

30 Working Bees at Southern Star Abbey 2021-2026.



Newsletters from 2021-2026

**A record of before / after efforts to restore the native bush
(Kopua-riki) around Southern Star Abbey, Kopua
And some of the people who have helped.**

Over the course of nearly 5 years, the Kopua-riki Habitat Restoration Project has transitioned from an initial clearing weed effort into a thriving, multi-stakeholder ecological initiative. The main achievements can be categorized into volunteer contributions, ecological recovery, infrastructure development, and long-term protection.

Volunteer and Community Milestones.

- **Labour and Engagement:** By the 30th working bee on Anzac Day 2026, the project surpassed **2,000 total volunteer hours**. This represents a monetary value of over \$40,000 in donated labour.
- **Collaborative Effort:** The project has grown to involve over seven representative groups in its management, including the Monastic Community, Kopua Companions, **A Rocha (Wellington and Kapiti)**, local Iwi and hapu, Queen Elizabeth Trust, various local parishes and Kopua associates.
- **Restoration Phase Completion:** The primary restoration phase is scheduled to conclude in late 2026, with a shift to a **maintenance phase** starting in 2027 to sustain the thriving natural ecosystem. This will fundamentally include cycles of weeding and planting.

Ecological and Biodiversity Successes

- **Species Recovery:** The **Puriri moth**, a key success indicator, has returned in large numbers. A dedicated "bio-blitz" and follow-up visit recorded over **438 species** (under Project; Kopua-riki Habitat Restoration) using the iNaturalist app, including rare and "At Risk" native moths.
- **Birdlife Improvement:** Native bird populations have noticeably increased; sightings of five wood pigeons in a single morning were recorded in 2026, alongside more frequent reports of bellbirds, tui, and quail. Four dedicated **five-minute bird count sites** have been established to track this progress.
- **Pest Management:** A trapline covering nearly 20 hectares has been refreshed monthly for over two years, resulting in the removal of **over 200 pests** including rats, stoats, and ferrets.

Planting and Weed Clearance

- **Mass Planting:** Thousands of native trees have been planted, including over 1,000 in early stages and a major milestone of **2,000 eco-sourced trees** at Matariki 2024. Contractors were also used to plant 2,000 trees in remote, hard-to-access areas.
- **Large-Scale Clearing:** A contractor and volunteers have cleared massive infestations of **2-metre-high blackberry**, Spanish broom, willow, and barberry hedges to make room for native growth.
- **Memorial Walkway:** The project initiated the **Blessed Suzanne Hohepa Aubert Memorial Walkway** and Rongoa Forest, planting medicinal and native species in her honour.

Infrastructure and Signage

- **Named Walkways:** A network of trails has been established and signposted, including **St Stephen's, St Roberts, St Alberic's, St Benedict's, and St Bernard's Ways**, as well as the (soon to be developed) Blessed Suzanne Hohepa Aubert memorial walkway.
- **Permanent Installations:** Achievements include the installation of large map signage, totara trail signs, and a **stone memorial bench** at a walkway gathering point featuring a quote from St Bernard.
- **Support Facilities:** The monastery provided a dedicated **volunteer storage shed** to house equipment and serving as a hub for resources, tools, planning board and health and safety gear.

Funding and Protection

- **Legal Safeguards:** The project secured a restoration agreement with the **Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) National Trust** to protect the 13-hectare site in perpetuity.
- **Financial Support:** Significant funding was attracted, including over **\$60,000 from Horizons Regional Council** for weed clearance, fencing, and biodiversity initiatives. This support has been fundamental
- **The Gifted Name:** The habitat was officially named "**Kopua-riki**"—meaning "something small but part of a bigger picture"—reflecting its role in the global effort to combat biodiversity decline. As well the Aotearoa Cistercian Community is part of a wider International Cistercian, known for their care of "people and of place."

Kopua Habitat Restoration Project Working Bee No 1 October 11th.

Associate Stephen Close and fellow All Saints Church (PN) parishioners , Leonie Salisbury and brother Norman Mangnall and Mike Stone worked for three hours to clear a path to the Community pumphouse and then on to “White Rock “ below. We also cleared broom from the roadside. Broom is an introduced weed which smothers native regrowth. Some next steps are to clear more broom from the roadside and then more weeds through into the wetland walkways to enable next winter tree planting



Before



After



White Rock —once a popular swimming hole.



The gate has deteriorated and needs a replacement. It is on Kopus Road by the bridge over the Manawatu River.



Kopua Habitat Restoration Project Working Bee No 2 November 13th 2021

Associate Stephen Close and fellow All Saints Church (PN) parishioner , Norman Mangnall and Mike Stone worked for three hours to focus more on the walkways to the wetland and clear more of the invasive (Spanish) broom to enable tree planting for next winter.

Andreas , a Monastery companion, has repaired the gate and we were able to clear another area of the invasive (Spanish) broom on a hillside. We were able to clear sticks, branches and a few patches of thorny barberry (from Himalayas originally) and blackberry before widening the three trails.—Stephen’s Way, Robert’s Way and Alberic’s Way.



Before



After



While resting Stephen and Norm can see the area cleared for future planting and the patch of broom to clear another time. With recent rain the wetland is full and planning for appropriate plantings with advice from regional council biodiversity advisors can be imagined. It was pleasing to note when clearing the path from the pumphouse (Working Bee 1) that blackberry covering the trail is now clear. Some low blackberry at ground level will need attention at the next working bee. We have completed Stage 1 (A and most of B). The next Working Bee is likely to be late January, 2022.

Kopua Habitat Restoration Project Working Bee No3 Feb. 2nd/3rd Feb.2022

Six Associates and friends gathered on Wednesday and Thursday to prepare an area around the Kopua wetland for planting later in the year. The group was able to remove



(Spanish) broom from a hillside and from an area in the lower Wetland. Willow trees were counted around the wetland and the work of removing them begun. Removing the willows will enable more water to be retained for wild-life and it will create space for native plantings such as carrax (glasses/sedges)

toi toi , flax and kahikatea (or white pine). Kahikatea grow well in this area and will become the largest trees in the district and a will eventually provide a home for as much biodiversity as a whole hectare of farmland.



The temperature rose to 30 degrees and so for some of the afternoon we worked in the shade along Roberts Way (The upper trail from the green cross) and we cleared blackberry and small barberry. The seat in that area was also repaired.

Stephen Close (below) and I had the opportunity to meet with freshwater advisor from Horizons (Phil) and confirmed the planting types and the overall plan as already circulated. (in the brochure Kopua Habitat Restoration).



In the photo Stephen is pointing out the willows that currently dry out the area and provide a poor habitat for native wildlife

The Associate Group and friends operated as bubble and we followed Ministry of Health guidelines provided.

Those participating were: Stephen Close, Norman Mangnall, Bruce Humphrey, Andre Jacobs, Laura Holcroft and Mike Stone.

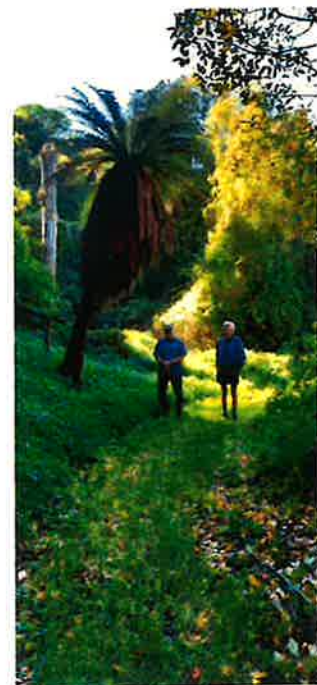
Kopua Habitat Restoration Project Working Bee No 4 and 5 April 19th/26th

On Tuesday 19th April Stephen Close, Norm Mangnall and myself headed to Kopua to clear weeds and drop the dead willows around the wetland. This is done in order to create space for the native grasses, flaxes and trees due to be planted in June. The Regional Council has already ordered and paid for these 1100 plants, worth \$2500.

