



Summer Newsletter 2026 Number 88

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 of Nature in the City/Waiwhakareke, Forum day, Te kaararo Nature Precinct Hamilton, 20th of May 2026

In Memory of Betty Collins, 1st September 1952 - 23rd March 2026.

No words can do justice to the contribution Betty made to the conservation of our local native biodiversity over the many years of her involvement both as a volunteer and as an employee of Hamilton City Council. She began there as a landscape assistant in the Parks Department, where she worked on Hamilton Gardens and many other projects through the city's parks. However she found her true work home with HCC at Hamilton Zoo, where she truly left her mark.

On the voluntary side, and particularly following her "retirement", Betty was a key member of Tui 2000 (established in 1989 to bring Tui back into the city of Hamilton). Under the umbrella of Tui 2000 Betty was fully committed to both the Friends of Barrett Bush (a DOC Reserve) and the Friends of Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park (WNHP). Betty was also an active and effective member of Weedbusters Waikato.

For Barrett Bush, Betty organised the monthly working bees over many years ensuring that this Kahikatea remnant was added to with suitable tree species and kept relatively weed free. She managed the relationships with neighbouring farmers which was a challenging task at times.

For WNHP, Betty also attended regular working bees from its establishment in 2004 and served all of those years on the Waiwhakareke Advisory Group (WAG).

It was Betty's formal training in Holland (she immigrated to NZ as a 21 year old) in horticulture and landscape design that made her such a valuable member of the native plant growing community. We, at the Waikato Ecological Restoration Trust (WERT) Community Nursery, used Betty's expertise on many occasions in seed germination, nursery management and general plant rearing.

Betty's dedication, wisdom and general knowledge will be sorely missed as will her ever-willing and kindly determination to encourage others in the biodiversity area.

Our sincere condolences are extended to husband Brian and family, Catherine Smith and Kemble Pudney.



The Karioi Project and the Waikato Conservation Community Remember Andrew Styche with Deep Gratitude and Appreciation

Andrew Styche, Community Senior Ranger with the Department of Conservation, served community conservation for many years - working alongside countless projects, iwi partners, and community groups across the region. For us here at the Karioi Project, Andrew supported our work for 15 years.

Andrew was a true “bird and bat man” - deeply knowledgeable, passionate, and committed to protecting nature. He generously shared his expertise and stood alongside community-led mahi, helping strengthen conservation efforts in practical and meaningful ways. Andy, we couldn't have done so much of this work without you!

We will always remember the many conversations - at times drifting into full lecture mode - and the honest exchanges that followed. Community-based conservation is not an exact science; it is often messy, human, and imperfect. We are grateful that Andrew was willing to meet us there, recognising that “not perfect” was still meaningful and worth doing.

He was a smart man and serious - seriously stoked on nature and preserving what we have left! He inspired and supported so many people and projects, even when the challenges brought moments of cynicism. But Andrew - you were one of the good ones. Kua hinga te tōtara i te wao nui a Tāne. A tōtara tree has fallen in the great forest of Tāne.

Thank you, Andrew. For your knowledge, your commitment, and your love for nature and this work! Moe mai rā 🍀

