



Coleridge Habitat Enhancement Trust  
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## **Coleridge Habitat Enhancement Trust (CHET) Summary of Activities 2019-2020**

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### **Overview**

During the 2019-2020 year CHET has continued work on long-term projects, particularly:

- Scamander Wetland wilding pine control – experimental use of a drone to deliver spray
- Establishing a formal project assessment process and raking 25 projects to help determine priorities
- Displaying more signs related to CHET's work
- Maintaining pest trapping records and support of volunteer trappers, as well as investigating trapping improvements.

More information about these and other initiatives is below.

### **Relationships with stakeholders**

The CHET Coordinator has continued close contact with the following stakeholders in relation to projects that are relevant to them:

- Landowners/Managers – particularly Lake Coleridge Station, Glenthorne Station, Algidus Station
- BRaid in relation to bird surveys and their annual braided river seminar
- DOC staff, particularly at Rangiora and Geraldine offices in relation to trapping work
- ECAN staff in relation to the braided river weed control programme
- SDC biodiversity officer
- Lake Coleridge Tourism Group

### **New project assessment process**

CHET Trustees have become increasingly aware over recent years that there are a lot of different activities that CHET has been getting involved in and even more opportunities we are aware of. This has raised the question of whether our efforts are being spread too thinly and what our key priorities are.

CHET therefore developed a project assessment process during the 2019-20 year to compare all projects that are currently underway, or that CHET is aware of, fairly alongside each other. The process uses a set of agreed criteria to rank projects. It was guided by recommendations in the report done for CHET by Wayne McCallum in 2009 with some adaptations made by CHET Trustees.

Twenty-five projects were ranked, largely by averaging scores completed on an individual basis by CHET Trustees. While ranking some projects as a group was also done, it was decided that independent scoring, which was later averaged, had the benefit of less influence of on other's thought processes.

CHET is not treating the rankings as binding, but instead as a guide. For example, some projects ranked highly but there is little CHET can actively do on them because other organisations are better placed to lead the work. However, there are potential actions CHET can take, big or small, for all projects.

Following the ranking exercise, CHET has also commenced writing management plans for each of the projects to help record decisions and ensure discussions cover all important aspects in a more methodical way than has been done previously.

## **Signage**

News signs were printed during the year, which included:

- A set of braided river information boards were given to the Tourism Group for their permanent possession for use at the Highland Games and other events.
- A set of these same braided river information boards were printed for display by Algidus at the Wilberforce River, along with the sign informing people to beware of disturbing nesting braided river birds from Sept-Feb.
- Arrangements were begun for displaying the 'beware of nesting river birds Sept-Feb' sign below the Power Station in Lake Coleridge Village where there is public 4WD access to the Rakaia River.
- A sign warning that 'predator trapping occurs in this area' was created by CHET this year and put in publicly visible locations in the vicinity of trapping operations by the Glenthorne and Lake Coleridge Station managers.
- Selwyn District Council, in liaison with the CHET Coordinator, installed camping and public toilet signs at Harper Village to ensure the location of these facilities was clearer for the public.
- The braided river information boards and grebe information sign planned for Harper Village and Lake Selfe respectively, which Glenthorne has previously offered to build display structures for, have not yet been erected. It is anticipated that with Rebecca Rose now filling the landowner representative role, progress on getting these structures built will resume again during the coming year.

## **Predator Control**

Three volunteers have continued to look after a number of CHET and BRaid-sponsored DOC200 style traps as well as some rat and Timms traps. They are located around crested grebe nesting sites or on around riverbeds used by braided river birds for nesting in spring/summer.

Unfortunately, due to spring flooding of the Wilberforce, which caused damaged to Trustpower canal structures in the Wilberforce/Harper area, Brian Lancaster (Trustpower) ceased monitoring traps in this area over spring/summer. He also found several traps missing (assumed washed away by floods) when he resumed trapping in autumn.

The CHET Coordinator has continued to stay in touch with DOC Rangiora, which is developing a Predator Trapping App that has the potential to make recording trap locations and trapping results easier. In preparation for starting to use this App, or a similar system if it doesn't come to fruition, the Coordinator and Trustpower staff recorded GPS locations for CHET traps during the year.

The Coordinator drafted a Predator Trapping Protocols document during the year to help CHET better determine its role in trapping initiatives and ensure best practice is followed where CHET is involved. Many of the recommendations that the Protocols identify are already being followed by CHET, but there are also opportunities to improve our trapping processes. The Protocols will ideally be finalised and put into action in the 2020-21 year.

#### **CHET trapping results:**

##### ***Around lakes along Harper Road***

Traps monitored by Rosalie Snoyink - Total 30 x DOC200 traps (some are Fenn traps), 6 x rat traps (as at 31 July):

- Lake Evelyn - 5 x DOC200 traps/Fenn, 2 x rat traps
- Lake Georgina - 10 x DOC200/Fenn traps, 2 x rat traps
- Lake Selfe - 10 x DOC200/Fenn traps, 2 x rat traps
- Rakaia/Acheron confluence - 5 x DOC200/Fenn traps
- **Total 2019-2020 caught predators recorded: 14 stoats, 1 ferret, 7 hedgehogs**

##### ***Around Boat Harbour (south-east end of lake)***

Traps monitored by David Murchison – Total 5 x DOC200 traps (as at 31 July).

