

Pīpipi

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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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May 2025

End of the golden weather

The World for sure is living through troubled times, but Hinewai had a good summer. It didn't look too good to begin with. [Never end a sentence with with -Ed.]. [Unless you have nothing else to end it with -Hugh]. It didn't look too good to begin with and it didn't end too good either [Sigh - Ed.].

In the first half of December we feared we were heading inexorably in to drought, and indeed that was the fate for much of the motu. As we walked to work up the Stones Track in mid-December we could see that māhoe, kawakawa



Kārearea / falcon. See page 11

and ferns were already wilting. Grass was frizzled on Wahanui Track, stream flows were dwindling,

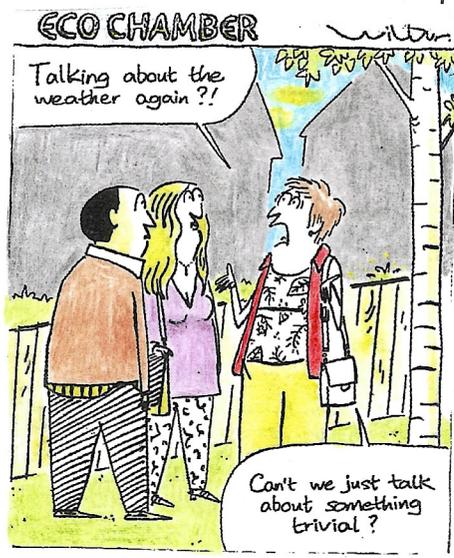
2 and Pūtakitaki Pond was dropping.

Two days later, out of the blue came substantial rain. After that there was no hint of drought for the rest of the summer. The bush looked lush and lovely, the streams flowed fast and clear, the waterfalls were showing off, and the birds kept singing.

Āhua o te Rangi

Benign as the summer was, the skies constantly surprise. At Hinewai weather station, 450m above sea level, snow has typically fallen on average around 16 days each year (29 days in 1992). But 2024 managed only four days, the extreme end of a recent trend.

Wind! Biking home up Long Bay Road one November afternoon, Hugh had to walk much of the way



because a northeast gale kept throwing him off sideways. Near the top a pleasant young Englishman asked if Hugh needed a lift. No sooner had Dan stepped out of his car than the wind whipped off his hat. He and Hugh eventually found it hiding in long grass a hundred metres away.

Several downpours fleetingly raised worry levels, took out

floodgates on boundary fences, and brushed aside Mark Armstrong's boomerang Banks Track bridges at Stony Bay (he now tethers them at one end and simply swings them back in to place once each flood subsides ~ one has to learn to go with the flow, he says).

Then, unexpectedly, April ended with a prolonged drenching equalling the Disastrous Deluge of December 2021. This time it caused floods, slips and road closures on a much wider scale. The town of Little River went under water and a steep hillside above the south end of Akaroa hinted that it might let go as it had threatened to do several decades earlier.

The entire city of Christchurch was cut off from Hinewai for three days. The citizens coped; they appear to be a resilient lot.

Here we expected the worst. Hinewai rain gauge recorded 297 mm for the five consecutive wet days, and Skyline an astonishing 376 mm. The comparable tally in 2021 was 304 mm at Hinewai rain gauge, and 283 mm at Skyline. Miraculously this time the reserve suffered minimal damage. How could two similar rain events produce such different outcomes? Maybe the multiple landslides of 2021 had "vaccinated" Hinewai against the next attack, triggering most of the places that had grown unstable in the decades before. The 2021 event was also unusual, however, in that rain fell just as copiously at mid and lower altitudes as on higher ground, which is much more accustomed to heavy falls. In 2021 this acclimatised high ground escaped damage, just as the whole reserve did this April.

