

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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November 2025



Whither the weather?

You might well wonder why we witter on about weather? Ah, we have some good reasons to do so. One is that, out here on the wild extremities of Banks Peninsula, weather dictates daily where we work and why. Another: we worry that our weather is going dangerously astray as climate change bites more deeply, and we sleep-walk into catastrophe.

Copious water and wind have punctuated the

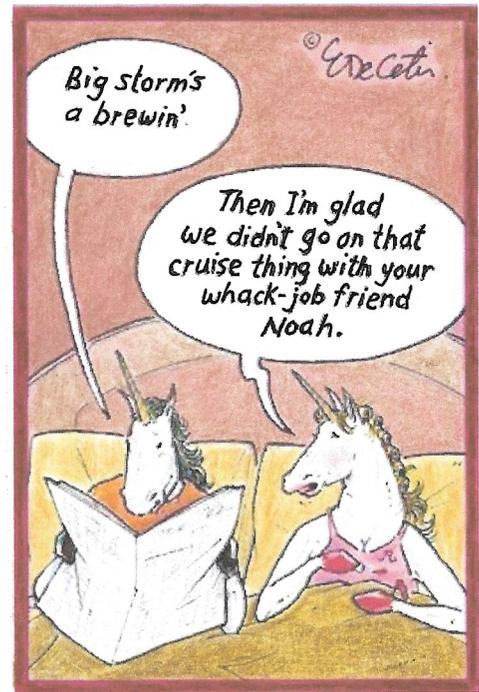
2 past six months. Four more serious drenchings have doused us since the Disastrous Deluge of December '21, two of them this year. At first we were pleasantly surprised at how minimal the additional damage seemed to be. Bit by bit, though, we discovered a few fresh slips, some broken fences, demolished flood-gates (where boundary fences cross streams), and thus also multiple incursions from neighbouring sheep.

Wind

Adding excessive wind to the weather equation hardly helped. After each big blow we check our track network and saw our way through a few windfalls of varying sizes. At the end of September we were all feeling rather pleased with ourselves; much mahi had put Ōpātuti Track in to its best-ever condition for the start of the Banks Track season.

Alas, within a week, a day of wild wind and rain laid low a big kānuka, completely blocking the way. Thwarted, the walkers turned back to Stony Bay. Next morning Max and Ash headed south with an electric chainsaw and seriously sharp pruning saws. They checked the whole length of Ōpātuti Track, cleared the blockage, found no other significant issues, walked on down to Stony Bay Homestead to report all this to Mark and Sonia Armstrong, walked all the way back upvalley, and were in Akaroa in plenty of time to start the scheduled Track Inspection along the 3-day Banks Track route.

The wildest winds of all though hit us hard in mid-October, when severe northwest gales savaged all of the eastern South Island and much



of the North Island, killing a man in Wellington, closing numerous main roads, sparking wildfires, flooding Westland, toppling trees, and cutting power for thousands. Ash and Max again checked and repaired Ōpātuti Track the next morning. Overall we decided that Hinewai had got off lightly, compared with the mayhem reported elsewhere. Scariest of all was fire, sparked by a severed power-line on the Akaroa side of Long Bay Road. It was quickly quenched by the local fire team before it could rampage across Purple Peak Curry Reserve.

Not much snow

Snowfalls, or rather lack of them, hardly diminish our angst about global warming. For all of winter and spring this year, the deepest snow pack at Hinewai weather station (450m altitude) was 1.5 cm on 1st October. It quickly melted. Just as this newsletter was going off to the 5-digital printer at the end of October the sky surprised us by snowing again, whitening the landscape, although less than 1 cm deep and gone in an hour. This brought the total number of days with snow falling for all of 2025 to 5, well below the average for our 38-year record (15 per year).



