

PANUI

NEWSLETTER

Kōanga/Spring 2023



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT Sept 2023

Kia ora everyone, and welcome to Spring 2023.

Well, we've certainly weathered a proper winter here in Ōwhango this year, with over 40 frosts counted from March 30th up to 1st September! The coldest frost being minus 4.8 degrees C. We have had colder frosts, with minus 7 degrees being recorded when I first moved to Ōwhango in 2012 (the water in the toilet bowl froze!)

We have a great fire at home, but I always wonder how our tiny forest birds cope, when the ice is 2 inches thick, but they're still out there singing their hearts out at daybreak.

With spring here, the birds are certainly doing "their thing" and the Whio are sitting too.

Fingers crossed there are no extreme weather events to destroy nests and wash our precious whiolings away.

We've had a productive 5 months since the last newsletter, with the trapping programme removing many predators – see attached trapping records.

We have also had more volunteers join our team, which is great for the succession of Ōwhango Alive.

Welcome aboard, everyone!

We decided to initiate fortnightly working bees in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve.

This has proved popular, with an average of 11 volunteers turning up, to get stuck in to "Hacking and Hauling" the invasive weeds away.

This initiative achieves in several ways, primarily to rid our precious forest of invasive weeds, but also to foster relationships within our team.

The working bees finish with lunch at our local, the Blue Hill Cafe, which is always a crowd pleaser.

A fund raising quiz was held at our local pub in August, which was a great success, with 26 teams of 4, lots of local business support by way of prizes, and fun to be had by our local community.

Result.... \$2280 raised – WOW! What a great community we live in.

The Ōwhango Alive team is now looking forward to celebrating World Rivers Day again, on Sunday, Sept 24th.

This year's theme is a Festival and we're stoked to have Tania Bramley, of NZ Landcare Trust, involved with the day, both as an OA volunteer and also in her professional role as Manawatu-Whanganui Regional Coordinator – see the article and flier at the end of the newsletter.

That's all from me and as always, thanks go to you all, for your continued support of Ōwhango Alive. Together, we are surely making a difference.

Nga mihi,

Mark Fredericks

Ōwhango Alive Chairman

TRAP DATA FOR LAST 3 MONTHS

1st April to 31st August

Bird	1
Cat	13
Hedgehog	16
Mice	35
Possum	4
Rat	191
Stoat	3
Unknown	2
Total	265



SPONSOR DATA 1 April to 31 August

	Mouse	Rat	Stoat,	Total Result
Anderson-Smith		1		1
Claire Stevens				
David Partis and Suzanne Wilkinson		5		5
Derek & Ann Percy (Swimming Hole 1)		1		1
Derek & Ann Percy (Swimming Hole 2)		1		1
Fa'i Pudney, Tauranga		1		1
Grace & Mary Donald		2		2
Jacob Simmonds				
Kayden and Zander McConkey				
Knowles Family	1			1
Lucy Simmonds		3		3
Manawa Energy (BH01)	1	2		3
Manawa Energy (BH02)		1	1	2
Manawa Energy (BH04)	1	2		3
Manawa Energy (BH05)		2		2
Manawa Energy (SH02A)		1		1
Manawa Energy (SH04A)		2		2
Manawa Energy (SH05)		2		2
Margie Riley (Lagoon 18)		1		1
Margie Riley (Tawa 1)		1		1
Marsaili Cash (Boat Hole 22)		1		1
Marsaili Cash (Boat Hole 3A)		6		6
Marsaili Cash (Swimming Hole 4AA)		2		2
Marsaili Cash (Swimming Hole 7A)				
Martin Bond				
McEntee Family: "Admiral Ackbar"		2		2
McEntee Family: "Stumbleduck"				
McEntee Family: "Verminator"				
McEntee Family: "Weasel Vin Diesel"	1	4		5
Mike Camm	1	2		3
Nan & Malcolm Pullman		1		1
Ngakonui Valley School	1			1
Opie Family		1		1
Phil & Kate Taylor		1		1
Rachel & Marty Cashin		2		2
Richard & Felicity Porter				
Sally & Mark		1		1
Shirley and Kevin McEntee		1		1
Simmonds family, Melbourne		2		2
Stent Family		1		1
Taumarunui Auto Centre		2		2
The Baylis Family, Owhango		2		2
The Golden Family		3		3
TMN Hort and Beaut Soc				
Turangi Painting Services	2	1		3
Weir Family	1	4		5
Total Result	9	67	1	77

PESTIVAL and WORLD RIVERS DAY - Sally Lashmar

Ōwhango Alive will be celebrating World Rivers Day on Sunday, September 24th. This is the ninth year in a row that we have celebrated the day and this year's theme is a Festival.

