

Pīpipi

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Maurice White Native Forest Trust
Newsletter from Hinewai Reserve, Banks Peninsula
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R.D.3 Akaroa 7583

60

November 2024

Green and gold

The contrast is striking! Much of the ground bared by landslides during the Disastrous Deluge of December 2021 was quickly colonised by gorse. This alien shrub, hated with good reason by farmers, tolerated for equally sound reasons by greenies, is supremely set up to be among the first pioneers on denuded terrain, large-



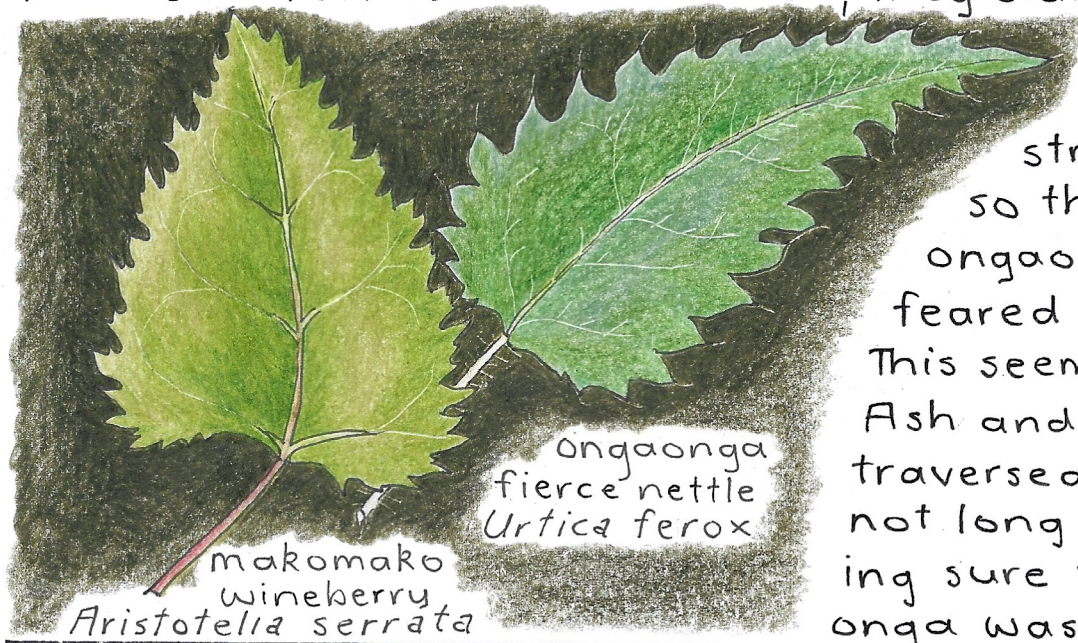
The "Moa Claw" slip, 14 October 2024
See also page 3.

ly because it has a seedbank waiting in the soil for just such opportunities. In October, the prolonged flowering of gorse reaches a crescendo, making the gorse-clad slips stand out in golden glory against the rich green on either side, where native trees have long since replaced the exotic scrub.

The gold won't glitter for long though. For one thing, during the few months of the year when gorse takes a well-earned rest from flowering, the slips are green too, scarcely distinct from the surrounding bushy hillsides. But already on the slips, barely three years since the flood fiasco, restless natives are muscling in.

2 Poroporo, māhoe, makomako, kōtukutuku, patē and ngaio, for example, are here and there overtopping the gorse. These strapping saplings have grown 3 metres tall from seeds that germinated less than three years ago! Some slips display almost no gorse at all but instead are thick with makomako (wineberry) 2 or 3 metres tall. [Wineberry also hedges its bets with a seedbank - Ed.].

Way back in May some walkers ascending Kere-rū Track turned back because, they claimed, a stretch



along the devastated stream bank was so thick with ongaonga they feared being stung. This seemed strange; Ash and Max had traversed the track not long before, making sure that no ongaonga was too near

passing arms or legs. Honorary Track Inspector Annabel went to have a look. She reported back. It was a clear case of mistaken identity, she said. The offending foliage was far from fierce. It was makomako, looking a little like ongaonga, but benign.