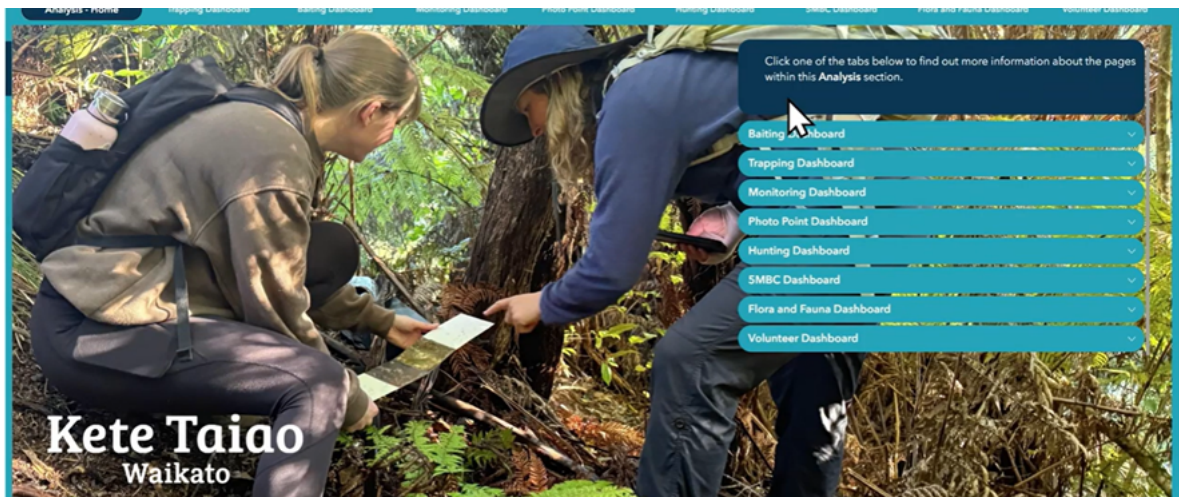


Waikato Regional Council - Kete Taiao Waikato

We're getting ready to pilot Kete Taiao Waikato, a new spatial data management tool designed to support community-led biodiversity projects. Kete Taiao Waikato can be used on desktop or mobile to record things like planting, pest control (animals and plants), monitoring and volunteer hours, all in one place. It works in the field and makes it easier to plan activities, track progress, and report on what's being achieved. Click here to see a short demo of what can be done. If you're interested in being one of the first groups to try Kete Taiao Waikato, we'd love to hear from you. We're looking for groups who are:

- comfortable using technology (or keen to learn)
- willing to actively use the tool and provide feedback
- able to put some time into learning and using the system as part of their project work
- positive about helping test the tool so it works well for community groups.

Please email a brief expression of interest, including your group name, a contact person, and a short description of your project to ketetaiao@waikatoregion.govt.nz.



Fairfield Gully Restoration Grows Environmental Education

For Fairfield Project co-ordinator Lyn Rogers, restoring Kukurūruhe Gully bordering Fairfield College in Hamilton is all about leaving a legacy for students. The former science teacher, who helped spur the Fairfield Project in motion back in 2014, says when she taught at Fairfield College, the gully was full of rubbish and overgrown with every pest plant imaginable.

“It wasn’t feasible to take my students in the gully as a science teacher so, for me, the Fairfield Project is about creating a learning environment that other teachers can use,” says Lyn. “It’s an opportunity to connect students, and the community, to the restoration that’s happening, as a place they can go to and learn about ecology, conservation, pest management, environmental monitoring, mautaranaga and promoting kaitiakitanga.”

The Fairfield Project, led by the Kukutaruhe Education Trust Board, was established to foster environmental education for people of all ages. The seed of the project was planted by chair Vic Arcus, a biology professor at the University of Waikato, as an alternative to a proposal put forward by the Ministry of Education to sell 12 hectares of Fairfield College school grounds for housing development, including the 8ha gully.

“The community saw it has a valuable green space,” says Lyn. The Kukurūruhe Stream has been identified as a giant kōkopu spawning site. “This land was a place of abundance, with two pa sites. The gully was their kai basket, with fish in the streams and birds in the bush.”

The Kukurūruhe Stream, a tributary to the Waikato River, had also just been identified by NIWA as a giant kōkopu spawning site. “We were not at all keen to see this land turned into housing, and if it had been developed then it would have been hard to look after the stream and the taonga species in it. “More than 300 people turned up to a community meeting in support of keeping the land, and the trust was set up to make that happen.”

Fast forward to 2026 and thousands of volunteer hours have gone into gradually restoring the gully to recreate the biodiversity it once had. Thousands of students have gone into it to learn about the restoration process, including taking part in an annual Bioblitz where they become citizen scientists by monitoring life in Kukurūruhe Gully, for example, doing bird counts, macroinvertebrate monitoring to assess stream health, and identifying regenerating plant species.

To make all this happen, the trust actively seeks partnerships, collaboration and funding for the project. It was one of 15 community projects to get a grant from Waikato Regional Council’s Environmental Initiatives Fund (EIF) in 2025, receiving \$23,944 to support project management of the ecological restoration.

Most of the planting is done by students from Waikato Diocesan School for Girls and Fairfield College. Trustee and project volunteer Roger Cox says planting has been ongoing for nine years now, under the direction of ecologist and “gully guru” Bruce McKay, with over 35,000 native trees in the ground so far. “We’re really grateful for the EIF funding,” says Roger.

See full article [here](#)



Manaaki Kaimai Mamaku Trust - Pekapeka, Where Are You?

Te Whakamaru o Horohoro, the iwi-led conservation project of Ngāti Kea Ngāti Tuara, have placed 29 ABM's (Automatic Bat Monitors) in ~100 hectares of indigenous DOC land. Thanks to the support of WRC and Rebecca Stirnemann, previous monitoring has confirmed long-tailed bat presence on the maunga.