Halcyon days

Let's get all this in to perspective though. The weather is not always wild, it's often so benign and beautiful that the Hinewai log book is moved to rhapsody, e.g. 25 May 2025: "Beautiful sunny day, virtually still, lightly dewy; clear, sharp sea horizon. Fog encroached upvalley from the sea, then retreated back downvalley without having risen to house level, and without obscuring the

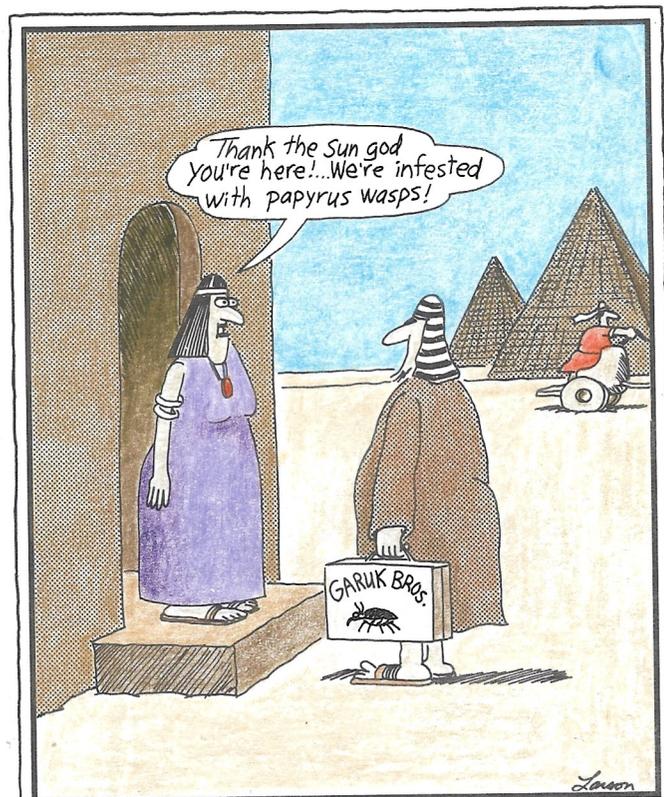
4 sunlit and shadowed flank of Taraterehu."



Possum-free

The heroes of Pest Free Banks Peninsula are within a whisker of eliminating the furry Ozzies from Hinewai and the rest of the Wild Side — an impressive achievement. AKaroa town itself is declared to be close to possum-free. Humans there

are urged to report any sign or sightings, for an immediate response. In September, frontman Ollie detailed follow-up operations across Hinewai. The tally was 8 — "not zero" said Ollie "but close".



Ancient exterminators

Is data a starter?

[Are data a starter? -Ed].
[How about "Are datas starters?" - Hugh]. [Sigh - Ed]. Pest Free B.P. asked if our long-term bird monitoring might reveal avian increases

following possum elimination. Nearly four ⁵ decades of documentation do indeed back up our subjective impressions of burgeoning bird-life. There's no doubt, for example, that ngirungiru/tomtits have increased from uncommon to abundant. We put it down mostly to the steadily improving habitat as we removed or reduced much alien mammalian browsing. But could our records back up, with hard data, significant benefits from the recent gruntier pusch against the possums?

Max has a University-trained mathematical sort of brain, and Ash's current University studies include a discipline called "data analysis". [He reckoned this was his most challenging subject but he underestimated himself, completing the course with a B⁺ - Ed.]. Max and Ash digitised our data and produced some graphs which were interesting but which fell short of showing statistically convincing trends. We're planning to hand over the digitised data to even brainer analysts. Meanwhile when Ash was working one day on Wahanui Track, using loppers rather than a computer, he described the bird song as "so loud and sustained that it was more like being on a pest-free island than on eastern mainland Aotearoa".

The team

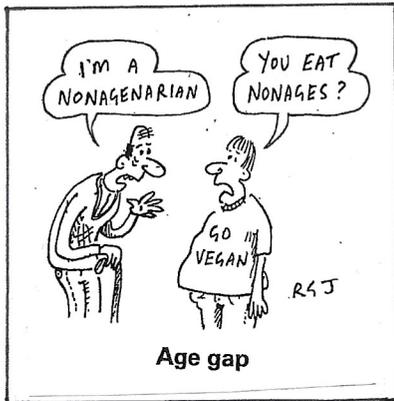
With our efficient waged team of four we more or less keep up with the most important mahi even if we never actually get ahead. Many people offer volunteer help, and we are grateful, but we have found this to be mostly impractical. Not that we always say no. Peter and Annabel of Tai Tapu continue to help us once a week as they have done for years now, both with the work and with transport to the most distant workfaces. Mohini's unfailing band of friends swept in again to spring-clean the Visitor Centre / Lodge ahead

6 of the overnighting season.

