you or your club or workplace could do with a team day out, please get in touch. Typically on the Friday before each planting (first Sundays of each of June, July and August) we mobilise tractors, rangers, and vols for this important task. We can also cater for small to medium sized groups to plant trees on days other than our public days, again get in touch.

With kind regards, Matt Maitland I can be contacted at [matt.maitland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:matt.maitland@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) or 09 426 1200



## Takahe are caught and given annual health checks.



Chris Steele (Auckland Zoo) and Matt Maitland (AC) carry takahe to the health check site. Photos by Justine Sanderson



Kerry McKee uses gloves to protect his hands from those fierce beaks.



Sally Richardson relaxes with a takahe ready for its health check

## General news



Alison Stanes visits Penny and Steve Palmer Ex TOSSI Chair, at their home in Nelson 4 mins. from the main square says the GPS. Then on to visit to the cabin being built with a view of Mt. Arthur. (Photo)



Russell Parish has volunteered and repaired Tawharanui farm gates for years. This year age has crept up on him so he employed his grandson, who wanted a job, to help him. A big thank you goes to Russell.



## Takahe at Tawharanui



It's over a year since these amazing birds arrived at Tawharanui and the sight of them still brings a smile to one's face and an appreciation of the honour that we, at the park, have been given, in becoming custodians of these incredible birds. It all started for TOSSI workers, a couple of weeks before 'due day' when a merry band trudged to the far end of 'West Beach' to reinforce the existing wire fence with netting that was hoped would keep takahe inside the park.

On Saturday 4th October 2015 a crowd of 300 gathered to welcome seven female and three male takahe who'd started their journey in the snow of Te Anau at 3:00am that morning, and flown up from Queenstown, each on its own seat.

At a powhiri held at Anchor Bay Ngati Manuhiri along with Auckland Council and TOSSI welcomed the birds and representatives from Ngai Tahu, DOC and Mitre 10, the latter who'd sponsored the birds and their transit. Needless to say, the crowds had endured cold, blustery weather but were finally rewarded by the sight of ten magnificent birds emerging from their boxes to run off into the bush at the release site. Thence started daily monitoring of the birds, which was always interesting and soon became a good-natured 'contest' to see who could see the most birds in one session.

The initial excitement of the possibility - that soon became a reality - of loss outside the safety of THE FENCE resulted in teams venturing to parts of Tawharanui they'd never seen whilst looking for one particularly restless bird (Peti). Tracking her and other birds was often made more difficult by failing transmitters and other problems. Sighting the birds' individual leg bands was confirmation of the birds' identity but not always possible in long grass.

Finally, after the worry of Peti's wanderings and her two escapes outside the fence, she made news in a newspaper article describing her transfer to somewhere safer - Motutapu, where she immediately crossed over the causeway onto Rangitoto to investigate the tennis courts! Happily, we now know that she has accepted her new home and teamed up with a male bird. The regular monitoring was reduced as the birds became more settled and two more arrivals, a male and female, were introduced in February 2015. Sadly, one of the wetlands group, a male, died, leaving two females. This was due to a bacterial problem that no one could have foreseen.

In September 2015, three males, a father and two sons, were translocated from Tiritiri Matangi Island. It was hoped that this would give a better balance of the sexes. One of the newer birds, a young male, who had not been 100% fit on arrival, became sick and was transferred, first to Auckland Zoo, then to the Burwood takahe recovery centre where he has settled with a mate. The older male is often found in the M16 area and his son is with the two females in the wetlands. We have a trio regularly in the Ecology Bush area and another pair who are regularly near Sanctuary Hut.

Monitoring teams continue to regularly check on the whereabouts of each bird. Recently most of the twelve birds were caught and had comprehensive health checks done. Samples were taken by vets from the Auckland zoo, transmitters were reset and birds were given the all-clear. The three that evaded capture will hopefully be caught next time. (Not a job for the faint hearted in prickly plant cover!)

Visitors to the park are thrilled to encounter our takahe on walks and they have become a great interest to the public. While the translocation has been a lot of work for volunteers and rangers alike, we think the advocacy opportunity has been well worth it.

We're keeping our fingers crossed for successful breeding next year!

**Mel Wilson**



## The back bones of TOSSI — Nursery Volunteers



Mel Wilson, Barbara Pinfold, Dorothy Cooper and Leslie Cornwell prick out delicate manuka seedlings.



Maggie Cornish, wearing her kitchen apron, washes the seedling containers.



Sheila Jenkins and Ngaio Forsyth-King keep the records.



Keith Edwards helps out with potting up.



Vanessa Pinfold, Sue Gibbings, Ebony and Raewyn Armiger potting up manuka.



**On target for 15,000 plants this season - well done!**



John Lowe, Jill Ronald, Diana Chambers, Cecil Bowyer, Ray Blackburn on the opposite side of the trailer potting up manuka into PB3's.



Cecil Bowyer carefully manoeuvres the trailer into position in the workshop to be used for a potting table.



