

Pīpīpi

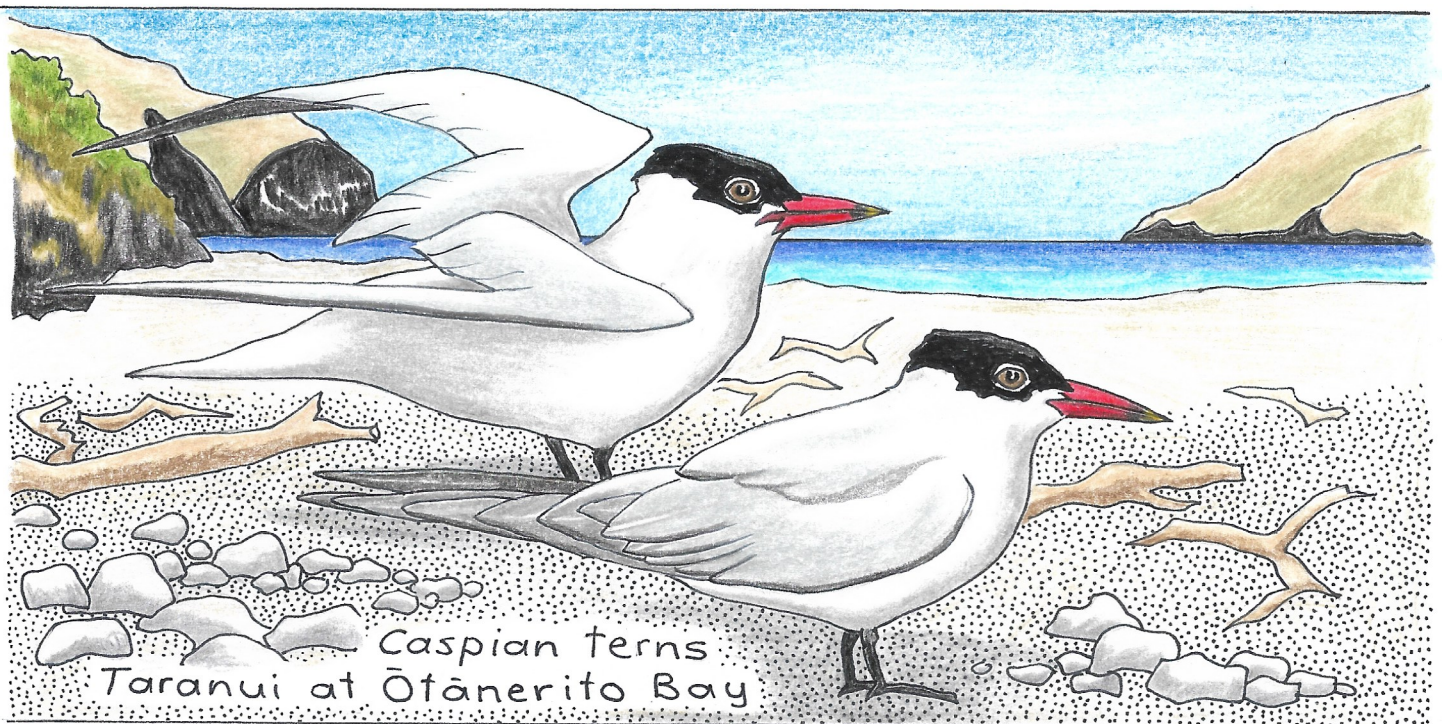
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Maurice White Native Forest Trust
Newsletter from Hinewai Reserve, Banks Peninsula
Aotearoa / New Zealand

R.D.3 Akaroa 7583

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May 2024



Can you hear the mermaids singing, beech to beach?

"I confess I am dreaming still" wrote Hugh Wilson, at the close of a little book about Hinewai, published in 2002, "that one day, within my time or not, the reserve really will stretch from Taraterehu to the sea, from mountain daisies [and beech trees - Ed.] down to penguins and seals, from snow tussocks blowing in the upland winds down to saltwater surges heaving through bull kelp and pāua." Eighteen years later Hinewai did indeed touch the sea at Stony Bay, through the addition of Mokimoki Bush from our good neighbours the Armstrongs.

