

# Otatara Landcare Group

## PIGEON POST

*Newsletter of the  
Otatara Landcare Group*

**Issue 57, December 2019**

Welcome to Pigeon Post, the newsletter of the Otatara Landcare Group. In this newsletter we bring you news of the latest happenings in our area and snippets of information, anecdotes and ideas about improving our environment.

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Please contact the Otatara Landcare Group if you have any questions, ideas or problems relating to the Otatara and Sandy Point areas:  
[otataralg@gmail.com](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com)



## Editorial

Our final newsletter for the year is an introduction to a slightly new format. Given that many of our Society members have email, we've created a newsletter that now has a menu, and is easier to navigate on screen while still bringing you a range of articles, anecdotes, opinions and information about what's going down environmentally in our unique "hidden treasure" of Otatara. Just click the kereru silhouette to go home.

We also invite our members to contribute if they'd like to, the more submissions we have the more editions we can produce. Any interesting snippet with a link, however tenuous, to Otatara and its flora and fauna is newsworthy. Photos in particular are most welcome, particularly those of our lovely native birds captured in your own backyard.

As with any community newsletter, the articles contained herein represent the views of the contributor and are not representative of the Otatara Landcare Group as a Society. It is the diversity of views and opinions that make a community so interesting. So if you have something you'd like to share, email it to [otataralg@gmail.com](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com), attention Editor of Pigeon Post, and watch out for it in our next edition.



Photo: Martin Catterall

## Chairspeak

-a message from our Chairperson: Barry Smith

What an absolutely fantastic year the Otatara Landcare Group has had. If you haven't heard about what we've been up to then you are probably dead or newly arrived from Alpha Centauri (That is a star system some 4.3 light years away). Anyway we've got to our 20 years and our 15,000 hour milestone, which we reached in May, is now over 15,600 hours and the 30,000<sup>th</sup> tree we planted is now more than 30,500 so the place has not stopped still at all. If you are one of the people who have helped in any way this year, you can pat yourselves on the back, the environment has appreciated it, especially the environment at Bushy Point.

There has been a couple of interesting things (Environment Wise) in the news since our last Newsletter. The first is our School Kids protesting about too little being done to combat climate change. Fine... but, how come we hardly ever see that age group out at Bushy Point when we have a work day or when we have a planting day. It was said that the last day there was a mass protest on the issue in New Zealand 170,000 people marched. I wasn't one of them. I was potting up plants for riparian plantings on a Dairy Farm. Anyway I got to thinking. They probably spent a couple of hours each on that protest plus a half hour travel each way making about 500,000 hours wasted. For what is considered to be a living wage of around \$20.50/hr that is \$10,250,000. For us at Bushy Point it costs about \$25 to purchase and look after every plant to a point where it can look after itself. So, for their effort we could have basically established 410,000 Native trees. As we are planting at the rate of about 5000 / hectare we could have effectively had an extra 82 hectares of Native Bush. Consider this: The Otatara Landcare Group has planted about 30,000 plants, about 6 hectares and it has taken 20 years. Hmmm!



The second thing is that a report funded by the Institute of Environmental Research and Environment Southland found that the predominant faecal pollution in 80% of our waterways comes from geese, swans, gulls and ducks, not dairy cows or sheep or deer. This hasn't set well with Fish and Game who manage these game birds and who seem to want farmers to clean up after them... again.

I say again because in the mid 1800 Fish and Game's predecessor, the Acclimatization Society released rabbits in Southland, as evidenced by this letter to the editor of the ODT, courtesy of Allied Press Ltd's, Papers Past. Then when the rabbits got out of control they, the Acclimatization Society, that is, were nowhere to be seen. This resulted in the 1950's with the Labour government making farmers financially responsible for cleaning up the problem, and they are still paying for it some nearly 70 years later.

The end of the year is coming up again (Seems to happen regularly, every year, for some reason) anyway there is a general consensus from the weather people that the current systems will clear up and we will have a normal summer.

The Otatara Landcare Group Committee hopes that everyone has a great time over their summer break, enjoying time with family and friends and the relaxation. Remember, keep your drinking and driving to zero and when you are on the roads, take your time.

Better late than dead on time.

