



Kia ora koutou / Seasons greetings.

Some of the initiatives included in this newsletter were beyond our wildest dreams when a small group formed in 2017 to protect kiwi and to promote community-led conservation work in the newly formed Piroa-Brynderwyns High Value Area (HVA). Community interest in conservation projects has blossomed over the past five years. This work has gone hand in hand with opening walking tracks making some of our hidden treasures more accessible.

Piroa Conservation Trust is focused on conservation projects. Mangawhai, and more recently the Wairahi trackies, are focused on opening recreational walking and cycling tracks. Trackies continue to play an important role in opening easy access for pest control projects and education - these activities go hand in hand. Many of the trackies are also actively involved in pest control projects and their champion trapper won this year's Trapper of the Year Award.

Our Christmas newsletter includes stories about the exciting and innovative projects that are underway in our HVA including a Kiwi presence survey, our conservation in schools programme, and the fledgling waterway catchment group initiative boosted by a community native plant nursery. We support and applaud everyone in their community-led conservation work.

Over time projects throughout Te Tai Tokerau will hold hands to regenerate and enhance the natural beauty and ecological significance of this amazing region.

We wish you all an enjoyable Christmas and New Year

Nga mihi mahana

Ann Neill / Peter Hunt (co-chairs Piroa Conservation)





Volunteers learning the ropes

5 Minute Bird Count Training

On November 13th a group of keen conservationists gathered to learn from Dr Dai Morgan from NRC about monitoring native bird species and density in the ranges. The work is important as over time this will provide evidence around the impact our groups' pest control programmes are having, and what new species are returning to the area.

Over the past couple of years, the group has noticed more species comfortably residing in the areas where rats, possums and mustelid are controlled.

2 years ago, Bream Tail Farm saw breeding kiwi return and more recently bellbird and kaka - all three species- are now recorded regularly on the property. Over the road at Waorahi Conservation Estate bellbirds have returned and other native species are growing in numbers, but the Marunui Conservation estate continues to be the hub for kiwi conservation in the area along with other species such tomtit, bellbird, grey warbler, ruru, kererū, pīwakawaka, fernbird, and shining cuckoo.

With other landowners joining the journey, and the 3 large DOC reserves in the ranges now part of the pest control programme, the group expects to see broader spread of native birds - given there is increased safe habitat to reside.

The team of 20 local volunteers will now monitor key bush sites to track and record a collection of key native species. Some of the volunteers will also be working with the local schools to train the students to assist and be involved as part of their conservation curriculum.



Wrapping up the field work at Bream Tail Farm

The return of the Air Force! - progressing the work on the Waorahi Track

Once again, the Royal New Zealand Air Force returned to help us progress work on the Waorahi Track. A team of 20 staff came for a day of hard work and to experience the amazing environment we all enjoy so



much. Work progressed very well thanks to the incredible effort of all involved.

The Mangawhai Trackies have been instrumental in continuing the work over past weeks and in guiding the RNZAF work on the day. Massive thanks to both the RNZAF and the Mangawhai Trackies for their remarkable efforts.

The track is another recreational track through amazing landscape where serious conservation work is under way. Waorahi is 200 acres of native bush newly added to PBL's pest control programme: the great work will further enable safe habitat for native species to flourish in the ranges.

Once completed the track will provide easier access for teams to manage animal and plant pests along with providing a new walkway for the community to experience.

The native bush is already seeing the return of many native birds and regrowth of the understory now that rats and possums have largely been controlled, if not eradicated. The work at Waorahi has also included the removal of many pest plants including areas of wild pine.

Bruce (the owner of Waorahi) is one of the areas' 5 Minute Bird Count team which has now completed the monitoring on Waorahi. The monitoring will provide a benchmark for future years' comparisons and quantitative evidence on the impact of the pest control work.



Thanks to the teams at both the **Mangawhai Meat Shop** and the **Waipu Four Square** for putting on the BBQ for the day's workers. The group enjoyed a well-deserved swim and BBQ at the Waipu Surf Club to finish the day. We greatly appreciate the sponsorship of our local businesses!

Creating the Flock around Mangawhai

As an acknowledgement of how keen the students at both the Mangawhai Beach School and the Mangawhai Nature School were to trap predators to protect our birds, PBL supplied them with traps to use in their own backyards. This coincided with the return of New Zealand's long-haul native flock.



