

Te noninga o Hākuturi - Taranaki's new environment centre

Inglewood is set to become the epicentre of Taranaki's conservation effort thanks to construction of a Taranaki Environment Centre in the town.

The \$4 million centre, a partnership between East Taranaki Environment Collective, Pukerangiora hapū of Te Atiawa iwi, and New Plymouth District Council, will be built as a centrally located shared space for organisations working in the conservation and pest management sectors, and as a place of learning.

The centre will be named te noninga o Hākuturi – the place where the Hākuturii, the guardians of the forest, reside.

In Maori mythology the Hākuturi have a collective responsibility to protect, regenerate and advocate for the natural environment. The Taranaki Environment Centre will mirror this responsibility, as a place where organisations involved in environmental stewardship and the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity can work together and collaborate.

Planning for the centre, which will be sited on council-owned land adjoining Joe Gibbs Reserve alongside the Kurapete Stream, is well advanced. For several months now New Plymouth architect Brady Gibbons of Gibbons Architects has been creating a building concept that closely follows Pukerangiora's cultural narrative surrounding te noninga o Hākuturi.

In the Maori korero, Rata felled a tree to build a waka, but he failed to offer prayers to Tane the lord of the forest, so that night the Hākuturi repaired the tree



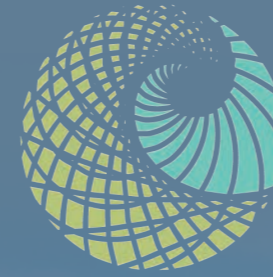
and stood it upright again. Rata expressed remorse and pleaded forgiveness, and in response the Hākuturi felled a tree themselves and carved a waka for him.

Brady Gibbons' building design suggests a long and lean facility that will lie lightly on the landscape, indicative of the trunk of the tree that Rata attempted to fell to make his waka. The centre will comprise a simple but robust series of pole shed type structures linked with covered walkways. This will allow development of te noninga o Hākuturi to be staged if necessary, as costs and funding permit.

In conjunction with the building project, the NPDC will restore part of the property into wetland and native bush area featuring a wide range of native plant species. Inglewood's public walkway network will be expanded so it leads walkers through it. The centre will be positioned on a rise overlooking all of this.

EETEC chair Rob Maetzig says that as part of research into the need for a Taranaki Environment Centre, the region's conservation groups were surveyed to establish their support or otherwise. This research confirmed a lot of interest from respondents to use these facilities, either as a permanent base, or for workshop and/or boardroom facilities as required.

"te noninga o Hākuturi will be a place where the conservation community can come together to share overheads, resources, expertise and knowledge," he says.



EAST TARANAKI ENVIRONMENT COLLECTIVE

Restoring Native Biodiversity. Protecting our Future. Together



Christmas Newsletter 2024



Inglewood set to be Taranaki's environmental HQ

This is an artist's impression of te noninga o Hākuturi – a new Taranaki environment centre that will be located in Inglewood.

The \$4 million centre, a collaboration between East Taranaki Environment Collective, Pukerangiora Hapū and New Plymouth District Council, will be built at Joe Gibbs Reserve on the southern outskirts of the town.

When completed, it will become a shared space for organisations and individuals working in the conservation and pest management sectors, and as a place of learning, based on iwi principles of environmental guardianship.

More details about this exciting project are included in this newsletter.

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From the General Manager

Let's remind ourselves exactly what we do

In this message, my first as General Manager, I thought I would take the opportunity to remind ourselves what it is that East Taranaki Environment Collective actually does.

It's simple, really. Our mission is to restore native biodiversity within the East Taranaki and provide a protected area for native wildlife to thrive. We do this through a pest management system targeting the main pest species, and by monitoring kiwi, kokako and other species to confirm that our pest management is working.

But there's a tremendous amount of work behind the simplicity of ETEC's mission – all of which is described in our Annual Report for the financial year ended June 30.

That report tells us that during that 12 months we maintained trapping for mustelids over a total of 18,000 ha of East Taranaki land, and intensive rat and possum control over 1000 ha.

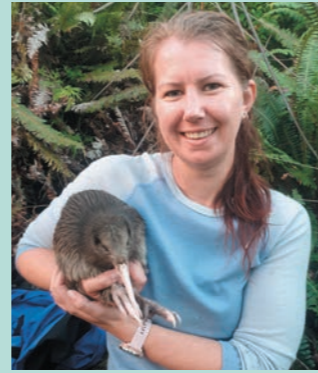
We relied heavily on volunteers to carry out this work – a total of 2040 volunteer hours were recorded during the year. In addition

to this, our staff either hosted or attended a total of 31 outreach events, which was almost double the number the year before, and close to 1000 people were engaged through these events and presentations.