Crossing over

Winter was a good time to continue forming our new track to Ōtānerito Beach. The route branches off lower Valley Track at the Fantail Falls intersection, crosses the flood-ravaged gully of Piwakawaka Stream, rambles through regenerating forest not far above the main valley floor until it reaches the margin of the macrocarpa plantation, then follows an old farm track through these exotic conifers before dropping to the mouth of Narbey Stream and the wave-washed sand. We cut, cleared, benched, banged in steps, built a loo near the sea, and erected signs, some

reminding walkers that the adjacent land is a private working farm, not to be trespassed.

Max and Ash, ostensibly our summer workers, returned on winter days when called upon, to help with the new track. It was they who dug the deep hole for the long-drop loo, before Paul Newport topped it with his handsome wharepaku. And both were there on the memorable day in mid-July when no fewer than 15 people pooled their powers to heave the heavy bridge beams on to their prepared foundations.

Professor of Geography at Canterbury University, Simon, was there, with his Herculean son Joel. Richie, Fran and Tom, the three builders working on Ōtānerito Beach House, brought both strength and know-how to the mission. Success was due not only to the 15 burly bodies, but also to Paul Newport's meticulous preparation and organisation. The deed done, it is now easier to understand how the Incas built their huge stone walls and the Egyptians their pyramids.

Paul spent much of the following few weeks on the bridge project, adding hand-rails as the finishing

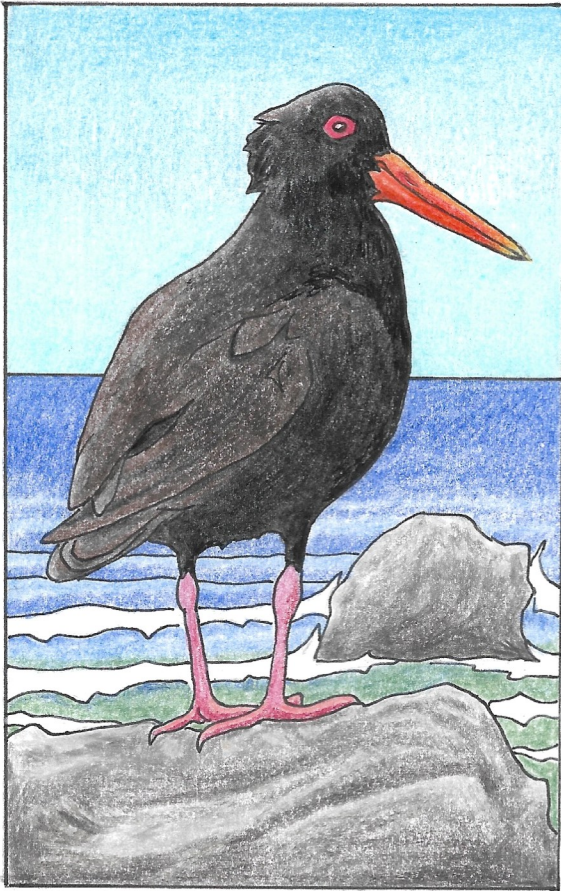


The "Moa Claw" slip, 17 Dec. 2021, two days after the Deluge. See also page 1.



Engineer Kate Zwartz and Bridge Builder Paul Newport on the completed bridge across Narbey Stream. 22 Aug.

4 touch by mid-August. A few days later our very civil engineer Kate Zwartz came down from Nelson to see first-hand how her beautifully conceived plans had translated in to the real world. Delighted, she offered a few small suggestions



which Paul promptly enacted.

Just before our Trust AGM in late October, all seven Trustees walked across the new bridge and along the new track to the beach. The resident black oystercatchers (tōrea pango) welcomed them with piping calls. We are calling the new route Tōrea Track after these handsome shorebirds.