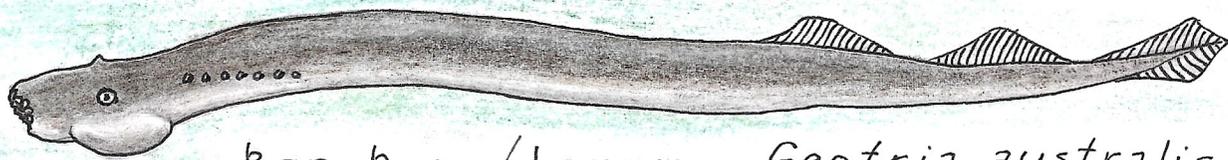
Tracks and landslides

Unchecked by the April dousing, Nature continues to heal the scars of the December 2021 Deluge. Only a little over three years have passed, but rampant greenery has mellowed and softened the wounded hillsides and the savaged streams. Across some of the most ravaged and thickly regenerating terrain we re-routed sections of tracks through adjacent easier untouched forest. Where tracks cross slips at right angles, though, we have no option but to continue clearing the way through dense regrowth, such as on Waterfalls Track which crosses the multiple "Moa's claw" slip.

Recovering streams

Immediately after the December '21 Deluge we had wondered what stream fauna could possibly have survived such a thrashing. Since then, scientists have been surveying waterways on Banks Peninsula's "Wildside", using electric fishing and

4 sophisticated DNA sampling. Happily, the overall picture is now looking positive. Stony Bay Stream was found to be the richest so far for native fish with ten species recorded ~ four bullies, three galaxiids, two tuna/eels, and torrentfish. Aquatic invertebrates were hit hard by the 2021 disaster, but the scientists concluded that both the fish and the insects are recouping. Chemical testing detected a weak signal for kanakana/lamprey, indicating presence but perhaps not in large numbers. The team thought that kanakana might be more common further downstream than they sampled. The continuing presence of exotic brown trout is yet to be confirmed.



kanakana/lamprey *Geotria australis*

Marvellous Mokimoki

Taking in Mokimoki (at Stony Bay) and "Mundyland" (at Ōtānerito Bay) meant not only adding more hectares of regenerating land to the reserve, but also enriching our checklists of protected flora and fauna. Mokimoki in particular hosts several plants that are not known otherwise on Hinewai and are very rare or absent else-



Raupeka
Earina autumnalis

where on the Peninsula. The name mokimoki itself refers to one such plant; it's a climbing fern related to the common kōwao-wao or hound's tongue

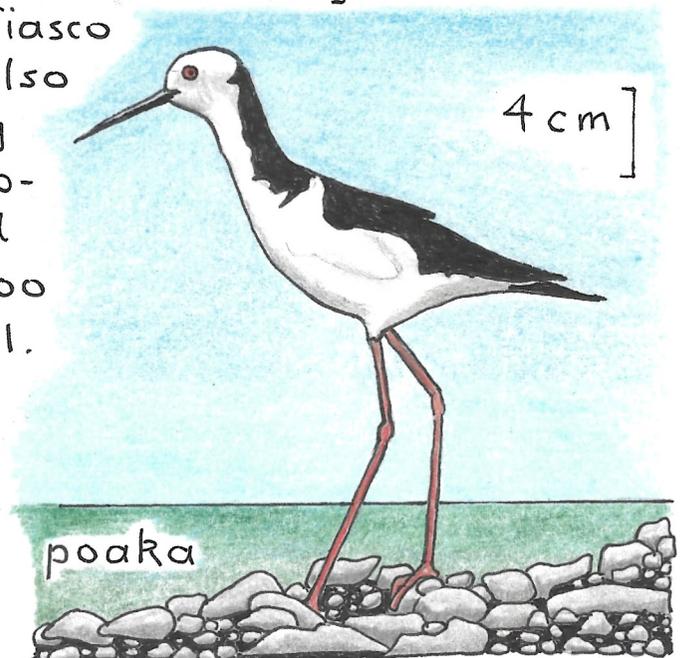
fern. Among native flowering plants known 5 from nowhere else on Hinewai other than Mokimoki is the lovely Easter orchid/raupeka, which fills the bush with its sweet scent when it flowers in autumn on one secret rock outcrop near Nikau Falls.

