

Pīpipi

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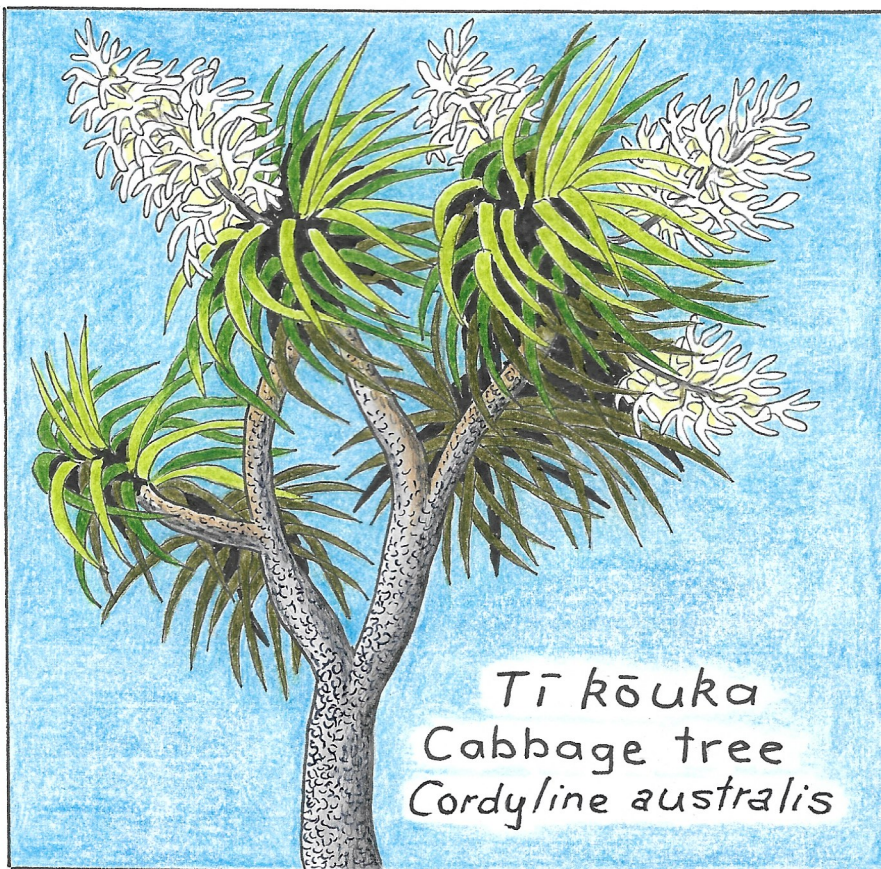
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Maurice White Native Forest Trust
Newsletter from Hinewai Reserve, Banks Peninsula
Aotearoa / New Zealand

R.D.3 Akaroa 7583

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November 2023



A surfeit of wind

We seem to have suffered an awful lot of wind lately [the atmospheric kind - Ed.]. Weather is chaotic and complex of course; it's hard to decide what's normal and what's extreme. We do know that a NW gust, measured at 204 kms/hr above Le Bons Bay, set a new

record for Banks Peninsula. Our own weather book notes at least 12 days in the past six months when NW and SW winds were "severe gale." Such winds thrash and break vegetation, thump and shake houses, cut power, close roads and block tracks.

Most Kiwis know that in Māori mythology Tāwhirimātea is the atua of wind and storm. Long ago, Ranginui the Sky Father, and Papatūānuku the Earth Mother, lay pressed together in close embrace. Their many sons were trapped in darkness between their parents' bodies,

2 Extremely unhappy about this, they plotted their escape. One by one they tried to push them apart — first Rongomātāne (atua of kūmara and agriculture), then Haumiatiketike (wild foods), Tangaroa (seas), Tūmatauenga (men and war) — they all failed. It was Tānemahuta (atua of forest) who lay on his back, pushed upwards with his powerful legs, and forced his parents asunder, ignoring their lamentations. Now Rangi lay far above, and Papa far below him. Revealed at last were the numerous men [women were not yet invented; that's another story - Ed.], conceived between the primal parents.

