



## 🍷 YEAR END NEWSLETTER 🍷

What a thrilling year it has been for us at PCT! We've continued to grow and expand our operations, and it's heartwarming to see more volunteers joining our efforts every day.

In this edition, we'll highlight some of our recent projects and introduce you to the exciting initiatives we have lined up for 2025.

First and foremost, we want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We hope you enjoy the festive season with good weather, fun, relaxation, and quality time with your loved ones.

Looking ahead, we are launching two major campaigns that we hope will ignite your enthusiasm:

1. **The Great Climbing Asparagus Hunt:** This citizen science project is crucial as climbing asparagus poses a significant threat. We need everyone's help to locate and manage this invasive species.
2. **Reintroducing Native Species to the Brynderwyn Ranges:** We're embarking on an ambitious journey to bring back native species that have been absent for too long.

Our dedicated community groups have tirelessly worked to reduce both animal and plant predators. These upcoming projects will build on the solid foundations

already laid.

We are incredibly grateful for your continued support and look forward to making even greater strides together in the coming year.

Happy holidays and here's to an amazing 2025!



We are proud to launch our first citizen science project so [join the great climbing asparagus hunt](#)

Climbing asparagus is a rapidly growing invasive weed which strangles and smothers other plants. We can help landowners to get rid of this pesky weed and protect native bush & home gardens.

Your observations are crucial in mapping out where climbing asparagus is and how much there is. Let's work together to protect our natural spaces! Here's how you can help and make a difference:

1. [CLICK HERE](#) to open our website for more information.
2. [SAVE THIS LINK](#) to your phone so its handy. Whenever you're out & about, simply open the link & pin the location of this invasive weed. Every pin counts! Your contributions will help us build an action plan.

## 'RANGATAHI CONSERVATION' PROGRAMME WRAPPING UP FOR 2024

The programme, which launched in July, is designed to build knowledge and experience around ecology and conservation in our local area. With the help of volunteers, the aim is to grow this into a full year programme in 2025, able to support a larger group of teenagers.

Each session starts with a bit of learning, followed by putting that learning into practice. Attendees learn about the fundamentals of conservation; predator control, biodiversity monitoring, and restoration, with each session focusing on a new ecosystem like forests, coasts, or freshwater.



In August they ventured into the Waorahi bush block ready for a day of learning. Deb Searchfield showed us a slideshow about kiwi and talked about what is being done to keep kiwi safe and protected from predators, how kiwi chicks are raised, when kiwi are considered old enough to be able to fend for themselves and much more. Then it was on to frogs - the frog's life cycle, the habitat and the threats to the native frogs. Then into on to the bush walk. At the start of the walk was a

quick stop to look inside a weta home where they observed a bunch of Auckland Tree Weta (*Hemideina thoracica*) inside.

Along the walk they stopped at a large puriri tree that is said to be about 800 years old. Part of the trunk had hollowed out but inside they could see two large Auckland Cave Wētā (*Pachyrhamma acanthocera*). While standing beneath the large puriri tree they learnt about and completed a five minute bird count. Deb explained how the bird count works, what it is useful for and the factors that need to be considered before starting the bird count eg; temperature, how sunny it is and how windy it is. All of these can affect the birds behaviour and activities.

In November it was along to Mangawhai Natives where Rick & Jess taught the group about seed collection, laying seed, potting seedlings, planting, canopy closure and more. With some theory and getting their hands dirty the group had a great day.



### EMBARKING ON OUR AMBITIOUS JOURNEY

Our second exciting project aims to reintroduce native species that have long been absent from the Brynderwyn Ranges. Our dedicated community groups have tirelessly worked to significantly reduce predator populations, creating a safer environment for these species to thrive once again.

**The Vision:** Our vision is to restore the Brynderwyn Ranges to their former glory, teeming with native flora and fauna. By bringing back these native species, we aim to enhance biodiversity, strengthen ecosystems, and ensure the survival of unique species that are integral to our natural heritage.



**The Challenge:** Reintroducing native species is no small feat. It requires careful planning, resources, and continuous effort to maintain predator control. Our community has made significant strides in reducing predator numbers, but we need your help to take the next crucial steps.

