

Protection projects on private land are going full steam ahead with a number of landowners taking advantage of funding available through the Council's Landowner Assistance Programme to help them achieve biodiversity gains.

Wither Hills Rarangi Wetlands include five nationally significant wetland areas that together cover about 50ha. The Rarangi wetlands are home to several rare and threatened plant species and it is a constant battle to keep invasive weeds under control. Wetlands generally are highly valued these days because they have been so reduced in number, these Rarangi wetlands are particularly unique because of the underlying geology which is made up of old beach ridges and hollows.



About three years ago staff at Wither Hills decided to increase management of these wetland areas and approached the Council for assistance. A two year funding package was put together, mainly to deal with the weeds, but also to carry out restoration planting in some areas.

Willows, hawthorn, old mans beard and other weeds have been dealt to and about 3000 natives have been planted in strategic areas, including swamp maire, kahikatea, kowhai, cabbage trees, and coprosma. Natural regeneration is also occurring vigorously in some parts of the wetland.

The wetlands are an excellent example of good environmental management also being good for business. Various staff are responsible for the project and the wetland provides a point of difference and a memorable place to bring distributors and media when visiting the vineyard.

The Plaisier family – Enhancing native forest ecosystems by controlling pests on their 40 hectare Tui Nature Reserve property in the outer Pelorus Sound. Along with their neighbours, the Plaisiers have been working to get animal pest numbers down to low levels so that the native plants and animals on their peninsula, can flourish. They have worked from large to small, firstly tackling the pigs, goats and deer on the property by hunting to low numbers, then getting to work on the possum population with an extensive trapping programme using Timms kill traps set up trees to avoid wekas being accidentally caught.

More recently they have begun work on rats by setting up some well designed grids of suitable traps every 50 metres and checking these every two weeks. By getting all these pest species down to lower numbers they are seeing good recovery of species with kohekohe trees flowering and fruiting prolifically, and insect and bird numbers increasing dramatically.

The Plaisiers have a QEII covenant over most of their property apart from the 2 hectares they use for low impact tourist accommodation. They have also sought and received assistance through the Council's funding programme to carry out some of the pest control work over several years. In 2009 they entered the Marlborough Environment Awards and came away with both the Habitat Enhancement Award and the overall Supreme Award in recognition of their efforts.



Tony and Joy Redwood, along with their son Phil, farm on the western side of Anakoha Bay in the outer sounds. A survey of the property carried out by an ecologist in 2005 identified six significant natural areas, and since then the Redwoods have carried out protection fencing and weed control in two of these areas. They have also "helped" the regeneration process along in one of them – 9 hectares of diverse lowland forest at the head of the bay which includes five podocarp species, including rimu and lowland totara, and several plants of botanical significance including ramarama, small-leaved milk tree (*Streblus heterophyllus*) and an unusual hybrid with the rare large-leaved milk tree (*S. banksii*).

Joy explains that while vigorous regeneration is happening naturally in parts of the forest now that stock are fenced out, other more open areas that get swamped with long grass could do with a helping hand to speed the process along. She has tried directly transplanting some species like cabbage trees but mostly she pots up excess natives like titoki, lacebark, whitey wood (mahoe), kaikamako and kohekohe when they are small and plants them out into the sprayed open areas a year or two later when they are a minimum of 30 cm high.

Joy says "its just basic gardening really, I hate waste and if a plant is going to be removed or is in the way of another plant it may as well be relocated. We just thought it was a way of increasing the plantings, particularly in areas where pasture has been fenced off and it is open and light".

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<http://www.marlborough.govt.nz/environment/land/significant-natural-areas.aspx>**

The Significant Natural Areas Project – ten years on – 2001-2011

It is 10 years since the first Significant Natural Areas ecological surveys began on private land in Marlborough.

By 2010 the surveys were more or less completed and about 280 properties had been visited and 700 sites identified as ecologically significant. Overall, about 75% of the landowners approached by the Council agreed to participate in the programme and many have become enthusiastic supporters. There is still scope to carry out surveys at the request of landowners.

SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREA (SNA) REPORTS—if you have lost your copy of the SNA report for your property, or are new to the district and unsure if there is a report on the property, contact us for a copy or to arrange an SNA ecological survey.

From 2004 the Council has run a funded programme to help with protection work on some of the sites and at about the same time central government also established the “Biodiversity Condition and Advice Funds” to help landowners with biodiversity protection work on private land. The Council has been successful in applying to this fund on behalf of local landowners. The QEII National Trust also offers some funding assistance for fencing if a covenant is put in place.

