



canopy 75

Newsletter of the Native Forest Restoration Trust

Summer 2025

NFRT Chairman's Message

I take great pleasure in introducing our 75th issue of Canopy. The Canopy newsletter shows some of the hard work and dedication of our trustees, managers, contractors, volunteers, supporters and donors. The year goes by so fast that you can easily forget what's happened over the previous months and the articles in Canopy are a good reminder of what's happening in the engine room.

The stories in this issue, like all those in previous Canopy newsletters, reflect what the Native Forest Trust is all about. In a world that can be particularly negative and depressing the work that NFRT carries out is a ray of sunshine, hope and positivity. To be able to protect and enhance pockets of New Zealand biodiversity into perpetuity is an amazing achievement and a Taonga to all New Zealanders living today and for future generations to come.

A cool story highlighting this comes from our Opoutama Wetland in Mahia Peninsula, Wairoa. Recent bird counts by the Department of Conservation have shown that our wetland has the highest population of Matuku-hūrepo (Australasian Bittern) in the Wairoa region. With so few bitterns left in New Zealand and the species being globally endangered, this makes our wetland in Mahia even more special and precious. Another story looks at some of the hidden treasures to be found at our William Upton Hewett Reserve. As part of a field trip organised for the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network Conference, around 40 botanists and plant enthusiasts gathered at the reserve in search of interesting species – and they were not disappointed.

There are many great stories like these in the archives of the trust and these stories will only continue to grow as the trust acquires more reserves and continues its mahi. The Hutiwai appeal is part of this ongoing story. Our campaign to raise funds to purchase and restore this property in Taranaki is well under way, with approximately 35% of the purchase price already raised. We launched stage 2 of the appeal just before Christmas.

A special thanks goes out to our outgoing trustee and treasurer Andrew Tuckey. Andrew resigned in July of last year after 8 years of service to the trust. Andrew did amazing work as treasurer and was extremely handy as a carpenter too, building bridges, sheds, walkways and repairing huts, fences and gates at several of our reserves. Thanks for your dedication and support Andrew, it's very much appreciated, and we wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Succeeding Andrew Tuckey as our new trustee and treasurer is Louis Nel. As a Chartered Accountant, Louis is highly skilled in managing financial accounts and brings extensive experience from his work with charitable trust organisations, including High Performance Sport NZ, Predator Free 2050 Limited, and Auckland Rugby League. Outside of work, Louis enjoys spending time with his young family and loves the outdoors. We're thrilled to have him on board! PS: He's also handy with a builder's apron!

Ed Chignell, Chairman, NFRT



View from the proposed new reserve to Taranaki Mounga. Photo by Tania Niwa.



Ed at Mangarakau. Photo by Rosemary Davison.

native forest
restoration trust

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A Warm Welcome to new Trustee/Treasurer Louis Nel



We are very pleased to welcome and introduce our new trustee and treasurer, Louis Nel.

Louis, originally from South Africa, has called New Zealand home for over 20 years. Residing on Auckland's scenic Hibiscus Coast with fiancée (Megan) and two daughters, aged 10 and 5, he embraces the outdoor lifestyle to the fullest. A weekend rarely goes by without Louis tackling a home project – whether it's building a deck or transforming his garden. He's an avid nature enthusiast, often found hiking, fishing, or seeking new outdoor challenges, like his recent accomplishment of completing the breathtaking Tongariro Alpine Crossing in 2024.

A Chartered Accountant with a BCom in Finance and Accounting, Louis has spent over a decade supporting

business growth, especially in the sports and conservation sectors. Louis has a long background with charitable trust organisations having worked for High Performance Sport NZ, Predator Free 2050 Limited and currently with Auckland Rugby League. His tenure with Predator Free 2050 as Head of Finance and Operations saw him play a key role in shaping the organisation with robust financial management and strategic vision. Most recently, as the General Manager of Finance at Auckland Rugby League, Louis oversaw the financial stewardship of four entities, helping to drive sustainable growth and resilience in Auckland's rugby league community.

We welcome him aboard!