We had time to complete a five minute bird count. This involves sitting quietly for five minutes taking note of the weather, time, date and situation and then we recorded all birds seen or heard. It was a sunny autumn day at 11.54am with little wind. We saw /heard: blackbird(2x), magpie(5x), bellbird, fantail(3x) paradise duck, skylark and tui(4x) This record will be helpful in the future. It will be helpful as a measure of progress of habitat / biodiversity health for ourselves and future funding supporters. It would be especially helpful following the implementation of a trapline for rats, mustelids etc over the years ahead. This would provide evidence of trapline impact. When the visitor centre opens up we would encourage any visitors to complete a five minute bird count when staying at Kopua and help us build a wildlife archive for the future. The group worked for 3 hours



On Tuesday 26th April Stephen Close, Graeme Dickson (see side photo) and I visited Kopua and walked around the entire forested area. Graeme Dickson is a very experienced trapline designer. We were able to GPS and identify 20 sites around the entire area to site traps that would protect the native animals from rats, ferrets, stoats, etc etc. Traps will be funded by the Regional Council (\$2500) and once in place we will need to have a maintenance roster that will involve someone walking the line once a month and replenishing bait and recording catches. This would take someone about an hour to complete. Graeme had not been to Kopua before and has offered to be part of the roster. Time taken was 6 hours.



Next Working Bee; May 14th Saturday
Moving willow branches, removing blackberry, grass in areas to plant trees, grasses etc on 24th June (Martariki) and Saturday, 25th June.

Kopua Habitat Restoration Project Working Bee No 6/ 7 May 14th/28th 2022

On Saturday, 14th May, Stephen Close, Steve Munday and myself stacked willow branches from around the pond/wetland to give space for low-lying grasses, carrax's to be planted. Spot spraying was also done on the hills in preparation for Matariki (June 24th/25th) tree planting. This would enable the trees to grow without the competition of grasses around the stem.

There was chainsaw work, spraying and stacking. In the recent week Fr Nicho was consulted about the walkway signage—(St Stephen Way, St Roberts Way and St Alberics Way). The signage can now be priced, ordered and installation planned for 14th September. The 20th Anniversary of Kopua Associate Community.



Below is Philip Barker
Freshwater Advisor



On Saturday, Steve Munday and a group from Dannevirke (above) Gregg and Samuel Wyatt, Nick Vella, Troy Archer joined Stephen Close and I to complete the clearing for Matariki plantings. Fires were lit and spot spraying was completed.

More logs were felled and hauled from the pond to be cut and stacked. Remaining dead willows will need to be felled next summer when the water level enables access.

A few days earlier, the Freshwater Advisor (Philip Barker) visited the site and confirmed the area to plant this year and identified gaps that could be filled next year with a second application for more trees approximately the same number as this year ie 1000 native trees. (2hours)

This group worked for 3.5hours



Kopua Habitat Restoration Project Working Bee No 8 Matariki Weekend June 2022

On the Friday of the first public holiday acknowledging Matariki over 40 volunteers gathered to begin planting 1000 native trees around the Kopua Wetland. We began with a Matariki Waiata sung by Hinekawa Munday. This waiata featured all nine stars in the cluster. After introductions we moved to the planting area with an A Rocha group from Wellington and Manawatu planting a southern hillside and a group from Hokianga and Dannevirke planting the Northern hillside. Those more comfortable on level ground planted the many grasses and



flaxes and kahikatea around the wetland itself.

Not everyone was featured in the photo to the left. One group did some early morning sightseeing and others joined us later in the morning. By the end of the day over 980 native trees had been planted.



Left foreground
Sybil and Jim Gibson
planting a 2.5m Kahika-
tea. South facing hill
and wetlands at back.

Over 214 volunteer hours were spent planting the 1000 native trees provided by (Horizon's Regional Council) as part of the Manawatu River Leaders Accord, Community Project Application. In seven previous working bees 2021/2022 104 volunteer hours had been spent clearing blackberry, spanish broom, willow and other introduced native plants. Weed trees had been felled to give space to plant the natives. As well as trees Horizon's has also provided funding for 20 traps to catch rats, stoats, opossum that predate on local native birds and eat the native invertebrates such as puriri, weta and native seeds. A 12 month roster is being formed for volunteers to check this trapline once a month, replenish any trap with bait and record the results.

Kopua Associates acknowledge the vital support from Father Nicho and the Monastic Community including companions, A Rocha (Wellington and Manawatu), Members Associated with Panguru Parish, Hokianga (with Rev Fr Maliu 'Otutaha and Sessi 'Otutaha), Parishioners from St Joseph's Parish (Dannevirke), Steve Munday and whanau, Andre Jacobs and Philip Barker (Freshwater Advisor—Horizons Regional Council).



Father Maliu and Steve Munday at work clearing a large native beech tree that had fallen over a seat.

How will we measure progress?

1) A five minute bird count done regularly is an excellent way to determine the success of a habitat restoration. This process involved listening, watching and then recording the name of any birds identified in the 5 minutes. A record is also made of the location, weather details and date and time. It is expected that as the trapline is managed there will progressively be an improvement to the numbers and types of native birds identified at Kopua.

2) Another measure of progress is the prevalence at Kopua of New Zealand's largest moth –the Puriri. Its distribution is only in the North Island and it was once more commonly seen at Kopua in September through to November. We were able to plant 8 Puriri trees. It is hoped that visitors will experience these beautiful moths more often in the future.



The above photo was taken on (late) Saturday afternoon 25th June , after the trees had been planted and the wider area cleared of dead branches/fallen trees. To the right is an area covered in some blackberry which we have sought funding to remove and then plant out in trees on Queen's Birthday 2023. A five-minute bird count was done here to add to our archives. Please contact Mike Stone stonem@xtra.co.nz for information about working bees in the future or assisting with managing the trapline. Check out working bee newsletters on www.kopuacistercianassociates.nz under "Kopua-the Place."

Kopua Habitat Restoration Project 2022 (actions to date following Matariki 2022 Planting)

September.—Walkway Signage installation leading up to September launch.



This involved digging postholes and bolting totara signs to the half round posts.

Associate Stephen Close and fellow All Saints Church (PN) parishioner , Norman Mangnall and Southern Kopua neighbours Michael and Shane Story and Mike Stone worked for thirteen hours in total to complete this and also clear some weeds.

Trapline- July-December

The trapline gets checked monthly and involves walking the trapline refreshing each trap with bait, removing any pests caught and maintaining a tally of results including observations from the habitat area.

This has been done 6 times and includes bait preparation, cleaning traps and communicating with sharemilker when on farmland. Total hours 15

December 2022 Working Bee.

This was delayed due to poor weather for weeding and involved cutting (Spanish broom) and pasting the stem with a herbicide. It also involved clashing pathways through 2metre high blackberry. This involved Stephen Close, Norm Mangnall, Gregg Wyatt and Mike Stone and took 19.5 hours



Habitat Restoration volunteer Hour tally till end of 2022. (not including travel)

327 hours. (This includes 214 hours spent by volunteers on Matariki 2022)

External Funding attracted to this Kopua Habitat Restoration is \$5,500 from Horizons and donations \$450. Total \$5,950.

Working Bee No 11 21st January 2023.

Today we cleared weeds from around areas to be planted later this winter (Over Kings Birthday Weekend and Matariki Weekend) and also next year. As well we continued to clear mainly blackberry from a paddock, which may become the Memorial Forest for Suzanne Aubert in 2024. Our next working bee (Saturday 1st April) will be done in conjunction with A Rocha (Wellington) who have booked the guesthouse. Kopua Companions kindly provided morning tea for us today.



Today we were also able to rebait the trapline. Wood pigeons and tui were not far from us all day.

Photos are of Stephen Close., Steve Munday and Gregg Wyatt . The other image gives you a sense of the height of the blackberry with gloves and slasher for comparison.

Hours worked in total was 14hours-not including travel.

“One learns more in the forest than in books. The trees and rocks will teach you things you will not hear elsewhere.”

Bernard of Clairvaux. Letter 101 to Henri Murdach (Abbot)

Newsletter 8 Working Bee No. 12 1st April 2023



For the first time Kopua Associates, Kopua Whānau and A Rocha combined for a joint working bee. We were able to weed, plant flax, undertake 5 minute bird count surveys, remove dead trees from the wetland, and also to release trees planted last Matariki. (Above —all involved except our cooks)

Helen and Hazel



(Left) This was our shared lunch which was also a celebration of the Wellington A Rocha's ten years of transforming a grass area into tall healthy native bush.

