



# Piroa Conservation Trust

Autumn Newsletter

Welcome to our autumn newsletter. As the weather starts to cool and we get some much-needed rain we start to think about planting for this year's planting season. Planting to create healthy habitat lies at the heart of our work along waterways and is the reason behind the Waipu Waters Community nursery. Over 10,000 plants have now been grown by this nursery; it's a glorious sight and we look forward to these plants going into the ground very soon.

In this newsletter we feature a relatively new area of focus for PCT-catchment groups and the impact they can have to improve water quality and biodiversity. We hope you will enjoy learning about the Bream Bay Rivers Community project and the work being undertaken in this space.

We have also included updates on our work in schools, in predator control, weed action - including workshops that are growing our number of volunteers - and of the bounty award for ferrets being claimed.

The PCT trustees and operations team have just completed a strategic planning workshop. While the funding for conservation looks uncertain in the near future, we take heart from the growing momentum and community enthusiasm for what we do. We have established a strong foundation and now have the opportunity to grow in a resilient and agile way. Our recent submission to Northland Regional Council sought to retain the community funding for High Value Areas like PCT at least at the same level, and to consider allocating budget to catchment groups to support farmers to implement farm environmental plans.

You make a difference just by showing an interest in our work.

## KIWI DOING WELL IN THE BRYNDERWYNS

We're continuing to hear kiwi in new locations and reconfirm their presence in places we've heard them before.

Of 32 devices put out to listen for kiwi, calls were recorded on 18, that's 56% (Nov - Feb).



*Kiwi calls detected*

Kiwi in the Brynderwyns are now confirmed from SHI right across to Bream Tail Farm on the East Coast.

Kiwi have spread 6kms east, 6 kms west, 3.5 kms north and 2.5 kms south of their Marunui release site. The positive sites are shown in the map above.

## GROWING CONCERN WITH DOGS

With the kiwi spreading in our area, it increases the necessity for dog owners to be vigilant about keeping dogs under control, out of dog free areas and on a lead where required.

Owners who prevent their dogs from roaming can sleep easier knowing their dog isn't in danger.

Save the Kiwi and the Department of Conservation are joining forces to encourage dog owners to make a pledge to prevent their dogs from roaming. For more info and to pledge, visit their site.



[Where's your dog at? Call to keep dogs safe by not letting them roam - Save the Kiwi](#)

The "Where's Your Dog At?" campaign aims to raise awareness about the risks roaming dogs can pose to themselves, other dogs, people, and wildlife.

“Just because your dog was on the deck when you went to bed, doesn’t mean it stayed there all night,” says Save the Kiwi dog specialist Emma Craig. “Even the loveliest, cuddliest homebody of a dog can be prone to roaming, and dog owners don’t necessarily know it’s happening.”



To support this nationwide campaign PCT has partnered with Kiwi Coast to bring workshops to both Mangawhai and Waipu. The workshops are free and will be held on

Sunday 9th June  
Mangawhai in the morning  
Waipu in the afternoon.

Feel free to register here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/trbeat6wEK>

Kiwi Coast’s Know Your Dog Workshops have proven a hit with Northland dog owners keen to get inside the minds of their canine companions and understand what is behind some of their quirky traits and antics.

Every day we are surrounded by high value conservation areas from Mangawhai to Bream Bay with over 30 at-risk species we need to protect. Whether on the beach, walking around dog friendly bush areas or estuary, a dog pulling on a lead, running off in full flight after rabbits or birds on the beach ignoring recall commands, or even just tearing up your furniture while you’re at work will become simpler to manage when you understand why a dog is doing what it’s doing.

The Know Your Dog workshops are intended for all dog owners, including those living in areas with native wildlife such as shorebirds, kiwi, bittern, weka or pāteke.

## CATCHMENT GROUPS

PCT’s catchment group project, also known as “Bream Bay Rivers Community Project”, funded by MPI, is making great progress. Currently, four catchment groups are up and running, meeting regularly to discuss the challenges in their area and work towards improving water quality and biodiversity. These groups are formed by farmers and landowners from the Waionehu Stream, Ahuroa River/Mill Brook, Pohuenui River and Ruakākā Forest. Groups will soon be established on the Waipū Estuary, Waihoihoi River and Ruakākā River. If you’re interested in joining a catchment group, reach out to our Bream Bay Catchment Coordinator, Graham Matthews, at [catchmentgroups@piroaconservation.org.nz](mailto:catchmentgroups@piroaconservation.org.nz).



