



## Winter Newsletter 2025 Number 86

**Kia ora tātou,**

**Some of the work undertaken over the past three months:**

- Responded to a range of information and support requests from WBF members and public
- Organisation and facilitation of Waingaroa, Raglan Forum day , 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2025

### **New Zealand Geographic – Making Gullies Great Again!**

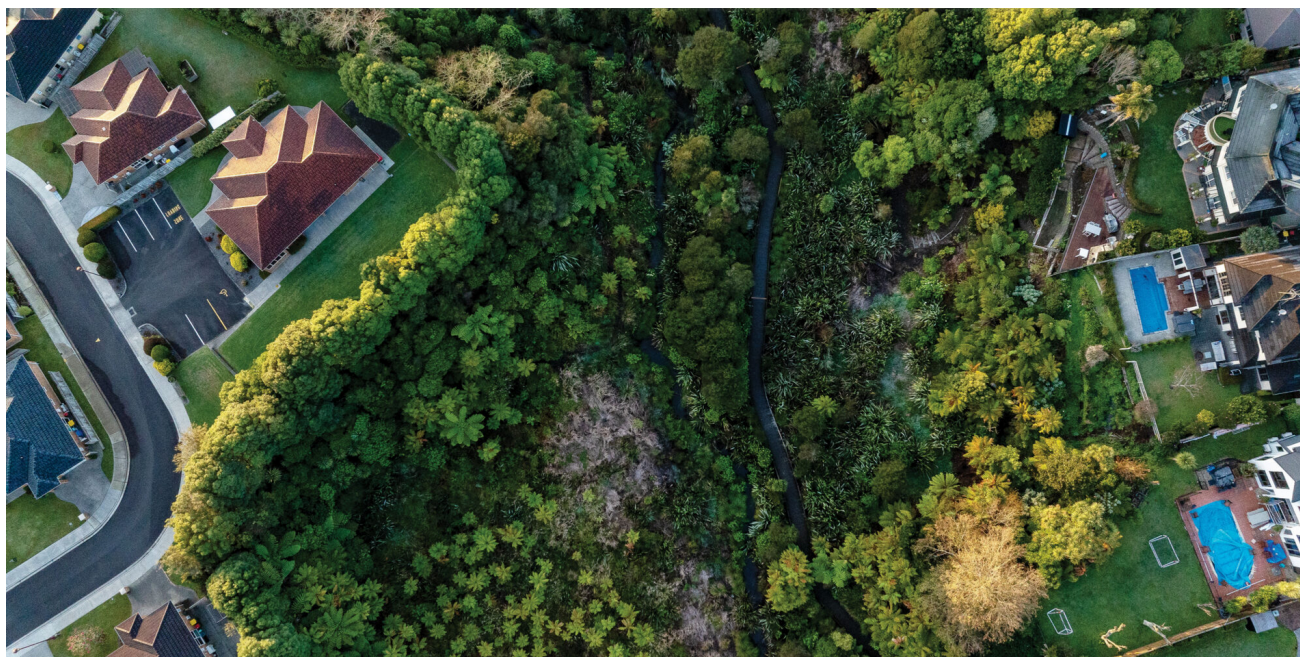
Stand anywhere high in Hamilton, on a tall building, or one of the few hills in town, and it seems as if distant ranges encircle the skyline.

The city lies in a 90-kilometre-long, 40-kilometre-wide oval-shaped depression known to geologists as the Hamilton Lowland. Within the lowland is the Hamilton Basin—a large alluvial fan, like a rimmed plain, that is cut through by the modern Waikato River.

The river's course today is nothing like its ancestral path. In past lives, it meandered, braided, flooded and spread far beyond its present banks, flowing into the Thames estuary by way of the Hinuera Valley and the Hauraki Basin.

Following the massive Oruanui eruption of the Taupō volcano about 27,000 years ago, the river slowly began to choke on debris. It was eventually forced onto a new path, cutting through the Hamilton Basin.

Early Māori knew that the river had changed its course dramatically. Waikato iwi retain the details in a pūrākau about the relationship between Taupiri and Tongariro mountains. It tells how the two maunga redirected the river's flow by awakening Rūaumoko, god of earthquakes and volcanoes. And so, the mountains made Hamilton a city of gullies. [Click here](#) to see full story and images.