**Why Your Support Matters:** To achieve our goal, we need the collective effort and support of the entire community. Here's how you can make a difference:

- **Donations:** Amplify our effort. Financial contributions from individuals and businesses are essential to fund the reintroduction efforts, including habitat restoration, species monitoring, and predator control.
- **Volunteering:** We need passionate volunteers to join our efforts in monitoring wildlife, maintaining predator traps, and participating in community outreach programs.
- **Spreading the Word:** Help us raise awareness about this project by sharing our mission with friends, family, and on social media. The more people know, the greater our impact.
- **The Impact of Your Contribution:** Every contribution, no matter how small, plays a crucial role in the success of this project. By working together, we can ensure the successful reintroduction of these native species and create a thriving, sustainable environment for future generations. Your support will help us protect our natural heritage, promote biodiversity, and inspire a love for nature within our community.

Join us in this exciting journey to revive the Brynderwyn Ranges and secure a better future for our native species. Together, we can make a lasting difference.

#### 5 MINUTE BIRD COUNTS COMPLETED FOR 2024

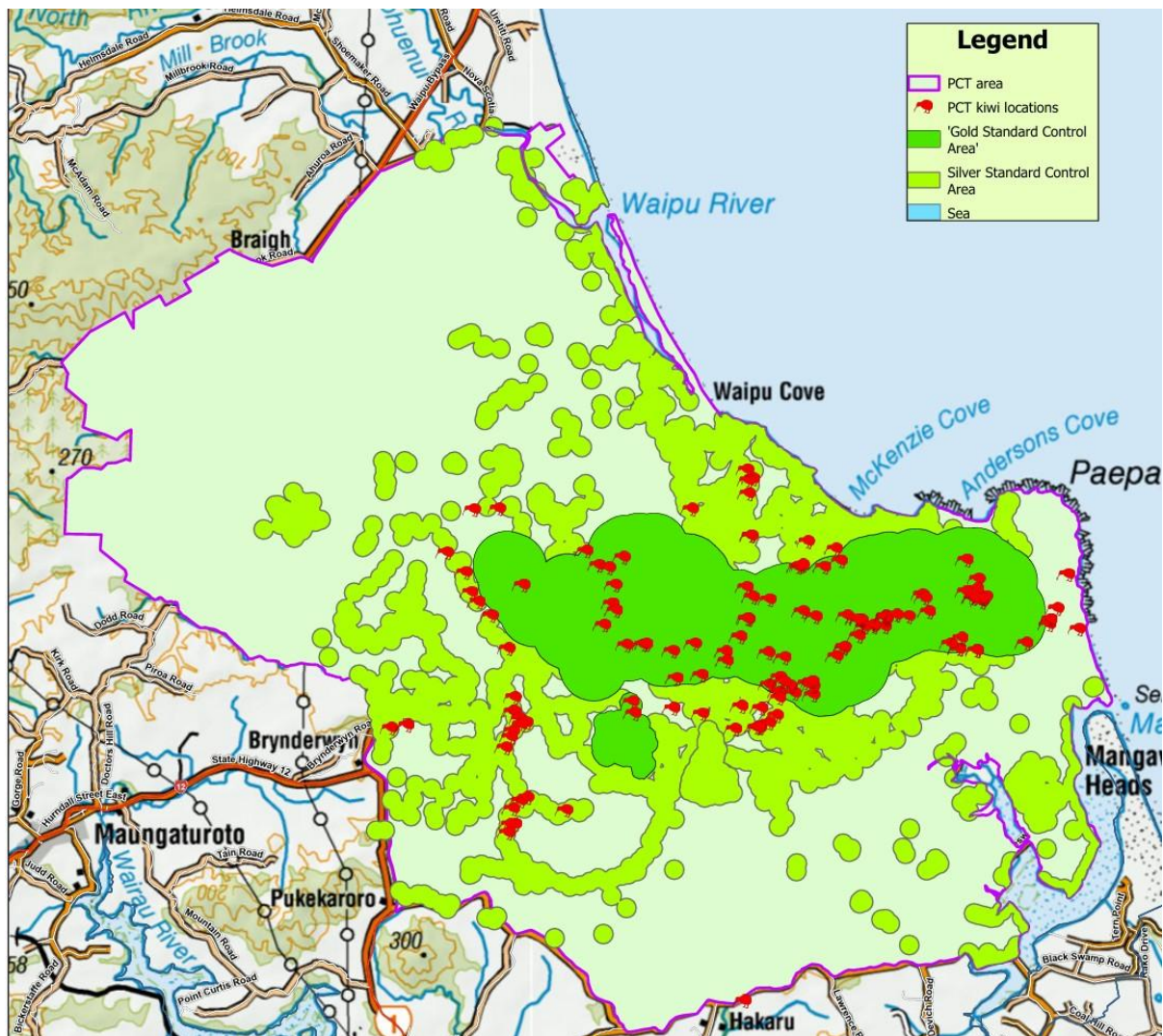
Our bird counters have been out again during November counting the 8 native species we are doing year on year monitoring of. It's pleasing to see for

another year some increases in nearly all the species. Kaka are still scarce but bellbirds are becoming more frequently observed as our predator control work expands.