Paul Newport's main home base is now in Little River with Tricia but he continues to work weekdays on Hinewai from his Ōtānerito base. Ash Lennon, English-born, Kiwi-partnered (with Elishea), became a fully-fledged Kiwi on the 20th of May. He can put on a convincing New Zealand accent [i.e. he can speak normally if he tries hard - Ed.]. He and Jack Gibbs, of Ōnuku Heights, compared their respective citizenship ceremonies. They were each given a native tree to plant, Jack a Kānuka, Ash a mataī, but they swapped. Ash's dad declared his son a "traitor" but he was only joking.

An ageing hippie

When Stu Wilson, a famous New Zealand rugby player, died recently at 70, some Hinewai supporters misheard on the radio that Hugh Wilson had expired. [Thanks for your concern - Ed.]. Hugh is pretty certain he is still alive. And as Paul N. points out, the two are not readily confused. Stu had scored 19 tries in his All Black career, whereas Hugh in his brief, best-forgotten role as captain of his High School's



5th fifteen, never managed to score one [not for want of trying though - Ed.].

In early August Hugh scored a new hip. His left hip had been replaced four years ago so he now has two bionic substitutes. "Thank heavens they did the right one this time" commented Paul Broady of Kāpuka. Two and a half months later Hugh is not only walking and working as before, he finds to his delight that he can again swing his right leg over his Brooks leather saddle and

