

PĀNUI

NEWSLETTER

Takurua / Hotoke/Winter 2024

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Kia ora koutou,

Well, we're now in the last month of winter, with spring just around the corner – the birds are already starting to sing more loudly to each other!

We've had another productive few months, as you will see in the following articles.

A big thank you, as always, goes to our dedicated volunteers who are out checking trap lines, maintaining and building traps and controlling weeds in all sorts of weather, on a regular basis.

Appreciation also goes to our committee members and newsletter and calendar coordinators, who work tirelessly behind the scenes, all helping Owhango Alive to run smoothly. It certainly is a team effort.

Sponsorship & Funding grants.

Ongoing trap sponsorship continues to grow – this support comes from all over the country and even Australia, which is very heartening.

We have also received grants from:

: The Lines Company.

: Ruapehu District Council.

: Horizons Regional Council .

Funds from the above grants have helped us repair traps, purchase native trees and assist with maintenance at the Owhango Domain Pavilion, where we have our Owhango Alive depot.

I will leave you to read about our endeavours over the last 4 months – thank you to all the contributors to this edition – and let's keep up the good work!

Nga mihi,

Mark Fredericks

Owhango Alive Chairman



Graphic by Amber-Krystle Stier

SPONSOR DATA 1 April to 31 July	Bird	Mouse	Rat	Weasel	Total Results
Anderson-Smith			2		2
Beth and Fred Richards					
Bill O'Donnell					
Carol O'Donnell		1	1		2
Derek & Ann Percy (Swimming Hole 1)		2	4		6
Derek & Ann Percy (Swimming Hole 2)					
Devo and Maree			2		2
Fa'i Pudney, Tauranga			1		1
Grace & Mary Donald			2		2
Harley		1	1		2
Jacob Simmonds		2			2
Kayden and Zander McConkey					
Lucy Simmonds			1		1
Manawa Energy (BH01)			1		1
Manawa Energy (BH02)			3		3
Manawa Energy (BH04)			1		1
Manawa Energy (BH05)		1	2		3
Manawa Energy (SH02A)		1		1	2
Manawa Energy (SH04A)			3		3
Manawa Energy (SH05)			3		3
Mandy Lacy Family					
Maree von Trapp		3	3		6
Margie Riley (Lagoon 18)			2		2
Margie Riley (Tawa 1)		2	1		3
Marsaili Cash (Boat Hole 22)			1		1
Marsaili Cash (Boat Hole 3A)			1		1
Marsaili Cash (Swimming Hole 4AA)			3		3
Marsaili Cash (Swimming Hole 7A)					
McEntee Family: "Admiral Ackbar"			1		1
McEntee Family: "Stumbleduck"			2		2
McEntee Family: "Verminator"			1		1
McEntee Family: "Weasel Vin Diesel"					
Mike Camm					
Nan & Malcolm Pullman			1		1
Opie Family		1	2		3
Pat Lacy (BH06)					
Pat Lacy (TW02)		2	1		3
Phil & Kate Taylor			1		1
Rua Awa (LG11A)			1		1
Rua Awa (TW08)			1		1
Sally & Mark			1		1
Shirley and Kevin McEntee	1				1
Simmonds family, Melbourne			2		2
Turangi Painting Services			1		1
WABBILOW		2	1		3
Total Result	1	18	54	1	74



TRAP SPONSORS

Sally Lashmar

A big “Thank You” to Sheryl and Warren Simpson from Rua Awa Lodge, Kakahi, for sponsoring 2 of our Owhango Alive traps!

Sheryl joined me for a walk along the trap lines, to choose which traps they would like to place their name tags on. Now, get catching, traps!

These newly sponsored traps add to the 30 traps already sponsored, so thanks go to our many sponsors and supporters – without you all, Owhango Alive wouldn’t be the success it is!

STOP PRESS!

Since an OA facebook post re Sheryl and Warren sponsoring traps, our post went “viral” (well, kind of) and 7 more traps have since been sponsored!