Tāwhiri was hugely angered by his brothers' cruel behaviour. He flew off to join Rangi. Forever after, he has been attacking Tāne's forests, Tangaroa's seas, Rongo's farms, and Tū's people. (Tū alone was unafraid and fought back.) Tāwhiri still taunts and torments us. One wonders now if he is so furious about our own abuse of Papa and Rangi and their beautiful taiao which sustains us, that he is stepping up his attacks to teach us some lessons.

Hinewai has suffered a bit from all this. After each severe gale we check for and then remove shattered limbs and, often enough, whole trees. Tū has not been much help, busy as he is with distant wars, but Tāne, without fuss, just gets on with mellowing each mess, covering them all with fresh growth.

No shortage of water

Twice in July Tāwhiri doused Hinewai with drenchings about as copious as the 2021 Disastrous Deluge. At Hinewai weather station the 2021 event tallied up 304 mm in 4 days, mostly concentrated in to 24 frightening hours. Early in July 2023 a further 4-day tally was 312 mm, rather more evenly spread. Ten days later another 4 days totalled 272 mm.

Both times we feared the worst, but then marvelled that there was almost no additional damage to land, streams, bridges or tracks. July 2023 ended up as the second wettest month (639.7 mm) we have recorded so far (37 years), beaten only by July 2022 (663.8 mm at Hinewai rain gauge and a prodigious 769.3 mm at Skyline!).

No dearth of trees

Tāwhiri's wind and rain toppled the handsome tōī near the Wahanui Info. Board that greets most visitors to Hinewai. Already on a lean, its saturated roots failed to support the weight of its wind-whipped, rain-soaked top-knot. Shortly afterwards, at Wahanui Gate, neighbouring farmer Marie was asking Hugh how he was faring through the wild weather. "Alas, Marie" Hugh answered, "I've lost one of my trees". Marie first looked astonished, then burst out laughing. "But Hugh, you have *trillions* of trees". As it happened, the toppled tōī was not lost. Over the following months it continued its handsome existence from a reclining but gradually straightening stance.



Tōī *Cordyline indivisa*

Was there a winter?

Late June is midwinter, but what little snow we could see on the mountains to our west was melting away. The deepest snowfall of the year for us was on the 10th of August when it lay 4 cm deep at the Visitor Centre and up to 10 cm

4 deep higher up. Away to the west the mountains at last looked snowy white and (nearer) conspicuous snow banks were persisting on Te Ahu Pātiki, the Peninsula's highest ground. Then, surprise! Late October, well in to Spring, brought another polar blast. It was briefer and milder than last October's frigid change, when soft spring growth was frizzled. This year the 1 cm "snowpack" was mostly melted by afternoon, and there was almost no discernible damage to plants.

Will there be an El Niño drought?

To-and-fro reversals in relative sea surface temperatures, west to east across the Pacific, drive alternating weather scenarios known as La Niña and El Niño. NIWA (our National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research) predicts that a 3-year La Niña is giving way at last to a developing El Niño. For us in the east of Aotearoa, that usually means a dry hot windy summer with heightened risk of wildfire. The worst droughts of our 37 years were El Niño driven, especially 1988, 1998 and 2016. No-one seems quite sure what an El Niño summer will be like when influenced by increasing global warmth. So far (this is early November) nicely timed dollops of moisture are keeping vegetation lush and lovely, and dampening drought fears.

There are moments that run counter to tales of drought, deluge and disaster. Here's one plucked from the logbook entry for 5th July: "It was a very



beautiful early morning with a waning, but still almost full, bright 'supermoon' westering high above Purple Peak Saddle in a cloudless sky, virtually still, with a patchy white frost, and bellbirds in full-throated song". The World is still a wondrously beautiful place.

