

SNA Survey ends—site protection continues

The Significant Natural Areas (SNA) surveys began in Marlborough in 2001 and have recently drawn to a close. The main purpose was to identify areas with important ecological and natural values and promote their protection where practical. Most of the Marlborough area has been covered, with about 75% of landowners agreeing to participate.

Contract ecologists Geoff Walls and Philip Simpson have assessed around 280 properties and identified about 650 significant natural area sites. These include wetlands, rocky bluffs, tussock grasslands, forests and regenerating native vegetation, coastal areas and freshwater streams and their margins.

Many sites are in good health and are self sustaining. Others are quite degraded and need protection and restoration if they are to survive in the long term. The Council has established an ongoing Landowner Assistance Programme to help landowners protect SNA sites. So far about 50 protection projects have been completed.

Launch Event in June

A summary report of the ecological values of North Marlborough will be released in June. This will complement an earlier summary report for South Marlborough published in July 2005 and together they provide an overview of the results of all the ecological survey work on private land in Marlborough since 2001.

A special event will be held in June to mark the end of the surveys and the launch of the North Marlborough Summary report.

Projection projects—update



A new fence preventing stock access to native bush on a property near Havelock.

Through its Significant Natural Areas "Landowner Assistance Programme" the Council has worked alongside landowners on about 50 projects so far. Another five projects are at the planning stage. About half of these projects have received additional funding through the central government "Biodiversity Fund", with the Council making application on behalf of the landowners.

Protection work has included fencing, plant and animal pest control, and restoration planting. The types of sites protected include wetlands (11 projects), coastal areas (4), shrublands and bluffs (9), riparian areas along waterways (4) and forested areas (22). About half are also legally protected in the long term by a QEII covenant.

The Council intends to continue working with landowners to protect SNAs where they are at risk of becoming unsustainable through impacts such as stock pressure, weeds and feral animals. If you have an SNA site on your property and are interested in practical protection options contact Nicky Eade at the Council.



Contacts: Nicky Eade - ph 520 7400 nicky.eade@marlborough.govt.nz (MDC), Paul Millen - p.millen@xtra.co.nz (consultant), Chris Bowron - bowron.family@xtra.co.nz, Kristen Gerard - hopai@actrix.co.nz (landowner reps) www.marlborough.govt.nz/enviromonitoring/ecology.cfm

QEII National Trust—Covenanted news



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 managed by a Board of Directors, chaired by Sir Brian Lochore. Covenants are registered on the property title in perpetuity, meaning that future landowners must abide by them.

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 interested in looking at covenanting options.

Marlborough has 44 registered covenants and 12 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, planting etc, at a later date.

QE II provides a range of advice and support to landowners and 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 027 445 3890 email tstein@openspace.org.nz.

Sevenoaks Wetland—a work in progress

David and Val Goulter are half way through a three step plan to restore part of their wetland on their Brookby Road property, near Renwick. The Council provided funding and practical support through its Landowner Assistance Programme plus helped source additional money from the central government Biodiversity Fund. The Goulters also decided to covenant the area through the QEII National Trust early in the process so that their hard work would be protected in the long term.

The restoration project has been divided into three manageable areas with the work (mainly fencing, clearing the area of major weeds (particularly willows), and planting), planned out over a three year period.

"We would not have had the confidence to tackle the job without the support of the Council programme", the Goulters say. The Council has helped source funding as well as providing practical help to plan and carry out the work through environmental consultant Paul Millen. While the Goulters have put many hours of work into the project themselves, a lot of the heavier work has been done by contactor Tony Pruden and his team. QEII have covered the cost of surveying and registering the site as a covenant and also contributed some cash for fencing work. Local representative Tom Stein (see above) will keep in touch with the Goulters to monitor the restoration area and help with any ongoing issues.



David and Val Goulter check some of their new wetland plantings.