With all that as background and with Christmas almost upon us, I would like to thank everyone for your contribution to what has been a very busy and successful year. We look forward to continuing to work with you in 2025 as we progress towards some very exciting times.

Ngā mihi

Kat Strang



Kat with Bloom

ETEC's new General Manager and Conservation Manager.

Conservation scientist Kathryn Strang has been appointed ETEC's new General Manager.

She replaces Rebecca Somerfield, who has joined the Taranaki Regional Council.

Kat, who has a PhD in Zoology, was previously ETEC's Conservation Manager. That role has now been taken up by Senior Ranger Jayden Fabish.

East Taranaki Environment Trust chair Rob Maetzig says the appointment of both Kat and Jayden was an easy choice, given their outstanding performances over the past four years.

"During that period they have helped develop ETEC as an authoritative conservation initiative that is willing to closely collaborate with all other environmental organisations in Taranaki and beyond," he says. "With that as background, I am, delighted that they have stepped up to their new roles."

Kat has interests and experience in invasive predator and carnivore biology and management, and previously worked in Indonesia and Madagascar carrying out biodiversity surveys. Prior to joining ETEC four years ago, she had also worked with kiwi and is a certified kiwi handler.

Jayden has a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in zoology. Prior to joining ETEC he completed an internship at Pukaha Mount Bruce wildlife centre gaining practical handling experience with kiwi and other native bird species.



Kat and Jayden

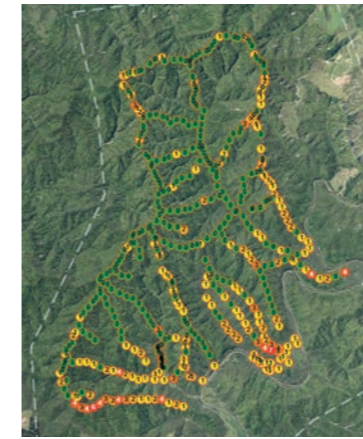


Kiwi supporting kiwi

Proud to be the designers of this newsletter, sharing the good news about the work ETEC is doing in our community.



Toxin operation locates the possum-y parts of the Pouiatoa



Here's a fascinating illustration. The map shows the location of close to 300 possums that were removed during a recent pest control operation in the Pouiatoa Conservation Area, which lies within East Taranaki Environment Collective's operational area.

ETEC has cared for the Pouiatoa since 2009 on behalf of the Department

of Conservation and local iwi Ngāti Maru and Ngāti Mutunga. Possums and rats are the target species, because this is where the rare native kōkako have settled since their reintroduction into East Taranaki a few years ago.

Possums are known to eat chicks from nests, and in their attempts to get to eggs and chicks they can also kill adult female nesting kokako. So, it was important to knock down the possum population before the start of the kokako's annual breeding season.

A feature of this year's operation was that an encapsulated potassium cyanide called Feratox was used. The ETEC team

had to obtain Controlled Substance Licences to use this toxin, because it is toxic to all animals, including humans. But it is also very effective, and lighter to carry around the rugged and steep Pouiatoa.

The team did two pre-feeds, followed by a toxin 'pulse' along existing lines of bait stations. After that the ETEC moved through the area and counted all the dead possums near the bait stations.

The map shows the possum count at each bait station – and it shows that the southern lines the most possum-y, with more than 260 of the animal pests found. And many of them were big, weighing in at around 3kg. That's big.

Based on these results, a few weeks later the ETEC team undertook a second toxin operation in the Pouiatoa, targeting the southern lines in an attempt to get rid of any possums that may have moved into the conservation area from further south. This time 29 dead possums were counted, indicating that the first pulse had been a success.

"The operation also underlined the importance of ongoing pest management," says ETEC general manager Kat Strang. "While we're working over 1000 ha, we're surrounded by at least 5000 ha of contiguous forest, meaning we will always have possums re-invading.

"Hopefully this work allows some of the kōkako chicks to make it through to adulthood."

Latest Kōkako census offers encouraging news

How is our resident population of North Island kōkako faring? Rather well, it seems.

Six years ago it was feared that because of more than two decades of predation of eggs and chicks by pest animals, unless something was done we might never again hear the call of a kōkako in the eastern Taranaki bush.

