



**MARLBOROUGH
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Summary Report on the Results of the
Significant Natural
Areas Project
2014 – 2015**

July 2015



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Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

Through the Resource Management Act 1991 and its subsequent amendments, the Council has a role in maintaining and protecting indigenous biodiversity and significant natural areas in the Marlborough region. Since 2001 the Council has implemented the “Significant Natural Areas” (SNA) project, which has involved extensive field based ecological survey work and a subsequent protection and monitoring programme.

This report provides a summary of results of the Significant Natural Areas project (SNA) over the one year period from July 2014 to June 2015. It follows from six previous summary reports, one of which covered the early years of the project from 2001 to June 2008, one covering the two year period from 2008 to 2010 and the other four covering the annual periods from 2010 to 2014.

This report summarises the results of:-

- the related environmental protection work carried out through the SNA project Landowner Assistance Programme from July 2014 to June 2015
- the related monitoring programme; and ;
- several other projects associated with the Significant Natural Areas project including:-
 - o publicity and education activities,
 - o the native seed collection project; and
 - o the Tūi to Town project from its establishment in 2008 until June 2015

(NB: all financial amounts in this report are presented GST inclusive)

Ecological Survey Work

Since 2001, extensive field based ecological surveys have been carried out on private land through large parts of the Marlborough region. The majority of the work was carried out from 2001 to 2009 and since that time only the occasional survey is carried out, generally through landowner requests.

In the 2014-2015 annual period no further survey work was carried out, however, a summary of previous work is provided.

Protection Programme

A pilot landowner assistance programme to implement protection of areas identified as significant natural areas was established in 2003 and extended into a full programme in 2005. Since this time a total of 85 projects have been completed.

In the 2014-2015 annual period eight new projects were completed including seven field projects and one report on a related topic. In addition fourteen other on-going weed control projects were completed.

Total Funding Contributions for Biodiversity Protection Projects on Private Land 2014-2015

Marlborough District Council Funding	\$54,677.00
Central Government Biodiversity Fund	\$3,626.00
Landowners	\$51,570.00
Total	\$109,873.00

Monitoring

Monitoring of the sites that have been the subject of protection work was initiated in 2006 and has been repeated on a bi-ennial basis since that time. This monitoring was not carried out in the 2014-2015 year and will be repeated in the 2015/16 year coming up.

A new programme to re-visit a selection of un-managed SNA sites was initiated in the 2014-2015 year. This targeted two ecological district areas (Kekerengu and Medway) and included a telephone survey with participating landowners and field visits to a selection of sites.

Of the 25 un-managed sites that were visited, 14 were in stable condition, 8 showed some deterioration and 3 showed some improvement. Old mans beard was highlighted as a serious weed problem in the majority of sites.

Associated Projects

- Publicity – information about the project has been disseminated at a number of public events and the Tūi to Town programme featured on the Rural Delivery programme on TVOne.
- Seed collection carried out between February and May 2015 with a focus on collecting for the new extended Tūi to Town areas in south Marlborough.
- Tūi to Town project – three new plantings were funded in the Wairau Plain area over the 2014-2015 year. The programme area was extended in early 2015 to include the Wairau Valley area and the Seddon/Ward/Flaxbourne area and there has been publicity about this to encourage further plantings in lowland south Marlborough in the future.



Members of the Significant Natural Areas working group which has been instrumental in helping to guide and manage the project since 2001

From left to right, Geoff Walls (contract ecologist), Alan Johnson (MDC), Jo Gould (DoC), Paul Millen (consultant), Mike Aviss (DoC), Nicky Eade (MDC), Tom Stein (QEII rep), Ross Beech (farmer rep), Roy Grose (DoC), Jan Clayton-Greene (DoC), Simon Moore (DoC)

Absent: Chris Bowron and Kristen Gerard (farmer representatives)

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1. Introduction

The Significant Natural Area project was established in 2000 to enable the Marlborough District Council to meet its obligations under section 6 (c) of the Resource Management Act which requires that, in relation to managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources, the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna, shall be recognised and provided for as a matter of national importance.

The Council of the time decided to meet these obligations through a proactive but non-regulatory programme to identify significant natural areas and offer landowners support to protect and enhance these areas. Integral to this approach was a commitment to hold the property specific information confidentially rather than scheduling it for regulatory purposes.

A working group was established to assist the Council to manage the programme. The group included Councillors and staff, Department of Conservation staff, three landowner representatives and the local QEII representative. This group met several times a year in the initial stages of the project and continues to meet approximately annually. It has played an important role in guiding the direction of the project over the years.

A small team was employed to assist with landowner consultation and carry out the ecological survey work. Paul Millen carried out the majority of the direct consultation with landowners while ecologists Geoff Walls and Philip Simpson carried out the ecological field work and reporting and also provided expert advice as required. Once the later protection programme was established Paul Millen also assisted with managing restoration and protection programmes and has carried out the seed collection work since 2006. Some external assistance was also used to help with publicity and the publication of the two summary reports (2005 and 2009) and planting and restoration guides (2004 and 2011).

Information collected through the significant natural areas surveys is held in a database and is only reported publicly in a general sense. The two main ways the information is used are firstly, to provide a regional overview of significant natural areas and biodiversity on private land in the Marlborough region, and secondly, to provide a basis for developing protection programmes with landowners interested in proactively managing and protecting these areas.

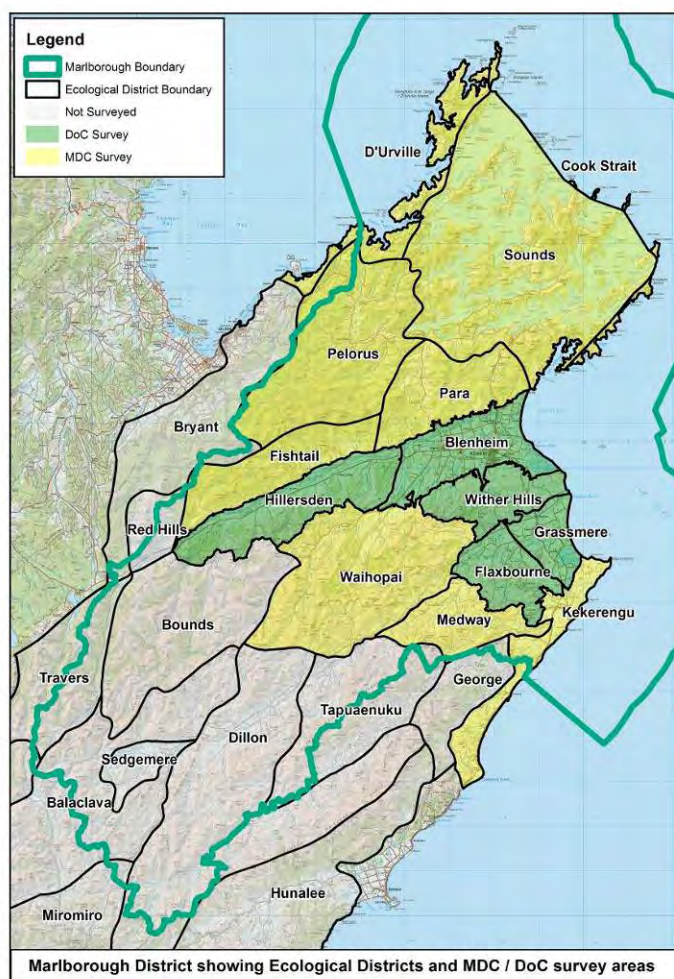
The Marlborough District Council continues to support the non-regulatory approach to provide for the protection of significant natural areas. The Significant Natural Areas programme is well established but continues to evolve over time.

Part A: Ecological Survey Work – Summary of Results – July 2014 to June 2015

2. Field Based Ecological Surveys – Background and Overview

Between 2001 and 2009, extensive field based ecological surveys were carried out on private land throughout large parts of the Marlborough District. This work has been approached as a partnership with landowners, who have participated voluntarily. Through the results of the ecological survey work, it has been possible to analyse the extent and type of ecosystems remaining and the severity and types of pressures these remaining areas are subject to.

Ecological Districts have been used as the survey units. The Marlborough District Council carried out the majority of the survey work overall (Kekerengu, Medway and Waihopai ecological districts in south Marlborough and Para, Fishtail, Pelorus, d’Urville, Sounds and Cook Strait ecological districts in north Marlborough). However, the Department of Conservation also carried out a substantial part of the survey work between the years 2002 – 2004, as part of the Protected Natural Areas (PNA) survey of the Wairau Ecological Region which included five ecological districts in south Marlborough - Grassmere, Flaxbourne, Wither Hills, Blenheim and Hillersden. Some ecological districts at the south of the region were not surveyed (Tapuaenuku, Bounds, Dillon, Sedgemere, Balaclava Travers and Red Hills), being mostly Department of Conservation land or pastoral leasehold land.



Map 1: Ecological Districts and Marlborough District Council/DOC survey areas

The ecological survey work has resulted in a large amount of information being collected. This provides both a regional scale overview of the extent and state of biodiversity resources on private land, and a more detailed property scale assessment which is useful for implementing practical protection measures such as fencing and pest control. While the emphasis has been on terrestrial vegetation and habitat values, wetlands, and some waterways, have also been assessed.

The work was largely completed in the nine year period from 2001 to 2009 (inclusive). Further occasional field surveys have been carried out at the request of landowners since that period.

