

Ki Uta Ki Tai

From the Mountains to the Sea Conservation Volunteer Week, 12-15th May 2017



Introduction

Ki Uta Ki Tai: From the Mountains to the Sea volunteer week is a 4-day volunteer programme working alongside four coastal community groups (Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki Rūnaka, River Estuary Care, East Otago Taiāpure and Hawksbury Lagoon) in the Karitāne – Waikouaiti area that focuses on habitat restoration, conservation and fisheries management. The name of the volunteer week, ki uta ki tai, means from mountains to sea; a reference to protecting our resources from the mountains all the way out to sea. Ki Uta Ki Tai brings together keen and energetic volunteers with a shared vision of sustaining our natural environment.

This year we were fortunate to have 10 volunteers join Ki Uta Ki Tai, all of whom are students at the University of Otago studying Physical Education, Ecology and Geography. Volunteers were hosted at Puketeraki Marae which ran 12-15 May.



Volunteers potting up in the shade house at Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka

Day 1: Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka

Our first day started at the Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka office where the volunteers were welcomed by Brendan Flack and the community groups on behalf of Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki who hosted the group. Leading the Rūnaka day was George Meikle who started us off with potting up for the shade house. Over 900 harakeke seedlings were potted up by the volunteers, and all before lunchtime. After a delicious lunch courtesy of Aroha Ellison and the Rūnaka, the volunteers joined Brendan and George on Huirawa where we planted a small number of native trees. The work here will support restoration efforts to return Huriawa to a fraction of what it used to be; focusing on bringing native birds, wildlife and bush back into



Volunteers with George Meikle on Huriawa Peninsula

the area. Our first day concluded with a whakatau (welcome) at Puketeraki marae, where the volunteers were formally welcomed and acknowledged for the time they will spend supporting these community groups.



Reaching 50+ volunteers at Orbell's crossing for a day planting with River Estuary Care.

Day 2: River Estuary Care

On Saturday, we were joined by Joel Vanderburg and River Estuary Care planting on the Waikouaiti river near Orbell's crossing. We were thrilled to have an incredible turnout of locals who arrived to work with us also, reaching over 50 volunteers throughout the day! This made a huge impact which saw us plant a massive 1500 native trees. We were also very fortunate to have the kind farmer drive a digger through our working site the day before, to help us with our planting. His small gesture made a huge impact for how many plants we were able to get into the ground – this preparation made a big difference for us.

The restoration work here will support the biodiversity of the river and restore balance to Papatūānuku. We were blessed to be hosted for lunch at the Vanderburg's home in Karitāne, a beautiful place surrounded by good food, great company and stunning views of the ocean. It was another marvellous day.

Day 3: Hawksbury Lagoon

On the third day of Ki Uta Ki Tai, we travelled to Waikouaiti to work with Shirley McKewen and her team at Hawksbury Lagoon. We planted a number of native trees on the Inverary St Reserve side of the lagoon. This was a fun day for the volunteers who were lost in the tall bush as they hunted for gaps to plant their trees. We had a beautiful lunch beside the lagoon with many Hawksbury locals cooking up a storm for us.

As always, Emma's chocolate and gluten friendly brownie was a hit!

After lunch we joined Greg on a tour of the lagoon learning about the Māori history of the area and the importance of Hawksbury (traditionally known as Matainaka) for traditional food gathering to local hapū (sub-tribes). The planting at Hawksbury will improve the water quality of the lagoon and begin to restore the area.



Planting at Hawksbury Lagoon.



Learning about water quality testing with Dr Pete Russell.

Day 4: East Otago Taiāpure

On our final day of Ki Uta Ki Tai we headed back to the rūnaka where we were joined by Brendan flack on behalf of the East Otago Taiāpure. Today was an awesome way to finish off what has been an incredible week. We returned to Huriawa with paint in hand, and worked on repainting the pou Ki Uta Ki Tai. The pou has two faces, one representing Tangaroa and was painted blue, and Tāne representing the land, mountains and forest which was painted green. The pou symbolises the work that is undertaken during the volunteer week, protecting and safeguarding our resources from the land to the sea.

After the painting was finished, we headed down to the water where we took Hauteruruku out for a sail and the 6-man waka ama. As part of our thanks and appreciation to the volunteers, the community groups offer fun activities for the volunteers. Sailing, paddling, fishing and harakeke weaving were offered this year and was a first-time experience for many of our volunteers, most of whom are international students.



Volunteers at Huriawa Pā after a morning of planting and painting.



Volunteer Lizzy van Heugten, planting at Hawksbury Lagoon.

“Ki Uta Ki Tai taught me, most of all, about oneness. Connecting people to the earth mother, to each other, to the community and even between communities. It taught me about the importance of knowing where you are from and honouring that. It taught me about the fullness and grace of the Māori culture and more than ever I got to understand the true meaning of Whanau. It is more than a 'project' or a 'camp', or even a 'learning experience'. It's a fully immersive participation in the modern Māori culture, and it makes you think more deeply about your own actions and how they affect other beings. A million thanks to all involved for this experience. I walked away a bigger person” (Lizzy van Heugten).



Volunteers aboard Hauteruruku waka.



Waka ama paddling – they managed to bring back 3 fish too!

Special thanks...

We would like to thank our volunteers for their dedication and commitment to the work, to the mana whenua, Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki for hosting us at Puketeraki Marae and our friends, family and local Karitane - Waikouaiti members who also supported the volunteer week. To our cooks, thank you for keeping us refreshed and well fed, your hospitality was greatly appreciated. Finally special thanks to Emma Farry for her generous donation of plants as well as Mark Brown from Blueskin Nurseries for your continued support. Ngā mihi ki a kōrua.

For more information on how to get involved in Ki Uta Ki Tai volunteer week contact:
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