



A quarterly update to the community at large.

April 2020

Activity in the First Quarter

- Achievement of silver Qualmark Sustainable Tourism Business award
- Further project development including new car parks, completion of the bridge over the main dam, landscaping improvements at the bridge approach, new signage and mapping, two new benches and a wheelchair accessible boardwalk on the Loop Track, and a move of the city office to new premises
- Closure of Sanctuary 10-29 February because of fire risk
- Commencement of charges for visitors on 29 February
- Increase in numbers of Sanctuary Supporters and visitors as well as more Facebook and Instagram engagement
- Visit and talk by Zero Invasive Predators CEO
- Second closure for Covid-19 lockdown from 25 March

1. Introduction/overview from Ru Collin, our CE

The first quarter of 2020 tested the organisation's ability and capacity for adaptive change. In January, we were looking forward to a busy visitor season over the summer and we had nearly 2,000 visitors through the gates that month. The education offering was put in place for Nelson Tasman schools to learn about conservation, ecology and about the Sanctuary's aims. Pest monitoring was concentrating on trapping weasel pests, running dog sweeps through the operation and reactivating Sanctuary-wide surveys.

By February however, we were in the grips of a rising fire risk and all activity came to a halt as we closed for nearly three weeks. On reopening, several new projects got underway: moving office sites in the Nelson CBD within Morrison Square; implementing visitor charging and completing the Sanctuary signage and mapping project.

You are all aware what came next: organising our COVID-19 response and adjusting to the new working environment. Covid-19 has become all-consuming for all of us. At the Sanctuary we had to cancel the official opening of our newly built Founders' Bridge among several other planned activities. However, by far the biggest impact of lockdown is reducing our response plans for catching pests.

Unfortunately, we had already had to postpone both tieke (saddleback) and orange-fronted kākāriki reintroductions until later this year, due to the continued detection of weasels throughout summer. Weasels are a significant predator that we must be rid of and we have been responding utilising our proven biosecurity plan of continual and targeted trapping. Once the lockdown is lifted, we will be tackling the issue with renewed vigour. Improved technologies in pest surveillance and trapping controls have been investigated and will be outlined in future newsletters.

Staff, volunteers, contractors and trustees have been especially supportive throughout this period of successive business disruptions and that of rapid change. Our focus now goes on post-June as we enter another period of change possibly involving less travel and a greater use of technology.

2. Financial overview to 30 June

In these newly uncertain times, we are grateful that since the lockdown began, we have gained more Sanctuary Supporters and more Brook Business Club members, and the Sanctuary accounts are in a sound state with no term debt. We reluctantly had to start charging visitors as we need to fundraise two thirds of our operational costs. The move seemed to be well received, however, as visitors understand every cent goes towards our conservation efforts.

In terms of expenditure we had thankfully already paid for our three big budget projects (Founders' Bridge build, the new signage map project, and the bulk of current handrail and boardwalk works) so exposure to large project expenditure flows is behind us. For the last quarter of our financial year (April to June) expenditure will be cut, as the bulk of our operation is effectively shut down. However, staff continue to work from home so activities such as business support, administration, fundraising, communications and operational planning continue as normal.

3. Celebrating what we have

New visitor map

Attached is the refreshed visitor map for your use and enjoyment. Copies are available at both the visitor centre and at the city office in Morrison Square (when lockdown is lifted). Highlights include:

- The map has been redrawn by specialist Andy Glover, who made a pro bono contribution of 25 hours to make our refreshed map now accurate against the survey grid, with better detail
- Colour-coded track networks on the map (which are consistent with new wayfinding signs in the Sanctuary)
- More detailed information on the different track options plus notes on key points of interest on our main Loop Track.

Signage

We have introduced a new series of signs highlighting points of interest and flora and fauna, with 38 signs now installed with the initial emphasis along the Loop Track where most visitors walk. We will build on these series and expand across the Sanctuary over time.

We have also added signs celebrating our history, existing species, walking options, and ways to get involved in our conservation efforts.

