



Newsletter No. 2 August 2008



So far the winter of 2008 has been great for the ski fields, although not such a challenge for the keepers of State Highway 73. Snow has fallen sparingly at lower levels in the Castle Hill basin, and has not caused too many access problems for users of the Centre.

Greetings from the Co-Chairs of the Canterbury Environmental Trust.

We thank those of you who visited our Centre over the last year, and hope you enjoyed the changes we have recently made.

The future developments in the vicinity are very exciting, both in terms of the very real conservation work to be involved, and enhancing environmental educational opportunities. The Craigieburn area has huge potential as a living environmental resource for educators, their students, and recreationalists, which we believe is still largely untapped. It is our hope that we can assist groups to develop this, particularly in terms of sustainability. Bob Leonard, Maree Goldring



Roadman Ray at work on the cut-outs.

The access road has long been a source of great embarrassment to us. However, the Department of Conservation came up trumps, and while machines were in the area working on their Cave Stream Reserve enhancement, a grader dealt to the access road. As soon as was possible, the caretaking team cut culverts and cleared ditches, fortunately before any significant rain. It has held up well so far to the skiing traffic.

Did you know that:

Kea are not as visible as they have been in the past. There is some concern about a decline in numbers. If you see kea at the Centre, please do not feed them. You can help by informing the Kea Conservation Trust for their population assessments at www.keaconservation.co.nz

This segment was in the first newsletter and was considered worth repeating for your information.

Recently most of the old platform bunks have been replaced with conventional single bunks and mattresses. This has meant that people can enjoy a night less likely to be disturbed by restless neighbours.

A huge night store heater with a fan has been installed. This is working well. At last the endless headache for overworked Trustees—keeping up with the enormous firewood consumption—is over. *All groups are advised to bring their own firewood if they want to have the log fire burning as well as the night store.*

An additional septic tank was installed to cope with the heavy usage. The area around both tanks has been landscaped and planted to protect and enhance the area. *We would appreciate it if you could ensure all members of your group stay off the 'hills', and out of the area beyond.*



"Is this van worthy of our name???"

A new association, The Waimakariri Ecological and Landscape Restoration Alliance, (WELRA) has been incorporated, and is in the process of seeking funding to assist in the removal of the wilding pines in the Waimakariri/ Castle Hill basin.

Caretaking:

Caretaking of the Centre is a challenge for Trustees, most of whom live and work in the city. Caretakers are often at the Centre, and live part-time at Castle Hill Village. (See Trustees box below)

Bookings:

The booking system has changed again. A website allows prospective users to see when the facilities are booked, and provides details of how to book. The booking officer is now a Trustee, Ruth Millar, phone Christchurch 03 376 6104

Website: www.enved.org.nz

Environmental education

A pilot environmental education programme was run with four classes from Christchurch East School in March this year. CET educator Andrew Hamer worked with each class on a number of hands-on activities centered on threatened species. Activities included setting and analyzing tracking tunnels, stoat trap checking and soil invertebrate identification. A limited number of days are available with other schools over the next six months.

New place-based education/sustainability programmes are being planned and enquiries are welcomed from teachers who wish to participate in a partnership with the Trust to develop resources focused on the interaction between people and the Craigieburn locality.

Contact: Andrew Hamer at hamera@landcareresearch.co.nz



Red and yellow mistletoe blooms last summer

This excerpt is from the last newsletter...

Kiwi Recovery Programme—Exciting Times

One of the most exciting events in our history occurred late 2006. The Trust signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the New Zealand Conservation Trust, based at Willowbank Wildlife Park, which runs a kiwi recovery programme there. We are working together to prepare and support a great spotted kiwi recovery programme in the area near the Centre, and also near Castle Hill Village.

Currently:

Predator control is well under way in the Craigieburn valley, with 75 predators, (60 stoats) caught in the 300 + traps deployed on roads and tracks. Last season, Great Spotted Kiwi eggs (and one chick) were brought to NZCT's breeding centre at Willowbank. Two chicks were hatched, and released on a predator controlled island to grow to a safe weight before being reintroduced to their whanau in the Paparoa Range. Hannah, the chick from Arthurs Pass, is doing well, and will be re-released later in the year. NZCT has already made progress with clearing pre-release pen sites at the bottom of the hill below the Lodge. Many more GSK eggs are expected in the imminent season.

Any school or other group who would like to assist with the trapping programme in any way in the future as part of their Environmental Centre experience is encouraged to contact Ray Goldring, Christchurch 3380535, or 03 3189189, for information on how this can be done.

Mistletoe

The summer of 2007/8 will long be remembered by botanists as the scarlet summer in the Craigieburns. The brilliant scarlet red falls and splashes of mistletoe through the trees were un-missable. From one point on Broken River Skifield Road 37 individual plants could be seen. After the red flowering in January, the less spectacular yellow bloomed through February, just as prolifically.



Large, but unlucky, male stoat removed from trap on bottom Broken River Ski field Road 2/8/08.

Trustees:

Co-chairs: Bob Leonard and Maree Goldring

Treasurer: Andrew Hamer

Secretary: Ruth Millar

Bert McConnell

Barry Law

Ray Goldring

Shona Lamoureux

Alan Palmer

Ross Meder

Kees Doornenbal

The Goldrings also act as part-time Caretakers and are often at Castle Hill Village to assist if there are problems for groups. (phone 03 3189189)

Charges:

Our philosophy has always been to make environmental opportunities as available as possible to educational groups at as little cost as possible.

\$8/night/person school and youth groups

\$10/night/person tertiary groups

\$15/night/person other adult groups

Minimum charges:

\$120/night—Korimako Lodge \$50/night—Kea Cottage

\$170/night entire facility