What crisis?

In late July the United Nations issued another statement about the imminent peril to ecosystems and human life posed by human-induced global warming, calling for immediate urgent action. A neutral observer, say an alien from another planet, might expect this news item to be followed by reports on dramatic moves towards global human co-operation, setting the World on a united "war-footing" to tackle such a clear-cut existential threat. No. Straight after the U.N. report, items followed about the price of oil, business, economies, sport, brutal wars in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, etc., as if life just bumbles on as usual with no hint that we are gazing backwards from the brink of an abyss.

Resilience

In the middle of severe gales one wonders how any plant can remain unbroken. But Nature continues to reassure. All over Hinewai at present (early November), big budding and unfolding flowerheads are bursting forth from the palm-like tops of tī kōuka, the distinctively New Zealand "cabbage trees" (see front page). These inflorescences look perilously vulnerable to wild weather. But they don't fight Tāwhiri's fury, they simply move and flex with the flow. Among hundreds of these seemingly fragile floral eruptions near the Visitor Centre we have noticed only one small torn-off fragment, despite winds that felled trees, tore off roofs, and cut power to thousands of Canterbury homes.

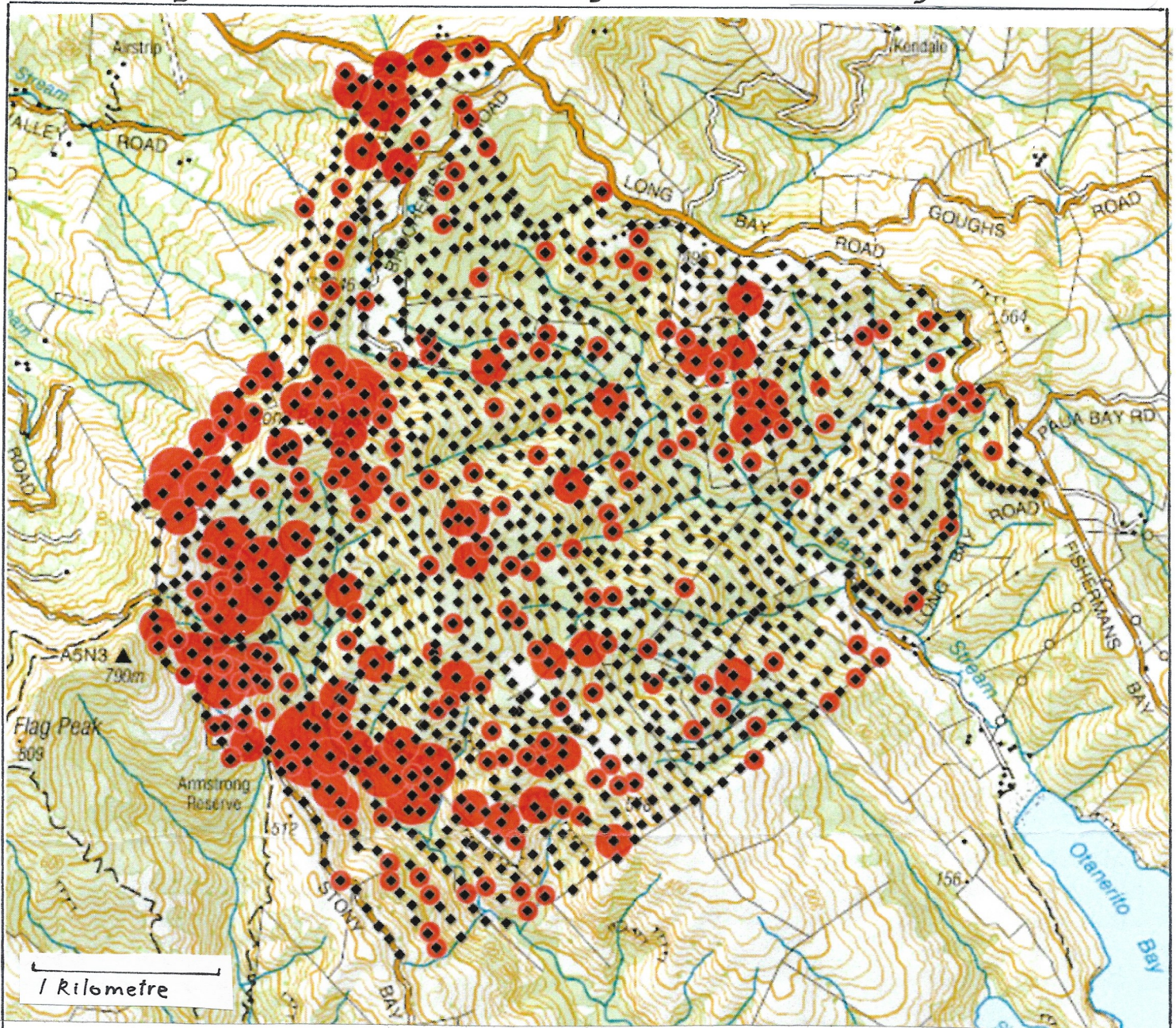
The Team

Max returned for his third summer at the start of September. Ash will be back in early December, taking a 4-month break [hardly a break is it? - Ed.] from his work with Te Ara

6 Kākāriki. Joining Hugh and Paul, they bring the paid workforce back up to four. Peter and Annabel continue to assist once a week at diverse workfaces.

Pest-free B.P.

Elimination of Australian brushtail possums from Banks Peninsula is the first goal of Pest-free B.P. In late July workers from High Country Contracting Ltd. started filling the laboriously laid-out