The combination of these programmes means that landowners can get from between 50% to about 75% funding for protection works on their properties. So far in Marlborough, about 65 projects to protect significant natural area sites in some way, have been successfully completed, mostly involving fencing and weed control.

The Council has always recognised that the success of the Significant Natural Areas project and managing biodiversity on private land is dependent on a constructive partnership with landowners and managers. A working group was set up very early in the process and Council acknowledges the long term contribution of Ross Beech, Chris Bowron and Kristen Gerard in providing a landowner voice on this group.

The voluntary and non regulatory nature of the significant natural areas project has been maintained over the years and no rules have been put in place that apply specifically to areas identified as SNA sites. However, there have always been general rules in the plans that restrict the removal of native vegetation and also the mechanical draining or modifying of rivers, coastal areas and wetland areas.

RULES—There are rules in place restricting clearance of native vegetation and also modification of water ways or wetlands in Marlborough . All landowners should check before carrying out these activities. The rules apply regardless of whether an area

The Regional Policy Statement and Resource Management Plans for Marlborough are being reviewed at the moment. Overall the approach taken by the SNA project is proposed to be continued in recognition of its local success and the efforts of landowners to protect these important biodiversity areas under a voluntary programme.

Wetlands - However, one area of difficulty is around wetlands, which have been the subject of damage and drainage over the past few years, with some landowners apparently being either unaware of the rules or unaware that an area is classified as a “wetland”. This is in spite of wetlands being protected through the plans in a general sense and some wetlands having been restored through the SNA landowner assistance programme.



these wetlands in the new resource management plan. The Council intends to consult with all affected landowners to make sure they understand the process and that the wetland is correctly identified.

There will be some cases where the wetlands have already been identified as significant natural areas through the SNA project over the last 10 years. In effect nothing will change in that landowners cannot currently modify the wetland anyway (which is what the new approach is trying to reinforce) and actually in quite a few cases SNA identified wetlands have already been protected by

The Council has decided that to improve clarity for landowners all significant wetlands will be identified so that there is certainty around which areas can or cannot be drained or modified. A desktop project specifically to identify wetlands in Marlborough has recently been carried out (using aerial photography backed up by flights to check some areas) and the intention is to identify

landowners with fencing, weed control, planting etc, going beyond what the plans will require. Where they have not been protected, there will not be any obligation to do so, only the same incentives that already apply through the SNA programme, where funding and advice are available where landowners decide, **voluntarily**, to protect and restore these wetlands.

Tui to Town Project Update



The Tui to Town project is now into its fourth season, promoting natural habitat restoration on the Wairau Plain. The Council is encouraging people to report any sightings of tui on the Wairau Plain area around Blenheim or in the Waihopai and also to consider planting suitable native plants to provide habitat for tui and other native birds and insects.

Sightings have been trickling in steadily this year (about 50 so far) after a high number in 2010 and reasonable numbers in 2008 and 2009.

- in 2008 between the months of June and December 80 tui sightings were reported.
- in 2009 over the same 7 month period 71 tui sightings were reported.
- in 2010 there were 218 sightings between the months of May to December.

Sightings: - to report a sighting of tui on the Wairau Plain either do it online

www.marlborough.govt.nz/Environment/Land/Ecology-Projects/Tui-to-Town/Report-Tui-Sighting-Form.aspx by email to tui@marlborough.govt.nz or phone the Council on 5207400.

Plantings:- funding may be available to help with suitable native plantings that are a minimum of 1000 square metres in area within the Wairau Plain area. A contribution of \$1 per plant up to a maximum of \$1000.00 is available. Have a look at the details on the Council website or ring Nicky Eade to discuss.

So far a total of 23 plantings have been funded - 4 in 2008 – 8 in 2009 – 11 in 2010, together creating about 2.5 hectares of new native habitat on the Wairau Plain area.

For those that are interested - a full report on the Tui to Town project is available on the Council website.



A two year old Tui to Town planting on a Jacksons Road vineyard.



A three year old Tui to Town planting on a small rural property.

"Heritage" Native Trees

**Matai – Totara – Kahikatea
Red beech – Black beech**

Council has collected native tree seed through the generosity of local landowners granting access to remnant stands of some of our iconic heritage trees, now virtually extinct in lowland South Marlborough.

This includes matai, red and black beech, totara and kahikatea; all species that can provide excellent habitat and food for native birds.

Morgans Road Nursery has been very successful with propagating these seeds so that this year there are some surplus seedlings available for purchase to plant sites of lowland native forest.