Three years earlier we had had friendly discussions with Rex and Karen Mundy. They owned

2 82.4 hectares on the north-east flank of Ōtānerito Bay, but due to grandparent duties had moved north to remote West Auckland. Those negotiations had lapsed, partly because of differing opinions about the value of a 27-year old macrocarpa plantation. By late 2023 the trees were six years older, and so were Rex and Karen [so were we all! - Ed.]. Older and wiser, we agreed on a way ahead. Legal title to the land transferred to the Maurice White Native Forest Trust on 1 March, 2024.

Backed by champions

Land additions to Hinewai are possible only because our land purchase fund is nourished by carbon credits and by an angelic host of donors. This is not a plea for more support but a heart-felt thank you. Some large donations helped seal the "Mundyland" deal, But many smaller contributions keep the daily wheels turning and are hugely important. The financial side of the Hinewai project is astonishing, miraculous even, though firmly grounded under careful management by our Finance Officer Bruce Hansen and the other Trustees.

Hugh receipts and responds to supporters with hand-written envelopemails. He is a bit nonplussed if a lack of contact details makes this impossible. Such mahi needs to be squeezed in between the demands of outside workfaces, dictated by weather. Don't feel anxious if a response is delayed for a few weeks. On one January foray in to Akaroa he posted 94 letters all at once, believed to outnumber all the letters posted in one day in the U.K. and U.S.A. combined. [I've told him at least a million times not to exaggerate - Ed.].