So thanks go to our most recent trap sponsors: Mandy Lacy, Pat Lacy, Stacey Aoake, Bill and Carol O’Donnell, and Maree Surrey.

Thanks, of course, go to ALL of our trap sponsors over the years – you can check them out on the “sponsored trap table” in the newsletter.

Special mention to Derek and Ann Percy, local and long time Owhango residents, who approached Mark (OA Chair) while he was checking traps, to ask what he was up to.

Next thing, a cheque arrived in the OA bank account from Derek and Ann – thus the idea was born to offer traps for sponsorship. This was back in 2013!

We now have over 37 sponsored traps, so if you too would like to sponsor a trap or two, they can be sponsored for \$50 each, for a 1 year period.

Each year, you will have the opportunity to re-sponsor your trap for \$50 per annum.

Alternatively you may choose to make a donation of your choice, to go towards trap maintenance, purchasing lures to entice predators into the traps, investing in more sophisticated trapping devices and/or native trees to plant in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve.

Each year, Owhango Alive celebrates World Rivers Day, where we plant about 100 native trees in the Reserve. You may even like to join us on the day to plant “your trees”.

If you are keen to donate for either traps, trees or general running costs, you can contact us at owhangoalive@yahoo.com or, of course, on our Facebook page.

*New trap sponsors Sheryl Simpson, Bill O’Donnell, and Maree Surrey
Photos by Sally Lashmar*

TREE DONATION

Sally Lashmar

Each year Owhango Alive purchases trees to plant on World Rivers Day – we always try to buy locally, both to ensure the trees are acclimatised to our climate and also to support local business.

For the last 3 years, we have purchased our trees from King Country Natives, Taumarunui.

In April, Jen and Julia from KC Natives offered 40 koromiko plants to Owhango Alive – free of charge!

The OA working bee team duly planted the koromiko in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, where the young plants have happily settled in to their forever home.

Many thanks go to Jen and Julia, King Country Natives – we look forward to working with you in the future.

WORKING BEE with TAUMARUNUI KIWIBANK STAFF

Sally Lashmar

Each year Kiwi Bank offer their banking staff to a community group for a day of volunteer work – this year Kiwi Bank Taumarunui chose Owango Alive! “Yes please” we said, “have we got the jobs for you!”

So a working bee was planned for the end of June with our OA team of vollies plus three staff from Kiwi Bank – Andrea Lethborg, Angela Bycroft and Mabel Hune.

Armed with secateurs, sacks and saws, we all proceeded with the ongoing work of hacking and hauling out more pesky weeds.

Everyone got stuck in, so, with much laughter fun and not too much sweat (it was a coolish day), more privet and blackberry was removed from Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve.

Many thanks go to our Kiwi Bank team – it was productive and fun working with you all.



OWHANGO ALIVE HI VIZ VESTS

Sally Lashmar

Michelle Campbell and Jack Faulkner recently arrived at ours to present their fabulous new Hi Viz vests – complete with the “sew/iron on” patches (designed by Jack) for the front and the Owango Alive logo printed on the back.

Michelle and Jack are both volunteers for OA and had noted that there was a need for our Hi Viz vests to be available for our vollies, whether checking their traps, attending working bees or participating in events.

So, over and above the call of a vollie, Jack and Michelle bought and donated 6 Hi Viz vests, all printed with the logo on the back and sewed the “patches” on the front.

Thanks go to both of you, from all of us, for your generosity of spirit and for everything else you do for Owango Alive.

The “patches” are also available to sew/iron on to your own tee shirt, coat, back pack etc - \$10 each – all proceeds go to Owango Alive.

Just contact us at owhangoalive@yahoo.com if you too would like your own “patch” and support our conservation work at the same time.



All photos by Sally Lashmar



Can you hear the the call of the Toutouwai (North Island Robin)?