Take care everyone

Barry Smith, Chairperson

## Evening Walk - Bushy Point

**Wednesday 18th December 2019. 7:00 pm**  
**173 Grant Rd, Otatara.**

Every year around this time I organise a walk around Bushy Point. This year we will head back into the swampy end down and back along a trap line or two. This is a walk I combine with the Southland Tramping Club and if it is like any other years there may be 10 ~ 15 of us all together. No need to book, just turn up. It will take about an hour and afterwards bring some nibbles for a Pot Luck supper. Be it wet or be it dry, bring suitable clothing and definitely gumboots otherwise you will get wet feet.

For more information, contact Barry Smith;

Ph: 027 22 88 980; e: [bjsrdms@gmail.com](mailto:bjsrdms@gmail.com)

### ENEMIES TO ACCLIMATISATION.

(To the Editor of the OTAGO DAILY TIMES.)

SIR—I feel it my duty to inform you that a number of the rabbits turned out in the country by the Acclimatisation Society have been killed by persons who make a practice of hunting them. If the Society wish that these animals should spread over the country and become a source of sport, an immediate stop should be made to their destruction.

VENATOR.

Dunedin, 24th July, 1867.

## Did You Know?

The Acclimatization Society wanted to acclimatize something to Southland and released the rabbits to great fanfare with one dissenting Scotsman swearing at them in Gaelic.

Lloyd Esler has replayed that story many times, once at Whalers Bay and once on the release of his "Rabbits" book. Since I owned and wore a kilt I played the part of the Gaelic swearing Scotsman...



Photo: Robyn Smith





## Traplines

Dressed to kill in  
ladybird gumboots and a  
blue fairy skirt, Moana,<sup>3</sup>  
splashes through the last weeks' puddles.  
We are like Diego,  
animal rescuer, Nana.  
But we are bird rescuers.  
Why don't you want rats to eat  
birds' eggs? We eat puk puk eggs.  
Wait, Nana, do you like butter?  
You do! She holds a buttercup to my throat.  
Where are the birds we are helping?  
I am trying to listen.  
What is that noise?  
A fernbird?  
Does it live in ferns  
like some fairies do?  
I like in this big forest, Nana.  
Do rats like those baits? Then they don't  
get hungry and eat the birds' eggs.  
This is a big hill.  
How will we get back down?  
Nana, you are silly.  
I can't slide on my bottom  
I don't want my fairy dress all dirty.  
Where are the rats now?  
I know the opposite of nocturnal, Nana.  
Diurnal.  
This is an adventure, isn't it.  
What are these things all rolled up  
in the fern?  
A koru? I've never heard of that.  
Look, I can roll it right out.  
I know what, Nana.  
I could bring the rats  
some of our puk puk eggs  
instead of the bait  
next time.

Kathy Morrison

## IMPORTANT CHANGES FOR BUSH HAVEN

By May Evans

The website: [bushhaven.org](http://bushhaven.org) will be closing soon. However you can see all the happenings on our Facebook page, Bush Haven: <https://www.facebook.com/bushhaven/>.

The old phone number of Bush Haven does not work so well since Russell and May moved into Invercargill, so we ask that you now phone Kathy directly on **03-213 0504** or **027 786 5365** if you have an injured native bird, especially kereru or tui. Kathy now has an interim permits, for acute care before kereru are able to be moved to Dunedin for further rehabilitation care with Nik Hurring. They are later flown back to Otatara (by plane) for release.

If you have an injured seabird, please phone DoC on **0800 362 468**.

**Remember** if you see a kereru or tui on the ground, hopping around and after observation see it is unable to fly, and you are not sure if it has hit a window, or what has happened, please **DO NOT** leave it there.

Drop a towel over it and take it ASAP to Kathy, preferably after phoning at any of the numbers above. Kathy's address is **33 Oreti Road**, down the driveway. The sooner a bird gets into care, the better chance it has of survival. Be careful of their claws, especially tui as they can be very sharp and in fear they will cling on.



## Bush Haven, Open for Business

by Kathy Morrison

Unlike most businesses, the less we get the happier we are. So we are encouraging everyone to let your windows get really dirty, hang dreamcatchers, Xmas decorations, hawk transfers, and other ideas that Gretchen Ledington has posted on the Otatara Noticeboard.

We live in Kereru paradise and unfortunately too often they see trees and bush reflected in our windows and crash through or into them. It's not just a crazy bird thing going on.