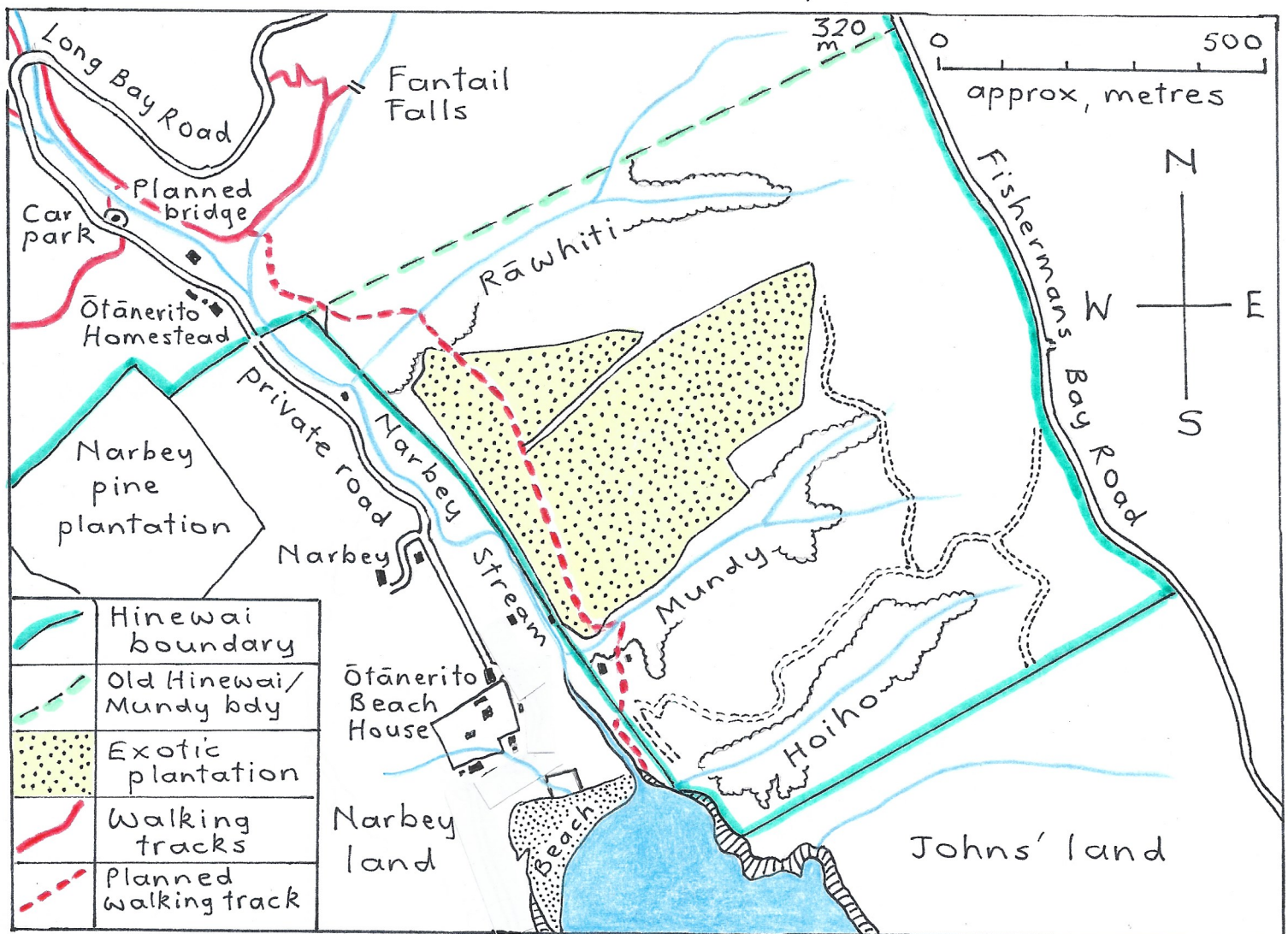
The lie of the land

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"Mundyland" is roughly square, about 1 kilometre long from NW to SE, and almost the same from the upper edge in the NE (around 320 metres altitude) falling away steeply downhill to the valley floor and the sea. Three main bushy gullies are filled with regenerating native hardwood trees and a few podocarps. The macrocarpa plantation occupies about a quarter of the land. Much of the remainder is gorse scrub, with native trees emergent, despite decades of grazing by sheep. A band of mostly exotic pasture borders Fishermans Bay Road. The 2021 Deluge caused several slips, now revegetated by a mixture of fast-growing natives and exotics.

Finding a way

Until 2017 public walking access to Ōtānerito Beach followed a track across private farmland on



4 the valley floor. "Renegat" is a working farm, and the family there had concerns about continuing public passage. Hinewai's eastward extension provides an opportunity to restore walking access to the beach, so long as these concerns are adequately met. (Even on wider Hinewai, public access is secondary to our conservation goals and, although we have never had to exclude people, our Management Guidelines allow for that possibility.)

So, what is happening? Right now we are forming a new foot trail, well away from the farm, through the regenerating bush and the macrocarpa plantation, down to the stream mouth and the wave-washed sand. We are talking to all the neighbours. They seem prepared to find out whether our devised route, our signage, long-drop loo, doggie-ban, etc., might keep everybody happy. There is a lot to do though. Don't hold your breath. It won't be open soon.

Bridging troubled waters

A key component in the new route to the beach is a replacement bridge across Narbey Stream. Five very civil engineers offered advice, but the one who came up trumps is Nelson-based Kate Zwartz [whose name, incidentally, is the very last in our sophisticated alphabetical shoe box address database - Ed.]. Kate has designed many footbridges for DoC [the Department of Conservation - Ed.]. She even organised her brother Ben in to fitting in a site visit when he happened to be within coo-ee. Hugh's initial site selection would have meant a challenging gap of 15.2 metres, but Ben's more discerning eyes lit upon a spot only 20 metres or so upstream which Hugh had rejected for spurious reasons. Ben's gap is only 7 metres wide, easily spanned by standard 8.4 metre beams. Not long after Ben's visit, beautiful drawings arrived for review. Winter stream flows may delay construction until next summer. We won't attempt to bridge the stream mouth. The flow here spreads out across the sand and can normally be

paddled through with ease. From here, though, ⁵ it is essential that, (away from the beach), the farm land, the yards, the tracks, the private road, and all the buildings are treated strictly as closed-off and no-go.

Murdering the macs

Monterey cypress, *Cupressus macrocarpa*, is usually just called "macrocarpa" in New Zealand, where it is grown widely for shelter and timber. The macs on "Mundyland", planted around 1990-91, are not thriving, nor are they yet mature enough for a timber harvest. On the other hand, left standing as old dead wood, they foster rapid regeneration of native forest and fauna. That's our goal. Along the track itself, though, disintegrating trunks and limbs are not a great idea. Different strategies are called for there.

