

Photo by Jo Roberts – Foxton Beach Jan 2024

Issue # 9 – September/October 2026

Papangaio Te Wharangi Manawatū Estuary Newsletter

Kia ora / greetings, welcome to the ninth edition of our community newsletter from the Manawatū Estuary Management Team.

This newsletter we have a focus on Pest Plants, with Horizons Regional Council providing a useful handout to keep on your fridge.
Often, when out walking, people admire pretty flowers, but now is the time where you can take effective action in just pulling out those pretty flowers that are actually invasive pests smothering our native species.
Two very common pest plants are



Caper Spurge



Tree Lupin

So, when out walking, feel free to pull these out *if you have gloves on* as the white sap is very alkaline. If helping to weed out these pests is of interest come join the Weed busting team on **Wednesday September 30th 10am to noon**. This is happening in the area around Pinewood Road, so if you want to help and to learn about some of the weeds that can encroach on this important area, please come along.
Park in the area by Pinewood Road then look out for the volunteers that will be available for advice, and to show the species to be eradicated, two of which are shown in the photographs above. Please bring gloves.

Another opportunity to learn is detailed in our **Community Day on Saturday 26th September 10am to 2pm** where you can bring a pest plant from your garden and get it swapped for a native. See details further on in this newsletter.

Another successful Planting Day!

Saturday 5th September, after gale force winds the day before, Foxton Beach put on one of its beautiful spring days with an average sea breeze for an awesome 35 adults and children planting over 1700 Spinifex and Pingao on the dune foreshore south of the Surf Club. In under 2 hours! Massive effort team! Lunch and laughter then followed out of a growing breeze and clouds at Wildlife Foxton Trust – huge thanks to **Green by Nature** for their great community barbeque on wheels and **Horowhenua District Council** for the kai to feed the team.

Local Historic Place Names and sites:

Continuing from our last newsletter, in this issue we explore the once Lake/lagoon Whakapuni.



The blue oval shows the approximate location of Lake Whakapuni.
This tidal lake, pre-1700's, was a significant seasonal kai (food) collecting site.
On the map we show with a yellow dotted line To give an approximate view where the tide came into.
Silt buildup restricted tidal flows, shrinking the lake beyond recognition. Locals started calling it Rush Flat and now more commonly known as "Fernbird Flat".

The red lines show the original riverbed that the lake was feed from and drained into. Even further back in time archaeological testing to the north shows the red lines on the map having the river flow even more northeast, which today would put it flowing east of whitebait creek!

Is wakapuni, where waka were beached for trips into the lake area for kai collecting.
The three most common kai collected were pātiki - flounder, tuna - eel and īnanga – whitebait.
Names for these sites can be found in Newsletter # 8.

Some other Te Reo Māori local identifiers:
Whakapuni = place of encampment, covered in water, to sleep.
Hinemoana (Atua) = ocean
Hāwai = channel
Ngā ngaru / Ngā karekare = waves
Pū waha = river mouth
Ngatu Awa = Estuary
Hāpua = lagoon, lake.

Copies of all previous newsletters are available on the website: www.metrust.org.nz.
The full estuary map can be found in Newsletter #8.

History is being provided by Te Kenehi Teira with knowledge through his Waitangi Tribunal research as well as from his kaumatua and kuia who have schooled him in the last 50 years.

Bird Species focus: Kōtuku – Royal Spoonbill



The stately royal spoonbill is one of six spoonbill species worldwide, and the only one that breeds in New Zealand. This large white waterbird was first recorded in New Zealand at Castlepoint in 1861. Sightings increased through the 1900s, with breeding first recorded next to the white heron colony at Okarito, south Westland, in 1949. Since then, it has successfully colonised New Zealand from Australia and is now widespread, breeding at multiple sites on both main islands, and dispersing to coastal sites across the country after the breeding season.

WFT Community Day! Saturday 26th September 10am to 2pm



Wildlife Foxton Trust, in collaboration with Horizons Regional Council invite the community to come see what we do!

This event aims to connect with our local community, highlight the mahi happening in the area, and inspire awareness and action. The idea grew from our recent inanga hui, where a range of community groups came together around this exciting new project.

