

River Estuary Watch

River-Estuary Care: Waikouaiti – Karitane

DECEMBER 2012

River - Estuary Care



R E C W K



Waikouaiti - Karitane

New Approach: Volunteer Weeks 2012

As our activities move from strength to strength we have found that many of our challenges are challenges of success. We have been good at what we do and lots of people are interested in knowing how community conservation works and are offering to help. Other environmental projects in our community are getting the same attention.

This year we all decided to pilot a collaborative project called “Ki uta ki tai: From the Mountains to the Sea”. This took the form of 2 separate Volunteer Weeks, one in June and one in September. They were a roaring success and we found that by concentrating much of our work, recruiting volunteers to help and collaborating with other environmental efforts in our community we made huge progress in our individual projects. The 4 groups were Hawksbury Lagoon Society, East Otago Taiapure, Kati Huirapa Runaka and River-Estuary Care: Waikouaiti-Karitane.



Each volunteer week followed a format, with approximately 10 registered volunteers housed at the hostel on the old school/runaka compound. Each day of the week was dedicated to a project organised by a host local group. The volunteers set off that day with community members for fieldwork (habitat restoration,

clearing, track building, beach clean-up, etc). The community group also provided a hearty meal for the volunteers back at their hostel that evening and a chance to talk about how their work came about, lessons learned from community conservation projects, etc. During the week they also had no cost activities offered by folks in the community in appreciation for their hard work, eg kayaking on the river, field trips, traditional weaving workshops, etc. One challenge we set for ourselves was to run the programme with no budget, based on the generosity of individuals and the host groups. This worked very well and allowed us to be realistic and creative in our activities.



We all got a real buzz from working together and accomplished a huge amount in those weeks. Hawksbury Lagoon Society got established habitat restoration areas cleared and almost 200 metres of track made. Kati Huirapa Runaka got a stretch of native plants in above the new extended parking area at the marae, parts of Huriawa Peninsula plantings released and massive flax plants divided for replanting. East Otago Taiapure got one whole coastal area cleared of rubbish. River-Estuary Care:Waikouaiti-Karitane planted 800 riparian natives on the Stephanie and Nick Scott farm along a newly fenced tributary of the Waikouaiti River and did additional planting on a previous habitat restoration site on the Hurst Farm.



“Many hands make light work” was proved during those volunteer weeks. The volunteers said they enjoyed working along side people from our communities. They appreciated the hospitality and meeting other volunteers. It was such a success that we are likely to have a similar programme in 2013.

If you are interested in helping to organise programmes in the future or would like to be a volunteer yourself contact: Patti Vanderburg, vburl@es.co.nz

Local Relevance, Community Involvement, World Class Research

An evening presentation of postgraduate research from the University of Otago at Puketeraki Marae for the 3rd year running highlighted student work in our local community.