## RIPARIAN PLANTING GIVEAWAY: Enhancing our waterways!

With the generous support of Pub Charity Limited, PCT is thrilled to announce its first Riparian Planting giveaway initiative! This year, we're focusing on two catchments: Waipū Estuary and Waihoihoi River.

These sites, which offer great potential for success, have been selected based on their visibility to the community, diversity of land use, and number of owners. Our goal is to expand this initiative to other catchments within Bream Bay in the future.

Plant distribution and planting workshops are scheduled to commence in May, with ongoing monitoring and support provided to ensure the success of the project.

Each of the 20 selected landowners will each receive 50 native plants grown at the Waipū Waters Community Nursery.

The main aim? To enhance water quality water quality and support biodiversity in the Waipū River ecosystem. Riparian buffers act as effective filters and stabilizers, reducing erosion and run-off while filtering out contaminants like sediments, nitrogen, and phosphorus. Additionally, they provide shade, which lowers water temperature, reduces weed and algae growth, and offers essential spawning spots for whitebait (īnanga) and habitat for fish, insects, and animals in and around the water.

If you're a landowner along the Waihoihoi or Waipū Estuary and would like to be part of this new initiative, fill out our online form: <https://forms.office.com/r/Jgu5TG5A3i?origin=lprLink>

**RIPARIAN PLANTING GIVEAWAY!**

Piroa Conservation Trust invites landowners along the Waipū Estuary and Waihoihoi River to participate in our Riparian Planting Giveaway! The plants are grown in the Waipū Waters Community Nursery from eco-sourced seeds.

Why?	What?	When?
Enhance your riverbanks, improve water quality, and create habitats for native birds, insects and fish along your riverbanks.	Selected landowners will receive a pack of 50 native plants along with a Riparian Planting Information Kit.	First weeding in April and Planting workshop will be organized in May.

CONTACT CATCHMENT COORDINATOR GRAHAM MATTHEWS AT 027 432 1016

OR

FILL OUT THE ONLINE FORM BY SCANNING THE QR CODE

Pub Charity Limited

## Conservation for our taonga species

Piroa Brynderwyns High Value Area (HVA) is home to some incredibly special and unique taonga species that need protection. As part of our catchment project, we're focusing on different habitats, including wetlands!

Wetlands are land areas that are saturated or flooded with water, either all year round or seasonally. They're considered environmental hotspots as they support a wide diversity of species. Plus, they act as natural filters, improving water quality by trapping, filtering, and removing nutrients and contaminants such as sediment, nitrogen, and phosphorus, which helps keep our rivers and streams healthy.

Sadly, wetlands are one of New Zealand's rarest ecosystems, with Northland alone having lost a staggering 90% of its wetlands! That's why we focus on protecting and enhancing this special habitat. We're working on two demonstration wetlands to explore the benefits of fencing, controlling weeds and pests, and planting native plants to increase nitrate uptake, trap sediments, and enhance habitats for native wildlife.



Did you know we have a really cool native wetland native bird hanging out around Waipū Cove? The incredible Australasian Bittern, Matuku-hūrepo! The Australasian Bittern, member of the heron family, is a master of camouflage and often appears as a solitary figure in our wetlands while feeding on eels, frogs, fish, and insects. They play a pivotal role in maintaining the health and diversity of our wetland ecosystems.

*Cove Road bittern on the move, spotted on DoC camera*

Classified as a Threatened (Nationally Critical) species, Bitterns face significant challenges, with their populations declining due to wetland drainage, habitat clearance, and predation by pests like rats and stoats which prey on their eggs.

Wetlands can also be home to some native fish. Let's talk about the whitebait catch! Did you know that five separate galaxiid species make it up? Inanga, banded kokopu, koaro, shortjaw kokopu, and giant kokopu. Adult inanga are the smallest of the five whitebait species, rarely exceeding 110 mm in length. They're very poor climbers and their population has been declining of the years due to swamp and wetland drainage.