Below is our most recent map of control areas vs where kiwi have been recorded - it is no coincidence that kiwi are deciding to hang out in the safest bush areas in

our area where there is a the lower chance of predation. Thanks to everyone who contributes to predator control in the area.



### CONGRATULATIONS TO THE SANCTUARY MANGAWHAI

We are thrilled to hear that The Sanctuary subdivision in Mangawhai has spotted a kiwi chick in their bush this month - what a fantastic milestone! And there's more! They have also photographed a pair of Australasian Bitterns on their ponds. With only around 1,000 of these birds left in New Zealand, this is an incredible sighting.

These remarkable achievements are thanks to dedicated predator control efforts, creating a safe haven for these precious creatures.

Huge congratulations to the owners at The Sanctuary in Mangawhai. Let's all follow their lead and ensure we continue to protect our unique wildlife.

[View video here:](#)



### MANGAWHAI COMMUNITY PARK NEEDS YOU

As the sun rises over Mangawhai Community Park (MCP), it casts dappled shadows on the winding walking trails. Beneath the trees, a quiet mission unfolds—one that requires willing hearts and sturdy gloves.

Where is Mangawhai Community Park? The park is 34 hectares and is open to all ages and community groups. Established in 2014 and is located on Molesworth Drive, it has many attractions and facilities

The park encompasses bush and walking track area surrounding the Mangawhai Activity Zone (MAZ), Museum and Historic Village, Bowling Club, Golf Club and course, Wastewater treatment plant, and Fire and Ambulance stations - right in the heart of our town but it needs some tender loving care.

Invasive weeds—those persistent trespassers—threaten the delicate balance of this park. Their roots entwine with native bush, stifling the life out of trees and other native plants. Many small self-seeded native plants are being choked by these weeds and will die without our intervention. As a community, we are the guardians of green spaces. The Piroa Conservation Trust invites you to join us. Volunteers, young and old, seasoned and new, are needed to lend a hand. Armed with determination and a shared purpose, we'll remove weeds and restore the park's natural beauty.

Imagine the magic: If we can bring the native bush back to life, we'll witness the return of many native birds to the park. Two years ago, and again very recently, part of the park was replanted with native plants by volunteers that need releasing and new planting areas cleared. These spaces were previously dominated by pampas grass and other unwelcome intruders.



We draw inspiration from the tireless efforts of our community volunteers already working across various locations. Yet, this story aims to rally support for new volunteers to help rejuvenate Mangawhai Community Park to a place we can all enjoy.

So, if you are available Monday morning for 2 hours, step forward. Mangawhai Community Park awaits your hands, your heart, and your commitment. If you're keen to help either at MCP or any other conservation work in the area, please email us at [info@piroaconservation.org.nz](mailto:info@piroaconservation.org.nz) and we will put you in touch with a

suitable project or group. Alternatively call 0210 244 34 54

### LOCAL BREAM BAY FARMERS TAKE CHARGE

Farmers in the local Bream Bay area are making positive changes to the land and waterways. They are achieving this by setting aside boggy, less-profitable land to create wetlands and an exciting new idea of inanga rearing ponds. Doing this is important because we've lost more than 90% of wetlands in Northland. Wetlands reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients entering our waterways, act as a sponge for big rain events, and are home to many rare and endangered species found nowhere else in the world.

Through the Bream Bay Community Rivers project, driven by the Piroa Conservation Trust and funded by the Ministry for Primary Industries, four demonstration sites have been built in partnership with the farmer owners. Situated in different catchments of the Waipū and Ruakākā Rivers, these sites showcase pragmatic and cost-effective works of digging, fencing and planting to build wetlands and inanga rearing ponds. "There's a well-known science behind this work," says Graham Matthews, Project Catchment Coordinator.

"The objective of the demonstration sites is to provide a "proof of concept", creating wetlands and rearing ponds which improve water quality and biodiversity, at the least cost. Many small wetlands in key areas of the catchment is the way to significantly improve our waterways, and these demonstration sites provide examples in different situations."