No further ecological field surveys were carried out in the 2014-2015 year.

2.1. Wetland Survey 2010 – 2013

From 2010 – 2013 Council has carried out a further project to identify regionally significant wetlands in Marlborough. The intention is that these are scheduled in the new resource management plans (due for public notification in 2015), there for providing certainty to landowners over whether rules relating to wetland areas apply to them. This project involved desktop identification followed by notification to all affected landowners and follow up field visits on request. There was some overlap with wetland areas already identified through the earlier Significant Natural Areas surveys.

While the final number of identified wetlands is not yet completely confirmed, well over 1000 are likely to be scheduled. The intention is that these wetlands will in effect be classified as significant natural areas and will therefore qualify for the same assistance with protection works through the Landowner Assistance Programme. A number of wetland owners have expressed an interest in wetland restoration and approached the Council for assistance in the 2014-2015 year. Three wetland projects have been completed and are included in the Protection Projects Summary section.

2.2. Results

The tables below show the summary of ecological results from the Significant Natural Area surveys on private land for both south and north Marlborough in the 12 year period from July 2001 to June 2015. These do not include the additional wetland sites that have been identified more recently through the 2010-13 survey described above.

Tables 1 and 2 show the total participation rates and overall results from 2001 to June 2015 in south and north Marlborough respectively. Using ecological district units, the tables show; the number of properties surveyed, the number of properties where permission to survey was sought but declined, the number of sites identified, the combined area and percentage of total land area of all of the identified significant natural area sites, and in north Marlborough, the percentage of Department of Conservation land.

As of June 2015 a total of 284 landowners participated in the ecological survey in both south and north Marlborough (75% of those approached). A total of 94 landowners declined to participate (25% of those approached). A total of 708 significant natural areas have been identified, with a combined area of 45,099 hectares.

Table 1: South Marlborough Ecological Survey Participation and Results (July 01 – June 15)

Ecological Districts	No. Properties Surveyed	No. Properties Declined	No. of Sites	Combined Area (ha)	% of Total Land Area
Kekerengu	20	3	57	1,446	4.6%
Medway	14	3	79	4,961	15.5%
Waihopai	19	14	61	5,418	5%
Blenheim	15	1	13	292	1%
Wither Hills	22	7	24	5,132	16.7%
Grassmere	10	4	11	155	1%
Flaxbourne	26	14	62	2,027	7%
Hillersden	29	4	30	3,666	7.5%
Totals	154 (75%)	50 (25%)	336	23,092	7.2% av

Table 2: North Marlborough – Ecological Survey – Participation and Results (July 01 – June 15)

Ecological Districts	No. Properties Surveyed	No. Properties Declined	No. of Sites	Combined Area (ha)	SNA sites as a % of Total Private Land Area in ED	SNA sites as a % of Total Area of ED (DoC and Private)	% of DoC Land
d’Urville	21	9	47	3,650	16.5%	12.0%	27%
Cook Strait	3	0	7	755	17.1%	13.2%	24%
Sounds	62	16	184	11,790	16.0%	9.5%	39%
Pelorus	19	10	45	1,472	3.8%	1.4%	63%
Para	18	7	55	2,975	8.7%	6.2%	24%
Fishtail	6	2	33	1,350	9.0%	3.0%	55%
Totals	128 (75%)	44 (25%)	369	21,924	(Av=12%)	(Av=7.4%)	(Av=38.5 %)

2.3. Discussion

The field based ecological surveys have produced a lot of information about the distribution and type of native habitat remaining on private land in both south and north Marlborough.

South Marlborough

This part of the region is characterised by a history of extensive native vegetation clearance and consequently very depleted ecological functioning in some respects. While there are some extensive areas of beech forest, kanuka forest, shrublands and tussock grasslands, these all occur in the extensive areas of hill country. Of the eight ecological districts that were surveyed in the south Marlborough area there is very little Department of Conservation land, apart from in the Waihopai ecological district, and in general, the percentage of total land area of significant natural sites is very low - less than 10% in six of the eight ecological districts and less than 5% in the three of these lowland coastal ecological districts (Blenheim, Grassmere and Kekerengu).

This is clearly reflected when the ecological districts are compared to the Priority One area of the 2007 Statement of National Priorities for Protecting Rare and Threatened Biodiversity on Private Land which identifies land environments that have less than 20% remaining in indigenous cover. The 20% threshold is based on a well established species-area relationship which shows that the rate of biodiversity loss increases dramatically when the amount of available habitat drops below 20% of its original extent.



Some ecosystem types in south Marlborough are very depleted and the little that does remain is not always well managed or formally protected in anyway (for instance wetlands, podocarp forest and broadleaved forests). However, with a recent emphasis on protection of some of these areas some improvements are being made, with landowners introducing management such as fencing, weed control and restoration planting, that will ensure the long term sustainability of some of these sites.

North Marlborough

The north Marlborough part of the region has a different climate and history of land clearance to south Marlborough and also has a considerable amount of land in Department of Conservation management (ranging from 24% to 63% in different ecological districts). The percentage of total land area of significant natural sites is generally higher than in south Marlborough, ranging from about 4% to 17% across the ecological districts.

While some ecosystem types are quite depleted, for instance lowland alluvial and swamp forests and kohekohe forest, a significant amount of native forest habitat remains – both beech and podocarp dominated. Additionally, large areas of regenerating forests consisting of kanuka, manuka, tauhinu and broadleaved species are present where land has been left to regenerate following earlier clearance.



While fencing is important for some lowland sites within a pastoral farming landscape, feral animal pest control is the main challenge in north Marlborough, especially as there are still populations of a range of native fauna present (forest birds, sea birds, weka, giant land snails, freshwater native fish species).

Part B: Protection Work – Landowner Assistance Programme – Summary of Results 2014-2015

3. Landowner Assistance Programme – Background and Overview

The Landowner Assistance Programme has been operating since 2003 in conjunction with the field ecological survey work, and has targeted assistance to high value sites with identified pressures and threats that can be practically managed. It was initially established as a pilot programme with a focus on the south Marlborough area, but has since been fully established as a permanent programme and extended to include north Marlborough.



Waihopai Valley wetland area newly fenced and marked out with bamboo stakes for spring planting

While the main focus of the programme has been on practical protection of individual high value significant natural area sites

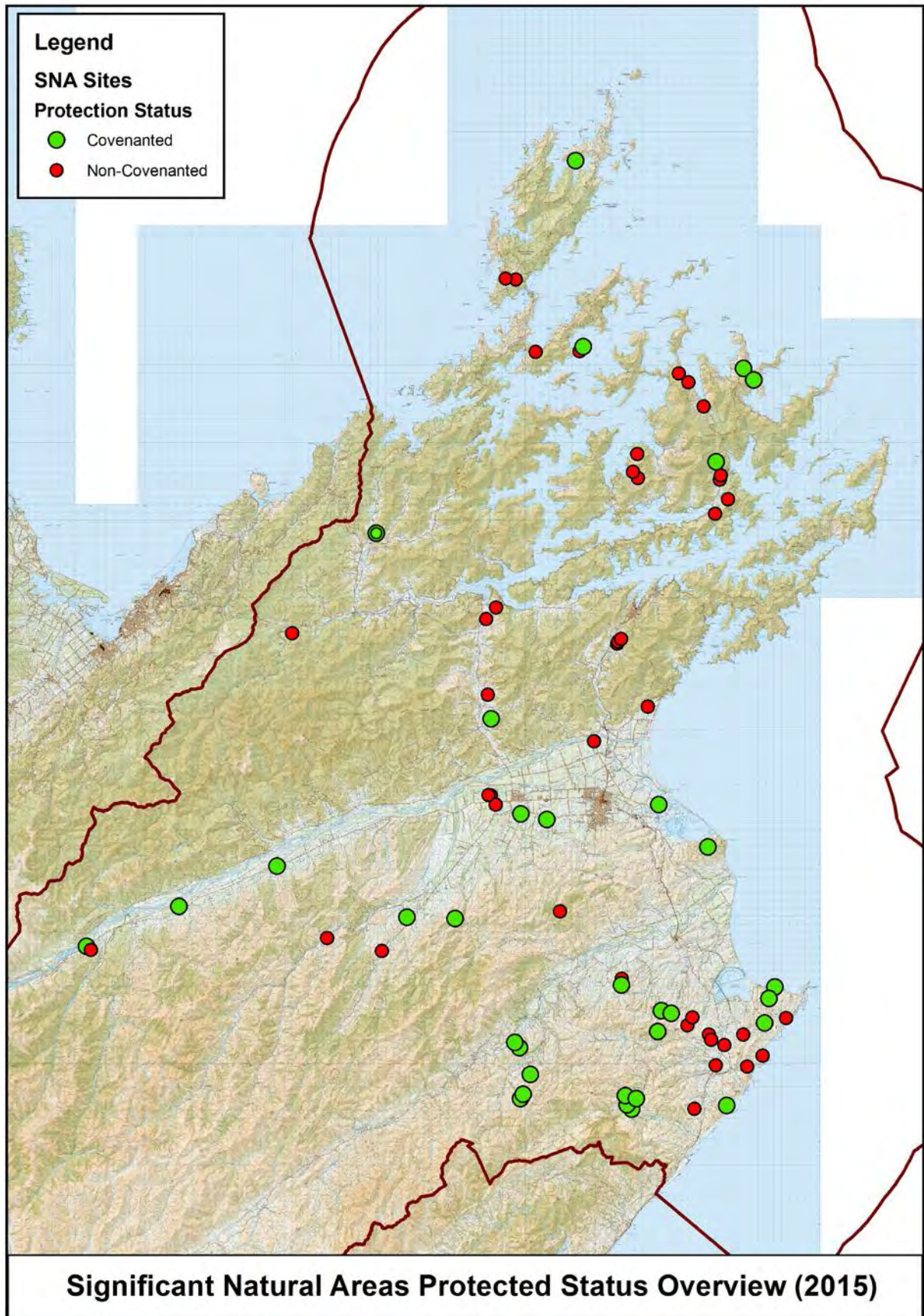
(including a mix of fencing, weed and animal pest control and restoration planting work), other broader methods to promote the protection of natural values in south Marlborough have also been incorporated. These have included:

- the pilot use of farm scale plans to balance the production and conservation values within properties (especially where fencing is not practical);
- three feasibility studies looking at pest and weed control issues (old mans beard and goat control in south Marlborough and wilding pine control on d’Urville Island);
- the collection of native plant seed material to ensure an ongoing supply of locally sourced plants for re-vegetation and restoration efforts, associated publicity and promotion work (newsletters, a series of newspaper articles and publication of summary reports and native planting guides for both south and north Marlborough); and
- The Tūi to Town restoration project with an original focus on the Wairau Plain area but which has been extended to include the Wairau Valley and lowland areas around Seddon and Ward in 2015.

A strong conservation effort on private land is needed if functioning ecosystems are to be maintained, especially in the lowland areas of south Marlborough which have been identified nationally as threatened environments with less than 20% of natural cover remaining. To be effective this would need to include continued protection of the last remaining remnants as well as active restoration planting to create new habitats and increase the overall area in natural cover (which is currently less than 1% on the Wairau and Awatere Plain areas). So far only about 12% of the 708 identified sites over the whole of Marlborough have received any restoration or protection (30 in north Marlborough and 55 in south Marlborough). Many surveyed sites are likely to be deteriorating in condition over time due to a range of threats and pressures.

While the protection and restoration efforts have been heartening, continued effort is required. There is some indication that demand for assistance to protect sites is decreasing and efforts to encourage further work need to be considered.

Map 2: The location of the majority of the 85 sites that have been protected through the programme. The sites shown in green have been covenanted.



3.1. Protection Projects 2014-2015

In the 12 month period from July 2014 to June 2015 year the Council contributed to 22 projects in total. Eight of these were new projects (one being a report only), and fourteen were follow up weed control projects (including four minor contributions to QEII managed maintenance projects).

The seven new protection projects included four small wetland fencing projects (4.5 hectares in total with three in south Marlborough and one in north Marlborough), two wilding pine control projects (54 hectares in total, both in north Marlborough) and one animal control



project (37 hectares in north Marlborough).

Wilding Pine control starting to become evident in an Okaramio SNA site

The eighth new project was a report prepared by consultants summarising fencing options to restrict/control ungulates (deer, goats and pigs) in the Marlborough Sounds.

All of the fourteen follow up projects involved weed control in sites already protected in some way. Eight of the fourteen sites are wetlands. The main weeds include willow re-growth, old mans beard and wilding pines.

An additional three small restoration planting projects within the Blenheim Ecological District were funded through the Tūi to Town Project.

3.2. Protection Projects Summary – July 2014 – June 2015

Table 3: Summary of new protection projects July 2014 – June 2015 (GST inclusive)

Ecosystem Type	Size (ha)	North/South Marlborough ED	Type of Work	Total Funding	MDC	Biofund	Landowner and QEII/other
Wetland (Pe)	1	S Medway ED	Fencing	\$8847.34	\$2950.00	-	\$5898.22 (QEII/LO)
Wetland- (Sa)	1	S Hillersden ED	Fencing Planting	\$5684.00	\$2842.00		\$2842.00
Wetland (Bo)	1.5	S Waihopai ED	Fencing Planting	\$6582.00	\$3291.00		\$3291.00
Wetland (Va) QEII	1	N Pelorus ED	Fencing	\$2031.00	\$677.55		\$1355.00 QEII/LO)
Hill Slopes (Me)	40	N Sounds ED	Wilding Pine	\$4000.00	\$2000.00		\$2000.00
Hill Slopes (Ne)	14	N Para ED	Wilding Pine control	\$4000.00	\$2000.00		\$2000.00
Coastal (Wa) QEII	37	N D'Urville ED	Animal pest control	\$11,500.00	\$3000.00		\$8500.00
Report on Ungulate Fencing	-	Sounds	Report - Animal Pest control	\$6440.00	\$3220.00		\$3220.00
Tūi to Town x 3	0.3 ha	S Blenheim ED	planting	\$1845.00	\$1845.00		Un known
Total				\$50,929	\$21,825		\$29,106

Table 4: Summary of ongoing protection projects July 2014-June 2015

Ecosystem Type	Size (ha)	North/South Marlborough ED	Type of Work	Total Funding	MDC	Biofund	Landowner and QEII/other
Wetland (De)	1	S Blenheim ED	Weed control	5774.00	2887.00		2887.00
Wetland-(De)	1	S Blenheim ED	Weed control	2000.00	1000.00		1000.00
Wetland (Wi)	1.5	S Blenheim ED	Weed control	6000.00	3000.00		3000.00
Wetland (Pr) I	1	S Blenheim ED	Weed control	9200.00	4600.00		4600.00
Wetland (Hi)	40	S Kekerengu ED	Weed control	6868.00	3434.00		3434.00
Wetland (Sp)	4	S Blenheim ED	Weed control	2542.00	1271.00		1271.00
Riparian (Pe) QEII		S Medway ED	Weed control	5750.00	2875.00		2875.00
Riparian (Pe)		S Medway ED	Weed control	2300.00	1150.00		1150.00
Hill Slopes (Sb) QEII		S Flaxbourne ED	Weed control	4024.00	2012.00		2012.00
Coastal Mirza		S Kekerengu ED	Wilding Pine	6762.00	6762.00		
QEII x4 projects				\$7724.00	\$3862.00		3862.00
Total				\$58,944	\$32,852.-		26,090

Total spending on the 22 protection projects was \$109,873, the Marlborough District Council share being \$54,677, QEII National Trust share \$3626 and landowner share \$51,570. This includes Tūi to Town spending of \$1845.

There was no contribution for the central government Biodiversity Fund, however funds are still available for one outstanding project from an application in 2013 scheduled to be completed in the 2015/16 year.

Total combined spending on protection projects on private land for the 2014-2015 financial year, when all of these protection projects are taken into account, is set out below showing the contribution of the various funding sources.

Total Funding Contributions for Biodiversity Protection Projects on Private Land 2014-2015

Marlborough District Council Funding	\$54,677.00
QEII National Trust	\$3,626.00
Landowners	\$51,570.00
Total	\$109,873.00

Summary of Total Funding Contributions for Biodiversity Protection Projects on Private Land 2003 – 2015

Marlborough District Council Funding	\$630,838.00
Central Government Biodiversity Fund	\$810,010.00
QEII National Trust	\$78,318.00
Landowners	\$541,087.00
Total	\$2,060,253.00

A summary of all Significant Natural Area project expenditure is included in Appendix 1

3.3. Relationships

The Council promotes covenanting and has developed a strong relationship with the Department of Conservation and the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust (QEII), both of which provide a mechanism for landowners to independently covenant protected areas on their properties. A total of 37 of the 85 projects protected through the programme so far have been covenanted. Two of these are Protected Private Land (PPL) covenants administered by the Department of Conservation and the other 35 are QEII covenants. The QEII National Trust takes responsibility for on-going monitoring of their covenanted sites, reducing the monitoring required to be carried out by the Council.

The Council has also been working collaboratively with the Marlborough Sounds Restoration Trust in recent years and has contributed to several wilding pine control projects on private properties, led by the Trust.

The Waima Valley Ecological Restoration Society is a community based initiative in South Marlborough with an emphasis on Old Mans Beard control in the Waima/Ure catchment area. The Council has assisted this group to develop a management strategy to structure the project work, and has also contributed financially to some small areas of control work.

Other community based conservation groups currently operating in the Marlborough region include:-

- The Tūi Nature Reserve Trust
- Kaipupu Mainland Island Sanctuary
- Grovetown Lagoon Restoration Project
- The Endeavour Inlet Restoration Trust
- The Te Hoiere/Pelorus Long-Tailed Bat Project (Forest and Bird)
- The Para Swamp Restoration project (Fish and Game and Gamebird Habitat Trust)

All of these groups are independent of the Council and obtain significant levels of funding from other sources, for instance Lotteries, Canterbury Community Fund, the Biodiversity Condition and Advice Fund (now Community Conservation Partnerships Fund), and landowners.

Part C: Monitoring Programme – Summary of Results 2014 – 2015

4. Background and overview

Monitoring is an important part of measuring and tracking the outputs and outcomes of any project. There are three types of biodiversity monitoring that are relevant to the Significant Natural Areas project.

Firstly, at the broadest level, regional scale biodiversity monitoring is desirable so that an overall picture of biodiversity state and trends can be gained. At this stage we don't have this type of monitoring established in the Marlborough region but we are involved in a national Envirolink Tools project which is being carried out in conjunction with Landcare Research and the Department of Conservation. This project is developing some standardised biodiversity indicators and methodology to measure these indicators. Staff continue to maintain a watching brief over this project.

