

## 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. We're now fully digital as well! If you wish to subscribe/unsubscribe to future newsletters please click the link at the bottom of this email. Panui koa!

*Maukatere,  
Rakahuri (Ashley river),  
Rangatira Tuahuriri,  
Tūāhuriri,  
Ngati Urihia te hapū,  
Kai Tahu te Iwi,  
Takitimu te waka,  
Aperahama Kipa  
Tena koe katoa*



## Rongoa Māori in the Pūharakekenui

I nga wa o mua ... in times past, our land and waterways flourished. Tangata Whenua retained a connection with nature and ancestors, and knowledge of Rongoa Māori healing was passed down one generation to the next. The vision of the Kahukura Māori Healing Partnership is to push back on the negative impacts of urbanisation to strengthen the mauri (life force) of local waterways: to heal the land, and heal the people.

This mission has helped build strong partnerships with the Styx Living Laboratory Trust and Christchurch City Council. Together we restore the environmental and cultural value of the Pūharakekenui through environmental work, planting days, community activities, talking circles, and events like Summer in the Styx.

As part of these partnerships, Aperahama is proud to be the Kaitiaki (Guardian) for the Kaputahi Rongoa Māori Healing Reserve in Ōtautahi (Christchurch). The reserve is designed to foster connection and cultural learning: by running wananga (workshops), giving free access for rananga (weavers), whakaro, and sharing knowledge of Rongoa Māori. In the future this site will be developed further, into a whare nui and eventually whare tipuna.

These common Canterbury plants are all Rongoa plants. The propagation and use of Rongoa plants brings nutrients into the whenua and fosters connectedness between people and the environment. This connectedness is why Rongoa Māori speaks for the birds, invertebrates, and plants.



### Koromiko

*Hebe salicifolia*

The buds of new leaves are good for stomach aches, motion sickness, and teething relief. They can be cooked, eaten raw, or prepared as tea.

#### Identification

This large hebe is common in gardens and plantings around Ōtautahi. It is recognised by its long, spear-shaped leaves growing in pairs to form a cross shape on the stem. When it blooms, it forms cone-like clusters of little white flowers.



### Manuka

*Leptospermum scoparium*

Manuka has antiseptic properties; the entire branch and leaves can be ground into a paste and put on wounds and burns. The oil is good for skin care, and the bark is used to smoke eels and fish. And of course the delicious honey...

#### Identification

Manuka is less common in Canterbury than it once was. It has masses of tiny, pointed leaves. It has white flowers with five petal and distinctive red centers. It is very similar to kanuka: if you crush the bark and it smells strongly, it is kanuka.



### Tarata

*Pittosporum eugenioides*

When crushed, tarata leaves smell of citrus. This refreshing plant helps with brain functioning, sleep, and relieving anxiety and stress. Make a cup of tea from the leaves before bed.

#### Identification

Also called lemonwood, this plant is identified by its glossy, yellow-green leaves which release that beautiful lemon scent. In spring it makes clusters of tiny, sweet-smelling yellow flowers which form into green capsules.

# Our Team

Meet the newest members of our Project Kōtare team!



**Loren Pye**

**Field Staff Intermediate**

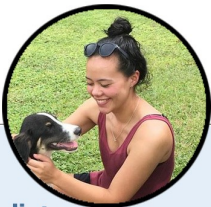
Loren is one of our Field Staff Intermediates (Rangers) for the Pūharakekenui Freshwater Improvement Fund Project. Before joining our team, Loren was working in the area as a Christchurch City Council park ranger and is excited to continue contributing to the restoration of the Styx catchment. In her spare time, Loren enjoys hiking, hunting and swears by the philosophy that you never regret a swim.



**Finn MacEwan**

**Senior Field Staff**

Finn is our Senior Field Staff for the Pūharakekenui Freshwater Improvement Fund Project. Finn has recently returned home to Christchurch after spending two years in Wellington doing Landscape Gardening. Having studied geography and river science in Otago, he is excited to help beautify and naturalise the Styx River Catchment. In his spare time you can find him on the beach or up in the mountains.