The next working bee will be at Kings Birthday on June 5th (Monday) we will prepare the ground for planting another 700 trees at Matariki. Matariki is on July 14th (Friday). We will also need to release trees, pot native trees from walkways, attend to Spanish broom and oil walkway signage etc etc

Vision 2222

In two hundred years' time it would be great for people then to see what Mark Twain saw of Kopua from the train window in November 1895. His diary records,

"A perfect summer day: cool breeze, brilliant sky, rich vegetation. We saw wonderfully dense and beautiful forests, tumultuously piled skyward...sometimes these towering upheavals were festooned and garlanded with vine-cables. And cocooned in another sort of vine of a delicate cobwebby texture, "supplejack" I think. Tree ferns everywhere -a stem fifteen feet high, with a graceful chalice of fern-fronds sprouting from its top-a lovely forest ornament. There was a ten foot reed with a flowing suit of what looked like yellow hair hanging from its upper end.."



Above is the area in February 2022 and below is the area as we left it after the working bee. In the picture below. What is not seen below ,are the 100,s of small native trees that are growing well.

700 more trees will be planted around the large tree on the right at Matariki 14th July 2023



(Left) Gregg , Samuel and Steve talk with Lou Hagger (QE2 Trust Rep, (Centre) . Terry and Helen are listening and Anthony is seated at the back for a well earned rest.

It was such a productive day with abundant bird song and Cistercian hospitality. Thanks to all involved. Please register with Mike at stonem@xtra.co.nz to assist at a working bee in the future.

Newsletter #9 Working Bee #13 Kings Birthday 2023



A large group from Auckland, led by Sessi and (Father) Maliu Otutaha, returned this year to support the Kopua Restoration Project. The Otutaha whanau have had a long association with Kopua and stayed in the guest-house. Those assisting were Clive Tu’i, Sione Latukefu, Emily Otutaha, Thelma Rondon, Waisele Latukefu and Manatu Latukefu.

Local regulars included Gregg Wyatt and Steve Munday. Palmerston North regulars included Stephen Close and Norm Mangnall were accompanied by Mike Dodd and Mary Eastham. (Mary-fourth from the left- is now one of NZs newest recipients of the Queen Service Medal.) Not in the photo above were our cooks Hazel Wyatt and Helen Carver. Support also came from Andre Jacobs, Laura Holcroft, Maria Andresen, Mabes Munday, Sela Byrne, Lee-Anne Stone and the monastic community and companions.

We were able to : 1) clear a large patch of blackberry, with handtools and fire, where trees will be planted at Matariki, 2) spot clear 700 patches for trees to go in at Matariki weekend, 3) translocate about 80 seedlings from a paddock to be grazed , 4) planted the first trees in the Suzanne Aubert Memorial Rongoa Forest. (The area cleared was 2 metre high blackberry at the last working bee– see below), 5) removed large exotic trees from the habitat area and 6) provided three ute loads of firewood to the community from non-native trees.



On the left is the paddock on Kopua Road. Notice the same skyline trees in both photos — one taken in January , the other at this Kings Birthday Weekend.



Below is the first tree to be planted in the Suzanne Aubert Memorial Forest by Thelma Rondon from Auckland





Above -Seedlings were dug out of an area that was likely to be grazed soon.



Left, Clive clearing blackberry ready for the Matariki planting.



Right , a rare (for this habitat) black maire and a stand of Kaikoromako, that we hope to fence off with support from QE2 Trust. Once protected its seed will slowly spread throughout the Kopua bush.

News of an application by the Monastic Community to the QE2 Trust will be announced this month.



Total Kopua Associate and Kopua Whanau volunteers hours this weekend 133hrs (not including travel)

It was such a productive two days with good weather. Thanks to all involved. Please register with Mike at stonem@xtra.co.nz to assist at our next working bee. (Matariki — July 14 –15th Friday /Saturday)

Newsletter #10 Working Bee #14 Matariki 2023



A large group from Wellington, led by Mary Hutchinson (Trustee of A Rocha Aotearoa NZ), returned this year to support the Kopua Restoration Project. This group was able to ; plant out all 700 trees around the southern and western side of the wetland, clear one full ute load of English Ivy from spreading further and potted around 100 native seedlings for planting out next year. The 700 trees were provided by Philip Barker (Freshwater Advisor– Horizon Regional Council), who was available to assist as was Lou Hagger (QE2 Tararua Representative).

NB Not all the Wellington Group are present in the photo above



(Left) Emeritus Professor Jason Maaka (Local Hapu member) with Norm Magnall , Brother Jeffrey and Stephen Close., were able to check the site out the day before Matariki and Professor Maaka and whanau were able to present to us all on Matariki evening about hapu aspirations for the future.



The area (above) is now planted out completely in a variety of eco-sourced trees. (ie from the Pahiatua Ecological region.)



(Above) Shared lunch and (Below) A group resting after jobs have been done. We had time to explore a second wetland– upper left of the photo.



(Left), Clive Tu'i clears a large patch of 1-2m high blackberry over Kings Birthday Weekend. Five weeks later (Below) this same area is now entirely planted out in a variety of native trees



(Left) Steve Munday and Jo White (staff member at Home of Compassion Wellington) plant a small kowhai tree in an area designated the Suzanne Aubert Memorial Forest.

Thanks to Hinekawa Munday for the Waiata sung to begin the days work., to Professor Jason Maaka and whanau for joining us at Matariki and presenting to us .—and all involved.

Total volunteer hours worked after 14 working bees is now 582 hours (not including travel.)

Newsletter #10 Working Bee #15 25th August 2023



On August 25th, 2023 staff at the Palmerston North Catholic Diocesan Centre spent a day joining the Kopua Monastic Community for prayers, walked around part of the grounds to view a hermitage and wetland developments. The group then assisting in the Habitat Restoration by removing weeds especially English Ivy and Spanish broom, approximately 60 totara seedlings were potted for future planting and karamu and manuka trees were planted along Roberts Way.



Before



After



Lunch in the guesthouse



Taking in the view from Roberts Way



(Left) The puriri moth is a key success indicator species for this Kopua restoration effort.

Greater numbers over time of this —the largest moth in Aotearoa/ New Zealand —will mean progress.

Total Volunteer hours worked after 15 working bees is 627 hours.



(Above) During our orientation walk to a hermitage, we were not far from curious keruru and darting fantails.

(Bottom left) David Malloy prepares the tools, plants for the group at the start of Roberts Way.



The restoration focus of this visit was to enhance Roberts Way. One of the three “Little Camino Walks” near the wetland. This walk has now been planted out with karamu and manuka—both used in the successful medicines of Suzanne Aubert. Weeds in this section of the habitat have been dealt to!

For this visit Kopua Associates were able to prepare a booklet featuring :

- ⇒prayers of the 6th and 9th hours,*
- ⇒information about the links the area has with Suzanne Aubert and the native plants used in her medicines*
- ⇒information about the Kopua Habitat Restoration long-term and short term.*

This was the first habitat restoration working bee at Kopua by staff from a single workplace.

In recent years, the Catholic church has heard from Pope Francis about “being synodal”. It seems that the Diocesan Office is “walking the talk”. According to Pope Francis “being synodal” means Christians walking together, working together and praying together.

The next Working Bee is on September 23rd Saturday 9am (start) –3pm. All welcome, but please register with Mike Stone at stonem@xtra.co.nz for catering and logistics purposes. Focus will be potting young trees, clear weeds-(ivy, cotoneaster, Spanish broom and esp. blackberry) and a little fencing.

Kopua Habitat Restoration Working Bee #16

23rd September 2023 Newsletter #11



In September a few hard-working volunteers assisted in the Habitat Restoration by releasing trees planted this year on each side of the three paths. Seedlings for potting (to go to a nursery in Palmerston North till winter 2024)—and large fallen trees and branches were cleared from trails.



Before



After

We now have 400+ trees at the A Rocha Nursery in PN to be planted back at Kopua next year.

(Seedlings under one large tree are now being watered daily in PN)



Hazel and Helen with morning!

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Later Laura and Andre provided beef Bolognese





(Left) The puriri moth is a key success indicator species for this Kopua restoration effort.

Greater numbers over time of this, the largest moth in Aotearoa/ New Zealand, will mean progress.