Secondly and more specifically, in relation to the Significant Natural Areas project, some ongoing monitoring of the state and condition of a selection of representative sites from the more than 700 sites identified that have not had any specific conservation management applied is required. This type of monitoring was started in the 2014-2015 year.

Thirdly, systematic monitoring to assess the condition of the 852 protected through the Landowner Assistance Programme sites (about 10% of all sites identified), has been established and is carried out every two years. So far four monitoring rounds have been undertaken starting with a pilot in the summer of 2006/7 with 12 sites visited. The following three rounds have been carried out at two yearly intervals including 2010, 2012 and most recently in the summer of 2013/14. The QEII National Trust monitors the sites that have been covenanted through their organisation (currently 34 sites), and some sites are not monitored as they are managed by other organisations or are very minor in nature.



4.1. 2014 - 2015 Monitoring

SNA Assistance Programme Monitoring – This monitoring programme is carried out every second year and did not occur in the 2014-2015 year. The next round is planned for the 2015-2016 year.

SNA un-managed sites monitoring/re-visits pilot programme – This was the first year of a programme to re-visit a selection of SNA sites that have not had any pro-active management since the time of survey back in 2001-2002. The purpose of this was to firstly ascertain if the site still exists and secondly to assess its state and condition in the absence of active management. The Kekerengu and Medway ecological districts were chosen to begin the re-visit programme as these were the first areas surveyed at the start of the project in 2001-2002.

Communication with landowners was necessary to obtain permission to access properties to carry out this monitoring. This was carried out via a phone questionnaire to collect information about landowners' awareness, interest and thoughts about the SNA sites located on their properties. Access permission (to re-visit sites), was also sought from a selection of landowners.

- **Questionnaire/Survey** – Consultant Paul Millen contacted 25 of the 26 landowners that were identified. Two of these landowners were unwilling to complete the phone survey, so a total of 23 responses were obtained.

- Sites on 20 properties were identified as potentially worth re-visiting and 17 of those asked granted permission to re-visit their properties, with 3 declining permission. Of the 17 properties that granted permission, 12 were actually visited in the end, and where possible, multiple sites were visited on each property to improve efficiencies.
- The general attitude of the 25 landowners that were surveyed can be summarised as 12 (48%) positive, 10 (40%) landowners neutral and 3 (12%) negative.
- The overall level of knowledge and awareness about the SNA project of the 23 landowners that completed the survey can be summarised as 11 (48%) high knowledge, 7 (30%) medium knowledge and 5 (22%) low knowledge.
- The table below summarises the other survey results and further discussion is included in Appendix 2

Table 5: Summary of responses to Significant Natural Areas phone survey

Landowners responses	number and % high/yes	Number and % medium/maybe	Number and % low/no
Awareness of MDC SNA programme and voluntary approach?	13 (57%)	8 (35%)	2 (8%)
Voluntary approach to continue?	18 (78%)	5 (22%)	0
Aware of SNA report?	12 (52%)	3 (13%)	8 (35%)
Awareness and knowledge of SNA sites?	14 (61%)	6 (26%)	3 (13%)
Importance and value of SNA sites?	15 (65%)	7 (30%)	1 (5%)
Desire to generally protect SNA sites and values- day to day farm mgmt?	All 23 landowners 9 (40%) - fencing 14 (60%) - other		
Actual specific protection of SNA sites through MDC programme?	9 (40%)	7 (30%)	7 (30%)
Interest in MDC support?	9 (40%)	6 (25%)	8 (35%)
Community of interest in relation to SNA sites?	3 (13%)	9 (39%)	11 (48%)

- **Field visits to selected un-managed SNA sites**

The re-visits and assessment of un-managed SNA sites were carried out by contract ecologist Geoff Walls from January to June 2015. A total of twenty five sites were visited, spread over twelve properties, with sixteen in the Kekerengu ecological district and nine in the Medway ecological district. Eleven different ecosystem types were represented.

As a pilot project the method of assessment was somewhat open although simple monitoring assessment similar to those used in the managed SNA site monitoring were used, with some photopoint observations and rapid ecological condition/trend assessment. Site boundaries were also amended where earlier mapping showed inaccuracies.

Individual reports were prepared for each site and will be provided to the landowners, and an overview of the findings of the monitoring visits was also provided.

The monitoring allows the Council to maintain links with landowners and remind them of their responsibilities in regards to these sites.

Some key observations and learnings from the 2014-2015 monitoring round include:

- all of the twenty five sites still existed, more or less intact, and all were still significant
- the condition of the sites varied with the majority being relatively stable (14 out of 25 or 56%), some deteriorating (8 out of 25 or 32%) and a few improving slightly (3 out of 25 or 12%). It should be noted however that many of the “stable” sites were only in fair condition and had serious infestations of old mans beard (OMB) present which was being kept in some sort of equilibrium with stock grazing pressure.
- In sites with no OMB, where stock access was limited or stock were completely excluded, the indigenous vegetation generally was in better condition than when stock have access to a site.
- However, where the weed OMB is present (15 of the sites), it creates an ecological dilemma as stock keep this weed under control and prevent it from completely dominating a site. To improve the condition of these sites would require serious attention being given to the control of OMB at a landscape scale, followed by fencing of the sites to prevent stock access and allow regeneration and recovery.
- Other issues affecting some sites included active vegetation clearance using fire or herbicide (2 of the 25 sites), and all sites are likely to be infested with a suite of animal pests which have impacts on both the vegetation and any indigenous fauna present (birds, insects and lizards).
- most properties were still in the same family ownership, but the younger generation was now in charge or poised to be so;
- most owners were aware of their SNA sites and valued them, though there was a broad spectrum of the degree to which the sites had been nurtured. The sites where the owners treasured the natural values on their properties really shone out.

Overall, this monitoring showed that the SNA Programme was still well regarded by landowners, and that their state of knowledge of indigenous biodiversity and conservation had been elevated by involvement in the programme. Most indigenous biodiversity gains had been made where the Council had assisted the landowners, and the owners were enthusiastic about the indigenous vegetation, fauna and flora around them. For some, the conservation of nature was seen as an economic benefit.

Generally, fencing appears to be the key. Fencing often leads to heightened weed and animal pest control, restoration planting and formal protection, spurred on by the visible plant regeneration and tangible increase in native fauna. Where domestic stock have access, the main change in 14 years has been one of ecological deterioration. Exceptions are where old man’s beard is out of control and where the values are dependent on grazing (such as tussock grasslands or prostrate kowhai shrublands).

This aspect of the SNA monitoring relies heavily on very experienced ecologists, preferably highly familiar with Marlborough and at least some of the sites. That is because no formal monitoring was built into the original survey design. Otherwise, a few photos and basic descriptions of the ecological aspects are all there is for comparisons between sites in 2001 and 2015.

The addition of fixed photopoints, vegetation plots, bird counts and standardised lizard, fish and invertebrate assays would be required to improve the monitoring information base and the ability for less experienced ecologists to do the monitoring. However, what has been done in this first pilot year is quick and simple and yields instant meaningful results. It is also beneficial for the working relationship between the Council and landowners.

Consideration will need to be given to monitoring methodology for the future, and the resulting budget implications.



Part D: Associated Projects

5. Publicity and Information

5.1. Background

Publicity and promotion have been integral to the Significant Natural Areas Project because it relies heavily on voluntary participation and proactive protection activity from landowners. Initially the emphasis was on increasing awareness about the unique and diverse biodiversity of the region and the opportunity for landowners to participate in collecting information and looking at options for protection where necessary. This occurred through personal contact, individual property reports, annual newsletters and newspaper articles.

More recently publicity about the SNA project is integrated into other media releases and publicity, for instance links with entrants in the Marlborough Environment Awards, farming articles and so on.



Previous publications relating to the project have included:

- annual project newsletters – 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014
- Guidelines for landowners to develop a management plan for the sustainable management of native vegetation – 2004
- Native Vegetation for South Marlborough – a Planting Guide – December 2004
- South Marlborough – Significant Natural Areas Project Summary Report – July 2005
- Marlborough District Council web page – Environment/Ecology and Biodiversity - 2005
- Tūi to Town brochure, web page and associated planting guides (Wairau Plains and South Marlborough low lying hill country) – June 2008
- North Marlborough – Significant Natural Areas Project Summary Report – June 2009
- North Marlborough – Native vegetation planting and restoration guide – June 2011

5.2. The 2014-2015 year

In the 2014-2015 year displays were presented at a number of public events including the Marlborough A and P Show, Garden Marlborough (both November 2014) and the Flaxbourne A and P show (March 2014).

The Tūi to Town project was profiled on the TVOne “Rural Delivery” programme in July 2015 after being filmed in May profiling both the private and community native plantings of veteran environmentalist Margaret Peace, and a more recent Tūi to Town planting on Mel and Greg Holes Hawkesbury Road property.

The Tūi to Town site on the Marlborough District Council website was updated to reflect new boundaries with online funding guidelines and application form now available.

The SNA programme also received profile at two Environment Award field days, the Farming Award at Mike and Kristen Gerards Pelorus Sound farm and the Forestry Awards at Manuka Island in the Wairau Valley.

6. Seed Collection Project

6.1. Background

Through the Significant Natural Areas project it became apparent that boosting the supply of suitable locally sourced native plants would be necessary if there was to be an adequate volume of plant material available for restoration projects in Marlborough. The Tūi to Town natural habitat restoration project is helping to stimulate this activity on the Wairau Plain area by providing information and for larger projects, funding assistance.