The most common cause of kereru injury and death is window strike, from our experience.

I haven't met anyone who dislikes the wingbeat and gentle "who" of these beautiful birds, and their calm, benign presence in our gardens. From the wonderful care so many people have taken to find help for them when they are injured, we know that most of us treasure them enough to take the next step back and deal with prevention rather than rehabilitation. At this time of the year birds have chicks to feed and rehabilitation can take months which makes the chicks' survival very difficult.

We do the initial rehabilitation of birds here at **33 Oreti Road**, using the methods and equipment that Russell and May Evans developed so successfully over their many years and, until we have our own local flight cage built, kereru will be taken up to Nik Hurring's Project Kereru in Dunedin to practise flying again. They are brought back here for release. The Ledington family have kindly offered to have Bush Haven's large release cage built on their Otatara property, which is a massive task especially given the erratic weather they have had to work with.

Anyone who has a few hours and would like to be part of this project, please get in touch with them. You can contact Gretchen or Stephen on **021 512 147**.

Going from a regular volunteer to managing the birds, I have to admit to a couple of mistakes. Nothing died, thank goodness, but I could imagine Russell saying, *That's how we learn*, with a slight touch of grim on his face. It would be hard to watch on at someone else.

A tui absconded in the middle of its breakfast, swiping my glasses off my nose, as it spied the gap I'd left open in the netting behind me. I was tripping myself up in my attempts to catch it before it was gone for good. I ended up on the garage floor, it headed for the blue yonder.

Peanut, who came into care as a ball of kereru fluff, a little chick, is our equivalent of Russell's Bubs except she doesn't get or want fed. She was brought back from Nik Hurring's large flight cage, where she'd been since May, and released along with another young one from our back lawn. She has taken on the important task of providing company to others in the small outside cages sitting above or on branches alongside them for hours at a time. And she has learnt the hard way to avoid going anywhere near the chooks. She freaked us out by getting into the hen house one morning through the nesting boxes I'd left open to the fresh air. Fortunately we were alerted by the chooks going spare. Rushing



Newly released kereru at dawn, Photo: Kathy Morrison



outside we found that they had her cornered and were hell bent. Douglas crawled in and saved her inquisitive hide minus a few feathers, just in time.

We are loving it. What a huge privilege to have wild birds up close, needing the care we can give until they can be released and free again.

A huge thank you to Russell, May and Lisa for years' of best practice and love.

## Some personal Otatara highs and lows from 2019

By Cathy Macfie

### Lows

- I contribute to climate change by two trips to UK
- New subdivisions continue, even along little-known Huruhuru Road
- There is more estuarine mud and less eel grass on our stretch of the Oreti River
- First small signs of damage and carelessly dropped rubbish on our native bush track

### Highs

- Bellbirds' dawn chorus returns to our bush; thank you Pest Busters
- Family and friends help me towards planting 1000 trees along our bush edge (to say sorry for my carbon footprint)
- Local people increasingly appreciate the natural treasures on our doorstep - Otatara South Scenic Reserve in particular
- Grandchildren's observations and delight in where we live has to fuel optimism

May Otatara have a Happy New Year!



Macfie Family Planting Day at Tahaki, Otatara South Photo courtesy of Cathy Macfie





## Bushy Point Triple Celebration

By Chris Rance



On 14 September 2019 the Otatara Landcare Group (OLG), in Southland, celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> year and two other important milestones. At its flagship restoration project at Bushy Point- the planting of 30,000 native plants and the reaching of 15,000 volunteer hours.

The Bushy Point Restoration Project commenced in the year 2000. The 14 hectare project, on Department of Conservation (DoC) land, aimed to link two native forest remnants - of nationally significant totara forest on sand dunes with kahikatea swamp forest by planting out the bare paddocks between them. The linkage from forest to estuary would benefit native birds and other species - but particularly fernbirds, tui, kereru, bellbirds. On the Triple Celebration Day we not only planted 1000 plants by lunchtime but had a ceremonial tree planting for Russell Evans who passed away recently - his wife May planted a special totara tree and our new kereru mascot was named Russell in his honour. This was followed by a BBQ (yes in Southland in winter!) and children's activities.