“We assume the long-tailed bats move throughout Horohoro maunga, but we are monitoring a new location to confirm. We are also checking to see if the nationally vulnerable short-tailed bat is present,” says Project Manager Kataraina George. The monitors will be left out for a month, and results will help target trap locations to better protect the pekapeka.

As well as predator control, the Ngāti Kea Ngāti Tuara nursery is thriving, producing almost 40,000 plants annually, with over 95% eco-sourced from the Horohoro area. Since predator control began, the team are noticing a healthier ngahere, with seedling regeneration and older trees showing encouraging new growth.



Central Waikato Predator Free Hub - Six+ Months of Pest Control and Passion at Te Aroha

Well, here we are another year has come and gone and so much has happened in our beautiful part of the country. From scratch we have worked our way into a neat little group of volunteers. The team of a dozen is made up of a diverse group who all bring their talents to the table, and all are hard working, enthusiastic individuals with a passion for their mahi.

Our first traps went up on the mountain on 27 May this year which makes us just over 6 months old, at present we are sitting on about 220 odd traps up on the beautiful Maunga of Te Aroha. We are targeting rats, possums, stoats, hedgehogs and mice, currently a total of 580 pests removed.

The Mountain has seen a lot of damage done to it over the generations by mining, forestry and farming. The foothills were burnt and cleared, so pretty much all of the lower bush is all secondary growth. Our goal is to eradicate the Predators to encourage the natural Flora and Fauna to regenerate. We want to leave it better than we found it and to hand an asset on to our future generations.



Purangi Conservation Trust - Hot Chicks on Beaches

With wind and rain, high tides, holiday makers with dogs, and predators still lurking in the grasses, life is never easy for a small ground nesting bird. Despite these pressures, this season has been remarkable, with more dotterel nests on our beaches than ever before. The exact reason isn't certain, but there is likely a strong link between increased public awareness and ongoing predator control and birds surviving, returning, and being joined by their offspring. Here's how our beaches are tracking so far:

Front Beach - The first chicks in at least two decades hatched this year. Sadly, they disappeared after just two days, with cat prints suggesting the likely cause. Other nests were lost to high tides or abandoned after disturbance from off lead dogs.

Flaxmill Bay - A real highlight — all five chicks have now fledged. A fantastic result for this site. Lonely Bay. Both chicks were progressing well but disappeared over two nights, almost certainly taken by a predator despite the extensive pest control.

Cooks Beach - A complex but productive season. Since October, there have been at least ten nests. From the early nests, 11 chicks hatched and five have successfully fledged. Some nests were lost to tides and two chicks died in the nest. More recently, two chicks have hatched and are confidently ruling the beach between the orange and black posts and the Central Reserve boat ramp. The final nest near Cooks Stream each contain three eggs and are expected to hatch by mid to late January.



Econet - Vastly Better Weed Mapping Now Ready

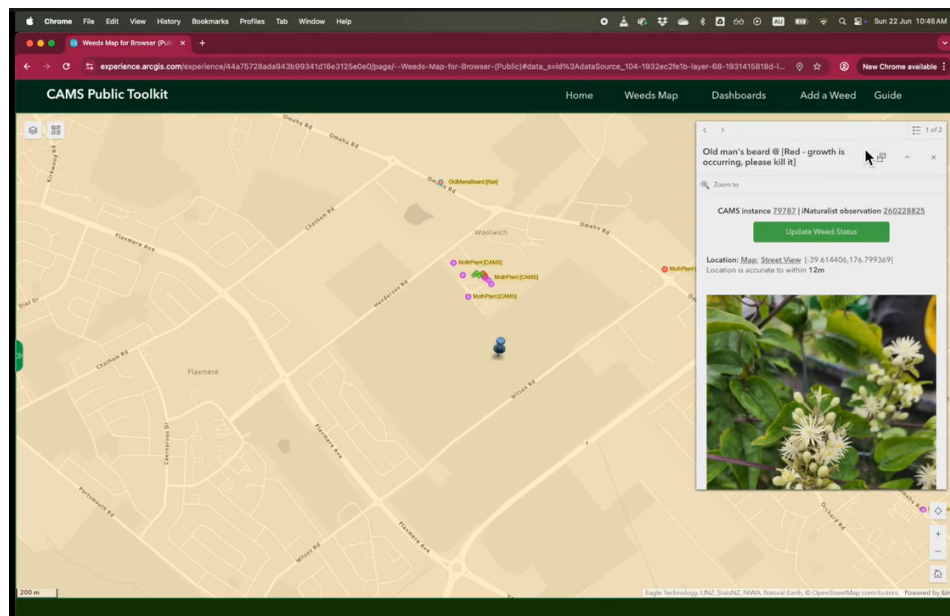
We are very excited to announce that our new CAMS Community Toolkit v0.8 is now ready to use. CAMS Community Toolkit v0.8 is a website where you can access maps, field maps, dashboards and more. This is the culmination of more than a year's work by some incredibly dedicated volunteer developers. We are extremely grateful to Keith Salmon, Nigel Charman, Daniel Thomas, Mohadesa Sharifi and many others for your generous input.

