

THE LAKE NEWS

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Official Newsletter of Rotokare Volunteers

From the General Manager

BY ADRIAN CLEARY

Kia ora e te whānau,

We've now made it past the shortest day of the year and, while the days may be getting longer, I think a true winter is still yet to arrive (although last week's sou'easter was a sign it might not be far away). I hope everyone came through it without any major damage.

A huge thank you to everyone who joined us for our recent TKKR end-of-season celebration. It's important that we take the time to recognise the hard graft and mahi you all put in. Even if you don't regularly help with kiwi work, your contribution supports the wider project and helps make that work possible. Thank you.

This past Friday we attended a Predator Free NZ workshop hosted by Wild for Taranaki in conjunction with Predator Free NZ Trust. During her address, General Manager Danielle Gibbs spoke about the growing rate of burnout across the conservation sector. It's something we're seeing more often, and it feels like an appropriate time to remind everyone to look after themselves. By doing so, you're also looking after the people around you and, ultimately, the places and spaces we all care so deeply about.

Take care out there.
Adrian



Photo taken by Adrian Cleary

Last Month at a Glance - JUNE

- The **mouse response traps, tunnels and tox**. Thank you to all of you helping put in the extra work to check and put them all out!
- Dave who enters all of the data for us (my hero, excel spreadsheets are not my favourite thing in the world).
- Audrey and Tony who led and catered for the working bee this month.
- Andrea for helping me organise the volunteer base and prepping tunnel cards.
- Jenny and John who have been working on updating the GPS route for public, so that we can get an upgraded map made! Plus all of their other mahi they do on a day to day (there is too much to list in fact; stock wires replaced, spraying, clearing gutters, pulling manuka seedlings, the list goes on)!
- There are a lot of you to thank for all of your dedication and hard work over the month, including John and Helen, Robert, and Graham, the Gobles, Tony, Rick, who have put many hours into **fence and trap checks** (and other jobs)!
- Paul all your track work with Kane (and the rest).
- Education helpers, Freda doing lizards!
- Thanks as always to our **hihi and toilet roster helpers**!
- I apologise as always if I have left anyone off, I am sure I would have - there are so many of you that put in so many hours to keep Rotokare and the wildlife here thriving!
- Amee, Brooke and Ashley who are line clearing extraordinaires!
- And there are many of you, I see your names pop up on the hours, and I do not get to see you as you are not here on my work days, but thank you also!



Mid-Winter Breakfast



A reminder that we have our Mid-Winter breakfast on Wednesday 15th July at 8am, to celebrate you, our amazing volunteers.

We would love to treat you to breakfast, so please do RSVP if you can make it :-)

Access Radio Show

Adrian and myself had the pleasure of chatting on a show for Access Radio, with Marie from Volunteering Taranaki. This was aired on Sunday 21st June. The episode is available to stream any time. There was also an article that came from that interview in The Post June 22nd.

[Radio Show](#)

[Article for Subscribers](#)

[Or to read the article if not a Post subscriber](#)

Volunteer Reminders:

Line Clearing Sheet

The line clearing sheet has been refreshed. It can be found on the ops room bench, next to the intentions board.

Please fill it in anytime you do any line clearing so we can keep up to date with what has been done, and what needs attention.

If you notice any particularly in need of clearing lines, just pop a post it note on the sheet or let me know!

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The heart of Rotakare's success

VOLLY CALL
Marie Riordan

When people visit Rotakare Scenic Reserve, they are often captivated by the flourishing birdlife, the tranquil lake and the sense of stepping into a thriving native ecosystem.

What many don't immediately see is the army of dedicated volunteers working behind the scenes to help make it all possible.

Located in South Taranaki, Rotakare Scenic Reserve is Taranaki's only pest-free sanctuary.

The 230-hectare reserve is home to a remarkable range of native wildlife including kōwhiri, tui, kererū, tika (saddleback), tōtō, North Island robin, kōrearea (New Zealand falcon), and many other treasured species. It is also home to one of the region's most inspiring volunteer programmes.

Recently, I spoke with sanctuary manager Adrian Cleary and volunteer coordinator Lorella Doherty about the reserve, its history and the vital role volunteers play in its success.

Rotakare's journey has been decades in the making. One of the most significant milestones was the construction of its 8.2km predator-proof fence, completed in 2007 after extensive community fundraising and support.

The specially designed fence prevents unwanted pests from entering the sanctuary and protects the precious wildlife within. But a fence alone doesn't keep a sanctuary thriving.

"Volunteers are the lifeblood of Rotakare," said Lorella. "Their passion, commitment, and willingness to give

“Volunteers are the lifeblood of Rotakare.”

Lorella Doherty
Rotakare Scenic Reserve

their time allows us to achieve so much more than we ever could alone.”

Today, volunteers contribute in countless ways. Some help inspect and maintain the predator-proof fence, while others monitor tracking tunnels, assist with pest surveillance, plant native trees, control weeds, maintain walking tracks, or help with building maintenance. Others support guided walks, educational programmes, and community events.

There are opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. Some volunteers commit to regular weekly or monthly activities, while others contribute to one-off projects or working bees. Local businesses, schools, and community groups also regularly roll up their sleeves to help out.

One particularly exciting opportunity is the Youth Ambassador Programme, which gives young people hands-on conservation experience while developing leadership skills and a deeper connection with the environment.

For many volunteers, the rewards go far beyond the work itself. They gain new skills, make lasting friendships, spend time in nature and enjoy

the satisfaction of contributing to something truly meaningful.