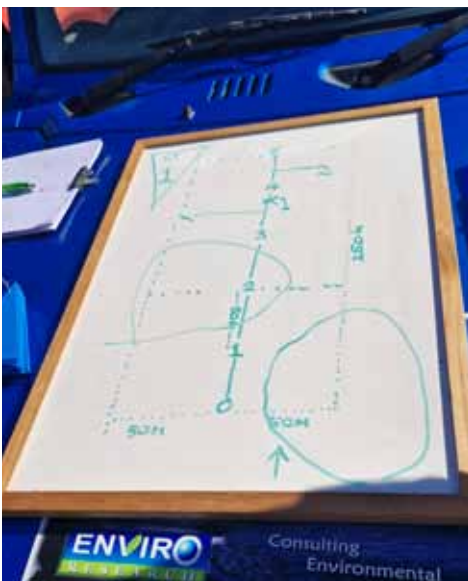
This was the task for 3 Owhango Alive volunteers; Michelle, Heather and Julie, during a training session in the Distance Sampling method of bird counts with Kerry Oates, Director of Enviro Research Ltd. Sally Lashmar, our Project Co-ordinator arranged the session with Kerry on 24 March 2024.

Kerry has been involved in predator control and monitoring outcomes for over 20 years in several parts of the country. He is now based in Ohakune and involved with the Predator Free Ohakune group.

Distance Sampling is a recognised method of assessing populations in areas that have undertaken predator control, enabling us to count the predators caught and monitor the outcomes of the catches.

Distance sampling is carried out twice a year, in spring and autumn. It involves choosing locations to set up monitoring lines, choosing an indicator species and walking each line 10 times over a 6-week period, recording the calls and/or sightings each time. The indicator species recommended by Kerry was the Toutouwai (North Island Robin) because of its distinctive call, the fact that it can be seen at ground as well as tree level and that it is a territorial bird.

The monitoring lines are 250 metres in length, with triangle markers spaced 50 metres apart. Calls/sightings can be recorded between markers within 50 metres either side of the line. (insert photo of diagrams)

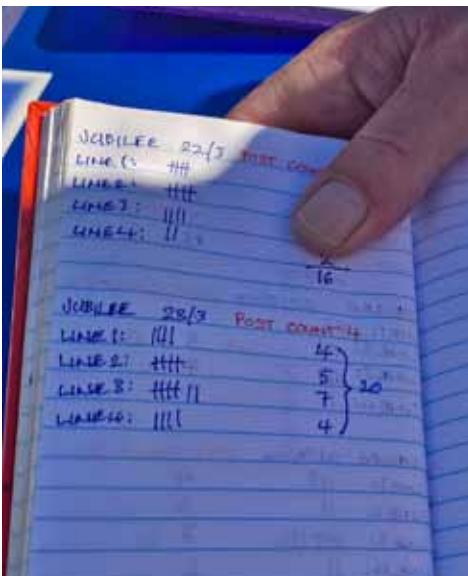


As there were 3 volunteers, 6 locations were selected, giving us 2 lines each to monitor. Markers were placed by Sally and the respective volunteer on each line. By the middle of May we had completed our 10 walks and recorded our findings. This data has been forwarded to Kerry for analysis.

So if you are walking the Boathole track, the Tawa line, the Swimming Hole track or the Lagoon track, you might spot a blue triangle with a number (from 0-5) on it.

Our next series of walks is due in Spring so you may see us with notebook in hand listening/looking for Toutouwai.

This is a longitudinal project and we anticipate at least 3 years of monitoring our lines. We are looking forward to Kerry's analysis of our data and being able to correlate this with our trapping programme.



Photos by Sally Lashmar

In March this year, the biggest kiwi translocation to leave Maungatautari Mountain began. Two hundred and seventeen kiwi were translocated around the country and included eighty seven being released into the foothills of Tongariro Conservation Area. Jack and I were lucky enough to join DOC staff Jerome, Luke, Steven and D.J to assist and observe with their release.

