

Newsletter 83 Autumn 2023



Tāwharanui
Open Sanctuary
Society Inc

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Mark the date

2 April

Sunday in the Park work day. All welcome.

7 May

Sunday in the Park work day. All welcome.



Support TOSSI

To volunteer, join and/or make a donation, go to <https://www.tossi.org.nz/>

Pateke

Photo: Alison Stanes

From the Chair

Since my December report, so much has happened at Tāwharanui. Who would have predicted the chaos that nature would throw at us between then and now?

It started with a vengeance on Auckland Anniversary weekend. Many of us were personally affected by the torrential rains that hit the region. Tāwharanui suffered the following impacts: the Anchor Bay sand ladders were all damaged, dune fence posts and wire were washed away, sand dunes subsided, a lot of plastics washed up on the beach, the campground gained a few new lakes, both the fuel and the pump sheds flooded, the pest fence sustained some damage, and there were slips in Ecology Bush and on the South Coast track.

The call went out and the regular Thursday volunteers were bolstered by those who could help. Much of the required clean-up was completed. The planned *Sunday in the Park* workday the following weekend put teams into the remaining clean-up work.

To thank us for our efforts, nature threw Cyclone Gabrielle at us. While the impacts in the region were severe, many other parts of the country suffered much worse. Our thoughts are with them as they continue to recover from the tragic impacts of the cyclone. Being without power for days or even a week seems insignificant compared to what others have endured. As Gabrielle approached, we were advised to cancel all volunteer activity. The main message was that we should all stay safe; the clean-up would come later. The pause to volunteering extended a few days and then it became 'until further notice'. Community Ranger Larissa had to look after the Park alone, as access via Christian Bay was constrained due to flooding.

There was substantial coastal impact, with the dunes eroded and the sand ladders again trashed. Luckily, the pest-proof fence was not breached. The decision was made to close the Park to the public, and to volunteers for a short time, which turned into a week and a half. The key issues were:

- Tree-falls restricting access to the west end and the north coast.
- Tree-falls and slips affecting traplines.
- A 20m slip across the main track through Anchor Bay.
- Beach access was all but wiped out with damage to sand ladders (again) and walkways.
- No power.
- Takatu Road was very dangerous due to many slips and subsidences.
- Damage to the potable water and sewerage pumping systems.
- Disruption to the nursery irrigation system.

Again, volunteers turned up to support the Park team as best they could. Due to the dedicated efforts of Larissa, Georgia and all the other Regional Parks' staff, most of the work that we could have assisted with had been achieved and the Park was re-opened. However, volunteers still need to take extra care as they go about their regular activities, as issues continue to appear. I know the Northern Parks team appreciates the extraordinary effort that was put in. Let's hope we can all get back to a more normal life soon.

Roger Grove



Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary is a joint project with Auckland Council



Climate chaos in the Park

Senior Ranger's perspective

In times of adversity I am always impressed and incredibly proud of our Ranger team who swing into action. Our priorities sharpen to the safety of people, the welfare of our livestock and wildlife, and assessment and protection of key infrastructure. Often this means Rangers, who are isolated by access or unavailability of peers, working long and challenging days, then returning to cold homes without power and limited resources. And they are not alone among the many who swung into action around the region and country.

Roger, in his Chair's comments, has covered well the impact upon the Park and the support from TOSSI members to help return the Park to a functional state. The beauty of the land endures and nature will heal, with some help from us all.

Whilst Tāwharanui and most of our Northern Regional Parks are back to nearly normal (some power, water and sewerage issues notwithstanding), our thoughts are with those from elsewhere in the region and country whose damage and issues far exceed ours. Their recovery will take months, maybe years and it is important we all remember and support them as the Cyclone Gabrielle impacts lose prominence in the news cycle.

To all our Rangers, volunteers and responders, we thank you for your commitment and service.

Matt Maitland
Senior Ranger
Open Sanctuaries



Photos supplied by Auckland Council





There was really only one way to supply the large amount of sand needed to rebuild the destroyed sand ladders — by tractor.



The final filling still had to be done by hand, with buckets and shovels.



An urgent call went out to *Springboard* to lend some extra hands (left). *Springboard* is a local organisation which supports at-risk youth. Find out more about their excellent programmes at <https://www.springboard.org.nz>

The ever-adaptable Thursday work group had to pivot from their usual tasks to focus on the sand ladders. At one stage it became a race against the tide.



The Annual Pateke Survey

The annual pateke survey was able to be carried out in February, despite the adverse weather events. The monitoring team was pleased to report an almost doubling of the population inside the Park, and a stable population at sites beyond. As shown in the table below. It is heartening to see these reintroduced birds thriving overall, albeit with some annual fluctuations in numbers.

