



Issue #6 – February 2026

Photo by Jo Roberts – Foxton Beach Jan 2024

Papangaio Te Wharangi Manawatū Estuary Newsletter

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

Vehicles, Trailbikes Damaging Our Dunes

The dunes between the Foxton Beach township and the estuary river mouth are a sensitive area, and even more so, the flat dune wetland area between the dunes. If these do not survive, then we lose valuable protection from the flooding that extreme weather brings, especially with the ever-increasing impact of climate change. Native plants are essential to the survival of the dunes. These significantly reduce the impact of weather and help re-build dunes.

Trail bikes and vehicles are damaging the dunes, both by driving over plants, and by disturbing the dune surface so that wind blows the sand away and into the estuary where it will also make flooding more likely. There is now a bylaw that makes it an offence to take any type of vehicle or trailbike into the dune area. Police are keen to help reduce damage to dunes – however their resources are limited and they rely on people reporting problems along with the necessary evidence such as photos or videos.

Our Dune Protection team is working with the Community Patrol, Police, Horowhenua District Council and the Horowhenua Community Camera Trust to develop a simple way to make reports that will enable follow-up action to be taken. We are currently trialing this and once we are confident it works well, it will be available for anyone in the Foxton Beach community to make a report.

The first few trial reports have been welcomed by Police, we look forward to learning how their follow-up is going. Once we feel the new system of notification is working well, we will be able to advise where forms are available for downloading and where printed forms can be obtained.



Also, we are reviewing signs in the area and hope to alter or remove any that are not consistent with the bylaw.

Unregistered off-road motorbikes have no place on our streets or walkways or dunes! Off road vehicle owners and drivers need to transport their vehicles correctly to places where such activities are permitted. The Beach driving area is stated as below the high tide mark, on hard sand. A copy of the Horowhenua District Council Public Places Bylaw which covers vehicles on the beach can be found here:

[HDC Public Places Bylaw](#)

Let's look at the history of the area, in this edition, from an Iwi and hapū view.

In this issue we are sharing some of the history through the eyes of Muaūpoko.

The area over which Muaūpoko exercises kaitiakitanga, for the purposes of the RMA, is shown below.

Muaūpoko are descendants of Whātonga, Tara-Ika I Nohu and Tūteremoana, and had an established and recognised area that extended from Te Waka a Maui (the South Island), Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington), Te Waewae Kāpiti o Tara rāua ko Tautoki (Kāpiti Island) to Castlecliff (Whanganui). Muaūpoko can be translated as 'head of the fish' or 'people of the head of the fish,' the fish being Te Ika a Māui, the North Island of New Zealand. The fish's head is the bottom of the North Island, where Muaūpoko are born of the land. The Muaūpoko story of origin began with the arrival of Kupe from Hawaiki on the Matahourua Waka, or more recently, the migration of Whātonga (the great grandson of Kupe) who was a navigator on the Kurahaupō Waka. Muaūpoko can also identify themselves with the Fleet migration where Pōpoto of Ngāti Apa (son of Haunui a Nanaia) captained the Kurahaupō.



The eldest son of Whātonga, Tara-Ika I Nohu (shortened to Tara), is the ancestor of Ngāi Tara. This creates our shared whakapapa, Ngāi Tara ki te Mua Ūpoko o Te Ika o Maui. The half-brother of Tara was Tautoki, the father of our whanaunga Rangitāne. The area of Ngāi Tara was traditionally recognised as the Niho Mango (sharks tooth) and was marked by three locations named after their ancestor Tūteremoana; a rock outcrop near the modern-day Castlecliff, the highest peak on Kāpiti Island and a rock outcrop near the modern-day Barrett's reef near Wellington. Prior to this, he was also a chief in Heretaunga, ruling over vast areas. During the influx of migrant Iwi in the 1820s and early 30s, Ngāi Tara lost many of its lands in its vast rohe with the remnants of the Iwi being referred to as 'the people of the head of the fish' or Muaūpoko.

