

Pūkorokoro Miranda News

Journal of the Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust

August 2023 Issue 129



Volunteers: Backbone of the Trust

Editorial – Keith Woodley

For PMNT, as with many organisations, volunteers are our backbone. My arrival as fulltime paid Centre Manager in 1993 meant the centre could remain open permanently, usually seven days a week. Over the next few months visitor numbers began to build, and within a year or two the centre was generating revenue sufficient to cover most operating expenses. From the mid-1990s a part-time cleaner was employed for a few hours a week; and some years later a part-time centre assistant, initially working two days a week, now expanded to three days. In 2010 we employed a seasonal shore guide for the first time; and several years later, an educator. The advent of our kaitiaki rangers is a further massive boost to our capacity. But everything else to do with the Trust and its many activities has, since its inception, been performed entirely by volunteers.

The Trust has been the beneficiary of tens of thousands of hours of voluntary effort. The list of functions performed by volunteers is a long one: serving on the executive council; relieving and assisting at the centre; maintenance of the building and grounds; design and building of bird hides; guiding and assisting at the hides; preparing, publishing and distributing a quarterly magazine; designing and producing interpretive displays, signage and other promotional material; delivering talks on behalf of PMNT; plant propagation and restoration planting; researching, preparing and submitting funding applications; tutoring at training courses; preparing submissions on public policy; weeding bird roosts; bird banding and bird counts (each of which require many people); along with shorebird surveys in the Gulf of Carpentaria, China and Korea. Such activities contribute essential data that underpins the stories told at the Shorebird Centre. It adds up to a sizeable contribution without which we would struggle to exist.

PMNT is not alone in its reliance on unpaid effort. Volunteers are to be found in virtually every sector of New Zealand society. Imagine if everyone currently serving in some form of voluntary role anywhere in the country were to abruptly cease their contributions. I suspect there would be no one unaffected in some way. Volunteer NZ estimates 1.2 million or 21.5 % of all New Zealanders volunteer each year, contributing 159 million hours, estimated to be worth \$4 billion to non-profits alone. According to a 2021 survey, a higher proportion of women volunteered than men, with 53.7 percent of women volunteering over the previous four weeks, compared with 47.5 percent of men. Those who volunteered for an organisation contributed an average of 15.9 hours over a four-week period, an increase of 2.4 hours from 2016 (the most recent previous collection of this data). And it is not just the recipient organisation that benefits. People who volunteered rated life as more worthwhile on average (8.1/10) than those who did not volunteer (7.9/10).

From 2016 to 2021 the proportion of volunteers in the environmental sector grew from 6.9 % to 11.1 %. I believe a significant part of this increase relates to pest control. A common topic of conversation with visitors to Pūkoro is how they are seeing more birds in their gardens and neighbourhoods. While some can offer a likely reason for this, many others have yet to connect the dots. So, I ask: is anyone doing pest control in your area? Are there trap lines and bait stations? Invariably the answer is yes. More and more people throughout the motu are contributing to pest control activities. Community groups and individuals managing traplines and bait stations has become commonplace. Hence a marked increase in local biodiversity.

It should be evident from recent issues of this magazine that a lot is happening at Pūkoro, with much more to come. We want to expand our pool of volunteers by offering a variety of opportunities, tasks, and projects. We have developed a set of task descriptions, outlined in this issue. So, if there is something here that inspires you to join us, do get in touch. It is likely to be fun. It will certainly be rewarding, and very much appreciated.

EVENTS CALENDAR 2023

Saturday 12 August
Working Bee/Potluck Dinner and Quiz

Friday – Sunday 22-24 September
Nature Journaling Course

Sunday 22 October – Spring Migration Day
Speaker: **Claire Fearnley** former New Zealand Ambassador to China and Korea.
High tide 1.15 pm

Volunteer Training Days

Tuesday 19 September	10 am to 2 pm
Saturday 23 September	10 am to 2 pm
Tuesday 31 October	10 am to 2 pm
Saturday 4 November	10 am to 2 pm

Please contact Chelsea admin@shorebirds.org.nz

DOC Community Fund success

We are delighted to announce ours was one of 38 successful applications to the DOC Community Fund.

\$110,564 has been granted to continue the enhancement of the RFWR, restoring areas to functioning, biodiverse, indigenous ecosystems on the highly modified chenier plains found alongside one of New Zealand's seven Ramsar sites. The start of this project has engaged PMNT staff and volunteers and mana whenua. The focus of the application is the continued weed control and planting of the reserve, improving drainage, and introducing bicultural interpretation of the site.

Shorebird Snippets

Aberrant terns



Whiskered Tern at Pūkoro
MIKE VINCENT

Terns can be tough to identify. From a distance some species look quite similar. Then there are their changes in plumage depending on age or season. Over late summer there were two White-winged Black Terns frequenting the Stilt Ponds. This species is a visitor, most likely from Australia or Asia, although they have occasionally nested in New Zealand. They were then joined by a Eurasian Whiskered Tern, an even rarer Australian vagrant. Both these species of marsh terns had many visitors unfamiliar with the tern family, scratching their heads. Both are a little smaller than our White-fronted Terns, and have different flight patterns. Whiskered terns have a distinctively short and shallowly-forked tail. While White-winged Black Terns are smaller, slimmer with a finer bill. They also have irregular black blotches on the body during moult, which one of the two Pūkoro birds had.

Other Rare Visitors

Diminutive and strikingly handsome, Black-fronted Dotterels tend to be an infrequent visitor to Pūkoro. In June one bird found a puddle on the driveway inside our front gate suitable for ablutions. It was seen again several days later before moving down to the Findlay Reserve.



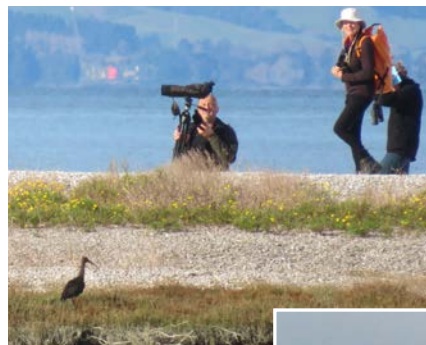
Black-fronted dotterel ROWENA WEST

A surprising addition to the usual suspects recorded during the Firth of Thames census on 11 June was a Glossy Ibis seen on the edge of the shell bank in front of the Godwit Hide. With no further sightings subsequently, it was assumed to be a passing visitor. Then on 6 July young birder Lucy Dean saw it again, flying over the Findlay Reserve.

Meanwhile two Arctic visitors lingered here over winter much to the pleasure of visitors. A Black-tailed Godwit in breeding plumage was a star attraction. Likewise, a Whimbrel seen regularly from the Godwit Hide.

Royal Spoonbills appear to be thriving

The New Zealand population of Royal Spoonbills continues to increase. This is reflected at Pūkoro, where numbers steadily increase through the year. Where we used to get 30-40 a few years ago, the flock now exceeds 100. Birds New Zealand is planning a national survey of the species next year, which should give us a good idea of the current population along with any new breeding sites.



Above: Glossy Ibis Pip Wallace, Tansy Bliss census day SUE FROSTICK
Right: Glossy Ibis LUCY DEAN



Meanwhile, the endless succession of rain events this year left the area completely sodden. As a result, it was not uncommon to see Spoonbills foraging in paddocks, something I have seldom seen before. What prey items they were finding there is unknown, although it is suggested that overflowing drains may have left small fish and other aquatic animals stranded.

In early July they also made it on to the list of birds seen from my sofa, with seven birds roosting in the paddock behind the house.

An Alaskan sighting



Male godwit HDD at Teshekpuk Lake
KRISTI CARR

On 8 June avian ecologist Kirsti Carr encountered this male godwit while working at Teshekpuk Lake Special Area, in northern Alaska. 'It was very agitated by my presence and called repeatedly' she writes. 'Eventually, its mate joined and watched me briefly. I had a fixed area (400x400m) to survey so I moved off the area as best I could to lessen stress on these birds, but the male kept a close eye on me for the rest of the 96-minute breeding survey. These two showed all the behaviour cues of having an active nest.'

Adrian Riegen reports it was banded at Corner inlet in Victoria on 31.01.2018, aged as a first-year bird. It was seen at Ruakaka, Northland on 20.09.20 and then at Snells Beach just north of Auckland on 14.09.21 by PMNT member Michele MacKenzie. Michele writes: This is truly wonderful news; I had feared the worst but hoped for the best with this bird. There have been so many losses over the past couple of years. I have attached a photo of it when it was here. You will note the drooped wings as it had only just arrived and was on a feeding frenzy at high tide.'