Passing by

Another project filled many winter days, keeping us off the streets and out of mischief. South of Hinewai where the Banks Peninsula Track descends towards Pōhatu/Flea Bay, the way has long followed Flea Bay Road for a bit over one kilometre. Years ago Mark and Sonia Armstrong had replaced another kilometre of rural road with a beautiful walking track into Stony Bay, by-passing the road altogether. Hugh dreamed of doing the same sort of thing above Flea Bay but was deterred by land ownership issues and by the logistical challenge of getting to such a distant workplace. This winter we took the plunge. The Generous Joyces of Tai Tapu offered not only physical labour but viable transport in their electric car. We explored and flagged a route through old-man gorse, kānuka, and regenerating native hardwoods close to the road where the Council's Misty Peaks Reserve borders Council road reserve. We cut, cleared, benched, stepped and signed about 300 metres, barely a third of the length of road involved, but the steepest,

sternest stretch. "It's a start" said Hugh.
"One step at a time."

5

Tracking on

More tracks, more maintenance. Never mind, the work was already never-ending. Nature is marvellously capable of bush regeneration, but She scorns our track network. Quickly and without fuss She grows back Her riotous vegetation over our labouriously won clearways. More dramatically She criss-crosses our hard-won highways with windfalls. We seem to have suffered more wind damage than usual over the last few years; the accumulated wreckage in the beech forest is currently looking pretty drastic [more drastic than pretty - Ed.].

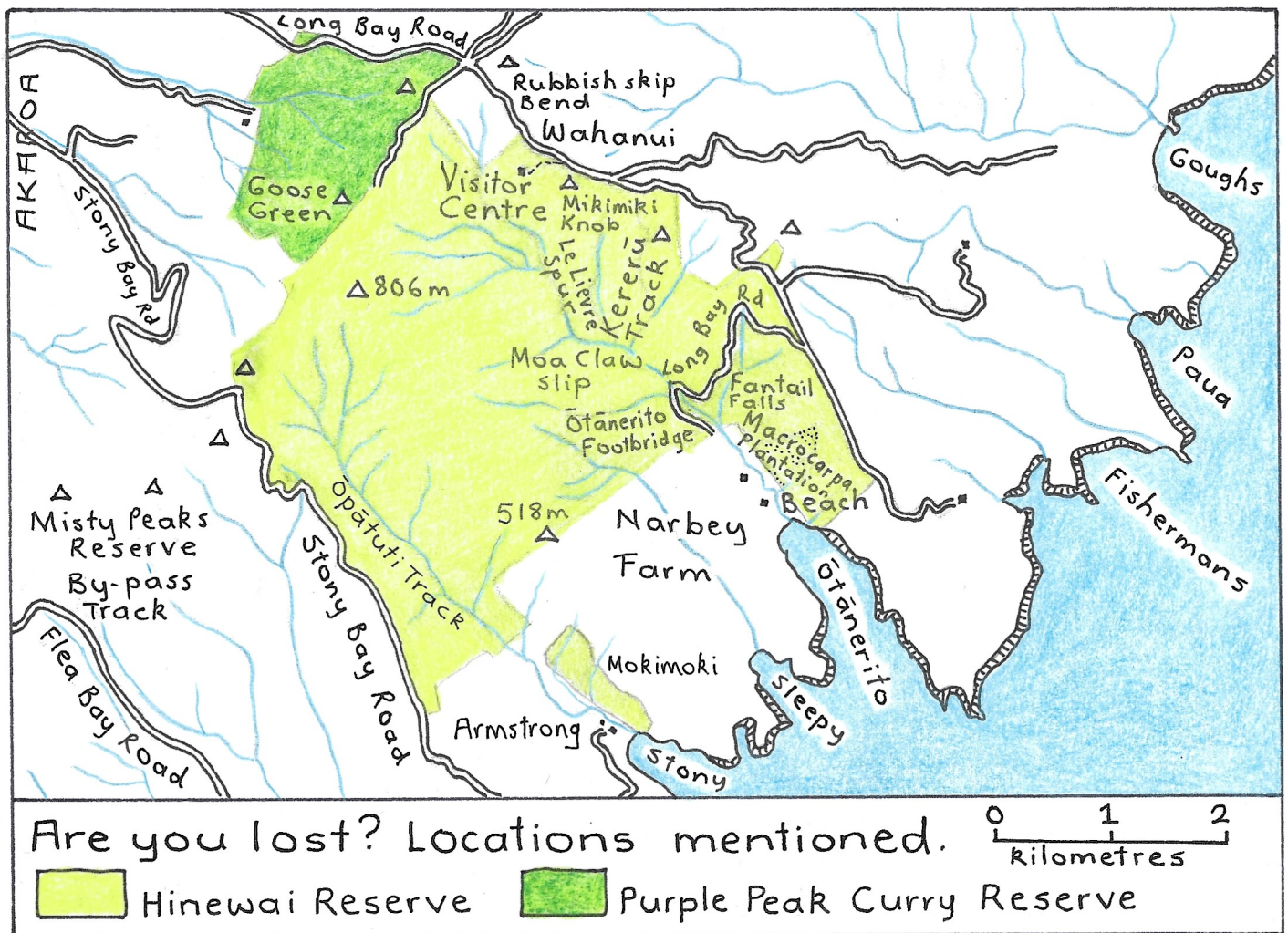
In remaining open areas (steadily diminishing) where grass still forms the track surface, Paul has been brushcutting a lot lately to subdue vigorous spring growth, including long stretches of Ōpātuti Track through the Stony Bay Valley. He also revamped stiles along Jules Knob Track, including the much-used crossing from Wahanui c̄r̄park to Mikimiki Knob.