- **Total 2019-2020 caught predators recorded: 3 stoats, 1 ferret, 4 rats**

##### ***Around Lower Harper River***

Traps monitored by Brian Lancaster of Trustpower - Total 18 x DOC200 traps, 7 x Timms traps (Note: several traps were lost during spring flooding). Brian didn't check traps between October and May this year due to flooding repair work taking all his time. On resuming trapping, he has tied remaining traps to posts to secure them.

- **Total 2019-2020 caught predators recorded: 1 stoat, 2 ferrets, 1 weasel, 4 cats, 5 rats, 1 possum**

#### **Predator control undertaken by landowners around the catchment:**

Landowners undertake major possum control every year on their land, as well as rabbit, pig and deer culls.

#### **DOC's Rakaia Pest Trapping Project**

This trapping project has now completed its 3<sup>rd</sup> summer season. CHET has offered \$20,000 towards the project over two years (2018-19 and 2019-20), although it hasn't yet been invoiced by DOC.

During the 2019-20 nesting period, fledging was significantly affected by flooding in spring, but predation also continued to be an issue. The flooding issue meant that DOC has still not managed to prove its theory that it's possible to trap intensely on one side of a nesting colony while the other side is protected from predators by a deep-water channel. There are another three years of the project to run.

The 2019-20 season included a successful cull of predatory black backed gulls (535 gulls killed, estimated to be about 80% of this past year's Rakaia population, with approximately 120,000 black backed gulls estimated in Canterbury).

## **Crested Grebe platform**

In mid-November 2017, an experimental platform designed for crested grebes to nest on, was launched into Lake Coleridge in the Boat Harbour area (south-east end of the lake). The design has been successfully used in the Wanaka area for several years now.

The platform and signs associated with it have remained in good condition until recently when the platform broke away from its mooring. CHET has offered it to the Lake Lyndon grebe group, but it is not wanted there at the moment, so will stay in storage until another use is found.

## **Weed control**

### **Wilding Pines in Scamander Wetland**

In April 2019, CHET contracted AgriDrone (Richard Cookson) to use his drone to spray smaller wilding seedlings that have spread throughout the wetland. During this past year we have monitored the results of the spraying. Some of the pines have died or yellowed, but some are still growing well. Trustees have decided to observe the trees for another 9-12 months before arranging a second spray. Also, given there are many small seedling pines throughout the wetland, which were too small to spray using the drone the first time, it's anticipated that another spray will be needed for these in years to come and the larger trees that the first spray has been ineffective on could be sprayed again then.

### **Willows**

Trustpower has worked on a plan for willow control along the Acheron Diversion with Lake Coleridge Station during 2019-20, with mechanical removal of willows commencing in July 2020. The willows have spread down this diversion to reach the shore of Lake Coleridge. They have become very dense and been causing unpredictable flooding of paddocks near the lake shore due to the main water channel being clogged up with willow roots.

Willow control in the Scamander Wetland and around Lake Selfe has not progressed this year due to CHET deciding that a process of reassessing all potential projects was needed first to determine the priority of this work compared with other projects before investing significant funds.

### **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 - BRFP).

Trustpower's spraying of the Harper Delta in Autumn 2019 resulted in a very clear delta in the 2019-20 summer. Previous surveys organised by BRaid have shown the delta is a desirable nesting location for black fronted terns, oyster catchers and banded dotterels.

### **Events attended:**

- **DOC North Canterbury Trapping Workshop – July 2019**  
CHET Coordinator Toni Barlow, CHET Trustee Chris Stewart, and Trustpower staff member Brian Lancaster attended this workshop in early July 2019.
- **BRaid Wilberforce River Survey – November 2019**  
BRaid organised an informal bird survey of the Lower Wilberforce River with 20 volunteers taking part on 5 November. This included the CHET Coordinator, CHET Trustpower Trustee Holly Simperingham plus Brian Lancaster and Natalie Robb from Trustpower. The Upper Wilberforce is considered too difficult for volunteers to survey due to its width and river tributaries. A range of species were seen including 2 wrybill eggs, 2 wrybill chicks and 4 banded dotterel chicks, but overall numbers of birds present were considered relatively low by BRaid representatives.
- **BRaid Seminar on braided river issues – 8 July 2020**  
This mid 2020 seminar was attended by CHET Trustees Holly Simperingham and Donna Field as well as other Trustpower staff, and landowner representatives Rebecca Rose from Lake Coleridge Station and Jo Johns from Glenthorne Station.

### **CHET Trustee Representatives**

During the 2019-20 year, DOC Trustee representative Chris Stewart resigned from DOC and consequently his role on the Trust has been temporarily replaced by DOC North Canterbury Manager Kingsley Timpson. Federated Farmers appointed Rebecca Rose from Lake Coleridge Station as the landowner trustee representative.

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