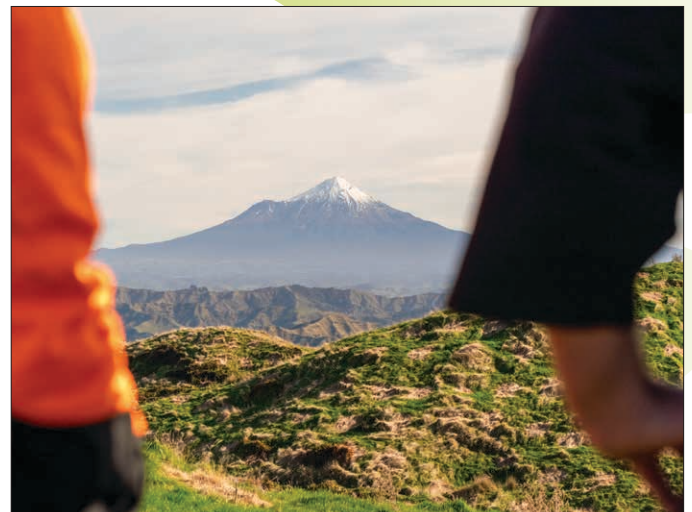
Sara Rogers, Administrator, NFRT

Behind the Scenes of Our Patui Short Film

We couldn't have asked for better weather during the two days of shooting our video project at Patui! The first day greeted us with a chilly -2°C when we arrived on-site, but it was a clear, blue-sky day – the views to the distant Central Plateau to the east and Mount Taranaki to the west were breathtaking. The camera crew from Strategy Collective were blown away by the beauty of Patui, and they got some amazing photos, footage, and interviews with our video stars.

The main purpose of the video project was to thank our wonderful supporters and share the story of how over a thousand people came together in 2022 to help NFRT purchase and protect the very special Patui Forest remnants in the eastern Taranaki hill country.

We really wanted to capture the emotional ties people feel to special places like Patui, whilst highlighting the beautiful biodiversity of the site. We also wanted to demonstrate that purchasing a property is just the first step – we then spend many years protecting and restoring the biodiversity of these



Looking west from the planting site towards Mount Taranaki. Photo by Strategy Collective.

special places for future generations, through community involvement, pest control, replanting, and education initiatives.

A special thanks to everyone involved in planning this video, especially those in front of the camera during the filming days: Rosemary Davison, NFRT Deputy Chair; Jake Goonan, NFRT Operations Manager; Cynthia Northcote, former owner of Patui; Chris Mattock, Principal of Makahu School and the students of Makahu School; and Rumatiki Timu, Cultural Lead for Ngāti Maru.

You can watch the Patui video on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@nativeforestrestorationtrust>



Cynthia Northcote, former owner of Patui, preparing for her moment in the spotlight.



School principal Chris Mattock and the Makahu school children. Photo by Strategy Collective.



Makahu School. Photo by Rebecca Martin.

Close up on a Gumland Habitat – The William Upton Hewett Reserve

In early October, Whangārei was host for the biennial New Zealand Plant Conservation Network Conference. Trustee Geoff Davidson presented the 44 year history of the Trust to attendees on day two. Following days of workshops, presentations, and networking, a field trip went ahead at NFRT's William Upton Hewett Reserve in Titoki. This reserve is a 240 hectare unique mosaic of habitats including nationally critical gumland, regenerating shrubland, kahikatea wetland and kauri/podocarp/broadleaf forested gullies.

Botanists and plant enthusiasts from all over the country walked the Jack Kennedy Loop Track, scanning for rare plants and taking in the unique floral assemblage of a habitat found only in Northland and Auckland. I stuck close to two very knowledgeable ladies, Maureen Young of Northland and Jesse Bythell (who was visiting from Southland) who generously shared their extensive plant knowledge. Maureen had mentioned earlier to the group of approximately 40, that on a previous visit to the reserve many years ago, she had identified the naturally uncommon *Pittosporum pimeleoides* in one of the many steep gullies. Laughing, she told us that she had proudly managed to successfully guard the branch that was taken as a sample despite multiple tumbles traversing the steep and slippery terrain. With this possible find on the radar (and associated bragging rights for being the first to spot it), a current of excitement rippled through the trail of rambles when Joe Dillon spotted, a young, but mature specimen of this species right on the track. Word spread quickly to Maureen at the tail end of the group. Cameras clicked away on one small flower and very



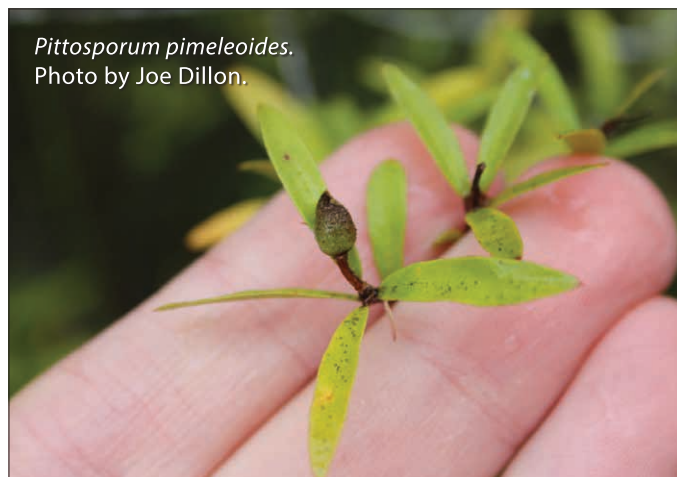
Thelymitra sanscilia.
Photo by Matt Ward.

