

Welcome Back! Nau mai hoki mai!

Welcome back to the Styx Living Laboratory Trust's quarterly newsletter! Within this issue you'll learn about all the amazing things the Trust has been up to and how we plan to move forward. Panui koa!

Matariki 2022

Māori New Year's Blessing from Hama

Whakataka te hau ki te uru,
Cease the winds from the West,
Whakataka te hau ki te taonga.
Cease the winds from the South.
Kia makinakina ki uta,
Let the breezes blow over the land,
Kia mataratara ki tai.
Let the breezes blower over the ocean.
E hi ake ana te atakura.
Let the red-tipped dawn come.
He tio, he huka, he hauhu.
With a sharpened air, a touch of frost, a
promise of glorious day.
Tihei tihei mauri ora

At the end of June we celebrated Matariki and puaka rising in collaboration with the Christchurch City Council and the Kahukura Rongoā Māori Trust to celebrate the Māori New Year.

Matariki is the Māori name for the cluster of stars also known as the Pleiades. It rises in midwinter and for many Māori, it heralds the start of a new year. Iwi across New Zealand understand and celebrate Matariki in different ways and at different times.

Matariki is an abbreviation of 'Ngā Mata o te Ariki Tāwhirimātea' ('The eyes of the god Tāwhirimātea') and refers to a large cluster of stars, known in European tradition as the Pleiades. According to Māori tradition, the god of the wind, Tāwhirimātea, was so angry when his siblings separated their parents, Ranginui the sky father and Papatūānuku the earth mother, that he tore out his eyes and threw them into the heavens.

Traditionally, Matariki was a time to acknowledge the dead and to release their spirits to become stars. It was also a time to reflect, to be thankful to the gods for the harvest, to feast and to share the bounty of the harvest with family and friends.

(<https://teara.govt.nz/en/matariki-maori-new-year>, accessed June 2022)

We held a dawn planting where a specimen tree was planted before starting a traditional hangi that would be eaten later in the day. The dawn planting also had a bench naming and time for storytelling which was followed by a community family planting event with stalls hosted by local Rongoa practitioners. Thank you to all those who joined us and we look forward to seeing you again next year!



Volunteering Extravaganza

New Opportunities

In addition to our long-standing Water Quality and Bird Monitoring volunteer programmes we have a variety of other new and exciting volunteer opportunities to get involved with!

Invertebrate Monitoring – Dr. Jon Harding

The Trust is working on re-instituting this programme with the help of Dr. Jon Harding from the University of Canterbury. Keep an eye out over the next few months for updates and how to work with this amazing group!

Env. Advocacy – Selena Coombe

The advocacy volunteers contribute to the Trust by submitting and writing to various corporate organisations such as the City Council and ECan. By making a contribution, the Trust is able to have a say in the projects that may affect its goals. The recent submissions include the ECan and Christchurch City Council Annual Plan. The Trust has supported some of the initiatives in those plans and have also made suggestions of their own regarding the funding. For example, we have highlighted that funding should be allocated to ecological restoration in ECan's initiative to tackle climate change. The advocacy volunteers help to keep the Trust engaged and involved in the projects carried out by these organisations.

Field Volunteers – David Anderson

The Trust plans to give more opportunities for enthusiastic members of the public to join the new Field Volunteers Programme to help progress the Trust's goals. Staff will give us work that is productive and enjoyable bearing in mind the requirements of Health and Safety Act and our volunteer's physical abilities. We envisage jobs will include planting and care of the new plants during vital establishment early years, eradication of woody weeds, and other general maintenance. We will also endeavour to have workdays that suit our volunteers.

Ecosystem Restoration – Alan Leckie

The scientific journal Nature produced an editorial stating "The best research is produced when researchers and communities work together" (Nature 2018).

At the Styx site, ecological monitoring approved by the Trust will be completed by members of the community in an initiative called Citizen Science, where the community members will establish the restoration protocols, set up the methods and monitor the success of the programme over many years with the assistance and support of the Trust Community members will learn how to collect scientific data, analyse, present, and store the data with an understanding that the management of the Styx ecosystem influences other ecosystem services downstream.



Examples of monitoring, that are indicators of ecological health and success will be; pitfall traps to monitor the abundance and seasonal variability of insects such as ground beetles and spiders, permanent sample plots established to monitor the success of the plantings over many years, weed mat installation to monitor the impacts on tree growth (height and diameter) by weed removal, planted tree survival to monitor planting technique, and five minute bird counts of all birds seen and heard within the restored area.

All citizen science results will be reported to the Trust annually, so the current monitoring can inform the success of future restoration planning.