Selective weedicide

New land and new discoveries have bolstered Hinewai's plant species checklists. Native vascular plant species now number 334, naturalised exotics 250. That latter figure might seem scarily high for a project promoting native biodiversity. But relax. Natives are largely outcompeting the aliens. There is no more striking example of this than gorse, which continues to diminish, shaded and killed by trillions of native trees growing up through it. Weed species which pose a real threat to native ecosystems and which need to be actively sought out and destroyed can be counted on the fingers of one worker. This summer we have continued our push against pines, against old man's beard clematis, against sycamore, and indeed against gorse along boundaries and tracks.

Thank heavens the clematis advertises its presence with its distinctive late summer flowering and autumnal seeding. Ash and Max made several adventurous forays in to the wilds of Mānatu Stream and Murderers Gully to dispatch isolated

6 appearances spotted from afar. On the Akaroa side of the hill this smothering vine keeps invading from extensive infestations in the Grehan Valley. Paul continues to eliminate pines from what seem to ordinary mortals to be inaccessible perches on bluffs, where the trees find the full light they need. Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) also has wind-borne seeds that sometimes find root far from parent stands. From Curry Track in April we could see not only hoary stubble of old man's beard awaiting the razor, but also a bright yellow banner below Coppertop. Mash and Axe [Ash and Max - Ed.] burrowed through the scrub, confirmed it was a sycamore, and schmaxed it on the spot. [Is that a word? - Ed.]. [It is now - Hugh].

Life on the edge

The combined area of Hinewai, Kāpuka, and Purple Peak Curry Reserve is now 1625 hectares, encircled within 26 kilometres of boundary fencing. By law we have to keep gorse and broom 10 metres back inside our boundaries wherever they border weed-free pastoral farmland. It's a daunting, time-consuming task, and we never fully comply. But we allow ourselves some pride and satisfaction for maintaining the edges as well as we do. There has been some friction and angst over the years, and we don't take any of it lightly.

Fire and extreme weather have complicated boundary issues in recent years. During the Great Deluge of December 2021, big landslides demolished or severely compromised about 800 metres of fencing along our Ōnikautahi boundary in the Stony Bay Valley. Fencer Guy and his offsider Rex completed a replacement there by late November 2023, and also dealt with a dubious dropout along the top edge of Mokimoki Bush.

All in all it has been a bad two years for having woolly ones on the wrong sides of the palisades. We mounted our own muster last January, hoping

to expel an estimated eight who remained 7
within refenced Ōnīkautahi. Three Kaimahi
[workers - Ed.] from the Te Ara Kākāriki project
offered to help. There was an initial glitsch. We
assumed that the strategically placed gate at the
top western corner had been left open. Just as we
managed to coax the first little cluster of three up
to it we could see - aarrgggh! - it was firmly closed.
A Kaimahi moved smartly along the fence-line and
opened it. Spooked, the sheep vanished. Undaunted,
the dogless shepherding resumed. Before too long we
had merged several little groups into one close
cluster of 14, who then trotted *en masse* [as we
say in Akaroa] through the gate - closed at once
and ever since. Such success was unlikely without the
Te Ara Kākāriki Kaimahi. They said they loved the
whole experience and the beautiful setting.

Sheep remain in several places, including on
"Mundyland" where fencing and boundary work
proceed. Over on Stony Bay Road (our SW frontier)
lovely neighbours Anita and Scott are keeping their
eyes sharp and their powder dry for elusive survivors
in the Stony Bay Wilds.

Marginalising mammals

Plant-munching mammals were never part of
New Zealand's original forest ecosystems. Large
browsing birds were, but most are gone for good.
Ecological restoration in Aotearoa has a rather
different flavour from other parts of the planet
where grazing and browsing mammals are key players.
Minimal Interference Management is our philosophy,
but our aim has always been rigorous control of
alien herbivorous mammals and, if possible, their
elimination. Currently, Pest Free B.P. workers are
following up their extraordinary campaign against pos-
sums, seeking out survivors from the gridded bait
stations of last winter. The growing nightmare is deer.
Evidence of browse, antler-rubbing damage, wallows,
footprints, images caught on night cameras, a few

8 actual sightings, all confirm the presence of small numbers of red deer in Purple Peak Curry Reserve and the Stony Bay Valley. Trained assassins are in hot pursuit. Mid-April, Blake Thomson shot a roaring stag above Goose Green, the biggest (he reckoned) he had ever seen.