Total Volunteer hours worked after 16 working bees is 667 hours (9/23)



Above. Kevin Smith, who together with Maria, manage the guesthouse at Kopua took this photo yesterday. He has been at Kopua for over a year and has not seen a puriri moth here before. These moths, once common in September, October and November, are vulnerable to feral cats, hedgehogs, rats, mustelids and ruru.



(Left—Before) <---

(Right—After) --->

This track now cleared by Gregg Wyatt and Steve Munday will enable a kaumatua to visit a site of significance on Kopua Monastery Land in the months to come.

The track may also be part of a Suzanne Aubert memorial trail, which is only at the early planning stages.



We are awaiting the outcome of two applications for funding in October to enable the restoration project to continue at pace into 2024.

The next Working Bee is on November 18th Saturday 9am (start) –3pm. All welcome, but please register with Mike Stone at stonem@xtra.co.nz for catering and logistics purposes. Focus will be on potting young trees, clearing weeds-(ivy, cotoneaster, blackberry and the yellow flowering Spanish broom) and weeding around young trees planted this year.

Kopua Habitat Restoration Update Working Bee #17 Newsletter 12

18th November 2023



Left top. Stephen Close, Steve Munday, Gregg Wyatt, Norm Magnall, Catherine Campbell, Joseph Wong. (Bottom Left) Patrick Hue, Br Chris Maney, Kevin Campbell, Sujit Liampetch, Hazel Wyatt, Anthony Kreichbaum Abs Helen Carver, Mike Stone

(Left) The group spent time weeding around trees planted at Matariki, this

ensures that the survival rate will be high even in a predicted warmer summer. Spanish broom was cleared from hillsides, and a pathway cleared to a significant sight for local Maori.



Left (Arapera Paewai, Taranaki Nepe Apatu, Steve and Gregg.)

Following the working bee, we were able to show Arapera and Taranaki about parts of the habitat. Both having extensive knowledge of Matauranga Maori of the area. Taranaki is part of Arapera's team called Taioa Contracting – a preferred Regional Council contractor for environmental restoration. Taranaki is a member of the local Hapu and his grandfather used to work on the Kopua Monastery Farm naming his children with Kopua related names- such as Basil. The name was in memory of Abbott Basil at Kopua. Arapera's father is Dr Manahi Paewai. Manahi assisted in writing the brochure, available at the monastery, about the pre-European history of Kopua.

The work done (755 hours=value approximately \$18k) by all volunteers has been tremendous. We have planted 1000 trees +, harvested 600 seedlings for planting in 2024, cleared half an acre of blackberry for future planting, cleared nearly all Spanish broom, cotoneaster, and large willows, around the wetland and are preparing areas for planting in 2024/2025. We have also maintained a trapline that is showing results with reports of birds not seen before such as quail. Reports of more abundant native birds (day and night), rare reptiles, and more frequent sightings of some uncommon invertebrates such as Puriri moth our indicator species.

Brother Jeffrey has reported he now hears bellbird early every morning instead of only occasionally as before there was a trapline.

We have a promising arrangement with the QE2 Trust which will provide \$10k over five years to target areas to fence, weed and replant with natives. At this stage we are unsure when the funding for this will be available.

We were one of 130+ groups to apply to the Tindall Foundation but were not among the 18 successful groups. A stated priority for the Tindall Foundation was a focus on marine habitat in 2024. We unfortunately missed out on this application, and they confirmed there were no flaws in our application. We also recently learned that our application to Trees That Count was unsuccessful for next year, not due to problems with the application but the funding available was oversubscribed. Trees that Count will be reviewing our application for trees in 2024 based on their revenue stream over the summer, however these decisions jeopardized our planning for 2024.

Mindful of the lack of success in external funding and as the monastic community supports the objectives of the Kopua Habitat Restoration, the Abbey have been generous with financial support over the next three years. The farm advisory group also advised support as the restoration plan fits well with environmental stewardship aspirations of the farming operation.

This funding will enable the Kopua Restoration plan to proceed with regular working bees and allow for more involvement of volunteers and speed the progress to register the 13ha with the QE2 for protection in perpetuity. I am confident now that with some assured funding, promised grant of \$10,000 from QE2 and further applications for one-off items we will complete the restoration over the next three-to -four years and begin the next phase moving from restoration to Kopua Bush Management around 2028.

We can now hold another public planting day on Matariki 28th June. If you would like to register yourself for this day or a group, please contact me via email stonem@xtra.co.nz Although we have seen pleasing progress --there is still much to be done.



(To the left is Rev Jon Hartley QSO and Brother Jeffrey.) Jon has extensive experience supporting community groups with governance advice. He was keen to visit the habitat area before making suggestions. As we toured the wider habitat area we came across the overnight resting spot (as indicated by depressions in the grass) of two deer seen the previous day by a guesthouse visitor.

We were contacted recently by Kay Griffiths of The Conservation Company about a record of rare plants in the vicinity of the Kopua Bush. The rare plant had been identified by a visitor to the monastery some 20 years and was already known to us. This adds further impetus for the area to be protected in perpetuity.

We will close a section of Stephens Way till overhead dead willow trees have fallen to the ground.

The next Associates working bee will be Saturday April 6th. This will be a joint working with A Rocha Kapiti who have been visiting Kopua for over 10 years now. If you would like to register with this event please let me know via email stonem@xtra.co.nz The focus will be on: 1. weeding-wandering willy, blackberry and Spanish broom, 2. harvesting trees (esp totara) for later planting, 3. releasing trees. We generally start at 9am and finish at 3pm.

Kopua Habitat Restoration Working Bee #18

April 2024 Newsletter #12



For the second time in two years, A Rocha (Wellington) and Kopua Associates and Whanau combined efforts to advance the habitat restoration programme.

Those present here are;

(Left) Mary Eastham, Helen Bathurst, Annette Doyle, Kathryn and Kevin Campbell

(Bottom Left) Anna Baird, Irene and Terry Parminter, Lynn Pritchard, Anthony Kreichbaum, Richard Noble, Beverly Parton, Stephen Close and John Parton.

Not in the photo but participating on the day were; Frances Kuryana, Steve and Mabel Munday, Hazel and Gregg Wyatt, Mike Stone

One of the main jobs this working bee was to deal to willow near the wetland to enable space for planting natives later in the year. Notice in the photo on the right large willow have been removed and willows around the wetland have been cleared.



Before



After

A group cleared English Ivy in an area begun last year — and largely now contained. The group cleared the area of four large plastic bags, (right) which have been carefully burnt since.



The total volunteer hours worked is now 924 hours

Following the working bee there was a meeting of the advisory group. The group updated the Health and Safety Policy .

The Advisory Group includes; Brother Alred (Kopua Monastic Community) ,Greg Wyatt (Kopua Whanau), Steve Munday (Kopua Whanau) Lou Hagger (QE2 Trust Ranger -Taranui), Irene Parminter, (A Rocha -Wellington/ Kapiti, Roger Maaka (Local Iwi) , Kevin Smith (Kopua Companions), Stephen Close (Kopua Associates) and Mike Stone.

It was a very productive meeting with the Kopua Restoration Plan 2023-2026 discussed in detail.

Other news

We have applied to the Indigenous Biodiversity Community Grants Fund (Regional Council—Horizons) for \$27,000 over the next three years to maintain project momentum.

Kevin Smith and Edmund Aldiss reported sightings of two wild deer in the habitat area.

Kevin took the first known image of a live gecko (bottom right) in the Kopua Bush Remnant.

The next working bee is at Matariki (June 28th and 29th) 1300 trees to plant. There will be a request for volunteers to bring a plate for a shared lunch. 9am start , 3pm finish. Hazel Wyatt will be the food and drink coordinator on the day.

There will be a smaller working bee on July 13th Saturday to plant 500 trees from Horizons.

Please register with day/date availability and name to stonem@xtra.co.nz.

All welcome



June 2024 -Kings Birthday and Matariki Working bees

Newsletter #13 Working Bees #19 and 20



Fr Maliu 'Otutaha and friends with Steve Munday clearing logs from the wetland.



Sessi 'Otutaha and friend planting a hill with flax near the hermitage

Kings Birthday Working Bee 2024

This was the third time the 'Otutaha whanau and friends have come to Kopua at Kings Birthday to assist in efforts to restore the Kopua habitat.