Close grid pattern of bait stations across most of Hinewai and the south-east edge of Purple Peak Curry Reserve. Red dots indicate possum kills mid-August, halfway through the initial blitz. Smallest red dots represent 1 possum carcass recorded at a bait station, with dots of increasing size for greater numbers recorded at a site.

bait stations with brodifacoum and feratox. 7
They stayed for several weeks in our revamped old house. The task seemed challenging to say the least, but they completed the first phase by mid-August, remaining cheerful to the end. Then all the tricky terrain had to be traversed again, monitoring and replenishing bait.

Possums killed by feratox (cyanide capsules) can be counted, as they drop on the spot. Numbers dying from brodifacoum are less knowable because the animals can wander some distance from the stations. Rats also eat some bait. But the amount of bait laid out and the amount remaining on the second round provides an estimate. We have hammered these Ozzies for many years but, even so, hundreds have been accounted for in the present pogrom. It's overly optimistic to claim zero survivors, but so far we *can* say we haven't spotted a possum within our boundaries since!

Happy hordes

Diverse groups of locals and travellers visit the reserve. Here are a few recent examples, plucked from the Log Book:

May: "Akaroa pre-schoolers visited. A possum had somehow got in to the Visitor Centre overnight, left a dreadful mess, and was discovered hiding in a cavity above the door. This, and a dead rat in the trap, failed to disconcert the little rural humans."

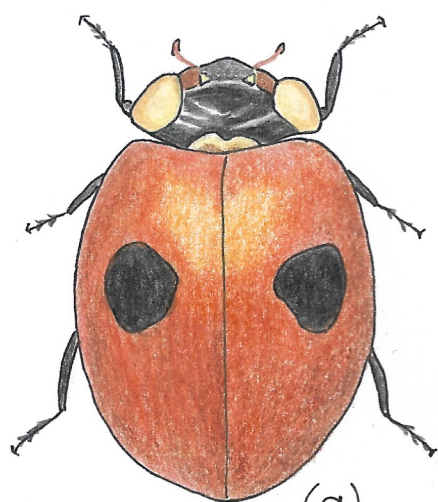
August: "Akaroa W.O.W. [Women Out Walking-Ed.], more than 20 of them, were eating lunch on top of Mikimiki Knob in rare windless sunshine. From a distance, their conversation had sounded like a murmuration of starlings" [Hugh's words, not mine-Ed.].