Adrian explained that while many people had heard the term “predator free,” Rotakare's goal is to maintain a pest-free sanctuary within its protected boundary. This requires ongoing monitoring, management and vigilance work that simply could not happen without volunteer support.

The long-term vision for Rotakare is ambitious. The trust aims to continue restoring and enhancing the reserve's indigenous ecosystem while inspiring wider conservation efforts throughout Taranaki and beyond. Volunteers will remain central to achieving that vision.

Whether you have a few hours to spare each month or would like to become involved in a larger project, Rotakare offers a chance to be part of something special.

If you've ever wanted to make a difference for nature, Rotakare Scenic Reserve may be the perfect place to start.

Step forward. Get involved. Find your place.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities at Rotakare Scenic Reserve, connect with Volunteering New Plymouth on 06 758 8986 and speak with Wendy or Marie, or text 021 575 4228, or email admin@vnpnz.co.

Your time – no matter how limited – could make a big difference.

Marie Riordan is the Manager of Volunteering New Plymouth. She writes a regular column about volunteering opportunities in Taranaki.



Incredible photo captured by Jenny K. May 29th, one day after the predicted date for the sun to set on top of the mountain.

Volunteer of the Month

Rick Penhall

"Back in '88 was when I first came out here. The walk was quite a struggle at places when it rained. Camped out with my parents and sailed a small boat on the lake.

It was always a place I loved to go through the years when I went out in my own.

It is a place of healing for body and mind.

The light glinting off the waters on a misty morning. The songs of birds as the tea brews over the fire. The peace filled with the cacophony of nature, winds in the trees, the creaking of aged wood. The scents of deep forests just a stone's throw from home.

It is a place filled with the ghosts of times past and for forging new memories.

The increased numbers of birds is a joy to behold.

A sanctuary in the heart of Taranaki.

I feel at home walking into the bush and want to do my part to keep it alive for generation's to come, that haven't discovered this beautiful place yet."



Photo captured by Rick on North Fence 1st July

In Need:

We are needing an extra two people to join the toilet roster for July-Sept, while some of our regulars are away.

In Need:

We are in need of more Night Tour volunteers. Including next week (6th & 8th July), & especially the 15th of July. If this is something you are interested in, please let myself or Cassie know.

A Note From Lorella

I have enjoyed the slightly slower pace of this month compared to the kiwi season that has just been! It means a lot of jobs are getting ticked off the to-do list and they do not sit for as long, and lots of maintenance such as line clearing and weed control is being done!

It has also given me some extra time to spend on my computer (yey :-), to get on top of updating the database and older systems that do not work as well. Please let me know if there are ever any suggestions for this, or anything else you can think of! While I am updating email lists and volunteer groups, now is a great time to let me know if there is ever any jobs or rosters you are not as keen on any longer, or feel like trying new things. We want you enjoying your time at Rotokare, not doing things because you feel like you have to because no one else will.

As always, I come away from every day I am at Rotokare with a really happy heart. You all blow me away with how much guardianship, time, energy and passion into this beautiful sanctuary. Like I said in the radio show, you are the lifeblood of Rotokare :-)

Please reach out if you have any questions, suggestions, problems or wisdom and knowledge to share. If I am not here in person, please feel free to contact me, I will always listen.

volunteers@rotokare.org.nz
027 424 6695



Volunteer Reminders:

Please take care on lines and tracks through this season while the weather is less dry, creating more slippery tracks!

Don't forget to take out microspikes with you incase! And let myself, Kane or Fiona know if there are any spots that are particularly slippery and in need of extra safety measures.

Thank you!



Mouse Resonse

- 2x per week for Public area (including C2 and C3).
- Fence traps in tunnels F112-F109 (North fence)
- Fence tracking cards (with tox) F170-F145 (West fence)
- Responses at L10 - there is a map on the white board in Ops shed.
- Check and replace any cards with a new card if damaged/dirty/covered in insect prints or ANY with mouse prints.
- Tox in from Entry Gate-Trig 10 and public area this week (L10 next week).
- North (F112-F109) and West (F139-132) to be closed - bring in cards, any extra traps/baffles in tracking tunnels and tox).

Looking Ahead

Monday July 13th
Ops meeting 9am

Wednesday July 15th
Mid Winter Christmas Breakfast 8am

Sunday July 19th
Tunnel Card Run (high risk) 9am

Monday July 26th
Tracking Card Tunnels brought in 9am

Monday July 27th
Ops meeting 9am

New Volunteers

A warm welcome to our new volunteer Sandra Blue, who has joined the Rotokare volunteer team since the last update. We also have a few others' starting in July which is exciting, I will introduce them next newsletter!



Job List

- Regular assistance with Monday and Wednesday fence and trap checks (and mouse response).
- Maintaining monitoring lines.
- Assist with weed control within the sanctuary.
- Pampas bush at OConnors Gully 8, needs to be dug out carefully or sprayed.
- Watergate to be scrubbed and checked it is clear and functional each time going past.
- Tracking card run prepped (pencils, peanut butter, rabbit meat, rest of cards counted).
- Hood cleaning East fence.
- Pile of metal needs to be bagged up for walkway resealing.
- Bush classroom and seats need a wet & forget & good leaf blow.
- Seat back needs a stain (ops shed).

If you are interested in helping with any of these tasks, please see Lorella or Kane, or simply tick off 'jobs list' on white board when complete :-)

CONTACT US

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