*Taonga species: inanga*

Today, a reduction in spawning habitat is believed to be the major limiting factor. They spawn on river and stream banks among vegetation inundated by spring high tides. The eggs remain above the water level until the next spring tide when they hatch and are washed out to sea.

Inanga spend half their lives in freshwater, migrating as juveniles into rivers and streams to grow into adults. By protecting wetlands, we're ensuring these fish have access to lowland freshwater rearing sites, contributing to the richness of our aquatic and marine biodiversity!

Recently, an exciting discovery emphasized the positive impacts of waterway and land management on native fish. The owners of the Millbrook Farm in Waipū, whose waterways are fenced and planted, caught 57 fish in one fish trap left overnight.

They observed inanga, bullies, banded kokopu and an eel! "We were really amazed at the quantity of fish caught in only one fish trap. This unexpected discovery brings us excitement as we find out about the biodiversity in our waterways," said the surprised farmers.



*Fish caught on the Mill Brook by local farmers*



Another special endemic species we're looking out for is one of New Zealand's most unique and ancient creatures, the Hochstetter's frog (*Leiopelma hochstetteri*).

Here in Waipū, we're lucky to be the northernmost place where Hochstetter's frog has been found.

These tiny creatures, measuring up to 50 mm long, are masters of camouflage, hiding during the day in cracks and crevices under rocks, logs, leaves, and in rock fissures. They're semi-

aquatic and often live near small streams in forested catchments. You might spot them by searching under streamside rocks during the day!

The work undertaken around our freshwater ecosystems help us to look out for some unique species that call these places home!

### Recent events: Northland Field Days & Speaker Event in Waipū

In early March, we had the pleasure of attending the Northland Field Days in Dargaville. As the largest agricultural event in the region, it provided a fantastic opportunity to explore the latest farming technology and innovations, all while engaging in meaningful conversations with local farmers. Our presence at the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) tent allowed us to connect with project partners, including MPI itself, the Northland Regional Council, and Whitebait Connection.



*PCT & MPI at the Northland Field Days – March 2024*

Later in March, we hosted a special speaker event at the Waipū Central Café, featuring John Burke and Andre Hickson, two farmers from Bay of Plenty. The event brought together over

30 farmers and landowners from Bream Bay, all eager to discuss nature-positive farming practices.

Here's a snapshot of the key takeaways from our conversation:

**Shared goals:** The importance of setting a common goal for the catchment group and establishing a timeframe for achieving it.

**Power of collaboration:** Forming catchments groups is a powerful strategy to bring together different skills and knowledge to drive positive changes in land use. Building trust within the community is crucial to reach the goals.

**Patience and progress:** Recognizing that progress takes time, starting with small steps and gradually building momentum towards long-term success.

**Science-based practices:** Treating the catchment as our own farm and implementing science-based practices emerges as a winning strategy for effective management and conservation.

**Balancing act:** Prioritizing profit without compromising environment sustainability is essential. Finding the right balance between profit, productivity, and environmental impact is what John and Andre call the “blue zone”.

This event served as a platform for insightful discussions and valuable experience-sharing among farmers and landowners. Special thanks to John and Andre for their visit!



*Farmers and landowners during our last speaker event featuring John Burke and Andre Hickson in Waipu – March 2024*



## SCHOOLS & EDUCATION



### Exploring water quality with Bream Bay College students

Through our catchment project, we shared an exciting day in March as we teamed up with seven Year 13 students from Bream Bay College. Led by Graham, our Catchment Coordinator, we explored three sites on the Waionehu Stream and one site on the Ruakākā River to learn more about water quality.



Using SHMAK kits, we measured water temperature, clarity, phosphorus, nitrate and E.coli. These enthusiastic geography students were also interested in water velocity, habitat quality, including stream shade, vegetation, water pH and visual pollution.

The students were amazed by the different tools and sampling methodologies that were used to measure various indicators.

*Graham and students from Bream Bay College – March 2024*

They were also excited to see several eels (tuna) at the first site on Lloyd's Cullen property. Some early results suggest better water quality on the upper end of the catchment, and confirm the importance of shading by trees and plants to maintain lower temperature. It was an inspiring learning experience and forms part of our collective efforts for improving water quality and biodiversity. Special thanks to the students and their teacher Abby Hope!



