

Newsletter March 2021

Takatu Landcare Group



Chair's Report

Takatu LandCare had its AGM in late January, kindly hosted by Hegman and Bev at OBV Vineyard. We had a good turnout with plenty of new faces, which was great to see. John Lawrence, who has made significant contributions to TLC committee activities over the years, elected to stand down from the committee to focus on his conservation activities in Auckland. Adrienne Cranshaw from Christian Bay was elected to join the committee, which is otherwise unchanged from last year. Adrienne has also agreed to take on the important role of communications for TLC. Any interesting sightings, stories or photos about flora/fauna in the area email them to a.cranshaw@orcon.net.nz.

The issue of fundraising was discussed at the AGM. In December and January we lodged two significant grant applications. One to Auckland Council (Community Coordination & Facilitation Grant) and one to DOC (Jobs for Nature fund). We are very grateful to Meredith Macnab who put many hours into the preparation of both of these applications. The primary purpose is to fund continuation for the next two to three years of the animal pest coordinator role, which has been so effectively managed for us by Ngaire Wallen for the last 18 months. The private donations TLC has gratefully received from the local community in the last six months are being used to support the pest control coordinator position until we secure additional grant funds.

The grant applications are also for funding several new positions: a trap management/maintenance person, a weed pest coordinator and weed contractors (to tackle major weed infestations). Weeds are a big problem on some parts of the peninsula. Reducing animal pest numbers is only one part of the necessary strategy for creating a healthy environment for native fauna.

Community engagement in weed and animal pest control makes a real difference to the environment, and it is fantastic to see so many resident and non-resident 'locals' doing their bit. Ngaire has done a terrific job engaging and connecting people, and her success demonstrates the importance and value of community coordinator positions.

Jon Monk
TLC Chairperson

Pest Control Coordinator's report

608 new traps

TLC has had a very successful year implementing new pest control projects in the Takatu area. Since July 2020 when 400 traps had been set out, another 208 have been added, making a total of 608 new traps since the first new line was implemented in November 2019.

4000 pests caught

At the end of January 2021, according to CatchIT, total catch reached the 4000 mark. This was celebrated on 25 February at an informal gathering at 8 Wired.

Those catch numbers are a huge testament to the efforts of our community, without whom this would simply not happen. Thank you everyone who has embraced our project with enthusiasm and who continues to take care of our environment. Pests take no notice of legal boundaries - working together is the only way to make progress.



CELEBRATION AT 8 WIRED

Regional Collaboration

We have worked with the Omaha and Pt Wells groups, and other landowners, to record their trapping locations and assist in building up a big picture of pest control in the area. This led to a tentative exploration of a regional cooperative - a Restore Rodney East project the Auckland Council were already working on as it happens. You may have seen the recent information in Mahurangi Matters of the project funded by the Rodney Local Board.

New Initiative Encouraging Children's Participation

More recently we have started using tracking tunnels to see what pests are wandering around. This is a low-stress activity setting out tunnels with inked cards to see what walks over them during a three-day period. We have some excellent rat, hedgehog and skink tracks. It is a good exercise to involve children, and we aim to sample lots of different locations throughout the area. It may also identify specific locations that require additional pest control efforts.

Bird Monitoring

While anecdotal feedback shows that many of us are enjoying the resurgence of bird life, we have now had a year of bird monitoring, thanks to the team of people who are involved. This is a long term project, for at least the next 5 years, to add some science to the anecdotal evidence that we are helping bird life to thrive. The differences between locations with or without trapping, and rural versus urban, make interesting comparisons. In the meantime the people involved get to officially sit still for half an hour every three months and just enjoy listening and watching the birds. If there is anyone who would like to join in, please contact me through the website. Our data is now included in the e-bird database, which as I understand, will feed into an updated publication of the NZ Bird Atlas sometime after 2024.

While it has been a successful year it has also been a challenge to hit the pause button during the first lockdown, take in a new reality with no Council traps and so shift focus slightly only to be restricted a second time. The Council targeted rate is now back on target - just as the traps funded by the grant application also arrived. It never rains but pours, but there is every incentive to get the traps out and set asap now that they are available.

Thanks

Our neighbours Mark Spenceley and Don Hanley have been sterling support, making trap boxes from upcycled plywood from Charlie and Jill Shears house recladding project. Phil from Omaha always comes up with the goods if we need to make bases for Timms traps, and Matakana ITM give us a good discount on building supplies. Huge thanks to all of you, particularly when it looked like we needed a DIY trap box supply. I would also like to thank Whangaripo Valley Free Range Eggs, who have supported our trapping with the supply of over 2000 eggs.