Just add a little salt

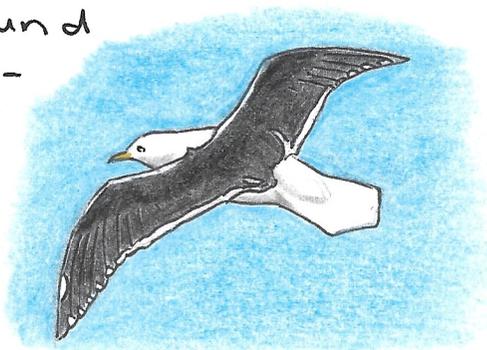
Of course the coastal extensions at Mokimoki and "Mundyland" add, to Hinewai, flora and fauna that occupy only the salty edges of the sea. Finding an inhabited burrow at the southeast end of Mokimoki in the early summer let us write down "white-flipped blue penguin" (kororā) on our Hinewai checklist of confirmed bird sightings. It's stretching things a bit, but our checklist now modestly mentions tōrea (pied and black oystercatchers), kāruihiruhi (pied shags), pārekareka (spotted shags), tara (white-fronted terns), taranui (Caspian terns), and poaka (pied stilts ~ Tina and Penny of Ōtānerito Beach House photographed three near the mouth of Narbey Stream in late November). Not to boast [not much-Ed.], but just to hint at Hinewai's avian diversity, the bird checklist now registers 35 native species and 18 naturalised exotics — leaving out the bizarre golden pheasant fiasco of 2012 (see Pīpipi 37), also Doug and Fiona's meandering muscovy ducks, and the probable but not fully confirmed sighting of an oriental cuckoo by Viola and Norman in 2011.

Just in passing

Black-backed gulls / karoro were already on our bird checklists. Common along our coasts, they are



6 also quite at home inland. Alerted to their wild calls *Karoro Karorororo* we often look up from our earthbound labours to see them cruising non-through gale and calm alike. How we wish that! Fit but wingless walk-takers would take a good two hours to cover the