surprised to see some of their delicate, but stunning blooms growing in the disturbed margins of the walking tracks. Sightings of *Thelymitra longifolia*, *T. pauciflora*, *T. ixioides*, *T. pulchella* delighted, but when someone asked to confirm what was a suspected and nationally critical *Thelymitra sanscilia*, botanists seemed to draw their hand lenses faster than any anxious cowboy at a showdown. Not only was the one plant confirmed to be *T. sanscilia*, but many more were successfully identified along the ridgeline track, making this site an unofficial national stronghold for the species. Other orchids sighted were common onion orchid (*Microtis unifolia*), white fingers (*Caladenia chlorostyla*), pixie cap or heart-leaf orchid (*Acianthus sinclairii*), gnat orchid (*Cyrtostylis oblonga*) and *Caladenia bartlettii* which given its 'at risk: naturally uncommon' conservation status, had excitement levels justifiably raised again.

Having 15 minutes in hand to walk back to the car park where the bus awaited the group, the pace was picked up and stops for chats were severely limited to very special finds only. One such being a large and healthy swamp maire (*Syzygium maire*) tree growing on a spring on the track. Unfortunately, this species is now often scarce or absent over large parts of its former range due to the clearance of swamp forest and its conservation status was raised to national critical after the arrival of myrtle rust in 2017.

Everyone left the reserve feeling as though it had been a really worthwhile field trip and headed back to the Forum North base in Whangārei for the conclusion of the conference. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to showcase one of our nine NFRT reserves in Northland. If you have the opportunity to visit this reserve, our one and only gumland habitat, it's open to the public and we encourage a stroll with a friend on the well-formed tracks. If you're visiting around Oct-Nov keep your eyes open for the various orchid species on the sides of the tracks and an ear out for the thriving fernbird population. At night, on the Jack Kennedy Loop Track you may hear the resident North Island brown kiwi and a headlamp could reveal the many gecko species present such as the elegant green gecko/Moko Kākāriki.

Funding from Basil and Cynthia Hewett made it possible for the Trust to purchase this land in 1991 under the Memorial Forest Scheme to commemorate their brother William. We are



Pittosporum pimeleoides.
Photo by Joe Dillon.

small seed capsule - an iNaturalist dream, but without taking that second glance it would be quite conceivable to assume it was mingimingi or perhaps kanuka and walk straight past it unaware. This reserve may well be the southern-most example of this plant naturally occurring in the country, which makes it that little bit more special for NFRT to be the proud guardians. It also reaffirmed the value of spending time with others, immersing ourselves in nature, and sharing observations that make it easier to remember the names and characteristics of species by linking them to people and their stories.

Another fantastic feature of the William Upton Hewett Reserve is its abundance of native orchids, although it was felt that we may have been too early to see the *Thelymitra* or sun orchids in flower. These orchids are notoriously difficult to accurately identify when not in flower, so we were happily



Scott Lyon and Daryl Barge installing the kauri washdown station

also deeply grateful for the continued support of our donors and the Northland Regional Council, whose contributions help fund animal pest control efforts. Wilding pines and prickly hakea continue to be ongoing weed threats that are currently being managed. Looking ahead, we aim to deepen our understanding of reptile species' diversity and abundance through ongoing monitoring, while maintaining effective pest animal control to provide a safe haven for these species.

Through funding from the Ministry of Primary Industries, we were able to recently install a washdown station for footwear to minimise the risk of spreading kauri dieback to the many trees present here. With thanks to the generosity of neighbours

Daryl and Raewyn Barge, who volunteered time and the use of their tractor to move the station in place, we were able to install it at the start of the walking track. The Barges play a big part in supporting the operations of pest control at this reserve and kindly allow our contractors to base themselves at their property, sometimes over a period of multiple days. Support doesn't always come to our reserves in the form of funds and the Barges are an example of how our neighbours can make a valued and appreciated contribution. More information on how to get to William Upton Hewett Reserve is available on our website: <https://www.nfirt.org.nz/reserves/william-upton-hewett/>

Kelly Maxwell,
NFRT Reserve Manager – Central & Western Northland



New kauri washdown station at the entrance to William Upton Hewett Reserve

Pest animal work and its benefit to key species: Exciting results from a recent bittern survey at Opoutama Wetland

We have been seeing some outstanding biodiversity outcomes recently from our large-scale, ongoing pest control and planting efforts at our reserves. A recent highlight was an excellent result from a matuku-hūrepo/bittern survey conducted at our Opoutama Wetland Reserve in the Hawke's Bay.