The day will be a great opportunity for anyone who is keen to start a trapping/predator control group, or is looking to implement a trapping programme in their area or block of land. Or of course learn some skills to enhance their existing trapping programmes.

John Bissell, of Backblocks, is our speaker for the day – John specialises in pest/predator control and is national predator/control advisor with Save the Kiwi.

These events are always a great opportunity to learn and to network with other likeminded folk and groups.

The venue is Brock's Farm Complex, Ōwhango, on the banks of the Whakapapa River.

There may even be Whio chicks to spot, when we "Walk the Line" with an Ōwhango Alive trapper.

See the attached flyer and link to register – hope to see you there!

Ōwhango Alive launches their annual calendar on World Rivers Day, so we'll have them available for purchase at the Festival.

Once again, we have had a great response from local, and not so local folk, who have offered us some pretty amazing photos for the calendar – many thanks, photographers. We wouldn't have such a great fund raising project without your input.

So be in quick to pick up your Ōwhango Alive calendar - first in, first served!

P.S. Just a reminder that World Rivers Day is also Daylight Savings day, so we put our clocks forward an hour!"

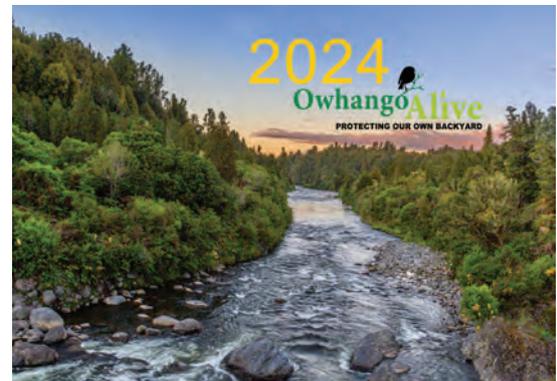


PAUA SLUGS *Schizoglossa novoseelandica* - Rosemary Steele

Did you know that snails are slowly evolving, losing their shells so that they become slugs? In lots of ways it makes sense: having to carry a shell around must make life harder, especially if trying to hide from predators. New Zealand has several species which are in transition and all that remains of the shell is a small oval, up to 2cm long and 1 cm across, located towards the rear of the snail. It looks almost like a tiny paua shell but lacks the line of holes. Scientists believe that these slugs are derived from our largest land snails, Paryphanta.

Paua slugs are carnivorous and are only found in the North Island (including Great Barrier Island.) There are 3 living species: *Schizoglossa novoseelandica* ((2 sub-species) and *S. worthyae* (which is restricted to north of Hamilton). Two others *S. major* and *S. gigantea* are only known as sub-fossils. Their bodies vary in colour from brown to almost black and the colour of the shell varies too, from black to quite a bright green.

I have seen them at Retaruke, once beneath the bark of a fallen kahikatea and once in the leaf litter in my garden where the bright green shell caught my eye. There is no reason to think they are not in the Ōwhango Reserve but they are nocturnal and come out to forage at night like all slugs and snails. This makes them vulnerable to predators like rats, mustelids and wild pigs.





WEED OF THE MONTH - Shirley McEntee

Himalayan Honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*) is a hollow-stemmed shrub which grows up to 3m. It has heart-shaped leaves, red-purple flowers and dark purple berries that are produced in autumn. Being an abundant seed producer it is easily spread by birds, water, mammals and careless dumping of vegetative material. It aggressively colonises disturbed land, competing with native colonisers. It was introduced into N.Z. as a garden ornamental and has become naturalised since 1878. It is best controlled by digging out in spring before seeds form, or cutting down and painting stumps with herbicide.

Ref: N.Z. Plant Conservation Network nzpc.org.nz



WORKING BEES - Sally Lashmar

For the last few months a committed group of volunteers have been meeting fortnightly at the Whakapapa Bridge.

The focus is to get stuck into the pervasive weeds growing along the tracks of the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve.

The Hack and Haul team of vollies have filled several trailers, wool fadges and bags with weeds and have put in over 130 hours of work this year.

A bit of blood, lots of sweat but no tears so far!

A team of DOC rangers have also joined us when available, with the heavy artillery of chainsaws for the bigger work required.

We're certainly seeing a difference being made, which is rewarding.

The bird life is a joy to work around too – they're very active at present, what with "spring things" happening, so it's easy to lean on the grubber or loppers and watch the avian courtship rituals going on!

We have also slipped into the routine of finishing each fortnightly working bee with lunch at the Blue Hill Cafe in Ōwhango. It's becoming a welcome habit!