HDD newly arrived at Snells Beach
MICHELE MACKENZIE



New outlet for the Stilt Ponds ADRIAN RIEGEN

Stilt ponds drainage update

It had been a long time coming, but with resource consent received from Waikato Regional Council, drainage of the Stilt Ponds got underway around 3 pm on Monday 17 July.

Local contractor Grant Fitzgerald and his digger began early that morning clearing a new channel between the ponds and the Pūkorokoro Stream. Using huge wooden pads, he slowly but steadily worked his huge machine towards the creek, having to move the pads into place every few metres. Then he painstakingly retraced his route and began excavating the remaining few metres up to the culvert. There immediately appeared at the inland end of the pipe a whirlpool, while on the other side water began flowing down the new channel. Hours later a tiny strip of dark waterline could be seen all around the ponds, evidence the water level was falling. We expect the area to be once again available to the shorebird flocks this Spring. While it has been nice to have Dabchicks in residence, (up to 31 birds recorded) we believe roosting habitat for the likes of Godwits, Knots and Wrybill must take precedence.

Jimny Branding

Thanks to the design expertise of Trudy Lane, our katiaki rangers have become roving billboards for us, with the Jimny now bearing the logos of both Ngati Paoa and PMNT. Tansy and Hera report that almost immediately the new livery proved its worth as a conversation starter with curious passers-by.



Jimny branding TANSY BLISS

Chisholm Whitney grant

Thanks to a grant from Chisholm Whitney Charitable Trust our accommodation facilities have received a substantial upgrade. We have replaced all bed linen, some of which had been in service for several decades. There are new bath towels and shower mats, as well as door mats and rugs in all rooms. We have also taken the opportunity to upgrade the fold-down sofa beds in each unit, with delivery expected in late August. We are most grateful to Chisholm Whitney who have been regular supporters of the Trust since the early 1990s.

Hauraki Rail Trail Funding Boost

A total of \$3.7 million in government and council funding is a most welcome boost to the Hauraki Rail Trail. The funding, announced in June by Tourism Minister, Peeni Henare, will be used to repair and upgrade the network, parts of which have been severely damaged by extreme weather events.

It is particularly good news for the Shorebird Centre, which has yet to see the full visitor potential of the trail. The Pūkorokoro section was still being built when cyclists began using it, and

there has been steady use ever since. This is despite ongoing issues with trail surface and stability. The section from Taramaire to Kaiaua has been a perennial problem with regular wash-outs from weather and tidal action. Some of the new funding will be used to relocate the track away from the unstable northern end of Rays Rest and rehabilitate other sections.

A further problem has been the trail section from Waitakaruru to Kopu which has been closed for well over year, due to major work being needed to stabilise stopbanks. This includes the section at the mouth of the Piako, where PMNT is working with WRC on enhancing shorebird habitat. That people have been unable to cycle from Kaiaua to Kopu has been a major drawback. The funding means a bypass of ongoing major stopbank work and relaying the trail surface can proceed.

Hauraki Rail Trail CEO Diane Drummond said: 'strong support for the repair project reflected the contribution the 160 km trail made to the surrounding regions, providing both strong economic and health benefits.'

We anticipate an increase in visitors to Pūkorokoro as the trail becomes fully operational again.



Recent sightings at Pūkorokoro

<p>International Migrants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 602 Bar-tailed Godwit 1 Black-tailed Godwit 1 Whimbrel 400 Red Knot 1 Whiskered Tern 1 Glossy Ibis 	<p>New Zealand species include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3600 South Island Pied Oystercatcher 2250 Wrybill 2350 Pied Stilt 4 Black Stilt/Pied Stilt hybrids 470 Black-billed Gull 111 Banded Dotterel 75 Royal Spoonbill 1 Black-fronted Dotterel 125 Caspian Tern 31 Dabchick
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Trust Member Jennifer George Appointed CEO of the Flyway Partnership Secretariat.

In May the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) announced the appointment of PMNT member Ms. Jennifer George, as its new Chief Executive of the Secretariat, effective 20 June 2023.

‘With a distinguished career in various sectors, and being a lawyer in practice, Ms. George brings a wealth of experience and a passion for driving positive change to her role in leading the EAAFP’s mission of conserving migratory waterbirds and their habitats along the East Asian- Australasian Flyway.’

According to the announcement ‘her expertise and collaboration with the EAAFP Secretariat and Partners have resulted in driving momentum to the development of the partnership.’ She developed ‘*Guidelines for EAAFP National and Site Partnerships*’ and ‘*Guidelines for the EAAFP Sister Site Program*’ that were both adopted at the 11th Meeting of Partners at Brisbane in March. ‘She is also an active member of the EAAFP Partner, Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists Trust, where her interest and passion for conserving migratory waterbirds has built up.’

Jennifer has an extensive background as a performance-driven professional spanning government, law, education, business development, and the non-profit sector. ‘As a governance consultant, she has been instrumental in developing best-practice governance frameworks for Crown Entities and local governments, ensuring compliance with legislative requirements, and fostering efficient processes.’

She worked in the Secretariat of the Climate Change Chief Executives Board of the Ministry for the Environment providing advice on best practice governance. She has also worked for the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Ministry of Justice, and Wellington City Council in roles ranging from analyst and project manager to convenor of an expert panel. Her research and advocacy has resulted in policy changes at governmental level.

Additionally she has 10 years of teaching experience in a secondary school, serving as Head of Department, as well as a board member of Central

Regional Health School Te Korowai matauranga mō ngā tamariki, ‘where she proved her skills in education and management. In addition, her role as Development Director of Henwood Trust demonstrated her leadership in developing and cultivating strategic relationships with indigenous people and diverse stakeholders to bring positive changes.’

‘Her track record of success in facilitating transformational outcomes for organizations and communities showcase her exceptional leadership skills and her ability to collaborate effectively with diverse stakeholders, including government officials, academics, professionals, Indigenous communities, philanthropy, and NGOs. These diverse cross-sector skill sets should equip her well to lead EAAFP to implement the Strategic Plan and CEPA Action Plan for the next years.’

Jennifer writes:

After moving to Auckland in 2016 from the Wairarapa I discovered Pūkorokoro Miranda and fell in love with the marathon journeys of our migratory water birds. I remained transfixed each spring and autumn when the work of an international consortium of researchers was posted on Facebook. They were tracking godwits/kuaka as they travelled to and from their breeding grounds. It is one of the magical and mystical events of the natural world, one that has yet to be fully explained.

They trust that the world will provide for them. I’m keen to honour that trust and be part of the efforts that ensure their fuel stops and breeding grounds are plentiful and resourced.

Armed with this passion, an interest in biodiversity and wetlands, a membership of Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists Trust (PMNT) and two days at Pūkorokoro learning how to identify waterbirds, I contracted with the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership



(EAAFP) in 2020 to develop guidelines for National partnerships, Site Partnerships and to strengthen mechanisms within the partnership including Sister-site partnerships. PMNT is a Partner of the EAAFP and Pūkorokoro is a Flyway Network Site and also a Sister Site with Yalujiang National Nature Reserve site near Dandong City, China.

Over the following two years, I developed a deep understanding of the Flyway culminating in my attending the MOP11 conference in Brisbane in March 2023 where I presented my work to the conference.

My appointment as CEO from June 2023 of the EAAFP is for two years. I will lead the work of the Flyway across the twenty-two countries of the Flyway Partnership. For those unfamiliar with the flyway an inspiring introduction can be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tafmrlvi0tM>

My squiggly background is in education, business, governance, and as a lawyer. I have almost completed my Master of Technological Futures and hope to find pathways to leverage the work of the Flyway through the power of data and digital technologies. My background is different from my predecessors who come from specialist fields in migratory water birds, and I want to build on their achievements and ensure the sustainability of the Partnership’s work and its international reputation.

It has been Pūkorokoro that has educated me about wetland conservation and migratory water birds. My involvement with Pūkorokoro has shown me how it is at Flyway network sites that the real work is done and I want to bring that understanding and insight to my work as Flyway Partnership CEO.

Volunteers: Backbone of the Trust

By Keith Woodley, Chelsea Ralls, and Tansy Bliss

Overview (the past)

Who have been our key volunteers and what have they been doing over the last year or so?

It is hard to quantify all the volunteer contributions made over the last year but taking stock of who has done what, helps us think about what is possible into the future. The snapshots presented below highlight the huge diversity of tasks undertaken by volunteers and the significant contribution they have made. It is difficult to imagine that PMNT's key objective: to keep the birds coming through habitat protection and advocacy would have been possible without them.