Matuku-hūrepo/bittern are one of our most endangered native birds, with a current threat status of 'Nationally Critical'. It's estimated that there are less than 900 individuals remaining in New Zealand.

After the survey work was completed, Helen Jonas, DOC Biodiversity Ranger from DOC Wairoa sent us the following feedback "... the reason I wanted to know about the trapping at Opoutama was because whatever is being done out there is working! The Opoutama wetland is the hotspot for matuku in the Wairoa district".

Helen was working with a keen group of volunteers, and they managed to get pretty good coverage of the area. The team spent two evenings listening at Opoutama, once in October and once in November. Both evenings were very successful, with lots of birds heard over the duration. The map below summarises the survey, with pink stars indicating birds heard in October, and green stars indicating birds heard in November. Overall, Helen estimates there were about 10 different bittern booming, which is a phenomenal number for such a highly threatened species.

According to Helen, this is by far the most significant site for matuku in the Wairoa district which is largely down to effective predator control. The team were especially excited to spot some of the birds, given they are notoriously cryptic.

Thanks to DOC and the team of volunteers for their work on this survey, and to our trapping contractors, who are obviously doing a fantastic job there!



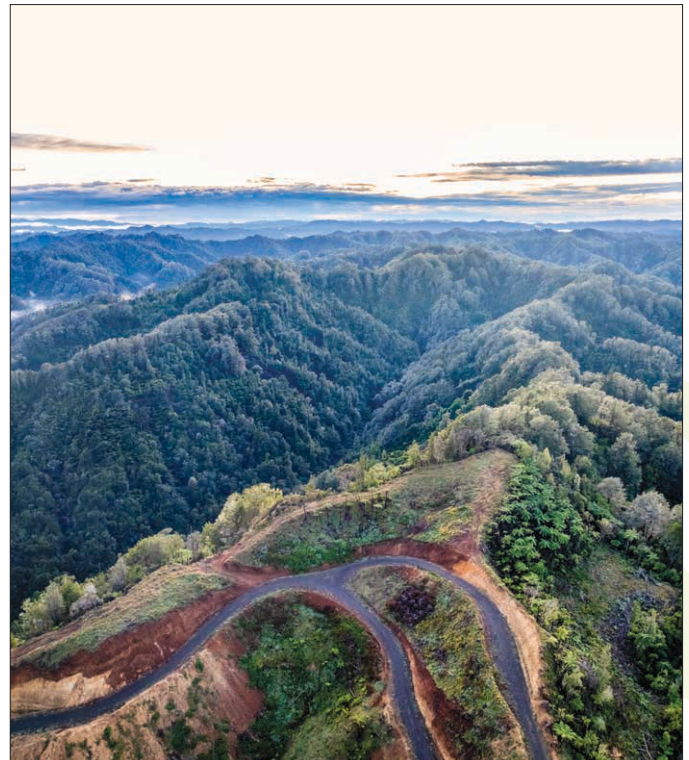
Hutiwai Appeal Update

Our campaign to raise funds to purchase and restore a portion of Hutiwai Forest in North Taranaki is well underway, with approximately 35% of the purchase price already raised at the time of writing.