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## Northern Pureora Kōkako Recovery Project – Mangatūtū and Tunawaea Ecological Areas

Reaching the milestone of 30 years since we started, allows time to reflect on our progress. With a remnant pair of 7 kōkako in 1995, Mangatūtū's recent kōkako survey – yet to be finalised – indicates that our population has grown to approximately 373 pair, the highest density anywhere at an average of 22 pairs/hectare. This is a fantastic result, a huge boost to our volunteers and a credit to all the hard work and commitment by Laurence Gordon, Rosemary Gatland, the Howick Tramping Club and many people over the years, despite our ups and downs along the way. With Liz Ware from the Auckland Tramping Club offering to bait the nearby Tunawaea EA, a bait station network was set up by Mangatūtū volunteers and DOC Maniapoto with rat control starting in 2011. Sustained commitment by ATC volunteers has increased their kōkako population from 13 pair to an interim result of 84 pair. Aerial 1080 by DOC has also helped enhance these populations with the advantage of targeting the full suite of predators. Growth in these populations has allowed kōkako translocations to support other projects - 90 from Mangatūtū and 15 from Tunawaea, as well as 160 toutouwai/North Island robin translocated from Mangatūtū.



Fiona Darin

*Trail camera kōkako footage, Mark Darin.*

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## Greening Taupō - We're on the Radio!

Our team was very excited to have a special visitor at a recent Wicked Weeders session. The Project Tongariro, Greening Taupō, and Kids Greening Taupō teams had the amazing opportunity to be interviewed for RNZ's "Our Changing World" podcast with Claire Concannon. As we got stuck into another session of weeding and restoration work, Clare was right there alongside us — microphone in hand, capturing the spirit of the work that we do. Our coordinators, some of the Wicked Weeders and our Senior Students had the opportunity to be interviewed and share their views.

Claire Concannon and the team at RNZ's "Our Changing World" did an amazing job of pulling all of the interviews together and making a podcast that discusses the history of Project Tongariro, Greening Taupō, Kids Greening Taupō and Greening Taupō Day. This was a lot to cover - the story of the tragic helicopter accident that led to Project Tongariro, the move to urban restoration with Greening Taupō, then bringing the tamariki on board with Kids Greening Taupō. As she interviewed us, we were frantically preparing for our biggest event of the year, Greening Taupō Day, so she covered that too! It was a lot of content and Clare did an incredible job of getting it all to make sense in an accurate way. She managed to shine a light on the huge

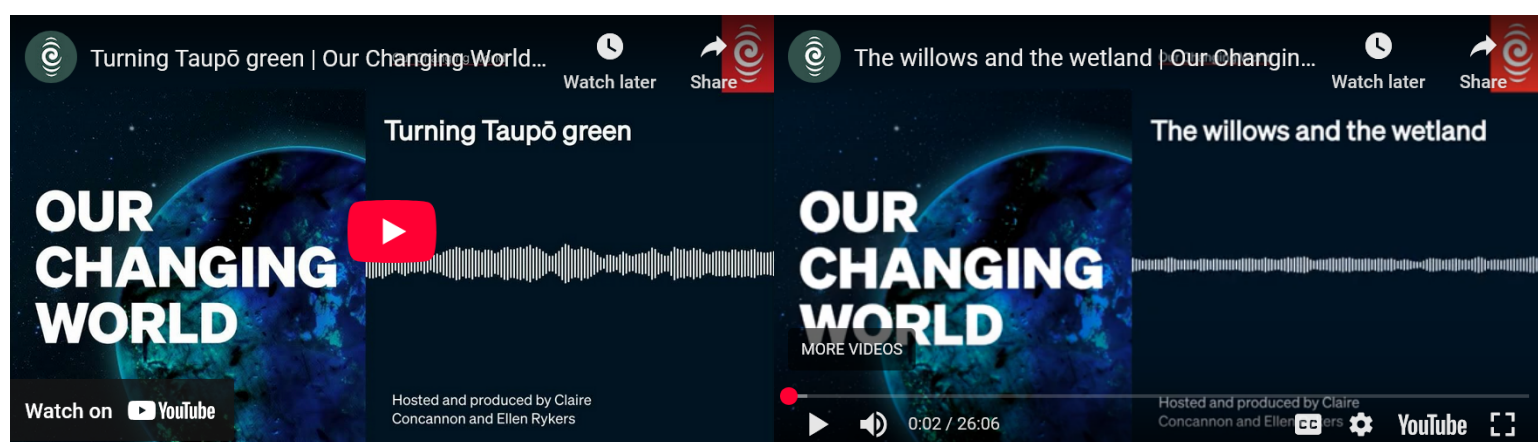


range of grassroots conservation and environmental education happening right here in Taupō while telling our story.

