



Before a magnitude 7.8 earthquake uplifted the land in 1931, the low-lying areas around Park Island were mudflats and tidal inlets of the Ahuriri Lagoon. Now, they are home to Napier's largest sports grounds, catering for many different sporting codes and offer a great destination for people wanting to enjoy walking, with or without dogs, running or cycling. Development to transform part of the area into a major sports hub started in 1981 and is on-going.

The 68 hectares of NCC-owned land, which was previously farmed by the former Hawke's Bay Hospital Board and Hawke's Bay Harbour Board, has significant historical and cultural importance.



The two prominent hills in the park were originally two islands, together with an islet called Te Umuroimata.

Many years ago, the larger islands were connected by a shallow shell bank and both have flat summits with steep, sea-cut and easily eroded cliff escarpments.



Walkways circumnavigate the former islands and ducks and other wildlife can be seen in the adjacent Taipō Stream. The stream is considered to be a notable historic site. It was an important food source for Māori prior to the massive earthquake, with people travelling each year to camp on Park Island to collect pipi and eel. Te Umuroimata Pā is one of two areas of significance to Māori in this location; the other is a large area at the southern end of the park identified as Te Roropipi, the site of a major battle against Ngāti Kahungunu led by Te Whatuiapiti as he reconquered lost territory. It's interesting to reflect on how life must have been in those days compared to now.



Spot the tui...

There is a real feeling of open space in the large flat area known as The Dell, where the archery targets are located. Dogs can run free in Park Island, so it is a very popular off-leash exercise area and there is also a well-used dog agility course close to the carpark, accessed from Prebensen Drive. When I visited with a friend in August, we could see that extensive native planting was in progress.



Around the perimeter of the Shrimpton sports field there are established native trees and we saw tui feasting on prunus campanulata cherry trees. We were also lucky enough to see two kereru in a nearby kowhai and, while one took off, the other was happy to stick around and pose for a photo.

## COMMUNITY PLANTING

It's really positive to see so many enthusiastic young people helping with planting to improve the environment and biodiversity.

During the winter months, pupils, staff and parents from Taikura Rudolph Steiner School planted another thousand trees on the banks of the Maraetotara River, continuing their support for the Maraetotara Tree Trust's thirty-year project to see the entire 43 kilometre length of the river fenced and planted in native tree species. The Trust works in conjunction with landowners and the Hawke's Bay Regional Council, who help clear the river of invasive willows and fence the riparian strip to keep livestock out of the water.



The Trust then plants native trees and flaxes on the riverbank, creating a green corridor from the sea to the native bush remnants on the high plateau at the source of the river. To date the Trust has planted 150,000 native trees along the river but expects to be busy for another ten years.

Volunteers, potential sponsors or interested parties can e-mail: [maraetotaratreustrust@gmail.com](mailto:maraetotaratreustrust@gmail.com) or look them up on Facebook.



There was another great community effort during July with many families involved. This time it was the HBRC which organised a planting day, teaming up with Bostock New Zealand. Around 1,500 plants were put in along the river edges at Pukahu as part of the Karamu Restoration Project.



The area along the Esk River benefited when all 300 pupils from Eskdale School joined forces with the Te Huka Waiohinganga (Esk) River Care Group, Trees that Count, HBRC and HB Enviro-schools to put in more than 2,000 native plants.

Principal, Tristan Cheer said, "The children loved the opportunity to contribute to our wider community and the enhancement of our local environment. As a Green-Gold enviro-school it was so rewarding seeing the way the children displayed the school's values and really got stuck in to the planting on the day".



A group of Iona College girls helped plant a previously unsightly, steep bank in Tainui Reserve with a wide range of native shrubs in 2018. The idea was to attract birds and increase biodiversity. Now that the hardy shrubs have survived two dry summers, the planting is greatly enhancing the area.



Gumboots, gloves and spades (and their owners) were out in force when 1,000 natives were planted along the Taipō Stream in August as part of the Wairua Regeneration Project. HBRC Councillor, Hinewai Ormsby, told me that she and her husband were thrilled with the turnout of 62 hearty Napier community members who planted the seedlings. Councillor Ormsby is keen to encourage the community to get involved in local restoration projects to enhance ecological systems that once existed in and around local waterways and the old inner harbour Te Whanganui a Orotu.

## PICTURE PERFECT

Perhaps what's perfect about this photo is the setting... Roger and Diane Alexander's absolutely beautiful Monet Lake at Puketapu with resident swan, Mr Mistoffelees, gliding silently by.

Swans are such elegant, graceful birds. Interestingly, all swans in England are officially owned by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

Mute (white) swans were first introduced into New Zealand as an ornamental species, both for private estates and for municipal parks, ponds and lakes from 1866 – 1871. While declining in NZ, they are not endangered.