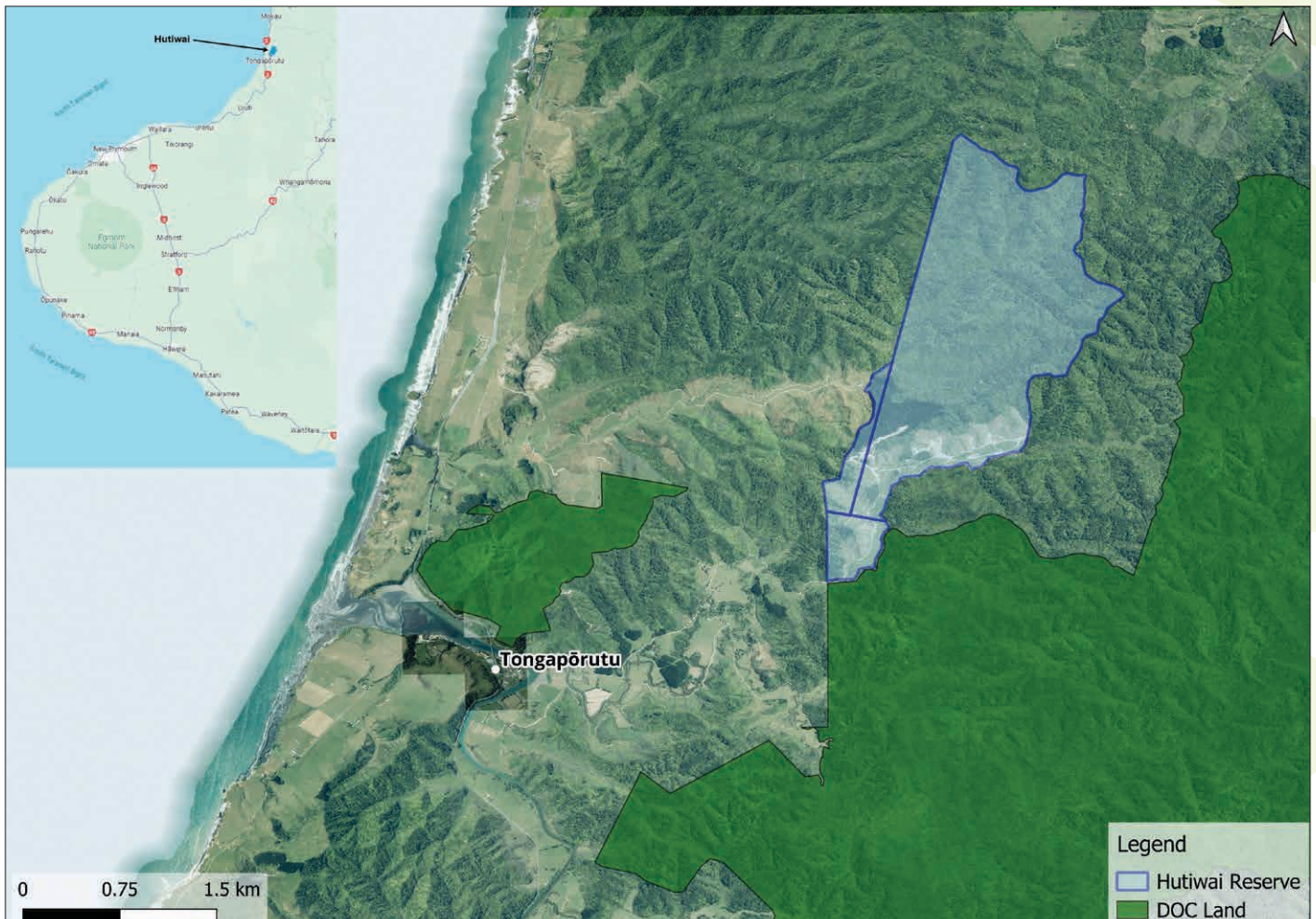
This is a special place and NFRT has pulled out all the stops to secure this land and protect it for all New Zealanders, for ever. The forest is predominantly native, with some recently felled pine forest and valley floor wetland areas that hold tremendous potential for restoration. The area is part of a larger forest tract dominated by tawa and kamahi, interspersed with beech forest.

Hutiwai Forest is home to rare and endangered species including the North Island Brown Kiwi and Yellow-Crowned Parakeet. Future surveys are expected to reveal even more valuable species. Hutiwai also borders large DOC-owned conservation areas, which are known to support species such as Long and Short Tailed Bats and Whio.

Under Trust ownership, we plan to restore the recently cleared pine areas to create additional habitat for native wildlife, while implementing predator control to protect these species. Hutiwai truly is a very special place, and this is an opportunity we can't afford to miss.



Logging tracks with native forest to the north.
Photo by Tania Niwa.



The proposed Hutiwai Reserve, north-east of New Plymouth.

At 434 hectares Hutiwai is one of our more substantial projects and, with land prices being so high, it will take time to raise the \$1.725 million needed. Fortunately, the current owners have been very flexible and have given us some time to settle the purchase. However, the sooner we raise the funds the sooner we can gain access to protect the wildlife and start restoring the forest and wetland areas.

So far, we have secured over \$600,000 – an incredible achievement, thanks to the generosity of our supporters. As a relatively small organisation, we are acutely aware of the challenges of competing with developers and other potential

buyers in today's real estate market, and we rely heavily on the support of donors to help us secure land like Hutiwai with such fantastic conservation importance.