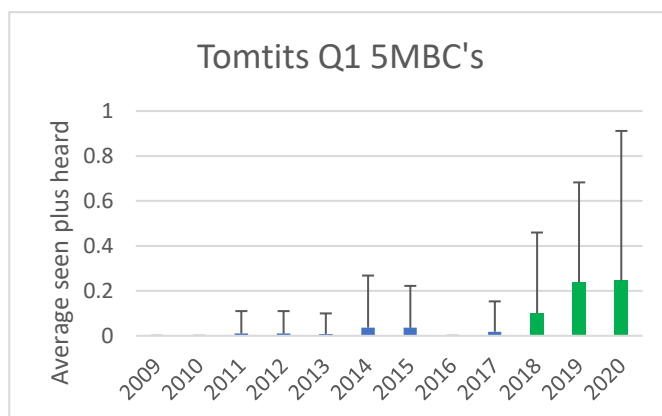
Birds, birds, birds!

Bird Monitoring in March; a report by Katherine Chamberlain, team leader

Amidst the anticipation of species' translocations and disappointment with their delays, it is easy to forget the tremendous benefits the pest eradication has had on the species already resident within the sanctuary. Most notable of these is a dramatic increase in the number of tomtits recorded during our five-minute bird counts.

Prior to the Brodifacoum drops in 2017, anywhere from 0-6 tomtits, though more usually 1-4, were either seen or heard for every 100 five-minute bird counts conducted (yes, for every 500 minutes spent actively bird monitoring). In 2018, an average of 8.5 tomtits were seen or heard per 100 five-minute bird counts. The average rose to 13.4 in 2019.

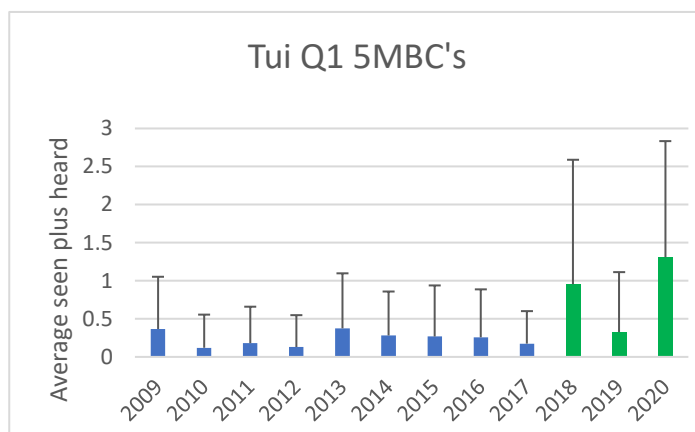
During our most recent counts conducted in late February/early March 2020, an average of 24.5 tomtits were either seen or heard per 100 five-minute bird counts (5MBC), representing a possible 5 - 6-fold increase in tomtit numbers.



The bird monitoring team has been conducting quarterly five-minute bird counts at 20 sites extending the length of the Sanctuary since the start of 2009. To date the team has conducted 408 surveys (10 count sites are monitored per survey). Given a round trip for each survey typically takes 4-5 hours, somewhere around 2000 hours have been committed to bird monitoring. Not included in this figure are the many additional hours spent on data entry and analysis - a respectable effort.

So, what other changes have we observed? Counts of bellbirds, tui and kererū have all increased. Looking solely at the counts for the first quarter of each year, between 2009 and 2018, the number of bellbirds seen or heard per 5MBC ranged from an average of 1.7 to 3.8 bellbirds. In 2019 and 2020, the average bellbirds per count increased to 5.8 and 5.2 respectively.

Likewise, the average numbers of tui seen or heard per 5MBC was below 0.38 (or 38 birds per 100 5MBC's) every year except 2018 and 2020. In 2018, the average was 0.95 per count (the equivalent of 95 birds counted over 100 5MBC's). The average dropped in 2019 to 0.33 (33 per 100 5MBC's), but increased again during this year's counts, with an average of 1.3 tui per count (or 130 per 100 5MBC's).



Fantail activity increased dramatically in early 2018 and has since stabilized. There has been a slight decline in silvereye activity. There have been no significant changes in blackbird, chaffinch, grey warbler or song thrush activity.

Most of our count sites lie along E-line. Patrick Crowe's 2012 study of New Zealand robins found their lower altitudinal distribution within the Sanctuary was approximately 400m, which is where E-line sits. Robins appear occasionally within our counts, but numbers are still too low to show any trend. With time, they may descend to lower altitudes. At higher altitudes, they are abundant.

