



Summer Newsletter 2025 Number 84

Kia ora tātou,

Some of the work undertaken over the past three months:

- Responded to information and support requests from WBF members and public
- Organisation of South Waikato Event, 14th of May 2025
- Updated website including funding opportunities
- Participated in Wai-Connect Inanga workshop

Ōwhango Alive Celebrates a Major Milestone – 10,000 Predators Trapped!

A huge milestone in predator control was achieved when Ōwhango Alive caught its 10,000th predator on the 'Peter Lacy' trapping line in late January. This significant achievement was made by dedicated volunteers Robert and Annemie Peter, marking a proud moment in the ongoing effort to protect native wildlife in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve and surrounding areas.

Ōwhango Alive's trapping programme began in January 2013 with just 20 DOC200 traps and three committed volunteers. Over the years, it has grown into a well-established conservation effort, now boasting over 300 predator traps that are regularly monitored by a dedicated group of volunteers. These efforts have contributed immensely to protecting native birds and restoring the ecological balance in the region.

Beyond predator control, Ōwhango Alive actively engages in habitat restoration. The group organises regular working bees to remove invasive weeds such as blackberry and privet, helping to restore native flora. Over 1,500 native trees have been planted in cleared areas, enhancing biodiversity and improving the health of the local ecosystem.

This milestone is a testament to the power of community-driven conservation. However, the work is far from over. Ōwhango Alive is always looking for passionate individuals to join its efforts. Whether its trapping predators, clearing invasive species, or planting native trees, there's a way for everyone to get involved. If you'd like to be part of this incredible journey and help Ōwhango Alive reach its next milestone, get in touch at owhangoalive@yahoo.com. Every volunteer makes a difference in protecting our native wildlife and ensuring a thriving future for our forests. [Ōwhango Alive](#)



Picture: Sally Lashmar. Trailer of invasive weeds removed on volunteer working bee.

Native Forest Restoration Trust - Ed Hillary Hope Reserve Community Planting Days

Winter 2024 has been a busy planting season at the Ed Hillary Hope Reserve (EHHR), with around 4,000 plants from approximately 30 different eco-sourced species planted, over 5 different planting events. Special thanks go out to all our volunteers who have helped getting plants in the ground, including all those involved with our open community planting days, local school plantings, memorial planting, and assistance from the Hamilton Junior Naturalist Trust.

Having so many different groups coming together to restore our native forests and taonga species results in a very special and rewarding gathering, and we thank everybody who participated and supported us with these events. As we all know, planting events themselves are often the culmination of a long preparation and planning period beforehand, with the hard work starting months or years before the plants actually go in the ground. We are fortunate to have such legends in eco-sourcing and plant propagation as Jan Simmons and Wayne Bennett, as Ed Hillary Hope Reserve community planting days enthusiastic contributors to our planting and restoration success at EHHR, who have assisted us with seed collection, plant ordering and propagation, and pre-planting site preparation.

Many of the species planted have originated from seed sourced and collected locally or at EHHR itself, which has then been grown on at the Waikato Ecological Restoration Trust (WERT) and Forest Flora nurseries. Specialist ecological nurseries like these, and the passionate people involved with them, are essential for accessing a much wider range of diverse eco-sourced species than would otherwise normally be available. Of course, another special mention needs to be made for our Honorary Ranger extraordinaire Bill Carlson, who has been key to the preparation and organisation for these and many other restoration actions occurring at EHHR over the years. Mike Paviour, Reserve Manager [NFRT](#),



Legends of eco-sourcing and restoration. Left to right at EHHR Jan Simmons, Bill Carlson, Sue Bennett, Julia Grimm and Wayne Bennett.

Pūkorokoro Shorebird Centre - Snippets

Opening of new hide at Piako - Rationalising flood protection infrastructure was the primary reason Waikato Regional Council bought the flooded farm block at Piako. But as reported previously, the council commissioned PMNT to design and build a bird hide with interpretation panels. These facilities were officially opened in October 2024.

Youth Camp - The Shorebird Centre hosted a camp for young birders in December. Organised by Ian Southey, and held under the auspices of Birds New Zealand, the six-day event attracted nine very keen teenagers. They filled the centre with a buzzy energy and enthusiasm, along with an already well developed knowledge of birds. The Findlay Reserve, Manukau Harbour, Kopuatai Peat Dome and the Kokako Management Area in the Hunua Ranges all featured in the programme.