While Claire was in town, she also visited local expert, Nick Singers, and well known Project Tongariro volunteer, Shirley Potter, to see the amazing wetland restoration work that they have undertaken in Tauranga-Taupō. This fantastic success story was made into another podcast, 'The Willows and the Wetland'.

These two podcasts are interesting to listen to and cover an incredible amount of information, but they are pretty lengthy. We were really excited when Claire did an interview with Jesse Mulligan on RNZ and discussed her time with us all here in Taupō. This interview is a great concise summary of the two podcasts for those who don't have time to listen to them.

An article with [links to both podcasts was released](#) by RNZ too! Thank you so much Claire, Jesse and the team from RNZ for taking the time to see the great work that we are doing here in Taupō and sharing it so beautifully and accurately with everyone else in Aotearoa.



## Forest and Bird Waikato Volunteer Planting

For the community planting at Aorere Glen covenant in Whatawhata on Mother's Day, it was interesting that mostly women turned up, a few supportive men and one family with a small child. There were ten of us in total, with 500 native trees to plant, funded by Trees that Count.

The site was relatively steep and there was a lot of ferrying plants from the top of the gully down to the bottom and then empty containers, back up again. But local volunteer and supplier of the native plants, Steffen Grimm, helped enormously by pre drilling the holes on the day.

Mr David Wilde said a few words of thanks, then planted a large kōwhai tree to mark the occasion and we had some homemade shared kai afterwards. We also had a beautiful blue sky day, which was lovely. These trees are helping to extend the existing covenant on the farm through retiring a steep gully and associated wetland system along the Koromatua stream.

Many organisations and people are involved in providing assistance to this project, including, Ngāti Mahānga, Waikato River Authority, Waikato Regional Council, QEII National Trust, Forest Flora Nursery, Fonterra, NZ Landcare Trust and Waikato District Council. Nardene Berry







*View from the bottom. Above: from the top. Nardene Berry*



*The planting crew. Julia Grimm*

## Whatawhata School Room 11 student's Tree Planting

Around 22 students planted 750 native trees in a matter of minutes, it seemed like, as it was such an enjoyable day! The weather was amazing and there was fantastic support from teachers, grandparents, and many others from the community, including:

Steffen and Julia Grimm, Ngāti Mahānga, Waikato River Authority, Waikato Regional Council, Waikato District Council, QEII National Trust, Forest Flora Nursery, Fonterra and NZ Landcare Trust. The planting occurred at Mr David Wilde's Aorere Glen covenant and was opened with a karakia and a brief history of the area by kaumātua Hori Richmond.

Fonterra provided an amazing BBQ lunch. After lunch, the students went for a tour of the more mature section of the covenant led by Steffen Grimm. The students enjoyed the chance to serve their local community by being part of a legacy building event as they work towards achieving their William Pike Challenge credentials. Nardene Berry





Panorama of planting site with students spread out planting. Nardene Berry



Plants on the trailer ready to be unloaded and planted. Nardene Berry

## Ōwhango Alive - Trap Swapping Teams

July and August saw the “trap swap” team carry in and lug out more than 40 DOC200 traps on a couple of lines along the Whakapapa River. The fresh, clean and dry traps weren’t such a mission to carry in, but the ones we carried out were seriously heavy with the rain we have been having, along with them sitting out in the weather for the last couple of years. Some were a bit stinky too!

Thank goodness for the DAMP team (Dean, Andrew, Mark and Peter) – they brought some muscle, a hand trolley and plenty of irreverent repartee. It was almost fun! It was a good job done over a few days and now all those traps are ready to start catching again, in time for the spring rush. We endeavour to swap out the traps every so often, to replace soggy timber, the wire baffles if necessary and check everything is working as it should be.

Some of the other trappers change/repair traps as required – it can be a bit of a mission on your own so all hail the Damp team and trappers.





## Taiea te Taiao - has launched a new Education Box

Taiea te Taiao has launched a new Education Box filled with games for students to learn about biodiversity, cultural history and the Maungatautari to Pirongia ecological corridor. The Education Box was put together by New Zealand Landcare Trust, Pirongia Forest Park Lodge, Enviroschools and Pūrekireki Marae with funding support from BUPA Foundation. Students of all ages can enjoy the games.