Our appeal is ongoing, and we will be providing another update in the next edition of Canopy. In the meantime, if you'd like to follow our fundraising progress or contribute to the purchase of Hutiwai, please visit our appeal page at: <https://www.nfrrt.org.nz/help-us-purchase-hutiwai/>. Every donation, no matter the size, makes a difference and brings us closer to our goal.



Some of the valley floor wetland areas and hill slopes with restoration potential.
Photo by Tania Niwa.

New Carpark at Ed Hillary Hope Reserve

Over the years, we've faced ongoing anti-social issues at our Ed Hillary Hope Reserve (EHHR), which our Honorary Ranger, Bill Carlson, and Reserve Manager, Mike Paviour, have been working hard to try to resolve.

EHHR has experienced repeated vandalism, property damage, and theft of items. There have also been persistent issues with access, including a carpark that was too small for visitors to park, turn around and exit safely. Additionally, the entry and exit onto the main road was challenging, and there was limited access for those with mobility issues.

For some time, we have been planning ways to minimise opportunities for those intent on causing damage, including reinforcing fences, gates, and other security measures, as well as improving the carpark for better access and safety. However,



Carpark extension works starting at EHHR.

despite these improvements being much needed, we have not had the budget to carry out the work until now.

In August 2024, we had a very generous offer from the Waikato Ecological Restoration Trust (WERT) for a contribution to the proposed car park and safety improvements at EHHR. WERT were offering us co-funding towards the project on a 50:50 basis, whereby NFRT would match the amount WERT contributed. This provided us with an excellent opportunity to halve our costs, while further developing the relationship with WERT.

Our Reserve Manager Mike had already done a detailed costing and plans for the carpark improvements, and he had

contractors ready to go, once funding became available. Therefore, with much excitement and anticipation, these works went ahead in the third week of October 2024.

Thanks to WERT's generous and timely donation, we now have a well-fenced and significantly expanded carpark, improved access-ways that are safer and more accessible, and stronger security gates. A special thank you once again to our Honorary Ranger Bill Carlson, Reserve Manager Mike Paviour, and our contractors for ensuring these important improvements were completed!

Rebecca Martin, NFRT Operations Team

Ed Hillary Hope Reserve community planting days

Winter 2024 has been a busy planting season at the Ed Hillary Hope Reserve (EHHR), with around 4,000 plants from approximately 30 different eco-sourced species planted, over 5 different planting events.

Special thanks go out to all our volunteers who have helped getting plants in the ground, including all those involved with our open community planting days, local school plantings, memorial planting, and assistance from the Hamilton Junior Naturalist Trust.

Having so many different groups coming together to restore our native forests and taonga species results in a very special and rewarding gathering, and we thank everybody who participated and supported us with these events.

As we all know, planting events themselves are often the culmination of a long preparation and planning period beforehand, with the hard work starting months or years before the plants actually go in the ground.

We are fortunate to have such legends in eco-sourcing and plant propagation as Jan Simmons and Wayne Bennett, as

enthusiastic contributors to our planting and restoration success at EHHR, who have assisted us with seed collection, plant ordering and propagation, and pre-planting site preparation.

Many of the species planted have originated from seed sourced and collected locally or at EHHR itself, which has then been grown on at the Waikato Ecological Restoration Trust (WERT) and Forest Flora nurseries. Specialist ecological nurseries like these, and the passionate people involved with them, are essential for accessing a much wider range of diverse eco-sourced species than would otherwise normally be available.

Of course, another special mention needs to be made for our Honorary Ranger extraordinaire Bill Carlson, who has been key to the preparation and organisation for these and many other restoration actions occurring at EHHR over the years.

Mike Paviour,
NFRT Reserve Manager
Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay & Wellington



Legends of eco-sourcing and restoration. Left to right at EHHR Jan Simmons, Bill Carlson, Sue Bennett, Julia Grimm and Wayne Bennett.

Trail Cameras on Reserves: A key tool for tracking pest populations and behaviour

We have been increasingly using trail cameras on our reserves to monitor pest ungulates (like deer, goats, and pigs) and predators (like stoats, rats, and possums) to get a better feel for the number and diversity of pest animals present (sometimes this even includes human trespassers/poachers!).

Trail cameras are a useful tool to get a quick snapshot of the types of pest animals and their frequency in a given area. For ungulates, trail cameras provide data on their numbers and behaviour, helping us to assess the level of grazing pressure on native vegetation. For predators the cameras help track their presence and activity, which is crucial for planning and executing control efforts.