**Hana Allan**

**Field Staff Intermediate**

Hana is one of our Field Staff Intermediates (Rangers) for the Pūharakekenui Freshwater Improvement Fund Project. Before joining the Trust, Hana was working as a park ranger for the Christchurch City Council. She studied biology and environmental science at the University of Canterbury. In her spare time she enjoys swimming, playing softball, netball, and pottering around in her garden.



**Tim Veling**

**Creative Communicator**

Tim J. Veling is a photographer and artist living in Ōtautahi Christchurch. He is a Senior Lecturer in Photography at the University of Canterbury, Ilam School of Fine Arts and Director of Place in Time: The Christchurch Documentary Project. The cornerstones of Tim's practice are the social-political and built environments, with particular emphasis on tracking Ōtautahi Christchurch during a time of rapid change.

# Project Kōtare

**Dr. Antony Shadbolt**

Some of you may have noticed, that some time over the last 12 months Styx Living Laboratory Trust's logo has changed. Where once the kōtuku/white heron is what people may have associated with The Styx (like the pūkeko is to Travis Wetland and the kuaka/bar-tailed godwit is to the Ihutai-Avon/Heathcote Estuary), the kōtare/sacred kingfisher has now been adopted as the Trust's new logo. Why, you may ask? While the kōtuku will continue to be the Christchurch City Council's Pūharakekenui-Styx emblem, we thought it might the opportunistic - given the trusts increased activities lately - to forge our own path.

We asked Council's ornithologist Andrew Crossland – 'if he were to choose a bird – what bird would he most associate with the Styx area'. The pūkeko was already taken, but the kōtare wasn't! And so, we developed the new logo, and at the same time gave our MfE funded Freshwater Improvement project the name - 'Project Kōtare'. The kōtare is admired by Māori for the way it perches without moving while stalking its prey, then suddenly attacking in a blur. A good sentry was likened to a kōtare.

The Trust's bird monitoring volunteers have been recording kōtare more and more regularly during their monthly sessions, which have been running for eight years now. This is a good sign! So, alongside the kōtare, it is hoped that the Trust will also have a permanent place in the catchment - continue to be a good sentry - and help protect this special part of the Ōtautahi-Christchurch for future generations.



# What's going on at the Styx

## Update from the Trust

**Ko Hananui te maunga e ru nei taku ngākau.**

**Ko Pūharakekenui te awa e mahea nei aku māharahara.**

**Nō Ōtautahi ahau.**

**Ko Watkinson tōku whānau, ko Hannah tōku ingoa.**

**Kāore ōku toto Māori, engari ko Aotearoa te whenua i whakatipu mai i a au.**

**Nō reira, tēnā koutou katoa.**

I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to introduce myself as the new Chairperson of the Styx Living Laboratory Trust.

My career to date has been embedded in the arts and environment communities, and I am passionate about forming connections and making pathways easier for our talented people to function and flourish in Ōtautahi. I hold a Masters degree in Photography, and regularly lecture at the University of Canterbury. I have sat on a number of Trusts, including Te Tira Kahikuhiku, and the Red Zone's transformative land use group.

I first became involved with the Styx Living Laboratory Trust in 2020, when I was contracted as a Project Manager to work through the final stage of the Project Kōtare (Ministry for Environment Freshwater Improvement Fund) funding application.

Sincerest thanks on behalf of the Trust to Rex Williams for his phenomenal contribution as Chairperson, as well as personally for his support and encouragement. I look forward to working alongside alongside you as Trustees, Rex, and

your continuing championing of the Trust. I have a lot to get my head around in my new role, but I look forward to working strategically on the future of the Trust and our mahi, alongside the talented Trustees - in our monitoring programmes, research and the continuation of the excellent work that Project Kotare is achieving. It feels like a great time to look back, ensure we are on the right track, and move ahead into the future at pace.

Mauri ora!

Hannah Watkinson

## Update from Anita

Our field team doubled in size in July with the addition of Loren Pye, Hana Allan and Finn MacEwan. They have made a big difference already, allowing us to step up our level of work. Gareth is kept busy organising tasks ahead of them, and this autumn we have planted over 15000 plants with more to come.

The focus of our work has moved to private property as Jackie meets landowners and gets agreements signed with them. We have now completed our first stretches of fencing protecting the river margins. Gareth's tree felling skills have been put to good use at some sites as part of the site preparation for planting, with the team then chipping the branches of fallen trees for use as mulch.