As part of their conservation programme the students then learnt about how migratory shorebirds connect inland New Zealand with the coast. Many of our endemic birds migrate from their winter habitat to other places in New Zealand. Examples of this are the tiny Ngutuparore/Wrybill and the much larger Tōrea/South Island Pied Oystercatchers that migrate annually between New Zealand's main islands, breeding in South



Island riverbeds and farmland and wintering on the North Island's coasts. These are our endemic birds. Tara Iti migrates from coast to coast and is here on our beaches to breed over summer.

Our native long-haul migratory birds connect New Zealand to the rest of the world; they are capable of amazing feats of endurance. An example of this is the Kuaka or Bar-tailed Godwit that created a record by staying in the air for 11 days straight, in its effort to get to its feeding grounds thousands of kilometres from its breeding grounds in Alaska.

Inspired to protect our birds, students at both schools have painted their own 'Flock'. The 'Flock' is a creative and fun project to spread the word about our amazing migratory shorebirds and what we can do to ensure their protection. To see the students' enthusiasm and passion for the natural world is encouraging. This activity has been developed by the Miranda Shorebird Centre.

None of it would have been possible without the amazing volunteer work by Neville from the Waipu Menz Shed who made all the wooden bird cut-outs for the students to paint. What a legend!

Special thanks to Glenys from Mangawhai About Tern. Glenys took on the task of managing the project. She was joined by Jane Vaughan from Mangawhai About Tern at the after-school painting sessions at Mangawhai Beach School. Susan, the



Neville hard at work

PBL educator, did the in-class work to prepare students for the project. It was great to have experienced birders sharing their knowledge and facilitating the activities with teachers Jackie (MBS) and Maree (MNS).



You will see the Mangawhai Nature School's Flock in the Mangawhai Santa Parade on 11 December 1pm from Alamar Crescent, through Wood Street shops and finishing at MAZ.

Please help these students with their efforts to protect our amazing shorebirds during the holiday period by doing your bit to keep them safe. Remember you are sharing their breeding, feeding and rest-up territory when you go to the beach this summer.

Coast Track work is under way

Lang's Beach to Waipu Cove walkway is getting ready for summer: work is underway between Lang's Beach and Waipu Cove to improve the walkability and safety of the track. This project (jointly funded by the Whangarei District Council and the Wairahi Tracks' Charitable Trust) will be completed, to the extent that funds allow, by Christmas.



The Trackies have already put in weeks of intensive effort by delivering to site all of pre-cut timber and the gravel required by the contractor to build the 29 sets of steps designed for the improvement of the track.

The Trackies have continued to do weed control, native revegetation and trapping along the track. Once done this track will provide safe passage along the coastline for the public to enjoy along with great educational opportunities and easier access for volunteers to continue their pest control efforts.

It is a team effort! Many, many thanks to all who volunteered their time and energy - whether lugging

the bags of gravel and the timber, pointing the pegs, pulling out weeds, planting new vegetation, letting the Trackies use their facilities, with special thanks to the owners of neighbouring properties who provided access. Thank you also to Northpine, ITM, and Mountfield for their generous contributions.

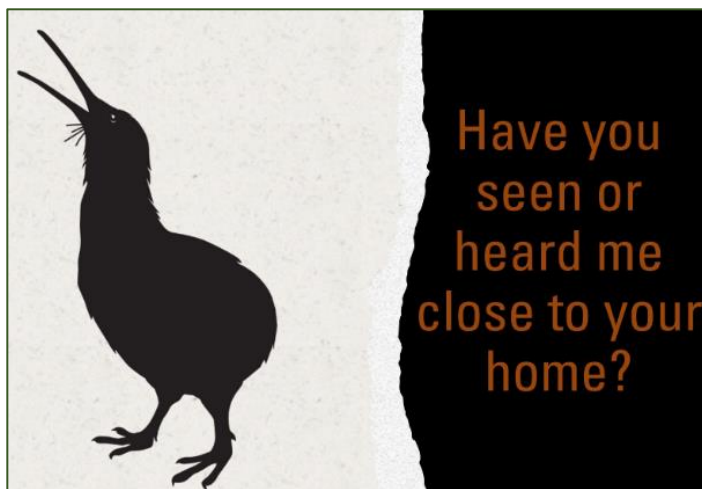
The building contractors, Northland Park Care Ltd have completed over 80% of the step construction, so bring on summer so we can all enjoy the track over the holiday season!