Pateke Survey

Tawharanui, Christian Bay, Omaha Storm Water Ponds

Location	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	22-Feb	10-Feb	12-Feb	12-Feb	17-Feb	21-Feb	13-Feb	11-Feb	22-Feb	8-Feb	7-Feb
Tawharanui											
Mangatawhiri/wetland/lagoon	5	6	7	7	17	21	15	11	2	9	9
Camp wetlands/roadside drains	0	0	0	0	0	7	3	0	0	0	16
Hayter's wetland/Lagoon stream	2	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29
Anchor Bay road drains	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Waikokowai (Ecology) Stream/stock dam & gullies	13	16	20	16	22	8	21	24	12	16	23
Waimaru Farm (Hubbard's) pond and stream	12	2	7	16	11	13	25	19	8	23	21
Total Tawharanui	32	25	41	39	50	49	64	54	22	49	98
Other Sites											
Christian Bay/wetlands, lodge area	*0	22	31	10	36	17	37	21	19	35	46
Omaha Storm water ponds	*0	21	31	16	26	38	15	48	48	23	35
Omaha Wastewater	0	0	0	7	32	30	25	7	13	31	6
Total Other Sites	0	43	62	33	94	85	77	76	80	89	87
Total All Sites	32	68	103	72	144	134	141	130	102	138	185

* Not established in 2013 (or not counted, if they were)



Left: a male (top) and a female pateke.

Photo: Alison Stanes

This is what a pateke 'train' looks like at night.

A rare sight caught on an infrared trail camera at Tāwharanui, evidence of the healthy number of pateke in the Park.



Sea Week at Tāwharanui

TOSSI, Forest & Bird, and Restore Rodney East members came together at Anchor Bay recently to promote *Sea Week*.

Although the ocean was too choppy for planned snorkelling and the low tide wasn't quite low enough to explore the rock pools on Phoenix Rocks, it felt like summer had finally arrived and everyone enjoyed the day.

The public spoke with us about the health of the ocean, they ate our sausages, donated money towards monitoring in the Marine Reserve around Tāwharanui, and were impressed by the TOSSI education trailer.



Left: the volunteers from various local environmental action and advocacy groups set up their displays at Anchor Bay.

Right: one of the TOSSI guides, Lyn Hamilton-Hunter (left), showed members of the public our wonderful education trailer.



Left: Sally Richardson (Chair of Warkworth Forest & Bird and a TOSSI committee member) explains the significance of the Marine Reserve which borders Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary.

Right: volunteers showed people the fascinating hidden treasures of the rock pools at the edge of the beach.



Activities in the Park



Work in the Sanctuary's plant nursery does not ease up over the summer months.

Seedlings are pricked out of their trays by the team (left) and larger plants are put into bags (below).

Work in the nursery can be for all ages.

Plants are being nurtured for the first day of the planting season on Sunday 4 June.



The first two *Sunday in the Park* volunteer workdays this year included clean-up of storm damage debris on Ecology Trail (below left) and uncovering trap line corridor netting buried under rocks on the Jones Bay shore (right).



Caught on camera

There is a huge number of trail cameras in the Sanctuary used primarily to capture the presence of predators. They also capture the activity of the birds being protected from those predators. This selection of camera images was provided by ranger Georgia Pringle.



Above: tīeke in triplicate.

Left: canoodling takahē.

Being very small, pōpokotea/whitehead are usually very difficult to photograph without a high quality camera with a zoom lens. However, this cheeky little bird got a selfie without any effort.



Infrared cameras capture the nightlife of kiwi. Above: when on tour in the Park, just follow the signs.

Above right: a kiwi calling.



Right: one of the original kiwi contingent translocated into the Park in 2006/7, identified by its band glowing in the camera's infrared light.





Also caught on camera, Rochfort, a five year old male takahē. He is one of the four takahē currently in the Park. Rochfort and his partner Heaphy hatched a chick late last year but unfortunately it didn't survive.

Photo: Lyn Hamilton-Hunter

Below: two ruru seen at what is suitably named 'Morepork Corner' in Ecology Bush.

Photo: Mark Atkinson



Above: a pukeko nest with eggs of different tones indicating at least two females have laid their eggs in this nest. Hatching and raising chicks is a shared responsibility among pukeko, regardless of who laid which eggs.

Photo: Alison Stanes

Summer Days

Yes, we really did have a few!
The TOSSI education trailer was out
at Anchor Bay most weekends.

Right: TOSSI guide Janet Poole talks to summer visitors.



Left: on one of the typical summer days in early January Tāwharanui looked like it does any year — big crowds, stunning scenery, good surf.