

NEWSLETTER

DEC 2018

SEASON'S GREETINGS



Hello to everyone,

The last few months have flown by again, with lots more work put in by our growing number of volunteers. So here's what we've been up to....

Owhango Alive Chairman's Report December 2018.

Another steady few months in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, with predator control, weed busting, working bees and planning for World Rivers Day on Sunday the 30th September, more on that below.

Trap data for the months of September, October and November are as follows:
Mice - 30, Stoats - 5, Feral Cats - 1, Rats - 87, Hedgehogs - 0, Weasels - 1

Great to see that there are still good numbers of people using the walking tracks within the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, despite the riverside track being closed to the "Boat Hole" since late May. We have chased up DOC on what's happening with the slip and should hear by the end of November on what they propose to do. We hope, as I presume you all do, that it will be repaired in the very near future. You can still access the "Boat Hole" from the loop track off the Ohinetonga Road. The bird life on this section of the track is great – if you stop and listen occasionally, you will be amazed by the bird song.

World Rivers Day Sunday 30th September.

For the fourth year running we celebrated World Rivers Day on the banks of the Whakapapa River in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve.

A good turnout of young and old attended the celebration. During the morning we planted 50 trees in the Reserve, along with placement of a bench seat downriver from the bridge - many thanks to David Johnston for his hard work in designing and constructing the seat. After all the tree planting and seat placement we adjourned to the pavilion at the Owahango Domain for refreshments and presentations from Owahango Primary School students, Jack Owen and Nairn Higgie on the whio (NZ blue duck). After lunch, Danial Van Der Lubbe of Predator Free 2050 talked about different types of predator traps, baits and lure and placement of the traps.

Owahango Alive calendars. David Robinson has created a great calendar which Owahango Alive is selling for \$20.00. If you would like one, be in quick as we only have less than 10 left! All photos have been taken in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve. Photographers are John Martin, David Robinson, Tim Holmes and Mikayla Donnelly.

Trap vandalism. Sometime between the 5th November to the 12th November, 18 traps on the "Tawa" line were vandalised. Some were simply just upended, resulting in the bait and lures being damaged. 6 of the 18 traps had been thrown down steep banks and it took a considerable amount of time and effort to locate them. All traps are now back in place and working.

The traps in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve all are owned and maintained by Owahango Alive. These have all been purchased by generous donations from local businesses, trap sponsorship from individuals and businesses, and general fundraising

The traps target the predators (rats, stoats, weasels etc.) that predate on the native birds that make their home in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve and its surrounds.

Owahango Alive has a Facebook page, check it out.

That's it from me – if any of you feel like getting involved, just email us at owhangoalive@yahoo.com. We'd love to have you on board.

Warm regards,

Mark Fredericks and the OWHANGO ALIVE team.

TRAP DATA - Sponsor by Species									
Count - Kill	Kill								
Sponsor	Rat	Mouse	Stoat	Hedgehog	Other	Cat	Weasel	Rabbit	Total Result
Anderson-Smith	28	7	1			1			37
Claire Stevens	10	2							12
David Partis and Suzanne Wilkinson	15	5	1						21
Derek & Ann Percy (Trap 1)	31	1	1		1		1		35
Derek & Ann Percy (Trap 2)	31	1	1						33
Fa'i Pudney, Tauranga	22		2						24
Jacob Simmonds	9	2	3	3		2		1	20
Knowles Family	19	2	1	1					23
Margie Riley	15	4		1					20
Nan & Malcolm Pullman	31								31
Ngakonui Valley School	16	6	1				1		24
Phil & Kate Taylor	4	3							7
Rachel & Marty Cashin	26	9	2						37
Richard & Felicity Porter.	20		1						21
Sally & Mark	17	2	3				1		23
Simmonds family, Melbourne	32	1	4						37
Stent Family	25								25
Taumarunui Auto Centre	22	3	3				3		31
The Golden Family	9	2	1						12
TMN Hort and Beaut Soc	15	2							17
Weir Family	12	6							18
Total Result	409	58	25	5	1	3	6	1	508