On track

After lots of work in November, Waterfalls Track is pretty much walkable again. We had to carve our way through thick broom, poroporo, wineberry, toatoa, gorse, ngaio, fuchsia, māhoe, etc., flourishing on the slips, especially across the 3-pronged landslide we call "The Moa Claw". This young vegetation is way above our heads, yet only two years old.

In mid-December the East Track Slips were putting on a particularly colourful display, with exotic foxgloves and native poroporo flowering in unison. Employing lateral thinking, we re-routed parts of The Stones Track, quitting the ravaged and revegetating stream side and instead wending a way through intact bush further from the battered banks. This will save us days of ongoing maintenance.



Ash and Max on East Track, December 2023

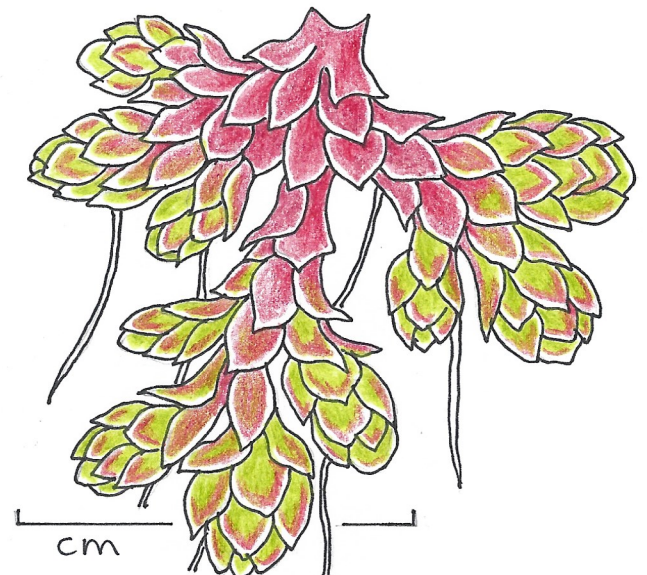
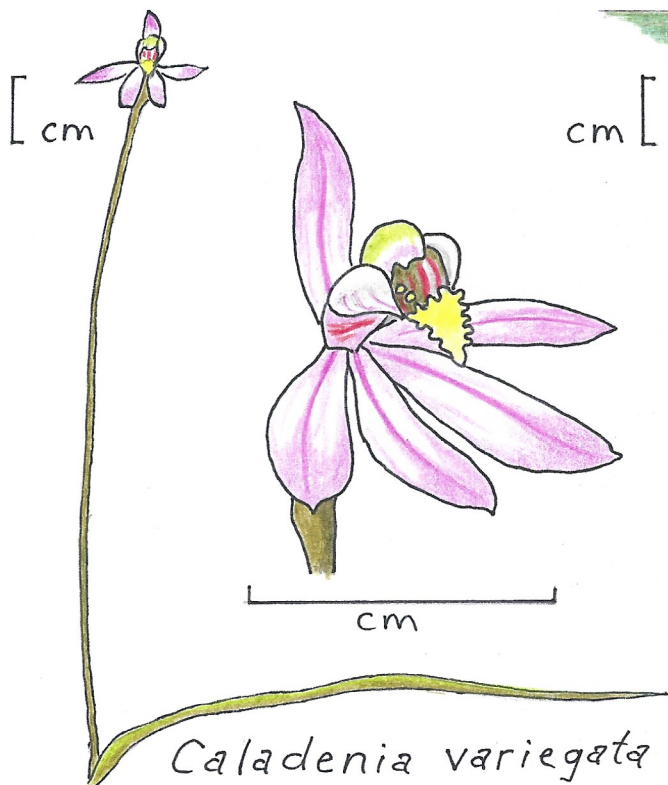
Was there a drought?

Spring predictions of an El Niño summer drought were not wrong, but to our relief, were overstated. It was dry; stream flows diminished, Pūtakitaki

Pond shrank to as low as we had ever seen it, 9 there was some serious wilting at lower altitudes, Hinewai's mid-February skies hazed over from another big fire on the Port Hills, and pastoral drought was officially declared across Canterbury by March. But, throughout summer, periodic sprinkles of rain were just enough to keep most of the reserve pretty fresh and green.

