

Hawksbury Lagoon AGM Annual Report March 2021

I think we would all agree that it has been a very unusual year due to Covid 19 and it looks as though its effects are not over yet. Last year we held an online AGM, but this year we get to meet face-to-face, unlike a lot of other places in the world.

During last years lockdown, many local residents took the opportunity to walk the lagoon causeways. Every day I could see many people out walking, most with dogs, hopefully on a leash. During a time when our options for being outside were severely curtailed, it was wonderful to see good use being made of the causeways.

Due to the restrictions our Ki Uta Ki Tai days were cancelled, and Patti Vandenburg took the opportunity to get us thinking about the future of the programme. This resulted in those of us involved in the programme agreeing that it is a valuable programme which needs to continue, but which may be tweaked somewhat ie incorporate “Pocket Projects” small doable flexible projects, which require less preparation. This coming year over a 4-week period in April, it is proposed that each group will have one afternoon with students to undertake a defined project. The connections the KUKT programme brings with other local groups has been invaluable to our work at the lagoon.

Over the past year it seems that the range of wildlife at the lagoon is increasing, there are shoals of fish in PO Creek, probably Bullies, along with eels in quantity. We have also had reports of a Marsh Crake and possibly but NYC, reports of hearing a Bittern booming. We are also seeing Shags and Herons more often these days and although Spoonbills were missing in action for several months they have recently returned, although not in such large numbers.

Russell, our trapper, reports the number of pests caught is trending down, which he believes is due to less animal pests at the lagoon, apart from rabbits of course. He caught 20 rats, 2 ferrets, 24 stoats and 10 hedgehogs.

Other activities the committee has undertaken this past year include having 5000 new brochures printed with financial support from the Waikouaiti Coast Community Board. We have also had our website redeveloped and it is now able to be maintained by Emily (Committee member) which will reduce ongoing costs. Financial support for this was by Bendigo Valley Trust and the Otago Community Trust.

Jenny (committee member) has continued with her planting project on the Inverary Reserve and it is beginning to really take shape now with maturing trees and shrubs. It is a credit to all her hard work. A start has been made to install the electronic water monitors, but due to unforeseen circumstances it has been slow to get underway. A Health and Safety plan requested by DOC has been completed by the committee and will be used to guide our planting days.

The beginning of 2021 saw significant growth of green algae around the margins of the lagoon, more than we have seen for awhile, although for once PO Creek didn't turn bright green during the summer. It is difficult to know what influences affect the lagoon, but hopefully once the water monitoring starts we will get some answers.

We had decided to hold an “open day” in January, in lieu of an open AGM. It was a very successful day, with quite a number of people attending, they particularly enjoyed the

presentations by Greg and Derek. It raised a useful amount of funds and provided an opportunity to inform people of our work. We will look to repeat this again next year.

In February the University contacted us to see if we would like to have orientating students carry out some work. They came out for an afternoon and undertook clearing at the Inverary Reserve, they were a lovely group of young people excited to be embarking on their new careers, and willing to give up their time to work with us.

In looking to the future there are several possible developments within the lagoon catchment which may require consideration by the committee, including future use of the racecourse land, and the effects of a proposed large subdivision near the beach. The recent illegal felling of a large macrocarpa on the reserve is also concerning and is being followed up by DOC compliance officers.

Finally, it is my intention to stand down as chair of this committee and pass the reins onto someone else. I would like to thank everyone who has helped and supported me, both from within the committee and external to it over the years. I feel I have achieved the goals I set for myself when I accepted the role as chair, but the lagoon and its environs is a 'work in progress' and will be for many years to come. I feel honored to have had a small role in this and hope to continue in a lesser capacity for some years yet. Thank you,

Shirley McKewen Chair