TRAP DATA - Line by Species

Count - Kill	Kill													
	Line	Bird	Cat	Ferret	Hedgehog	Magpie	Mouse	Other	Possum	Rabbit	Rat	Stoat	Weasel	Total Result
Boat Hole			1		6		115		1		499	54	23	699
Brock's Boundary										6				6
Brock's Farm		2	41	3	20	5	69	19	14	11	318	33	4	539
Domain					3			3			7		1	14
East of bridge							5				124	17	1	147
Kakahi Terrace					2		1				10	3	1	17
Lagoon		1	2		2		35				246	12	2	300
Lagoon Tunnels											1			1
Lord's Boundary			4		3						2			9
Ohinetonga West					1						14			15
Peter's Pumice Pit Line											30	2		32
Private			19	7	23	10	13	174	13		96	3	1	359
Road			1				1				5			7
Rugged Tunnels					1				2		4			7
Swimming Hole					4		33	1			354	18	2	412
Swings Track			1		14		45				111	1	1	173
Tawa			2	1	26		30				138		4	201
Tennis Court Tunnels											8			8
Transfer Station											1			1
Waterfall Track							5				8			13
Total Result		3	71	11	105	15	352	198	35	11	1976	143	40	2960

QUIZ NIGHT August 23rd

Another successful quiz night was held at the Owhango pub, with raffles, donations and team registrations providing lots more funding for the work we do in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve. There were 16 teams vying for top spot, with lots of banter, good fun and some dissent over a couple of questions (that's standard for a good quiz, isn't it?) throughout the evening. Several businesses provided us with prizes for raffles, for which we are very grateful. These were: Seriously Outdoors, Farmlands, Forgotten World Adventures, Gorj's and Grant Lethborg (Owhango Pub). All up we raised \$838. Well done team.

WORLD RIVERS DAY September 30th

We celebrated our 4th World Rivers Day Sunday 30th September, with nearly 40 people gathering at the Whakapapa Bridge for a blessing by Reverend Merv Aitken. Our mission was to carry 50 native trees and a wooden bench seat, that David Johnston had generously designed and constructed, downstream to a prepared site. Barry and Colleen Boston and DOC staff had cleared the area a week or so prior. With the help of some willing tree carriers, a motorbike with a trailer with the bench parked on it, we all "sally forthed" to the assigned area downstream. There had been a reconnoitre, a few days prior, to choose a suitable spot for the bench seat and an area to plant the trees. We were rapt to have so many children in attendance, who dug the holes and planted the trees into their new homes. Meanwhile, the men dug holes for the bench seat, poured concrete into them and placed the seat in situ, along with lots of advice and suggestions from those of us looking on. Ahem!



Aaron and Theresa Owen donated and carved a plaque for the bench seat and Braithwaite Timbers Ltd (ITM) Taumarunui supplied the stain, at cost. Many thanks to all who helped and contributed to the day.

Over lunch at the Owhango Domain, Nairn Higgle (10) and Jack Owen (11) from Owhango Primary School, delivered a presentation on Whio. The boys had been studying the birds at school and they informed us on what is so special and unique about these endangered birds, why they need clean and fast flowing rivers, population numbers etc. They also created a pair of beautiful, larger than life, cardboard Whio - both painted and cut to shape. They used this pair of Whio in their presentation, and have now given them to Owhango Alive, so that they can be used as "props" at future advocacy events. There is an article on Forest and Birds Kiwi Conservation Club blog about the boys – [check it out!](#)



Danial van der Lubbe from DOC/Predator Free 2050 also joined us for the day, and gave a demo on the various types of traps available, how to set them, baits and lures and so on. He also held a question and answer session, with the correct answer winning a trap. Four winners went home enthused and armed with a trap, all set to embark on a trapping regime in their own back yard. Go get 'em, people!