Flaxes donated by Te Miro Farm (Dairy Farm at source of Manawatu River) were planted near an area where peripatus have been seen. Peripatus (uncommon pan-gea heritage lifeform) are known to thrive in and near flax.





The wetland now

Matariki 2024

Groups represented over Matariki were;

St Josephs Parish Dannevirke, Kopua Associates, A Rocha Wellington, A Rocha Palmerston, PN Young Catholics, Kopua Companions, Monastic community and Kopua Whanau.



Kathryn Campbell stands where 12 months ago there was so much blackberry—now planted and marked with a bamboo stake for weeding in the spring.



A large group gathered on Matariki Friday at 9am to begin the planting of over 2000 native trees in a variety of areas around the Kopua Habitat. Missing from the picture is Hazel Wyatt who usually manages the kitchen and hospitality.



(Left) This group completed the planting job on Matariki Saturday at 3pm.



(Left Photo) Kopua Associates Neil Styles (Left) with Stephen Close and volunteer from Dannevirke Reuben Russell (Centre). This group placed trees around the various planting sites after Horizon staff—Led by Philip Baker (Fresh Water Advisor) dropped them off earlier.



(Above left) Prior to clearing April 24 (Above right) now planted —East of Hermitage.

(Right) Brother Alred , who has had digger experience before, assisted the contractor to clear blackberry near the hermitage.



(Far right) is an after photo beneath the hermitage —now clear of blackberry seen below





Recently Leonie Salisbury passed away in Palmerston North. She is pictured here at Kopua in red with her brother Norm Magnal (left) and Stephen Close.(right)

Leonie participated in a few of the very first Kopua working bees (at the age of 80!)—clearing Spanish broom from the Kopua roadside and kindly turning fallen totara branches at Kopua into comfort crosses (right)



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Kopua Habitat Restoration Project Summary of Progress (at 1st July 2024)

- **Kopua Habitat Restoration Project began as a giving back to Kopua Monastic Community by Kopua Associates and Kopua Whanau in July 2022**
- **20 working bees since 2022**
- **Trapline now checked and attended to monthly for the last two years.**
- **Volunteer hours now total 1171 hours (not including travel) At \$20 per hour this equals over \$23,000 in monetary value already evident.**
- **Funds provided to date is \$10,000 for trees and traps from Horizons**
- **New funding \$16,000 indigenous biodiversity for Eco sourced trees provided by Horizons over the next three years**
- **Lou Hagger, QE2 Trust Ranger, has assisted the project to get a restoration agreement (with QE2) which, once checked by the monastic community and signed, will enable additional funding to be used to increase biodiversity and reduce infestations of weeds.**
- **We now have a Kopua Bush Remnant Advisory Group, who meet face-to-face in April, and make adjustments to the Terms of Reference with the monastic community. The Terms of Reference is a comprehensive document of historical information, current plans and future aspirations. It is approved by the monastic community and also includes a detailed restoration plan for 2023-2026. We had our first meeting last April.**
- **Updated Terms of Reference April 2024 See below**
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kFD3Kd4ZnTvqclkB6OXVCw3uQwzGPKau/view?usp=sharing>

Next Working Bee.

The working bees in June were so productive and we had good weather. Many thanks to all involved. Please register with Mike at stonem@xtra.co.nz to assist at our next working bee September 14th (9am start)— We will join the monks for afternoon prayer—being the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. And the 22nd Anniversary of the Kopua Associate Community. The working bee will primarily focus on weeding (esp Spanish Broom, and willow) and to harvest seedlings on walkways for future planting at Kopua.

Lost Property

1. (Large) Blue Jacket with logo Alleva Animal Health, & with hood.
2. Orange sun hat

Kopua Wetland Restoration improvement since it began
All planted out now, but will need releasing (weeding) this spring.

Top-October 2021

Below-Matariki 2024



We are on track to complete the restoration phase by the end of 2026.
Following this phase, less intensive work will be needed to maintain a
growing forest remnant.

Thank you for your interest in this project. Ngā mihi



Kopua Habitat Restoration

Newsletter for working bee 21/22 October 2024



On the 14th September, (Exaltation of the Cross) the above group gathered at Kopua to continue the habitat restoration work. The day was also the 22nd birthday of the Kopua Cistercian Associate Community.

Most came from Palmerston North and / or Dannevirke. Left, Mike Stone, Hung Nguyen, Helen Carver, Paul Dingah, Br Chris Maney, Nguyen Van Lam, Nelma Ngonga, Norm Magnall, Stephen Close, Steve Munday, Gregg Wyatt and Anthony Kreichbaum.



Local Associate Helen (Upper left) had morning tea ready for the group. Anne (Kopua Associate from Wellington) had gathered daffodils for the Day Centre. (Below left) Norm Magnall checks potted plants before they go to a nursery over summer and then next year planted back into the Kopua remnant bush



Steve Munday and Gregg Wyatt began at 8am and did not stop till 5pm transforming a two wire fence into a more stock-proof 5 wire fence. This strengthening of the habitat boundary is a requirement for Queen Elizabeth Trust registration in the future.

This was the first wet day at a Kopua working bee since starting the effort in October 2021



Guesthouse manager, Kevin Smith, did not see any puriri moths in the first spring of his residence at Kopua. He saw one puriri moth in 2023 and this year so far he has seen two. The puriri moth is an indicator species for this project. These observations are an anecdotal indicator that we are on track.

A huge thank you to all the volunteers at our working bees. We are certainly on track to complete the restoration phase by December 2026

(Restoration Phase - All very large weed infestations are gone and replaced by native trees.)

Updates:

#Recent new funding from Horizons \$5,500 for signage and some track improvements.

#Volunteer Hours now total 1264 (not including travel). This equates to \$20 x 1264 or \$25,280.

#Next Working Bee is February 15th, 2025, Saturday. Please register with stonem@xtra.co.nz for catering purposes

Kopua Habitat Restoration

Newsletter for working bee 15th February 2025 (No 22)



Volunteers came from Palmerston North, Feilding and Dannevirke.

Back: Kevin and Kathryn Campbell

Left front: Stephen Close, Anthony Kreichbaum , Paul Dingah, Tekaa Redfern, Mike Stone and Reuben Russell.

We weeded around the 500 trees planted near the hermitage and Kopua Road, cleared both a hillside and roadside of Spanish Broom, painted stakes and picked up enough rubbish near Kopua Road wetland to fill a fadge.

A huge thank you to all the volunteers at our working bees.



Tekaa stepped in and did a magnificent job of providing lunch and morning tea assisted by Maria Andresen.



Above, Charlie Ropitini (a chaplain at a Hawkes Bay Secondary School) and his father Douglas checked out the restoration work and Charlie has a particular interest in the life of Suzanne Aubert and noted a recently planted and flowering koromiko near the hermitage. Charlie commenting it was one of Suzanne Aubert favourite medicinal plants.



Kevin has painted bamboo stakes for special plantings in the coming winter.

Kopua-riki – new habitat name

At Father Nico's request, Roger Maaka, an active Kopua Habitat Restoration Group member and Emeritus Professor, was approached to gift a name for the habitat around Southern Star Abbey. If possible, the name was to include the word “Kopua”. Roger engaged another local Brian Morris, an experienced linguist, local historian, and educator in the discussion. Riki means something small but part of a bigger picture.

A Bigger Picture

Biodiversity is in rapid decline and approaching possible tipping points. Over the last 50 years, the world has seen sustained decline in primary forests (20%), wildlife populations (69%), wetlands (85%). Over half the world's total GDP, \$US44 trillion of economic value generation in 2020 -is moderately or highly dependent on nature and its services, and all economic activity is ultimately dependent on nature. The World Economic Global Risks Report 2023 ranked biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse as one of the top five threats to humanity over the next ten years. (Source: Biodiversity Credits; Demand Analysis and Market Outlook, Insight Report Dec 2023, World Economic Forum)

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Updates:

- #Taiora Contracting were contracted to weed 2000 trees before Christmas. Trees planted in 2024 are doing well as a result. Survival rates look above 90%.**
- # 159 European mammals including mustelids (stoats, weasels and ferrets) and rats have been removed from the Kopua Habitat Area since July 2022**
- #Volunteer Hours now total 1313 (not including travel). This equates to \$20 x 1264 or \$26,260. There is \$21,000 of Horizon funding being spent before July 2025 for indigenous biodiversity and signage.**
- # There will be a meeting of the Kopua-riki Management Group at 3pm on the 5th April**

Next Working Bee Saturday April 5th, 2025.