The Significant Natural Areas project has provided an opportunity to identify remaining pockets of indigenous plants on private land that provide valuable seed sources to generate future material for restoration planting.

A pilot seed collection project was initiated in 2006 focusing on totara seed collection and this has continued since then and broadened to include a range of suitable species for restoration planting such as kowhai, kanuka, flax, cabbage tree, mahoe, kohuhu, ngaio, broadleaf and lancewood.

Over the last seven years since July 2008, the emphasis has been on collecting the podocarp species matai and kahikatea from sparsely distributed remnant populations to complement the original and ongoing focus on totara. Coordination with the Marlborough District Council's Reserves Section has also taken place to try to create efficiencies in the area of seed collection.



The programme is flexible and can be shifted to meet the needs of specific projects. The current emphasis in terms of location has been to collect seed close to Blenheim to ensure that the Tūi to Town and other lowland restoration projects have a supply of suitable plants, and also some collection in the Rai Valley area to enable an effective riparian restoration planting project in the area in the future.

A co-operative arrangement with local plant nurseries has been developed whereby Council collects and provides the seeds (courtesy of the access granted by private landowners to seed sources), and the nursery propagates, grows and sells the plants. This helps to ensure that appropriate locally sourced native plants are available in Marlborough nurseries to service the restoration of natural areas in the modified lowland environments.

6.2. The 2014-2015 Season

In the 2014-2015 seed collection season seed was collected from a number of sites in both north and south Marlborough. The main focus was on collecting seed from common restoration species in the Flaxbourne area to ensure a supply of locally sourced plants are available for future Tūi. The total cost of the seed collection project in the 201/15 financial year was \$13,664.

7. Tūi to Town Project 2008 – 2015

7.1. Background and overview

The Tūi to Town project is a subset of the significant natural areas project which promotes the protection of natural areas of ecological value. The SNA surveys have confirmed that very little natural habitat remains on the lowland parts of South Marlborough and the Tūi to Town project is designed to promote habitat restoration in this area. From 2008 the programme was targeted to the areas around Blenheim and Renwick but in early 2015 was extended to include the wider lowland south Marlborough area, including the Wairau Valley area and out to Seddon and Ward and surrounds. Native bird sightings (not limited to Tūi) are being regularly reported from these new areas and a number of enquiries about funding for larger plantings have been received.

The programme essentially remains the same with the public encouraged to report native bird sightings to build a picture of species present and habitat use, and funding available for native plantings which are a minimum of 1000 square metres.

7.2. Information and Publicity

In the 2014-2015 year displays and presentations promoting the Tūi to Town project were presented at a number of public events including the Marlborough A and P Show, Garden Marlborough (November 2013), and the Flaxbourne A and P show (March 2015).

The Tūi to Town brochure and website page have been updated to reflect the extended programme area. See brochure in Appendix 3.

Publicity around the extension of the programme has been made available to those areas and staff have attended several meetings in these new localities (Seddon Lions, Wairau Valley School, Awatere garden Club etc), to give presentations on the programme.

The Tūi to Town project was profiled on the TVOne “Rural Delivery” programme in July 2015 after being filmed in May profiling both the private and community native plantings of veteran environmentalist Margaret Peace, and a more recent Tūi to Town planting on Mel and Greg Holes Hawkesbury Road property.

Tūi to Town street flags continue to be flown in Blenheim and Renwick periodically.

A number of public plantings (for instance the Taylor River plantings carried out by the Marlborough District Council Reserves section and the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT) Horticulture course), are publicised as being linked to the Tūi to Town project.

7.3. Sightings

In the 2014 calendar year 52 sightings were reported. This brings the total number of sightings to over 750 over the seven year life of the project, providing useful information about Tūi movement and feeding patterns on the Wairau Plain.

The basic pattern that has emerged is that Tūi are resident in the forested areas to the north of the Wairau Plain and begin travelling to feed about May, continuing through until about December. They appear to be resident in and around large flowering eucalyptus trees for periods of time through winter (ie; they are present early in the morning and late in the evening for several weeks), but it is not yet clear if they nest in any locations on the Wairau Plain.



Eucalyptus species are the most common for sightings (34%) with kowhai next (23%) as well as a variety of other species (banksia, camellia, various native species, fruit trees).

7.4. Plantings

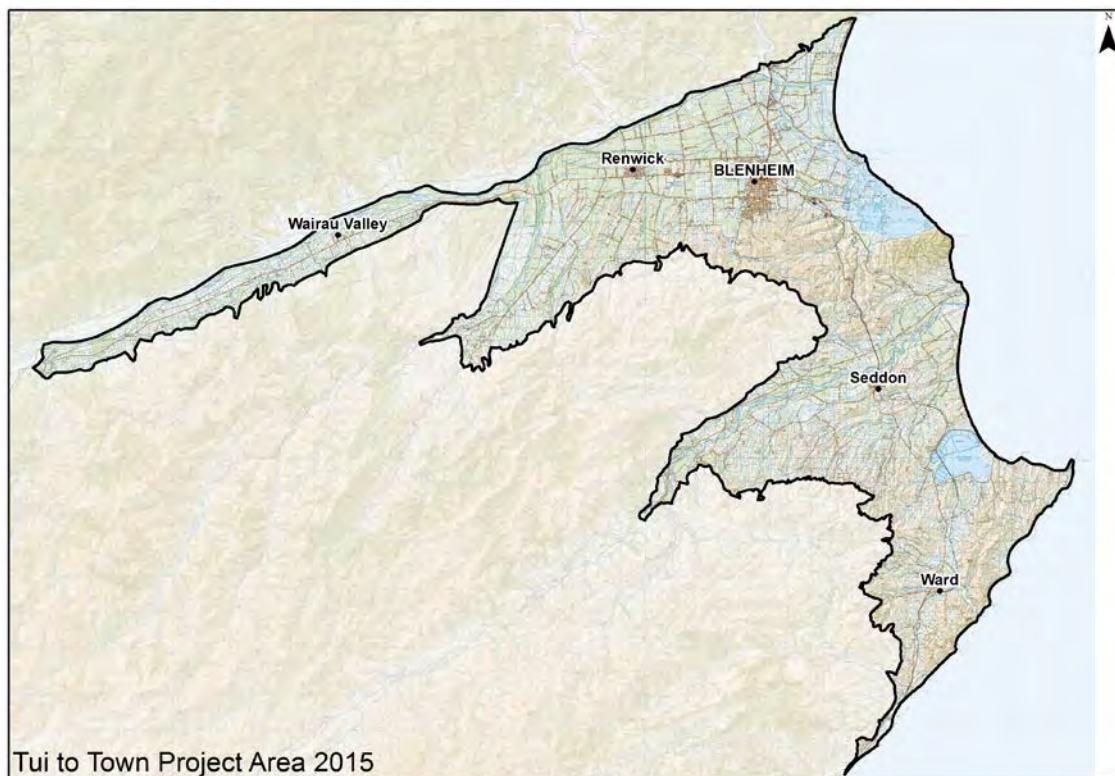
Three new plantings were funded in the 2014-2015 financial year, bringing the total number of funded plantings to 44 since 2008, a total area of new habitat of about 4.5 hectares. These plantings compliment other restoration projects on private land being undertaken through the SNA project, projects on Council land, and other smaller scale plantings of native vegetation on private land, school grounds and so on.

The total Council contribution to the three Tūi to Town planting projects in 2014-2015 was \$1845.

7.5. Extension of Tūi to Town programme to Wairau Valley and Seddon/Ward areas.

Map 4 shows the new extended Tūi to Town area which include the original Wairau Plain area along with the valley floors of the Wairau Valley and the lowland areas of the South Marlborough area where there is less than 10% of indigenous vegetation cover remaining . This is based on the Ministry for the Environment “Threatened Environments” layer and has been identified as one of four priorities for protection on private land in the 2007 central governments Protecting our Places document. The area represents land where very little indigenous habitat remains –between 1 – 5% of land area with sites generally very small, highly modified and scattered and isolated within the landscape. It includes all of the Blenheim and Grassmere Ecological districts and lowland parts of the Hillersden, Wither Hills, Medway and Kekerengu Ecological Districts.

The extension of the Tūi to Town project into these new areas will help to create more awareness about native bird presence as well stimulate new native plantings. At the time of writing a number of enquiries had been received for the 2015/16 planting season.



Map 3: Tūi to Town Extension Area

8. General Discussion and Conclusions

The Significant Natural Areas programme has been in place in Marlborough since 2001. It is the main mechanism used by the Council to identify and promote protection of terrestrial indigenous biodiversity. It is entirely voluntary but sits alongside some rules preventing certain types and scale of indigenous vegetation clearance and wetland drainage and clearance. The sites are not scheduled in the resource management plans (apart from wetland sites identified in the 2010-13 surveys which will be scheduled).

The project is very focussed on habitat areas as a mechanism to protect larger suites of indigenous species (insects, reptiles and birds) and in this sense is quite limited. While it is a voluntary method of promoting protection, the information collected through the significant natural areas ecological surveys is used internally by the Council when assessing the effects of resource consents.

A working group continues to assist the Council to manage this project and meets at least annually.