What's going on at the Styx

Update from Anita

It has been a busy autumn season for Project Kōtare. The focus of the field team has been on meeting our planting targets, so they have been preparing sites for planting, planting them out, and also maintaining areas that have been planted by the Trust over the last two years. Over 5ha of land in the catchment area has been planted in the last year such as 1500 plants along the stream boundary at Redwood Springs Reserve and 1900 plants in the Earlham Street redzone area. The team has also exceeded their willow and weed control targets for the year, including a focus on keeping a special fen area in the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve clear of invasive grey willow as a joint project with the CCC rangers.

Jackie Howard, our Community Coordinator, has been meeting local landowners and developing plans for their riparian sites. We will spend much of the second year of the project working with landowners to do weed control, fencing and planting along their stream side boundaries which we are all excited about starting.



Some thoughts about conservation of the Styx River - John Knox

My involvement with conservation efforts of the Styx River has spanned over a period of 22 years. Initially, we formed the Guardians of the Styx group which carried out all manner of tasks, including planting, cleanups and water quality testing. Some of our members even attended the Environment Court hearings, arguing our cases against unchecked detrimental commercial development along the Styx River riparian margins. We were often listened to and this made changes for the better concerning pending plans that might have threatened the river's environment.

I realised very early in the piece that the protection of the Styx River and its catchment is the essence of river conservation. If our efforts to preserve the Styx River system are successful, which I believe they will be, then all of us, as well as future generations will be able to enjoy and appreciate its nature and 'spirit of place'.

Presently, I am very enthusiastic about the proactive direction that is being pursued through the actions and activities of the Styx Living Laboratory Trust.

We have skilled, employed staff and volunteers who are caring for the Styx River and its wider catchment in many different ways. I hope that this will continue into the foreseeable future.

Some have said that the test of good stewardship of the natural world is whether when it comes to protecting the environment, wise choices are made. We have a choice with the future of Styx River – to despoil or to conserve it. First we must care for it in order to save it. We have choices and we will be measured, as a people, by the wisdom of these choices.

Update from Bethany

With the morning frosts slowing down and a full team onboard: we're getting ready for planting season which is just around the corner. This season we've got multiple planting sites including Styx Loop and Styx River Conservation Reserves. Keep an eye out for our planting events that we have lined up.

We've also been busy working on multiple projects! For Project Kōtare we had a film crew from the Ministry for the Environment join us earlier this year and you can now see our team in action. We have undertaken an eDNA Research Project to find out what species are in our awa and have had two postgraduate students from Lincoln University join our team to help us produce better catchment maps. We undertook a Sediment Research Project, and we now have maps of where the sediment hotspots are in the Catchment. Five students from the University of Canterbury are also about to start a research project looking at how we can make the Styx Source-to-Sea reserve network a nature tourism destination. To learn more about our projects please visit our website.

Passionate Portfolios

The Trust's work is supported by a variety of portfolios. Each Portfolio is lead by a passionate volunteer and is aimed at helping the Trust achieve its visions for the Pūharakekenui.



Health and Safety

Our Health and Safety Portfolio is dedicated to making sure the Trust has all the necessary policies and procedures in place to keep all staff, volunteers, and community members safe. Health and Safety is the Trust's number 1 priority, so Bethany and Anita work hard to ensure all our I's are dotted and T's are crossed.

Education

The Education Portfolio lead by Simon Rutherford is focused on developing the Trust's education programmes. The Trust currently offers education days and planting days, but are hoping to bring back bus tours and design a curriculum that is tailored to meet the needs of teachers for all school years. By educating the younger generations now we create stewards for the future.

Communications

John Knox leads our Communications Portfolio. This Portfolio ensures that the Trust gets the message out in a professional manner as to what is happening with the SLLT and publicises what it is actually doing. That in turn, creates an awareness and appreciation of our endeavours being seen as perhaps decent and worthwhile.

Science

New to the team is Dr. Jon Harding who has graciously taken the lead on our Science Portfolio. Our Science Portfolio provides technical and scientific advice for our projects and citizen science programmes. This Portfolio makes sure we really are a 'living laboratory' and are providing the best opportunities for research and learning in the Pūharakekenui.

Volunteering

Christina Stet leads our Volunteering Portfolio. While each volunteer

group has its own volunteer lead, Christina oversees the groups and reports back to the Trustees on their work.

Predator Control

The Trust's Predator Control portfolio is championed by Dale Hedgecock. This Portfolio keeps the Trust up to date with pest management in the catchment including work undertaken by the New Zealand Conservation Trust. The Trust has also opened a trap library which will enable us to lend out traps to landowners and other community members so they can undertake backyard trapping projects and help reduce the number of pests in the Pūharakekenui.