### Predator control workshop at Ruakākā School

As part of our ongoing efforts to engage with schools, we developed a trapping programme to empower students to protect our precious native wildlife. During our last workshop at Ruakākā School, we explored the world of trapping and predator control with some fantastic tamariki.

First off, we discussed the importance of understanding the differences between endemic, native, and introduced bird species. “Every pest you catch here helps protect our endangered manu!” highlighted Susan.

*Susan and students at Ruakākā School – March 2024*

Then it was time for the student to get hands-on with trapping, learning about health and safety guidelines, setting traps, and baiting strategies.

From smelly cheese and cat biscuits to peanut butter oat balls, we discussed the best baits to lure pests like rats, stoats, ferrets, weasels, and hedgehogs.

Shoutout to these young empowered learners at Ruakākā School and their teacher, Gillian, for being advocates for change to protect our taonga species! Thanks Susan Steedman for the amazing workshop!

## TRAPPING NEWS



### Massey Road Trapping workshop

There were 25 attendees, with eleven from the immediate area. Peter and Graeme demonstrated the common trap types and lures and talked about getting started with trapping on your own property.

Some have already responded to an email asking for the traps they thought would work for them. Graeme will start taking them out and having a further learning/training session at their individual properties to ensure the best outcomes.

They will all have an invite to join TrapNZ and Graeme will show how to use this. The locals are all talking to each other and making plans. These plans include putting some traps along the roadside for a group of local trappers to service. Initially this is a most positive group and we look forward to more locals joining in the efforts.



### Waipu West SWAT Team

In mid-April a group of 12 volunteers and landowners joined together to fill bait stations in a Waipu West native forest. The project has been underway for over 18 months so we are starting to make headway reducing rats and possums in the area.

It's very rewarding for the team to see small new trees now having a chance to grow and in time replenish the forest and provide more habitat for our native species. The forest isn't easy place to work as many areas are steep and slippery.

### Local farmers engaging in predator control.



Out in our local farmland, some of our catchment group members are tackling invasive pests like rodents, mustelids and possums to safeguard our precious ecosystems and endangered native species.

Here's a quick update from the Mill Brook area: Back in 2022, an important inanga spawning site was discovered which sparked a team effort between Whitebait Connection, Patuharakeke Te Iwi Trust, PCT, and local farmers. Together, we've been weeding, planting, and deploying a trap line.



In February, we set up 39 traps and 33 bait stations along the riverbanks to protect the inanga eggs. This teamwork is a big step forward for our inanga and other native species in Bream Bay.

*Graham, Graeme, and local farmers setting trap lines – February 2024*

If you're a farmer or landowner keen to get started with predator control, whether it's in wetlands, riparian zones, or bush blocks, we're here to lend a hand. We've got traps and advices to share!

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### Our growing concern about Ferrets

Well done to Iain MacLeod who trapped a ferret in a DOC 200 trap in the last week, in the Waipu Gorge DOC reserve. The trap was set with fresh rabbit approximately one week prior.



The trap is within 1km of the location where another PCT trapping expert saw a ferret run over on SH1.

PS - Trapping legends Iain MacLeod and Grant Lester were TOTY nominees 2019, 2021, 2022 and winners in 2023. PCT has been talking to ferret experts about how to increase our surveillance for this mustelid and firm up a response plan, after a recent siting in Seamore Rise, Waipu.



### WOMeN'S TRAPPING

We are pleased to be running our very first Trapping Workshop for Women.

The workshop aims to build confidence in women who are keen to trap but need some guidance on what and how to trap successfully. Are you keen to learn how to trap animal pests either as part of a community group or for private land? No prior experience needed - bring a teen if you're keen! If you are keen to attend, please register here: <http://forms.office.com/r/FwvhAEhuMg>

### WEEDIES NEWS



#### Mangawhai Weed Bin

An amnesty weed bin at Wyatt's in Mangawhai during March has been another resounding success. It worked so well that there were three full skips of invasive weeds which have now been safely disposed of. The most common weeds brought to the bin were wild ginger, tobacco weed, agapanthus and montbretia as well as debris from last year's storms. Another useful tidy up was the removal of weeds which Roly and the team of volunteers have cleared from the Cheviot Reserve.