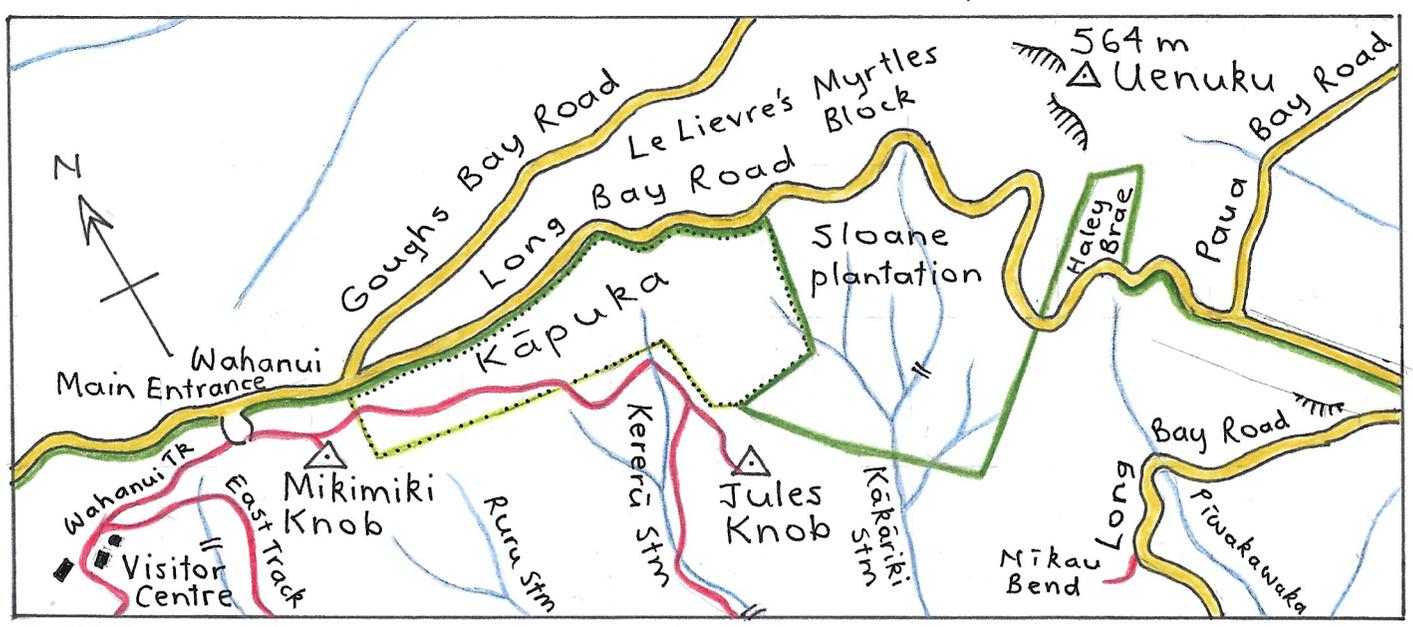


bike off in to the sunset.

Paul Broady of Kāpuka

Paul Broady's association with Hinewai harks back to the earliest days. Born in Manchester in remote England, he taught phycology [algae, not human minds - Ed.] in OZ for many years before crossing the Tasman to teach at Canterbury University. In June 2000 Paul purchased 16 hectares between Long Bay Road and Hinewai's northern boundary. He called the land "Kāpuka" after the native broadleaf tree *Griselinia littoralis*. For 25 years Kāpuka Bush has been legally owned by Paul, looked after by him, but in effect part of wider Hinewai. The area was formally protected in perpetuity by a whole title National Trust covenant in October 2000. We helped Paul remove planted pines, eucalypts and wattles, and form a track from Mikimiki Knob through Kāpuka to Jules Knob. In 2019 the North Canterbury branch of Forest and Bird nominated Paul as a Hinewai Trustee and he was appointed thus at our 29th AGM.

Always generous with time and money, now growing older, still deeply involved with Hinewai, Paul has now gifted legal ownership of Kāpuka to



- Hinewai boundary
- Kāpuka boundary
- Foot track
- Road

500 m

8 the Maurice White Native Forest Trust. We expect to see him working on the land from time to time but no longer with pressure or obligation. Thankyou Paul. Ngā mihi nui ki a Roe. Ko Kāpuka, ko Roe!

Bookmaking

Hugh's hip recuperation was nicely timed with work on "Hinewai Reflections", the approaching publication of a selection of his drawings in book form. While Paul N., Max and Ash toiled away at outside workfaces, Hugh was at his desk assessing cover designs and page layouts, correcting page proofs, and compiling an index.

We suffered an unimagined glitch in September. A shadowy hacker somehow accessed the pre-purchasers' email list on Bruce Hansen's computer and tried fishing for financial feedback.

Use of non-Kiwi words such as "drugstore" rang alarm bells. But a lot of time, effort and angst went into sorting out this mess. Bruce advised everyone he could reach to ignore the fake email. Trustees Tina and Bruce consulted a computer expert in the city to ramp up security.

Hugh hastens to add that the newsletter mailing list is not vulnerable to such embarrassing modern-day nonsense. It is a sophisticated shoe box full of hand-printed address cards, unaffected by scams, viruses, solar flares or Donald Trump.

Friendly fauna

Many visitors comment on how *friendly* the wild birds of Hinewai seem, especially if they are from overseas and meeting pīwakawaka/fantails for the first time. Blackbirds, assisted immigrants from Britain and abundant on the reserve, are perhaps not immediately thought of as in the same league. Indeed, as you walk the tracks you are likely to hear their staccato alarm calls as they

flee away frightened through the trees. But every now and again a blackbird befriends us, usually (but not always) a boy, and only at the houses. For many months down at Ōtānerito



Homestead Paul and Tricia fostered the friendly overtures of one they called "Manu", until he was feeding fearlessly from their hands. This winter and spring a male - "Bertie" - befriended Hugh, often joining him on his weather-reading rounds. More recently a handsome male chaffinch - "Charlie" - seems confident that Hugh (unlike the falcons) pose no threat at all to health and safety. And always there is Thomas Tomtit, calling bossily from the balustrade, sometimes with the more demure Thomasina, checking out nearly every human caller.