Partnerships

Dr. Gillian Lawson and Emma Norrish lead our Partnerships Portfolio. This Portfolio was created to help achieve Vision 5 of the "Styx Vision 2000-2040" document which is to foster partnerships. The types of partnerships the Portfolio aims to develop and foster include Business, Research and Education, Community, Tangata Whenua, and Council.

Field Centre Grand Opening

Advocacy

Our Advocacy Portfolio is lead by Nick Moody and Hugh Thorpe. This Portfolio ensures that we are submitting on any legislation or plans that may impact the Pūharakekenui. This Portfolio also spreads awareness about some of the issues impacting the awa by running community bus trips, giving presentations to decision makers and by working with landowners and developers.

Arts

Our Arts Portfolio is lead by Hannah Watkinson, who also directs our Creative Communicators. This Portfolio is dedicated to using the arts as a way to connect to the communities in the catchment. Each Creative Communicator utilises a different medium to capture the wonders of the Pūharakekenui and share them with the wider community.

Innovations and Ideas

The Innovations and Ideas Portfolio is co-lead by John Knox and Dr. Antony Shadbolt. This Portfolio is centred on creating and imagining future ideas and innovations for the SLLT that not only are proactive but are capable of getting the SLLT recognised as a cutting-edge organisation that not only just fulfils its role of environmental stewardship of the Styx river and its catchment. It also sets out a program for the SLLT to display an ability to stage unique events, assist to sustain its existence through capital generating initiatives and

bring enjoyment into the whole ethos of what it is doing with the Styx River environs. Also, it is essential during this process to avoid the SLLT concept becoming too deep, meaningful and serious, which in short, can be turn-offs for people wanting involvement in this already busy world we all share. Through some of these things eventuating, hopefully more people will be attracted to the positive enjoyable atmosphere created with a group that does nice things. That is why this role is important in order to come up with ideas and initiatives which will help to try and achieve some of these goals mentioned.

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Funding

Last, but not least, we have our Funding Portfolio co-lead by Bethany Baker and Dr. Antony Shadbolt. The Funding Portfolio supports the work of the other portfolios by seeking funds to make ideas come to life! Portfolios notify the Funding Portfolio of any ideas for projects they have and the Funding Portfolio makes these projects happen.

One of the many exciting things that happened this quarter was the Grand Opening of the Christine Heremaia Field Centre on 7 May, 2022. We had stunning weather, an amazing turnout, and lovely guest speakers including Hon. Mayor Lianne Dalziel, Environment Canterbury Chair Jenny Hughey, and Christine's whanau. Many of our guests also walked along the reserve meeting our staff and volunteers and learning about what the Trust is doing to restore the Pūharakekenui!



Education and Creativity

Education Officer - Susannah Robertson



We had Susannah on as the Education Officer for the Styx Living Laboratory Trust from May – July. Her mahi was aimed at developing the Styx vision of creating a learning and research hub within the catchment. She worked on fostering partnerships and participation with schools and the public at large to form the building blocks in achieving this vision. Susannah did an amazing job and we miss her dearly, but we know we'll continue seeing her at community events with her family and adorable pup Jim!

Social Media Mania

The past few months we've continued updating our website and social media platforms. Remember to keep up to date with the Trust between newsletters through our Facebook and Instagram accounts! We've also started a new Facebook Group Page for you to share your amazing experiences in the Pūharakekenui.



Creative Communicator - Lucy Kang Dolan

Our newest creative communicator is Lucy Dolan Kang. She received a Bachelor of Design from Ara Institute of Technology in 2000 and was the recipient of the William Hodges Fellowship in 2005.

Her work is held in collection of the Southland Museum and Art Gallery, and private collections throughout New Zealand and Europe.

Lucy has been a finalist in many National Art Awards including most recently the 2019 and 2021 Parkin Drawing award; Small Works Art Prize in Melbourne 2021; and received the People's Choice Award for her work in the 2021 Zonta Women's Art Awards in Ashburton. We're so happy to have her on our team and looking forward to seeing the beautiful and inspiring paintings she creates.

What's on next?

Keep an eye out for details concerning Lucy's public showcase as it's sure to be amazing! World Rivers Day and Conservation Week will be coming up in September, so keep an eye out for community events on our Facebook and Instagram pages



Keep on the lookout for our new creative communicators lead by Hannah Watkinson. These positions run on 3-month terms and each communicator will present their work to the community at the end of their term. If you think you might be interested in working as a creative communicator for the Trust contact Hannah Watkinson at hannah@thestyx.nz.



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