



NEWSLETTER #07 / NOV 2021

WILD FOR TARANAKI UPDATE

Kia ora,

We recently held our Wild for Taranaki AGM. Although disappointing not to be held face-to-face, it was lovely to see such a large turn-out for a Zoom meeting.

We're pleased to welcome four new board members, who bring a wealth of experience and perspectives to the governance of our Trust: Amanda Clinton-Gohdes, Jan Hania, Tane Houston and Damian Roper. They join existing board members Simon Cayley, Bev Gibson, Michael Joyce and Lauren Wallace.

Our long-time chairperson Roy Weaver has retired and we thank him for steering the waka over the past five years. Thank you also to Michelle Bird and Allen Juffermans, who have recently departed the board.

Our Annual Report is now on our website, outlining achievements for the 20/21 year. In it you'll notice we've put together a graphic of all the Wild for Taranaki member groups and approximate locations.

We're planning to expand on this in a clickable web version with more detail so we can assist people wanting to help biodiversity efforts and provide an overall regional view of what's going on, whether that's planting, trapping, education or reintroducing species. If we haven't spoken to you about this we'd love to hear your feedback.

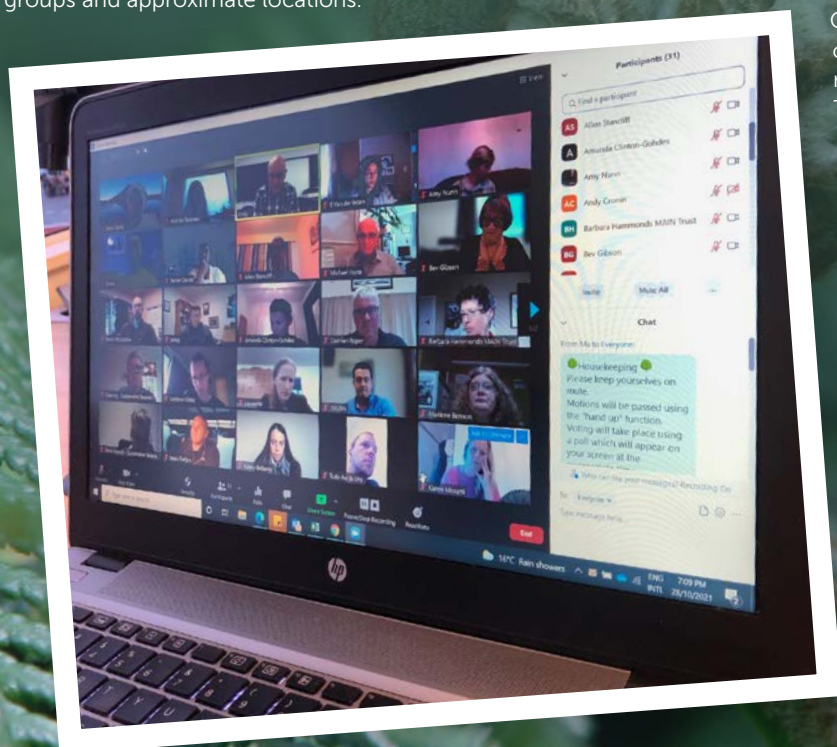
A few other things going on: We're waiting to hear on an application to MBIE Unlocking Curious Minds Funds. The project, if it gets the go ahead, will explore how satellite imagery and weather data combined with oral history and community values tell the story of a catchment and supports iwi and community to take action.

We have also been working on a Taranaki Coastal Seabird strategy, considering where we can leverage off existing effort and strengthen restoration and protection actions along the Taranaki coastline and pitching it with funders. An overview of it is up on our website and we'll be seeking feedback from iwi and community groups and anyone else keen to be involved over the next few months.

As we head into the so-called 'silly season' marking the end of year, we wish you all the best with your health and wellbeing.

Ngā mihi,

Andy Cronin
General Manager



Some of the more than 50 Zoom participants at the Wild for Taranaki AGM.



WILD FOR TARANAKI CHAIR RETIRES

The recently-retired chair of Wild for Taranaki (W4T) is confident he is leaving the organisation in a state where it has 'wings and is now flying'.