Haeremai / Welcome

Ash and Max hosted a visit from the QEII National Trust Board, with retiring field officer Alice Shanks. Most of Hinewai is legally safeguarded in perpetuity by a DoC-arranged Protected Private Land covenant, but some land additions have included areas already protected under the National Trust - Mokimoki, Mark's Bush and Kāpuka are examples. We've had a long positive relationship with exceptional Alice, and are already enjoying contact with her enthusiastic and knowledgeable successor, Joe Potter Butler.

10 Anna from Deutschland / Germany, and Johanna from the USA / North America [in part - Ed.] joined our July bird survey. They are biology students, on Banks Peninsula to monitor tūi, mentored by tūi project scientist Laura Molles. Hinewai's birds put on a good show for them - kārearea, tūi and tītītipounamu materialised in the right places, along with ubiquitous pīpī, korimako, ngirungiru, riroriro, pīwakawaka and kererū.

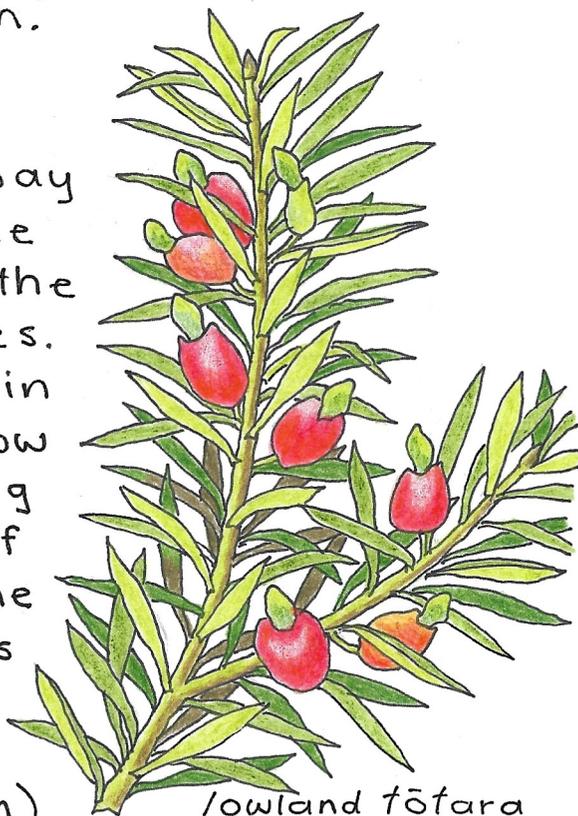
Two international conferences in Christchurch sent fieldtrips to the reserve, one of them focused on invasive plants, the other on Sustainability and Climate Change.

Chris Le Lievre, eldest son of our farming neighbours Paul and Hanne, marked his 50th birthday by leading 30 of his friends and family on a walk through Hinewai from Ōtānerito to Akaroa. Hugh sat down with them on the beech forest floor and answered questions. Chris commented "I was only 12 when Hinewai began, and I watched this valley transform from a golden blaze of gorse to green bush."

Podocarps at Stony Bay

Mark Armstrong of Stony Bay showed us photos taken in the early 20th Century, showing the valley virtually devoid of trees. (Old-growth forest survives in the valley head as you will know if you have ever trekked along Ōpātuti Track). There's lots of native bush now throughout the Stony Bay Valley, but most has regenerated over the past one hundred years or so.

Native hardwood (angiosperm) trees are abundant and diverse, but the podocarps - the big emergent softwood or gymnosperm trees