PONGA VANDALISM – October 15th (about)

It is disappointing to note that a few of the lovely ponga at the Swimming Hole have been mindlessly trashed - pushed over and left to die for no apparent reason. The Swimming Hole trapping team, Marion Johnston and David Robinson, service their line weekly through this section of the track and have noticed this happening over the last few weeks. Hopefully this is a one-off from some idiot with too much time/energy on their hands.



TANIA'S FAREWELL – Oct 30th

October 30th saw the end of an era, with our original secretary Tania Dewitt leaving Owhango, to be closer to family and embark on another chapter of her life in Wellington. Tania was instrumental in creating Owhango Alive (OA) back in September 2011, when a few of us got together and formulated a plan to "bring back the birdsong" in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve – this is when Owhango Alive was born. Tania was nominated to be the secretary of our OA volunteer group, bringing her wealth of experience and knowledge of working with conservation over many years. To acknowledge Tania's input to OA and to wish her well in her new life, many of our group gathered with Tania at the "new bench seat" to have a picnic on the banks of the

Whakapapa River. We also arranged for a Whio “fly by” during the proceedings, which went without a hitch. I now know where the word “zoom” comes from – those birds surely did fly quickly up river and then downriver just as we were packing up to head home. Especially for you Tania! Thanks for all you brought to Owango Alive.

CALENDARS LAUNCHED on World Rivers Day

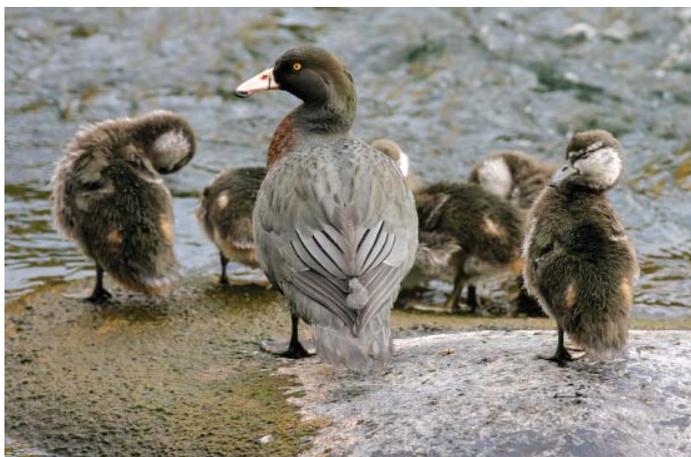
After a few of us got together and shared some amazing photographs, it was mooted that we create a calendar of photos from the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, all taken by locals. (David Robinson, John Martin, Tim Holmes and Mikayla Donnelly). David Robinson, trap checker and photographer, took it upon himself to create this calendar for Owango Alive and suffice to say, they have been super popular. We had 50 printed first up, launched them on World Rivers Day and then needed to print another 50, another 50 and so on.... I've lost count! A great fund raiser and effective way to promote our birds and the bush. Be in quick if you would like a calendar – they're going fast!



WHIO DUCKLINGS – 1st October

On the 1st of October Mark and I went for a walk along the Whakapapa River and spotted two adult Whio with 6, yes 6, ducklings! We of course, were very excited and let the rest of the team know, along with informing Alison Beath from DOC (she is Ms Whio). Since then, we have seen the 6 ducklings with the parent birds regularly, just upstream from the Whakapapa Bridge. This is very heartening for us and of course, the local Whio population, as at this time of the year we often experience heavy rain and floods. The floods, along with predation by stoats etc, compromise the Whio ducklings' survival. So with our rigorous trap line programme, we certainly feel as if we're doing something constructive towards the protection of the local bird life.