The number of species counted has also increased, with rare birds such as brown creepers and riflemen increasingly appearing in our counts. In total, 31 species of birds have been recorded during our 5MBC.

Boardwalk and handrail project progress

The Loop Track is to be classified an accessible track that is safer for wheelchairs and other limited mobility track users. There was a narrow spot in the track that has been widened and handrails attached. Thanks to the generous support of resources and time from **Ground Anchor Systems** as well as our volunteer assets team, a 30m section has been now been improved, as shown in this image.



Pic: Boardwalk and handrail with adjacent ferns left in place

4. Backyard family conservation activity while in lock down

Our educator, Rick Field is currently working on promoting a Backyard Bio-blitz which is all online for kids and families locked down. See here for the iNaturalist page: <https://inaturalist.nz/projects/big-backyard-bioblitz>. Please feel free to sign up.

5. Our Sanctuary

These cool images were taken by Murray Neill, our Sanctuary field coordinator.



If you have any images of the Sanctuary, please send to us at admin@brooksanctuary.org.nz or post on our Facebook or Instagram pages. We never tire of images from this beautiful place.

6. Donations

Tax Deductible Donation receipts

Anyone requiring a consolidated tax deductible donation receipt for multiple donations made in the tax year ending 31 March 2020 should request from nick.tilly@brooksanctuary.org.nz. Please put 'donation receipt required' in the subject line of your email message.

Thank You for the Support!

- Over 266 Sanctuary Supporters, which is a 150% increase to date this financial year
- Cash grant secured by a key partner after the lockdown started
- Two longstanding volunteers have donated a petrol-powered drill to help with asset building and controlling pests such as wilding pines in the Sanctuary
- Ministry of Social Development (MSD) for the rapid turnaround of our wage subsidy application for the 12 weeks to 30 June. This was done in just four days and gives us some security in an unsettling time
- Andy McDonald had offered to undertake photography training last month. Andy is kindly still extending this opportunity but changed to an online session instead. For further information or to book a place please register at admin@brooksanctuary.org.nz

- We are appreciative three of our volunteers registering to sponsor either bench seats or picnic tables. If you are interested in sponsoring a table or bench seat located along the lower valley loop tracks, please contact us at admin@brooksanctuary.org.nz. To acknowledge your support, we will place a small plaque on each item
- All offers of support – in time, kind or cash - are really appreciated and make a difference. A full list of options for helping is on our website - www.brooksanctuary.org.nz
- **To our Sanctuary volunteers:** Next month we are going to refresh our Give-a-little page and will have an interesting proposal for financial support featured in May's Fan-tales edition. Look out for it!

7. Wasp Wipe-out

The Wasp Wipe-out exercise went to plan mid-late March. This program is designed to target one invasive species - the German wasp that has become established in the NZ bush and is responsible for stinging young birds and many people. As in the past two years it appears to have been successful once again in the Sanctuary. Volunteers did a great job laying out the bait within a week then recovering the used baits 14 days later. There are a few known hot spots for wasps in the Sanctuary and pleasingly field operations coordinator observations over recent weeks has seen almost all wasp activity die off. This effort means a safer walk in the bush, less birdlife loss and allows other native species like our native 'paper' wasp to recover.

8. Sponsors' Spot

Last year Blueberry IT's local team went the extra mile to help ensure the Sanctuary's business systems were made more secure, more reliable and cheaper to run. They also helped us move the Sanctuary's city office in March giving us seamless internet access and reducing business disruption – THANK YOU.

Blueberry IT

BlueBerryIT is a full-service Information Technology (IT) company with offices on Achilles Avenue in the heart of Nelson and on Sutherland Terrace in Blenheim.

We look after a wide variety of IT services for companies throughout Te Tau Ihu with our core expertise being in Cloud Services leveraging Microsoft's Office 365 range of services and applications.

We are proud supporters of a number of non-profit organisations such as The Nelson Tasman Regional Hospice, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Safeguarding Children, the Fifehire Foundation and, most recently, have been proud to have partnered with Brook Waimārama Sanctuary.

We have a saying in our business, 'we are driven by what is best for your business, not ours' – we believe it and live it. For more information please do not hesitate to contact us on either 03 548 4923, contact@blueberryit.co.nz or visit us at www.blueberryit.co.nz



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