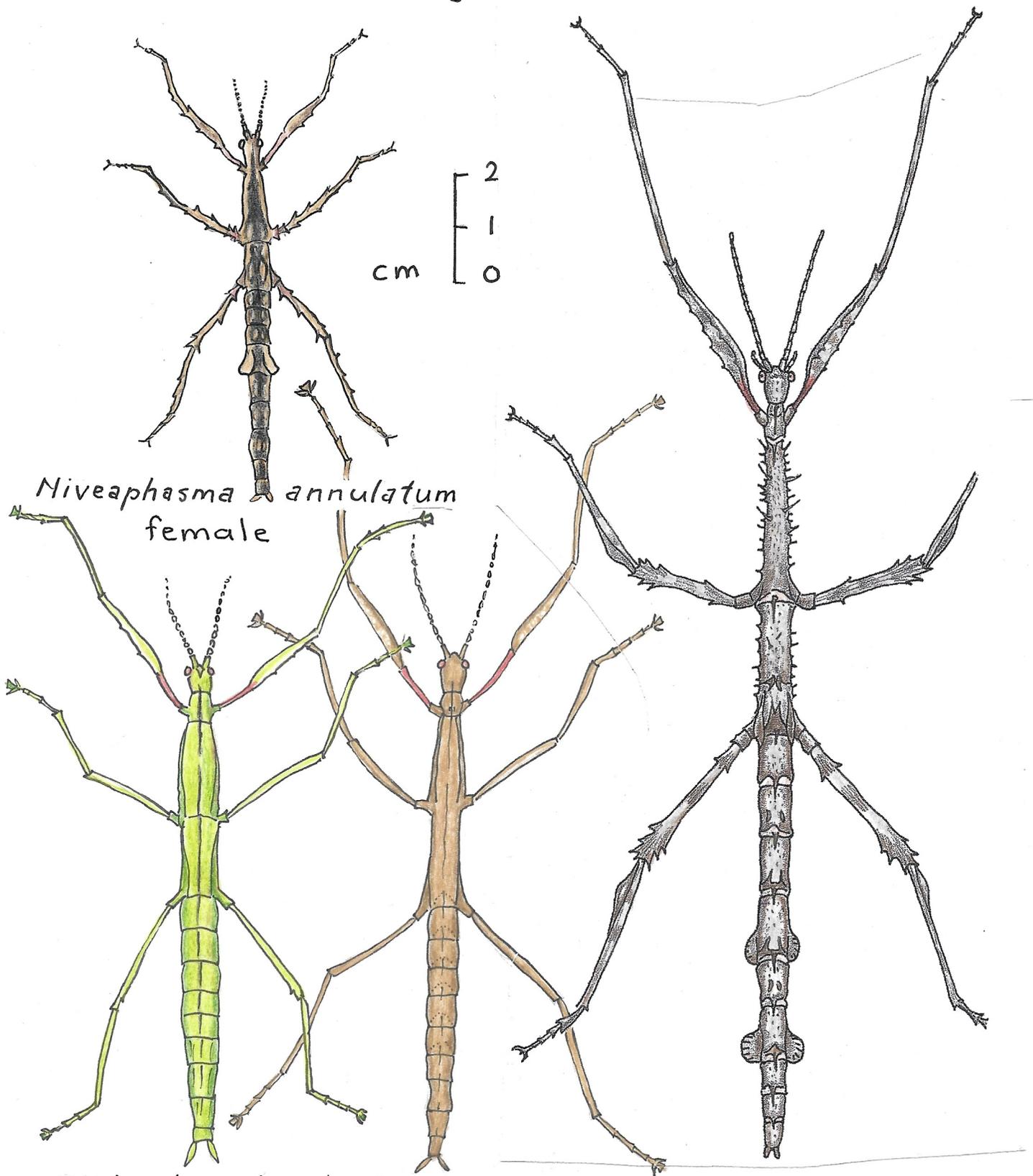


distance from the Akaroa shore-line to Ōtānerito Beach. Karoro probably do it in ten minutes. Only once have we seen a red-billed gull / tarāpunga make the crossing. And although two species of shag ~ kawaupū / black shag, and kawaupaka / little shag ~ visit our freshwater ponds and streams from time to time, the much more coastal pied shag / kārūhiruhi (kawau, kōau) has surprised us only once by flying so far upvalley, and the ocean-loving spotted shag / pārekareka, never.

A bit more stick

When 21 scientists published a provisional checklist of Insects and other Arthropods of Hinewai Reserve in 1999, they documented 885 species, including, for example, more than 150 beetles and over 60 fungus gnats. But the charismatic stick insects (phasmids) scored only one brief mention: "One species on Muehlenbeckia and Rānuka." Now we know that at least four species live here. The one we mostly see is the smooth stick insect, *Clitarchus hookeri*, which comes in two colours, green or brown. Last November Ash photographed a different-looking phasmid on Kererū Track and posted its image on I-Naturalist. An identification came back almost at once from expert Thomas, in Auckland. It was *Niveaphasma annulatum*, apparently the only one out of the 16 New Zealand species to live above the tree-line, but found at lower altitudes too. It's known to be common on the Otago

Peninsula, but Ash's photograph might be ⁷ the first record for Banks Peninsula. Hinewai has offered us only a few encounters with the magnificent and inaptly named *Argosarchus horridus*.



Niveaphasma annulatum
female

Clitarchus hookeri
females
green and fawn forms

Argosarchus horridus
female

Males of all these three species are smaller and much more slender. The fourth species (not illustrated) is *Tectarchus salebrosus*.

8 A Macs Murderer at Large

In deciding how to deal with 20 hectares of macrocarpas on the "Mundyland" addition, we had a good example to follow. To our west, our friends and co-conspirators Bob and Carol had documented their own transmogrification of an extensive plantation above Little River. Dead, standing exotic trees may look sad and ugly for a while but they furnish shelter, dappled sunlight and a bounty of bird perches. These foster a burgeoning native understorey and eventually native forest without, we hope, dishonouring all the effort that the previous landholders put in towards the eventual, but now abandoned, timber harvest.