While much has been achieved through the project, it appears that momentum to protect sites is decreasing, although the recent identification of more than 1000 wetland sites has boosted interest. Of the 700 or so sites identified through the SNA surveys about 85 have had protection work of some kind applied to them and a number of these have been covenanted to provide permanent legal protection (primarily through the QEII Trust).

However, there are around 600 SNA sites yet to be protected and proactively managed so that their ecological values are sustained in the long term. Some may be in a sustainable state within current management systems, others are likely to require intervention if they are to be sustainable in the long term.

A new programme to re-visit a selection of un-managed sites in the Kekerengu and Medway Ecological Districts was carried out from February to June 2015 and showed that while a number of sites are in a relatively stable condition, about a third of sites were showing signs of deterioration. The presence of the weed old mans beard was a consistent issue for the majority of these sites and acts as a brake on any meaningful restoration work. The phone survey carried out in conjunction with this programme showed that landowners are still fairly aware and [positive about the SNA project and some are considering seeking assistance for protection work.

Over time it may be that the Council also establishes a broader regional state of environment monitoring programme to align with national monitoring and reporting requirements. Work is underway nationally to assist with developing this programme.

The significant natural areas project is an important element of indigenous biodiversity management and protection in Marlborough, with a particular focus on privately owned land. It is complemented by the work of the QEII National Trust which works independently with private landowners to covenant and protect areas. Treaty of Waitangi settlements across the top of the south island may also influence iwi involvement in biodiversity related issues over the next few years.

There has also been an increase in the number of larger scale community conservation and restoration projects in Marlborough in recent years and the significant natural area project continues to work closely with some of these, particularly where private land is involved.

The SNA project has focused particular effort on restoration of existing sites including some restoration planting, in the highly threatened lowland environments of south Marlborough, including the Blenheim ecological district (Wairau Plain) and the Kekerengu ecological district (Ward and East Coast area). The recent extension of the Tūi to Town project should stimulate more new plantings in these areas with funding incentives now available over a wider part of the region.

There may also be opportunities to work more closely with the farming sector over the next few years to encourage and assist with restoration planting in riparian margins along waterways, potentially achieving biodiversity gains in threatened lowland environments alongside water quality and land management benefits. Examples include DairyNZ's current emphasis on riparian management planning and Beef and Lamb's promotion of Environmental Plans.

In recent years complimentary work to identify ecologically significant marine sites in Marlborough has also taken place, and more work is planned, extending the scope of knowledge about ecology in the region.



Appendix 1: Total Budget for Main Aspects of Significant Natural Areas Project – MDC Expenditure and Revenue – July 2014 – June 2015 (GST inclusive)

Table 6: Significant Natural Areas Project – Total budget July 2014 to June 2015

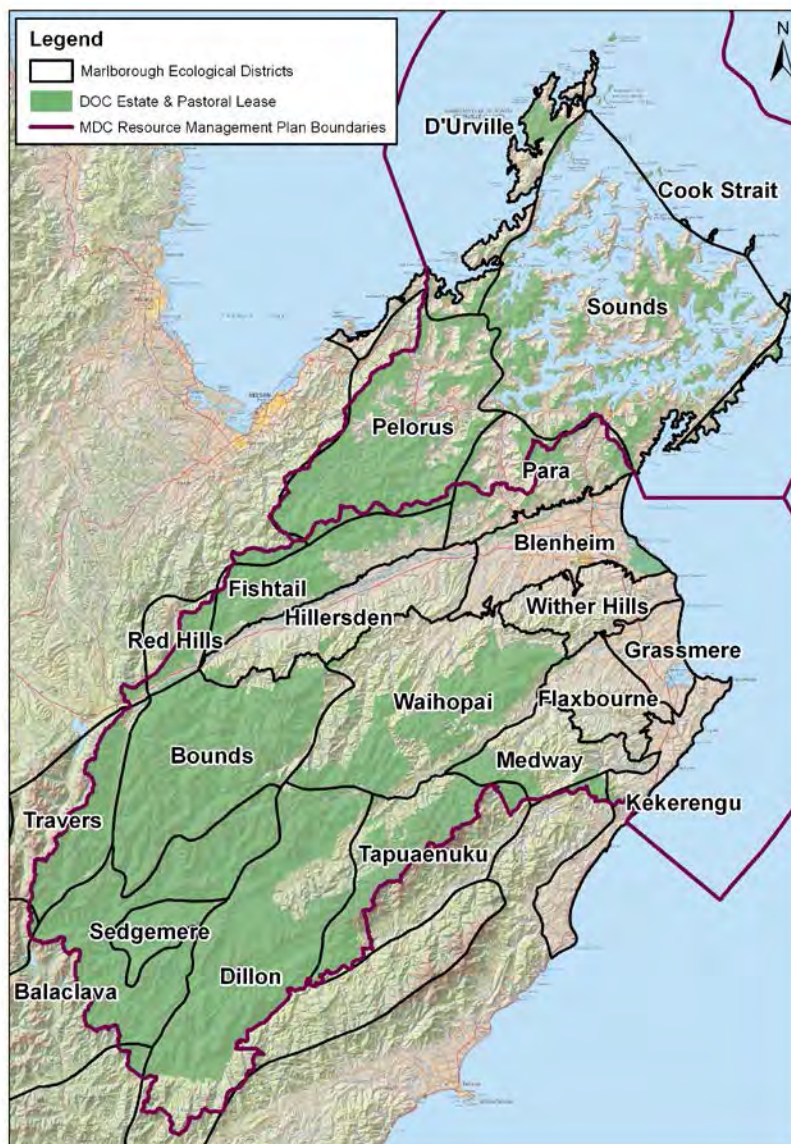
Project Name	Projected Budget	Actual Expenditure	Revenue
SNA survey and general	\$10,000	\$0	
SNA protection projects	\$80,000	\$52,832 +1606 (Biofund refund for CON 883)	
Tūi to Town	\$10,000	\$1,845	
SNA associated projects (seed collection)	\$10,000	\$13,664	
SNA monitoring	\$30,000	\$27,693	
SNA miscellaneous (meetings and publications)		\$6,034	
Total	\$140,000	\$103,674	

Appendix 2: Significant Natural Areas Project Phone Survey

Report on Marlborough District Council Significant Natural Areas Project Phone Survey of Landowners in Kekerengu and Medway Ecological Districts 2014-2015

1. Introduction

In 2001 the Marlborough District Council (the Council) commenced the first Significant Natural Area (SNA) ecological ground survey on a property by property basis throughout the Kekerengu and Medway Ecological Districts of Marlborough. These areas are located in the south-eastern part of the region.



This was the result of a policy decision to pursue the Resource Management Act 1991 requirement to promote the protection of significant natural areas through a voluntary partnership approach with landowners in the region. Out of a total of 40 landowners in these two ecological districts, 34 agreed to participate in the programme (83%), and 136 sites were identified by the MDC's consultant ecologists, covering about 6400 hectares in total. All participating landowners received a report describing the significant natural areas sites identified on their properties (SNA reports).

In 2004 the Council initiated a funded programme to assist landowners to protect identified SNA sites. Since that time there have been 19 protection projects carried out on 11 separate properties in the Kekerengu and Medway ecological districts, sometimes in partnership with QE II and central government. In addition, several landowners already had formally protected sites through covenants. Where protection work has been carried out with the assistance of Council funding, sites are re-visited every 2 years to assess the success of the work and monitor results.

However, many of the other sites identified through the SNA project 12-14 years ago have not been re-visited by Council since the original SNA surveys were carried out. Council recently decided to initiate a programme to re-visit a selection of these sites to monitor their condition (starting with the Kekerengu and Medway ecological districts) and also to carry out a telephone survey to contact all landowners with SNA sites in these districts to find out how they are managing the areas and if they still support Council's voluntary partnership policy to identifying and managing SNA sites in Marlborough. The phone survey also provided the opportunity to engage with several new landowners who have bought properties with SNA sites over this time period.

The Council contracted Paul Millen from Millen Associates to carry out the phone survey over the period from November 2014 to May 2015. The Council compiled the list of landowners and supplied SNA reports for all those to be contacted. The Council also identified those landowners with a range of SNA sites where access was requested for a re-visit by an ecologist to assess and monitor the site condition.

The general results of this phone survey are set out below.

2. Phone survey of landowners

Twenty five landowners with SNA sites in the Kekerengu and Medway EDs were contacted as part of the phone survey. They were asked to respond to a set list of questions (Appendix A). This list included questions to ascertain their attitudes to the Council's voluntary programme as well as questions designed to find out how landowners are managing their SNA sites. It was also an opportunity to find out if landowners are aware that Council offers free advice and funding assistance to protect these sites.

In addition, a selection of landowners were asked permission for access to the SNA sites not already being monitored that were identified for a possible re-visit by an ecologist to check on their state and condition. The sites identified were selected to provide a good spread of vegetation types and habitats (i.e forest, limestone habitats, wetlands etc.) and also a good geographical spread.

By way of the introduction, all landowners were asked if they were happy to answer a few questions and/or if there was anyone else (e.g. manager) that may be able to answer on their behalf. They were also asked if they were happy that written notes of their responses were recorded on the basis that these would be confidential to the Council and not to be made public. In some cases, when requested these notes were emailed to the landowners.

3. Summary of Phone Survey - Responses

The total number of landowners listed to contact for the phone survey in the Kekerengu and Medway EDs was 26.

A total of 25 of those landowners were successfully contacted being 92%.