The Bushy Point Project is accessible to the public at all times with walkways and interpretation signs - access from Bryson Road - look for people you know in our new commemorative panel like the boys are doing in the lower right photo.

Read more about Bushy Point at <https://www.otataralandcare.org.nz/bushy-point-restoration/>





## Gallery - Triple Celebration and around Otatara

By Graeme Childs (Triple Celebration) and Martin Catterall (around Otatara)



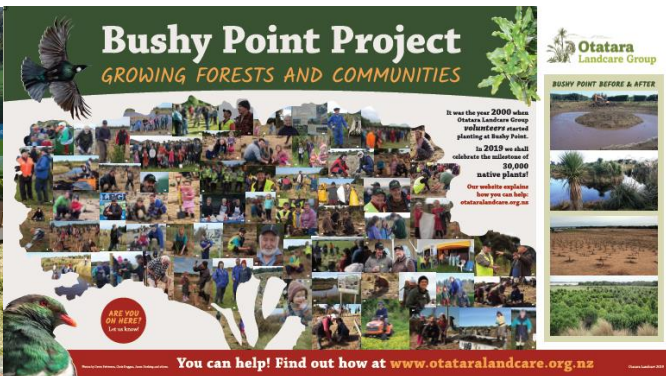
Russell, the OLG Kereru with the kids



Living Legend - Kevin Laidlaw



Taking the Cake



Triple Celebration Commemorative Panel



Tui at Dusk



Little things that matter



Selective Picking





## Southland Community Nursery News November 2019

By Chris Rance

The Nursery continues to produce around 8,000 locally sourced native plants a year - all grown by a dedicated band of volunteers on a Friday morning. A barter system is in place - take away some plants for the work you put into the nursery. It's now spring so lots of seedlings are coming up and cuttings done in winter are beginning to root and there are plenty of weeds showing themselves in the nursery - so plenty of varied jobs for people to do. Shared morning teas are always popular making the morning a good networking or social opportunity. You don't have to book to come along, or stay for a particular amount of time, all help is appreciated. We also sell plants at \$5 for PB3 as a way of resourcing Nursery infrastructure and activities.

Bronwyn Graham is doing a great job organising school and other groups coming to the Education Centre. She has also developed a number of locally based resources and made connections with various schools to develop a place-based resource - learning about and valuing your local environment. We have also done more "outreach" and connected with various other groups who share our goal of encouraging children's play and learning outside the classroom. Bronwyn's extra work at the Education Centre has been made possible by a Lotteries Grant and numbers attending the Education Centre have increased markedly. All visits are documented at:

<https://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/news-and-events/>.

We are also constantly hosting workshops of various types - from native plants, to art, to making natural body products, to apple pressing and grafting to permaculture. We can be a venue for other groups run their own workshops from our venue - contact Chris at:

[rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz](mailto:rances@southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz). For all our upcoming workshops go to:

<https://www.southlandcommunitynursery.org.nz/education-centre/activities/workshops/>

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## A Kereru Story

By Bronwyn Graham, KCC Coordinator,

Artwork by  
Arthur Holmes

& Photos from Bush Haven

As part of the Triple Celebration September 2019, a package of competitions and activities were sent to the Otatara School and Pre-schools. A story was part of this package and local budding artist, 7 year old Arthur Holmes, illustrated the story about a kererū and its life in Otatara.

### A Kereru's Tale

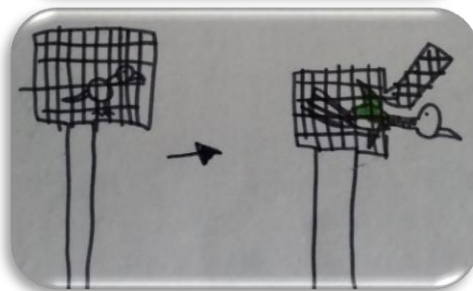
It was spring time in Otatara. The days were getting longer and the sun was getting brighter and the residents were spending their sunny weekends spring-cleaning and making their homes spic and span.

In a nest high up in a tree I was growing fat on the food my parents fed me. I wanted more than anything though, to go swooping through the trees like my parents did, but all my wings could manage was a pitiful flutter. Each day I worked on my wings, and each day they got stronger. Then one day, with mum and dad watching I took my first flight. It was a short one, but it was exhilarating. I so wanted to do more, to leave the nest in the tree in the forest and swoop through to the feeding grounds in Bushy Point with all the other kererū.