October: "A gaggle of 15-year-old Australian school kids dropped in. A few of them had been to New Zealand before. One boy said he had been here only once, long ago, but only to Hobart. His friend quickly corrected him, but we all agreed 'Tasmania was, like, halfway between Australia and Aotearoa, in

8 nature if not in distance."


A bevy of beetles

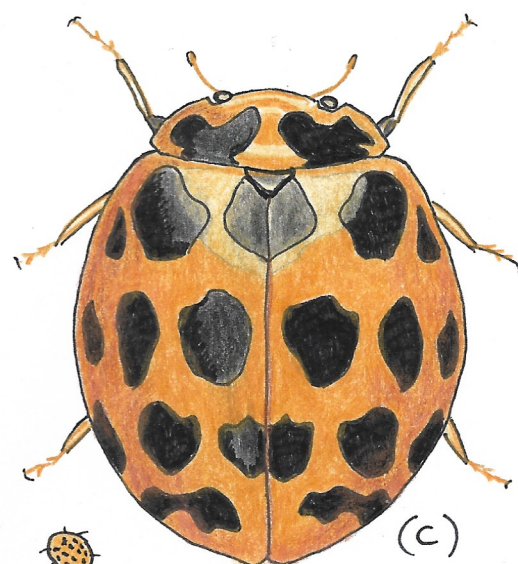
A British scientist was once asked by an Anglican cleric what his life-long study of Nature had taught him about the Creator. "She has an inordinate fondness for beetles" came the reply. Indeed there is no other Order of creatures with so many species – at least 350, 000 of them worldwide, 160 already recorded on Hinewai. Now we have added two more: the 2-spotted ladybird (pictured (a)), and the 18-spotted ladybird (c), both naturalised exotics. At least six other ladybirds had previously been spotted here, among them the native *Coccinella leonina* (b) which has 16 spots.



 actual size



 (after Miller)



 (c)

The Woolly Majority

Invading sheep have been a recurring nightmare ever since the Deluge Disaster of 2021, now nearly two years ago, browsing where they should never be, including on revegetating landslides.

Paul N. has been labouring for days on some remaining boundary issues, and fencer Guy is now well-advanced with replacing 800 m of obliterated and damaged fencing at Ōnīkautahi.

Buildings and bridges

Paul has built a ramp and decking on the new

ablutions facility at Ōtānerito and painted ⁹ the glaringly white exterior a muted green. We still have no footbridge across Narbey Stream to lower Valley Track and Fantail Falls. [Hugh is secretly hoping for a chance encounter with an especially civil engineer who can advise how we can span a gap twice as wide as before - Ed.].

Mokimoki Bush

Mark Armstrong of Stony Bay offered to convert his little old woodshed, just across the stream from the Banks Track Hut Village, into an info. booth, and to make this the main entrance in to Mokimoki Bush. Mokimoki was protected and covenanted by the Armstrongs 17 years ago but is now an extension of Hinewai to the sea. Another



entrance at the coast is a bit obscure, and at some distance from the huts. Now both Banks Track walkers and day walkers can more easily access the Mokimoki Bush rambles. The new info. booth is already adorned with maps. Small versions will be available for explorers to take with them.

Encounters with birds

Visitors familiar with brown creeper/ pīpīpi have been expressing astonishment and delight at how abundant they are on Hinewai.

One day in late May, on the shuttle bus to Christchurch, Hugh found himself sitting next to a couple

10 of bird enthusiasts from Denver, U.S.A. On a tentative request, the bus driver agreed to wait at Barrys Bay while Hugh led the visitors across to the tidal edge where six royal spoonbills were feeding.

Out at Parakākāriki Headland early in June, Paul watched a large number of white-fronted terns / tara – around 200 on the rock islets, he reckoned, plus another 60 or 70 in the air.