Key new features

- New popup displays past visit dates and status clearly
- New popup shows iNaturalist photo if entered via iNaturalist
- Easy Updater makes editing a weed instance super quick and easy
- New fields in the AGOL GIS form for power users
- New indicator of months since last visit
- New indicator that next visit date is passed

Features from CAMS Public Maps carried through to CAMS Community Toolkit include:

- iNaturalist selected weeds added to map and show as iNat in label
- All weeds added via Weed Management Aotearoa NZ iNaturalist project appear on map



To access CAMS Community please see [Our Solutions on our website](#). You need to be a verified user to access this toolkit - follow the instructions on our website carefully.

People, Cities and Nature - Towards a Paradigm Shift in Aerobiome Research

Recent research by Professor Martin Breed, Dr Craig Liddicoat, and a group of interdisciplinary colleagues argues for a strategic shift in aerobiome research. The aerobiome comprises microorganisms and bioactive compounds suspended in air. The current paradigm predominantly focuses on harmful bioaerosols linked to disease, allergy, and pollution. Breed and colleagues show that this focus limits progress and misses an important piece of the aerobiome pie.

They call for support of a new paradigm that considers not only harmful bioaerosols but also the huge array of beneficial airborne components, including salutogenic microbiota (microbes that promote health), phytoncides (plant-derived organic compounds associated with immune modulation), as well as pheromones and aeronutrients (airborne bioactive molecules that can influence human physiology and ecosystems). The team has established the [Aerobiome Innovation and Research Hub](#) to accelerate aerobiome science.

The People, Cities and Nature team contributes through applied aerobiome research in urban restoration contexts. Over the past four years, Professor Breed and his team have collected and analysed aerobiome samples from a network of urban forest restoration sites across nine cities in Aotearoa New Zealand. This work aims to inform urban restoration guidelines that integrate ecosystem recovery with measurable human health outcomes.

You can read more about their research here: [Opportunities, challenges, and policy implications of the aerobiome paradigm shift | mSphere](#)



Kids Greening Taupō – Snapshot of Success 2025

Thank you to everyone who made 2025 such a successful year for Kids Greening Taupō! It has been a fantastic year as we celebrated our 10th birthday party, moved into freshwater biosecurity, and geothermal ecosystem education, and launched our new reo Māori resources!

As a non profit organisation, we are incredibly grateful to those who have funded our programme and sponsored services or equipment. This makes our programme possible.

Also, a big 'Ngā mihi nui' to all of the schools, ECE centres, teachers, students and whānau who have supported our sessions and events. Together we make Taupō a better place for native wildlife and for people, while raising tamariki who will be the future kaitiaki of Aotearoa.

SNAPSHOT OF SUCCESS JANUARY-DECEMBER 2025



2025 TANGIBLE OUTCOMES

- 46** Schools and ECE centres with native planting projects led/supported by KGT (61 school restoration sites total)
- 30,389** Native plants planted (along with Greening Taupō) this year
- 11,950+** Student and adult volunteer hours actively restoring project areas this year
- 22,500+** Students attended sessions with us this year*
- 650+** Teachers received professional development through our sessions this year*
- 350+** Free online resources on our website, including 55 in te reo Māori, available free to schools, ECE centres, and families
- 54,500+** Page views on KGT website this year
- 3400+** Facebook Followers
- 100+** Students on our extra-curricular student leadership teams in 2025, aged 7-18, from a range of schools
- 80+** Organisations and businesses that we have collaborated with to put on events or educational sessions this year
- \$23,293** Funding (or value of plants) given to schools/ECE centres this year by KGT for projects (through generous sponsors such as Contact Energy, First Credit Union and Possum Run)



*Some teachers/students may have attended more than one session with us and been counted multiple times