"Be patient little one," said my mother, "You need to be strong to do that, the path is never straight so you must learn to twist and turn as we do. In time, with practice you will get better and then you can tackle the trees in Bushy Point."

But (being a young kererū) I was as short on patience as I was on practice. Sitting in the nest one day, bored with being left behind yet again, I watched in amazement as the grey, rain-stained sides of the big box amongst the trees started to sparkle and shine. As the sun rose higher in the sky, it was as if the sides of the box disappeared and I could see the pathway through to the other side – a shortcut! Who needed practice to swoop and swerve when there was a straight path ahead of me? Excitedly I fluffed my feathers, and flexed my wings and without another thought, flew off the side of the nest, down through the trees straight for the pathway...

SPLAT! I smacked into (what I now know) is a nice clean window. My head spun as I lay there and I saw stars as I was carefully picked up. I was taken to Bush Haven Native Bird Rehabilitation Trust, where I was cared for in the bird hospital. I mended and as I got stronger I moved to a bigger cage, and eventually the door opened and I was again where I was meant to be – in the forest!







Now that I have got flying sorted I love flying round and over Otatara. I am noticing all the bush remnants of Otatara, and my friends and I love racing from Otatara Reserve to the Southland Community Nursery. Our favourite place to hang out is Bushy Point Reserve before speeding back to the Otatara Reserve.

Our favourite snacks are the new shoots and leaf growth on kōwhai trees and we strip these, eating as many of them as we can. We love when there are berries, ripe and succulent and juicy. We sometimes eat too many of these!

I see so many of our friends as we fly and hang out in the bush—tui, bellbird/korimako, fantail/pīwakawaka, silver eyes/tauhou, and grey warbler/riroriro. And nearer the estuary we see kingfisher/kōtare and the rare fernbird/matata. And I have spotted some new kids on the block—kākāriki and kākā. I do hope they stay in the hood.

Now that I am flying so much (rather than stuck at home in the nest by myself) I am noticing all that goes on in Otatara. Have you seen the “caution kereru” signs around Otatara? These are to warn drivers coming to Otatara that sometimes us kererū are having so much fun swooping and flying that we forget about cars on roads (we did not always have to watch for these!).



I have also been watching what is happening in our forest area – there are work days at Bushy Point, and there are these people called Pestbusters who are keeping the bush safe for us birds. I have decided that I live in the best place. Otatara is a hidden treasure!

Did you know? In September this year, there was a big triple celebration event – a Planting Day at Bushy Point. The awesome people of the Otatara Landcare Group and the community of Otatara planted more forest for us birds and our insect friends ...

Just like the people of Otatara love us kereru, I have learned to love and appreciate the caring people that make up the Otatara Landcare Group. So I decided to stick around as the Otatara Landcare Group mascot! Keep an eye out for me, my name is Russell.

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**“Russell” the Otatara Landcare Group mascot, was named after Russell Evans, co-founder of Bush Haven, who passed away in July this year. A tree was planted in his memory at the Bushy Point Planting Day.**

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## In Appreciation...

### ...of Russell and May Evans and their the work with Native Birds at Bush Haven

For over 30 years, Russell and May have housed and bred exotic and native parrots as a hobby, first at Grasmere then from 1986 at Otatara; initially red and yellow crowned kakariki, but more recently also Antipodes Island Parakeets and South Island kaka.

From 1998, kereru were also placed in their care and this led to an interest in rehabilitating native birds, particularly kereru and tui, ably supported by their veterinarian daughter, Lisa Stuart.

In winter 2002, Russell and May successfully hand-reared a kereru chick fallen from its nest in a storm, although it was feared that it would not be able to survive in the wild. In 2004, this hand-reared kereru, named “Bubs”, became part of a DoC research project which Russell and May had joined. In 2005, Bubs was released with a transmitter attached and she nested and mated successfully, and contributed much to the project over the year.

Bubs is still a regular visitor to Bush Haven.

Since 1998, Russell and May have welcomed primary schools and other groups to Bush Haven to increase awareness, especially in young people, of the importance of native birds in preserving the bush ecosystem. In 2010, they were successful in getting ICC to erect the “Caution Kereru” road signs which are such a distinctive feature in Otatara. Bush Haven also kept the bodies of deceased birds so the local iwi could acquire their feathers for cloak-making and other traditional uses.