David Brailsford reported in July that a cock pheasant was visiting them in French Farm Valley and becoming increasingly tame. Then in mid-October Max met another male at the Heritage Park end of Curry Track. Ring-necked pheasants, native to Asia, are not rare nor are they very common on Banks Peninsula, but

Falcon flypasts are frequent now though. When Matthias (who biked all the way from Wanaka to visit us) Mikimiki Knob walked up sunrise, a September falcon sped past so close he felt the rush of air brush his leg. Little feathery circles along the tracks suggest their favourite food is currently song thrush, followed by blackbird and chaffinch.

Harrier hawks / kāhu are performing their marvellous spring sky dances, aerially courting, with acrobatic flings and flounces, and sharp wild calls.

Hugh and a visitor watched two male pūtakitaki in fierce wing-to-wing combat, flattening long grass near Hugh's house. A female waited demurely nearby. We don't know who won – both suitors floundered out of sight, still locked in battle with much flapping of wings. The female lost interest and flew away.



Personal column

Ed. found some intriguing entries in the Hine-wai Log Book. Listen to this: 23/2/23 "Hugh had

a nice close encounter with a lovely little female on Wahanui Track". And again: On West Track two males rushed past Hugh, one chasing the other." [The mind boggles - Ed.]. [I was referring to tomtits - Hugh.]

Nominative determinism

Surprisingly often, a person's name seems to determine their calling. For example, who is following up the possum elimination campaign around Hinewai's perimeter? Dave Hunter. And the organiser of the Banks Peninsula Walking Festival is called Wanda [pronounced Wander-Ed].

Purple Peak Curry Reserve

It's amazing how Purple Peak Curry Reserve came through the December 2021 Deluge with no significant damage. We did have to deal with one small slump on Curry Track, deciding that a 5m boardwalk was better than cutting in to kākūka on the uphill side. After the October gales Max cleared several windfalls blocking Curry Track near the Heritage Park, using only his trusty pruning saw.



Although it lasted only 2 million years, the Awkward Age was considered a hazardous time for most species.

At the same time, though, Paul had to take his chainsaw to five massive limbs across Beech Terrace Track.

Fine bright gold

One early September day when the Team were working their way down Ōpātuti Track in the Stony Bay Valley, they were treated to a wonderful outdoor concert by a local band, the Chiming Korimako, performing against an extensive

12 backdrop of kōwhai trees in richly golden flower. October gales, however, stripped parts of the landscape of their golden blossom, not from kōwhai but from gorse. Where gorse scrub faced the full frontal force of Tāwhiri's fury, quite extensive areas turned from gold to brown, especially noticeable on the exposed flanks of Parikura and Te Piki o Te Ake. Not for long, though, we expect. Gorse is a tough cookie!

On the rocks

Late September saw a 25m fishing boat, the 'Austro Carina', grounded on rocks at Shell Bay, just north of Hinewai. On board were 10,000 litres of diesel fuel, 400 litres of hydraulic oil, and a hold full of fish. The crew scarpered. Wild weather, and a seemingly total lack of New Zealand resources to deal with such calamities, meant that a week later the ship broke in half. The diesel apparently escaped; it was churned up in the rough seas and evaporated. The fate of the oil and the coastal ecology remains in limbo.

Valued but unknown

We love to send thanks to everyone who contributes to Hinewai in any way, but we have no postal address or other contact details for these heroes: J.E. Croucher, Z. J.N. Dorner, J.D. (Jack) Fifield, A.P. (Ally) Hall, P.L. Hegel, V.R.H. Jaenecke, Lil Johnstone, Mirjana Latinovici, Arch McArthur, (Memory Sarah, via Transferwise), van den Bosch, S. Wu (by Roxie W.).

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

NAME

ADDRESS

Direct credit BNZ

02 0832 0044 225 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

CC 11107 Pīpipi 58