



When I visited Puketapu Park with a friend earlier in the year, the place was humming. It was a Sunday afternoon, the sun was out and so too were families, with many enjoying a picnic.

The rural park has a free-to-use barbecue, picnic tables and a large grassed area with an informal cricket pitch. While freedom camping isn't allowed, self-contained motor homes can be parked up overnight for two nights and we saw several.

There was plenty of space for everyone and children were making the most of a good selection of robust play equipment. This includes a tandem flying fox, four (or six!) person see-saw and a spinning roktopus tyre swing.



Getting there doesn't have to be by car. Puketapu is part of the cycle i-Way network and many cyclists ride out to enjoy a meal or refreshments at the iconic, family-friendly Puketapu Hotel.

The hotel was built in 1885 and burnt down in 1928. It was rebuilt and extended over the following years. It's a great bike ride from Taradale up one side of the Tūtaekurī River and back down the other, passing scenic farmland and, of course, motorists get a great view of Roger and Diane Alexander's picturesque wildlife lake just before they reach the village.



My neighbours are keen cyclists and they really recommend the Puketapu Loop for riders who are even only moderately fit as the cycle trail starting at the Pettigrew Arena in Taradale is relatively flat. The trail is an 18 km round trip and what they like about it is the



well-maintained limestone surface, the peaceful countryside and the fact that the trail is suitable for all ages and fitness levels. They also enjoy the social aspect of the ride, meeting up with fellow cyclists at the pub where they can relax, enjoy good food and share their stories.

Puketapu supports a thriving community complete with a church, school, the pub, a village store and several family-run businesses.

Driving back to Taradale, there is a tall, unmissable timber sculpture of a man carrying a boy on his shoulders. Most people would have felled the old tree.

Instead, someone creative has carved it into a work of art and, in doing so, has given passers-by a lot of pleasure and something to talk about on the way home.





Black fantails (pīwakawaka) are very rare in the North Island and make up less than 5% of the South Island population.

Unlike their pied counterparts, they are mainly black, with black-brown over the rump, belly and flight feathers and, occasionally, have a white spot over each ear. Interestingly, they never have white on their tail feathers and young black fantails tend to be more dark brown than black.



While holidaying in the Abel Tasman National Park over Easter, Anna Phillips quickly snapped this friendly little guy on her phone. He's got the white patch on his ear.



Not every shot has to be a winning photo but it is nice to be able to record a moment in time.

One day while walking in a local reserve at dusk, I saw this young tui sitting on a low branch very close to the walking path, so I quickly grabbed my camera before it took off and, on another occasion, I saw a white dove keeping its beady eye on me as I walked by and thought the rather unusual angle made for quite an attractive photo.



**Birds NZ Hawke's Bay Region** hosted the 2021 annual Birds NZ Youth Camp during the first week of the April school holidays.

Twelve students from different parts of the country attended and all enjoyed a very full-on week of 'birding' under the guidance of some of New Zealand's top ornithologists and local 'birders' who were great at spotting and identifying the different species.

Anderson Park was the first port of call and among over twenty species spotted on the

visit was a plumed whistling duck (a rare Australian vagrant). There were also visits to Ahuriri Estuary, Pekapeka Regional Park and Waitangi Regional Park.

At the Waikahu Wetlands, participants were treated to a sighting of one of NZ's rarest birds, the Australian Bittern, while The Cape Sanctuary showed off some pretty special endemic birds such as kākā, red-crowned kākārīki, NZ robin, North Island tomtit, brown teal and the critically endangered NZ shore plover, which are part of the sanctuary's successful captive breeding programme.



Photos by Lynne Anderson



Mist netting in a Hastings orchard (something which must always be carried out by a licensed 'bander') was really popular. Birds were caught in fine nets, very carefully handled, weighed, measured and banded for scientific research - like keeping track of how long birds live for.

The final two days were spent at Boundary Stream where eagle-eyed students recorded sightings of the NZ falcon, whitehead, morepork and, after much time searching, a kōkako. Interested to know more? Contact: [secretary@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:secretary@birdsNZ.org.nz)



**Street Art** turns dull and boring buildings and walls into works of art which can be enjoyed by everyone.

The talent and seemingly endless imagination of creative artists who transform super-large blank canvases into astonishing artworks is just incredible. The striking mural of the extinct Haast eagle by Chinese artist Dal East is part of Dunedin's streetscape while the flying godwit



(which, as reported in a recent newsletter fly from Alaska to escape the northern hemisphere winter and enjoy the New Zealand summer at Ahuriri Estuary) by Charles and Janine Williams can be found closer to home at Napier Port.



Hastings has its share of murals too, with Cinzah Merkins' depiction of a hawk flying menacingly on the Karamu St East carpark wall adding interest for anyone passing by. Check out council websites for maps showing where the murals are.

## PICTURE PERFECT

This gorgeous photo of a cute little tomtit was taken by my friend Ros Rowe. Ros takes well-earned R & R breaks at a simple bush camp up Wairoa way and this is one of the residents.

Tomtits live mainly in forest and shrubland habitats and are rarely seen in highly modified open environs, such as farmland and suburbia.

They are widely distributed throughout the North and South Islands and are also found on Stewart Island, Chatham Islands, Snares Islands and Auckland Islands.

Males are mainly black and white while females are mostly brown and white. A bit like the fantail, individuals can be quite confiding, coming within a few metres of humans.

