

Ki Uta Ki Tai: From the Mountains to the Sea Volunteer Week 26-29 September, 2014



Student volunteers are led on a tour around Hawksbury Lagoon learning some of the history.

Ki Uta Ki Tai: From the Mountains to the Sea volunteer week took place for the second time this year, running from 26-29 September with the four environmental groups in the Waikouaiti-Karitane area including Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka, River Estuary Care: Waikouaiti-Karitane, East Otago Taiāpure Management Committee and Hawksbury Lagoon.

The groups welcomed student volunteers from two University of Otago classes including: PHSE427/527 Working with Māori Communities, supervised by Dr. Anne Marie Jackson, lecturer at the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences and; MAOR310: Indigenous Development, supervised by Dr. Lyn Carter lecturer at Te Tumu, School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies. We were also fortunate to have members of the community and some past volunteers from previous years join us in the field.

On Friday the volunteers worked alongside Hawksbury Lagoon with local residents, planting native trees and shrubs at an old pine plantation site at the lagoon. The planting of native trees is an effort to restore the habitat and help improve the water quality of the lagoon. Volunteers were provided with a gorgeous lunch and delicious home baking supplied by the lovely ladies from the Hawksbury community.



Student volunteer Talia Ellison planting at Hawksbury Lagoon.

Talia describes planting as “incredibly rewarding and therapeutic and looking at the end result instilled a sense of pride and achievement”.





Student volunteers Bethany Struthers (left) and Stevie Fergusson (right) planting at Mt Watkins Farm.

Bethany says *"it was an awesome feeling to be part of the team who planted behind Hikaroroa, knowing that we were helping to build the mauri of the area"*

On Saturday volunteers teamed up with River Estuary Care to plant native trees along the north branch of the Waikouaiti River up the catchment on the Mt Watkins Farm, behind the beautiful Hikaroroa maunga (mountain). David and Sarah Smith (landowners) are advocates for sustainable farming and invited volunteers from the Ki Uta Ki Tai program through River Estuary Care to help them in their efforts. The Smiths have recently fenced off a large area of riparian margin to exclude stock from the river.

It was a massive turnout at the Smith farm with over 50 volunteers and the spirits were high! Children, adults, young and old turned up with their tools and gloves to offer their help. It was awesome to see the community come together to support these landowners who are clearly making a positive difference to supporting the mauri (life) back in the waterways.

The planting (over 1700 plants!) will improve the biodiversity of the area and enhance habitats for long-finned eels and other native fish in the river whilst improving the quality of the water. We even had a couple of keen volunteers jump in to cool off after a day's work. The water was refreshing and healthy!



Group photo of the workers – included student volunteers, River estuary care members, the Smith family (landowners), and members of the Karitane – Waikouaiti community.

On Sunday we had the pleasure of having Mark Brown from Blueskin Nurseries come to talk to us about seed raising and to share some of his expertise. We were fascinated to learn about vegetative propagation and just how easy it was to grow your own plants at home. Many of the volunteers went away enthused and inspired to start their own little nurseries. A big THANK-YOU to Mark for coming along to speak with us.

After lunch volunteers joined the East Otago Taiāpure to survey the marine life in the estuary. We learnt about the important role of the rāhui (temporary closure/restriction) on pāua and the work of the Taiāpure to regenerate the pāua population for future use.

Part of the Ki Uta Ki Tai volunteer week is about teaching the values of kaitiakitanga (resource management) and how we must be kaitiaki (guardians) of our environments for our benefit and for our children and grandchildren. The continuous work of the Taiāpure is to sustain the health of Tangaroa and all the resources that are bound to him. They are ensuring that these environments and the resources that flourish from them are not lost to erosion, sedimentation and over-exploitation.



Mark Brown from Blueskin Nurseries teaches volunteer Charles Walters about seed raising.

Charles explains “we need to treat them [the plants] like ourselves, nourish them and give them attention”.



Volunteers carrying out Marine Meter Square surveys for the East Otago Taiāpure Committee.



Image of pipi (shellfish) and kūtai (mussels) that the volunteers gathered for dinner with Brendan Flack from Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki.

Mahinga kai (traditional food gathering places and practices) lies at the heart of the ki uta ki tai volunteer week, teaching volunteers the importance of looking after the environment from the mountains down to the sea, so that these food resources continue to be available for whānau (families) and communities to access.



Dr Anne-Marie Jackson (far left) and her Physical Education students sit around the kōwhai tree that student Huia Pocklington (third from right) gifted to Puketeraki Marae in appreciation for hosting the volunteers.

On our final day of Ki Uta Ki Tai, the volunteers joined Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki for a morning waka ama paddle. This was a perfect time for us to reflect on the last 4 days of work and understand the importance of what we were a part of. Whanaungatanga (relationships) are what make this program work, with the four community groups coming together and supporting one another on this collective journey. Mahinga kai lies at the heart of volunteer week, encouraging others to be kaitiaki of their environments and expressing the values of looking after these places that nurture us through the food that they supply. Most importantly it is about understanding that food feeds not only the body but it feeds the hearts and minds of people also; feeding our wairua (spirit), hinengaro (mind) and whānau (family).



Volunteers join Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki locals Waiariki Parata-Taiapa and Brendan Flack on the water for some waka ama paddling and fishing. We were blessed by the appearance of a beautiful Southern Right whale while we were out on the water. Our hysterical screaming and pointing could be the reason why we didn't catch any fish on our lines that morning. Nonetheless it was a beautiful morning surrounded by good people and beautiful scenery.

- Nā Chanel Phillips (Coordinator).
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Volunteer Maddie Bowles shows off her gorgeous kete she weaved at the volunteer week thanks to the expert guidance from Suzi Flack.