Roy Weaver, has been on the board since 2016 and chair for the past four years.

"In that time I've seen it grow from an idea, through a number of iterations to finally getting to a formula that works and is delivering results, unifying the sector in Taranaki and being recognised nationally as Taranaki's biodiversity hub," he says.

When Roy first joined the board there were 19 groups and organisations belonging as members, which has now grown to 47.

"The breadth of W4T membership includes numerous conservation projects across Taranaki, local and central government, Iwi and hapū groups, education and research organisations, and representative groups such as Forest and

Bird, and Federated Farmers. That breadth is our strength.

Though not always easy to reconcile, those various viewpoints can be discussed, challenged, and a way forward for the sector in Taranaki found," he says.

One of the board's next challenges will be to work out if it would limit or continue growing membership, depending on what W4T is aiming to achieve. With the Trust's Deed up for a review next year this would be a good time to look at it and discuss options with members.

Roy, who also sits on the board of Maritime NZ among other board commitments, says his departure means more time with family including 5 young grandchildren, although his retirement was motivated more about making space for the next generation of Trustees to come through.

FERAL CATS FORUM

Advocating for a national cat management act, similar to what is in place for dogs, was one of the suggestions discussed at the Wild for Taranaki quarterly catch-up meeting.

The meeting's theme, held at the New Plymouth District Council chambers, was how to collectively tackle the increasing predator issue of feral cats and their impact on biodiversity. Member groups are noticing more cats being caught in traps and also seen on cameras in bush areas, home to native birds and wildlife.

Predator Free Trust chief executive Jessi Morgan spoke about work being done nationally and regionally, and the need for a clear definition on feral cats to distinguish them from pet cats. She said social license was important and it was a 'political hot potato'. "It can be really emotive and that's why we need clear definitions. We're not talking about domestic cats."

Conservation Manager Kat Strang, from the East Taranaki Environment Collective, discussed the research relating to feral cats. Her PhD research was on the ecology of feral cats on Ponui Island in the Hauraki Gulf, looking at what they eat, their reproduction and methods to control them.



Kat Strang speaking at the Feral Cat Forum with Emily Roberts

She said feral cats are hard to catch and move around a lot. When one is removed from an area, more move in and take over the territory.

For groups involved in pest management that can feel like a never-ending cycle of feral cats coming into bush areas where native species, such as kiwi, are at risk of being predated on. As one participant summed up, "We just want someone to turn the tap off. Rurally, there is no argument. It's not a complicated thing we are after."

The attendees, 35 in person and another dozen taking part via zoom, discussed collective solutions, best practice and areas for further research.

Wild for Taranaki Manager Andy Cronin said actions out of the forum would include a letter to councils and ministers calling for a nationally co-ordinated approach and for feral cats to be included in the regional council pest management plan. There was also potential for a cat management workshop to share best practice.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS



Thea Awhitu is loving the role she started earlier this year. She's a Tumu Arataki, or Pathways Coordinator, working with rangatahi and education providers and helping them develop skills and qualifications for working in the environment sector.

After returning home to Taranaki after eight years of scuba diving instructing in the South Island, Australia and the Philippines, Thea never imagined she'd find her dream job here. "My environment education was not something I got in Taranaki and growing up here we never thought working in the environment was a career path. To be able to expose rangatahi to what is out there is really exciting. I'm extremely passionate."

Thea works for a new programme, Tupu ā nuku, developed by Te Kāhui Maru (Ngāti Maru PSGE), which began this year after several years in the planning. It was set up partly as a response to the lack of a Taranaki environmental workforce, as contractors from outside the region were brought in to do planting and forestry seasonal contracts. Her role is working with schools, alternative education providers, wānanga and rangatahi, supporting them to get the skills they need and work in the environment sector. Thea sees it as breaking down the barriers, when formal ways of learning are not always suitable for young people. "University wasn't for me. I'm practical based so when I learned scuba diving it made much more sense to me to learn about physics through how buoyancy works."

We can bring that type of conservation learning into the field."