The behind the scenes work by Jon Monk is quite possibly more than he anticipated when he became Chairman of a fairly quiet local group. I appreciate his support and encouragement and TLC is fortunate to have his input to the organisation.

My conclusion is that as much as we are building trap boxes, or servicing traps, we are building a community of people who care about our environment and are willing to put in their time and resources to protecting it from animal pests. It is entirely possible that the way to "Predator Free 2050" has not yet been invented, but in the meantime we are doing what we can.

Ngair Wallen - TLC Pest Control Coordinator

Happenings and Comments

Christian Bay Working Bee

Last August 2020, in between Covid outbreaks, about 20 keen locals met at Gareth and Rebecca's in Christian Bay to target the tobacco weed on adjacent properties. The working bee was followed by a delicious morning tea and a chance to catch up with the neighbours!



READY TO START



THE TOBACCO WEED TEAM

Pateke and Kiwi at Christian Bay

The residents of Christian Bay are very excited to report that the number of Pateke on the various local ponds is increasing and that they also now have proof that kiwi are living in the bush behind the properties just past the lodge.

Alysn and Brian from Kōtare House Accommodation and Art Retreat provided definitive proof last year that the sounds many residents have been hearing (including the sound of a male and female calling to each other), are indeed the sounds of kiwi. The Kogan trail camera gifted to Brian by their children for Xmas 2019 was set up in the bush in various different spots over 2020. Mostly the camera captured possums, rats and the occasional cat 😞 but then....when the camera was set up down by the stream....success 😊!

This is great motivation for all of us to keep setting our traps and to check them regularly.



VERY HAPPY PATEKE 30 DECEMBER 2020



KIWI IN THE BUSH AUGUST AND OCTOBER 2020

When catching pests is really fun

Our pest co-ordinator, Ngaire, reported great excitement from a Christian Bay resident who caught a possum a day for four consecutive days on their shared driveway. There is nothing like success to keep you motivated setting those traps. Photo below.



Restore Rodney East Project

The Rodney Local Board is promoting the coordination of community conservation groups. Their Restore Rodney East initiative has a specific focus on supporting and growing community-led conservation activity in the Rodney East area. Council recognition and support of efforts by local groups to improve our natural environment is so very welcome.

Christian Bay Bird Monitoring

Cheri Crosby has reported that Pateke on private properties are holding their numbers well. 19 Pateke have been sighted on the estuary and in ponds in the Christian Bay Area. Also, a Reef Heron, a few juvenile Kotare along with a Spotless Crake, two or three different shags and a family of grey ducks were sighted in January.

Kiwi spotting at Tāwharanui Regional Park

Did you know there are lots of options for spotting kiwi at the park. Head down in the evening just before sunset, have your torch covered in red cellophane at the ready, and take a very quiet walk in the bush. You might be lucky. Luck seems to be helped by having young adults in tow as they seem better than some of us older folk at hearing the sounds and sighting the well camouflaged birds.

You could also increase your chances of spotting a kiwi in the wild by taking a tour with the lovely Vanessa Wards of Kiwiness Tours or with Tristan Cullen from Habitat Tours.

Rabbits

Some people have discovered dead rabbits on their land, causing speculation that calicivirus has returned just as numbers of rabbits were becoming a major issue. If you have noticed dead rabbits on your property, without bullet holes, please let us know.

Wetlands Regeneration

Considering that 90 per cent of New Zealand's original wetlands have been lost and many others degraded by weed invasion, stock access, modifications and barriers to fish migration, recent reports of farmers devoting time and resources to regenerating wetlands on their farms is inspiring. The ecological importance of wetlands means our local and community efforts to assist in eradication of both plant and animal pests in the Christian Bay wetland is of both regional and national significance.

Upcoming Events

1st Saturday of Each Month 8am

Trappers monthly gathering at Bramble Cafe. All welcome.

Saturday 17 April

Mahurangi East Land Restoration Programme.
Community Information Day at Scotts Landing.

For those in the Baddeleys/Campbells Bay Community

A large weed bin will be located outside 7 Clinton Road for a week between 1-6 April. Everyone is encouraged to clear ginger, woolly nightshade and pampas and dispose of them in this bin.



VISITOR TO CHRIS AND CATHY'S GARDEN