Wairahi Tracks Trust still need funds to complete the track and would appreciate any donation - a Givealittle page has been set up for donations (<https://givealittle.co.nz/org/wairahitracks>) and signs placed at either end of the track. Alternatively, email trackies@wairahitracks.nz or visit the website www.wairahitracks.nz



Kiwi Survey

The kiwi survey that aims to determine how far in the Piroa-Brynderwyns area kiwi have spread is well underway. With kiwi listening devices installed in over 130 locations in the last few months, a picture of kiwi movement in the ranges is starting to form. The good news is that birds have been heard in numerous locations, some of which were not previously known. Much work is being done in these areas to protect this taonga species. Some of the locations where kiwi are living include the hills above Baldrock Road, up behind Lang's, out at Bream Tail Farm, at Marunui, in the Waipu forestry, near the winding section of Cove Road on the way from Mangawhai to Lang's, and in the Tanekaha DoC reserve. If you have heard kiwi in other areas, please get in touch by email: PiroaBrynderwynsLandcare@outlook.com or text Tace on 021 048 0011.



One of the biggest challenges for our local kiwi population is the threat of dogs. Uncontrolled and stray dogs in the Piroa Brynderwyns are a huge risk for both kiwi chicks and adults

An adult kiwi can live and breed for more than 50 years but sadly, in Northland, dog kills bring the average breeding life of a kiwi down to 14 years. Even cute, friendly, small dogs can kill kiwi and with the holiday season here, the dog population

in this area increases hugely.

There are many things owners can do to keep our local kiwi safe from dogs. A great place to start is to have a look at the Kiwi Dog Owners' Brochure on the The Kiwi Coast website, or to go along to one of the Know your Dog workshops that are being held in the area.

Know Your Dog Workshop in Waipu

At the end of November in partnership with Kiwi Coast we ran our first Know Your Dog Workshop in Waipu. Despite the terrible weather we had a good group learning about animal behaviour, traits and how to successfully manage your four-legged friends - especially around our wildlife.

We will be running our next workshop in Mangawhai in February as per the advert later in this newsletter.

With summer now on our doorstep it is time to remember how to be a responsible dog parent this summer. Many of you will be jumping for joy at the idea of taking your dog on holiday with you. But do you know what responsible dog ownership on holiday entails?



Responsible pet activity is about choosing walking tracks and visiting nature parks that permit dogs, and need-to-knows about boating, toileting and lead etiquette etc.

Much as you may want to take your pup to your favourite lake or beach - not all outdoor activities are pet-friendly. We cannot emphasise enough how important it is to control your dog on the beach. New Zealand has some of the rarest animals and most delicate ecosystems in the world.

NZ dotterel/tūturiwhatu, little penguins/kororā, red-billed gulls/tarāpunga, and many others are declining in number. Unfortunately, these are put at risk by pet owners who let their dogs run free in places where there's wildlife. Where are the local dog walking areas?

- Mangawhai: the following link takes you to the KDC dog bylaw document which lists all the on/off leash and prohibited areas. [Policy on Dogs & Dog Bylaw 2019-Adopted.pdf \(kaipara.govt.nz\)](https://www.kaipara.govt.nz/assets/Policy-on-Dogs-&Dog-Bylaw-2019-Adopted.pdf)
- Lang's, Waipu, Bream Bay etc: the Whangarei District Council site lists on/off leash and prohibited areas including the changes over the summer holiday period. [Content search - Whangarei District Council \(wdc.govt.nz\)](https://www.wdc.govt.nz/contentsearch)



Continue reading the DOC blog for more details [How to be a responsible dog parent this December | Conservation blog \(doc.govt.nz\)](https://www.doc.govt.nz/blog/2022/12/how-to-be-a-responsible-dog-parent-this-december/)

[200 Acres of Native Bush newly added to our pest control programme.](#)

A keen group of volunteers with sponsorship from NRC have installed bait stations and toxin in the ranges in a new block of land that has to date not had any pest control operations conducted. This Waipu West area falls outside the Brynderwyns High Value Area (HVA), however through a separate biofund programme NRC was able to support the project leader, Johnno, with some traps. This is a great example of a few teams working together outside the HVA area to support other keen volunteers.