She co-ordinates tailored training courses, such as bee-keeping or pest certifications, and helps young people with their potential career pathways. Anaru White is the manager of Tupu ā nuku. Lisa Holland works alongside Thea, and Jayden Waiwiri and Dani Toutai provide pastoral support.

Although Covid has put a 'temporary mute' on some of the face-to-face interactions with rangatahi and education organisations, it is not halting progress, and Tupu ā nuku has adapted to restrictions. It meant 'taster' days for students during the last school holidays were run with lower numbers. The young people involved still spent three days out and about including a day with Topec on bush survival, at Rotokare Scenic Reserve and riparian planting with Tree Machine.

"Next year we're aiming to do two courses for Forestry and Conservation, and running taster days through every holiday period, along with interacting with schools and building awareness about what Tupu ā nuku offers," Thea says.

She says it has been refreshing coming back to Taranaki after years away seeing how much more opportunity there is and that many organisations are open to collaboration and sharing resources.

"I think I have the best role. I get to experience all these organisations and get to go off and marry them all together."

The programme is supported by the Covid Regional Recovery Leadership Group with funding from the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

APPRENTICE TAKES ON KIWI PROTECTION

A new apprentice at the Taranaki Kiwi Trust has hit the ground running. Māia Gibbs recently joined the Trust as a trainee Kiwi Habitat Protection Ranger, funded by the Predator Free NZ apprenticeship scheme.

She got the kiwi bug after attending a kiwi listening course at Pukearuru Marae and then volunteered with Tama Blackburn from DOC.

Trust Manager Celine Filbee is thrilled with the way Māia is slotting into the team and says she has been trapping, box building, kiwi and Kōkako monitoring, interspersed with some formal training. "Smart young people like Māia will secure the future of conservation in our country and I commend the initiative of Predator Free NZ, which has about 70 of these apprentices spread across NZ".



Māia Gibbs

Following school, Māia worked as a beekeeper, in hospitality and spent some time in Canada working as a beekeeper and a short stint in logistics and geotech. She is of Tuhoe and Poutama descent and her hapū is Te Ahuru. Having grown up on a farm in North Taranaki with ten siblings she is familiar with the rural landscape and fitting into a team.

Māia will be working predominantly with the Trust's Community Trapping Project and also gaining experience in kiwi operations and assisting other community projects. The Trust, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in October, employs nine staff and contractors and has around 50 active volunteers assisting in protecting and enhancing kiwi in Taranaki.

Four other Taranaki organisations and businesses have apprentices and are working together on the training outcomes required, with joint training events planned.

RESEARCH SUPPORTING TARANAKI RESTORATION

Taranaki looks set to benefit from a large-scale research project aiming to restore and improve biodiversity in cities and towns.

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Professor Bruce Clarkson, from Waikato University, has received \$10 million over 5 years from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Endeavour Fund.

The funding will support 20 researchers across four universities and one crown research institute to improve restoration efforts in urban backyards across Aotearoa and measure the impacts and benefits. Bruce, who is from Taranaki, met with a range of conservation and biodiversity groups in the region in September to discuss projects underway and how the funding could be relevant and useful.

The research will connect with Taranaki organisations involved in restoration, including New Plymouth and South Taranaki District Councils, Wild for Taranaki and member groups.

Bruce says the research aims to be relevant and add value to what is being done, and, with his close connections to the region, he'll take a keen interest in hosting workshops and sharing results.

"It's my chance to contribute to the great work going on in my home region in Taranaki," he says.

The research has four interconnected aims:

- Residential Design for Biodiversity, discovers the capacity of urban neighbourhoods to support greater native biodiversity for the benefits of both people and nature, finding best methods for incorporating initially or by retrofitting.
- Retain & Restore Urban Wildlife, assesses habitats of all sizes in urban landscapes, focusing on reducing impacts of introduced mammalian predators and enhancing native fauna like birds and lizards.
- Restoring Health-Promoting Soil Biodiversity, characterises soil biodiversity across urban restoration chronosequences and tests the links with human exposure and health.
- Whanake rākau, whakatipu mātauranga, poipoiā te tangata: Growing trees, enhancing knowledge, nurturing people, develops a framework/approach for empowering local indigenous knowledge such as the māramataka for ecological restoration.