Ferns and orchids

We found some botanical surprises on "Mundyland". One is the abundance of a fern called turawera or trembling brake (*Pteris tremula*), uncommon on Banks Peninsula and found no further south. Far up-valley, the Ōtepiki ponds have been red all summer with a soft surface crust of retoreto (*Azolla rubra*). This is also a fern, although no-one but a botanist would dare suggest such an unlikely relationship. We had never seen it on Hinewai before but it's not uncommon on still or slow-moving ponds across the Peninsula. Mokimoki Bush we knew already to be full



of rarities. It was a botanical thrill to find another. Along the edge of Kawakawa Track a small colony of

10 a rare pink orchid (known tentatively as *Caladenia variegata*) was flowering in November and early December. That brings up to three the number of *Caladenia* species known to be on Hinewai, all vanishingly rare or at least easily overlooked.

Feathers and fins

How long does a tomtit live? The books say that the oldest one recorded to date reached only three years but "some probably make it to ten or more". Ever since Hugh moved in to his new post-earthquake house on Papakaika Meadow in early 2013, a pair of tomtits has inhabited the same patch. Thomas the male is bold and bossy, Thomasina much more discreet but not at all afraid of the big bald biped that shares Papakaika Meadow with them. Hugh always assumed that he would never know when one brief little tomtit gave way to a younger version, but recently he watched a transition. What he called Thomas 1 was distinctive because for at least a year he had sported a deformed (though not debilitating) left foot. In mid-December Hugh thought that Thomas 1 was looking rather scruffy and old. When February began, a male tomtit appeared, looking very perky and dapper, with two good feet. By mid-February Thomas 2 seemed to have asserted territorial possession of Hugh's house and surroundings. Thomas 1 made decreasingly frequent appearances, and the last time we saw him was in mid-March.



The massed flowering of tī kōuka in Spring || transmogrified into heavy crops of pearly berries in autumn, eagerly scooped by kererū. Eight took off from one cabbage tree beside Hugh's house when he emerged one morning. Down at Ōtānerito at least fourteen were snoozing in one tall eucalypt after feasting on tī kōuka fruit at the Beach House.

In mid-March fish scientist Martin Rutledge surveyed Hinewai's streams, savaged by the Deluge of December 2021. He reported reasonable numbers of kōaro, a few banded kōkupu, long-finned and short-finned eels, blue-gilled and red-finned bullies, but as yet no mention of īnanga, torrent fish or lampreys.

The plots thicken

A DoC team arrived in mid-December to re-sample the "Lucas" carbon sequestration plot on the reserve. Years ago some form of computer or artificial intelligence randomly propagated a wide scatter of sample plots across the whole country. One not only chanced to land in the middle of Hinewai, it happened to alight in one of the most special places – under tall red beech forest at the top of Whakamate Falls. This time Nature added a final touch by arranging that a family of tiny tītītipounamu supervised the scientists as they worked.

Shedding shelter

Looking westwards from the Visitor Centre or East Track, walkers often ask about the two buildings they can see on Brocherie's Flat / Ōtepiki. Now there is only one. Ōtepiki became part of Hinewai in May 2021, and as



12 part of the deal the previous landholder, wonderful Warren B. (who has bought up more land in Hickory Valley for conservation) undertook to have the lower building removed. It was a large farm shed, converted by an earlier owner in to an unconsented dwelling. Deconstructed it has been trucked off to a happy farmer further west. For now, the upper building remains, much less conspicuous beneath three large macrocarpa trees.

15 December 2023



Playing god

Replenishing pamphlets at Purple Peak Saddle one autumn day, Hugh found a queen *Vespula vulgaris*

Pīpipi appears twice each year. There is no sub and no obligation to donate, but donations of any size are hugely helpful and greatly appreciated. We will post a receipt but need your postal address if we don't already have it.

DIRECT CREDIT
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02 0832 0044225 00

POST Hinewai Reserve
632 Long Bay Road
R.D.3 Akaroa 7583

HUGH'S PHONE
(best evenings between
about 7.30 and 9.30
03 304 8501

Wasp settling down in one corner of the box for winter, while a female Akaroa tree wētā *Hemideina ricta* cowered in an opposite corner. In a blatant display of speciesism Hugh crushed the alien queen and made sure the native wētā was comfortable and contented.

