

# BOG PAPER

Awarua-Waituna wetland | November 2017

Conservation for prosperity – *Tiakina te taiao, kia puawai*



## Happy 10th birthday Arawai Kākāriki

*Let's look at  
what the Arawai  
Kākāriki wetland  
restoration  
programme has  
achieved here over  
the past 10 years,  
and take a peek  
at what the future  
holds!*

## Celebrating our wetlands

On a beautiful February day, Gorge Road School and the Waituna Landcare Group joined forces with DOC to celebrate World Wetland Day. We explored DOC's new restoration site at Fantail Rise, to find out what critters make this corner of the wetland their home. DOC rangers joined Lloyd Esler, Gay Munro and Brian McFaull to help the kids find tuna (eels), dragonflies, a grass skink and even some blue kōura. What appeared as merely sludge came alive under magnifying glasses... and enterprising local man John Smith gave a brilliant talk on growing native plants. The wetlands are in great hands for the future!



Zealandrea Emillie Elefanio checking out her catch at the new Fantail Rise restoration site.  
Photo: Jane Bowen



Blue kōura from Fantail Rise.  
Photo: Rose Hanley-Nickolls



Fantail Rise – before and after! Photos: Sarah Crump



The students wouldn't recognise the paddock now though: a herculean effort has transformed it into a knee-high forest of plantings, to help connect the covenanted kahikatea remnants to the Toetoes wetland.

These wonderful projects occupied just a few of the thousands of days the DOC team has spent in these fantastic wetlands over the past 10 years – walking, spraying, flying, cutting, digging, weighing, fishing, counting, shooting, planting, listening, measuring, trapping, studying, talking and teaching!

**We now have  
funding until  
2025!**

Thanks for working with us in this incredible place. Here's to many more swamp-y, bittern-y, eel-y years together!

**Arawai Kākāriki**

wetland restoration programme

Whangamarino • Ō Tū Wharekai • Awarua Wetland

Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*



# RESTORING the Awarua-Waituna wetland

## Southland, New Zealand

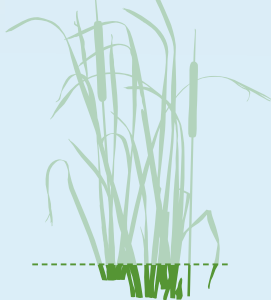
### Waituna is . . .

- one of the largest wetlands left in New Zealand – over 19,195 ha
- culturally, spiritually and historically important to Ngāi Tahu
- internationally important as a haven for wildlife
- an amazing home for hundreds of rare and threatened plants, animals and habitats



### What's the problem?

90% of New Zealand's wetlands are gone – only 240,000 ha remain.



### Why?

Fire, weeds, draining, development, animal pests, and increased sediment and nutrients.



### What's DOC doing?

In 2007, DOC started its wetland restoration programme at Awarua-Waituna, to help protect, better understand and restore wetlands through working with communities, iwi and agencies.



### Our successes over the past 10 years include:

- working together for Waituna: more than 25 organisations and groups, and thousands of Southlanders, young and old



- a strong partnership with iwi



- we've got more people visiting the wetland: we built a 4.5 km walking track, a viewing platform and a boat access point

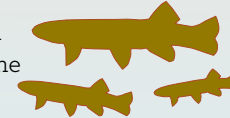
- thousands of hours working with local farmers. We've subsidised over 55 km of fencing of drains and waterways (that's like fencing the road from Mokotua to Gore!)



- hundreds of hectares of weeds controlled each year using knapsacks, saws, helicopters and argo



- 38,500 fish measured and returned alive to the creeks



- large-scale pest control to protect taonga species: 50 km of traps laid



- a new lagoon-opening consent negotiated



- 15,639 ha of wetland added to the internationally renowned Awarua Ramsar site

- a big increase in awareness – thanks to school trips, field days and events, and scientific research – over 30 scientific reports published



- we've also done loads of riparian planting, sprayed boundaries, discussed the RMA and supported local groups!



### There's more! We protected:

- rare and cryptic wetland birds – including biterns, marsh crake, spotless crake and fernbirds
- feeding grounds for 21 species of bird that fly in from around the world!
- 45 threatened plant species
- 8 rare, threatened ecosystems
- 80 threatened and at-risk species of plants and animals
- an outstanding variety of fish, birds, lizards and invertebrates
- one of the few naturally functioning coastal lagoons remaining in New Zealand.

### Budget

\$5 million over 10 years, funded by DOC



# 2025: The future

We've had a great 10 years – so what's on the cards for the next 10?

## In our first decade we ...

- **learned** about wetlands: what lives there, how they work, and what threatens them
- **figured out** what to do, how to do it, and then we did it!
- **worked with others** to learn what to do, and how to do it together
- **shared** what we learned.

## Our next 10 years will be all about ...

- **practical wetland restoration:** spraying, trapping and planting
- **learning even more** – especially about our threatened plants and animals
- **working with people and organisations** to get the best future for our wetlands
- **sharing what we learn**, with great research and monitoring.



Above: DOC scientist Hugh Robertson investigating an old drain. Photo: Sarah Crump

Left: Remuremu looper moth. Photo: Sarah Crump



Jane Bowen installing part of the new trapping network.  
Photo: Sarah Crump



**And don't forget ... wetlands *burn* too.**

We've lost large wetland areas to fire in the past 10 years. When fire goes out, weeds and pests burst in. ***Remember you need a permit for all fires from Tiwai in the west to Fortrose in the east, and as far north as the Catlins Highway (SH92).*** Fire and Emergency New Zealand is happy to talk to you about any burning, and provide free advice. For more information check their website: [www.southernruralfire.org.nz](http://www.southernruralfire.org.nz).

Sarah Crump fighting the most recent fire at Tiwai. Photo: Finlay Cox

Published by: Department of Conservation,  
Murihiku/Invercargill Office, PO Box 743,  
Invercargill 9840, New Zealand  
November 2017

Editing and design: Creative Services, DOC  
National Office

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