

Ō Tū Wharekai Newsletter

Autumn 2017



Nestled amongst high country tussock-lands and set against the towering Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, the Hakatere Conservation Park, centred on Ō Tū Wharekai, was opened in October 2007. It is one of the three sites that make up the national Arawai Kakariki wetland restoration programme.

Wetland advocacy and education

It has been a busy time for sharing knowledge and working with others in the wetlands. We have worked with Core Education to film a virtual field trip on wetland ecology for the LEARNZ programme. ARA Institute recently worked with DOC for four days, assisting with a range of conservation work such as removing old fencing at Spider Lakes, checking predator traps at Maori Lakes and planting native trees at Lambies Stream. We have also given presentations to the University of the Third Age (U3A) in Ashburton and Hinds School at Arowhenua Marae in Temuka. It has been very rewarding to meet members of the community and work with others in Ō Tū Wharekai.



Photo 1: Filming at Lake Emma with Core Education for the LEARNZ programme and students from ARA Institute planting at Lambies Stream near the Lake Clearwater outlet.

Threatened plants in Ō Tū Wharekai



Photo 2: Craspedia 'Heron' ready to be planted

Craspedia 'Heron' is an endemic plant species only found growing on the Cameron Fan, near Lake Heron in Ō Tū Wharekai. This plant species is classified as Nationally Critical on the threat list and we are working towards planting a second population. Seeds have been collected and propagated at the DOC Nursery at Motukarara and we have recently received 80 plants ready for planting. We will plant these on the Swin Fan this autumn with the aim of establishing a second population. We will be monitoring the natural population and the newly planted one on an annual basis.

Rangitata predator control

The Department has recently completed the second season of predator trapping in the Upper Rangitata River as part of the Braided River Flagship Programme. The aim of the programme is to increase the survival and productivity of two endemic bird species wrybill and black-fronted tern which breed in the river during the summer months. 1215 kill traps, 400 leg hold traps and 20 Goodnature self-setting traps were set up in the river bed from Mt Sunday to the Rangitata Gorge.

Total number of predators caught over two seasons;

Stoat 166, Ferret 139, Weasel 60, Rat 334, Possum 119, Cats 197, Mice 47, Rabbit 154, Hedgehog 1754

Wrybill and Black-fronted tern breeding

Both wrybill and black-fronted tern are monitored over the breeding season (spring/summer) in the upper Rangitata, upper Ashburton and Potts Rivers.



Results for monitoring on the Rangitata / Potts Rivers

Black-fronted tern

71 nests monitored in the upper Rangitata

51 of the 71 nests monitored produced 27 chicks and 9 chicks fledged (Predator control and weed free habitat present = breeding habitat available)

17 nests monitored in the lower Rangitata, 0 chicks produced, 0 chicks fledged (No predator control and weed encroachment present = breeding habitat loss)

Wrybill

55 nests were monitored in the upper Rangitata

36 of the 55 nests hatched one or more chicks, 10 nests could not be monitored successfully because adult birds were not banded. Of the 26 nests left 47 chicks were confirmed of which 31 fledged.

This can be correlated to the intensive predator trapping in the areas where the birds are nesting.

Recreation

Our Recreation team has undertaken two overnight trips into Double and Manuka Huts in the last couple of months. The intention of both trips was to give the huts a general clean up and undertake any minor maintenance that was required. At both huts, new toilet holes had to be dug which is always a challenge in the rocky environment. This is a good indicator of the amount of usage that these huts are receiving. Both huts are on the Te Araroa Trail – the 3000km walk that stretches the length of the country. During the last summer, at least 550 people have completed the entire walk with many more just doing sections. The number of New Zealanders completing the full walk is also increasing – we made up 20% of the total users this summer.

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