Unfortunately, we're seeing increasingly large numbers of pigs, goats, deer, cats, and possums every time we deploy our

cameras. Having this information on when and where pests are active, allows us to improve the efficiency of pest management operations.

Undertaking ongoing intensive predator and ungulate control is a costly business, so we really appreciate the support of all our funders and donors, which enables us to continue this important biodiversity protection and restoration work.

There are lots of options when it comes to purchasing and using trail cameras, but if you'd like to trial some on your own property, there are some good tips and tricks here for initial set-up: <https://predatorfreenz.org/stories/trail-camera-tips/>

Rebecca Martin, NFRT Operations Team.



1. Dog at Michael Taylor Kiwi Reserve. 2. Mob of goats at Michael Taylor Kiwi Reserve. 3. Pigs at Waipoua. 4. Possum in a pig trap at Waipoua. 5. Mob of young deer at Omoana Bush. 6. Feral cat in a pig trap at Waipoua.

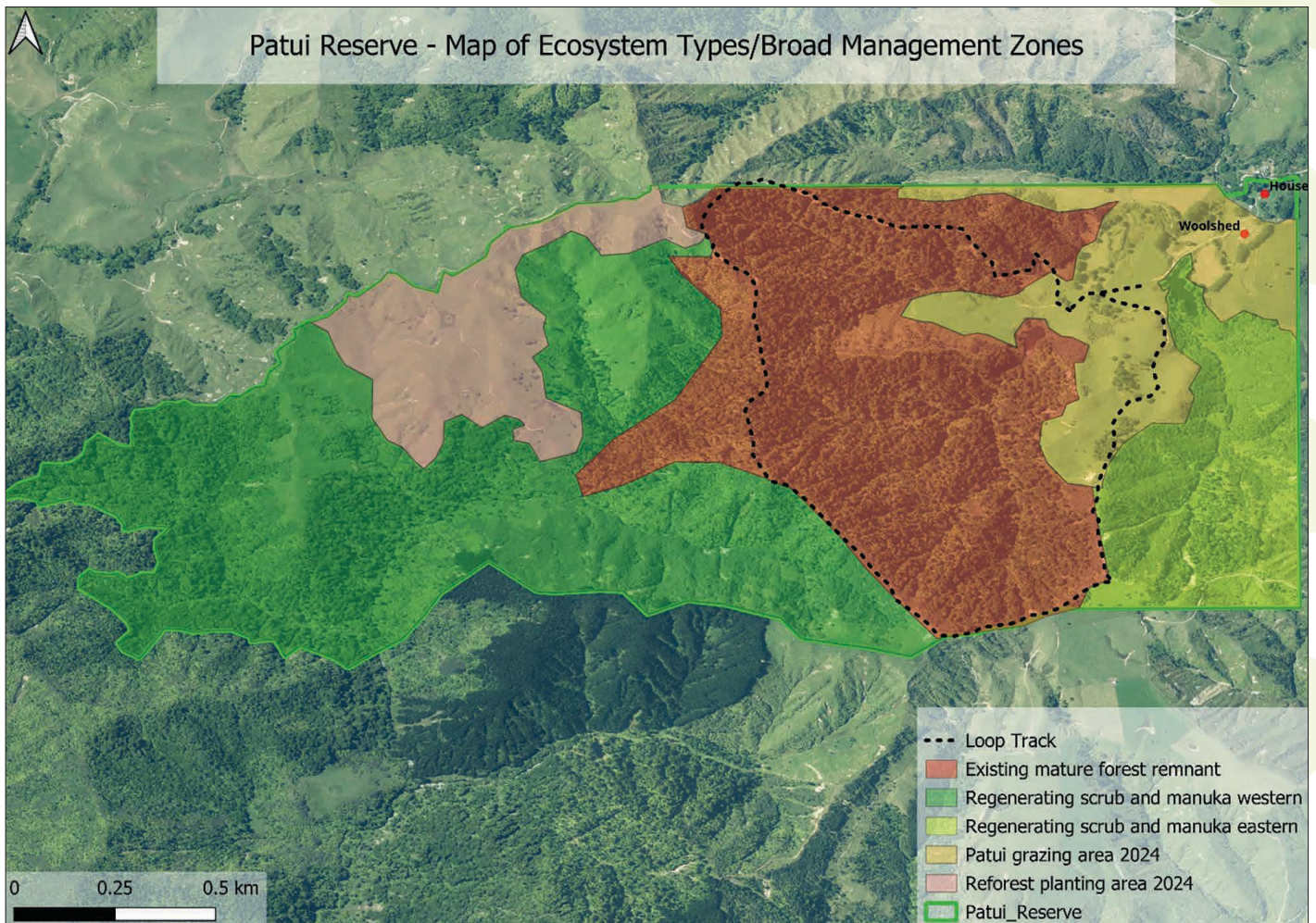
Large scale planting project at Patui

We continued our big reforestation planting project at Patui in April 2024. The long-term aim of this part of the project is to transform over 40ha of previously grazed hill-country land at the back of the reserve into native podocarp forest, creating additional habitats for native species, and enabling connectivity between existing stands of native forest in the area, both on the Patui property itself, but also with adjoining DOC land.