A total of 23 of those contacted completed the phone interview by answering all questions.

These landowners own approximately 90% of total SNA sites in the Kekerengu and Medway ED's.

- 13 (52%) are the same landowner contacted in 2001.
- 4 (20 %) are new landowners by family succession since 2001.

- 7 (28%) are new landowners by sale since the 2001.

The average telephone call required to complete the survey was 25 minutes with one short call of only 5 minutes, while all others were at least 15 minutes long ranging up to 40 minutes.

General attitude of the 25 landowners contacted for the telephone survey was:

- 12 (48%) landowners contacted were positive.
- 10 (40%) landowners contacted were neutral.
- 3 (12%) landowners contacted were negative with two of these not completing the phone interview. Main reason was a lack of trust about how Council would use the information.

Overall knowledge of the 23 landowners who completed all questions for the telephone survey was:

- 11 (48%) landowners contacted have high knowledge.
- 7 (30%) landowners contacted have medium knowledge.
- 5 (22%) landowners contacted have low knowledge.

Access for a monitoring visit was identified by Council for 17 of the 26 landowners listed:

- 12 (48%) landowners contacted agreed to a visit.
- 2 (12%) landowners contacted disagreed to a visit.
- 1 (4%) landowner was unable to be contacted.
- 9 (36%) landowners contacted were not asked for a visit.

TABLE 1: Summary of responses by 23 landowners that completed the full phone interview

Landowners responses	number and % high/yes	Number and % medium/maybe	Number and % low/no
Awareness of MDC SNA programme and voluntary approach?	13 (57%)	8 (35%)	2 (8%)
Voluntary approach to continue?	18 (78%)	5 (22%)	0
Aware of SNA report?	12 (52%)	3 (13%)	8 (35%)
Awareness and knowledge of SNA sites?	14 (61%)	6 (26%)	3 (13%)
Importance and value of SNA sites?	15 (65%)	7 (30%)	1 (5%)
Desire to generally protect SNA sites and values- day to day farm mgmt?	All 23 landowners 9 (40%) - fencing 14 (60%) - other		
Actual specific protection of SNA sites through MDC programme?	9 (40%)	7 (30%)	7 (30%)
Interest in MDC support?	9 (40%)	6 (25%)	8 (35%)
Community of interest in relation to SNA sites?	3 (13%)	9 (39%)	11 (48%)

3.1 Detailed summary and analysis of each question answered by landowners

Question: Were you aware (before this phone call) of Council's SNA programme and that it is voluntary unlike some other regions in New Zealand?

All but 2 landowners were aware of the Council's voluntary SNA programme with 13 (57%) of these being highly aware of this.

One landowner commented that "I does not think that the SNA programmes is voluntary as the information was used in RM consent process to impose subdivision consent conditions over the property outside the scope of the application and involved use of the SNA report. Considers that property rights are being eroded unfairly."

Question: Do you want this approach to continue and give reasons for your answer?

18 (80%) landowners want the Council's voluntary approach to continue with the following comments recorded from landowners that providing an insight to their reasons:

- Thought it was very well done. Wetlands and landscape were not done as well. Unhappy with landscape rules. Not all landowners got involved with SNA programme and were then being required to do this when resource consent being sought from the Council.
- The best way to deal with them is to talk to landowners. Was involved in wetland project over dam on property being identified that had been man made. Site was visited but not sure what happened. Also pissed off by landscape rules being imposed including forestry not being permitted.
- Its healthy approach as landowner feels part of decision making rather regulation.
- Voluntary approach is good. All properties should be surveyed and information kept confidential. Suggested that Council has responsibility to find a way for all SNA's to be identified as RMA requires all citizens to be aware of their responsibilities.
- It's been excellent. The Council helped with fencing and to tackle OMB. Without Council assistance difficult to deal with weeds in SNA. Bush has recovered since fencing completed.
- Has enjoyed dealing with the Council compared with ECAN where good dialogue wasn't possible. Believes that a voluntary approach is more effective to protect and maintain these areas.
- Should continue with being voluntary and with direct support and advice offered by Council. Current approach gives the landowner a choice.
- Very important as it takes time for people to learn. Best to demonstrate and lead by example, then communicate success. Use local networks. Keep process open and ensure landowners retain control over property.
- Voluntary approach is far favourable to regulation. However, not sure of which areas identified and what information is being held now on the property and what is voluntary nature of programme.

There were 5 (20%) landowners not sure on answering this question, with some comments including:

- Council already doing more than being 'voluntary' in its approach.

Question: Are you aware of the SNA report for your property and do you have a copy of the SNA report?

12 (52%) landowners easily recalled their SNA reports (and some of them the ecologist visit) and also could remember they had a copy and where it was located. Another 3 (13%) of landowners could recall they had seen the report but either they no longer had a copy or had only seen it briefly during the purchase process when buying the property in the last 14 years. 8 (35%) landowners had never seen the report mostly due to being new landowners. PDF versions of SNA reports were sent to several landowners as requested and some phone surveys were delayed until the landowner had received the report and read it.

Some comments worth considering include:

- Landowner hadn't seen SNA report so copy sent to him. Has had visits from QE II who were in contact asap after property purchased. But no contact from the Council. Expressed concern that the information/SNA report hadn't been notified directly by the Council through LIM report when property purchased. Also queried if a new landowner could request to withdraw from programme and have information removed from the Council files.
- Subdivision of adjoining property allowed purchase so that additional SNA sites added to larger property. Process needed to complete new report to amalgamate information into one new property report.
- There was a lot of native vegetation on property when we purchased. We didn't know about the SNA programme but once we found the report, it was logical to identify and fence best bits of bush from rest of property. This assisted them with overall farm planning and development".

Question: Are you aware of the individual SNA sites?

14 (61%) landowners had a high awareness of their SNA sites while 6 (26%) had a medium level of awareness with only 3 (13 %) having low awareness. This often correlated with landowners having a copy of their SNA report or could recall having seen one. However, several other landowners (including new landowners by purchase) who had never seen the report yet still had a medium level of awareness of the SNAs on their property.

Question: Do you consider the SNA sites of value to your property/Are the SNA sites important to you? (in some cases a checklist list was offered of what these values could be, ie, aesthetic, stock shade/shelter, family history, ecological values).

15 (65%) landowners considered their SNA's to be highly important while 7 (30%) gave them medium importance. Only 1 (4 %) considered they had little importance. Reasons given for importance included:

- All the above plus visitor appreciation and sustainable business branding.
- Loves native bush. Custodial attitude.
- Three key reasons; good for community, good for environment and has potential to add value to property in long term.
- Sites are very important. Ecology is the main reason. Want to protect/conservate bio diversity areas for future.
- Improve landscape of property: custodial responsibility; sustainability branding; ecological values all important.

Question: Do you aim to protect your SNA's in your general farm/property management activities? If so, what have you done already?

9 (39%) landowners had fenced at least one SNA site on their property since the survey, all of these with the Council support. 14 (61%) landowners said that they used management to protect the site to ensure that it was conserved. Comments included that the site was self sustaining and fencing not feasible due to difficult steep and rocky terrain; also sites only lightly grazed, mainly using sheep. Other comments were made about aerial spraying being used to control regeneration in surrounding areas rather than burning. A number undertake regular animal and plant pest control. This includes several landowners controlling goats with one trapping rats and ferrets.

There were no landowners not wanting to protect their SNA's in some way.

Question: What other actions would you consider for protecting your site/s and are you aware that the Council has a programme to help landowners protect these areas?

9 (39%) landowners have a high level of interest in taking further actions to protect one or more SNA sites and are aware that the Council could be approached to support them do this. 7 (30%) landowners have some interest in further protection but are not fully aware that the Council is offering support. 7 (30 %) landowners are either absolutely unaware of there being support available from the Council and/or have no plans to take any further action to protect their site.

Question: Would you be interested in Council's assistance with protection work?

9 (39%) landowners had a high level of interest in getting the Council assistance to protect one or more of their SNA sites while 6 (26%) landowners had a medium level of interest and maybe would get Council assistance with 8 (35 %) having little or no interest in Council assistance. This assistance included some interested in possibly fencing 1 or more of their sites; a lot of interest in old man's beard control as well as some interest in trapping animal pests, particularly rats and mustelids.

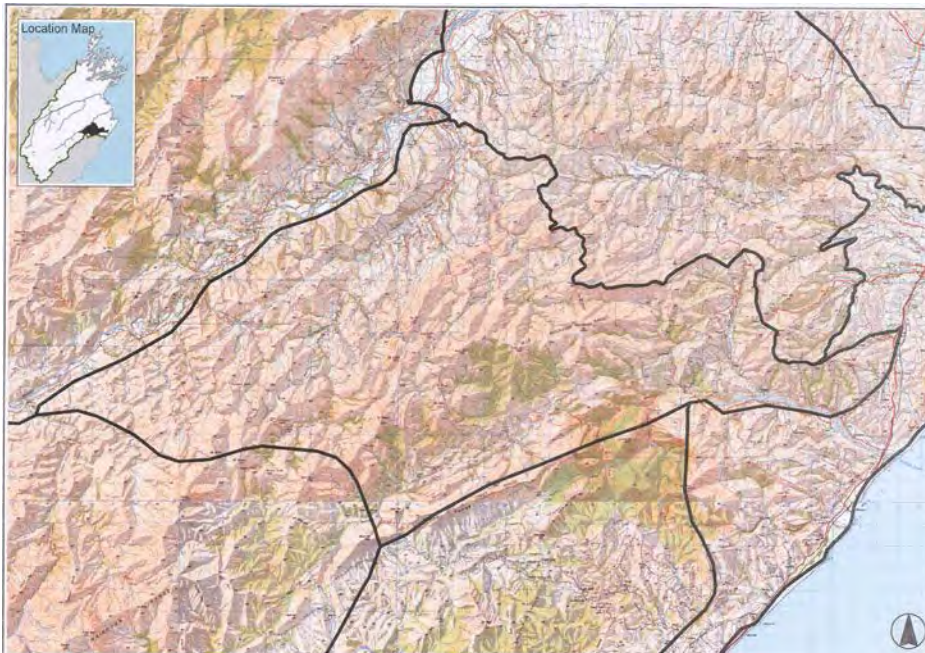
Question: Are there any issues common to others – projects of community interest where neighbours are/could work together on issues?