Martina, Weed Action Coordinator, fielded many phone calls about the plants that could be brought in and worked closely with Wyatt's staff on what was being dumped and how full the bins were.

Our thanks go to all those who responded to our shout out to dispose responsibly of weeds, to Vanessa and Sharan at Wyatt's, and to the Mangawhai Focus. We look forward repeating this offer next year.

**SWAT TEAMS** doing great work.

Over the past two months the weed SWAT team has started work on a few locations between Mangawhai and Langs Beach clearing sites of invasive weeds. Glenn Clark is leading the charge with a small group of keen weed warriors in tow.

The most recent was the dunes at Langs Beach where the team cleared kikuyu and buffalo grass from the roadside dunes area.

Along Cove Road towards Mangawhai at the Robert Hastie reserve roadside is a large patch of blue morning glory vines, wild ginger, bamboo and other weed pests spreading in the native bush. The team has started work both cutting and spraying and have planned for a second round of work in a few weeks. The SWAT team meets the first Saturday of each month for about two hours in the morning. If you are keen to join, contact PCT and we'll connect you with Glenn or another team member.



## TOP CONCERNING WEEDS FOR THE SEASON



Climbing Asparagus, also called Bushy asparagus (*Asparagus aethiopicus*) is a scrambling, multi-stemmed, bushy herb. Roots are tuberous and form a thick mat. Flowers are white and borne in late Spring and form bright red berries in summer. Birds feed on the berries and spread this pest plant far and wide. Use a sharp knife to cut underneath the crown, then hang tendrils into trees to dry. Dig roots out and dispose of safely. Small to medium quantities can be rotted in a large water barrel. It responds well to glyphosate (20ml/litre) early in the cycle.



Ivy (*Hedera helix*), German Ivy (*Delairea odorata*), Cape Ivy (*Senecio angulatus*)

Most ivies and their relatives are invasive weeds that smother shrubs and trees and need to be controlled. They look similar but the leaves vary in thickness, size and sometimes colour.

Organic control: pull or dig out shoots, dispose of safely.

Chemical control: Cut vine low to the ground and swab stump all year round with glyphosate (100ml/litre) or a GliGel stick. It is best controlled before seeds set in autumn. Some varieties are very good at propagating from a small piece so make sure to dispose of the greenery safely.

For more information contact us and we will share some control tips and tricks.

[weedaction@piroaconservation.org.nz](mailto:weedaction@piroaconservation.org.nz)

# CALLING FOR POTS!

As Waipū Waters Community Nursery continues to grow eco-sourced seeds, we need more pots to support our expanding nursery. 🌱

**Specifically, we're looking for plastic pots in sizes of 1.5/2L or larger.**

If you have pots to donate,

**Contact Coralie  
at 027 4320 293**



As Waipū Waters Community Nursery continues to grow eco-sourced seeds, we need more pots to support our expanding nursery. Specifically, we're looking for plastic pots in sizes of 1.5/2L or larger. If you have pots, please contact Coralie on 0274320293 to arrange a pick up. In the coming months we will also be organising a drop-off point at Waipu and Mangawhai.

## VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

We're always on the lookout for new people to help us in our work. Newcomers are especially welcome; it's a great way to make new friends and contacts in the community - we'd love to find a role for you.

There's plenty of variety in the work - some work is outdoors in the hills doing trapping and bait lines, some is chipping away at pest plants in local reserves, or it could be using your keyboard skills and experience for the essential communications. We are especially looking for teachers for our programmes in schools, as well as writers, and people with social media, creative marketing, grant funding, event organisation and project delivery coordination talents.

If you would like to volunteer, please fill in a simple form indicating what you would like to be



involved in and the right team member will be in contact with you. Are you looking for a volunteering opportunity based in the Mangawhai, Kaiwaka, Langs Beach, Waipu area?

Click the link if you are keen. <https://forms.office.com/r/Ms8h312KhB>

### SPONSORS

If you'd like to contribute as a sponsor of our conservation work, please contact Graeme on 021 118 4816.

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