Taramaire signage - As reported in earlier issues of Pūkorokoro News, a multi-agency committee is working towards a greater level of protection for the Pūkorokoro Coast. While the working group is investigating the most appropriate legal means for achieving this, an initial step was the installation of new signage at Taramaire, aimed at educating visitors about why it is such a world renowned shorebird site, and why we all need to protect it. Clearly there is still work to be done in getting the message across, especially the restriction of vehicle access to the shoreline. This SUV became stuck in late January, and remained so several weeks later. [Pūkorokoro website](#)



Floodgate Piako River KEITH WOODLEY



The gathering for the Piako Hide opening INGER VOSS



Waikato Regional Council Chair Pamela Storey at the Piako hide opening INGER VOSS

Landcare Trust and Fonterra - A farm in King Country Revitalises Decommissioned Effluent Ponds, Benefiting Local Native Flora and Fauna.

Wetlands used to be common place around New Zealand providing natural harbours for native flora and fauna. Most, however, have been drained and the land repurposed for urban and agricultural development. But change is in the air and the Co-op is a driving force. Offering natural flood mitigation and contaminant filtration, wetlands can help farmers navigate the changing environment.

Co-op Sustainable Dairying Advisor Matthew Holwill has been working with NZ Landcare Trust Coordinator and national wetland expert Nathan Burkepile to help local farmers realise the hidden assets sitting on their farms – turning decommissioned effluent ponds into wetlands. Matthew says he's been looking at opportunities to help farmers use 'dead land' on their farms in ways that contribute to improving overall efficiency.

"For the past 20 years ago there has been a shift away from having the old two pond discharge effluent system (oxidation ponds) to the recycled system we have now. The old oxidation ponds would discharge into a nearby stream or drain – generally prime locations. Farmers have wondered what to do with the ponds," Matthew says. "Using my associations with our local catchment group, I was able to access some funding via the Access to Experts Fund Programme run by NZ Landcare Trust, Ministry for the Environment and Beca. Nathan Burkepile came and visited three farms here in the Waikato and we were able to get the ball rolling and start developing the wetlands. It's a great example of different organisations all working together to make something happen."

Perfect Conditions - decommissioned effluent ponds offer all the perfect ingredients for a wetland, says Nathan Burkepile. An ideal wetland set up has two ponds – one situated above the other with strategic planting within and around the pond. Water will flow into the top pond from critical source areas bringing with it sediment and contaminants. The plants and bacteria growing in the wetland pond soils absorb and break down the nutrients from the fertilisers, chemicals and effluent captured from the run off and plants trap sediment from flowing into

the second pond and further downstream. Through the filtration process, water emerges from the wetlands into the main waterways clean.

“When we look at wetlands, we want a good solid clay basin to hold water and most of these effluent ponds have clay basins already built in. It’s just a matter of making it a shallow water habitat. If we’re looking at improving water quality, we want 70% of as emergent vegetation (200-300 millimetres of deep water) and then 30% deep water habitat,” he says.



Retired effluent ponds prior to conversion into treatment wetlands.

Wetland creation - In May 2024, Matthew and Nathan headed to Hangatiki in King Country to start construction on a wetland conversion on Len Martin’s farm. Len, who is in his 80s, had one proviso – he wanted to be able to see ducks from the window of the farm house when the wetland was up and running. The team got to work, first working on the lower pond and using the level of the composted effluent as the baseline. Part of the nearby paddock had an area where water accumulated so the team put in a swale to re-direct the water coming off the hillside into the bottom wetland rather than the paddock. The overall conversion took place over two days including planting – with Len planting the first native plant into the wetland.

By the end of 2024, the wetland plants were flourishing and Len was able to look out his window to see ducks swimming on the ponds. “This was a great result and showed the benefits of looking for small opportunities. We didn’t take anything out of production for this landowner. “Every little treatment counts. We’re adding biodiversity on a heavily agricultural landscape”. It cost two days of digger work and plants (which in this case were provided by the catchment group),” Nathan says.

Matthew is working with several other farmers in the Waikato region on effluent pond to wetland conversion projects. With decommissioned effluent ponds nationwide there are ample opportunities nationwide to expand the approach. For more information on ways to improve efficiency on-farm contact your local Sustainable Dairying Advisor or visit the Farm Source On-Farm Efficiency Hub. [NZ Landcare Trust](#) has a trove of information on wetland construction on its website.