For catering purposes, please register by 30th March at stonem@xtra.co.nz A health and safety plan and recommended gear list will be sent to those once you register. Our Focus will be on: Moving trees on trails into pots for future planting in the cleared areas.

- Cleaning and oiling “little camino” totara signage.**
- Weeding any cotoneaster and Spanish broom along Stephens Way**
 - Clearing convolvulus/weeds from trees below the wetland**
 - Clearing willow from the wetland area**
- Clearing dead weeds with hedge cutters/tools from areas along walking trails ready for planting trees, later this winter.**



Kopua-riki Habitat Restoration Working Bee April 2025

23rd Working Bee Since October 2021



(Back Row) Mike Stone, Lynn Pritchard, Beverley Parton, John Parton, Helen Bathurst , Mark Searle, Steve Munday, Paul Dingah, Richard Noble, Stephen Close.

(Front Row) Mary Hutchison, Frances Kuryana, Margaret Poynton, Terry Parminter, Irene Parminter, Reuben Russell, Greg Wyatt, Hazel Wyatt, Jonathon Boston. Absent Mabel Munday (Our cook for the day)

A very productive working bee. It was a combined effort with the Wellington A Rocha Group (staying in the Guesthouse) and Associates together with Kopua Whanau. We were able to : pot seedlings into pots and deliver them to a nursery, clean and oil totara signage, weed much cotoneaster and Spanish broom along Stephens Way, clear much willow from the wetland area, release over 100 trees and plant around 40 totara seedlings along Benedicts way. Gregg and Steve were able to strengthen the last remaining vulnerable point of the stock fence next to the habitat –adding three additional wires to the fence-line and clearing blackberry over the previous two wire fence. (See after photos below) .



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would just like to acknowledge the work of Philip Barker (Horizon Freshwater Advisor) who has supported our project since being involved from the beginning. We wish Philip well in his new job.

Helen is reacquainted with the hat lost in April 2024!

Helen and the Wellington Arocha Group have been coming to Kopua for over 12 years now, booking the guesthouse and planting, weeding and propagating. Helen returned this year with 40 large totara seedlings to plant back into Kopua bush. Helen is updating the early "Walkways of Southern Star Abbey" info sheet that she designed some years ago.



Progress Report

- With the Support from Horizon Regional Council with a large grant for Indigenous Biodiversity over three years (ie \$16,000 this year, next year and the following year, totaling \$48K), we can now scale the planting of (significant) gaps in the habitat and look to reintroduce flora once present. Next year, we will need a group to replant kawakawa back into the bush, grazed out by livestock some years ago. Kawakawa seed has been sourced within the Puketoi Ecological area and will be ready for planting in 2026.
- We can also explore the requirements for reintroducing a bird, such as the rifleman (Titi pounamu). This will require a more comprehensive trapline system and a reliance on volunteers to manage the trapline. These birds were last seen in the area 8 years ago. Fr John recalled the last sighting of a dead rifleman brought in by a guest after being mauled by a cat. Riflemen are present about 4km upstream from the Kopua Bridge on private land with a robust trapping management plan.
- Volunteer Hours to date 1,431 hours (Value in \$ is \$28,620).
- We have been gifted another 200 flax plant by Te Miro Farm this season.
- A large sign featuring Southern Star Abbey walks is complete and will be installed soon.

The Next Working Bee (May 31st, Saturday, 9am to 3pm with a 1pm lunchbreak). This

Working Bee is part of the Diocesan Commemoration of the launching of Laudato Si (Caring for our Common Home) 10 years ago by the late Pope Francis.

This Working Bee is also a combined effort with the regular Kings Birthday visit by the Otutaha Whanau (Auckland) and members of the Panguru Parish (Northland). Father Maliu, Sessi and Emily Otutaha are well known to the Kopua Community.

Focus:

- ◆ Releasing (weeding) trees with bamboo stakes along Stephens Way and Roberts Way and Benedicts Way.
- ◆ Removing of Spanish broom across Kopua Road and on monastery land downstream from the bridge (over the Manawatu river).
- ◆ Clearing a ridgeline of (12+) large barberry and some rubbish along a possible New Walkway.
- ◆ Planting trees along Benedicts way where there are bamboo stakes with orange tips.
- ◆ Installing a permanent (stone) seat and the start of new walkways; St Benedicts Way and St Bernards Way.






If you would like to participate please register with stonem@xtra.co.nz (for catering purposes). We do need cooks to assist on the day.


Thanks to all involved!! Arohanui Mike Stone

Southern Star Abbey Walks



Key

-  Start
-  Toilet
-  Guest House
-  St Benedicts Way
-  St Bernards Way
-  St Stephens Way
-  St Roberts Way
-  St Alberics Way
-  Proposed Blessed Suzanne Aubert Way
-  Protect our forest and wetlands - keep to the trails

 **WARNING:** The trails are slippery when wet. Sturdy footwear essential.



Kopua-riki Habitat Restoration Working Bees June 2025 Working Bee 24 & 25 King's Birthday and Matariki



Kings Birthday Present (from Top Left) Willie Bong Thomas, Julie Randall, Mike Stone, Solauvi Mateni, Tangi Folaumoeloa, Clive Tu'i, Siviki Pouono, Steve Munday, Stephen Close, (Father) Maliu Otutaha, Alopino Lusiani Talia'uli, Paul Dingah, (Bottom left) Kate Leef, Mavis Hinga Te Awhe, Aliayh Te Awhe, Pirima Thomas, Anthony Kriechbaum, Mary Eastham.

Those not present for the photo included: Emilie and Sesi Otutaha, Peter Te Rangi and grandson-Kaelyn TeRangi-Walker (Below -right) .



In addition to a King's Birthday weekend working bee organised by friends and members of the Otatahu whanau from Auckland and Pangaru Parish, the event also marked a ten-year celebration by the Palmerston North Interfaith Group since the release of Laudato Si.

This Northland group were fresh from Totara point where they have built a permanent monument overlooking Bishop Pompallier's New Zealand base. This group worked from the moment they arrived and throughout the weekend. I have rarely seen a group work so hard. Some of the group travelled 11 hours to get to Kopua.

The new St Bernard's walkway begins at the monument built by the Northland group, which includes a quote from St Bernard's writing. The path stretches through the valley below to the ridge on the other side.



The completed Walkway gathering point and the quote from St Bernard is formed in the concrete with letters/words in stones. (above)



A tree came down over the monastery driveway (left) during the working bee as a result of strong winds.



Southern Star Abbey Walks – New signage unveiled

Mary Eastham (Palmerston North Interfaith Group) and Father John Pettit unveiled a sign featuring new walks. Father John Pettit, a staunch advocate for nature, opened up another walkway last year. Next year, once funding has been secured to place steps and a handrail at a steep section of the track, we hope to extend the number of walkways even further.

Matariki 2025

This industrious group (many from A Rocha Wellington) planted and weeded over Matariki



L to R.
Stephen
Close, Dennis
Fountain, Paul
Dingah,
Richard
Noble, Aaron
Knight,
Chrissy
Knight,
Richard
Rhoades, Jean
Rhoades.



The group planted a variety of native hebes around the hermitage. This will become a habitat for native moths and other invertebrates in years to come.



They also were able to plant an extra 500 trees over Kopua Road, where previously there had been 2-metre-high blackberry.

Thanks, Paul, for collecting the trees needed from Coppermine Nursery and assisting in the organisation and transportation of people over Matariki.