The giant white van carrying the precious cargo was met at the Pumice pit with much anticipation by a local kura and a few Ruapehu locals. Each kiwi was unloaded from their wooden travel boxes with gasps and frantic camera clicks. “Ahhhs” punctuated the air while the expert wrangling of DOC workers ensured the kiwis’ insidious looking talons were kept in check while they posed for photos. What surprised me most was the overwhelming size difference between the kiwi sexes. Males were gently relocated from into their travel boxes looking tired and with bodies less than half the size of their female counterparts who I overheard Jerome describing as “absolute monsters.” He wasn’t wrong - one particularly cantankerous female snapped her beak in distaste and Luke quickly placed her into the cardboard relocation box, clearly not a fan of the conservation paparazzi - photos were declined.

Once we were loaded into ATVs with kiwi cargo balanced carefully on our knees we bumped our way along the 42nd traverse for a solid 45 minutes. Deep in the bush DOC staff found perfect hollowed out trees where the kiwi could chill out for a bit before exploring their new location. We gently placed ferns over the entries to their burrows so they could have a well deserved nap and I couldn’t help but think of their long journey to get here.

In 2005, Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro, one of the mana whenua of Tongariro, gifted four one-month-old chicks, two males and two females, to Ngāti Korokī Kahukura. Prior to this deforestation and predation from introduced predators like stoats had decimated the original population of kiwi that once lived on Maungatautari. Translocational releases of kiwi signal almost two decades of hard work and determination. It’s amazing thinking about the crucial parts both staff and volunteers play in ensuring the success of our native bird species. Everybody has a role to play and they are all important. Most of the kiwi’s we released settled into their new abodes and we quietly left them to it. But when Steven and I released one of the last males we had trouble locating a good hollow. We settled on a snug nook that the bird clearly took exception to. He gave it approximately 3 seconds before spinning on heels and taking off full gusto, his feathery butt disappearing into thick crown ferns. I called out after him, “OK bye! Good luck!”



Photos - Michelle Campbell

Update on “The Poplars Farm” / Kirikau Valley trapping programme.

Ken McCann

Since our last report quite a lot has happened in the valley.

We have helped out two neighbours with feral cat problems, one had a problem with a tomcat beating up their cat and the second had something killing chooks, which turned out to be two feral cats.

The chook problem job was interesting because we caught the first cat on the second night in our cage trap and had the action on game camera. On the third night the second cat turned up on the camera and was wary of the trap but did steal the tempting bait from the front step of the trap. This process went on every 2 to 3 nights for another 27 nights until finally the tom was caught.

Watching what happens around cage traps on video has been very enlightening and following on from attending a Cam Speedy lecture at the Kaitieke Hall we purchased a new double entry trap. I fitted a plywood floor and trip plate to the new trap so the cat doesn't feel the cold steel base of the trap and it has been located at a bridge site on the Kokakonui stream, which is an entry point thru the Poplars farm to a newly established pine forest.

We also had a single end cage trap and game camera there and in one 10 day period identified 7 different feral cats crossing the bridge on the camera. The new double ended trap is now accounting for cats on a regular basis. The single end trap has not caught a cat since the double has been installed. I think the moral here is if a cat can see straight thru the trap it is more likely to enter.

On a lighter side it also captured a very embarrassed farm fox terrier who could not resist the tempting bait.

This last January we also caught the first ferret that had ever been seen in the valley. We think this animal had followed the new forestry track from the top of the Te Maire valley to Kokakonui bridge area.

On one of our cameras at a group of old macrocarpa trees, we picked up some bats flying about on several occasions so we have been attempting to eradicate a group of ship rats that have been teasing us on the same camera. We are making progress but I am amazed how cunning and wary ship rats are.

We are also still catching the odd possum at a couple of sites but not on a regular basis. In the spring we will have a go at setting up a possum night club as described by Cam Speedy. My trapping mate and darling wife Gill is about to have a hip replacement so has been quite limited for a while so our brother in law, Steve Maunder has been filling in. Steve brings a wealth of knowledge on possum behaviour from his work with Ministry of Ag and Fish when possum control started in the King Country.

I have just finished retro fitting plastic guards to both entry holes on all our D200 trap boxes. All indications so far are this is helping to increase our catch numbers.

Well, happy and productive trapping to you all.