3 (13%) landowners already had a community of interest and were working with their neighbours on old man's beard control in the part of the Ure catchment. Another 9 (39%) landowners expressed interest in working with their neighbour or the need for a community lead action to control old man's beard in the Medway and Flaxbourne catchments. Also two landowners were interested to see community led action to restore Lake Elterwater. 11 (48%) landowners said there were no common issues that they could identify, in some cases because of the relative isolation of their SNA's sites in the coastal parts of Kekerengu ED.

Appendix A: Detailed Maps of Kekerengu & Medway Ecological Districts



Kekerengu Ecological District



Medway Ecological District

Appendix B: Significant Natural Areas Project - Phone Survey Questions

Introductory comments

Hello, introductions, SNA survey on your property 2001/2, part of a voluntary programme by the Council to manage native biodiversity/habitats/vegetation

Explain that there are some bottom line rules around modifying wetland and clearing some vegetation but MDC also followed a pro-active, non-regulatory, voluntary approach with landowners through the SNA programme, we are investigating if this has worked? (explain that that includes this interview, as well as re-visiting some sites.

However, Council is responsible for state of environment reporting so need to know how if these sites are sustainable over time? Do landowners support this approach continuing etc etc. Landowners that are on Council's working group that can be contacted are Ross Beech, Chris Bowron and Kristen Gerard.

Are you happy to answer a few questions and/or is there anyone else (e.g. manager) that may be able to answer on their behalf?

Are you happy that I make notes about your answers and that these are provided to MDC staff? And do they want a copy of my notes sent to them? If so get e mail address.

Main Questions

Were you aware (before this phone call) of Council's SNA programme and that it is voluntary unlike some other regions in New Zealand?

Do you want this approach to continue and give reasons for your answer?

Are you aware of the SNA report for your property? Do you have a copy of the SNA report? If not would you like us to post/email you a copy of your SNA report and delay this discussion?

Are you aware of the individual SNA sites? Run through each site to check knowledge and interest (this could be tricky if they don't have map in front of them?)

Do you consider the SNA sites of value to your property/Are the SNA sites important to you? (offer a checklist list of what these values could be, ie, aesthetic, stock shade/shelter, family history, ecological values,)?

Do you aim to protect your SNA's in your general farm/property management activities?

If so, what have you done already and what other actions would you consider for protecting your site/s? (if \$\$\$ weren't an issue?) (offer checklist of actions taken or considered, ie light grazing only, fencing, weed control, animal pests)

Are you aware that MDC has a programme to help landowners protect these areas?

Would you be interested in Council's assistance with protection work?

Are there any issues common to others – projects of community interest where neighbours are/could work together on issues?

Access Request (where applicable)

Council is planning to re-visit some SNA sites in March/April 2015 to observe the condition of the areas/any changes or threats – we would like to visit sites *** on your property – would you be happy to allow access for this?

Final comments

Confirm contact details – email/ phone postal

Thanks very much for your time, the results of the questionnaire (general not specific) will be set out in the next SNA annual newsletter which will be sent to you about April.

Appendix 3: Updated Tūi to Town Brochure

Suitable Tūi to Town Native Plant Species	
Smaller trees and shrubs (1-5 m)	Trees (tall 5-20 m)
Flax species <i>Phormium tenax</i> and <i>P. cookianum</i>	Broadleaf <i>Grisebinia littoralis</i>
Coprosma species <i>Coprosma propinqua</i> , <i>C. robusta</i> , <i>C. lucida</i> , <i>C. repens</i>	Cabbage tree <i>Cordyline australis</i>
Koromiko <i>Hebe salicifolia</i>	Kānuka <i>Kunzea ericoides</i>
Coastal Shrub daisy <i>Olearia solandri</i>	Kahikatea <i>Dacrycarpus dacrydioides</i>
Kōwhai species <i>Sophora prostrata</i> and <i>S. microphylla</i>	Lowland ribbonwood <i>Plagianthus regius</i>
Lancewood species <i>Pseudopanax crassifolius</i> and <i>P. ferox</i>	Narrow-leaved lacebark <i>Hoheria angustifolia</i>
Shrubby tororaro <i>Muehlenbeckia astonii</i>	Pittosporum species <i>Pittosporum tenuifolium</i> and <i>P. eugenioides</i>
Toetoe <i>Cortaderia richardii</i>	Tōtara <i>Podocarpus totara</i>

The native plant species listed have been selected because when planted together they:

- Provide food for native birds for most of the year (nectar and fruit).
- Are local species which naturally occur in lowland south Marlborough and are attractive, hardy and easy to grow.
- Are available from local nurseries. Ask for the locally sourced plants - plants grown in root trainers are the best value.

Other non native plant species can also be attractive to native birds and may complement plantings however these species are **not funded through this programme**.

Examples include Eucalyptus species (*leucocylon*, *globoidea*, *sideroxylon*, *melidora*), Callistemon species (Bottlebrush), Banksia species, Camellia species and fruit trees.

Plant establishment and maintenance tips - plant in early spring after the worst frosts. Eliminate all weeds by either mulching or spraying. Mark plants with bamboo stakes. Mulch around plants (straw, weed-mat, bark etc). Weed control around new plants will be needed for several years until they become established.



Tūi to Town

Natural habitat restoration for lowland South Marlborough

Photo: Damien Toman

Tūi to Town - Natural habitat restoration for South Marlborough

The Tūi to Town programme is being extended from the Wairau Plain west further up the Wairau Valley and south to the Seddon/Ward areas!! The programme encourages habitat restoration by helping with funding for new native plantings and recording sightings of native birds to build a picture of what species are present and what habitat they are utilising.



The Tūi to Town programme arose through the Council's Significant Natural Areas project which, since 2004, has been supporting private landowners to protect existing areas of native habitat. However some areas, particularly lowland South Marlborough, have very little natural vegetation cover remaining. The rich variety of native birds, insects and lizards that existed in the dryland forests before the land was cleared by fire is mostly lost. While the area is nearly all dedicated to productive land uses like farming and viticulture, there is potential for some habitat restoration.

The Tūi to Town programme was set up in 2008 to promote habitat restoration on the Wairau Plain. Since that time, about 35 new plantings (30,000 plants), funded through the programme, have provided small stepping stones of habitat and food and Tūi have started visiting some of these areas.

The extension of the Tūi to Town programme in 2015 to the Wairau Valley and the Seddon/Ward areas allows funding to also be available to create new areas of habitat through new native plantings over a larger area than the Wairau Plain (see map).

All of these areas are identified by the Ministry for the Environment as Threatened Land Environments with less than 10% remaining in native cover and are therefore a priority for protection and restoration.

Habitat for native birds and insects – creating stepping stones

Diverse native forest habitats support a variety of birds and insects. Some native birds like tūi, kereru (wood pigeons) and kaka, have specific feed and habitat requirements and generally need a sizable area of native forest and habitat area to live and breed in a locality. However, these species can travel long distances (up to 20 km), to feed, so they can be seen some distance away from native forests at certain times of the year (mostly winter and spring before they start breeding).

Others, like bellbird, fantail, grey warbler and silvereye, are less specialist feeders (relying mostly on insects), and can therefore live and breed in areas with less native forest and habitat and make more use of gardens and parks.

Creating stepping stones and corridors of native habitat will help support native bird species in lowland South Marlborough including the Wairau Valley. By reporting native bird sightings (not just tūi), it will be help to build a picture of what native bird species are present in lowland south Marlborough and what habitats and plants they are relying on.

What you can do

Report sightings of native birds to the Council so that we can build a better picture of where and when various species are seen and what they are feeding on. Report by www.marlborough.govt.nz/Environment/Tui-to-Town/Report-Tui-Sighting-Form.aspx
Email: tui@marlborough.govt.nz Ph 5207400

Protect existing remnants of natural habitat like wetland areas or pockets of native vegetation on your property (Council may be able to help with this).

Create more natural habitat by planting suitable native species (see list over page), on your property, at your school or in your garden. Funding assistance is available for plantings of more than 1000 square metres on private property (\$1 per plant up to a maximum of \$1000).

Create community groups to tackle larger restoration projects on public land.



Tui to Town Project Area 2015

Information and help available from the Marlborough District Council

- See over page for simple planting suggestions.
- More detailed planting information is available in "Native Vegetation for South Marlborough - A Planting Guide".
- Financial assistance may be available for larger protection or restoration projects of more than 1000 square metres in area.

Contact Nicky Eade, Marlborough District Council
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