Their Conservation Status is 'Not Threatened' but introduced mammalian predators, particularly rats, take a toll on eggs and incubating females because the birds tend to nest in shallow cavities which makes them vulnerable to attack. They feed on a wide range of small invertebrates, including spiders, amphipods, beetles, flies, moths, weta and small fruits. More info at: [www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz](http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz)



**RISE AND SHINE:** Here's a great excuse to get your tramping boots on.

The locally-loved and aptly-named Sunrise Hut and Sunrise Track in the Ruahine Forest Park are open once again following renovations and improvements. The views from the hut are, quite simply, breath-taking.



DOC's media release last month reported that this work followed an upgrade made to the hut's interior last winter with Jobs for Nature funding, which created jobs for six people over May and June 2020. The hut was painted by volunteers over four days in February (organised and funded by the Backcountry Trust and a local community group with support from DOC), using paint provided by Dulux. To find out more about bookings, go to:- [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) Thanks to Sally Neal for the great photos.



**Biodiversity Day** on 22<sup>nd</sup> May was celebrated locally when around 30 volunteers met at Te Mata Park and removed 5,000 wilding pines prior to replanting the Tauroa Forest area. Biodiversity Hawke's Bay's Administration Manager, Sarah Reddish, told me that it was a perfect way to recognise the day, working alongside and supporting local community groups to protect and enhance biodiversity in Hawke's Bay. If you want to learn more about how Biodiversity HB can support you and your community, contact its community facilitator, Belinda Sleight on [community@biodiversityhb.nz](mailto:community@biodiversityhb.nz)



**WINTER WARMERS:** During the winter months, garden birds will really appreciate some extra rations. I buy a 5 kg bag of mixed wild bird seed from the local supermarket for \$15 which keeps the regular visitors happy for several weeks. Fruit can be left out or, if you have the time, you could make your own with seeds and beef dripping. **Method:** Melt the beef dripping or suet over a low heat and pour it into a flat tin lined with greaseproof paper. Sprinkle about 500g of wild bird seed into the warm oil, allow it



to cool and place in the fridge. Cut into squares as it hardens. Once set, separate the squares and place individual portions in a cage feeder as needed. It's really rewarding watching the birds enjoy it.



There's just room to squeeze in a recommendation for those of you who missed TVNZ 1's fantastic documentary about New Zealand's endangered native species and the efforts underway to save them. It's available on TVNZ On Demand and includes great interviews and spectacular landscapes.



With the busy avian breeding season over for another year, it's now a case of all hands on deck to get a massive planting effort underway through the quieter winter months.

The number of plants needing to be transported from the huge, state-of-the-art nursery opened last year, to the various planting sites is staggering to people used to buying a few plants for their own town sections.



Manager, Rachel Ward, told me that in the 2019 and 2020 seasons, some 20,000 plants were put into two large blocks inside the predator fence and that, already, they are becoming well established.



This season, the team aims to get around 60,000 plants into the ground within the next three months - hence the call to arms to anyone willing to help out and get stuck in. Plantings include some 35,000 kanuka and 10,000 manuka, along with thousands of cabbage trees and pohutukawa.

Corporate Group Days will be arranged through the week (great for team-building exercises) and Community Group Planting Days (including High School students) organised for the weekends.

The exponential growth in numbers is due to the capacity of the new nursery, which was part-funded by a grant from the government's One Billion Trees Fund and has room for around 70,000 plants.

Most plants are grown from seed sourced from local pockets of native bush by keen volunteers. Once delivered, the nursery team got to work and potted them up ready to be nurtured until the time comes for them to make their way into the big wide world and help transform the rugged hills and gullies within the sanctuary's 2,500 hectares. A number of approved bare-land planting sites, to provide wildlife corridors between existing plantings, are waiting to get a magical makeover.



This is all a far cry from when landowner Andy Lowe walked over the retired farmland some fifteen years ago, heard no birdsong and made the decision to create a habitat where native species could thrive. Now, after more than a decade of large-scale plantings, there are growing populations of kākā, kākārīki, kererū, kiwi, North Island robin, seabirds, tomtits, tui and whiteheads, along with native lizards and skinks and the hills are alive with the sounds of many native birds.

Not only have there been extensive planting programmes within the predator-free fence but mixed native species have been planted around the buffer-zones outside of the sanctuary to create wildlife corridors. Planting the right tree or shrub in the right place is paramount and all plans are based on plant ecology. Often, cluster plantings provide the best results.



Are you up for the challenge? If so, bring a picnic, bring your gumboots, bring a shovel and bring a smile... there are roles for the fit and active and roles for the not-so-fit, so everyone has a chance to contribute their time and enjoy what Rachel describes as wonderful camaraderie.

She says that volunteers gain a real sense of achievement and that it's very gratifying work as the plants grow rapidly and people very soon see the fruits of their labour. Rachel told me that, as each plant is put into its newly dug hole, "We like to take a moment to wish it luck." That's a nice touch.

***Would you like to help with this year's planting?***

***If so, e-mail the sanctuary team for details at:- [volunteer@capesanctuary.co.nz](mailto:volunteer@capesanctuary.co.nz)***

If you know of a conservation champion or something relevant going on in Hawke's Bay, please let me know and I'll be happy to follow it up:- [jessicamaxwell2017@gmail.com](mailto:jessicamaxwell2017@gmail.com)



***Money can buy you a fine dog but  
love makes him wag his tail.***