By fencing off waterways and setting land aside to create a wetland or rearing ponds farmers and landowners are protecting tara iti (fairy tern), bittern, eels, kingfishers, black stilts, endemic plants, inanga and so much more. These local species have lost so much of their habitat already from wetland draining and intensive farming, we can all chip in to turn things

around!

As well as the environmental benefits, there are economic benefits including less drainage maintenance because silt and weeds aren't filling up the waterway, reduced flood impacts on farmland and infrastructure, shade and shelter for stock, and potential increases in the value of the farm. Healthy wetlands reduce impacts of weather events such as flooding and drought. Furthermore, for farmers working towards meeting environmental requirements, creating a wetland may reduce compliance and operational costs.



While the results of a year-long water quality monitoring programme in Waipū and Ruakākā as part of this project are still in the pipeline, a story from a Waikato farmer shows what might be found. Waikato dairy farmers, Gray and Marilyn Baldwin, developed a wetland on their 713ha farm. Their wetland is relatively small, but the benefits are huge. Testing showed that the wetland removed about 60% nitrogen, 70% sediment, 20% phosphorus and 88% E. coli from the water the wetland received.

We will follow up with the results of the water quality testing as soon as the report for Bream Bay is available. In other exciting news hot off the press, fish traps set in one of the newly built inanga rearing ponds caught over 50 inanga in each of the traps, a strong indicator that the concept of these ponds is working, and we are on the right track.

### USING GREAT TECH TO GET AHEAD

We are excited to pilot predator control technology in our catchment group tool kit with two AT220 auto traps at Graeme and Angela's wetland demonstration site to control possums and rats.

Auto traps reset themselves meaning many rats and/or possums can be killed each day and night.



What is even better is that these traps only need checking once a month making this task easy for farmers to do while going round the farm.

On its 1st night the auto trap caught a possum!

A second trap was installed the next day, and this also caught a possum!

By controlling these pests, we're boosting the productivity and health of pastures, farm crops and plantings while also helping to rewild the bush and rivers.

If you would like to find out about auto traps for your farm or lifestyle block in Bream Bay contact Graham, catchment coordinator, 027 432 1016 or want to know more about auto traps [click here](#)

## GOING POTTY

The potting team at the volunteer Waipu Waters Community Nursery has had a fantastic year growing plants for our various projects.

They have a good crew of regular volunteers with numbers increasing each month. This means they are now able to produce about 10,000 native plants per year which is simply phenomenal work.

Thanks to everyone who has donated pots over the year- without them the team doesn't have the ability to pot up new plant



## WEED WARRIORS' WEEKLY WORKOUT

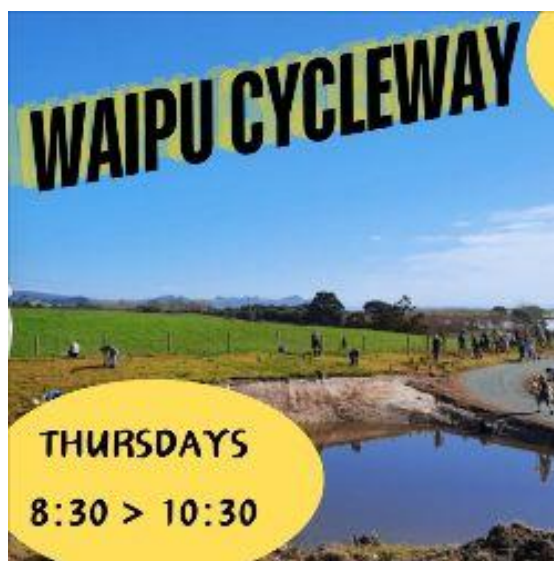
Big shout out to our weed warriors Mike & Christine.

During November they set to work cutting out Woolley Nightshade on the main road into Waipu. They have also been cutting woollies near Henry's Bridge (every Sunday on their bike ride) with a goal of gradually getting rid of them.

The next week they were at it again .... removing some huge privets on pine tree hill along the Waipu cycleway. Still hundreds of seedlings below so when you walk this way, please remove what you see as you pass. Thanks to the cycling weed warriors!!!

Battling our invasive weeds wouldn't be possible without all our amazing volunteers. If you are keen to get involved, we always need more helping hands so click [HERE](#) to get involved.

We are looking for people keen to help with the Waipu Cycleway on Thursday mornings, but if that time doesn't suit we have other times available as well.