After the morning session potting plants, Matt Maitland arrived and demonstrated how the transmitters are attached to the takahe.



Kerry McGee, Sheila Jenkins and Steve Harrison confirming numbers.

If you would like to join this happy team who indulge in excellent home cooking at morning tea time contact [secretary@tossi.org.nz](mailto:secretary@tossi.org.nz)

## **Tui at the Park**

Tui at the Tawharanui Regional Park are revealing many interesting aspects of this unique and beloved native honeyeater.

Since 2009, a research team of Massey University led by Dr Weihong Ji has been studying tui behaviour at the park. Through field observations and paternity analysis using the molecular method, Sarah Wells, a formal PhD student with Weihong, has revealed that, although appear to be monogamous with male and female forming pairs during breeding season, tui are among the most promiscuous passerine birds. Sarah found that 57% of all chicks she recorded were not fathered by the males that paired with the females at the nests and 67% of nests contained one or more chicks are the results of female mating with other males. Such a mating system enables female tui to maximise benefit from males for her offspring in terms of resources that defended by her paired males and genetic benefit from the extra-pair males. The white neck plume, a distinctive feature of tui, may play a role when female choose a male as an extra-pair father for her offspring. Sarah found that the males with larger number of feathers in his plume father more young outside his nest less likely to be cuckolded.

Sam Hill, who has been studying tui songs with Weihong for his Master degree as well as PhD, has revealed extremely high song complexity in Tui. With more than 300 syllables (the number is still climbing) to use to make up different songs and continue to incorporate new syllables, sometime from mimicking other birds or manmade sounds, tui have very large and evolving song repertoire that are difficult to count. Sam has also recorded regional differences in songs both at a large scale and micro-scale such as between Ecology bush and Jones Bay.

It is known that songs in songbirds are sexually selected traits. The diversity and complexity of male songs evolved because females prefer males singing diverse and complex songs. It has been noticed that there was a large variation between tui in their singing behaviour. However, Weihong has recorded that poor singers have successively paired and fledged young. Why, then, tui have so many and so complex songs? Do male tui songs play a role when females select males outside the pair? This year the tui team has started collecting data to answer this question. Serena Simmons, a Massey undergraduate student with keen interest in ecology and tui, has been awarded a Massey summer studentship to work on the tui project. She will be staying in the park and recording tui songs and collecting breeding data over this summer.

An NZ Royal society Teacher fellow, Logan Coleman from Albany Junior High School has also joined the inquest. The tui, a successful native species, has many more interesting stories to be revealed.

**Dr Weihong Ji Massey University**

## **Two young conservationists highlight experiences at Tawharanui**

One rainy day this summer my brother Calum and I decided that the weather was ideal for seeing banded rails, so we set off to the lagoon. Seeing nothing at the bird hide we walked on to the boardwalk leading to the South coast Track, where immediately we heard numerous bird calls. Within a minute we saw a banded rail dart into the long grass. Before long another dashed into view. This continued for several minutes, during which time the birds became accustomed with our presence, whereupon they began behaving more naturally, and remained exposed for extended periods of time. There were two or three of them, which we watched pacing around, examining the ground, often coming within five metres of where we stood. When the rain stopped, however, they all returned to the sanctuary of the grass and we didn't see them again.

A few days later, walking along in the ecology bush, we encountered a robin and one or two whiteheads, all of which were singing loudly. We found two north Island Robins further along the track.

That same day we also saw a lot from the bridge crossing the ecology stream. Initially we saw a large amount of galaxiids, including some quite big ones. Then a large eel, at least a metre in length, swam lazily under us, where it stopped and remained still for many minutes, slowly undulating its fins and opening and closing its mouth. As it swam on again to a new position about a metre away I spotted a movement not far away. Studying the area more closely I was surprised to see several freshwater crayfish probing the stream bed with their chelae, which was a first encounter for me. We watched them as they foraged under the sunken nikau fronds and moved warily out of the way as the eel approached.

Last January a spoonbill landed at the lagoon and Calum photographed it.

At our family bach (just outside the park) we were lucky enough to notice two more pork chicks staring transfixed down at us from a large puriri tree. Two adult moreporks were perched further into the bush.

**Angus Campbell**



## Tui Researchers



Sarah Wells



Sam Hill



Serena Simmonds



Logan Coleman



Dr Weihong Ji Massey University

Photos by two keen young conservationists, Angus and Calum Campbell



Keen young conservationists Angus and Calum studying a rock pool



Little blue penguin



North Island robin



Morepork chick



Royal spoonbill



## Volunteer comments

Over last summer our intrepid editor Alison ran the project to protect dotterel nests and chicks using inverted wire flower baskets so she was delighted when she thought Auckland Council was helping out with a more sturdy version. Senior Park Ranger Maurice Puckett dashed her hopes when he pointed out that the screen was for the Ecology Stream dam overflow pipe. Bad luck Alison.. **Kerry McGee**

## Bird News

### New Zealand dotterel— an excellent season.

This was a record season, since the Pest proof fence was installed, for New Zealand dotterel most likely as a result of the management of black-backed gulls along with a possible El Nino effect. Chick protection covers were also provided. These were used by chicks mainly in areas where there was sparse shaded vegetation near the nest.