In the last few years, Russell and May ran an enormously successful Kaka breeding programme with young birds being sent to selected locations throughout the South Island. Over the years, Russell and May received awards from Environment Southland and ICC including most recently a Long Service Award from Environment Southland. And they have attracted funding for their work from DoC, ICC, ES and the ILT Foundation and Southland Community Trust.

Through their inspirational care for our native birds, and their associated work controlling predators through the local Pestbusters network, Russell and May have made an enormous contribution to the bird life in Otatara and much farther afield through their Kaka breeding programme.

Happily, when Russell and May retired from Bush Haven early this year, their love and passion for our native birds inspired others to continue their rehabilitation work here in Otatara.

The contribution that Russell and May have made to the future of birdlife in Otatara and beyond is widely known and respected throughout the wildlife rehabilitation community of NZ.



*Russell Evans (1942 -2019)*





## Predator Free NZ 2050 starts at home

By Dallas Bradley

Predator Free NZ 2050 (PFNZ 2050) is an ambitious goal launched back in 2016 by Maggie Barry, the then Minister of Conservation. It is a lofty aspirational goal that will be difficult to achieve with current technologies and resources. It's a proverbial "elephant", and, as the saying about eating an elephant goes, you have to do it in small bites.

PFNZ 2050 starts at home where it is relatively easy to achieve. Collective efforts on the home front add up to predator free neighbourhoods, and maybe, hopefully even, predator free Otatara! So what can you do about it?

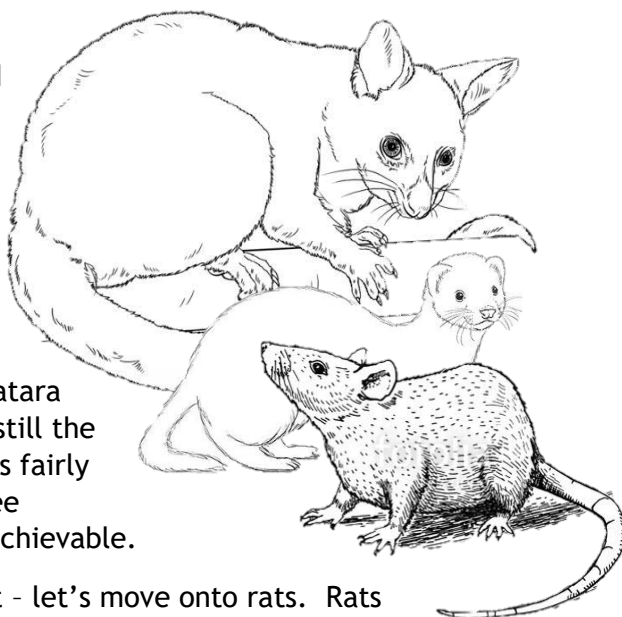
PFNZ 2050 has two elements, one being the predator and the other being the "area" or part of NZ. PFNZ focuses on 3 predators - possums, rats and mustelids, the latter being a collective term for stoats, ferrets and weasels. As far as the area goes, we will focus on our properties in particular and Otatara in general. The rest of the country is just too much to get my head around.

Regarding the pests, let's start with possums. It is fairly easy to get rid of possums. There aren't many left in Otatara due to control efforts over the last 10 years but there is still the odd one around or the odd pocket containing several. It is fairly easy to achieve "possum free my place" or a "possum free neighbourhood", so "possum free Otatara" is definitely achievable.

Possums therefore are an easy first bite on the pest front - let's move onto rats. Rats are controllable at a property scale but it takes consistent effort. I can't stress enough the need for persistency. A female rat can produce up to 20 or so young ones in a breeding season (Spring to late Autumn) and a young one is sexually mature after 3-4 months - a momentary lapse in vigilance and you will soon be going backwards fast. "Rat free my place" is achievable and in an area where a lot of properties are doing rat control, "rat free neighbourhoods" are achievable too, 90% rat free at least - we don't have to be perfect but we can try!