The first stage of this project was pre-spraying 40,000 planting spots to ensure the plants got a head start on any surrounding weeds – the planting area had been grazed before spraying to help control weeds and reduce grass growth. We then brought in a contractor to carry out intensive goat control before planting. Six weeks later, 40,000 eco-sourced mānuka plants were delivered, helicoptered to the planting site, and planted during the first two weeks of June.

The team returned to the site in the last week of September to finish the first release spray, as the grass had really started to grow again.

Of this planting project, 31.55ha has been generously sponsored by Flight Centre through partners Reforest, with the remaining 9ha qualifying for a Taranaki Regional Council STRESS (South Taranaki and Regional Erosion Support Scheme) grant.



Map of Patui Reserve showing overview of broad ecosystem types and management areas. Planting area in pink funded by Flight Centre.

Prior to planting we removed over 500 feral goats from the area, and since then another 200+ have been removed! Goats are an ongoing issue as they continue to re-invade from neighbouring properties, so ongoing goat culling is a key focus for us, to ensure ungulate numbers remain low and our new plants thrive.

There have been numerous people involved in planning and implementing this work over the past 18 months who we'd like to thank, including the current lessee Clint Bellamy and his family, our pest control contractors (Taranaki Kiwi Trust and Sean Gardiner), Dodunski Forestry Limited, the Biodiversity and Land Management Advisors at Taranaki Regional Council, Makahu School and local community, several researchers and all those involved in contributing towards the purchase of this beautiful property - thank you all very much!

Jake Goonan,
NFRT Reserve Manager
Taranaki, Southern King Country and South Island



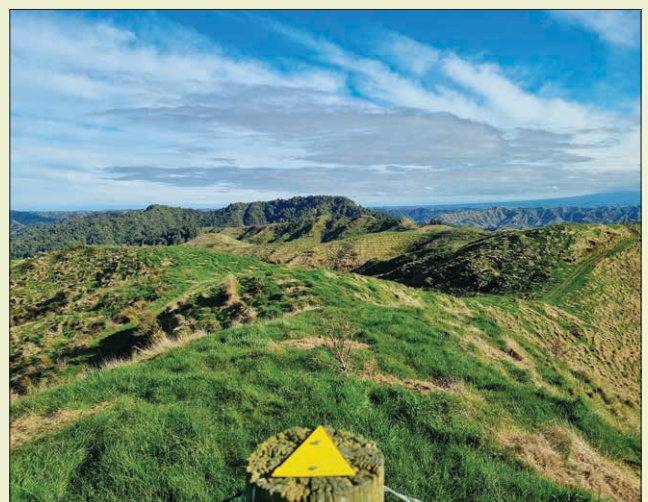
Photo by by Strategy Collective.



Area to be replanted prior to work starting.

Monitoring the Progress: Patui Planting Project

To monitor and measure planting success over time at Patui, we have installed five permanent monitoring plots for the planted trees, as well as six different permanent photo points, and a trail camera. This will allow us to measure planting success (or failure rates) and keep an eye on the number of pest animals passing through the block.



BECOME A FOREST GUARDIAN

Join us as a Forest Guardian with a monthly donation and help keep our native forests safe forever.

Your generous gift will help with the ongoing maintenance of our reserves, ensuring they're protected from invasive weeds, pests and predators. Thanks to you, native plants and animals will have a safe habitat where they can thrive.

For more information and to sign up, please visit www.nfvt.org.nz/become-a-forest-guardian

Our Landscape Our Legacy – Protecting, Inspiring, Managing, Restoring

Come and stay at Mangarakau Wetland Field Centre, North-west of Nelson

Attractive 10 bed lodge situated amid wonderful scenery with walking tracks around the swamp. Close to outstanding natural wilderness areas with access to Kahurangi National Park, Farewell Spit and Te Tai Tapu Marine Reserve. Bring own bedding and food.

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Ph: Robyn Jones (03) 524 8266 mangarakauswamp@gmail.com
www.mangarakauswamp.com



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