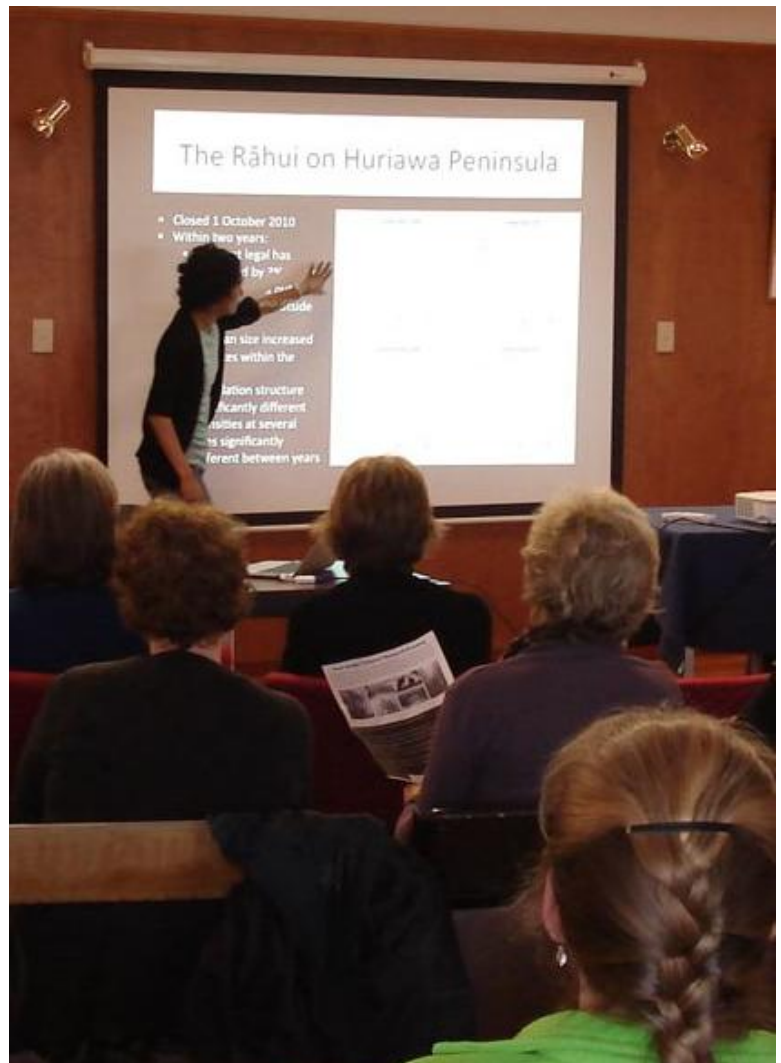
More than 75 people attended, learned about how the East Otago Taiapure and local fisheries management operates, and were informed about student research activities and results. Dr. Chris Hepburn of the Marine Science Department and Te Taiaki Mahinga Kai, who also serves as a member of the East Otago Taiapure Management Committee, presented an overview of our local fisheries management and challenges. Some of these challenges, specifically those of invasive species, sediment and overfishing helped guide the research undertaken by students.

Tasman Gilles, (Marine Science & Zoology) is looking into whether it is possible to restore paua stocks using traditional Maori poha / bull kelp bags as microenvironments. Matt Desmond (Marine Science) is studying the effects of land management along river catchments (including the Waikouaiti River) on coastal reef production. Gaya Gnanalingam (Marine Science) found that the local rahui on taking paua off the Huriawa Peninsula over the last 2 years has had a positive effect on paua growth and her work helped to inform an application for a further 2 year rahui. Pamela Fernandez (Botany) looked at the effects of ocean acidification on nutrients and growth of macrocystis/bladder kelp, a relevant research subject for New Zealand and her coastal South American home. Peri Sabrinski (Marine Science) is finding out more about paua habitat and tolerance to sediment. Kendall Stevenson (Physical Education) is starting her research on Maori leadership in culturally based outdoor education programmes. Gale

Summerville (Zoology) looked at maximising sustainable yields for paua by determining ideal harvest size. Peter Russell (Marine Science) presented his findings on tidal variations and upwelling at Kaimata Cape Saunders supporting rich marine life biodiversity due to the ideal combination of currents and conditions.

The community support and welcome given these postgraduate students over the years has been acknowledged and appreciated by the University of Otago staff. Research evening feels like a big celebration of their accomplishments and better informs us as a community about our local environment and the status and potential of our fisheries.

Patti Vanderburg
Information, Education, Advocacy Project Leader



Shade House Plant Propagation

Recent "Volunteer Weeks" provided an opportunity to invigorate the use of a plant propagation shade house. Originally located at the Karitane School, the shade house was initially intended for use by the school and River-Estuary Care in the propagation and care of native plants for local habitat restoration. Occasional disruptions such as school holidays meant that plants were not always able to be consistently maintained. Kati Huirapa Runaka was gracious in accepting the suggestion that the shade house be moved onto its premises which provided a more central location and where a more constant source of plant care might be assured. Volunteer Weeks gave us an opportunity to activate the shade house from which we

were able to obtain several hundred native plants for local habitat restoration. Volunteers were also able to seed and re-pot several hundred more native plants which are now growing in the shade house.