Mustelids are at fairly low levels in Otatara. They are very mobile and the traps required to catch them are relatively expensive. Unless you have several hectares, mustelids don't really lend themselves to property level control. If you see them though, let us know and we may be able to set a trap nearby or lend you a trap. The same goes for possums - if you start hearing or seeing possums or their damage, we can lend you a trap or set one up for you.

Rats though are best dealt to by property owners whether you have bush or not (everyone has rats from time to time). We have a range of traps, poison baits and bait stations available at very reasonable (unbeatable) prices. All traps and bait stations are pet safe. And on the subject of pets, you can't rely on them to deal to all your rats and mice - they will get a few but not all.





So the message is concentrate your home-based pest busting efforts on rats. As far as possums and mustelids go, tell us if you see them and we'll see what Otatarā Pestbusters can do about them. Remember, we have several members regularly undertaking pest control in ICC and DoC reserves. Collectively we can go a long way towards achieving Pest Free Otatarā.



If you want some advice or wish to purchase some pest control supplies, contact me (Dallas Bradley) on 021 784 962 or [amberg2@gmail.com](mailto:amberg2@gmail.com).

We can get you well on the way to pest free "my place" for \$20 or so. I haven't mentioned why we are doing it. Most people will know it is to protect and enhance the bird life but there are more selfish reasons as well - rats can do a heck of a lot of damage to homes, sheds and vehicles, so that in itself is good reason to keep their numbers down.

## Not What Your Think...

You know how you think you're feeding the birds? Well, it might not be them that are getting the greatest benefit...



Photo: Lois Caldwell

*We want birds, not rats, at the bird table!*



More from the Planting Day, September 14, 2019

Photos by : Graeme Childs





# Don't Go Batty these Holidays, go Batting instead!

By Geoff Dembo

Summer has come around again, and it's time to go batting! Nothing to do with cricket - this is wandering around outside at dusk to find long-tailed bats.

Bats are New Zealand's only land mammals. Short-tailed bats live deep in the bush, but long-tailed bats hunt for flying insects out in the open - usually on bush edges and along lines of trees on fence lines - so there's a chance of finding them in Otatara. I saw one a few years ago, and have heard of another couple of recent sightings.

The Otatara Landcare Group now has an ultrasonic detector: a small handheld black box which scans for bat sounds - too high-pitched for humans to hear - and converts them to audible clicks so you can tell when bats are hunting nearby.



Long-Tailed Bat, Photo by Colin O'Donnell, DoC



Penelope Gillette and bat detector, Photo by G. Dembo

If you're interested in borrowing the detector for up to a week, get in touch with me at [gdembo@yahoo.com](mailto:gdembo@yahoo.com). Bat season is usually till end of February or so, as you'll need a still, warm night so that flying insects will be out for the bats to hunt. Also contact me if you'd like to go out batting with me to local spots in Otatara, and I'll put you on my list of people I'll let know, though it will usually be at fairly short notice.

Please get in touch if you have seen bats in Otatara, whether recently or not. Stories about bats in Otatara back in the old days would be very interesting too. Further information will be on the Otatara Landcare Group website at: <https://www.otataralandcare.org.nz/lets-explore/native-birds-animals/bats/>





# The Art of Birds

A two day workshop in Otatara with Jo Ogier

Using a twig as a drawing pen was not part of my skillset until the latest drawing weekend held at the Southland Community Nursery.

Twelve learners keen recording skills inside & out in admit the more co-operative Jo combines her creating unique her warm, generous Journal keeping is our environment, & the context in Twelve keen students shared skills, ideas, range of enthusiasms. Our growing confidence document our own the world around us, we are inspired.



to grow their drawing & observed birds both the field - I have to stuffed birds were MUCH in holding their stance. interests & expertise in artworks together with style of teaching.

a way to respond to seeing connections which they appear.

& our expert tutor methods & a wide

Results demonstrated

to discover &

way of seeing in whatever way

Feather  
twig & ink

Otatara is a truly special place to cherish & flourish.  
Get involved with keeping it this way.





## Could your Tree Kill a Bird?

By Chris McMillan, Tree Wrangler

It is with great pleasure that we who live, work, and recreate in Otatara can experience the bird song associated with numerous happy native birds. I constantly hear the enjoyment in people's voices when they tell me that they have seen or heard Kakariki from their own homes.