From 43 eggs laid 21 chicks fledged (49%), compared with results in the 2013-2014 when the fledging rate was as low as 6% (68 eggs laid and only 4 fledged). Ten years of good observations allows for further analysis variables affecting breeding success.

Numbers of black-backed gulls are recorded now so that we can make some kind of estimate as to the relationship between gull numbers and the success of the NZ dotterel at Tawharanui.

Big thanks to Sharon Kast. Cheri Crosby and Jonas Kotlarz for assistance during the season. **Alison Stanes**

### Seabirds — a very good season

This season has seen impressive gains towards the restoration of seabird populations at Tawharanui. All told we found twenty active grey-faced petrel burrows with ten chicks: up from ten active burrows and six chicks last year. Fluttering shearwaters are known to be using nine burrows (eight of these artificial nest boxes!) and produced four chicks all of which have now fledged. We continue to see diving petrel activity at the Marine Triangle at Tokatu Point and recorded white-faced storm petrel for the first time. We also have a growing nesting population of red-billed gulls and good numbers of little penguins breeding around the coast. The most exciting development though is that there are burrow nesting seabirds breeding at several sites around Tokatu Point with up to three species breeding at each location. **James Ross**

### North Island robin

During the 2015-16 season we banded 110 robin chicks in the nest, and we missed about 5-10 others (some in high nests), so the total that fledged would have been about 115-120 for the season.

Last year (2014-15), 135 banded chicks plus about 7 other unbanded chicks fledged, to give a total of about 142 young for the season. We had about 36 pairs nesting in both years.

**Tim Lovegrove**

A research student is doing a study of the dispersal of robin fledglings. She has attached a tiny transmitter to their tail feathers. You might even see a robin with the smallest aerial out the back ! **Alison Stanes**



NZ dotterel chick cover and chick



Robin with transmitter

## TOSSI T shirts

For those who have been wanting a TOSSI branded t-shirt the news is good. We are currently printing t-shirts and these will be available for sale at the April work day or at the weekly Tuesday Nursery group. They will be able to be ordered for delivery also, details to follow. **Roger Grove**



## 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](mailto:jamesross@paradise.net.nz).  
Full training and advice will be provided.

### Stuck for a gift? Consider giving a TOSSI membership.

#### 'TOSSI the first Ten Years'

is an excellent historical soft covered book recording the Tawharanui story. Cost \$30. A second print is available. They can be obtained by emailing [secretary@tossi.org.nz](mailto:secretary@tossi.org.nz)

### 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, 09 422 9415. [Davidandjill@ihug.co.nz](mailto:Davidandjill@ihug.co.nz)**

### TOSSI Committee

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

<b>Committee</b>	Ray Blackburn	09 425 4995
	David Stone	09 422 9415
	Sally Richardson	09 425 0161
	Roger Grove	09 422 3459

**Newsletter Editor** Alison Stanes 09 524 0291

**Membership Secretary** Janet Barruel

**E letter** Janet Barruel 09 425 9852

**Email:** [secretary@tossi.org.nz](mailto:secretary@tossi.org.nz)

**Website:** [www.TOSSI.org.nz](http://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 \_\_\_\_\_

#### Please tick how you would like to help:

<input type="checkbox"/> Planting/workdays	<input type="checkbox"/> Bird Counts
<input type="checkbox"/> Fund raising	<input type="checkbox"/> Administration
<input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Pests	<input type="checkbox"/> Nursery
<input type="checkbox"/> Predator fence monitoring	
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental educational	
<input type="checkbox"/> Publicity/promotion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 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**



## Nursery news

The nursery continues to roll along as it should and we are on track to reach our goal of 15,000 trees ready for planting in June, July and August.

Late Feb'/ early March a group of some 200, year eight students from Mahurangi College experienced an outdoor activities camp at Tawharanui. We at the nursery were part of their busy schedule, teaching them the dynamics of trees and giving them some hands on experience of nursery work. They bagged up over 3,000 manuka for us. A fun and successful effort by everyone Special thanks to Sally who kept us all under control. Since the last news letter we had a major hiccup in the nursery with our soil supplier going belly up on us. This led to several weeks of controlled panic while we reorganised ourselves. All is now well with Daltons being our new supplier. **Ray Blackburn**

### Mahurangi College students potting up in the TOSSI Nursery



We acknowledge with grateful thanks Warkworth Printing Ltd. for their assistance with the printing of this newsletter.

**Warkworth Printing** Phone: 09 425 7188. Email: [sales@warkworthprinting.co.nz](mailto:sales@warkworthprinting.co.nz)