We are hoping to bring together a variety of stalls that showcase work relating to coastal pest plants, pest animals, native species, and other kaupapa to help people understand how they can get involved. *(And the newsletter writer heard there will be sausages on the barbeque!)*

The day is being run in partnership with Horizons Regional Council. Horizons will be hosting a pest plant swap, and we will be offering tours of our facility and sharing the resources we have available for the community, including viewing the new education kits for schools to borrow.

Come down and join us on Saturday 26th of September from 10am to 2pm.

Plant Species focus: Kōwhangatara – Spinifex



Spinifex is a sedge (grass-like plant) that grows within sand on active sand dune systems throughout New Zealand. They produce runners (stolons) that creep over the sand, rooting and forming new clumps that trap wind-blown seeds. It has silvery-green, long, narrow, hairy leaves. It flowers in spring with male and female flowers on separate plants. The female flowers mature in mid late summer. They look like a spiky ball and can be found tumbling along the beach.

Fish Species focus: Īnanga - Whitebait



In autumn, adult females of the Īnanga species release their eggs among vegetation around the high-water mark on a very high (spring) tide. When another spring tide reaches the eggs, larvae hatch. The falling tide then carries them out to sea. The hatchlings spend the winter at sea, feeding on small crustaceans. In the springtime, juvenile Īnanga make their way upriver. This is the whitebait stage. Those that reach fresh water remain there as adults for spring and summer. In autumn, the adult fish make their way downstream to spawn in estuaries.

We want to build better whitebait catches – so you will start to see signs and information on how the whole community can input into protecting & enhancing spawning sites that then bring about higher catch levels each following year. Our monitoring aims to find spawning sites, when the eggs arrive, the changes in whitebait movement and the sort of catches people are getting. Scan the QR code for *Manawatū Īnanga Project* information.

Trapping

Trapping is continuing to bring results!	Jun – Aug	YTD Total
Mice	40	210
Rats	16	138
Ferret	0	1
Weasel	1	2
Stoats	1	12
Hedgehogs	5	54
Possums	8	55



Want a trap? Email Suzanne on traps@wildlifefoxton.nz
OR leave a message on 022-684-9813 for one of the team to contact you,
OR drop into Wildlife Foxton Office at 207 Seabury Avenue, Foxton Beach.
Available on loan, free of charge.

Volunteer Opportunities

The team at Wildlife Foxton has a range of tasks that need a commitment of a couple of hours each week, so come drop in and see us, or reach out at: info@wildlifefoxton.nz . The hub - Wildlife Foxton Trust is open Mon, Wed, Thurs 9am – 1.00pm; but also onsite running the Foxton Beach Friendship Club Mon & Wed 1pm - 4pm; @ 207 Seabury Avenue, Foxton Beach. Other events and what is happening where you can join in, are available on the website under the Events Calendar: https://www.metrust.org.nz/current-events .

Upcoming events:

Wednesdays: 9.30 – noon weekly (weather dependent) Pest Plant removal on coastal dune/Ramsar areas Contact Wildlife Foxton Trust for directions and contact for Dr. Bob's Team. Special planting day where cleared areas need replanting on Wednesday 30th September.

Saturdays: Levin Repair Café (2nd Sat every month) 10-1pm Corner Cambridge & Montgomery Streets (Senior Citizens Hall), Levin.

Sundays: Dune Garden weeding – Early start till noonish. Fortnightly but need to contact Arnim Litteck for date confirmation as well as directions on meet up and approx. start times: arnim@actrix.gen.nz .

Friday 18th Sept 9.30-12.30: Manawatū Estuary Management Team 6 monthly meeting @ Wildlife Foxton Trust, 207 Seabury Avenue, Foxton Beach.

Saturday 26th Sept 10am to 2pm: Wildlife Foxton and Horizons Regional Council Community Open Day at 207 Seabury Avenue, Foxton Beach. Swap a pest plant for a native; Build a trap; find out what is happening and how you can help. Forest & Bird Kiwi Conservation Club for kids - register interest

Connecting Horowhenua – Horizons Consultation open

Have your say on Horowhenua public transport! Horizons are consulting 17/8/26 to 18/9/2026 to support planning and future provsion decision.
Online: https://haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz/connecting-horowhenua

metrust.org.nz

facebook.com/Manawatu Estuary

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