Swans spend most of their time floating on the water surface (this saves energy) and they use their long necks to feed on submerged plants, molluscs which cling to the vegetation, small fish and frogs. They will also feed on grass close to their pond or lake. Some young cygnets are born with white down, but the most common colours range from grey to buff. Think Ugly Duckling...

Their closest relative is the Australian black swan which, like its mute cousin, frequents lakes, rivers, estuaries and swamps. The oldest known swan in New Zealand was at least 29 years old.

**Fun Facts:** Black swans were first discovered in Perth, Western Australia in 1697 by Dutch explorer, Willem de Vlamingh and have featured on the flag of WA since 1870. The Swan River estuary flows through the city of Perth. Female swans (pens) weigh around 8-9 kgs and males (cobs) 11-12 kgs. A group of swans is called a bevy, or a wedge when in flight.



**GOOD SAMARITAN.** A simple act of kindness can mean the difference between life and death. Recently, my neighbour brought over a little sparrow he'd found injured in the middle of the road. He said it couldn't fly and we thought it might have been hit by a car. I popped it in the cat box (minus the cat!) on a towel with some water and wild bird seeds and left it undisturbed overnight. I wasn't very hopeful as it didn't look good. Next morning, it was so rewarding to see it was bright and chirpy and, once I'd checked it could fly within the confines of the bathroom, I opened the window and away it went. The wee bird only survived because my neighbour saw it, bothered to pick it up and got it help. It reminds me of a great quote from Martin Luther King Junior which WATCHDOG!, the animal welfare group I co-founded in 2014, believes in... *"Never, never be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way"*.

**Okay!** So they don't have feathers and they aren't wild, but an item on Newshub about a charitable group re-homing older or failed farm dogs caught my attention. What a great idea. Instead of farmers wondering how to manage dogs which can no longer cope with long days, they can contact [www.retiredworkingdogs.org.nz](http://www.retiredworkingdogs.org.nz) which has a list of kind people prepared to take on and love these rural retirees. President, Natalie Smith, says farm dogs make great pets so, if you'd like to give a farm dog a home or if you're a farmer and want your faithful worker to enjoy a nice retirement, head to the website. ⇨ *Bert*





Rather than go on a wild goose chase, Nadine Maue, who has been a valued member of the Cape Sanctuary team since 2018, took me on a wild kiwi tracking hunt – and a most successful one at that.

Our mission was twofold. We needed to find the elusive Clifford to replace the band on his transmitter with a larger sized one, vital because he is still growing and secondly, we needed to install a night-vision trail camera at the nest of kiwi No. 57, a mature bird which is still awaiting a name. This is to monitor activity around the nest, so that when he and his partner's chick hatches, it can be caught while young and fitted with its very own junior-size transmitter.

Finding Eastern North Island brown kiwi in their secretive, well-disguised burrows isn't easy, so staff rely on using telemetry to locate the nocturnal birds.



To a lay person like me, it was all a bit mystifying, but having located a signal, Nadine expertly honed in on it, found Clifford snoozing in his nest at the bottom of a very steep gully and emerged triumphant, holding her prize.



Clifford first found fame when he was spotted wandering along the beach at Clifton last summer. Somehow, he had escaped around the predator-proof fence and was in poor condition as he had wandered a long way but, after a few days of TLC, he was returned to the safety of the sanctuary where he quickly recovered and gained weight.



Clearly, he is thriving and enjoying the quiet life, now weighing 1,210 grams, a respectable weight for a sub-adult and passing his health check with flying colours. Regular health checks are carried out on the monitored birds.



As part of a study started in 2019 around productivity and chick survival, there are 30

male adult kiwi fitted with transmitters within the sanctuary which, by emitting different signals, can indicate whether a bird is actively up and about or spending more time stationary, incubating an egg. Nest cameras are fitted when the transmitters alert staff that the eggs are close to hatching and they are then checked regularly to sight the newly hatched chick.



Having attached the camera to a branch in front of No 57's nest, Nadine clipped a clothes peg fitted with reflective tape onto a nearby tree, so that when it comes to catching the chick, staff can find their way in the dark. All up, there are thought to be around 100 pairs of kiwi living within the 2,500 hectare sanctuary. Its successful kiwi breeding programme is another example of a professionally-managed conservation project and one of national importance.

***Would you like to volunteer your time and energy in this amazing place? Just e-mail-[volunteer@cape-sanctuary.co.nz](mailto:volunteer@cape-sanctuary.co.nz)***

**If you know of a conservation champion or something interesting that's relevant in Hawke's Bay, please let me know and I'll be happy to follow it up:- [jessicamaxwell2017@gmail.com](mailto:jessicamaxwell2017@gmail.com)**



***Don't you just love dogs?  
First they steal your heart - and  
then they steal your bed...***