The box includes field games with lots of running and fast action, using hula hoops as 'stepping stones', safe areas similar to the safe habitat patches that Taiea te Taiao hopes to create across the corridor landscape. There are also table games and charades. For visitors to Pirongia Forest Park Lodge, there is a on-site EcoTeering Course and Giant Tumble Tower! Pirongia Forest Park Lodge will have a box available to visitors and school camps. Pūrekireki Marae and Enviroschools will also have boxes available for schools to borrow. Schools can continue to play the games all year with download and printable resources.

The Education Box aims to plant the seeds of this project in the next generation. Taiea te Taiao recognizes that there is no quick solution to habitat loss and degradation. The solution lies in long-term, generational, and collaborative efforts which require an educational programme to bring everyone on board.

Taiea te Taiao has planted over 300,000 plants in just four years with support from Waikato River Authority, Waikato Regional Council and Trees That Count. Landowners have also received support from Fonterra and Open Country Dairy. Taiea te Taiao has been funded by Ministry for the Environment's Freshwater Improvement Fund, which runs until 2026. New Zealand Landcare Trust is currently seeking funding to continue the project into the future.



*Taiea te Taiao has launched a new Education Box*



## Tāne's Tree Trust - Trustees Acknowledged With Awards at the National Fieldays

Trees on Farms category - Cassie's Farm is an 85ha dry stock farm in the hills overlooking Waikato Basin. We bought this property in 2005 and began planting natives in 2007. To date, we've planted approximately 95,000 native trees and shrubs to create 38 hectares of managed forest. Work is ongoing.

In 2009, when we discovered Tāne's Tree Trust and the concept of Continuous Cover Forestry, we decided to create a showcase for CCF integrated into a farming landscape. Since then, we've systematically converted most of our steep land into native forestry.

Waikato Regional Council have consistently supported our yearly plantings and even changed the wording of their standard covenant to show their support for CCF. Our entire planted forest area is therefore legally protected in perpetuity - BUT - the altered covenant allows for best practice selective harvest from 2071.



We've planted every year since 2007, with funding since 2016 from WRC, Waikato River Authority, Trees That Count and 1BT. Our aim is to keep in pasture only those areas where it is safe to drive a vehicle. Anything steeper is destined for reforestation and management as CCF.

We construct tracks through each area before planting, to make maintenance easy. This track network will eventually facilitate small scale harvest with minimum disruption to the forest. Meanwhile, it provides safe vehicle access for groups attending field days here. Tāne's Tree Trust, WRC, NZFFA, TUR, NZ Landcare Trust, Trees That Count, Trees for Survival, Pūniu River Care, Ngāti Haua Mahi Trust have held field days here – some regularly.



*Open day at Cassie's Farm*

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## Piako Waihou Catchment Trust - Westpac Bank Planting at Toner Farm

It was great to see volunteers from Westpac Bank Hamilton connecting with nature and investing in the future by planting 360 native plants at a farm just outside Morrinsville in early September.

The plants were the last to be planted at this site for the year following a successful earlier planting supported by Morrinsville Intermediate School. Funding for the plants was secured by Piako Waihou Catchment Trust (PWCT) from Trees that Count, a national organisation which provides funding for biodiversity restoration projects made up of donations received from individuals and businesses who want to mitigate their CO2 emissions.

The species planted on the day were those that like “wet feet” and included kahikatea, swamp manuka, tī koūka/cabbage tree, ribbonwood and mingimingi. As well as helping to store carbon, which is the prime objective of the funder, a range of other benefits are provided including improved bank stability, reduced erosion and sediment to the stream, and increased habitat and biodiversity.

Westpac Corporate Relationship Manager Sam Cammock explained that staff get two paid days per year from the bank for employees to support a charity or social enterprise they care about. New Zealand Landcare Trust helped to connect the bank to Piako Waihou Catchment Trust and one of its on-farm planting projects.



Piako Waihou Catchment Trust are running a variety of ecological restoration projects across the catchment and rely on volunteers to assist. Increasing the number of volunteers and supporting them with a positive experience is something the Piako Waihou Catchment Trust will be investing in through a new “Community Activator” position.

“We are looking forward to having more capacity to enable us to build relationships with business and the community going forward” says Matt Vare who is the Catchment Lead for PWCT. “It would be great to see Westpac staff from local branches such as Morrinsville and Matamata be able to volunteer their staff community days to planting and restoration projects in their local communities”.



*Westpac Bank Hamilton staff receive guidance on “how to plant a tree” from PWCT Trustee Jude Tisdall.*

*Job done: Another 360 plants in the ground.*

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