Signs of the times

"How long will it take?" is a common query. How long is a piece of string? We've been adding suggested times to some signs, but it's not straightforward. Tōrea Track is an example. We measured each section at what we imagined was an average sort of walking pace, settling on 40 minutes from the Ōtānerito c̄r̄park to the sea (maybe a little longer, we thought, for older dodderier walkers like the Manager or Joe Biden). In the interests of scientific accuracy we asked a random party of four at the beach to note the time they took back to the bridge. They would leave a note at the Visitor Centre, they said. "22 minutes" their message read. "I bet they never saw much" was Trustee Nick's comment.

"Will I get lost?" asked anxious Carmen from Spain, clutching her map. Hugh assured her that,

6 armed with the map, it was well-nigh impossible to get lost on Hinewai because every junction is clearly signposted. "But what happens if I do get lost?" Carmen persisted. "Look," replied Hugh, "if you do find yourself lost just come and knock on my door and let me know and I'll come looking for you pronto." "Ha ha. Muy gracioso" laughed Carmen, still nervous. In the end Carmen suggested she would leave a conspicuous stone on top of the L00 signpost by the Visitor Centre. If it was still there late in the day Hugh would set off *prontissimo*, [leaving no stone unturned - Ed.] to find her. Much later Hugh found that the stone, and her vehicle at Wahanui carpark, had both vanished. Carmen was never seen again.



Missing the point

Photopoints set up in 1988 have captured an amazing overview of vegetational change on Hinewai. Photos are taken each October when any remaining gorse stands out because it is in full bright flower. The

captioned and dated images can be seen on request. A photopoint picture paints a thousand log-book words.

Photopoints 2 and 3 from East Track and Le Lievre Spur are now so lavishly blocked by burgeoning bush, the seven pictures from there are no longer worth a thousand words, more like a hundred at the most. They are being superseded by five views from the top of Miki-miki Knob, the 510 metre apex of Le Lievre Spur. The ground falls away on all sides from this rocky apogee so the views should stay unimpeded for many years yet.