News / Updates

- After 25 working bees at Kopua, the total volunteer hours worked are 1704 hours. (1704 x \$20 equals \$34,080 in \$ value). This does not include travel time.
- July 2025 is the 3-year anniversary of the trapline. Over this time the traps have caught over 183 European mammals that decimate the native populations of birds, invertebrates, lizards and consume copious amount of native seeds. The subsequent abundance in native birds, puriri moth and other invertebrates and seedlings has been very evident. As visitors become more confident to undertake bird counts at the 5 Bird Count Sites. We will then be able to quantify the birdlife more scientifically.
- Recently, Southern Star Abbey has formed an agreement with the Queen Elizabeth Trust to preserve in perpetuity the native bush at Kopua-riki. This restoration agreement which has funds attached, has enabled more traps and weed clearance.
- The Indigenous Biodiversity Fund (\$16,000) for the year ending June 2025 has been spent on approved weed clearance and purchase of more trees. Taiora Contracting completed the weeding and planting of 2000 trees in the very back, hard-to-access area, past the hermitage. This allows regular volunteers to focus on the more manageable areas. There will likely be a large working bee over Matariki in 2026 (Friday, 10th July) to plant trees.
- The funding for 2025 and 2026 can now be allocated. The secure medium-term financing has for example enabled us to commission a nursery to propagate kawakawa from the same ecological area as Kopua to return this native species now back into Kopua-riki - next year.
- There will be a bio-blitz in the early summer. It is hoped to begin documenting biodiversity through the citizen science app iNaturalist.
- Funding from Horizon Community Grants has enabled about 40 meters of Jakmat to be installed in areas previously impassable due to muddy or slippery conditions in winter. One area is below the hermitage and the other at the further end of Bernard's way.
- Dairy New Zealand have provided a printout of species identified at Kopua from an eDNA (Manawatu River) water sampling, and the printout lists 1200 species.
- We are very keen to find additional support persons to manage the monthly trapline clearing and rebaiting. This is essential if we are to return Titipounamu to Kopua-riki. A few rats would easily wipe out a small population of relocated riflemen.
- Te Miro Farm, located at the source of the Manawatu River, donated more native seedlings for planting at Kopua-riki this recent winter.

- A Year 12 class from Central Hawkes Bay College visited Kopua and completed a river study. Brother Jeffrey welcomed them in Te Reo and told them about the monastery.



Professor Roger Maaka spoke of the significance of the place. The class gifted a native tree to Southern Star Abbey and was able to plant it

near the hermitage. Several young people said they would be keen to return to check on the tree in the future.

- Funding from the Horizon (Regional Council) Regional Freshwater Community Grant has enabled us to begin to improve walkways, including signage, and longer-term funding from the Horizon Indigenous Biodiversity Fund has enabled the clearing and planting in more remote areas of kopua-riki.



Jakmat (a plastic mesh placed on sand and filled with gravel) has been installed by Taiora Contracting below the hermitage, making it easier to walk down in the winter and safer.



This team also planted 2000 karamu, toi toi and harakeke well past the hermitage and over the back ridge.

(Left)



Same paddock above and below. In January 2023 (above) with blackberry and planted out in native trees June 2025 (below)



- **Next working bee will be on Saturday, November 1st.** Some jobs will involve staking planted trees with bamboo sticks, controlling weeds, and removing gorse, Spanish broom, and willow. There will be some weeding around trees needed, and trap and signage cleaning.
- We will need someone to plan lunch and morning tea for all volunteers- a planning guide and funds are available.

Please register before the 24th October 2025. Thank you

Prepared by Mike Stone stonem@xtra.co.nz for Kopua-riki Habitat Restoration Management Group

Kopua-riki Habitat Restoration Newsletter No. 26 and 27 Spring 2025

The Southern Star Abbey Guesthouse was booked over two nights (October 24th&25th) to enable 8 ecologists to explore the habitat to better understand the bio-diversity features of Kopua-riki. It was also a chance to archive previous images and identify species range in the habitat and record these on the inaturalist app. This app is used world-wide to document species and their abundance and locations. There is also access to online expert help to identify images recorded on the app.



(From left) Ross and Sarah Nightingale, Pearl Ruston, Lou Hagger, Lorraine Cook, Craig Nightingale, Brother Alred, Arapera Paewai, Brandon Heperi Mike Stone.

The group was made up of staff from Horizons, Queen Elizabeth Trust. Local Iwi and hapu and experienced habitat restorers from Rotorua and enthusiastic support volunteers.

We stayed over a Friday and Saturday night downloaded the citizen science app called Inaturalist and observed photographed and identified over 275 species. Ross and Sarah trialled a prototype moth lodge that was sited in various locations. This enabled over 70 native moths to be identified and photographed. Several moths seen had only been observed through inaturalist less than 20 times over the whole of NZ indicating the biodiversity richness of Kopua-riki and its ecological significance. One moth was identified by DOC as “At Risk” and declining. If you would like to view the species, download the app inaturalist and register a name and password and under projects check “Kopua-riki Habitat Restoration.”



(Left-Above) The group check to see what would turn up overnight.

(Right) Lou Hagger (QE2 Tararua Ranger) documents one of numerous puriri moth attracted by the blue lights.

(Left) We were able to view the magnificent two acre stand of mature kowhai on a neighbour farm. The farm is called Kowhai Farm and “the trees with yellow flowers” were noted by Mark Twain when he travelled past by train in 1895.

The group contributed over 70 hours of volunteer time.



Saturday 1st November 2025 Working bee No. 27



(Left) Anthony Kreichbaum, Norm Magnall, Brandon Heperi, Mike Stone, Jim Trotter, Steve Munday, Steve Rankin, Amelia and Elli , Gregg Wyatt, Stephen Close, Mabes Munday and Father Nicho.

This group contributed 53 hours of voluntary time and placed bamboo stakes near trees so they can be spotted easily. The group weeded around over 100 trees and removed hundreds of Spanish broom from planting sites in four locations including along Kopua Road. Part of the group dealt to large willows and poplar near the Manawatu river, a future site for planting more kahikatea. Thanks, Mabes, for the lunch, baking and refreshments.



(Left) Stephen's Way is clearly seen with volunteers clearing Spanish broom seedlings. The hillside was planted by members of St Joseph's Parish three years ago.



Jim Trotter (Local farmer) is clearing weeds from around young trees, just below the hermitage. Jim has also been helping manage the monthly trapline refresh.



(Above) Much work was done around the hermitage top right , in this wetland area and across Kopua Road.

(Below) Site of a Matariki planting for 2026 (lower quadrant on the left –below an old coach road)



The next working bee is on Saturday, January 24th and will focus on weeding (below an old coach road) to prepare for Matariki planting 2026 (in below picture) and clear some hawthorn hedges (above picture).

If you are able to join us please register by 20th January for catering purposes. Gear needed: sun protection , gloves and secateurs.

Working Bee No.28 Summer 2026



(Top L) Gregg Wyatt, Steve Munday, Kevin Campbell, Mary Eastham, Graham Stubbs, Jamie Dickson, Norm Magnall, Paul Dingah, Laurie Gordon.

(Lower L) Mike Stone, Kathryn Campbell, Pene Gordon, Stephen Close and Mabes Munday.

This group of 14 spent an overcast Saturday weeding around young trees planted last Matariki and the previous year. and other members of the group got rid of over half a large barbary hedgerow that has been supressing natives and were being spread throughout the habitat.

Total volunteer hours now total 1917.5 Hours, so at the next working bee we may reach the milestone of 2000. 2000 hours equates to over \$40,000



(left) A stump of barbary hedge remains on the bottom right. The branches were burnt and the fence rewired.



(Left) Sheryl Bayliss, Guy Hanson, Pene Gordon, Deena Hanson are members of the Waipukurau Eco-Church and are walking the trapline on a sunny summer afternoon.

Irene Parminter (Member of the Kopua-riki Habitat Management Group) mentioned to the Lower North Island Eco-Church coordinator Mo Morgan about the Kopua-riki restoration.

Eco Church Aotearoa New Zealand, a project by A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand, helps

churches in areas like Waipukurau integrate creation care into their mission. The network supports churches to reduce waste, carbon, and energy use while fostering sustainable community practises.

The above group are standing by the two-giant kahikatea at Kopua-riki and have decided to manage the monthly trapline and upgrade some traps. These visits will be made on the second Saturday of the month. We hope to align working bees to the second Saturday where possible.