Paul has taken on this huge project, drilling the trunks of the 35-year old cypresses and carefully injecting herbicide. He made a start in November, despatching 58 trees on his first day. By the end of April the tally topped 1400. "How long do you reckon it will all take?" he was asked. "How long is a piece of string?" he replied. [So Hugh still doesn't know - Ed.]. Some special funding is covering the costs of this mission for five years, after which we will suss out how much string remains. Paul says he is happy to shoulder this load alone, working away at his own pace and strategies, calling on extra hands only when needed. Somehow he still finds time and energy for many other tasks such as brushcutting tracks, fixing fences, weeding boundaries, routing signs, clearing windfalls and building bridges.

Some things change

Hugh had aimed to be fluent in Te Reo Māori by the time he turned 80, but alas he never made it. [He made 80, but not fluency ~ just to clarify - Ed.]. He has given himself a 5-year extension. He's also considering an electric bike, yet another reluctant concession to advanced old age.

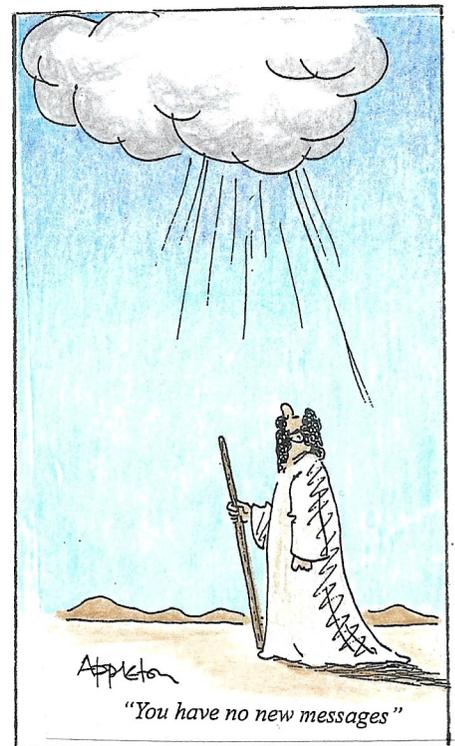
Paul and Tricia have moved house to Little

River. This is not so big a change as might appear. Paul is still based at the reserve's Ōtanerito Homestead during the working week. They have owned a house in Little River for several years, and when their long-term tenant departed, Tricia thought it would be a better base for her art-centred livelihood. Little River town flooded in the April storm; muddy water drowned their garden but spared their home.

Smash and Axe [Ash and Max - Ed.] have graduated to full-time Hinewai staff, working through winter as well as summer. Meanwhile Ash and Elisha have moved their own home base from northern Christchurch to Diamond Harbour, considerably closer to Hinewai. The inconsiderate timing of the April deluge and the resulting road closures could not have been worse for the move. Ash and Max [Smash and Axe - Ed.] have taken over the reserve emails (Tricia filled this role for years). If you want to communicate with Hugh, though, it is still more efficient to phone him directly on 03 304 8501 any evening between about 7.30 and 9.30. Therein lies another story.

Staying in the loop

Hinewai's telephone "landlines" were summarily abolished at the end of March. "Copper landline connections" the Company chorused "are being superseded nationwide by new technology". Actually our phones had nothing to do with copper lines; they were radio links called "country sets" which had given us reasonably good basic phone service for years, and which no doubt could have gone on doing so for the foreseeable future. We remain out of cellphone range [thank heavens - Hugh]. With



10 minimal help from the phone company we had to scramble for an alternative system. One option was to connect with Elon Musk's starlink satellites, but Hugh claimed he would rather be dead. Instead, a semi-retired phone engineer helped us tap in to a magical WiFi signal from the top of a nearby peak. For some reason the new arrangement scrambles Hugh's attempts at telephone banking, a problem for a rural Luddite living five hours bike ride away from the nearest surviving bank branch. Scariest of all, the new phone started sending mysterious robotic messages. It took some time for Hugh's ageing brain to realise that "You have two minutes left" was not a homicidal



threat but a reminder about some never-explained call-charging changes.

Possums, deer, predators and sheep

The heroes of Pest-free B.P. have performed such a thorough blitz across the Peninsula's Wildside that we have not seen a furry brush-tailed Ozzie for yonks. Indeed when Ash and Max found a fresh possum poo on Valley Track at the end of February it became a news item. It also meant there were survivors, but no-one had doubted that. Now PFBP is mounting more follow-up mahi within and around the reserve. It's perhaps not a coincidence that the summer surveys suggest an enhanced abundance of birds and a lack of possum browse on key plant species such as tree fuchsia, fivefinger, mistletoe and tōi.