From Photopoint 3c. October 1988



October 2000



October 2023

Four legs

Despite nifty fencing work and some smart mustering, we still aren't sheepless on "Mundyland" nor in a few

8 places above Stony Bay. And a few wandering deer continue to give us nightmares. One May morning we were shocked to see a big mountain fivefinger badly debarked overnight, right beside the main path to the Visitor Centre. Fortunately a local team of trained assassins have hatched a plan to attempt the elimination of feral deer in our corner of Banks Peninsula. Blake (you might remember he shot a huge stag during the autumn roar) has since shot a hind above Goose Green, pregnant with a male fawn.

Fallen angels

Welcome swallows tried nesting three times lately at the SW end of Hugh's house, but failed each time, their mud and grass creations falling from the excessively smooth oiled-timber wall on to the decking below, smashing eggs and chicks. Shocked, Hugh, Ash and Max decided they must intervene. They got out the ladder and nailed a small wooden ledge to the favoured site up under the eaves. This spring they launched a fourth attempt [the swallows that is - Ed.]. As Pīpipi goes to print their nest seems to be sitting securely on the ledge.

Thomas tomtit I (with the deformed left foot) has not yet fallen by the wayside after all. He has made several further appearances, always when Thomas II is briefly out of sight. The abundance of tomtits generally across Hinewai is marvellous.

One hoiho/yellow-eyed penguin is still resident in Ōtānerito Bay. He might be one of only three left on the whole of Banks Peninsula, the northernmost known breeding range of this extraordinary bird.

The annual Garden Bird Survey suggested a 3-fold increase in tūi numbers across Canterbury. One late September day Max watched at least five



in the enchanted fuchsia forest, upper Ōpātuti 9
Track, along with numerous bellbirds, all delirious
with delight among the honeyed flowers, singing
their little heads off. Pīpīwharau / shining
cuckoos took a wee while to warm up after their
long journey from the tropics, but were calling all
over the place by the second half of October.
Paul counted four all at once in the walnut tree
behind Ōtānerito Homestead.

Only human

The Visitor Centre, closed for
accommodation during winter but
always open for day visitors, re-
ceived much-needed maintenance
from all-round local handyman
David B. While he was at it he also sawed down some
projecting rocks in Wahanui c̄park, a noisy but
beneficial measure for both motorised visitors and
lawn mowers. David's mission was followed by Mo-
hini's marvellous spring-cleaning team, so that when
overnight stays started up again in October the
Centre was particularly spic and span.



Also in October, Hugh's right hand was operated
on for its worsening carpal tunnel syndrome. Mod-
ern surgery is barely distinguishable from magic, he
decided, as the local anaesthetic wore off. Thinking
his recuperating right hand would be unable to write
for weeks, he practised with his wrong hand. It looked like
this. Fortunately, on the fourth day after the op he
tried out his right hand again and found it could
cope — just as well, or this newsletter would have
looked a bit disjointed. As a botanist, Hugh was
impressed that the surgeon seemed to know the dif-
ference between a carpal tunnel and a carpel tunnel.

When a class of agro-forestry students from
Lincoln University visited in late September they had
to endure a prolonged rant from Hugh while he
railed against permanent forests of exotic pine
for carbon sequestration.

10 A greenhouse gas admission

Some might wonder at this – but there never was a serious doubt about what we would do with the newly acquired macrocarpa plantation. Before we could begin its elimination we had to surrender a large number of carbon credits because it was registered as permanent forest in the government's Emissions Trading Scheme. This does not mean we pay back a lot of money, just that we forego future income from this source. As all Trust income is solely to support natural regeneration of native forest on the now-enlarged reserve, this decision was a no-brainer. Deleting these exotic trees is going to be a multi-year mission, but is underway. On the ground beneath are already trillions of native seedlings poised to take over.