Prior to 1820, Muaūpoko had settlements at Arapaoa Island (Marlborough Sounds), Pukerua Bay, Waikanae, Kāpiti Island, Ōtaki, Ohau, Horowhenua, Poroutawhao/Waitarere, Awahou (Foxton) and along the lower Manawatū River and Rangitikei River. Muaūpoko tīpuna had socio-political relationships and shared whakapapa with their neighbor's in both the North and South Islands. These are Ngāti Apa, Rangitāne, Ngāti Ira, Ngāti Kahungunu, Whanganui iwi, Ngāti Kuia, Ngāti Apa Ki Te Ra To and Ngāti Tahu, with whom Muaūpoko had engaged in a number of marriages, alliances, and conflicts. Muaūpoko Pa sites situated at the lower Manawatū River included Karikari, Wai-pipi-o-maihi, and Ngarara.

The full account for each Iwi can be found at : [Management Plan | metrust](https://www.metrust.org.nz/management-plan)
(<https://www.metrust.org.nz/management-plan>)



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A Four-legged visitor late January!

On Wednesday 28th January our beautiful Ramsar site hosted Wink and the Department of Conservation Team carrying out their annual check on the spread of *Spartina*. So far, we have only had 3 small sites found over the last few years. The bad news was that these 3 sites have doubled in size this last year.



If you are out walking, you might see the brightly coloured stakes identify them – for removal in the next few weeks.

2025 Mātātā / Fernbird monitoring – Papangaio Te Wharangi Manawatū Estuary



Many thanks to Jonathon Gribble for allowing use of his photograph
Annual monitoring for Mātātā / fernbird was conducted on the 9th of December 2025. It was an excellent day for monitoring, with perfect, still sunny conditions. Monitoring was undertaken by Zoë Stone (HRC) and four volunteers – Dave Coles (WFT) and Leah Lee, Kirsten Olsen and Stephen Legg from the Manawatū branch of Birds NZ.

Two transects were monitored on Fernbird flats, starting at 7:30am. Along each transect, a 5-minute bird count was conducted every 100m, where we listened for 5 minutes and counted all heard and seen Mātātā. This was the 2nd year of monitoring, and a good number of Mātātā were observed. In total, 54 individuals were recorded during 1 ½ hrs of surveying.

A highlight of the morning was a nest observation.

The chicks could be heard calling hidden in a salt-marsh ribbonwood bush *Plagianthus divaricatus*, and the parents were seen carrying food and debris to/away from nest.

On average 2.45 Mātātā were recorded per 5-minute bird count across both transects. Last year (2024), monitoring was only conducted along Transect 1, with an average of 2.7 Mātātā per count. This year (2025), Transect 1 had 3.5 Mātātā per count detected.

With only 2 years' worth of data, it is still too early to assess the population trend. However, the good detection of birds this year may suggest the population is at least stable.



Volunteers Dave Coles and Leah Lee monitoring Mātātā at Fernbird Flats
Papangaio Te Wharangi Manawatū Estuary

Trapping

Trapping is starting to bring results!

| | <u>Nov 20 – Jan 28</u> | <u>YTD Total</u> |
|-----------|------------------------|------------------|
| Mice | 32 | 126 |
| Rats | 11 | 43 |
| Ferret | 1 | 1 |
| Stoats | | 3 |
| Hedgehogs | 16 | 23 |
| Possums | 2 | 28 |

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 (Senior Citizens Hall), Foxton Beach. Available on loan, free of charge.
 Photo to the right shows the next lot of traps getting built for location into more backyards!



What's on!

Volunteer Opportunities

At Wildlife Foxton they have a range of tasks that need a commitment of a couple of hours each week (social media content creator and posting, newsletter writer, litter collection coordinator, activities coordinator) – so come see us or reach out at: info@wildlifefoxton.nz or come drop in to Wildlife Foxton Trust: Open Mon thru Thurs 9am – 12.30pm; +50's/Senior Mon and Wed 1pm - 4pm; @ 207 Seabury Avenue, Foxton Beach. Other events and what is happening where you can join in, is available on the website under the Events Calendar:



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2026 Term 1 events:

- Feb 28 - Mar 8 Sea Week: lots of info here: www.seaweek.org.nz
- Environmental Funding for local projects through Environment Network Manawātū for large grants up to \$15,000 opens 1st Jan, closes March 15, small grants under \$1,000 anytime.
- Mar 13: Next MEMT meeting 9.30am- 12.30pm @ Manawātū Marine Boating Club, Hartley Street, FB
- Mid to late March: Watch the WFT and MET Facebook pages as well as our website for the announcement of 'Farewelling the Godwits' expected to be on a Saturday.



metrust.org.nz



facebook.com/ManawatuEstuary



Connect with us at: ramsarfoxtonbeach@gmail.com

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