#### MANGAWHAI BEACH SCHOOL ENVIRO GROUP

For another year the group headed home with their own rats traps to continue their trapping efforts in their own backyards.

Once the students in the conservation group become skilled at managing the small box traps on their trap line, they are given a trap to take home. Piroa Conservation Trust supply these. With each trap comes a set of gloves and a set of instructions about how to add their traps to TrapNZ. In this way they become part of the wider community effort to make NZ Predator Free by 2050.

Here members of the group give a demonstration of how to manage the traps before they all take them home.



They are brand new, so students kept the gloves in the box to make sure the gloves made it home because they understand that wearing gloves is important when actually trapping in their own backyard. Teacher, Jackie Fanning, and Alex Flavell-Johnson (Shorebirds Trust) only had to watch as the students took control of the “how to do” this part of the day.

### THANKS BUNNINGS

A big shout-out to Bunnings Mangawhai for sponsoring essential safety gear. Our volunteers will be easily spotted and safer in the bush as a result.

Hard hats, gloves, high viz vests and more. It is great to have the support of our local businesses, but we always would welcome more local business to partner with us.

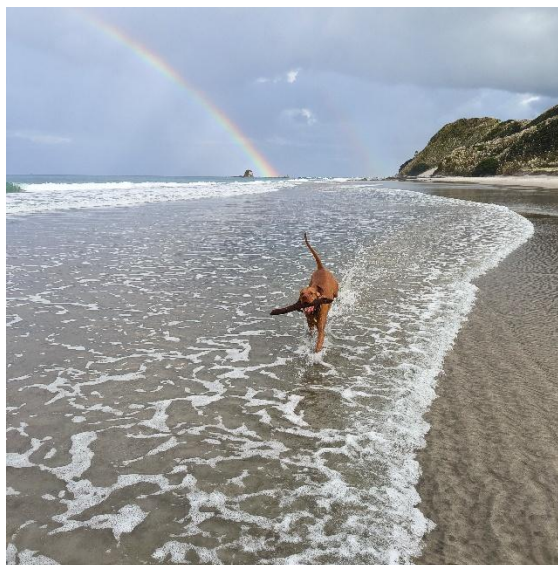
Amanda, you're an absolute legend! 🌟



## PETS OVER THE HOLIDAYS

Please remember this summer that 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. [CLICK HERE](#)

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. [CLICK HERE](#)

**NEW GUIDES AND RESOURCES TO HELP WITH TRAPPING & WEEDS.**

## WAR ON CLIMBING ASPARAGUS

Climbing asparagus is a nightmare. It's a scrambling & climbing plant that's rapidly spreading in Mangawhai so we need your help to remove it. Long green, thin, wiry stems (2-4 m long) that are much branched at the top. Fine, fern-like foliage, small, delicate leaves. Tuberous roots.



Tiny white flowers (Sept-Dec), followed in Oct- February by round green berries that ripen to red-orange (berries 8mm in diameter). Can also grow in trees as an epiphyte. It is a very shade-tolerant, smothering vine. It can invade even healthy forest with an intact canopy.

Once established it can expand rapidly, smothering the forest floor and understorey up to 4m high, and preventing the growth of established species and preventing all regeneration of native seedlings. It can also ring bark and kill soft-barked shrubs and trees. It has long-lived tubers that resprout easily, requiring follow up control, and well dispersed seeds.

[FREE GUIDE HERE](#)

## WHAT'S IN MY TRAP? AND WHICH TRAP IS BEST?

Keen to learn a bit more about the predators you might find in traps in our local area? We have a simple guide to tell you a little about each pest animal along with a supporting guide that tells you about what sort of trap is best for what pest animal. [can be downloaded here.](#)



## NEED TO CONTACT SOMEONE?

If you want to get in touch about any of our work you can contact us by emailing [info@piroaconservation.org.nz](mailto:info@piroaconservation.org.nz)

## VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

We're always on the lookout for new people to help us in 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 it could be using your keyboard skills and experience for the essential communications. We are especially looking for teachers for our schools' programmes, trappers and weeders to join a once-a-month SWAT team, as well as people with grant funding, event organisation and project delivery coordination talents.

If you would like to volunteer, please fill in a 5 second form indicating what you would like to be involved in and the right team member will be in contact with you. Are you looking for a volunteering opportunity based in the Mangawhai, Kaiwaka, Langs Beach, Waipu area?

[Click the link if you are keen.](#)