The shade house is not currently intended to supply all the plants for local habitat restoration, but may be able to provide a constant supplement to other sources of plants. Also if you have native seedlings and/or locally sourced native plant seeds to share (or even a chocolate cake) please contact me at: yburg@es.co.nz or (03) 465 8113.

Joel A. Vanderburg
Co-leader Revegetation Project

Memories of the River



I came to Karitane as a baby in the late 1940s and lived in Grimness Street with my parents and 2 older brothers.

The river became a huge part of our lives, we swam and sailed and went pauaing and floundering – all the things which young people do today but with none of the restrictions they have now. I remember us rushing to get out of the house before the wind got up and the tide turned and, during the long summers when there was no daylight saving, we went down in the morning and didn't go home until dark. My mother got up early and baked and packed the picnic lunch, which she brought down to us later –she was a great cook. We all used to swim in the

'King Hole' and, near where the new wharf is, there was a huge flag pole which they used to call 'the Maori Pa'. All the young people used to collect there and sunbathe together although, if you were a teenager and at that self conscious age, you would be swathed in towels. The flagpole was taken down not that long ago. I learnt to water ski on the river with friends and we would zigzag in and out around the fishing boats. It's rare to see water skiers now.

My brothers used to flounder on the river at night and I remember great excitement when they were on holiday from boarding school with friends here to stay and they would all pour out onto the river and we would see their lights – you don't see the floundering lights so much now.

My class at Karitane School did our 220 yds, 440 yds and then 880 yds swim in the river. We swam from the King hole to the old wharf backwards and forwards – don't ask me how many times but it seemed an awful lot. It was quite a feat – we weren't allowed to touch the bottom or we were disqualified, so the water must have been a good depth. The sand has all come up now so it wouldn't be possible to do it and OSH probably wouldn't allow it anyway.

My father bought a little yacht called the Manahe and we all loved sailing in it - we went out into the bay but not right out to sea. I learnt to row when I was 5 - I was on one oar and my brother on the other and we just went round in circles! There were gatherings on the river - nothing quite like the raft race they have now but people used to bring their little dinghies and yachts and there would be flotillas of boats. Lots of children came down in their dinghies with their fathers in dinghies too– it was more of a family event.

I do notice a change in the river. The bar has always changed – the fishermen were aware of it but the holidaymakers weren't and there were often cases of people running aground or hitting a rock because the sand was shifting. Now it is incredible how much sand has come up into the river. I don't know where the salinity stops but I remember it used to change about half way up to the Waikouaiti road bridge. I remember the difference with the fresh water when we had picnics at Bucklands Crossing and Orbells Bridge.

There were gaps in the sand hills and, during a storm, the sea would come through and surge into the river and I can remember people thinking that one day we may have waves coming up the river, but we never have. There was one huge sand hill and we used to run and jump and slide for about 20 seconds – it was



marvellous. That sand hill is tiny now because the sea grasses have grown up over it and the hill has sunk. I can also remember the water coming through the gap at Rona St during a big storm, making the peninsula into an island. The worst flood was in 1980 I think - It was horrendous and took out our boat shed and did a lot of damage, with loss of fishing boats and cockles and general riverside devastation. Once again the river's pathway changed and little channels emerged. Whitebaiting competition was always on after "a fresh".

I remember so well seeing the fishermen row their dinghies in from their moorings or tie up at the 'old'

wharf and then put the sacks of crayfish on their backs. I don't know where they took them then, but later the Kents developed a cool store and there were great big tanks to keep them fresh. They used to make their pots out of supplejack (we called it "simplejack") Bill Johnston had a little house down near the wharf where cars park now and it was amazing to watch him making pots –the supplejack had to be wet.

One of the oldest fishermen I remember, Sammy Heath, lived in a little house at the end of Grimness St and I remember that he brought home all the Blue Cod heads threaded on a bit of binder twine. He boiled them up for stock and soup and he always gave my mother some of the stock. There are a lot less fishing boats now but The Taipure is helping the fishing here I believe.