News and events

- **April workshops on wilding tree management – prevention and control** – Nick Ledgard from the South Island Wilding Conifer Control Group will lead these workshops. Nick has been carrying out research work relevant to Marlborough and will share his knowledge - including a practical session on stem poisoning of trees.
April 8th 1.30 – 4pm, Waihopai Hall, Waihopai Valley for landowners in the Wairau, Waihopai and Awatere valleys – Contact Dave Grueber at the Marlborough District Council, 520 7400
April 9th 10am - 4pm at the Linkwater Hall - Contact Phil Clerke or Gus Laird, Department of Conservation, Picton, 520 3002
- **Long Tail Bats** - The local branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Society is involved in a study looking at the distribution and biology of long tail bats in the Nelson/Marlborough area. For more information contact Andrew John, 573 5509.
- **Falcons on the Wairau Plain** – The Marlborough Falcon Conservation Trust has been recently established to carry on the work started by the Falcons for Grapes project in 2005. Around 28 falcons are now established on the Wairau Plain through the work of the group and the Trust intends to continue to work towards having a viable breeding population. Contact Colin Wynn ph 027 223 1115 email cwynn@minidata.co.nz www.falconalliance.org
- **Seed collection project** – Council's native seed collection project is continuing this year in co-operation with landowners who provide access to sites on their land. It started in 2005 with a trial to collect totara seed from various locations in the region but the focus has broadened to include other once common species such as kowhai, flax, lancewoods, matai, red beech and others so that there will be a supply of locally sourced native plants available for restoration projects. Morgans Road Nursery grow and sell the plants in root trainers – contact Grant and Donna ph 5781 412, morgansroadnursery@xtra.co.nz.
- **Landcare groups** are working to restore special places in Marlborough.
The Rarangi Landcare Group is the longest running and continues to work at restoring native coastal vegetation on parts of the foreshore (Contact Shelley Sidley – Department of Conservation, 572 9100).
The Tuamarina/Blind Creek Landcare Group is restoring lowland native forest on a section of riparian land along Blind Creek (Contact Philip Hunnisett, 570 5188).
The Grovetown Lagoon Restoration Group continues to work on willow control and native plantings on public land around the lagoon at Grovetown (Contact Lynda Neame, 578 2013).

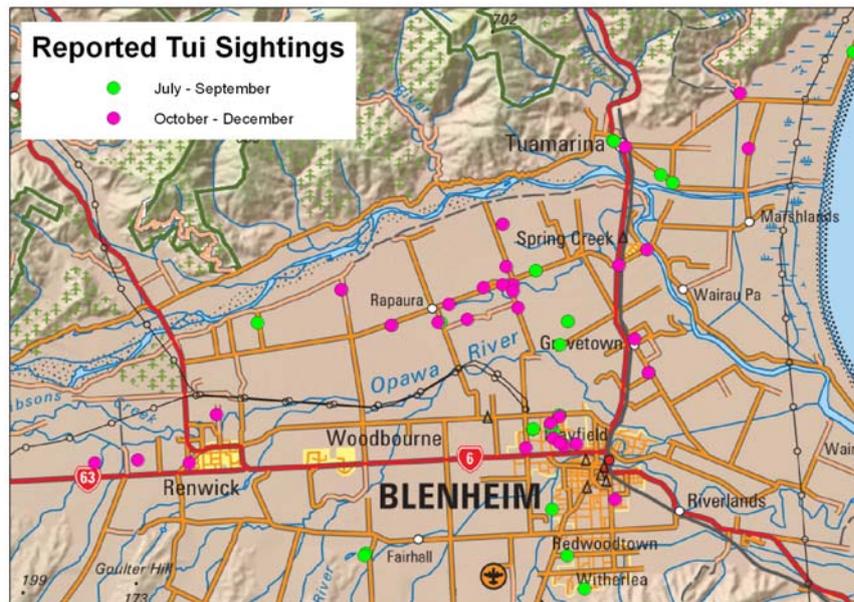
Tui to Town – Community involvement in habitat restoration



Five planting projects have so far been funded under the Tui to Town project launched by the Council in June 2008. Tui to Town offers funding assistance for larger native plantings on the Wairau plain, with 1000 square metres being the minimum size.

The Marlborough District Council has produced a brochure which lists native and non-native plants which can provide tui and other native birds with an almost year round supply of suitable food including nectar, fruit and insects. The Tui to Town plantings can be in home gardens, schools, vineyards, farms and on public land administered by the Council.

A link has been created on the Council website where the public can report tui sightings on the Wairau Plain. Since June 2008 about 60 sightings have been logged with tui seen feeding on flowering eucalypts (June/July), tree lucerne (July – August), kowhai (August/September) and flax (October – December) as shown on the map.



Bellbirds are more common and were reported in similar areas. The occasional native wood pigeon was also reported, generally within 2-3 km of the Northbank Hills in areas like Rarangi and Tuamarina.

The aim is to involve the whole community in natural habitat restoration over the highly modified Wairau Plain area. The planting of more native trees and shrubs will create corridors and stepping stones so that tui and other native birds and insects can find places suitable to feed and breed.

Before human settlement the Wairau Plain area was very good habitat for tui, with large areas of flax wetland and swamp forest to the north and dryland forest on the south side of the Plain and over the Wither Hills. Today less than 1% of the natural cover remains. Recent

government guidelines have identified the Wairau Plain area, along with other lowland areas throughout New Zealand, as high priority for protection and restoration of native biodiversity.

For more information about the Tui to Town project and to report any sightings – go to the MDC website www.marlborough.govt.nz/enviromonitoring/tui_town.cfm or Contact: Nicky Eade nicky.eade@marlborough.govt.nz

Tui to Town planting—Peter and Ally Jerram

Peter and Ally Jerram's property on O'Dwyers Road is only about 4 kilometres from the Northbank Hills and while occasional tui do visit through winter and spring Peter reports that they don't stay for long. He plans to change that by increasing the habitat and food supply on the property.