SAM THE TRAP MAN - Sally Lashmar

On Sunday August 6th, Whanganui Region Catchment Collective (WRCC) held a trapping workshop at the Kaitieke Hall, about 20ks from Owhango.

The invited speaker was Hamiora Gibson, AKA Sam the Trap Man.

Sam is an ecologist and coordinator with Landcare Trust, covering the East Coast/Tairāwhiti area. Sam has over 20 years experience in predator control and wildlife monitoring – he shared lots of tips on trap lures, trap maintenance and methods for targeting specific predators.

Sam also talked about the value of joining/creating a collective of similar groups, in order to not only access funding opportunities, but also to strengthen the shared knowledge and expertise within many trapping and conservation groups.

I am now collecting feathers to hang on a piece of nylon to entice cats to traps – why so? Well, Sam explained how cats are “visual” critters and that by placing a trap which a cat can spy from a distance (say a tree in the middle of a paddock) AND with a feather fluttering in the breeze above the trap, the cat’s interest will be piqued. The feather will entice the cat to head to the trap to check it out and then hopefully enter the trap – as the old saying goes, “curiosity killed the cat”.

Hence feather collecting :))

There were interesting discussions on trap placement, the efficiency of various baits and lures – soft meat baits can be gnawed at and pulled away, whereas a firmer bait encourages predator to engage more with the bait and BINGO, trap triggers.

Sam also placed emphasis on checking the traps that haven’t caught for a while yet the bait is disappearing, and to make sure that the trap is actually firing.

About 25 people attended the event, 5 of whom were Owhango Alive volunteers and the rest were members of the Retaruke Catchment group. The catchment group has just received a grant to have a community trap bank to get on top of wild cats in the Kaitieke Valley. The event was a great opportunity to network with other groups and trappers from around the region, as well as learn more trapping techniques.

Thanks go to Tania Bramley of NZ Landcare Trust and Natasha Cave, regional coordinator for WRCC, and of course to Sam the Trap Man.

It was a Sunday afternoon well spent. Check out Sam the Trap Man on youtube... there are several videos of his work in the Eastern Bay of Plenty.





QUIZ NIGHT - Sally Lashmar

Every couple of years, Ōwhango Alive hosts a quiz night, which is a great way of raising funds and awareness of ŌA's work and brings the community together for a fun event.

The local pub, Ōwhango Adventures, was the place to be on the evening of Thursday, 24th August.

26 teams of 4 vied for a huge range of prizes, raffles and activities, all generously donated by local businesses and residents. The pub was fair bursting at the seams!

The quiz master, Mark Fredericks, kept the show rolling along, encouraging folk to wrack their brains over his quirky questions, buy up the raffles and just as importantly, to "Buy Local". The local businesses support many volunteer groups in our community and it is much appreciated.

A total of \$2,280 was raised on the night, which is a great result, with donations continuing to be offered.

The funds will be used to grow, develop and service our trapping programme, purchase trees for planting in the Ohinetonga Scenic Reserve, and to cover the ongoing costs of running our expanding volunteer organisation.

Thanks to all who travelled, from far and wide, to enter teams - each and every one of you helped make the evening the success it was.

A special mention must go to the Ōwhango Adventures staff, who provided a great venue, an "Event Menu", plus prizes.

Appreciation also goes to Ōwhango Primary School, for providing the sound system, so the Quiz Master didn't have to yell!

See you at the next quiz!



A VISIT TO OHINETONGA - Heather O'Brien

It was so nice to meet Sally, who had been checking traps, on the afternoon we visited the beautiful Ohinetonga reserve.

We were on the lookout for Whio, and just like that, there they were. A little distant for photos at first, but we stayed 2 nights in our self contained motor home so I had some lovely views of these birds as they went about their daily business.

Steve and I loved the sound of the river, so many fantails and swallows constantly darting around feeding. Lovely bird song literally right outside our window. It was wonderfully peaceful walking the tracks through the beautiful bush hearing and seeing Tomtit, Robin, Whitehead, Bellbird, Tui, Silvereye, Kereru to name a few. We also saw harrier hawk cruising up the river and we both think we saw the silhouette of Falcon in the distance. As Sally suggested, the Swimming Hole was a great place to see Whio. So wonderful to be able to watch how Whio navigate in the fast flowing river and to see them feed. When we arrived at the Swimming Hole, the male Whio was very busy seeing off another rival Whio from his bit of river, while Mrs Whio sat on her rock, head tucked in sleeping. When the male came back to the female he was still in territorial mode and began shooing me away with feisty Whio charges.