Shorebird Centre

Pūkoro Shorebird Centre Assistant Chelsea Ralls reflects on all the volunteer help received to keep the shop and centre open 364 days a year and to have a shorebird guide down at the hides throughout the summer season and for key public events.

For some visitors, their first glimpse of a shorebird through a scope is unforgettable. They can still remember it vividly, right down to the name of the guide who shared it with them. The passion and enthusiasm for the birds and the natural history of the area that the guides and shop minders share, makes the experience memorable for our visitors. They will start planning another visit, share their experience with friends and whanau or want to become a supporter and volunteer.

The paid positions at the Centre (Manager, Assistant and Shore Guide) cover the staff needed to keep the visitor centre open 7 days a week and a guide at the hide 5 days a week over summer. But there is a raft of other operational tasks, projects, community engagement and promotional work that keep the Trust moving, sharing its message, and supporting its goals. Every now and again we need a break too, to recharge and come back refreshed.

This is why our volunteers are indispensable. They are supporting the Centre operations, staff, and the Trust, making it possible to achieve what it does. They are the warm friendly community who continue the legacy of the original naturalists who started it all.

We have a core team of 12 volunteer guides and shop minders who have spent more than 850 very generous hours of their time as the main point of contact for visitors over the last summer period. A considerable number of those hours came from Australian-based Wendy and Alan Pilkington, who lived on-site in their motorhome for a month. Alan provided guiding and handyman skills, while Wendy excelled at staffing the Centre. This is their second extended stay at the centre and their familiarity with us, education centres like ours and their experiences birding throughout Australasia means they can hit the ground running. I find it humbling to add these hours up, to think of the time and energy that everyone contributes here. No wonder our visitors are inspired. I am too.

Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve Restoration Project

Pūkoro Kaitiaki Ranger, Tansy Bliss, looks at how the Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve Restoration Project has been built on volunteer input and how all the different threads have been woven together.

Ray and Ann Buckmaster, active PMNT Council members from 2013 to May 2023, will always be remembered for bringing new initiatives and ideas to Council and then once approved, for making them happen. The RFWR Restoration stands out as one of their most ambitious legacy projects, following on from the innovative 'Flock' Project.



Volunteer Guiding SUE TOWNSON



Dave John with the auger TANSY BLISS

To make the Restoration Project happen, Ray and Ann planned, consulted, fundraised, and got on with the practicalities of getting native trees established in a hostile, weed infested environment. They created a vision and drew others in too.

A small nursery was established up at the Miranda Orchard with site and water kindly provided by Annie Wilson and Sean Wilson. Ann and Ray collected seed, propagated seedlings, and grew many of the plants now established in the Reserve. Wairarapa residents Diane and Dave John have grown over 700 Knobby Club Rush *Ficinia nodosa* annually for the last 4 years. Despite inclement weather they delivered their latest load in May and then followed their established routine: Dave lifts the auger and Di plants – until the task is complete. Jeanette and Hector Sutherland grew 100 Saltmarsh Ribbonwood seedlings for the 2023 planting, delivered and help put them in the ground and are now germinating more for the coming year. Annual planting days have seen numerous volunteers from around the area, bend to the earth and contribute to the project. Others have quietly weeded around the emerging plantings and Sally Gellard, a Canadian passing the Centre, stopped for a week to donate her time and energy to weeding and nursery work.

These and other volunteers can now proudly stand in the RFWR, look out over native plantings courageously competing with exotic vegetation and coping with drought, floods and changing water levels and know their contribution, like precious threads, are woven into the biodiverse tapestry of the Reserve.

Citizen Science: monitoring shorebirds and their migrations.

Many of the amazing bird stories we tell were uncovered through citizen science. Catching and banding birds and then monitoring future sightings is primarily done by volunteers. For example, Adrian Riegen has lists of Bar-tailed Godwit alpha numeric/three lettered flags sighted on birds around the Firth of Thames and beyond going back to the 1990s. Each year, a new list is compiled from observations, mainly from volunteers of where and when each bird and its unique three letter combination was sighted. From this there comes extraordinary stories of individual birds. [See page 3 for godwit HDD] You can be part of this project by looking out for marked birds and reporting them.



David Melville supervising bird banding by Abi Quinnell Pūkoro Field Course KEITH WOODLEY

While the national wader census is a Birds New Zealand project, PMNT has been closely involved since its inception. Each June and November, birds are counted on the Firth of Thames. You can help with these counts. If you are unfamiliar with some birds we can help you, by putting you alongside skilled people. Or you could attend our annual Wader Identification course.

Wednesday Garden Group

Sue Frostick has been leading the 'Wednesday Garden Group' focused on maintaining and upgrading the grounds of the Pūkoro Shorebird Centre. Modest, consistent, and hardworking is the only way to describe this dedicated group of volunteers who meet on the first Wednesday of each month between 10am and 3pm. They have added new native plantings, grown by volunteers, along the southern boundary fence and around the entrance gate which, with all the rain this year, are showing great progress. The Kaitiaki Rangers have now joined this group and together will work on an overall garden and grounds plan as explained in the following Project briefs.



Sue Frostick (l) and Darion Rowan with Coronation plantings SUE FROSTICK

Field Courses

Our six-day January Field Course is so popular that, by mid-May, the 2024 course was already full. This flagship event on our calendar is only made possible by the high calibre of our tutors, almost all of whom are volunteers.

Other tasks accomplished by volunteers over the last year include serving on the Trust executive council; building a deck around the new house, and a carport; helping demolish and dispose of the old cottage; ongoing Centre and hide maintenance; design and layout of Pūkorokoro News; and upgrades to our IT systems.



Field course tutor David Riddell examining marine specimens
KEITH WOODLEY

Looking Ahead (what we want for the future)

Here we outline an expanded range of volunteering tasks, with opportunities for you to assist or even lead a project. This involves a volunteer/s leading a key project that has been approved by the PMNT Council or the Shorebird Centre Manager. Resources will either come direct from the PMNT or via fundraising efforts by the Council, Manager, or project lead.

Library cataloguing:

There are well over 1000 natural history books in the PMNT library. Many are donations from members, while some have been gifted by authors or bought as key reference documents.

The shelves are overflowing, and the library is under-utilised due to limited knowledge of contents and a secure way to share this information. As Frank Rawiri of Ngati Paoa reminds us: 'Knowledge has no value unless shared'.

Task: Continue cataloguing the books into specific groupings in consultation with Centre Manager, Keith Woodley and Centre Assistant, Chelsea Ralls. Revise and update digital catalogue of books in the library. Identify duplicates which could go in communal library in the SBC lounge area or be gifted/exchanged for a donation/to suitable new homes.

Timeframe: on-going over the 2023/24. Work in library at times agreed with Centre Manager.

Qualifications/skills/interest: Knowledge of cataloguing or filing, ability to use computer spreadsheets/database, organised.

Understanding and reducing PMNT carbon footprint

PMNT is ready to start transitioning towards becoming a carbon neutral organisation. The first step is understanding our current carbon footprint and then looking at ways to reduce this.

Task: Work with suitable resources (see below) and/or identified organisation i.e. (Te Toi/The Nature Conservancy) to plan and calculate the current PMNT carbon footprint. Provide reports to Council about current state and explore options for carbon emission reduction or offsetting. The guide provided by New Zealand Trade and Enterprise offers some initial guidance. www.my.nzte.govt.nz/article2/what-should-we-do-about-emissions

Timeframe: This is envisioned to be a 3 – 4-year project with different stages identified in the planning phase.

Qualifications/skills/interest: Experience in working collaboratively with different agencies. Knowledge of and interest in climate change issues. Ability to plan, write and present reports and ideas to a range of people.

Reactivate Sibson scholarship programme (Sibson Award)

The Sibson Scholarship programme was set up with funds donated by Dick Sibson. The aim was to encourage students to undertake a small research project that would directly benefit the on-going work of PMNT and its objectives. Grants awarded previously, include to a master's student working on Wrybill foraging, and to a PhD candidate working on godwits.

There have been no recent awards of the scholarship and it was discussed at the AGM in 2023, that it should be reactivated. A volunteer is needed to lead this work, which would entail the following:

In liaison with PMNT Council, confirm the funds available, check whether the original objective is relevant today, and how it would operate in the current PMNT context. Write up a renewed brief for the Sibson Scholarship/Award programme, including a call for applicants detailing opportunities and the relevant terms and conditions.

Once confirmed by PMNT Council, advertise for applicants, evaluate responses and with input from Council decide on suitable candidate/s. Assist and provide support to candidate to ensure project is followed through and benefit of research is made available and utilised by PMNT.

Shorebird Centre Maintenance Project

The general maintenance of the Shorebird Centre has been carried out by dedicated volunteers in the past and this will continue in the future. Adrian Riegen is the project lead for this work, but he needs support from others who are willing to take on specific tasks and responsibilities or assist with specific jobs.

Task: Support the project lead with general maintenance jobs such as repainting the centre, inside and out, cleaning gutters, repairing the deck, replacing mosquito screens, etc.

Timeframe: Ongoing with specific tasks carried out as appropriate

Qualifications/skills/interest: Some building experience useful, use of power tools, able to work independently after consultation with project lead.

Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve Restoration Project

The RFWR is now in its fourth year of restoration, with several hectares of the southern part of the reserve planted in natives. Selected areas of these plantings will be maintained to showcase the native vegetation and facilitate visitor access into regenerating areas. To do this effectively, smaller areas have been defined and will be managed according to specific site requirements. Volunteers can choose to manage a specific site of their own or assist the Kaitiaki Rangers with ongoing work.



Volunteers rebuilding the Godwit Hide after extensive storm damage KEITH WOODLEY

Specific sites:

Carpark Corner – 2022 plantings. Keep plants clear of weeds and maintain mulch around plants as required. Weed eating will be carried out by Kaitiaki Rangers as required. Gradually remove invasive weeds from area by hand cutting or digging. Spraying on request to Kaitiaki Rangers.

Pōhuehue 100 – located opposite the Wrybill Hide, over 100 pōhuehue *Muehlenbeckia complexa* are struggling to grow in a shell ridge gradually being colonized by Divided Sedge. Weed and mulch around these plants. Add suitable bits of driftwood for plants to grow up and provide a vertical dimension to this area.

Wrybill rise – the plantings around the Wrybill Hide need some care and attention. Invasive mallow and fennel are creeping in. Keep this area clear of invasive weeds, mulch around the existing plants and add additional species where appropriate.

Stilt Hide seven to seventy – seven plants directly adjacent to the Stilt Hide have been weeded and mulched and are now producing fruit. Can we care for another 63 plants to enhance this well visited area? Work would require weeding, mulching and the addition of new plants.

Harakeke triangle and saltmarsh corridor – this is the area between the Stilt hide and the Wrybill hide. Kikuyu, fennel, and mallow are the main invaders here. Weeding, cutting, mulching, and spraying are needed. The Kaitiaki Rangers will be on hand to provide the necessary support for this area.

2020 Survive and thrive – a small group of Saltmarsh Ribbon wood and *Coprosma Propinqua* have survived in the most northerly 2020 plantings. They are visible from the walking track and would look great if they can be cleared of other vegetation and allowed to thrive. Mainly weeding and mulching.

Ongoing work

- Removing kikuyu by hand or with a light grubber from the salt marsh edge so it can be cut and sprayed without damaging the saltmarsh.
- Removing wild beet from the saltmarsh with a light grubber and carting it to a mulching site.
- Mangrove seedling removal from the saltmarsh edges and mudflats, as authorized under our resource consent from Waikato Regional Council. (August – September only)
- Removal of the taller vegetation from the shell area of the outer shell spit by hand and by grubber.
- Preparing the carpark area for development and planting in the winter of 2024. This will involve concept planning, design work, removal of vegetation, and planting.
- Plant growers – are you able to take seeds or seedlings home and grow them ready for planting?

- Green fingers: A small standalone task that will enhance the Shorebird Centre environment. Maintain the indoor plants and hanging baskets. These need a significant face lift. We have various bits and pieces already in the garage but would love someone to add a creative touch and brighten up our courtyard.

Shorebird guiding

It won't be long before the new summer season arrives on the wings of the arctic migrants. Our Guides play a vital role in creating a memorable and enjoying experience for our visitors to the bird hides. They have a passion for inspiring people and conveying information about the Manu, their migrations, the natural history of the area and the history of the Trust.

Task: Become one of our Guides. They are based at the bird hides for up to 4-6 hours around the high tide, sharing the telescopes and talking to the visitors. We ask volunteers to roster on at least 1 day/month (or more if you can) to allow us to schedule talks and guided walks in our calendar.

Qualification / Skills / Interests: Bring a keen interest in learning about our Manu, the ability to talk to a wide variety of visitors and a passion for sharing your knowledge. You don't need to be an expert; you'll learn so much while you're here. It does require a level of physical fitness to be standing during this time out in the elements. Come and join one of our Volunteer Training Days!

If you are here for a full day or more, you may be entitled to free accommodation.

Shop Minders

Greet our Centre visitors and help them plan the best experience possible during their time in the area. Share the information from our panels, the best viewing areas and recent sightings and pass on helpful local knowledge. You can help explain the Trust, its status as a registered charity and the importance of becoming members, making donations and sales in the shop, all to help keep us open.

Task: Become a Shop Minder. Based at the centre for a day or part-day, you are the face of the Trust and the fountain of knowledge to our visitors. We ask volunteers to roster on at least 1 day/month to help cover staff while they are away or busy with other Trust business.

Qualification / Skills / Interests: Bring your friendly warm smile and ability to engage with a variety of visitors. A flair for sales and experience in using point-of-sale systems is helpful but we can also teach you all you need to know. Come and join one of our Volunteer Training Days!

If you are here for a full day or more, you may be entitled to free accommodation.

Wednesday Garden Group

On the first Wednesday of every month, Sue Frostick has been leading volunteers in the upkeep and development of the Pūkoro Shoreside Centre grounds. The Kaitiaki Rangers have joined this group and there is great potential for planting and enhancing this QEII covenant.

Tasks: weeding, clearing, planting, growing seedlings, adding new species to the borders, and coming up with ideas of what we should do next. Tools available on site or bring your own.

Timeframe: ongoing, once a month on the group day or at your own choosing. Usually between 10am and 3pm, but this can vary depending on weather and time of year.

Marketing

PMNT is nearly 50 years old, and we have accomplished much in that time. We have many good stories to tell and want to improve how we tell them and to expand our audience. It would be good to attract more people, increase our membership, increase sales in the shop and online, and improve the visitor experience.

Do you have skills to assist us with our marketing and communications strategy?

PMNT Council

At the centre of Trust activities since its inception, is the executive council. Since 1975 91 people have served on this governance body, eight of them in the position of Chair. David Lawrie holds the record having served continuously since 1976, with comparative latecomer Adrian Riegen in second place only joining in 1985. These people have all helped direct the extraordinary story of the Trust and its many accomplishments. Being on Council can involve a lot

of time – especially for those serving as Chair, Secretary or Treasurer, but can also be extremely satisfying. And fun. There are generally 4-6 meetings each year.


Qualifications: A keen interest in the Trust and its objectives. Your interests may include birds or the wider natural world, or you may have certain skills such as marketing which would be beneficial to the Trust.

Pūkoro News Editor

Editing the Trust’s quarterly magazine is another important volunteer role. The magazine performs a similar role to staffing the front desk at the centre: it presents the public face of the Trust. Today, of course, we can reach the public through our website and other forms of social media, but Pūkoro Miranda News remains an essential component of our profile. It has come a long way since the beginnings of the organisation: from a series of typed bird notes by Dick Sibson, it has evolved into a substantial, slickly presented publication that is much appreciated and valued by Trust members. Production and distribution of the magazine is a major task, but with design and layout now being done separately, the role of editor is not as onerous as it once was. Commissioning items, sourcing images, prompts and chivvy-ing contributors are all in the editor’s job description.

Qualifications/skills/interest: editorial experience would be great but is not essential. A keen interest in all the affairs of PMNT, the natural world and wider environmental issues, and the stories they generate. A love of language.

Membership secretary.

Our membership database is securely maintained in house. But it would be useful to have someone to liaise with members, encouraging membership renewals and recruitment of new members. 

Celebrating World Migratory Bird Day, albeit a few days after.

Tony Habraken reports on a rare visitor to Pūkoro.

While many of our regular more recognised migrants had departed on their annual migration north to breed, there were still some lesser recorded species that occur in our waters down under, some ‘dressed and ready to go,’ hanging around deciding their options – to stay or migrate.

This Common Tern subspecies *longipennis*, recognized by its pale grey under belly tones and black bill, was sighted on 27 May which was getting rather late to migrate if it intended to breed this year. Many birds are arriving at their breeding grounds across Siberia about now having probably staged earlier somewhere in Japan or the Yellow Sea in April-May, and this bird had yet to fly the 8,800 kms if it takes a direct flight to Japan - so maybe setting itself a major task.

Its late presence here may point it to being a second or third year bird, yet to make its first migration back to, likely its natal area, somewhere in the Arctic.



Common Tern TONY HABRAKEN



Common Tern noticeably smaller than White-fronted Terns TONY HABRAKEN



Sandra Morris ONZM

Long-time PMNT member Sandra Morris was recognised in the 2023 King’s Birthday Honours, becoming an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to illustration and to education. Sandra is well known to Trust members as a writer and illustrator of books for children, and for her popular art courses at the Shorebird Centre.

Award Citation:

Ms Sandra Morris is an award-winning children’s and botanical illustrator and has written and published several nature and education books. She worked as an illustrator and art editor for school publications and Māori language journals from 1975 to 1979. She developed a passion for botanical art while studying in Australia, travelling to remote regions including the Subantarctic in 2000 to sketch the islands’ flora and fauna. She has written and illustrated several children’s non-fiction natural history books. Her first picture book, *‘One Lonely Kakapo’* won the Russell Clark Award for illustration in 1992.

She has mentored and advocated for many New Zealand illustrators. She was a designer for Land’s End Publishing and Shortland Publications from 1996 to 2003, recruiting and mentoring illustrators new to the profession. In 2003, she established her own illustration agency to represent illustrators nationally and overseas. She has educated thousands of children and adults in botanical, children’s book illustration and nature journaling through workshops and classes held at community education centres and schools in Auckland and Whanganui. She has used her artwork to raise money for several botanical and wildlife conservation organisations including the historic Stevens/Bell Garden in Whanganui and Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre. Ms Morris’ published her book *‘North and South: A Tale of Two Hemispheres’* in 2021.



An unusual passenger



Pacific Golden Plover on deck VICKY & TOM JACKSON

During a visit to the Shorebird Centre in April, Vicky and Tom Jackson of Nelson reported an encounter they had in mid Pacific in 2015, while sailing on their 12-metre yacht from Vancouver to New Zealand. They write that on 1 September on the leg between Hawaii and Tonga ‘a migratory bird took refuge on the deck. The bird looked like a wader. We realised it was not a godwit; our bird book and the internet suggested it was a Pacific Golden Plover.

The bird looked tired and stayed on the bow, hardly moving. We put some water nearby which it appeared to use. Our position when the bird came on board, was 8° 02” N/163° 20” W. The bird arrived in the morning around 0700 at a time that we had very light winds. It flew away at 1700 that afternoon, as the SE wind was increasing.

Vicky & Tom Jackson

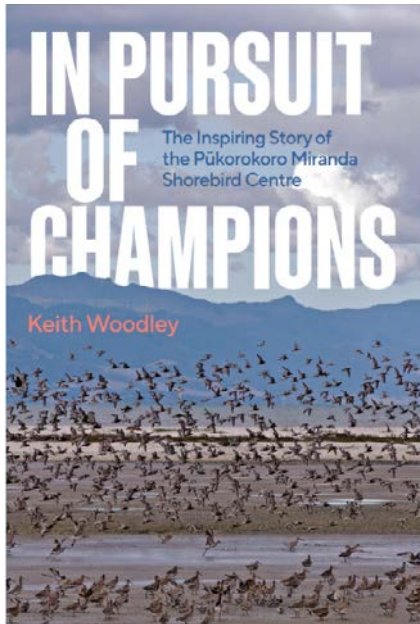


We still need photos for our **2024 Calendar**

If you have any high quality images of Pūkorokoro – birds, environment, landscape, people – contact Chelsea at admin@shorebirds.org.nz

In Pursuit of Champions by Keith Woodley

Published by: PMNT and Sherlock & Co Publishing 2022



Historical accounts of venerable organisations can be rather tedious litanies of names, dates, contentious issues and AGM resolutions. *In Pursuit of Champions* is no such thing. I found myself drawn in by the 3-page Introduction, even before embarking on the first chapter. And there was no surprise in this, given the author's reputation as a colourful wordsmith.

It is an honour to review Keith Woodley's latest book, as one sufficiently long-in-the-tooth and privileged to have known many of the great earliest figures in the story of the Pūkoro Mirānda Shorebird Centre: Ross McKenzie, Dick Sibson, Beth Brown, Sylvia Reed *et al.* It was quite a goose-bumpy experience reading about their contributions and idiosyncrasies, and the fond memories they evoked. And considering Keith's involvement was predated by the passing of many of them, he has done a remarkable job of enshrining them in the narrative without any strong sense of second-hand reporting.

One of the surprises for me – pleasantly so – was the degree to which this is something of an autobiography, a memoir. How could it be otherwise, since Keith and the Shorebird Centre have evolved in tandem for three decades and, at times, they seem almost synonymous. This could have been dangerous territory – a personal story under the guise of an institutional history. But the author has the wisdom and modesty to keep the right focus on the Pūkoro story in amongst the personal observations and frequent humorous anecdotes.

If the story of the Pūkoro Naturalists' Trust was set to music it could be described as polyphonic – several themes or lines running simultaneously, each with its own integrity yet interacting with the others. The lines have been separated out by the author in a way that does each justice, and then deftly recombines them.

As an example, Chapter 9 '*What's in a Name?*' traces well the search for a name that expressed the essential nature and purpose of the Trust, and the subsequent engagement with local iwi over the vexed historical connotations of the name Mirānda. The careful and respectful kōrero and listening which led eventually to the dual name of Pūkoro Mirānda is a story worth telling in its own right, and a fine example of the wider journey we are on as a nation. Keith has woven this bicultural theme throughout the book in various ways, including the referencing of Māori names for each bird species mentioned – some of the introduced examples of which I had no idea had been given a name in Te Reo – eg *hurukūwhai* for the Yellowhammer.

Part 2 of the book describes, through its fifteen chapters, the exciting growth and diversification of the Trust's activities (a burgeoning volunteer base, the annual field course, book and gift shop etc.) and the expanding activity of the Manager (including as artist, author and researcher in the Alaskan tundra).

With several transequatorial migrant shorebird species – notably Bar-tailed Godwit and Red Knot – making up such a prominent portion of the birds on the Pūkoro shoreline, Part 3 of the book is rightly devoted to the northern hemisphere connection and the opportunities and great perils that accompany the twice-yearly epic journey of these birds. With as much feeling as fact, the author describes the challenges facing the migrants along the East Asian Australasian Flyway and especially in the Yellow Sea where human pressures so intensely affect the diminishing feeding grounds. Within this part of the story is another line of careful, respectful dialogue and partnership between our southern shorebird advocates and both conservationists and political leaders in China and North Korea. Once again, a story worth telling in its own right.

There is both sombreness and hopefulness in this part of the Mirānda Pūkoro history, which spills over into the final chapters making up Part 4. Here climate change is addressed with all its impending threats to the Firth of Thames, but also the possibilities – some already being successfully actioned – for mitigation and future-proofing.

In Pursuit of Champions is a splendid account of the history of the Pūkoro Mirānda Shorebird Centre and Naturalists' Trust, its birds and its people, and its remarkable web of influence within Aotearoa and across the Pacific, East Asia, Eastern Russia, Alaska and beyond. If there is just one thing missing.....this closet twitcher would have liked an appendix of all the bird species recorded in the area since records began. But that aside, this is a book to read, to treasure on the shelf, and to return to.

Bruce Keeley



Stand-in for Tuscany Trelise Cooper photo shoot TANSY BLISS

The 2023 planting season: the volunteer contribution

Tansy Bliss reports

A sea of fluttering orange tape greets visitors as they leave the carpark for the hides. The brown flattened Divided Sedge that provided a Tuscan burnt summer look for a Trelise Cooper fashion shoot is now bristling with salt marsh plants.

Over a wet weekend in May, 17 Thames Coromandel Youth Search and Rescue (YSAR) volunteers and their leaders got out there, augered and dug holes, removed tangled mats of Divided Sedge roots and put plants in the ground. They completed the job by mulching and tying tags on the trees that were difficult to see with their small leaves and neutral coloured bark. The transformation is astonishing. The group stayed at the Centre overnight and had sessions on bird and plant identification as well as providing their own entertainment well into the night!

Their contribution, planting over 700 trees and shrubs is the start of another volunteer-PMNT relationship. There are plans to make it an annual event, with weeding and ongoing care of the plants scheduled for November and March. The enthusiasm, energy and dedication of these young aspiring adults was noted and very much appreciated.

Planting continued throughout May and June with planting days well attended on selected weekends and Wednesdays. Staff from the Hauraki District Department of Conservation biodiversity, visitor assets and community teams also pitched in. With two augers running almost constantly, spades in action, planters on their knees and a truck and trailer ferrying plants from the nursery, they ensured everything was ready for the main planting day on 24 June. All seemed in order and our spirits were high that the majority of the 3000 remaining plants, out of the 8000 being planted this year, would be in the ground after the scheduled planting with EcoQuest students and the Community planting day.