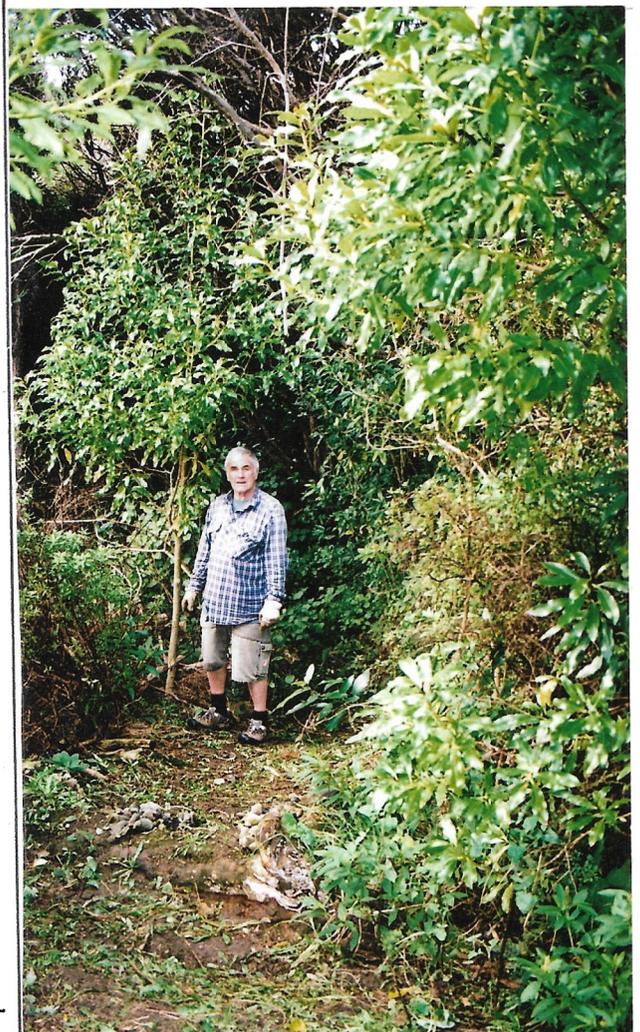
lowland tōtara

— only just hang in there. We know of only 11 one kahikatea in the entire valley, a virile adolescent of undetermined gender. It grows by Stony Bay Stream on Narbeyland, between Ōnīkautahi and Mokimoki. Mataī are almost as rare. In June we met the young mataī which Mark had told us about years ago, mid-Valley below Redrock. It is a delightful twin-trunked adolescent, maybe 80 years old (a mataī teenager), also of, as yet, uncertain sex. Several more grow in the Narbeys' precipitous gully between Ōnīkautahi and The Stones. A young lowland tōtara grows in Mokimoki Bush beside Nīkau Track East. Thin-barked or mountain tōtara is not uncommon in the valley head. In Ōtānerito Valley all four of these podocarps are doing okay despite the 19th Century apocalypse, but lowland tōtara is by far the rarest of them all.

Your slip is barely showing

Several slips sliced across Waterfalls Track in 2021. Growth is spectacular on them now, requiring our sensitively ruthless efforts to keep the way walkable to Whakamate Falls. As well as 3m tall broom and gorse, young wineberry / makomako and ngaio trees are now 4m or more tall. It seems almost unbelievable that they germinated on bare surfaces of mud and rocks less than four years ago.

The more recent deluges have bared a few more patches. After each new drenching we anxiously check the safety-barriered slump-heads



Peter on Waterfalls Track where it crosses a 2021 slip. 2 July 2025

12 that almost took out West Track and East Track. So far both are holding.

Thank heavens!

Scheming is afoot to make much of Banks Peninsula a "dark sky reserve", so that humans can continue to be awed by the glory of the night sky, and so that nocturnal wildlife can thrive in peaceful darkness.



black fantail

Most of Hinewai already complies with dark sky criteria, virtually free of artificial lights, and mostly of man-made sounds too, the precious silence only accentuated by the nightly hooting of ruru and occasional calls of plovers.

Rites of spring

The arrival each spring of pīpīwhararua/shining cuckoos is a wonder. Diminutive denizens of leafy habitats, they fly each year from tropical forests far to our northwest, across vast tracts of ocean, just so they can lay their eggs in the nests of tiny riroriro/grey warblers among our temperate trees.

Walking not falling

One August lunchtime Smash and Axe forayed from Lisburn Track to the lip of 30m high Whakamate Falls. They peered carefully down to the Lookout 15 metres below, a second or so of free fall but an hour's walk away along the tracks.

Pīpipi appears twice a year. There is no sub and no obligation to donate, but donations are hugely helpful and appreciated. Contributions of \$5 or more are tax-deductible. We will post a receipt but will need a postal address if we don't already have it.

Account name: Maurice White Native Forest Trust
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