

2017 AGM Hawksbury Lagoon annual report

Welcome everyone to report number nine from me as chair of the society.

It has been a quieter year, with the lagoon remaining quite full throughout the summer and given our poor summer also needing to have the outlet mechanically opened on at least four occasions by George Terry from Cargill Contracting. Fortunately the Otago Regional Council covers the cost of this work. This environment was a major change from the previous year during which the lagoon all but dried out.

Bird life: The Lagoon has had high numbers of black swans in particular, with two choosing to nest in the middle of the Scotia Street causeway to the consternation of walkers. Since the beginning of February there have been large numbers of Spoonbills staying on the lagoon and frequently roosting in groups in the macrocarpas. A less common visitor was a mute swan which graced us with its presence for a few days and then disappeared again. Derek might like to add some additional comments.

Planting: We continue to hold two Ki Uta Ki Tai planting days each year incorporating other conservation groups in the area and University students. Our thanks go to Chanel Philips for so capably organising the University component of the project while working on her PhD at the same time. This past year we mainly focussed on planting at the old pine plantation site below Mount Street, which is beginning to fill in nicely. Chris and I attended a one day workshop in relation to Health & Safety for volunteers and we will need to complete a Health & Safety plan for volunteers working onsite. During winter Greg and the PD group cleared the gorse on the Maori easement, which has made a huge difference. The plan is to deal to the regrowth over the next year or two before replanting the area.

Communication: I continue to liaise with the DCC and DOC in particular with mixed results. I am still waiting to hear about the fencing of the Cockburn farm (DOC), dogs on a leash signs (DCC), however the DCC has cleared the area at the end of Stewart St and I offered our services to plant here, however despite my asking about carrying out the planting in May, I have received no reply. DOC have agreed to permit installation of five interpretation panels on the lagoon, the Otago Community Trust has since granted us \$1400 of the \$3500 required. A decision re the remaining amount is yet to be made.

Trapping: This has become quite topical with the Halo project originating from the Orokonui Eco-sanctuary in relation to removing pests in the area. Steve is no longer able to continue the trapping project at the lagoon but it is hoped a replacement person is already available. We have reports of increasing stoat and rabbit numbers.

Water Quality: I remain reluctant to implement any of the options from Dugald McTavish's management plan until such time as the water quality from Post Office Creek improves. The responsibility is with the ORC I believe, but they have shown no inclination to do anything to improve the situation. All the culverts have remained open and this has increased the movement of water between the different lagoon areas, particularly when the outlet is open. There appears to have been less of an algal bloom problem this year, probably due to the cooler summer and the higher water level.

Volunteers: On behalf of the committee I wish to extend our heartfelt appreciation to Sandra, who is stepping down from the group having been actively involved with the lagoon committee since July 2002. Sandra has a keen interest and knowledge of matters relating to the lagoon and I have been very grateful for her support since I became involved. We all know that the Riding for the Disabled group is her absolute passion and focus and we wish her well in her ongoing endeavours and plans for this group. I would like to thank Scott who has decided to step down, and also Janet who joined us in 2011 and has been secretary for the past several years. Scott, although a quiet participant at meetings has a wealth of knowledge which we saw demonstrated on occasion. I would like to thank them all for their contributions and participation while on the committee and wish each of them every success for wherever their paths lead in the future. I'd also at this time like to acknowledge the ongoing commitment of John Ollerenshaw who regularly mows the grassed area at Inverary Street, he has been doing this for well over 20 years and it is, as always, very much appreciated.

Finally, my thanks to all the volunteers and committee members, known and unknown, who take an active interest in the lagoon and its surrounds. Unsolicited comments from local residents show they can see the positive difference our work is making at the lagoon and that they appreciate the efforts of all those involved.

I ask that this annual report be accepted.

Shirley McKewen
Chairperson
Hawksbury lagoon Society