Volunteer James Hook out in the bush



The possum disco!

The project took over 120 hrs hours to complete by around 10 volunteers on the rugged terrain. A massive thanks to Graeme Giles for driving this project with Johno and the volunteers.

To date 175 bait stations have been placed in the bush with 250g of pindone added at the same time to reduce the rat population. Another round of pindone is planned for next autumn followed by more toxin to deal to both rats and possums.



Headquarters after a day of installation

Added to the bait stations a few auto traps were placed in areas of the bush to see just how many possums were present. In one night, 38 possums were trapped - one trap being responsible for a massive 13 possums singlehandedly.

The animal highways on the ridges were a sight to behold! As you can see in the photographs the understory is sparse due to possums and rats depleting the new growth, so hopefully the bush will take a turn for the better once the rats and possums are controlled.

As well as marked animal highways and absence of understory, the volunteers observed hardly any bird life.



There are at least 4,000ha of regenerating ngahere and pine plantations involved here including 1,300ha of DoC reserve in the Mareretu Forest. The Waipu West project covers 7,000ha.

If you are keen to help with the project, drop Graeme an email graeme.giles.au@gmail.com

[Mangawhai Nature School - conservation impact.](#)

In their recent visit to Tara Iti, students from Mangawhai Nature School looked at the impact focused conservation can have. Each of these students is already doing conservation work by trapping in the school habitat. During their visit to Tara Iti, which was led by the Conservation Manager, Alex Flavell-Johnson, they were able to walk from regenerating native bush to wetlands and see the sand dunes that had been stabilised with planting.

Interestingly the plants used have been grown from locally-sourced seed and raised in a nursery close by. Students were also able to see that plants had managed to self-seed from one wetland area to another. When they saw the beehives, the students instantly thought that these were being used for bees to produce honey. Thus, the conversation moved to the role of insects in a habitat and to how different plants use different methods to spread their seeds.



Though they didn't see a bittern in the wetlands, they found bittern footprints in the sand. One of the things that really drew their interest was the camera set up to monitor hedgehogs. One of the first things they did was look for tracks in the sand. As these students have all been trapping in the school environment, this was a good way to bring the conversation around to pests in a habitat. They diverted to look at traps to see if there was catch in any of them. These traps are different to the rat traps they use at the school and at home. These junior trappers are doing such a great job with their own trap line and their home traps.

The number of quail moving about, and skylarks singing above the group as they walked made it easy to turn the conversation to birds. On their walk along the way to Te Arai stream they encountered oyster catchers in pairs, northern New Zealand Dotterel protecting territory, and pipits in the sand around the dune plants.



All these birds are endemic. By the time the students reached the fenced off area on the other side of Te Arai stream, they had a better understanding of why the fence was up and they were able to look at how birds use debris for shelter. Though there were whitefront terns present there were no New Zealand Fairy Terns. It is not unusual to see fairy terns close to the other the larger terns such as Tara and Taranui.

A big thanks to Alex for making the visit to Tara Iti happen and to their teacher Maree for the organisation behind such a trip.

Waipu's Catchment Group - up and running

Throughout New Zealand over 300 catchment groups have been started by farmers, landowners, and local communities as a way to help each other out to improve and maintain the health of shared waterways. The groups get together for social working bees planting up their riparian strips and learning how else they can improve their waterways.

On Thursday November 17th over 40 farmers gathered on the banks of the Ahuroa River for a Waipū catchment kick off meeting. Many came away from the rainy morning with a clear path of how they can work together with their neighbours to improve the quality of the waterways that pass through their land.

Ben Herbert from Fonterra, one of the organisers and speakers at the event, said “I've never seen such a good turn out in the many farming events I've been to.”

