

Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves Inc.

Your local group working to enrich our natural environment since 2002



Newsletter June 2025

In this issue

AGM feedback

Inspirational AGM

Planting dates

Mark your diary

Happenings

Rabbits!

New constitution & name?

More ...

Trappers update

News and tips

Willowbank

The WRCG

Your place

Tawa's micro reserves

Close-up

Profiling a local

Odd Spot

Population growth?

Sightings

Photo gossip

I spy ...

What our cameras see

Wild resources

Some more good stuff

Caption competition

Tickle your funny bone

<https://tawabush.org.nz/>

Please send newsletter contributions to the editor:

newsletter@tawabush.org.nz

Kiwi wow AGM!

Those attending the April AGM were treated to a brief business session before guest speakers Paul Ward and Jeff Hall from Capital Kiwi gave a stunner of a presentation on the successful reintroduction of kiwi to the wild on the outskirts of Wellington. Trapping began in 2018 before the first of 206 birds were released in 2022, and they are successfully



breeding with a survival rate that is happily above the target minimum.

The speakers emphasised how the project is community driven, "built on the passion of people like yourselves", iwi and landowners. "It's about all of us".

The land covered by the Capital Kiwi project covers an area roughly the size of Abel Tasman National Park, from Red Rocks in the south up through Mākara and Ōhāriu Valley to Whitireia Park in the north – kiwi are coming!

Your committee elected at the AGM is unchanged: John Burnet (President), Gary Beecroft (Vice President), Geoff Mills (Secretary), Chris Paice (Treasurer), Andrew Liley, Richard Herbert, Damian Hewett and Andrew Hunt.

Planting dates *(make a date with a plant!)*

The planting season is upon us! Here are the main event dates for your calendar. Watch email and FB for updates & other small volume and infill plantings.

Woodburn Reserve	Planting area above Takapu Road industrial area to the south of the reserve. Access from Takapu Road, lefthand side, beyond the industrial block to the north of the Bing Lucas Drive corner. Look for the FOTBR flag.	Sunday 8 th June, 1:00 Tuesday 24 th June, 1:30
Caribbean Dr Reserve	With Port Nicholson Rotary group.	Sunday 13 th July, 1:00 Tuesday 22 nd July, 1:30
Upper Te Ngahere-o-Tawa / Forest of Tawa	We have to drive through the tip boom gate in convoy. Meet at the Spicer Botanical Park car park (just to the right of the main tip gates).	Sunday 10 th August. Meet at 12:45 Tuesday 26 th August, 1:30

Happenings – news and updates

Editorial (that sounds very grand!) Your editor was delighted to receive some contributions for the **Sightings** segment of this newsletter and would love to share more of the good stuff you're doing at **Your Place**. It all helps in encouraging the rest of us, so please share what you've been up to, no matter how small. Tips for involving children would also be welcome!

Rabbits!! Our efforts to get action on the east Tawa **rabbit infestation** that is affecting Mexted Reserve and local landowners have resulted in an action plan in conjunction with the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC). GWRC will supply and lay bait at cost. The costs to landowners will be further reduced by a FOTBR subsidy from our pest control funding in an effort to combat the damage occurring in the native bush reserves from rabbits entering the bush from surrounding properties. We conducted a first letterbox drop to Bing Lucas and Gladys Scott landowners, which received about 40% support – enough for GWRC to go ahead - and some Woodburn Drive landowners are keen to join the programme. A second letterbox drop has now been made to all three streets with further information and answers from GWRC to landowners' questions. If you are in one of the streets mentioned and are yet to sign-up please join the programme by emailing your details to the FOTBR secretary at secretary@tawabush.org.nz.

Zealandia would like your input to this survey ...

Do you have a cat? Used to have a cat? Never even had a cat? We want to hear from you!

This short 10 to 15-minute [survey](#) will help us better understand how Wellingtonians feel about pet cats and their place in our homes. We want to help support both the threatened taonga species that call Wellington home and our feline family members' wellbeing—your answers will help us do that!

The research is being led by Dr Danielle Shanahan (Zealandia CEO & Adjunct Professor at VUW) and Dr Julie Whitburn (Zealandia postdoctoral researcher) and has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington [HE040105].

Let's work together to make Wellington a great place for both wildlife and pets. [Source: <https://www.visitzealandia.com/Members/Member-News#Cat>]

A **new constitution** is being drafted for FOTBR. New legislation requires all incorporated societies to re-register and update their constitutions to meet the new requirements. It's a lot of work and there's more to go. One item of discussion is the possibility of altering the group name (or adopt a "trading name") to keep our local identity but better recognise group activities beyond just bush reserves. Any suggestions?

Expect a special general meeting before October to ratify the new constitution – and we'll aim to bring you a guest speaker to add to the occasion.

Working bees are held regularly.

See the website, <https://tawabush.org.nz/what-we-do/#WorkingBees> for more information for FOTBR and Willowbank Reserve Care Group activities. We're coming into the planting season so do watch for email and FB posts for planting events.

Nursery action. An April working bee potted-up 173 plants. FOTBR is authorised to collect seeds from Reserves and this seasonal activity has been underway in earnest as another nursery cycle begins.

Farewell Brian Carter

We mourn the loss of Brian Carter in April and celebrate the major contributions he has left us and all of Tawa. Brian was a foundation member of FOTBR and a legendary track builder amongst other FOTBR activities. Famed for the hours and hours he put into construction of the Redwood Bush track, he also developed the Charles Duncan loop track, after which a seat was placed at the northern end of the loop in recognition of his work. Prior to this there was the clearance and planting of the old Army track from Brasenose Park to the ridgeline, and the formation of the Larsen Crescent tracks. Later still Brian started the development of the upper extension of the Wilf Mexted Reserve track toward the subsequent new entrance at the top of Bing Lucas Drive.

For his work he was nominated by FOTBR and received a Tawa Community Civic Award in the Environment category in 2006 and 2010, and in 2011 received a Volunteer Service Award Certificate from Peter Dunn as part of the North Wellington Volunteer Service Awards scheme.

Born in 1946 Brian grew up on a dairy farm in south Taranaki and had to leave school early to manage the farm due to the ill health of his father. He studied for his public service examinations by correspondence and joined NZ Railways, initially as a clerk in the Hawera office and later as a train controller in New Plymouth, Te Kuiti and finally in Wellington, where he lived in Tawa. Through his interests in gardening, Tawa U3A and Probus, with card games and pétanque, he found romance late in life and met Harriet whom he married in 2018.

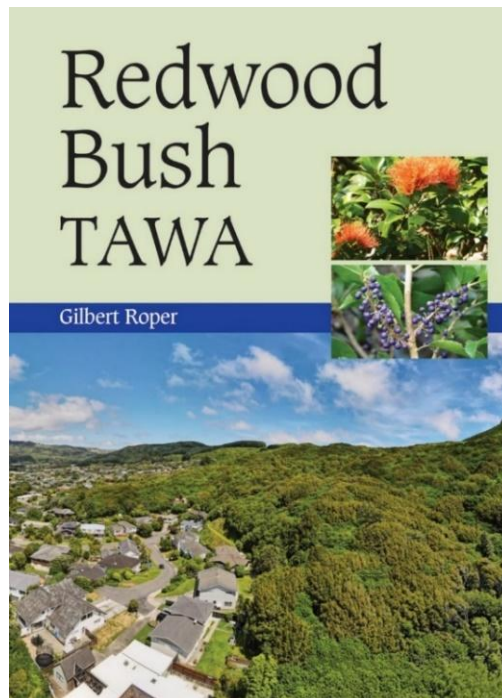
"He was a really nice, quietly spoken guy whose actions and efforts spoke louder than words."

Thank you, Brian

Annual subs are due. Please renew or join up - we'd love to have your support. Please pay the \$20 annual subscription by direct credit to **03 1534 0043966 25** with your surname and initials in the Reference field. Any donations are gratefully received.

Special book offer

Redwood Bush has been given special treatment by author Gil Roper with this great book. First published in 2022 it has been reprinted and is now available again at **Tawa Books & Post** for \$35 **cash** – real value for such a unique book and a great reference that won't date. The book is a useful botanical reference as well as a close-up of Redwood Bush.

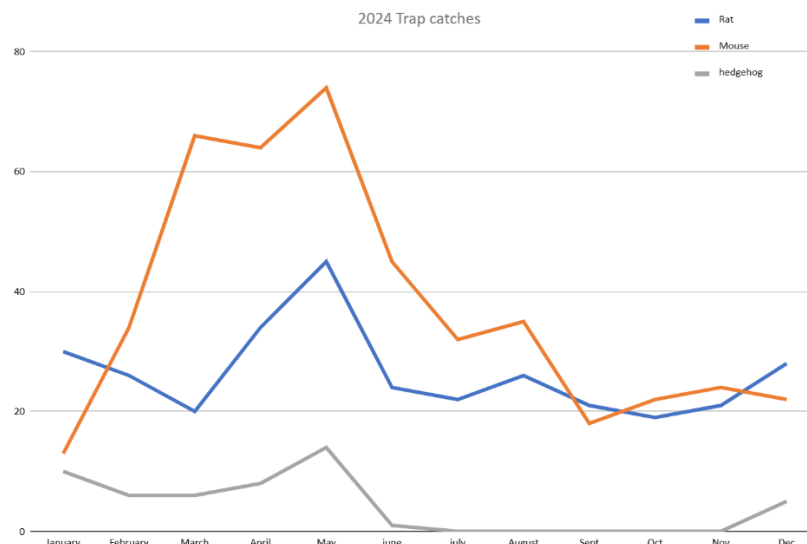


Trapping Update:

An extra trap line, consisting of 13 traps has been added to the southern part of Redwood Bush. This new line complements the four existing transect bait station lines already in the area. With Kiwi making their way up from Mākara we realised that our pest animal network needed more coverage, in preparation for their arrival. The traps

were kindly donated by GWRC. Our new trapper Antia and her husband have agreed to manage this line.

Trappers are reporting high bait takes as autumn sets in. The chart below from 2024 shows an increase in catches during May - as food becomes more difficult to find.



Every bit counts -In *Zealandia's April Member Update*, a piece by *Predator Free NZ* highlighted the contribution of backyard traps to predator free goals and noted that Predator Free Miramar started with a handful of backyard trappers that swelled to more than 1,000 households in just four years. Today, Miramar has been predator free for two years, and bird monitoring shows native species are up by 91%.

"Backyard trapping is about momentum. It creates safe space for wildlife to return, so tūi, kākā, korimako/bellbird don't just stay in sanctuaries but can safely spill out into gardens and parks."

Beside the compost bin is a great spot for a rat trap in a tunnel, and putting a mouse trap in the tunnel after the rat trap can be worthwhile too. If you don't already have a backyard trap then our friends at **Pest Free Tawa** can help – a Facebook search will find them, or try



<https://www.facebook.com/pestfreetawa>

Willowbank Reserve Care Group

Willowbank Reserve Care Group (WRCG) is a small but keen group of volunteers that does weeding, planting, litter pickup and water quality monitoring in Willowbank Reserve. We have regular working bees on Thursday mornings, 9.30-11.30am, and always welcome more helpers. We enjoy working in this popular amenity reserve, with its variety of flora and fauna.

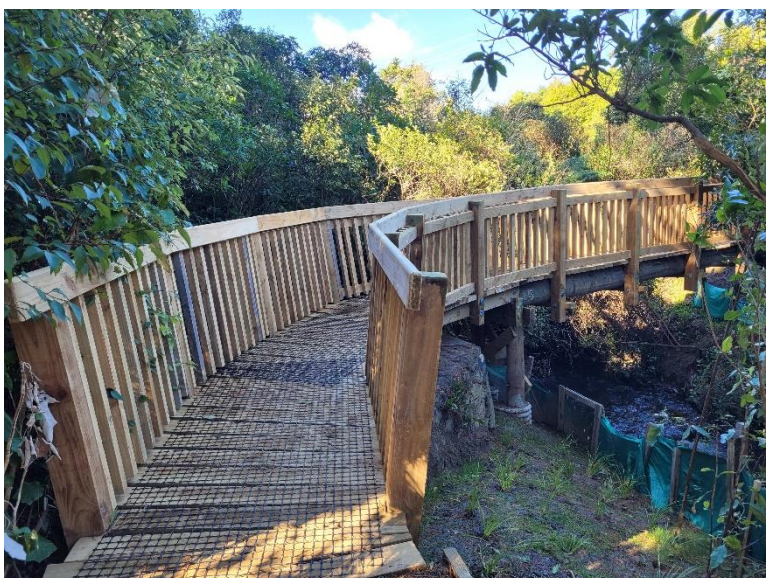


Our group comes under the umbrella of Friends of Tawa Bush Reserves (FOTBR), and we work under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Wellington City Council (WCC) and are supported by the WCC Park Ranger.

We do quarterly water quality monitoring in conjunction with Mountains to Sea

Wellington, and Porirua City Council (PCC). We also have other groups that work with us in the reserve at times, eg Conservation Volunteers Wellington, members of Tawa Anglican Church, Year 10 Tawa College students during their Community Service Week in December, the occasional business group doing a day's volunteer work, general supporters, and of course FOTBR.

Our recent planting day on 24th May, was attended by 17 people on a sunny Saturday, and approx. 200 plants were put in, including carex (various varieties), kawakawa, rengarenga, tarata, ngaio and cabbage trees. Riparian planting is important in the reserve. Porirua Stream has a large catchment, and the stream gets high after heavy rainfall. The confluence of Takapu Stream and Porirua Stream is in the reserve.



If you have visited the reserve recently, you will have noticed the wonderful new playground, with a variety of play equipment including swings, a climbing tower, a flying fox, dancing snake and more, which is proving very popular with families. Thanks WCC!

Also, a wide, wooden bridge, without any steps at the approach, has replaced the narrow steel bridge with steps up to it, over Takapu Stream, and is a big improvement. This makes it much easier for parents with prams, volunteers with wheelbarrows and tools, and other users. Again, thanks WCC!

There is much of interest at the reserve, with walkways, the streams, the heritage aspects, the playground and picnic areas, and more.

You can follow us on Facebook @willowbankreservecaregroup, and contact us at willowbankreserve.caregroup@gmail.com. Information about the reserve can also be found at <https://tawabush.org.nz/tawa-bush-reserves-and-walks/#WillowbankRes>

Your place

It's not just Tawa's 10 reserves that make up our natural environment - our conservation activities in our backyard micro-reserves also make a difference. Wildlife doesn't recognise fence lines so our own patches are part of the big picture too!

What's happening at your place? We'd love to share your activities – no matter how big or small - please send your contributions to newsletter@tawabush.org.nz



Getting a photo through the window of this weta house took several attempts, but apartment 3B is taken! Weta houses can be a great attraction for children as well as adults.

Do you have a weta house? Who's at home? Any tips on design or where best to place them? Please share your experience and other conservation happenings at your place through the newsletter - the editor is waiting eagerly at newsletter@tawabush.org.nz

Close-up – Glow worms/Titiwai



It's a brave photographer who takes on an assignment as challenging as capturing glow worms for the FOTBR newsletter, so well-done Liz! On the left some spots of light can be seen in glow worm territory, and in the darker shot above, more lights can be seen of glow worms on the job - trying to attract a meal.

The early darkness makes this time of year a great time to see glow worms and a special opportunity for a night time adventure with children.

New Zealand glow worms/titiwai (*Arachnocampa luminosa*) are the larvae of small flies called fungus gnats. Their life cycle is: egg, **larvae**, pupae and adult fly – so they are not true “worms”. The larvae use their ‘glow’ to attract prey, which is caught in sticky silk threads that hang from the glow worm nest. These threads are then hauled in, like fishing lines, and the captured insects are consumed. Glow worms grow up to 2.5cm long before developing into pupae and then adult flies.

Glow worms like a damp environment with little or no wind. Sometimes when a glow-worm is disturbed its light seems to go off suddenly. This is the larva taking cover and hiding its light – it takes quite a bit longer for the larva to actually turn off the light.

Where to see glow worms...

- Te Ngahere-o-Tawa / Forest of Tawa, on the bank above the track above the stream about 50m after the culvert.
- Mexted Bush Reserve, at the entrance take the righthand path and follow up the stream until you see a crib wall up the hill on your right. There are glow worms in the wall and along the bank across the stream.
- Woodburn Reserve, from the entrance at the top of Woodburn Drive, on the track embankment between the end of the pine tree section and the next stream culvert.
- Redwood Bush, in several places on the banks near the streams.
- Rangituhi/Colonial Knob walking track up the steps from the Elsdon entrance. At the last bridge (at the waterfall) before the top, the whole bank is alive with glow worms.

Glow worm viewing tips.

- Check out viewing spots in daylight so you know where you are going and the conditions to expect.
- Shhh! It pays to be quiet and not disturb them.
- Minimise the use of torches and keep them pointed at the track.
- Once at the location switch off your torch and give your eyes time to adjust.
- Please do not disturb their habitat.

Article Sources: DoC <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/southland/places/clifden-area/>

The Encyclopaedia of NZ <https://teara.govt.nz/en/glow-worms/page-1>

Odd spot

NZ population reaches 80 million ??

This perspective is from an opinion piece in *The Post* on Saturday 3 May titled, "The politics behind the tragedy of native species decline", which included the statement that one cow produces the waste of approximately 16 people, which, combined with 5M people, amounted waste-wise to "the equivalent of a population of more than 80 million [people]."

The same piece also reported that in 2024, after cameras were installed on fishing boats, "The number of fish species reported in catches increased by 34% and the volume of fish discarded rose 46%".

The author was Dr Maria Armoudian, co-executive director of Nga Ara Whetu – Centre for Climate, Biodiversity & Society, and director of the Sustainability Hub at the University of Auckland.

Sightings

To protect our wildlife we will generally not disclose where or when photos were taken or by whom. Some photos may be from outside the greater Tawa area. Please be discrete when sharing your own work.



These two geckos were spotted despite their amazing camouflage. The one on the right is a real spotting challenge ("should've gone to ...?"). Lizards are good reasons to keep dogs leashed (and to keep cats from wandering!).

Thank you to the readers who shared these photos - let us know what you've seen lately - send your photos to newsletter@tawabush.org.nz

I spy ...

An insight into what our cameras see.



An unwanted intruder in a reserve caught on a trap camera. No, this is not a target species.



Monitoring of an area for potential introduced species caught this visitor. *"Deer populations have been building over the past couple of decades across the country ... As numbers have increased, deer have moved into new areas to search for food."*

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/animal-pests-and-threats/deer/>



Another imposter, but benign by comparison. California quail are not generally regarded as conservation pests, and some even consider their presence as an indicator of safety for ground birds. However, farmers and gardeners would tend to disagree because of the crop damage they can cause. Quail are hunted during the game bird season.



Target species playing hard to get! A possum investigates an A24 automatic trap. Hopefully the possum eventually found a captivating restaurant.

Wild resources

The toll inflicted on wildlife by feral cats has been getting more publicity lately. *Country Calendar* on Sunday 4th May featured a trapping group inland from Gisborne who were targeting feral cats as well as other pests. The episode can be found on TVNZ+



For more about Capital Kiwi see its website:

<https://www.capitalkiwi.co.nz/>

or on FaceBook search for "The Capital Kiwi Project"

For more from and about Zealandia go to: <https://www.visitzealandia.com/>

Pest Free Tawa are on Facebook – a search will find them, or try

<https://www.facebook.com/pestfreetawa>

Don't forget our own **FOTBR website** – it's well worth browsing for information on fauna and flora and details of all 10 reserves as well as a great visual resource. The website is also where you can find past newsletters - <https://tawabush.org.nz/>

Facebook @friends.of.tawa.bush.reserves

Caption competition



Subject to budget approval from the Treasurer, a chocolate fish is on offer to the reader who comes up with the best caption to this photo, not to mention the associated fame and acclamation! Send your ideas to the editor at newsletter@tawabush.org.nz. The best suggestions will be published in the next edition.

Parting Shot



Thank you to everyone who has assisted with this issue and especially for the reader contributions 😊.

Please send contributions, feedback or suggestions to your ever-hopeful editor at: newsletter@tawabush.org.nz

Thanks to Zealandia for their willingness to allow use of their material.

<https://www.visitzealandia.com/>

At left. An ordinary scene beside the path in Mexted Reserve, walked past by most visitors, but showing just how much nature there can be in a single tree.



FOTBR is grateful to **Imagine That**, Tawa's full-service design & print company, for their assistance with our printing and promotional materials. Please consider them for your branding needs. <https://www.imaginethat.nz/>