Thanks to this communities involvement in actively trapping and poisoning rats, mice, stoats, ferrets and possums we are now seeing the results of this persistent predator control through increased bird life. It is a wonderful result and something we can be proud of and boast about too. Predator control is well supported in Otatara and we have our own Pest co-ordinator-Dallas Bradley who not only maintains several trap lines in Otatara but also supplies poison and traps for property owners to use.

As the birdlife increases there will be a need for good food and suitable habitat for them to live in. Unfortunately our protected bush areas are not increasing, other than the efforts of the Land care group to plant on Bryson Road. Sadly some parts of Otatara's bushed areas are reducing in variety and habitat that is valuable for our birds' long term survival. Introduced plant and tree species, establish themselves in areas we don't use or frequent. They grow to maturity quickly, and disperse their seeds into the environment via wind and birds. This creates an imbalance to a healthy eco system, by killing the native trees and preventing regeneration of native shrubs and trees that should provide a rich biodiversity.

A major threat to established areas of native bush in Invercargill and surrounds are the Sycamore, *Acer Pseudoplatanus*. This tree species is well established in Otatara. The Invercargill City Council is actively trying to eradicate this tree from Anderson's Park and Otatara Scenic Reserve. Sycamore is very fast growing and can grow 1-2m a year. This growth exceeds the ability of the majority of our native trees. Sycamore establishes a very thick canopy over the existing bush once it has a height advantage. This canopy will severely limit native species ability to grow. Their canopy will likely cause native species to die through preventing light to reach the forest floor, causing light deprivation. In the winter the Sycamore drops its leaves and subsequently exposes any delicate emerging natives to the wind and frost. Sycamore offers no food value to birds and the trees are not supportive of nest building.





If we look back to Otatara before the pest busters started removing the rats from our bush, the Sycamore seed would have formed part an important food source for rats, resulting in fewer seeds available to germinate. Today with very few rats foraging over our bush floors we are becoming inundated with Sycamore seedlings which are now starting to grow into large trees. The seeds are also wind dispersed to great distances, even into vast protected areas. One large Sycamore can drop 1000's of seeds a year. A stroll through the north east corner (East of duck pond) of the bush at Anderson Park is a nightmare that is happening right now. The only dominant native trees left, are the giant Podocarps. If you have Sycamore trees on your property in Otatara it would be a good idea to have a look at what is happening at Anderson Park. This gives the reader an insight into what potentially can happen to your bush in Otatara if sycamores are not removed early.



As poison and trap technology is advancing we are also seeing advancement in chemical technology which enables a quick death to Sycamore trees but it does not affect the neighbouring natives. Trees can now be killed while standing and allowed to die with the limbs becoming light and dry after 6 months from poisoning. Then they can be reduced to firewood with minimal to no damage to adjoining bush or just left for the insects or weather to breakdown.

Doing nothing about the control of sycamores is not an option because it will invariably assist the Sycamore to transform our native bush to something like English woodlands. The outcome would be that the native bush and homes for our native birds will be lost, by there being a loss of natural habitat for breeding and food for our native birds.

This time of year is the time to kill seeding trees and pull seedlings out.

*If you want help to identify or remove Sycamore trees from your property get in touch with the **Tree Wrangler - Chris McMillan**, phone **021 241 6236** or **03 213 1165***

*Chris McMillan has been a conservationist for over 40 years, he has worked extensively in Southland's conservation areas including Fiordland National Park and the Murihiku region, in both protection, weed and animal control. Chris has lived in Otatara for 33 years, is a keen arborist and bee keeper. He has a special interest in developing and maintaining the uniqueness of the coastal bush of Otatara.*





## Otatara Landcare Group Membership

If you are not already a member and would like to help support the work of the Otatara Landcare Group, just fill in the form below and come join us. We appreciate all our members both for their contributions of time and financial support. We can't do it without you.

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### Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers: (Hm) \_\_\_\_\_

(Mobile): \_\_\_\_\_

Email (for newsletters and events) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Subs** (please select)

☐ 1 year \$20

☐ Life Membership \$50

☐ Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Please email ([otataralg@gmail.com](mailto:otataralg@gmail.com)) or send this form with cheque to our treasurer Glenda Graham - 33 Rakiura Parade.

Subs or donations can be deposited directly into the OLG bank account

**03 1355 0805312 00**

Please make sure you use your **name** and “**olg subs**” as references with your payment.