A few botanical snippets

"Mundyland" holds some special botanical features besides the unusual abundance of trembling brake fern mentioned in the last newsletter.



mistletoe
Ileostylus micranthus

There are more tūrepo/small-leaved milk trees, more titoki trees, and more pirinoa/small-flowered mistletoe than on all the rest of Hinewai! A tall adult nīkau palm isn't visible from Tōrea Track, but a young adult mataī is. Nature is responsible for all significant planting on Hinewai, but sometimes we get a bit carried away and pop in a few specimen trees around our un-

natural buildings. Hugh had a young nīkau palm in his living room, rescued as a seedling from a Mokimoki Track in 2020, but it was getting too big for its boots [for its pot - Ed.]. So we planted it behind the new Beach Loo at the bay end of Tōrea

Track, well within its natural range. Thrust rudely back in to the outside world, the infant nīkau suffered a bit from sun scorch, but is settling in and looking good.

Vernacular names for plants can be pitfalls [so can botanical names - Ed.]. When a rongoā (natural medicine) group visited in September, one of the students asked if "old man's beard" grew on Hinewai. Thinking she meant the invasive alien *Clematis vitalba*, Hugh replied that indeed it does grow here but we are working to eliminate it. The student looked shocked. "E aue!" she cried, "he aha ai?" [= why? - Ed.]. All was made clear when she brought in to the ensuing discussion the Māori word *angiangi*. Hugh then realised she meant *Usnea*, a soft white native lichen closely resembling Hugh's face, used in rongoā as a dressing and absorbent padding. *Angiangi* not only grows on Hinewai, it is treasured and admired here.

Tree tutu (*Coriaria arborea*) is becoming a common coloniser now on the 2021 slips. It too is a treasured native, as well as being the most poisonous of all plants on the reserve should any mammal, including *Homo sapiens*, be silly enough to sample it.

More about visitors

Keith Woodley paid us a winter visit. Keith is the resident Raitiaki of the Pūkoro Shoresbird Centre on the Firth of Thames. Hugh and Trustee Tina walked and talked with him to the beach, where he was greeted enthusiastically by the resident tōrea pango.



12 DoC marine rangers from all over Aotearoa came to Hinewai in August. While we were all walking to Beech Terrace, NW gales were thrashing beech and kākānuka canopies overhead. "Worse things happen at sea" observed the rangers."

Good heavens!

You might remember we surmised in autumn that winter stream flows might delay bridge construction. They didn't. Even after the first white frosts, Pūtakitaki Pond sat at its lowest level ever, around 140cms below full, and stream flows dwindled. Eventually we did get adequate winter rains. But Pūtakitaki Pond didn't top its tiny weir until the start of July, and stream flows never hindered bridge-building.

Ash and Max reported some wildlife seen during Hugh's absence in the c̄r-infested Swamp. They mentioned a big crowd of redpolls on Long Bay Road, a white-headed yellowhammer near Wahanui Gate, and a jaguar lurking down the bank at Rubbish Skip Bend. This was a first. But it turned out to be of the four-wheeled persuasion rather than a four-legged

long-tailed one. Later, all was explained. A neighbour was putting some rubbish in the skip when he glanced round to see his c̄r rolling away backwards. He leapt to the rescue, but alas, too late! The vehicle ran over his foot and dived down the bank.

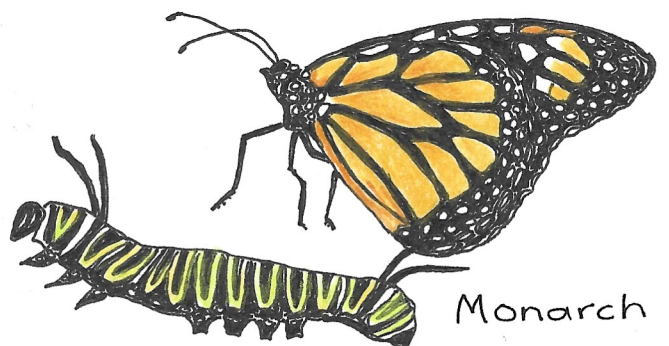
PĪPIPI 60

Pīpipi appears twice each year, usually around May and November. 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
BNZ
02 0832 0044225 00

POST Hinewai Reserve
632 Long Bay Road
R.D. 3 Akaroa 7583
Aotearoa / New Zealand

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



Monarch