Brenda and I check our Tawa and Boathole line weekly, ending up back at the Whakapapa Bridge. When we peered over the Bridge on Monday 5th November, after checking the Lines, we were thrilled to see a pair of Whio on the rocks just upstream of the bridge. Thinking we could see more movement, decided to walk upstream to “see what we could see”. Joy of joy, we broke out onto a ledge on the river, and there they were..... 2 adults and 6 well grown ducklings. Much excitement and photos! Brenda reported back to her man, John Martin, who went out the next morning and took a load of photos and video. John then edited his photos/video and has now produced an amazing video that will blow ya socks off!! [Check it out!!](#)



FEATURE BIRD: KOTARE – New Zealand Kingfisher



We have a healthy population of the native Kotare around the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, with them often being seen perched on telegraph wires or fence posts, or heard on the bush margins. They have strong/stout bills, and the jewel lit birds take a varied diet from live prey that, in our area, includes dragonflies, lizards, mice and small birds. This writer has watched (aghast) a pair of sparrows fossicking on the ground over a morsel, while a kotare watches above, from a telephone wire. The kotare dives straight down to the sparrows, kills one by repeatedly bashing its head on the ground and then eats the contents of its head. Nice. A full on nature programme which I'll never forget.

Kotare nest in the early spring, in vertical banks, rotting trees etc, where they burrow tunnels about 20cm deep. The female lays up to 7 eggs, and incubates them for 20 -21 days. The chicks fledge at about 26-27 days and the parents continue to feed them for another 7-10 days. The call of the Kotare is a distinctive "kek-kek-kek". You can hear it on the website homepage/New Zealand Birds Online.

And so, to finish..... what do you call a group of kingfishers/Kotare? I look forward to your responses!

TRAP DATA and TRAPNZ

We have recently started using the "app" TrapNZ. This allows us to see our traps/lines/map of the area we work in all sorts of detail. It also allows us to record trap results directly via phone or computer to the charts, what bait was used and so on. It also means that if you are a sponsor of a trap and you have the app, you can now check to see how your trap is going at the flick of a button. Clever stuff.

MEGAN WEIR

Six months ago Owhango Alive was approached by Megan Weir, who is a student at Feilding High School. Megan is in year 10 (14 years old) and was looking for a project for her Duke of Edinburgh bronze award. Megan chose to service a line for us, along with assistance from Mum, Chris Weir. Through the Service section of the award, students can volunteer in the community, and see how service can make a positive difference. It can also help improve skills such as team work and communication, building self-confidence as a result. Over the six months Megan checked the Brock's Farm Line, catching rats and mice and then in her final 3 weeks of the project, caught 3 stoats!! Great stuff Megan.... and thank you for your enthusiasm and commitment to the cause.



THE SLIP contd....

We reported on "The Slip" in the last newsletter – it occurred around May 26,, and completely blocks the downstream section of the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve walking track. Aside from one visit by the DOC track team, nothing else has happened, as far as we are aware. We really would like to see some progress on this, as it not only makes that side of the loop track impassable, but also thwarts the ease of accessing our trap lines along the river bank. We are hoping to have a meeting with DOC and other interested parties to see if we can move ahead and repair the track. The Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve track is an extremely popular walk, for both the locals and visitors, national and international. Given that we often see who on the river along this section of the track, it provides an excellent opportunity for people to view the unique birds in their natural environment.

We will keep you posted.

THE OLD AND NEW.... David Robinson

Many years ago I worked in the Wellington District Office of the Lands and Survey Department. For a period I worked with the planning surveyor and the reserve rangers (before DOC) preparing brochures for the scenic reserves in the Wellington Land District. Recently while doing a necessary clean up around the house I came across a copy of the one for Ohinetonga which I must have kept because of the proximity to my home town, Taumarunui. It is interesting to compare it to our current edition in all its Technicolor glory.



A Merry and Safe Christmas to you all,

If you're keen for a walk around the traps, or a chat about our special Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve projects, give us a holler and we may be able to take you for a walk through our "backyard"

Warm regards,

Sally , David and the newsletter team.

Photography:

John Martin took all the whio (apologies for the Santa hats!) and kotare photos, World Rivers Day photos by Sally Lashmar, ponga vandalism and Tania's farewell by David Robinson and Megan Weir's photo by Chris Weir.