In spring 2008 the Jerram's established about 900 native plants over an area of about 1500 square metres on their 2 hectare property which also contains a fig orchard, large vegetable gardens, formal gardens and a small stream in one corner. Being larger than 1000 square metres the planting met the Tui to Town criteria so Council provided some funding. A mix of species have been planted including kowhai, rata, totara, coprosma, red and black beeches, rangiora, matipo, silver tussock, flax, rewa rewa, kaka beak, hebe, broadleaf and manuka. Unplanted path areas will mean the mini forest can be walked through and enjoyed in years to come, providing a cool sanctuary on the sometimes hot and dry Wairau Plain. The Jerram's hope their efforts, combined with other new plantings in the locality, will eventually attract tui to visit more often and stay longer to feed on the variety of nectar and fruits that the native area will provide.



Ally & Peter Jerram enjoying their six month old plantings.

Carbon credits update

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) has received a number of applications from Marlborough farmers wanting to claim carbon credits on planting or protecting native forest and scrubland.

Most are under the Permanent Forest Sink Initiative (PFSI), applicable to new forests which won't be clear-felled in the future. Natural reversion of scrub back into native forest and/or the establishment of high value species which lend themselves to selective harvesting, are eligible. "The feeling I have is that these people are wanting to let a lot of land previously cleared for farming, revert to scrubland," says Ben Doherty of MAF's Sustainable Programmes Group, Nelson. Landowners running sheep and beef especially, say they can't afford to keep this land in grass." PFSI forest owners will receive tradable, Kyoto Protocol compliant emission units which they may sell to anyone they wish. These credits will be equal to the increased CO₂ stored in the forest between 2008 and 2012 (the first Kyoto commitment period).

A PFSI forest must be "direct human induced through planting, seeding and/or the human-induced promotion of natural seed sources". Limited harvesting is allowed, on a continuous forest canopy cover basis. Covenants are registered against land titles for a minimum of 50 years.

A second scheme – the Afforestation Grant Scheme (AGS) – invites landowners to tender to be paid the costs of establishing trees on unforested land, with priority given where erosion is a problem. Government retains the credits for 10 years, after which the landowner can either deforest or claim their own credits. Thirty percent of AGS funds are for low sequestration rate species including natives, with 5ha the minimum planting area. Significant Natural Areas and Recommended Areas for Protection are ineligible for AGS grants, unless the site is to be enhanced. Two AGS

tenders are held annually, with one closing at the end of April this year and the next at the end of October.

To find out more about the AGS and PFSI, contact Ben Doherty, MAF 03 543 9183 029 943 1738 ben.doherty@maf.govt.nz

Huia buys Adams credits

Last year's SNA newsletter told the story of Geoff and Liz Adams, who were being paid \$36/hectare (after costs) for carbon credits collected on 560ha of regenerating forest on their Northbank farm. Since then, some credits from the forest have been sold to Huia Wines, almost directly across the Wairau River.

Huia has undergone CarboNZero certification through Landcare Research and needed to buy credits to balance debits. Both parties were keen to buy and sell their credits locally, and hope to continue their relationship. "We've been approached several times by people wanting to buy our hill country for carbon credits, usually planning to plant pine trees. But from where we stand, we are keen to see native regeneration instead," say the Adams'.



Huia's Claire and Mike Allan with vineyard manager Matt Oliver (left)

Packages for protection

Funding options available to help Marlborough landowners protect ecologically significant sites include:

- The **Marlborough District Council's Landowner Assistance Programme** offers either 50% funding contribution for projects costing \$10,000 or less, or 75% funding contribution for projects over \$10,000.00 (this includes a contribution from the central government Biodiversity Fund) Contact Nicky Eade, 520 7400 nicky.eade@marlborough.govt.nz
- The QEII National Trust assists with protection costs including surveying and fencing covenant areas. Contact Tom Stein, field officer, (03) 574 2978 027 445 3890 email tstein@openspace.org.nz
- Various covenanting options are offered by DoC. Contact Jack Hayward, DoC Nelson (03) 546 9335.
- Other potential funding sources include the Nature Heritage Fund, Nga Whenua Rahui, The Department of Internal Affairs Pacific Development and Conservation Trust, New Zealand Community Trust, BOC Where There's Water Community Environmental Grants, the World Wide Nature Habitat Protection Fund and Lottery Environment and Heritage Grants.

Recommended Reading

The Marlborough District Council and Department of Conservation have published a number of publications relevant to people protecting the ecology of Marlborough, all available on request:

- The South Marlborough Significant Natural Areas Project Summary
- The Wairau Ecological Region Protected Natural Areas Report (DoC)
- The South Marlborough Planting Guide
- Marlborough's Freshwater Flora & Fauna – a field guide
- Brochures on wetlands, old man's beard control
- Threatened Plants of South Marlborough; a field guide. (DoC)
- Tui to town brochure and poster

