



Coleridge Habitat Enhancement Trust
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Coleridge Habitat Enhancement Trust (CHET) Summary of Activities 2017-2018

Overview

The 2017-2018 year has been one of consolidation. It has been the second year CHET has had a part-time Coordinator employed to advance CHET's activities.

The Coordinator position was a recommendation from a report CHET commissioned to better understand its role and opportunities (*Lake Coleridge: Opportunities and Strategies for Habitat Enhancement* by Wayne McCallum, January 2009).

With the establishment of the Coordinator position, CHET has benefited from:

- More regular contact with other agencies working in the Lake Coleridge area to keep abreast of their activities and plans in the area.
- Tracking/monitoring information gathered by other agencies that gives an indication of the catchment's environmental health.
- Updates on activities of farmers in the catchment related to CHET's areas of concern.
- Increased support for CHET's objectives from farmers in the catchment (both in-kind and financial contributions).
- A more transparent public profile via membership of the Lake Coleridge Tourism Group (LCTG), which includes a page that provides key information about CHET on the LCTG website.

More specific information about the above activities is provided below.

Relationships with other agencies and landowners with an interest in the area

Over the past two years CHET has partnered with BRaid (Braided River Aid) to advance work that helps to protect braided river environments in the catchment. These rivers support several unique and endangered endemic bird species.

Good relationships with landowners and farm managers are also essential and the CHET Coordinator has kept in close contact with these people to ensure they feel informed about CHET's objectives and can raise any issues with CHET.

More connections have also been made with Environment Canterbury (ECAN) and Department of Conservation (DOC) staff who undertake work in the catchment and can help to identify areas where CHET can make a difference.

New signage about endangered species

Over the past two years, the Coordinator has worked with BRaid on new signage about endangered species to help inform the public about the unique and important habitats that exist in the area.

Please don't disturb signs

These are basic signs - of which 4 were put up in the Harper Village/Lower Harper River area in late 2016 - asking the public not to disturb endangered species that nest in the braided river areas in spring and summer. These signs are still up and have weathered well. They are colourful with pictures of the bird species.

Species information signs

It is anticipated that in spring 2018, more extensive information boards will be erected about unique bird species that rely on habitats in the area for their survival (crested grebes and braided river birds). Design and printing has been completed over the past year, and Glenthorne Station has generously agreed to sponsor construction subject to staff availability. The receipt of a grant from the Rakaia Catchment Environmental Enhancement Society (\$4,427.50) and a contribution from the Lake Coleridge Tourism Group (\$500) has helped towards costs.

Predator Control

Volunteers look after CHET and BRaid-sponsored DOC-200 style traps in some specific areas. This trapping is by no means comprehensive but provides some information about predators in the area.

Lakes Evelyn (5), Georgina (5) & Selfe (10) – Total 20 traps, monitored by Rosalie Snoyink

2017-2018 predators: 5 stoats, 1 ferret, 3 hedgehogs

In addition, this year six rat traps were donated by Kelvin Searle of Kirwee, with 2 located at each of the above three lakes from early 2018. No rats caught in them by 30 June 2018.

Boat Harbour (south-east end of lake) - 3 traps, monitored by David Murchison

2017-2018 predators: 5 stoats

Lower Harper River - 16 traps, monitored by Brian Lancaster of Trustpower

2017-2018 predators*: 8 stoats, 10 hedgehogs, 10 rats, 11 cats, 2 seagull, 2 weasels, 4 ferrets

*Statistics only until 1 April 2018 as Brian took following months off work so didn't report predators caught for April/May/June.

Coleridge Village - 2 traps, monitored by village residents

2017-2018 predators: 6 rats, 1 rabbit

Traps in the Lower Harper River area have caught more this year than the previous, potentially because the traps have now weathered and no longer smell new, but small changes in location, bait or the number of predators could also be factors.

This is the first year a ferret has been caught by Rosalie at Lake Selfe and several were also caught in the Lower Harper River area. Rosalie has been trapping around these lakes for many years now so has a good sense of what is 'normal'.



Crested grebe numbers on Lake Selfe remain steady according to Rosalie, who reported seeing 12 grebe on Lake Selfe on 13 April 2018, which she considered an “excellent” number.

In addition, Glenthorne Station undertook a possum control operation on their land in early 2018 which removed approximately 1400 possums, the majority taken from the Cotton Ranges (between Harper Village and Lower Glenthorne Station).

This year, CHET set aside \$10,000 towards black-backed gull (BBG) control to support a DOC-managed predator control project (that began on the Rakaia River in spring 2017 and will run for 6 years) to protect nesting river birds. The BBG control work wasn’t done because of unforeseen circumstances, but it’s anticipated the CHET contribution will be used instead in spring 2018.

Grebe Platform

In mid-November, a platform designed for crested grebes to nest on, was launched into Lake Coleridge.

The platform is built according to a design that is proving successful on Lake Wanaka. It is located in a relatively sheltered spot, around 10 meters off-shore, in ‘Boat Harbour’ (the water protected by the gravel spit in the south-east end of the lake outside the Murchison baches). It has been put near willow trees that have traditionally been a popular grebe nesting location. It was located here because if grebes used it instead of nesting in the willows, their chicks might be better protected from stoat predation. Five stoats were caught near the platform over the year. The platform is being treated as an experiment.

Grebes were seen in the vicinity over the summer but did not investigate the platform. It has been left over winter and has weathered the lake conditions well and will be checked again before the next nesting season.

Weed Control

Wilding Pines

CHET is in contact with ECAN and the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) voicing our support for wilding pine control in the area, which began in the catchment this year. CHET particularly wants to ensure work started in the Scamander Wetland is completed.

Willows

CHET is concerned about the invasion of willows into wetlands, small river tributaries and around small lake margins and is investigating how best to control willow spread. CHET is liaising closely with farm managers in the affected areas on this issue.

Riverbed weeds

CHET is continuing to stay informed about the ECAN/DOC-managed riverbed weed control programme in the region (called the Braided River Flagship Programme). CHET has contributed financially to this programme in recent years and would consider contributing again if a financial contribution is requested. We are aware of particular concern about broom and willow control in the Lower Harper River/Harper Delta area and will be further investigating how best to manage these issues over the coming year.

Field Trip

In early April, a day long Field Trip was held that all the Trustees were able to attend, facilitated by representatives from Lake Coleridge and Glenthorne Stations.

The purpose was to look at potential projects that CHET could assist with. Weed issues in particular had been previously identified by the farms as a concern and areas of willow, broom and pine were observed and potential additional threats from buddleia, rowans and sycamore were identified. CHET will look into how the Trust can help with some of the areas identified over the coming year.

CHET Trustee Representatives

- Selwyn District Council - Councillor Bob Mugford (Chairperson)
- Trustpower - Holly Simperingham
- Department of Conservation - Chris Stewart
- Coleridge Farm Representative – Bruce Nell
- Fish & Game - Tony Hawker
- Forest & Bird - Donna Field
- Coordinator – Toni Barlow
- Secretary – Judith Pascoe