One of our project targets is to maintain sites of cultural or historical significance. CCC have discussed with weavers the state of the Pā Harakeke at Janet Stewart Reserve, and come up with a plan to thin out the existing harakeke so that the remaining ones can be maintained in good condition for

weaving. The Project Kōtare team will work with CCC to implement the plan, including attending a harakeke care workshop led by Paula Rigby from Te Roopū Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa (National Weavers Collective).

## Update from Bethany

Did you know there are Freshwater Jellyfish in the Pūharakekenui? We've had some exciting research projects this quarter including a nature-based tourism project with the University of Canterbury geography students, the creation of an interactive map of the catchment with postgraduate students from Lincoln University, identification of sediment hotspots research, re-started our invertebrate programme and undertook an eDNA project that led to the unexpected discovery of the DNA of the Pekapeka-tou-roa (New Zealand Long-tailed Bat) in the Kā Pūtahi. The last recorded Pekapeka-tou-roa sighting in Christchurch was in 1885.

Given the surprising results of our eDNA project, Councils and other community groups have now started following our lead and eDNA projects are on the rise in Christchurch! Our eDNA Project had some interesting findings such as Freshwater Jellyfish, Capybara, and certain invertebrate species. This has led to the creation of Project Pekapeka which is focussed on trying to find bats in the Pūharakekenui.

Three new forestry interns are about to join us for our internship programme and will start working on afforestation and forestry citizen science projects. Along with the array of planting, research and projects on the go, our team is also working on making the Pūharakekenui Styx River Esplanade Reserve publicly accessible for the community to use and enjoy.

# In - the - know

## Interview with a Volunteer - Selena Coombe

**Q: What programme(s) do you currently volunteer with? Why were you interested in these programme(s)?**

A: So currently I'm volunteering for the Environmental Advocacy (EA) programme. Additionally, I am also helping out with managing the social media pages. I was interested in the Advocacy programme because I can apply what I learn at University in real life. Accordingly, the Styx River could eventually be over-burdened, so in a way I'm raising awareness for that through both the EA programme and social media.

**Q: Why were you interested in volunteering with the Trust?**

A: The Styx River has a lot of biodiversity around it that should be conserved and I think it is important to be involved in the conservation so that future generations can enjoy it.

**Q: How has volunteering with the Trust benefitted you? (i.e. learning new skills, mental/physical health, etc.)**

A: I have learnt new things about the Styx River, and I have also been able to form connections with other people in the Trust. With my degree, writing resource consents and submissions as part of the EA programme has helped me improve my writing and communication skills.

**Q: How long have you been volunteering with the Trust?**

A: 7-8 months since March 2022

**Q: What would you say to someone looking to volunteer with the Trust?**

A: The Trust has lots of different volunteering programmes obviously, it doesn't just have to be the one I work in, there's lots of different things available and also lots of support, you can learn many different things throughout. and the programmes are really good and enjoyable.

**Q: Anything you'd like to add?**

A: With the social media work I'm bringing attention to the Trust in different ways. In one way I'm advocating for the Trust by submitting on things and on the other half I'm putting the word out to the general public through Facebook posts and getting the community involved and passionate about the Styx River as well. So there's a more general public group and a more specialised group because not everyone sees the submissions and consents.

*Thank you Selena for all of your hard work and hopefully you've inspired more people to volunteer with the Trust!*

## Letter from the Editor

Thank you all to your renewed support of the Trust's newsletter. It's been a pleasure getting it back up and running and we can't wait to see where it goes! We'd also like to thank Sir Tipene O'Regan for his praise of all the work the Trust is doing to restore the Pūharakekenui. Sir Tipene O'Regan is best known for his role as long-serving chairman of the Ngāi Tahu Māori Trust Board leading the Ngāi Tahu Claim process before the Waitangi Tribunal culminating in the Ngāi Tahu Settlement.

We'd love to hear your feedback on the newsletters as well as any suggestions for future articles. If you'd like to submit an article for publication in one of our newsletters, please let us know this too! Thank you all again and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Nga mihi nui,

Jackie Howard – Community Coordinator



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