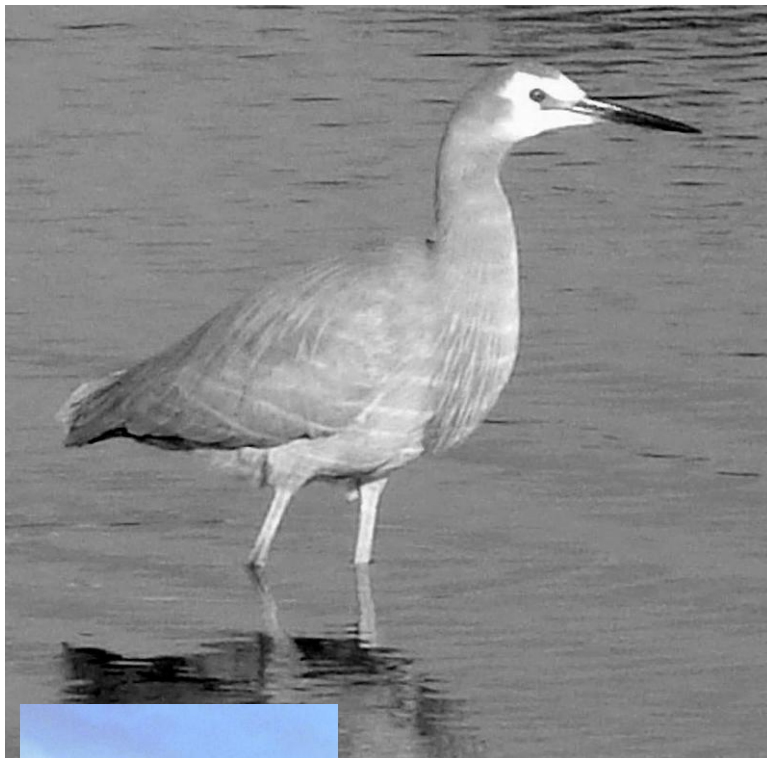
There were boatsheds and boats everywhere, mostly owned by holidaymakers past Dunnet St. They were all along from the new wharf to Rona St and right up the river. The boat sheds and the boats are long gone, but the memories remain.

Karitane is an amazing place and the river has been a huge part of those formative years. I would say that we were romanced by the river, particularly in our teenage years. On my 21st birthday we had a big party and we all swam in the river at midnight – I can remember that so well.

--Norma Chrissie Cooper

What's a White-faced Heron?

Nowadays birdwatchers are almost acceptable. No longer do you have to hide your binoculars under your jacket until you get well out into the open countryside for fear of being beaten up as a sissy or worse still, a



peeping Tom (voyeur for those not conversant with 1950s British slang). Rarely does anyone ask, "What sort of bird you lookin' at then, one with two legs?" The answer of course is all birds have two legs matey so why don't you leave me to look at this bristle-thighed curlew and piss off? Nowadays you can carry your binoculars openly along the beach with hardly anyone thinking much of it. You can even stand on the side of the road overlooking the estuary at Karitane peering through your telescope at godwits (137 on 26 November incidentally) and almost no one will jeer at you from a passing car. True, everyone will think you are photographing the birds rather than looking at their tertials, scapulars, banded tarsi and tibiae but on the whole life has become a lot easier for birdwatchers.

Except that there are times when you can be made to feel very pedantic. No more so than when tentatively suggesting that the correct

name for those little blue or grey herons that nest high in trees at Cherry Farm and Karitane is 'white-faced heron.' You have to get up pretty close to see that they do have a white face. Well the adults do. The young ones that are just about to, or have just left the nest in the last few weeks, are distinctly grey, blue-ish if you're feeling a little poetic and noticeably devoid of white around the face or anywhere else for that matter.