Congratulations and thank you to the Ōwhango Alive Society for all the work you do to maintain this amazing and special place.

Thankyou Heather for the lovely description of Ohinetonga and the story of the encounter with whio. Also for generously allowing us to use a selection of your photographs. You, the reader, will need to buy a copy of the calendar to see what a feisty whio charge looks like.



T42 MULTI SPORT EVENT AT ŌWHANGO DOMAIN - Peter Brennan

This year the T42 was a smaller event, as the 42nd Traverse has been cut in half by a very large slip, about 22 kms into the Tongariro Forest Park from the Ōwhango end. This meant that the event was a run and walk event only, with no mountain bikers. It also meant the event started and finished in the Ōwhango Domain. The organisers scaled back the event and were not expecting a large number of competitors, certainly not as large as previous years. However, on the day 300 people turned out to complete the challenge, so the Domain was full of people with supporters needing feeding.

The T42 event is an opportunity to show case our village and to raise funds by providing security to the organisers, feeding the crowd and when the bikes are involved the Volunteer Fire Brigade offers bike wash services for a gold coin.

Ōwhango Alive volunteers start the day before, with set up and stay on site all night to do the security, the Fire Brigade turn out to set out car parking and on the day of the event, marshal cars.

The Ōwhango Primary School volunteers start before us all - they provide the food and on the day run a well organised operation feeding the crowd. It was lovely to see the all the work being appreciated by the visitors. One woman, when she realised we were all volunteers, made a \$50 donation in addition to buying lunch for her whanau.

We look forward to the T42 event in 2024.

While it is unlikely that the event will be including bikes in the near future, DOC have worked out a way to bypass the slip and will join the 42nd Traverse to the Top Track. This work they hope to complete soon, but the track will remain closed to four wheel drive vehicles for the foreseeable future.

PHOTO CREDITS

Page 1: Whio - Marc Daalder , Quiz night and Working Bee- Sally Lashmar

Page 3: John Bissell - Backblocks Environmental Mgmt Ltd, Calendar image - Peter Brennan, Paua slug - Danilo Hegg, Southern Alps Photography

Page 4: Himalayan Honeysuckle - Weedbusters, S.McEntee, Carolyn Lewis
Working Bee - Sally Lashmar

Page 5: Sam the Trap Man - Tania Bramley

Page 6: Whio, toutouwai, pīwakawaka - Heather O'Brien

Page 7: Quiz night, Heather O'Brien - Sally Lashmar

The Ōwhango Alive team would like to thank Davina Zimmer for her excellent newsletters but unfortunately study commitments have taken more of her time. I am looking forward to the Festival on World Rivers Day and hope to see you all there.

Ka kite ano and until next time

David Robinson
Editor

THE WHIO YEAR



<p>APRIL – JULY</p>	<p><i>Time for romance – whio start looking for a mate, find their mate and settle down</i></p>		<p>AUGUST</p>	<p><i>Time to find a piece of paradise, build a nest and breed.</i></p>		<p>SEPTEMBER</p>	<p><i>Female whio sit on their eggs for around 35 days while their mate stands guard.</i></p>		<p>OCTOBER</p>	<p><i>Excitement the ducklings are hatching</i></p>		<p>NOV – DEC</p>	<p><i>The whio family hang out for about 80 days from birth to fledging when the young whio start to find their wings.</i></p>		<p>JANUARY</p>	<p><i>Teenage whio fledge and leave the nest. Adult whio are now vulnerable as they start to moult.</i></p>		<p>FEBRUARY</p>	<p><i>Time to release WHIO (captive breed) fledglings back into the wild.</i></p>		<p>MARCH</p>	<p><i>WHIO AWARENESS MONTH Time to let people know about whio – lots of whio activity including Whio Family fun days at Auckland Zoo.</i></p>	
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Owhango **Alive**
PROTECTING OUR OWN BACKYARD



Sunday 24th September (World Rivers Day)
10am to 2pm

Location: Brocks Farm

Farm entrance is at the start of Ohinetonga Road in Owhango,
opposite the end of Omaki Road. Look for event flags.

Guest Speakers: John Bissell from Backblocks.

Backblocks owner/director John Bissell specialises in pest/predator control
and holds the role of national predator control advisor with Save the Kiwi.

John will have a Q & A session, so bring your questions along!

Each conservation or catchment group will have 5 mins to share their story
on what has worked well (or not), for them.

We will also take a walk along an Owhango Alive trapline.

At the conclusion of the day, you will be invited to join Owhango Alive to
plant about 100 trees.

See you there!

Please RSVP by 21 September, by emailing:

owhangoalive@yahoo.com

Thank you to our event sponsors:

