

Where the wildings are

Wilding conifers are self-sown 'weed trees' that have spread from research plots, amenity plantings and farm plantations.

This season's wilding control programme is off to a flying start - see page 2.



Neil Bolton of the Department of Conservation (DOC) in Twizel undertakes wilding conifer control above Irishman Stream on Glen Lyon Station. Photo by Peter Willemse, DOC Twizel. Helicopter flown by Craig McMillan from Central South Island Helicopters.



Fonterra Manager of Sustainable Production, John Hutchings (left), and Environment Canterbury Chairman, Alec Neill, planting the first tree at Poynters Reserve for the launch of Fonterra's Catchment Care programme. Inset, volunteers young and old took part in the planting day.

Riparian for restoration

In early November it was all hands to the trowel at Poynters Reserve, in Environment Canterbury's Waimakariri Regional Park, as part of Fonterra's newly launched Catchment Care programme. The programme focuses on projects that enhance and protect waterways and wetlands, and involves riverbank (riparian) planting, fencing, removal of invasive species, weeding and rubbish clean-ups.

Fonterra Director of Sustainability, Barry Harris, says "We're supporting local activities that help to care for water-catchments in dairying regions. It's a natural extension to the work our own farmers are doing with riparian planting and fencing and takes us out into the local communities in which we operate."

"In this case we've worked with Environment Canterbury through our partnership with Conservation Volunteers New Zealand."

Environment Canterbury Chairman Alec Neill (pictured, right) says the level of community involvement in the park underlines its value to the region.

"Feedback on our regional park has been extremely positive and it's great to see Fonterra supporting our community partners in their efforts. Braided rivers like the Waimakariri are very special to Canterbury and we're privileged that the initiative has been launched in this area."

State of the Environment charges – your opinions sought

Environment Canterbury is asking for feedback on the introduction of State of the Environment cost recovery contributions, scheduled for implementation from July 1 next year.

Environment Canterbury is seeking to achieve a more equitable mix of funding for its water investigations and monitoring work – also known as the State of the Environment – which is required to understand the nature of Canterbury's freshwater resource.

These costs are currently fully funded by general rates, which means that all ratepayers pay these costs. From 1 July 2010 the Council intends to recover 30% of costs specifically from water consent holders. This proposal was deferred for 12 months in April 2009 to allow more time for consultation.

The feedback will be considered by an Environment Canterbury Working Group before making recommendations for implementation to the Council in February 2010.

i For more information and to provide feedback visit: www.ecan.govt.nz/haveyoursay. Alternatively, phone Customer Services on (03) 353 9007 or 0800 324 636 to receive a copy of the consultation document and the feedback form.



Where the wildings are



In October, Environment Canterbury launched this season's campaign to control wilding conifers in the region, focusing on the Waimakariri, Hurunui and Waitaki catchments.

Wilding conifers threaten Canterbury's high country landscapes, tussock grasslands and pasture productivity by competing aggressively for light and space.

Control in the highest high country areas is only possible by "skid-hopping", where helicopters take specialist contractors into otherwise inaccessible mountainous areas. Because the helicopters cannot land, chainsaw operators hop on and off the helicopter's skids to cut down those hard-to-reach trees.

Graham Sullivan, Biosecurity Manager at Environment Canterbury, says that some conifer species are able to produce seed at eight years old. Control then becomes a long-term problem as new seedlings will continue to spring up for many years.

"The amount of control work and the cost involved increases dramatically once tree trunks exceed 50 mm at the base. It's important that we deal with these pest trees before they can take advantage of summer growth conditions and produce a new crop of seed," he says.

Eugenie Sage, Environment Canterbury pest management committee chair, says that community initiatives such as those carried out by the Waimakariri Ecological Landscape Restoration Alliance and Lake Ohau Conservation Trust are also critical in tackling wilding pines.

"Environment Canterbury's Resource Care team organises groups of willing volunteers, armed with pruning saws or loppers, to deal with trees in open country while they are still small. Every year for the past 13 years, over 200 volunteers have come forward to help. That energy and commitment is hugely important. Without their assistance, areas between Porters Pass and Lake Lyndon or Cave Stream could now be covered by weed trees," she says.

More buses, more choice

Thanks to customer feedback, Environment Canterbury has made improvements to its Christchurch Metro services, including more frequent services, more direct routes and new services in some areas.

The changes include reducing the number of buses using Colombo Street to alleviate congestion, and timetable staggering so that buses in some areas run every 15 minutes rather than every half an hour.

Public passenger transport chair Carole Evans names the services to the Waimakariri District as her pick of the improvements.

"Building on the success of the Northern Star, people in Rangiora and Kaiapoi can now be assured of a space on the bus to and from Christchurch. We've reduced the number of stops it makes through Belfast so that Waimakariri people get a faster ride and don't have to compete for seats on the way home," says Cr Evans.

"We were careful to ensure that Belfast people didn't lose out and they now have an additional service to compensate for the changes to the Northern Star," she says.

Other changes include:

- A new No 3 Airport-Sumner via Avonhead route to complement the No10 Cashmere-Airport and No 29 Airport-City, meaning a service from the airport every 10 minutes.
- A direct service to Christchurch Public Hospital on the No 7 Halswell route.
- An additional service to Belfast from the city aboard the No 8 Casebrook-Hoon Hay.
- A route change on the No 21 Ilam-Mt Pleasant bus via Mandeville Street, providing a new service to the Tower Junction Industrial Park.
- A more direct No 35 Riccarton-Heathcote (35 Heathcote) route with a direct service to Christchurch Public Hospital and Riccarton for residents of Lyttelton and Heathcote.
- More frequent sailings on the Diamond Harbour Ferry.

i All of the new routes and timetable changes can be found at metroinfo.co.nz or call (03) 366 88 55 for information.



Digging for victory

Luke Fitzsimmons from Amberley has won the Environmental Awareness Award from Environment Canterbury and the Tai Poutini Digger School, Christchurch. Luke, who is a trained horticulturalist, won the award thanks to an assignment on sediment control and environmental impacts on-site.

i If you work in the earthworks industry and are interested in erosion and sediment control training, Environment Canterbury runs workshops subject to demand.

To register your interest, please contact Environment Canterbury's Customer Services. More information is available at: www.ecan.govt.nz/escg



Saving our shearwaters



Hutton's Shearwater/titi chick

The Hutton's Shearwater/titi is a nationally endangered species of seabird that breeds only in two locations high in the Kaikoura Mountains. Fortunately, it now has some serious backing from the local community.

Since its creation in 2008, the Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust has worked to establish a third colony of the birds, raising over \$200,000 towards a predator-proof fence on the Kaikoura Peninsula, including \$50,000 from Environment Canterbury. The fence is to protect a site where it is hoped that a third colony can be established.

The initiative for the Trust came from longtime Hutton's Shearwater advocate Geoff Harrow, who has championed their cause for almost 50 years. He is not alone in his belief that they are very special to Kaikoura. The Department of Conservation, Te Runanga o Kaikoura, Whalewatch, the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society and the local community have been working with the Trust on this venture.

In August this year, the 'Friends of Hutton's Shearwater' was launched at a champagne breakfast hosted by the Lions Club of Seaward Kaikoura at Donegal House. "This special fundraiser raised \$3200 and is typical of the extraordinary response from the community, funding agencies and individuals for funds to assist in the protection of this incredible bird," says Mr Harrow.

Environment Canterbury Councillor and Biodiversity Chair Jane Demeter is impressed by the commitment of everyone involved. "This project is 'partnership in action', she says. "It shows how, by working together, we can really make a difference".

i You can become a Friend of the Hutton's Shearwater by contacting Lindsay Rowe on (03) 319 7211. Individual memberships are currently \$15 (family \$20) per year. Your contribution will assist in the conservation of this precious species and the newly established colony. Friends receive three newsletters per year, plus special invitations to events and to take part in volunteering opportunities.



Environment Canterbury Christmas hours

Please note that the Environment Canterbury offices are closed for the Christmas period between Friday December 25 and Monday January 4, inclusive.



If you are a landowner on Banks Peninsula and you're interested or concerned about plant and animal pest control, you can download a new guidebook – The War On Pests – from our website:

www.ecan.govt.nz



New approach to managing dairy effluent

Canterbury dairy farmers have joined forces with industry and Environment Canterbury to improve the management of dairy shed effluent.

The region's dairy companies, Fonterra, New Zealand Dairies and Synlait, are collaborating with DairyNZ, Federated Farmers and Environment Canterbury to deliver timely effluent management information to farmers throughout the dairy season.

Methven farmer and DairyNZ board member Alister Body believes the step will build on the progress made in this area. "We all want the same thing, including farmers. We've got to make effluent management an area of continual improvement and I think this collaborative approach is a very important step."

Mr Body says the drive is likely to make progress because farmers will see that they are being supported with resources. "We need to know there is support and advice out there when we have to get the right information and this will go a long way toward that," he says.

Practical advice and self-assessment tools have been mailed to consent holders to improve their effluent and nutrient management systems. Further resources and on-farm demonstration events are also planned.

Mr Body suggests some initial steps for farmers to make: "Take the resource consent and familiarise yourself with it. Then use that really good system checklist that was sent out to all consent holders, couple that with the Farm Enviro Walk from DairyNZ, and you've got a good way to assess your effluent system with your staff."

"Make sure that everyone on the farm who has anything to do with effluent knows what they need to do and can carry it out, whether that's servicing machinery regularly or setting it up to work effectively and efficiently. And make sure your staff know the rules and how important it is to make the most out of your effluent resource."

i If farmers are unsure about any aspect of their effluent disposal system they can call their DairyNZ consulting officer through the Farmer Information Line on 0800 4324 7969, Federated Farmers, their dairy company contact, or Environment Canterbury's Environmental Protection Officers.

Environment Canterbury has Lions on its trail



Meeting at the rivers – Geraldine mountain bikers, from left Paul Williams and Kevin Johnston and far right, Dale MacLeod, pause for breath along the trail to chat with Environment Canterbury's Paul Eddy and Geraldine Lions Club's Allan Kelly.

The banks of the Orari River are set to become a magnet for cyclists with the completion of the Geraldine Mountain Bike Trail – a Geraldine Lions Project that uses Environment Canterbury river access tracks.

Environment Canterbury Rivers Engineering Officer Bruce Scarlett says the project is the first in the region to use river berm tracks (rather than stop banks) for multi-purpose recreational use.

The result is two riverside loop tracks, each about 10 km long, along with additional link tracks that add up to a total of about 30 km of trails stretching between Vance Road and the Upper Orari bridge.

"This project is a great example of how flood protection structures, such as our river access tracks, can be a wider community asset," Mr Scarlett says.

Geraldine Lions president Neville Robertson says the inspiration for the project came from club members who were keen mountain-bikers. Teams of Lions volunteers, assisted by local cubs, spent many weekends on site, clearing overgrown sections of the tracks and cleaning up rubbish. Fallen trees were chopped into firewood and given to needy households.

"We can see the track being used not only by locals but by visitors to Geraldine so we're working at publicising it, including through the Geraldine i-SITE."

The trails are already well used. Club members have been especially pleased to see the number of family groups out biking along with people making use of the improved access for walking. The track is graded as relatively easy but several stretches of more challenging trails have been created for more experienced cyclists.



Yellow admiral butterfly on Kanuka flowers at the Mud House Vineyard, Waipara

Ecological makeover for North Canterbury vineyards

The Greening Waipara research project has opened its doors to the public with the launch of the world's first vineyard biodiversity trails at four North Canterbury wineries. Greening Waipara, based at the Bio-Protection Research Centre, Lincoln University, is a world-leading project that enhances the sustainability and biodiversity of winegrowing and the marketing of wine by giving vineyards ecological makeovers.

Pegasus Bay, Torlesse Wines, The Mud House and Waipara Springs have each developed a trail close to their respective tasting room or restaurant, complete with information boards and an educational quiz for children – a great way to learn about biodiversity. Those who answer the quiz correctly can take home a puzzle book and be in to win a flax kete and New Zealand native plant seeds. The trails wind through vines and native plants, leading visitors to areas where Greening Waipara is in action. Visitors see how Greening Waipara benefits ecosystems by encouraging nature's services – beneficial insect activities such as pollination and pest control, as well as plant disease and weed suppression, improved soil quality and conservation.

Greening Waipara researcher Mark Gillespie, a Bio-Protection Research Centre PhD student, is the inaugural recipient of the Environment Canterbury 'Canterbury Biodiversity Postgraduate Scholarship'. His research aims to investigate ways of enhancing native butterfly populations in the Waipara Valley. Agriculture, including winegrape growing, damages biodiversity through reduction of habitat and has probably caused major declines in New Zealand's butterfly populations. Butterflies are charismatic insects, instantly recognised by young and old alike, therefore providing an all-important aesthetic service. Butterflies are a sensitive bio-indicator of environmental health and their iconic image is often used for marketing purposes.

Mr Gillespie is examining the factors influencing the remaining butterfly populations in Waipara and is attempting to develop grower-friendly ways of enhancing their numbers. Look out for native butterfly species such as the common copper, southern blue and red and yellow admirals when you walk the Greening Waipara biodiversity trails this summer.

i For more information, visit: www.bioprotection.org.nz/greening-waipara



Disaster Awareness Week Competition winners

The winners of our "Emergency Ready" competition were Euan and Robyn Heffer of Mt. Pleasant and their children, Samuel and Emily. Euan and Robyn's house was made "Emergency Ready" on Saturday, November 21, with help from the Fire Service, St. John Ambulance, Christchurch City Council Civil Defence office and the Canterbury Emergency Management Office. Pictured, Samuel with officers from Woolston Fire Station.

Staying in Canterbury over the summer?



NEWS IN BRIEF...

Our regional parks are great for a fun day out with the kids. Why not try:

- Mountain biking on the new five kilometre track extension at McLeans Island in the Waimakariri Regional Park.
- Stop off at Lake Tekapo Regional Park and bike along the lake shore. Alternatively, take a walk along Cowans Hill track around the edge of Tekapo village.
- Pack a picnic and drive out to the Ashley River. Just downstream of the Rangiora/Loburn bridge on the south side of the river, take a look at the Rivercare Group's riverstone information panel in the picnic area, the walkway and the recent native plantings downstream to the railway bridge. This is a good site for swimming with children, but always take care and check river conditions before you set out.



Christmas clearout - everything must go!

If one of your holiday jobs is to clean out that garage, storage shed or outbuilding, make sure you dispose of any hazardous materials properly:

- Old car batteries
- Empty LPG cylinders
- Household paint cans
- Household and garden chemicals.

It's free to dispose of these at any local waste facility. There are local waste facilities in Kaikoura, Oxford, Southbrook, Christchurch, Ashburton, Temuka, Timaru, Geraldine, Pleasant Point, Fairlie and Twizel.

For more information and directions, visit our website, contact your local council or phone 0800 324 636.

All dried up?

If you notice that a stream, river or spring near you has dried up over the summer, Environment Canterbury would like to know, especially if it does not usually run dry. Well operators should also let us know of any significant or unusual reduction in the water level in their wells. The information will be used to monitor the region's groundwater, and to gauge the extent of droughts. Call our Customer Services during business hours on (03) 353 9007 or 0800 324 636.

Pressure testing

Environment Canterbury has started a piezometric (pressure) survey to better understand the water flows in the aquifer system beneath the Rakaia-Ashburton Plains. Otago University geology student Clare Webster is working from November to February 2010 on the project, which is being managed by groundwater hydrologist Mike Thorley. The project will need access to some wells on private land. Landowners will be notified prior to Clare or other Environment Canterbury staff visiting their properties.

Feral peril

On Banks Peninsula, browsing by feral (wild) goats damages the habitat on which some of the area's unique native species depend. The goats also spread disease such as parasites and foot rot and compete with stock for grazing. Control is done by professional hunters with dogs and 3,837 feral goats have been killed since 2003. This is a great result, but there are still some feral goats left. If you are out and about in Banks Peninsula over the summer and you see feral goats or goats with no ear tags, please call Dave Hunter on (03) 325 1215 or 027 437 4743.

Now Available: State of the Water Resources Report 2009

Each year Environment Canterbury produces a report on the state of the water resources for the Canterbury region. It provides useful information for water consent holders to manage water in the current irrigation season. You can download it at www.ecan.govt.nz/publications or contact our Customer Services on (03) 353 9007 or 0800 324 636 during business hours to receive a copy.

Season's greetings

The chairman and councillors extend their best wishes for the festive season to everyone in Canterbury.

Keeping safe this holiday season

Summer is a great time to enjoy the outdoors in Canterbury. The sun, the mountains, the rivers, the sea... there's so much to enjoy – but it's also important to keep safe and act responsibly.

RIVER SAFETY



Even in summer the rivers in Canterbury can rise very quickly and without much notice, especially if there's been rain in the mountains. Always use your common sense when swimming and check the water for hazards before entering.

- Before you use a river – whether for swimming, angling, kayaking or boating – be sure to check the weather forecast. You can also check our website or call our Riverline on 0900 74 837 (charges apply). The information is updated twice daily and more frequently during floods.
- You can also receive text messages about river levels: find out at www.ecan.govt.nz
- Keep out of riverwater that's discoloured or brown with mud: this is an early warning that a flood is heading downstream.
- Never drive through flood waters. It is difficult to determine how deep the flood waters might be.
- Toxic *Phormidium* algae can form in rivers and lakes during summer and can be lethal to dogs. People should not swim in areas where there are large mats of dark brown/black algae. Find out more at www.ecan.govt.nz.

Please note that we measure river levels twice daily from remote monitoring stations so the immediate state of the river could be different from the recording.

BOATING SAFETY



Boaties can keep safe on the water this summer by following the boating rules, says Evan Walker, Environment Canterbury's Navigation Safety Manager, after what has been an alarming start to this year's boating season.

"The message is not new, but it's one we've just got to keep repeating until it gets through" he says.

A major group involved in boating accidents are men in their fifties and sixties. "Despite having a lot of experience on the water," says Mr Walker, "they are still very much at risk. Men in this older age bracket need to wear their lifejacket and not just stow it, as it may save their life. It is very cheap insurance," he says.

Mr Walker's message is reinforced by Maritime New Zealand, which has proposed two new safety initiatives:

- public consultation on a maritime rule change that would make the wearing of lifejackets compulsory for people in craft smaller than six metres long, unless the skipper decides there is low risk.
- a public awareness campaign encouraging boaties to make wearing a lifejacket as automatic as wearing a seatbelt, and to watch out for other water users.

Boating information pamphlets are available from www.ecan.govt.nz/boatingrules or from Environment Canterbury, 58 Kilmore St, Christchurch and 75 Church St, Timaru.

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Civil defence	03 366 2359
River and flood infoline (charges apply)	0900 74837 0900 RIVER
River report	www.ecan.govt.nz/riverreport
Latest riverflows	www.ecan.govt.nz/riverflows
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