Not so. After a run of beautiful sunny weather, the rain returned, water levels rose, and the thin dried out layer of valuable humus, turned to a slurry. The EcoQuest planting was deferred to the following week but with a brightening forecast *initially* for the weekend, our main planting day went ahead. Atmospheric conditions best describe the day, with rain seeming to hang low in the sky, draping itself against us from time to time and together with the intermittent sunshine, providing work stopping displays of double and even triple rainbows. The 20 or so volunteers, caked in mud and damp from the

rain planted the higher ground, while debate was had over how full could the planting holes be, before we should wait for the water levels to drop.

Our planting regime was to work from the wet margins of the ponds and depressions towards the shell ridges. The species chosen were based on advice from Ray and Ann Buckmaster and by looking at what had worked in previous years.

We are planting a chenier plain, so the landscape is made up of shell ridges with muddy silty hollows, sometimes tidal, in-between. The wettest parts of the hollows have native Glasswort *Sacocornia quinquefolia* growing in them; low and succulent it copes with tidal inundation and drought. Sea Rush *Juncus kraussii* also grows here and seems to self-seed and spread without any assistance from us.

It is right on the edge of the salt-marsh that our work starts. The extremities of the pools and wetland margins are to be planted with Oioi, Jointed Wire Rush, but with the water so high during May, June, and July, it has been impossible to get these plants in the ground. Next comes Mākaka, Saltmarsh Ribbonwood, which can tolerate some salinity and wet roots for short periods of time. Nestled in with the Mākaka is Mingimingi, closely followed by Coastal Tree Daisy.



YSAR planting HERA CLARK

Gradually we climb onto the shelly ridges and these present very challenging conditions for the plants. There is little organic matter mixed in with the shell and they can be incredibly dry in summer, but still have high water tables in winter. The growth of Divided Sedge, fennel, and grasses, all which have been killed before planting, has left a thin residue of humus on top of the shell. In slight depressions, the layer is thicker, and this is where we have put in Wiwi, Knobby Clubrush, alternating with Toetoe and Giant Umbrella Sedge.

On the slightly higher areas Harakeke, Flax with its long and hardy root system, sits alongside Taupata and groups of Ti kōuka, Cabbage Tree. A few Ngaios and Karo also grace the ridges with Pohuehue planted in clumps in these harsh areas. Some areas of raised shell have been left unplanted and will serve as sheltered basking areas for native skinks and butterflies and in time may be colonised by native Panahi, Shore Convolvulus *Calystegia soldanella* which is growing naturally on the most seaward shell ridge.

This pattern is repeated across the chenier plain where we have planted. The 2022 planting area next to the carpark shows the sequence very well, so when you next stop to have a cuppa after birdwatching, test your plant identification and see what is growing well where.

Take time too, to remember all our volunteers, those who have collected, cleaned, and sorted the seed, sown it and waited patiently for germination. Then pricked out tiny seedlings, which have been potted up once and some twice. Pots have been watered and weeded and finally the plants have gone in the ground. Unfortunately, the work doesn't stop here.

To make sure all these plants get ahead of the invasive Divided Sedge which with its strong rhizomes recolonising areas where it was killed earlier, there is weeding and mulching to do around our native plants for the next couple of years at least.

Anyone is welcome to join us. See pages 8-9 for details.

Native species planted in RFWR – wet edges to dry ridges

Māori name	Common name	Scientific name
Oioi	Jointed Wire Rush	<i>Apodasmia similis</i>
Mākaka	Saltmarsh Ribbonwood	<i>Plagianthus divaricatus</i>
Mingimingi		<i>Coprosma proprinqua</i>
	Coastal Tree Daisy	<i>Olearia solandri</i>
Wiwi	Knobby Clubrush	<i>Ficinia nodosa</i>
Toetoe	Giant Umbrella Sedge	<i>Cyperus ustulatus</i>
Harakeke	Flax	<i>Phormium tenax</i>
Taupata	Mirror bush	<i>Coprosma repens</i>
Ti kōuka	Cabbage Tree	<i>Cordyline australis</i>
Ngaio		<i>Myoporum laetum</i>
Karo		<i>Pittosporum crassifolium</i>
Pohuehue	Maidenhair vine	<i>Muehlenbeckia complexa</i>

Tansy Bliss reports on

Predator Control at Pūkorokoro

Metal kill traps in wooden boxes are a familiar sight in and around the Robert Findlay Wildlife Reserve. A blue triangle marking the location of trap FR001 flaps against a post at the entrance gate and sitting snug under the Miranda Redoubt information panel, is FR003. Anyone who uses the cycle trail will see more trap boxes, with blue triangles PK01-PK46, securely fastened to the ground with metal stakes.

Over 76 of these DOC200 kill traps thread their way through the reserve and surrounding area, all targeting rats, hedgehogs, stoats, weasels, and ferrets. Thirty, within the RFWR have been checked at least monthly by Living Water contract trapper Keith Driver. Over the last 4 years he has made at least 1500 traps checks to benefit the wildlife of the RFWR and to make the shell bank a safer place for nesting and roosting birds. His dedication, passion and innovative methods has reduced all the above listed predators and taken out some feral cats.

Early morning birders may have seen Keith's lean figure striding over the shell banks with an old canvas pack slung on his back or had the chance to chat while he checks the traps around the hides, pauses for a coffee and cigarette before disappearing into the distance. There is always more work on his agenda.

Late May 2023 saw Keith's contract end and with a wicked smile, he handed

over the ropes to Pūkorokoro Kaitiaki Ranger Hera Clark. "Don't forget I'll be checking on you" he grinned, passing her a bag of dried rabbit meat.

We are extremely grateful for all the hours Keith has put in for PMNT and to Living Water for funding predator control over the last 4 years. Keith will be a very hard act to follow, but Hera already has ideas of her own to implement and is ready to get started. Additional traps have been donated by Bob Rigter and are much appreciated.

Hera will initially be checking all the 30 kill traps on the reserve, collating the trap checks monthly in the Trap.NZ app under the 'PMNT - Shorebird Coast' project. Her FR (Findlay Reserve) trap records sit alongside those of PK (Pūkorokoro) traps, under the 'Firth of Thames' project managed by Department of Conservation Hauraki District. This project stretches along the cycle trail and up the coast into the Rangipo Reserve.

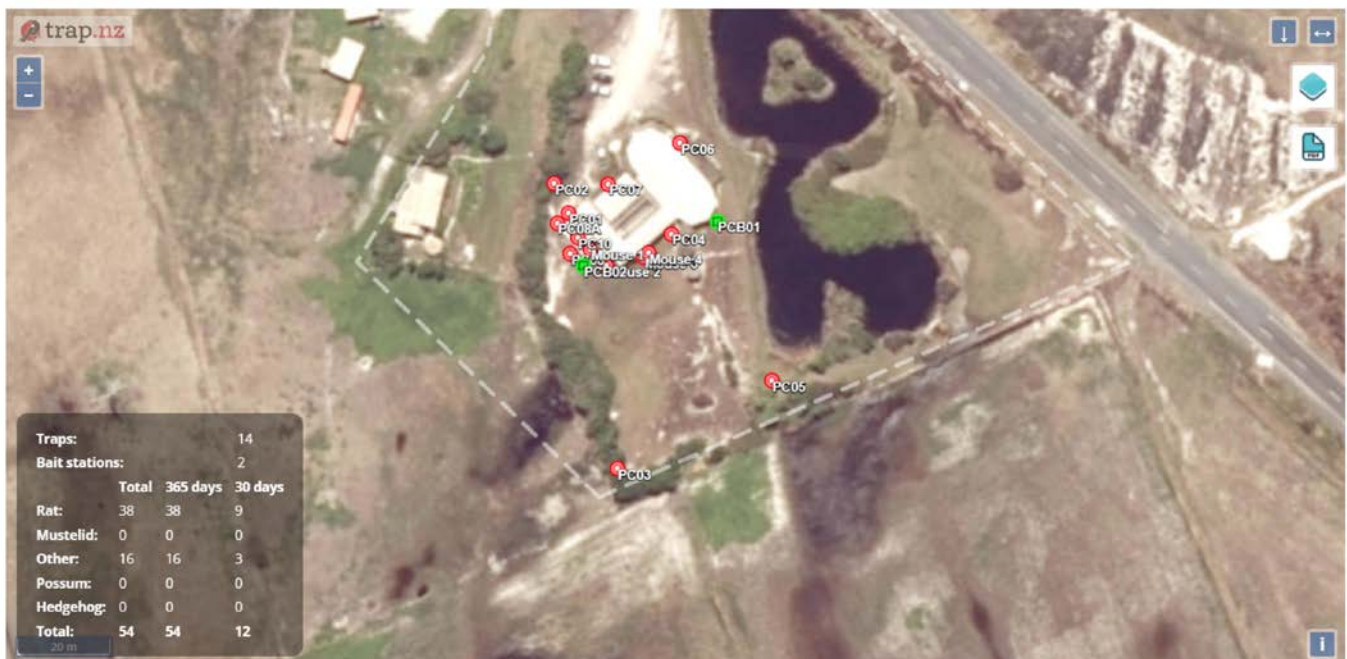


Hera and Keith Driver TANSY BLISS

Once Hera has the trapping network set up to her satisfaction, she will be happy to have company on her rounds, especially during the early summer months when trap checks will take place fortnightly rather than monthly.