Ken McCann



First cat in double end trap



Photos - Ken McCann

1. *Botrychium australe* the parsley fern.

Along the track leading to the Boat Hole there are various sunlit banks covered with a mixture of grasses, ferns and a wide range of small shrubs, both native and exotic. Growing amongst them are a small number of parsley fern plants. These are some of New Zealand's most primitive ferns and, although they are widely distributed throughout the country, they are often overlooked. Each plant consists of a short rhizome (underground stem) and usually a single frond. The appearance of the sterile part of the frond gives us its common name. Arising from the same stalk is the fertile part, bearing spore-producing sporangia. The spores fall away and develop underground into tiny tuber-like bodies which are fed by mycorrhizal fungi.

2. *Tmesipteris* species

Usually seen growing from the trunks of tree ferns, these extremely primitive ferns are the simplest vascular plants growing today. They evolved about 350 million years ago, long before dinosaurs and have no roots, just an underground rhizome and a single, usually unbranched, stem with leaf-like lobes. *Tmesipteris* species occur in Australia, Tasmania, N.Z., and some Pacific islands. Recently, a New Caledonian species was shown to have a genome 50 times larger than that of humans. *T. oblancoolata* has 160.49 Gbp (Gigabase pairs) compared to a measly 3.1Gbp distributed over 23 chromosomes in humans. It is not clear how (if at all) this helps the plants survive.



1. *Botrychium australe* the parsley fern.

2. *Tmesipteris* species

Photos - Sally Lashmar

WEED OF THE MONTH

Shirley McEntee

This moss, which is found in mostly tropical regions throughout the world has been found as fossils dating back to the Late Carboniferous period, over 300 million years ago. It originated in Central and Southern Africa and was probably introduced to N.Z. as an ornamental plant. It had become naturalised here by 1919. It is easily recognised by its form which is that of a flat leafed (2-4mm) ground cover. Spore cones are rounded and approx. 10mm. It tolerates a wide range of habitats, though prefers shady and damp areas. It was listed as a pest plant in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord due to its invasive nature whereby it inhibits the growth of new seedlings on the forest floor. This enables greater light penetration and subsequent weed growth. Eradication is difficult as it propagates easily by both spores and stem. Hence, is easily spread by human activity, livestock, water movement or transferral of contaminated soil. Suggested eradication techniques include physical removal and safe disposal of vegetative material by burning or burying deeply. It can easily regrow so these sites should be checked again after 3 months. The Weedbusters website suggests use of Glyphosate but this appears to have similar regrowth problems.

Reference and further reading: Weedbusters.org.nz; Wikipedia.org; nzpcn.org.nz



African club moss
Selaginella kraussiana

The first Saturday of May is T42 event day. The weather can be testing but it is remarkable how often we have a day that works. Dry enough and cool enough for competitors and sunny enough for the end point of the event at the Owhango Domain for supporters to enjoy a picnic and soak up the autumn sun.

The T42 event runs along the 42nd Traverse from near National Park, through the Tongariro Conservation Area, over the bridge across the the Whakapapa river, and on to the finish line in the Owhango Domain. Last year the event was a smaller affair with a large slip having closed the trail making it impossible to safely traverse the full length of the track. Over the summer DOC had cleared a way to bypass the slip and connect the 42nd Traverse to the Top Track. This diversion was tough, so reported many competitors, adding another gorge to be navigated. In the weeks prior to the event a local contractor pushed a digger through much of the 42 Trail to fill in trenches caused by our wet winter and to create a safer trail.

The T42 is after all a community event. The local primary school, the rate payers association, the volunteer fire brigade and Owhango Alive members all volunteer their time and energy to make the event a success, it is also an opportunity to show off our village. This also generates some funds for our community groups through providing food and via donations from the event organisers.

Around 480 competitors completed the event this year, with the fire brigade washing down a couple of hundred mountain bikes and the school feeding the supporters and volunteers. Owhango Alive helped with the set up and with the cleanup afterwards, with our allocated special duty being ensuring the site is secure overnight. This year we set up a fire pit to keep us warm while we watched over the sponsors tents. It was cold but the stars were out in full, the night passed without event. Last year we enjoyed ruru chasing moths around the flood lights but this year they didn't show up.