Deer are much larger than possums, but extraordinarily cryptic and elusive. In mid-April "Czech Pete" reported on the deer-squad's efforts. There were no more death notices, but the trackers had gathered quite a lot of information about their quarries' movements. Two stags appear to have

wandered from Goose Green in Purple Peak Curry Reserve, over the crater rim in to the Stony Bay Valley, joining up with hinds in Mamaku Gully. There may be six to eight deer lurking, lurching and lusting in that wild ravine, but currently there seems to be no sign of any elsewhere on Hinewai or Purple Peak Curry Reserve.

Meanwhile, despite further fence repairs and neighbourly sheep musters we still have a few wily wandering woolly ones within the reserve.

A track walker left comments in the Tara Track Shelter after noticing up to ten patches of feathers along Ōpātuti Track. He concluded they were mustelid or wildcat kills. He suggested that we needed to do more to control mammalian predators. But he had leapt to a faulty conclusion. The feathers (we had seen them ourselves) were the remains of predation not by alien cats or stoats but by our fierce and treasured endemic falcon / kārearea.

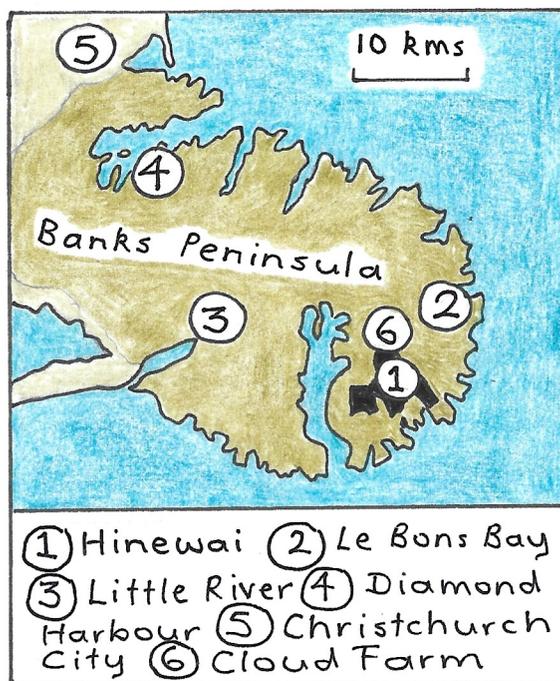
Bravo Le Bons Bay

Not far away from Hinewai to the northeast, Le Bons Bay hosts a human community of permanent residents and long-term bach holders. Out of the Disastrous December Deluge of 2021 and the formation of a local Trust had come a rare opportunity – the possible community purchase of 40 hectares of hillside, for rewilding and recreation, above where Le Bons Stream widens on to tidal sand flats and empties in to the sea. In mid-April nearly 200 people gathered there to celebrate success.



Ōtānerito Bay

12 There was a fiendishly good lunch, and admirable speeches from the Gordon family who had passed on kaitiakitanga of the land to the Le Bons Bay Conservation Trust at a fair price and on good terms. The goal is natural regeneration of coastal native bush on the Hinewai model; indeed many Hinewai supporters contributed to this wonderful outcome. The Trust also plans to create a walking and cycling track along the tidal margin, following the old road to the abandoned wharf.



Carrying on at Cloud Farm

Even nearer at hand than Le Bons, and also arising out of disaster and tragedy, beautiful Cloud Farm has new kaitiaki. Locals Lyndon and Sandy live at Goughs Bay as Farm Managers, but they don't intend to farm Cloud Farm, rather to manage it for conservation goals, a challenge they say is new for them but richly relished.

Pipipi appears twice each year. There is no sub and no obligation to donate, but donations of any size are hugely helpful. We will post a receipt (might take a few weeks) but need your postal address if we don't already have it.

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HUGH'S PHONE
(best evenings 7.30 - 9.30)
03 304 8501

Missing in action

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