Hera also manages the trapping network around the Pūkorokoro Shorebird Centre ('PMNT Centre' project in Trap.NZ) with 14 kill traps checked weekly, targeting both mice and rats.

In a new initiative, PMNT and the Department of Conservation will work together to trial 10 Tāwhiti SMART cage traps. The aim is to remove both feral cats and ferrets which are difficult to catch in the kill traps. This project has been funded by the outgoing Living Water Project and will be a very welcome addition to the overall predator control programme. Details will be in the next issue of *Pūkorokoro News*.



Map of trapping network at Pūkorokoro Shorebird Centre on Trap.NZ

The Changing Face of Ohiwa Harbour

Ohiwa Harbour is an internationally important shorebird site, annually hosting up to 3,000 Bar-tailed Godwits. Meg Collins reports on how recent weather events have massively impacted the area.



Whangakopikopiko in 2021 all in one piece

Cyclone Gabrielle in February 2023 largely missed the Eastern Bay of Plenty, with only a maximum daily rainfall of 65mm, and a total for the month of 263mm.

There was not much wind, but tidal surges and extra high tides caused a lot of sand movement and erosion along the beaches.

Looking back on the records, it appears there is a 50–70-year cycle, when these huge tides and waves lash the coast and cause destruction.

In 1870's a ferry service was started to connect Ohiwa to Ohope, and later a wharf was built at Ohiwa. There were many problems with the ferry, erosion, and the weather. The service was finally abandoned in 1915, as a road had been constructed to connect Opotiki to Whakatane, and the wharf just sunk into the harbour.

In the 1970's severe weather events and waves destroyed many of the houses on Ohiwa Spit and waves washed over the road. Some of the houses were moved, and the landowners were paid out for their sections by the Government. These sections now form part of the Ohiwa beach reserve.

During Cyclone Gabrielle, huge waves changed the face of Bryans Beach, Ohiwa Beach, Ohiwa Spit and

Whangakopikopiko (Tern Island). Some of the fore dunes that had been built up over 30 years have disappeared and replaced with flat beaches. Some of the plantings, by the Coast Care groups, have also disappeared.

Whangakopikopiko has now split into two with a channel running through the middle of the island. More of the rare Bay of Plenty Kanuka have slipped into the sea. The western end of the island has eroded, and the eastern end has accreted more sand. Once a home to six pairs of NZ Dotterels and many Variable Oystercatchers, there is now very little space for them to nest, without the risk of being washed out at high tide. This year there were no fledglings of shorebirds this year anywhere within the harbour, only a few Pukeko chicks on the harbour margins.

Just off the beach at Uretara Island was a shellbank. Over the last five years or so the size of the shellbank has steadily reduced so that now the whole bank is submerged at high tide. With extensive monitoring and pest control, this shellbank was a haven for the Caspian Terns to nest and raise their chicks. Fifteen years ago, when the project to reduce the Black-backed Gull population started, there were only six adult Caspian Terns but by 2022 there were 52.



Caspian tern and chicks on shellbank in 2022

Now the Caspian Terns have nowhere to nest and have been seen flying all around the harbour over the summer, looking for another suitable site. They have now disappeared - probably headed up the East Coast.

Ohiwa Harbour has a resident population of 40 NZ Dotterels and 200 Variable Oystercatchers. It also hosts over 70 bird species at various times of the year including a thriving community of Weka.

Over the summer, Ohiwa welcomes approx 3000 Bar-tailed Godwits from Alaska, and once they leave in March/April, the South Island Pied Oystercatchers arrive to spend the winter, after breeding in the South Island.



Whangakopikopiko now split into 2 islands



Two sand banks have formed in the middle of the Ohiwa Entrance

Birds NZ organises a bird count around the harbour twice a year in June and November. These counts help researchers determine trends, especially in the number of migrant shorebirds.

As a result of extensive pest control by many of the care groups around the harbour, the numbers of Variable Oystercatchers, NZ Dotterels and Caspian Terns have risen. With the recent changes in the harbour, it will be interesting to see how bird numbers are affected.

Ohiwa Entrance

Ohiwa Spit is eroding while Ohope Spit is accreting, with some of the sand getting stuck in the middle of the entrance to the harbour with two sand banks forming, one of which is over 300 metres long.



South Island Pied Oystercatchers resting in the back dunes as no beaches left to roost at high tide

Boaties must now steer close to the Ohiwa Spit, otherwise they may ground on these sandbanks. They also have to go wide off Ohope Spit, before steering towards Ohope Wharf.

On Ohiwa Beach, the fore dune has eroded, and the beach is now quite wide and flat at low tide. At high tide the nesting spots for the NZ Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers have gone, as well as half the access ways. Some dune care plantings have also disappeared under the waves.

Meanwhile on Ohiwa Spit the nesting spots for NZ Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers has been littered with forestry slash and driftwood, while the temporary fences and signs erected by DOC, have been washed out.

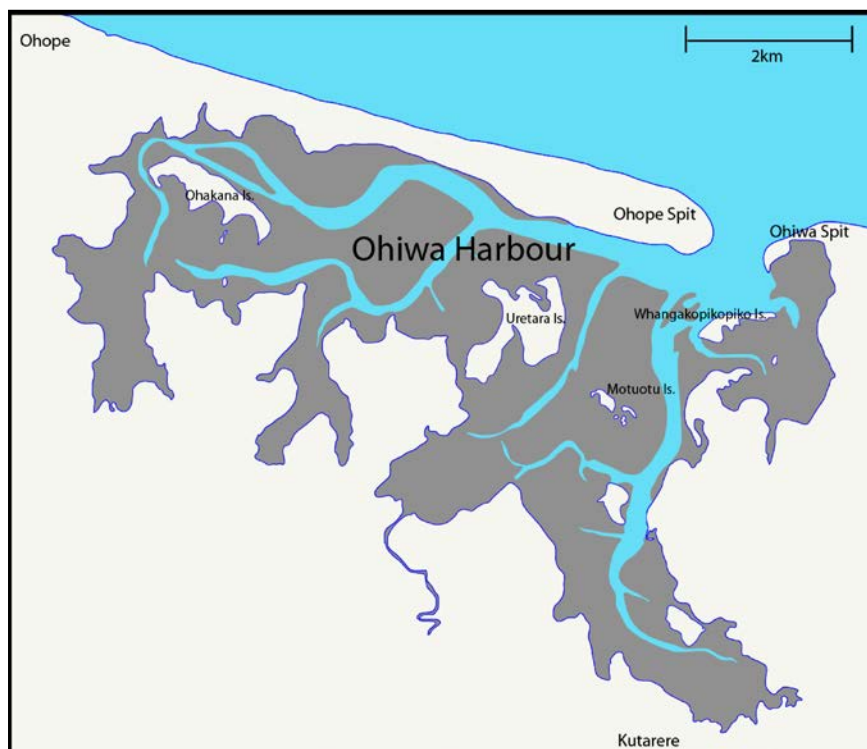
Mother nature has her own ways and in the next 50 years, the sand will probably move around again, and the birds will find new spaces to nest and feed.

Meg Collins

References

- Forest and Bird Magazine* 376 Winter "Death by a 1000 Waves"
- Ohiwa - a short story and guide.* Published Whakatane Museum 1993
- NZ Birds. Twice yearly bird census

Photos: Meg Collins



GODWIT TIMES

with Emma Salmon

Tēnā koutou

Welcome back to the Godwit Times!