Simon Couper, a dairy farmer by the Millbrook River and Trustee for Piroa Conservation Trust (PCT), has felt for some time there was a need to start a catchment group on the river. “It's a way to bring awareness of the river health and the collective responsibility for making waterways better.” He went on to say “Farmers have been fencing waterways for over ten years and continue with their efforts to comply with Regional Council requirements and Farm Environment Plans. Getting together as a catchment group builds on this work to create more of a community for further improving environmental outcomes for farms and waterways.”



The event was a team effort coordinated by Piroa Conservation Trust (PCT) and Waipū Waters along with Whitebait Connection, Patuharakeke Taiao unit, Fonterra, Dairy NZ and NZ Landcare Trust. Northland Regional Council, Whangarei District Council and the Department of Conservation also participated.

Piroa Conservation Trust really appreciates the commitment and effort of everyone involved. We welcome any farmers and landowners within the Waipū River Catchment to join the groups being

started for each of the sub-catchments. Sends us a message at piroabyrnderwynslandcare@outlook.com

Nursery Shindig Opening



A fun gathering was had by Waipū locals to celebrate the opening of the Waipū Waters Community Nursery in November.

Motivated by a collective goal of improving the health of our rivers, the Waipū Waters Community Nursery was formed. The nursery was initiated in May 2022 by the conservation group, Waipū Waters. Working with Piroa Conservation Trust, the nursery aims to produce 20,000 native plants annually for riparian margins, wetlands, and the restoration of migratory paths.

Currently the nursery is growing plants for the Waipū River Walk, the Waipū to Waipū Cove Cycle and Walkway and for local farmers who are interested in planting their riverbanks. Recipients wishing to obtain plants must either pay for the trees or put in some time to produce and plant them. All plants that leave the nursery must be planted in the ground and not left for the landowner to plant at their convenience. All seeds are eco-sourced locally as there are variations of every species within a small radius of a few kilometres.

Dave Brown of Tahamoana Angora goat farm has allowed the use of a discarded nursery on his land for the project. The first working bee was held in June, when over twenty volunteers took on the task of clearing the



area which had been dormant for around a decade. Dave also helped with logistics and landscaping.

After a successful start a regular gathering was established. Volunteers have been turning up every second Sunday of the month to continue clearing weeds, repair growing sites and develop a sustainable working nursery. Coralie Roberts has taken the role of nursery manager and has initiated a seed potting operation known as 'Potting Thursdays'. A small group attend the productive yet social gatherings resulting in approx. 5000 native plants being potted. If you are keen to attend, the potting sessions occur 5.30pm to 8pm every week with a shared dinner afterwards. The nursery would welcome new volunteers - if interested please contact Coralie kirkhouse@xtra.co.nz or phone 027432 0293.

Volunteers are also wanted for the second Sunday of every month - contact Peter pg@ecoprojects.nz

Looking Forward

Mangawhai Know Your Dog Workshop



Get inside the mind the mind of your canine companion to understand what is behind some of their quirky traits and antics.

Cost: free

Time: 10am until noon

Mangawhai: Sunday 26th February

Register [HERE](#).

<https://forms.office.com/r/trbeat6wEK>

Learn more: <https://kiwicoast.org.nz/understanding-the-awesome-animal-at-the-end-of-a-lead>

Sponsors

A huge shout out to the sponsors who have made our work possible: NRC, ITM Waipu, Northpine, Menzshed Waipu, Hammer Hardware Waipu, Wyatts Mangawhai. If you'd like to contribute as a sponsor of our conservation work, please contact Graeme on 021 118 4816.

Join us to grow our impact

We're always on the lookout for new people to help us deliver our work. Newcomers are especially welcome; it's a great way to make new friends and contacts in the community - we'd love to find a role for you.



There's plenty of variety in the work - some work is outdoors in the hills doing trapping and bait lines, some is chipping away at pest plants in local reserves or using your keyboard skills and experience for the essential communications. We are especially looking for teachers for our programmes in schools, as well as writers, and people with social media, creative marketing, grant funding, event organisation and project delivery coordination talents.

If you would like to volunteer, please fill in a simple form indicating what you would like to be involved in and the right team member will be in contact with you. <https://forms.office.com/r/Ms8h312KhB>

Click to [Follow us on Facebook](#)

PiroaBrynderwynsLandcare@outlook.com

Resources

[Ecological Plan](#)

[Annual Report](#)

[Working groups](#)

[Past Newsletters](#)