All in all a great event and we look forward to doing it all over again next year.



Photos Peter Brennan



A WHEEL, A WALK and a LAUGH!

Sally Lashmar

I was recently told a story about an experience some of our Owhango Alive volunteers shared while adventuring in the forest.

Amber-Krystle and Clive are both well involved with OA trap data collection, committee, admin work etc and Julie often attends our working bees.

Read on!

Part 1. by Amber-Krystle Stier

On a beautiful Tuesday afternoon, Clive offered to take me into our beautiful Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve to visit what we locals call The Swimming Hole.

And what I can say is that it was absolutely beautiful, even in the dead of winter. To be surrounded by the canopy of the trees and hear the birds was a wonderful experience – one I haven't been able to have in over 20 years.

It was also really nice to see the traps that I've heard so much about – to see them while I was being pushed over very bumpy terrain made me think what a wonderful job our volunteers at Owhango Alive do.

I can only imagine what we looked like when Julie came across us in the middle of the bush, me in the wheelchair, Clive sweating like a sinner in church and both of us laughing our heads off, having a great time!

After a few hours, many laughs and a few swear words from me, we made it out!

It is an experience I will treasure always and thank you Clive, for giving me the opportunity to experience our beautiful Reserve.

Part 2 by Julie Owen

On a recent walk around the Ohinetonga Reserve we were really surprised to meet this lovely pair coming towards us, on the south end of the track.

It was quite emotional to see that even in a wheelchair, people can still experience our lovely native bush tracks by the Whakapapa River and hear the many birds.

All things that many of us take for granted.

THE SMILES SAID IT ALL!



Amber-Krystle and Clive. Photo - Julie Owen



Gathering before Northern Loop opening ceremony, Mark Fredericks and Sally Lashmar - Photos by Peter Brennan

NORTHERN LOOP RE-OPENS

Marion Johnston



At last the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve has its Northern Loop track open to everyone, with a flight of steps where there once was a loose gravel slope, and replacement railing where the slip had damaged the track and washed the broken and bent railing into the river. Now walkers can once again enjoy one of the best views over the Whakapapa River to the Tongariro Conservation Area.

It wasn't the sunniest of days on Monday 22 July - okay it was raining - but all those attending the opening were happy to see the work achieved by the Department of Conservation team.

Owhango Alive organised this special event to mark the opening of the slip site. About 30 people met at the the Whakapapa Bridge car park in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve at 10am to walk to the slip site. DOC was well represented, plus volunteers from Owhango Alive, local Councillor Murray Wilson, supporters from the local communities and Mayor Weston Kirton. Chair of Owhango Alive, Mark Fredericks, led the proceedings which started with a karakia from Michelle Campbell, words from the Reverend Merv Aitken and from George Taylor DOC Operations Manager, Whakapapa. Then the symbolic ribbon was cut, this time by four people with 10 year old Beau Bryan who attends Owhango Primary School, Colleen Boston who is one of Owhango Alive's earliest volunteer trappers, Mayor Weston Kirton and DOC Operations Manager, George Taylor.

Despite the wet and muddy conditions, everyone had a good look at the great restoration that DOC has completed and then headed back for a warm drink and kai at the pavilion in Owhango Domain.



Top: New flight of steps - photo Marion Johnston . Centre: Cutting the ribbon are Beau Bryan, Weston Kirton, Colleen Boston and George Taylor - photo Toni Thatcher. Bottom photos: attendees at re-opening of Northern Loop - photo Peter Brennan

It has been a busy last few months for Owhango Alive, as reflected in the varied articles in this issue. Thank you to all who have contributed. A special mention must be made of Sally Lashmar for her hard work gathering material for the newsletter.

Now we are looking for articles and photographs for the Spring issue. Oh and don't forget World Rivers Day, Sunday 29 September. More details closer to the time.

Ka kite ano
David Robinson
Editor