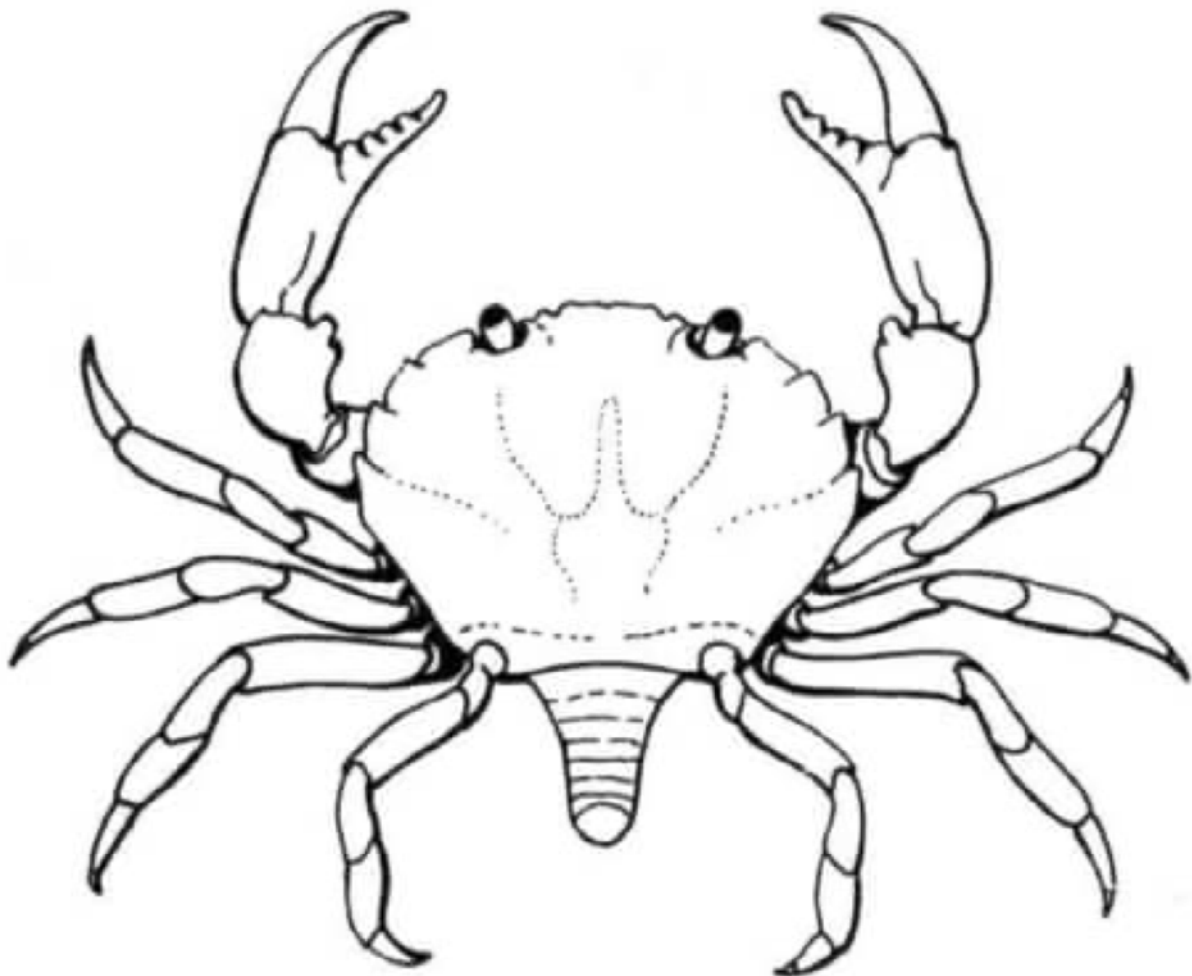
Winter is almost over, Matariki has passed, and Spring is coming. I am getting really excited waiting for all my whānau to come back from overseas.

Can you help me bring them back to Pūkorokoro by making this mud crab look delicious! Whimbrels and Far-Eastern Curlews love them!

See you at Pūkorokoro!

Ngā mihi, Godfrey

COLOUR ME IN - MUD CRAB



Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust



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Trudy Lane, David Lawrie,
Bruce Postill, Bob Rigter, Stuart
Laurenson and Olga Brochner

Magazine

Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust publishes *Pūkorokoro Miranda News* four times a year, in print and digital editions, to keep members in touch and provide news of events at the Shorebird Centre, the Hauraki Gulf and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. No material may be reproduced without permission.

Acting Editor: **Keith Woodley**
keith@shorebirds.org.nz, 09 232 2781
Layout and production: **Bernie Cornford**

See the birds

Situated on the Firth of Thames between Kaiaua and the Miranda Hot Pools, the Pūkorokoro Shorebird Centre provides a base for birders right where the birds are. The best time to see the birds is two to three hours either side of high tide, especially around new and full moons. The Pūkorokoro high tide is 30 minutes before the Auckland (Waitematā) tide. Drop in to investigate, or come and stay a night or two.

Budget accommodation

The Shorebird Centre has bunkrooms for hire and two self-contained units: Bunks cost \$20 per night for members and \$35 for non-members. Self-contained units are \$90 for members and \$135 for non-members. For further information contact the Shorebird Centre.

Become a member

Membership of the Trust costs \$50 a year for individuals, \$60 for families and \$75 for those living overseas.

As well as supporting the work of the Trust, members get four issues of PMNT News a year, discounts on accommodation, invitations to events and the opportunity to join in decision making through the annual meeting.

You can join at the Centre, pay via our webpage (www.shorebirds.org.nz), by direct credit to bank account 02-0290-0056853-00 or call the Centre with your credit card details. Contact admin@shorebirds.org.nz for further information.

Bequests

Remember the Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust in your will and assist its vital work for migratory shorebirds. For further information contact the Shorebird Centre.

Become a Volunteer

There's always a need for volunteers to do a variety of jobs including helping in the shop, guiding school groups, meeting visitors at the hide, working in the Centre garden, joining in the restoration project at the Findlay Reserve, helping with the Shorebird Census and lots more. If you're interested chat with the team at the Centre to see what will best suit you.

PMNT's work is made possible by the generous support of our sponsors



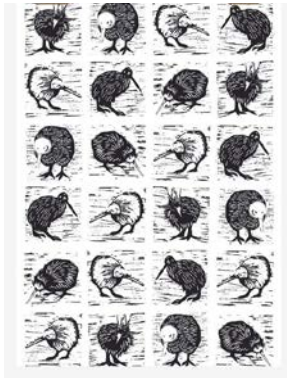
Sean and Annie Wilson's
Miranda Farm
Shop • Cafe • Gallery



Ron & Edna Greenwood
Environmental Trust



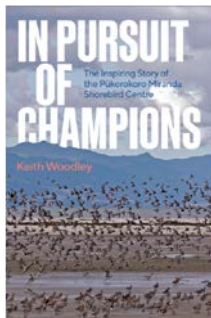
Gifts from the Shop



Ali Davies Tea Towels
\$18.00 – \$20.90
www.shop.shorebirds.org.nz/shop/ali-davies-tea-towels/

Moana Rd NZ Native Flora
1L Drink Bottle – \$44.50
www.shop.shorebirds.org.nz/shop/drink-bottle-nz-native-flora-1l/

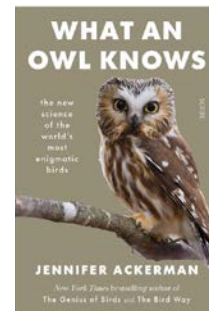
Great Reads from the Shorebird Centre Shop



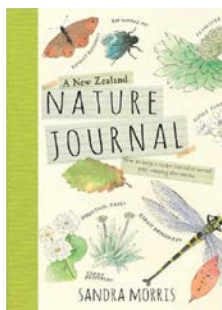
In Pursuit of Champions
Keith Woodley – \$40
www.shop.shorebirds.org.nz/shop/in-pursuit-of-champions/
See the review on page 12



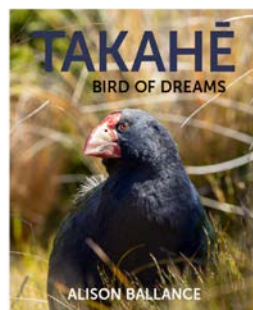
Fungi of Aotearoa:
A curious forager's field guide
Liv Sisson – \$45
www.shop.shorebirds.org.nz/shop/fungi-of-aotearoa/



What an Owl Knows
Jennifer Ackerman – \$40
www.shop.shorebirds.org.nz/shop/what-an-owl-knows/



A New Zealand Nature Journal by
Sandra Morris (NZOM) – \$25
www.shop.shorebirds.org.nz/shop/a-new-zealand-nature-journal/



Takahē - Bird of Dreams
Alison Balance – \$60
www.shop.shorebirds.org.nz/shop/takahe-bird-of-dreams/



Otari
Bee Dawson – \$80
www.shop.shorebirds.org.nz/shop/otari/

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Send an email to shop@shorebirds.org.nz. Ring 09 232 2781 and chat to the friendly team
We'll be happy to help