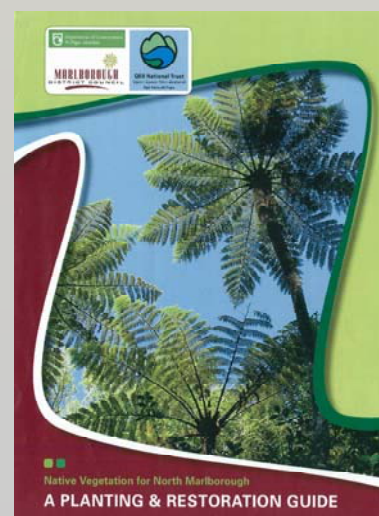
These tree species are all reasonably hardy (especially totara) but are best planted where there is some existing native vegetation to provide some shade and cover while they become established. They are long lived and become large so planting in the right place is important. In good conditions they can grow 2-3 metres in height after three to five years and after 15 years or so provide large volumes of fruit for birds as well as habitat for insects which in turn provides more food for the birds.

There are also plenty of totara available for the North Marlborough area.

Native Planting & Restoration Guide for North Marlborough

This guide is a companion to the "Native Vegetation for South Marlborough A Planting Guide". It provides practical advice for planting and restoration of natural areas in the North Marlborough area, including extensive native plant lists and also information on enhancing and managing existing native vegetation, and on plant and animal pest control.

The book is available free of charge from the Marlborough District Council and is also available on Council's website.



Other projects

Wilding Pine control—the Marlborough Sounds Restoration Trust continues to do great work eradicating wilding pine trees in the Sounds. Dead trees are now very evident and over the years will decay and allow strongly regenerating native vegetation to take over.

Work is ongoing in the Queen Charlotte Sound but has recently moved into the Kenepuru Sound and also onto D'Urville Island. The Council has worked with residents and the Trust to help extend the programme, with D'Urville Island being a particular focus due to its high ecological values, unique mineral belt geology and strong community.

Long tailed bats at Pelorus Bridge—the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, along with local iwi and the rural community, have initiated a project to study and protect the small remnant population of long tailed bats at Pelorus Bridge Scenic Reserve. This is the only known population in Marlborough although recent checks have found signs of another population on D'Urville Island.

The bats can sometimes be seen in the twilight circling high in the forest canopy or foraging for moths above the street lights at the bridge. A community pest control programme led by Forest and Bird is in place targeting possums, stoats and rats.

QEII Covenanting News from Tom Stein



The QEII National Trust helps landowners to protect significant natural and cultural features on their land through permanent legal covenants. The trust is an independent non governmental organisation. Covenants are registered on the property title in perpetuity, meaning that future landowners must abide by them. Private property rights are not jeopardised – the landowner retains ownership and management of the land. Visitor access is available only with the landowner's prior permission.

Tom Stein is the regional representative for Marlborough offering a wide range of practical skills and knowledge of the local environment. Tom is available to talk to landowners who are considering covenanting options.

Marlborough now has 59 registered covenants and seven in progress. In the last few years a number of landowners have decided to covenant significant areas identified through the SNA programme.

Landowners can approach QEII independently of the Council, and can also consider covenanting areas they have already protected through fencing at a later date. QEII provides funding for fencing and legal costs and a range of advice and support to landowners. It also publishes a very good quarterly magazine called "Open Space".

Have a look at their website www.openspace.org.nz or contact Tom on (03) 574 2978 or 027 445 3890 email tstein@openspace.org.nz.

Funding opportunities for biodiversity protection MDC Landowner Assistance Programme

Financial assistance of between 50% and 80% of the cost of protecting significant natural areas is available to landowners through the Council's Biodiversity Landowner Assistance Programme.

- Generally if a project is worth less than \$10,000.00 the Council and landowner share the costs equally although because the landowner share can be for labour (for instance for fencing), their cash contribution can be very minimal.
- For larger projects worth more than \$10,000.00 the Council generally applies to the central government Biodiversity Fund for a 33% contribution and then splits the other 66% with the landowner. If the landowner decides to covenant the site through the QEII National Trust, QEII will sometimes also contribute some cash to the project. The landowner generally contributes between 33% to 22% of the total cost.

This is a good deal given that most of the fencing or restoration planting work involved adds considerable value to the property and often improves the adjoining grazing management options as well. Having a good quality natural area on the property, be it a vineyard, farm or forest, can add shade, diversity and interest.

Since 2003 about 65 protection projects have been completed and another 10 or so are in progress.

Check out the website for details (<http://www.marlborough.govt.nz/Environment/Land/Significant-Natural-Areas/Landowner-Assistance-Programme.aspx>) or contact Nicky Eade at the Council if you would like more information on what assistance might be available.