Mangaiti Gully Restoration - Eel Feeding Platform Statistics

We found ourselves in a position where we had to invest in a CCTV camera at the eel feeding station to protect our infrastructure, our plantings around the site and the eels themselves. Sad, I know, but that is the reality of life where areas are opened up to the public these days. We can guarantee that your privacy will be protected with all files treated with the professionalism you would expect. We have noticed that the camera installation has already had a major deterrent on wayward behaviour. One of the positives is that we can now collect some really interesting data. Analysing the footage of a fine Saturday in January we recorded the following:

- A total of 113 people (including children) were recorded
- Visits were from 7.15am to 8.58pm
- 94 were adults and 19 were children
- 48 people spent time observing and / or feeding the eels, 12 of which were children
- The longest time spent at the platform was 35 minute with 5 groups of visitors spending more than 20 minutes.
- 13 walkers were walking their dogs
- 3 were runners

For our Trust to know that the infrastructure investment is being used to the extent it is, is a real positive for us. [Mangaiti Blog/Contact](#)



Purangi Conservation Trust - Update from Zoe, Our Contract Trapper

The latest round of monitoring for rats and mice was encouraging with no rat prints on any of the tracking cards in Backdrop or the Ferry Landing area. Mice prints were on around 30% of cards. Mice invariably increase in abundance once rat numbers have been suppressed.

The abundance of kohekohe fruit hanging like large bunches of grapes on the trees at Back Bay and Shakespeare Cliff is a positive sign that possum control is working. The fruit should ripen and burst around late autumn, with the seeds being a favourite of rats.



Karioi Project - Ōi Season 2024 Wrap-Up A Year of Highs, Lows, and Big Wins

What a season it's been! This year, we're celebrating a record-breaking Ōi breeding season, with 18 chicks poised to take their maiden flight out to the Tasman Sea. Seven of these fluffy adventurers have already fledged, with the remaining 11 expected to go before Christmas. After a tough season last year, which saw just seven chicks fledge, it's hugely encouraging to hit double digits this year.

And it hasn't been without its challenges. Early in the season, we captured devastating footage of a stoat pulling a chick from its burrow, and later, a roaming dog killed two adult Ōi at the beach. These losses hit hard. Ōi are slow breeders, often not returning to land to reproduce until they're about seven years old and producing just one chick each year after that. The death of two breeding adults in such a fragile colony was particularly gutting.

Other curveballs included pigs collapsing burrows, feral cats prowling the area, and several adult birds washing up on Ruapuke and Ngarunui beaches. Post-mortem results suggested starvation was the likely cause of death. Yet, despite these setbacks, the season also brought its share of incredible moments.

The Highs of the Season

Top of the list? The discovery of ten new kororā (little penguin) burrows scattered along the coast from the south end of the beach to Manu Bay. This exciting find came courtesy of Miro, a seabird detection dog, who also sniffed out several new Ōi burrows. After a break last year, having a seabird dog back in action was a huge boost – and the unexpected number of kororā burrows was the cherry on top.



After ten years of predator control, we're starting to see the slow but steady growth of the breeding colony. When the Karioi Project began, we monitored just four or five burrows. Fast forward to 2024, and that number has climbed to over 60 actively monitored burrows! This progress is a testament to the dedication of our volunteer "Burrow Buddies" and their consistent weekly efforts to check traps, monitor burrows, and keep the Ōi safe.

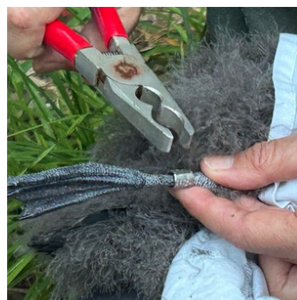
Our Burrow Buddies have been crucial to this season's success. From initially knowing little about the birds, they've become seasoned experts, spotting tell-tale signs of activity and reviewing hours of trail camera footage. This year, they also saw a few chicks get banded, getting an up-close look at the little fluff balls they've worked so hard to protect. It's been fantastic to see their enthusiasm grow alongside their knowledge.

For our seabird rangers, the Burrow Buddies' support has been invaluable, freeing up time to focus on monitoring fragile environments and deploying targeted pest control measures. Together, this small but passionate team has made a huge difference.