Please understand that birdwatchers are not trying to show off, demonstrate their superior knowledge or put you down in any way when they correct your nomenclature, it's just that they have a wider world view and it's not their fault. The trouble is that by the time ornithologists (pedantic birdwatchers for those not conversant with academic journals) got acquainted with the birds of Australasia, nearly all the simple, easy names for birds had been used up. Grey and blue had long been in use for the big, common grey heron of Europe and a smaller greyish, vaguely blue one from North America, so the poor Victorian naturalists had to resort to less obvious features of the bird's anatomy, song or behaviour or, God forbid, foreign names. Hence in New Zealand we have happily ended up with 'tui' but have to put up with 'orange-fronted parakeet' and 'white-fronted tern' amongst others. And the names sound even sillier when you realize that the orange

and white so loudly heralded in their names refers to a tiny patch just above their beak. It's like calling Rudolf the Red-fronted Reindeer. It is not as bad here as in South America, another latecomer to the naming game and one blessed with thousands of different species of bird. It will be some time before birdwatchers will feel it safe to pronounce that the proper name for that pequena mosqueta gris ("small grey flycatcher") in the mandioca tree is 'pearly-vented tody tyrant flycatcher.'

Many people receive their newsletter by email – contact Brad brad126@xtra.co.nz if this would be convenient for you also.

I started off this article with the intention of writing about white-faced herons, as several people, including Hilary the compiler of this newsletter, have mentioned that they have them nesting in large trees on their properties. The birds are particularly obvious at the moment (late November) because the large young are ready to, or have just recently left the nest and are very vocal in their demands for food; in a flapping, grunting, squealing, croaking reptilian way. White-faced herons are by far the commonest heron in New Zealand. They are present in almost every watery and marshy habitat, yet can be seen miles from water picking up worms and the like in freshly ploughed or even roundupped paddocks or stalking amongst dairy cattle and sheep. It is hard to believe that nesting was first recorded in New Zealand (just up the road at the Shag River near Palmerston) as late as 1930. Almost harder to believe, when you see them flapping off from a ditch in panic or plodding slowly up to their nest in a tall macrocarpa, is that they managed to fly across the Tasman in sufficient numbers to colonise the whole of New Zealand in the couple of decades after the 1940s, then push on to the Chathams in the 70s. White-faced herons are one of several species that have managed to fly across the Tasman from Australia post 1850s and have found the increasingly agricultural habitat to their liking. The equally awkwardly named spur-winged plover (1930s) and the aptly, if oddly named welcome swallow (1960s) are two that are now common around Waikouaiti. Their late arrival is another reason why we got stuck with silly names like white-faced heron, for there wasn't a suitable Maori name to fall back upon.

By Derek Onley

Waikouaiti River Minimum Flow



The Otago Regional Council is continuing work on a suggested minimum flow regime for the Waikouaiti River. A minimum flow provides for aquatic ecosystems, the natural character of the river, and economic, recreational and social values during times of low flow. A community workshop is planned in 2013 to discuss the suggested regime. The workshop is the third in a series on the setting of a minimum flow regime for the river.

For more information contact: Anja McAlevey, Policy Analyst, 0800 474 082, policy@orc.govt.nz



DONATIONS or to
become a Friend of the
River and Estuary Care:
Waikouaiti—Karitane

Should any friends or supporters wish to make a donation or to
become a Friend of the River and Estuary Care: Waikouaiti—
Karitane. Details available from Brad – 03 4658334,
brad126@xtra.co.nz or post donation to 1333 Coast Rd Karitane

River-Estuary Care Waikouaiti - Karitane

Active since 1999 – Incorporated in 2001

Coastal Otago Conservation Award for 2005

Objectives

- To restore balance to Papatuanuku (Mother Earth).
- To have a well informed community about our river and estuary.
- To have our community participating in sustainable resource practices.
- To have a healthy, productive river and estuary eco-system (fishing, biodiversity, general health).
- To promote an understanding of the interrelatedness of our river and estuary ecosystem with adjacent ecosystems.

Anyone interested in supporting the above objectives may join!

Would you like to help with a project this year?

- Newsletter – Hilary Yeoman ph 465 7687.
- Revegetation Project – contact Andy Barratt ph 021 890 048.
- Education, Information and Advocacy Project – contact Patti Vanderburg ph 465 8113.
- Birdwatching – contact current convener Brad, phone 465 8334.

Produced with assistance from the Otago Regional Council