5 Minute Bird Count



There are 4 sites within Kopua-riki that have been signposted as bird count sites by Pene Burton (Kapiti Coast-Forest and Bird Chair and member A Rocha NZ). If you would like to learn about how to undertake a five-minute bird count and would like visit these sites perhaps regularly at a working bee and help document recordings, please let me know. ***These observations will be invaluable to document progress over time, of our collective efforts, to improve the habitat for native wildlife.***



(Back L) David Rolston, Lee-Anne Stone, Stuart Cordell, David Bloor, Robert Sutcliffe, Jim Trotter, Trevor Luke.

(Front Left) Teresa Stone, Sandra Cordell, Barbara Summers, Anne Bloor, Ella Domper.

The Norswood Lions Club were interested to walk down sections of St Bernard's way and Robert's Way and get a sense of the Kopua-riki habitat restoration progress. The Club manages traps at the nearby Anzac Park.

Trevor has had a long association the monastery. He assisted for many years with pump and machinery maintenance, planted a large asparagus bed and looked after the monastery bee hives. In his role as a member of the Dannevirke Community Police Patrol he continues to weekly drive late at night around the monastery building for security.

David Rolston and his family have kept the tradition alive of potato growing around Norsewood that Kopua Monastery began.

Barbara Summers's sister-in-law- Joy Cowley has been to Kopua often leading retreats.

Jim Trotter has helped restore Anzac Park reserve (on the main road) and has managed the Kopua trapline a few times over the last few years.

Ella Domper, a neighbour, has seen the small herd of wild deer that have likely destroyed some younger trees. They have also seen the feral ginger cat that has roamed the habitat for many years. A feral trap-shy cat that Stephen Close spotted at the most recent working bee.

Next Working Bee April 11th Saturday.

This will be a chance to release (weed around) some trees on Bernard's Way. Plant seedlings growing on walking trails. Weed Spanish broom from hillside by wetland. Plant some trees that are being stored at A Rocha nursery Palmerston North. We are likely to be joining the trapline team for lunch at 1pm. Please register your attendance with me at stonem@xtra.co.nz. Strong footwear needed.

Working Bee No.29 Autumn 2026



Back Left: Mabel Munday, Hazel Wyatt, Gregg Wyatt, Jamie Dickson, Barry Taylor, Graham Stubbs, Mary Eastham, Kevin Campbell, Sheryl Bayliss, Trudy Rankin.
Front Left: Kathryn Campbell, Norm Mangnall, Julie Randall, Guy Hanson, Deena Hanson, Harriet Fitzpatrick.

This group of 17 weeded around some native trees being smothered by grasses and cleared rubbish from a site in preparation to be planted out at Matariki. A group removed large barberry hedge along a ridgeline using a tractor. Another group refreshed the trapline now spread throughout the nearly 20ha. A member of the Waipukurau Menzshed sanded outdoor chairs and measured where replacement timber is needed. We were so well catered for by the kitchen crew as well.

The group finished a little early as a State of Emergency was declared in the district north of Kopua.

Total Volunteer hours have now reached over 2000 hours! (Total 2007.5 hours)















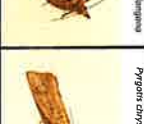



























































































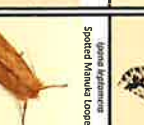













































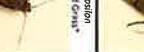



















Left -- Kevin Campbell potted many seedlings harvested from walking trails that are likely to be planted into clearings and back in some parts of the bush later in the year.

Right – Julie Randall stacks metal to be cleared from the site to enable trees to be planted later at Kings Birthday or Matariki.

Moths of Kopua-riki 2026

Most moths were photographed live at Kopua Riki. 158 species to date (5 butterfly species, 153 moth species). Those marked with * were seen at Kopua but not photographed there. The photographs used, Ross has taken of individuals seen elsewhere. Note: these moths have not actually been trained or coerced to lie facing the same direction, photographs are taken and then rotated and cropped! There are likely to be many different species seen at different times of the year. If you see moths, please photograph and add them to the Kopua Riki Restoration Naturalist project.

 Amaniella unicolor Kauai Moth*	 Myndus eximius Pauata Moth	 Lomus ornatus Common Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Gnathochorax phaeoptera Common Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth	 Ectropis caesiata Red Moth
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Photos by
Ross & Sarah Nightingale



Left – Mabses Munday accepted some healthy and locally sourced trees from Peter McDonald, a local Norsewood resident with a tree nursery.

Below--From Left to right-Sarah Falloon, Martin Steer, Rebecca Algie. Staff from Horizons visited the site to check on progress. Horizons (Regional Council) have been significant funding supporters of this project (around \$60,000-tagged to date). Other support has been in the form advice on tree sourcing and selection, priority actions short term/long term and problem solving around weed and pest control.



The St Bernard quote featured in the foreground states “One learns more from the forest than from books. The trees and the rocks will teach you.”



Left – Ross and Sarah Nightingale have returned to Kopua to add to the now 158 species of documented native moths living in the habitat around the monastery.

Next Working Bee. The next Working Bee will be April 25th as this allows a combined effort with A Rocha Wellington. Trees will be planted and weeds dealt to mainly in the Suzanne Aubert memorial paddock. A walking path will be marked out. Please register by 21st April to stonem@xtra.co.nz. If you are able to join us.

Working Bee No.30 Anzac Day 2026



(Top L) Norm Magnall, Terry Parminter, Helen Bathurst, Irene Parminter, Harriet Fitzpatrick, Liz McGruddy, Mike Stone. (33 hours in total today)

This Anzac Day, although aware several regular volunteers were unavailable, was the only day the Wellington A Rocha group and other stakeholders could meet for the annual Kopua-riki Habitat Restoration Management meeting. The meeting was held at 3pm on the same day. This meeting finalises the Terms of reference which guides the tempo, scope and overall direction of the restoration and habitat maintenance plan after consultation with the monastic community.

Other stakeholders attending were the Waipukurau Eco-Church Group (Represented by Laurie and Pene Gordon and Sheryl Bayliss), Queen Elizabeth Trust Ranger Lou Hagger, Kopua Companion representative Kevin Smith and Brother Alred (Local Superior) and Brother Bruce (Bursar).

Some milestones on the last 12 months ;

Now we have held 30 working bees in total, over 2000 hours of volunteer time, Puriri Moths are back in large numbers, over 200 resident pests have been removed and over 7 groups are represented on the Kopua-riki Management Group. This morning at the working bee, Kevin (Guesthouse manager) commented he had seen 5 wood pigeons. He had not seen so many in one morning before.

Another development in 2026 is that the restoration phase is due to conclude, with the maintenance phase beginning in 2027 -this will prioritise weeding and planting in what will be a more thriving natural eco-system. Planting will be on a smaller scale but be more targeted. Weeding will be a priority to enable trees planted in recent years to grow above the tall grass. A shed has been made available for volunteers to assist with this.



(Above) The undeveloped entrance to the Blessed Suzanne Hohepa Aubert memorial walkway. A pathway was formed through grass to guide where planting will be made at Matariki. Deer had eaten some trees and replacements will be planted. The path extends to the edge of bush, then through the bush to meet up with an old coach road to the Manawatu River below.

(Below) Some weeding of (Spanish) broom and from around young trees was done and 30 native akeake trees planted. Although not a primary medicinal plant akeake was sometimes used as a poultice for wounds and a general tonic. Norm, one of our volunteers grew a Thai variety of akeake for export to China, used there as a general tonic.





New Monastery Manager Brother Alred (called local superior) has provided Kopua Habitat volunteers with a storage shed for equipment needed to continue to plant, weed and plan. We were able to clean most of it out in

readiness for a shadow board and shelves for storage of pots , potting mix, tools and planning board so that if a guest house visitor has received an orientation of the Health and Safety Plan, the monthly priorities board and it very familiar with particular weed or job, they can then access and begin.

If anyone has planting spades, trowels, buckets, secateurs, gloves, loppers, large whiteboard, 7mm ply panels, white & black paint etc that you don't need any more, let me know.



This was the last remaining large blackberry area providing birds with blackberry seeds to spread to each side of the restoration effort, that we hope to plant out at Matariki (Friday July 10th and Saturday 11th July).

Next Working Bee is Saturday of Kings Birthday 30th May at 9am. Please register with me at stonem@xtra.co.nz by the latest Wednesday 27th noon for catering purposes, please

There will be weeding, a little planting and preparation of major planting days at Matariki. The new storage shed will be further developed in readiness for Matariki. Please consider helping out then, if available.