Want to get involved? We're always looking for more hands on deck for burrow monitoring. If scrambling through coastal bush and keeping tabs on our seabird friends sounds like your kind of thing, we'd love to hear from you.

Don't have the time to volunteer? You can still help! If you're a pet owner, simply keeping your dog on a lead on the south end of the beach (including the track from Earle's Place) is a massive help. Not keen on the lead? Then please head north from the main track instead.
Looking Ahead

We're already planning for next season, starting with updates to our permits to formally include monitoring of the kororā population along the coast. This year's 18 fledging ōi chicks are a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved. It's been a season of challenges, achievements, and valuable lessons – and we're more determined than ever to keep protecting and nurturing our seabird populations! [Karioi Project](#)



Pokaiwhenua Catchment Group - Waikato River Authority (WRA) Funded Planting/Restoration Projects

Planting for the season was completed in September 2024, with 23,400 plants being planted on properties throughout the catchment through our agreement with the WRA. These plants have also had their first "release" spray to knock back the grass/weed growth around them to ensure they are off the best start. This is part of the programmed approach we can implement with landowners in our funding agreement with the WRA, to not only get the plants in the ground, but also having a plan to manage these alongside landowners for the first three years.

Working in conjunction with Trinity Lands, Waikato River Trails & Transform Aotearoa, we trialled providing a planting service with several people through Transform. We now have a reliable team who have helped enormously with planting this winter, and lately with spray releasing on the recently planted sites, and the past two years planting sites. We also had 8 students from Tokoroa High School join us with the planting on one property as part of a fundraiser for new basketball hoops, and court re-painting for their school basketball court. Thanks to Brett Fleming, Trinity Lands for coordinating this, and for helping on the day.

We have had our 2024 funding application with the WRA approved. This is a 3 year project, with a further 15,400 plants to be planted in winter 2025. Would you like to partner with us and plant native trees on your land through this partnership? Be in touch with us! We are very grateful to be the recipient of this funding, thanks Waikato River Authority! Hadleigh Putt Catchment Coordinator, Info@pokaiwhenua.org.nz
www.pokaiwhenua.org.nz



Left: The Sneddon family chipping-in on a planting project on the Sneddon's farm. Right: a newly planted gully.

Piako Waihou Catchment Trust - Local Farmers Learn as They Go

Johan and Richard van Ras, and their family, farm near Tatanui and Morrinsville. They are also part of the Piako Waihou Catchment Trust (PWCT). The family have 215 cows on 76 hectares. Johan is a Trustee on the PWCT and also works for DairyNZ. Their farm includes two streams which flows into the Piako River. The streams are precious to local people, iwi, land owners including those farming in the area.

The PWCT, a registered charity, has been bringing people together on the van Ras family farm to share their work to plant and fence the stream and control possums, and rats. The Trust wants to help others in the area to care for their streams and get involved in local projects. “We wanted to help people in Morrinsville, Tatanui and surrounding areas to get involved in removing pests and planting natives,” says Francee Haydon, PWCT Coordinator and local farmer.

PWCT is supporting farmers and other land owners to get started with stream care and pest control on their farms and lifestyle blocks. They can also link up people living in Morrinsville, Te Aroha, Hamilton and other towns to support these landowners.

On 10 Feb the PWCT met Johan and Maakoha Pene, from Ngaati Hauaa Iwi Trust, on their farm to look at the native planting they have been doing and learn from their experiences and knowledge of the local area. Johan and family have been fencing off wet areas of their farm and planting natives. “Our aim is to cool the streams for the native fish and create places for native birds and insects to come to feed and breed.” Their next project is to create eel breeding ponds in some of the last boggy areas of their farm. They are keen to share what they have learnt with other land owners keen to plant their streams.

‘It’s about the community thriving and bringing town and country together, to get to know each other, learn new skills and enjoy doing something practical for the environment.’ says Francee Haydon.

Caring for the streams is a community effort, and there are many ways to contribute. “You don’t need experience—just enthusiasm,” Francee explains. “PWCT members love sharing knowledge with people who are new to environmental projects. It’s a chance to learn, make friends, and spend time outside in some of the most beautiful parts of our community.” Whether you’re planting trees, tackling pests, or simply enjoying time in nature, your involvement helps sustain these shared treasures that are our streams and bush. These efforts, supported by PWCT, GoEco, Wai Connect, NZ Landcare Trust, Ngaati Hauaa and many others, ensure the streams remain healthy for everyone.