So ETEC responded by releasing a small number of birds that had been sourced from Te Hauturu-o-Toi Little Barrier Island. They were released into the Pouiatoa Conservation Area, and since then our staff and volunteers have been keeping watch on them via annual surveys.

This year's survey was over a period of six days, covering 1400ha and 48km of tracks. Eight pairs and four single birds were found – a total of 20 birds. Of those, six of the birds were banded, 12 unbanded, and it couldn't be confirmed whether two of them were banded or not.

Nine of the unbanded birds were in a pair, including four pairs of unbanded birds.

The encouraging news is that the 20 birds identified so far in this year's survey is four more than last year. ETEC conservation manager Jayden Fabish says this is encouraging news, because each year the population is slowly growing.

"When I was out in the Pouiatoa I was excited not only to be able to photograph some of our birds, but also to spot several of them in one tree," he says.

The Kōkako belongs to a group of endemic New Zealand wattlebirds, an ancient family of birds which includes the North Island and South Island Saddleback and the now-extinct Huia.

Methanex sponsorship helping Kōkako population

Big thanks to Methanex New Zealand which is continuing to provide substantial sponsorship support for ETEC's efforts to re-establish a population of North Island Kōkako in eastern Taranaki.

Methanex' sponsorship covers most of the costs associated with monitoring and conserving the Kōkako population, and the pest control associated with this work. The sponsorship agreement covers the next two years.

ETEC general manager Kat Strang says this sponsorship is vital to the success of the Taranaki Kōkako project.

"A quarter century ago the last known Kōkako in Taranaki was captured in the Moki forest and translocated to Tiritiri Matangi island near Auckland, because of the threat of predation," she says.

"Now Methanex is helping us establish a self-sustaining population. It's a really worthwhile project."



Our Conservation Manager Jayden Fabish snapped this photograph of a Kōkako high in an eastern Taranaki tree.



ETEC's impressive new Purangi storage facility

ETEC now has a secure and comfortable forward base out at Purangi, thanks to a combination of sponsorship, support and voluntary work.

The base comprises a pair of shipping containers strategically positioned together, with a large roof built over the top of them that also doubles as a shelter and rest area for ETEC staff, contractors and volunteers.

Development of the base began several months ago when it was decided ETEC needed a storage facility at Purangi. This led to the Rotary Club of New Plymouth North donating one shipping container, and ETEC purchasing another.

Then local business Taranakipine donated a supply of timber material that could be used to build the shelter over the two containers. And once all that had been delivered to the site, a group of ETEC volunteers spent 156 hours over 26 days building and painting the structure.

"What we've ended up with is a fantastic facility that is making things so much easier for the ETEC team," says GM Kat Strang. "Those shipping containers provide very secure storage, and the shelter area will prove invaluable right through the year."

Kat offered special thanks to volunteers John Velvin, Robin Smith, Daniel Reardon and Wayne Butt for their work in building the shelter.



ETEC volunteers John Velvin and Daniel Reardon putting the finishing touches to the Purangi facility.

ETEC earns recognition in many ways. Here's two...

Good in the Hood gift



ETEC ranger **Olly Sleep** poses with a special gift presented to our organisation at a recent function – a \$756 Good in the Hood donation.

Each year individual Z service stations ask their customers to vote on a choice of local community groups, by placing tokens into special boxes. The votes are then tallied up to establish how the groups will receive their share of what is on offer.

ETEC was one of the community groups voted on by customers at the Z Inglewood service station.

ETEC general manager Kat Strang says it was fantastic so many customers supported us this way. **"Every dollar counts in our mission to protect the ecosystem and biodiversity in East Taranaki, so the Z donation is very much appreciated."**

Local Hero medal for Rob



ETEC chair **Rob Maetzig** shows off a medal received for being selected as a 2025 Kiwibank New Zealand Local Hero of the Year. He is one of 100 people nationwide selected by judges from more than 1000 nominations.

His award is for his work as a volunteer with ETEC, offering expertise in journalism and media to support local conservation

efforts. He also taps into his personal networks to secure essential funding and sponsorship, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project.

"Recently appointed as chair of the board of trustees, Rob's leadership and advocacy are pivotal in driving ETEC's mission forward," says Rob's citation. "Rob's contributions to conservation make him a respected and valued figure in the Taranaki region."

Big award for ETEC, Pukerangiora collaboration.



Representatives of East Taranaki Environment Collective and Pukerangiora hapū proudly pose after jointly receiving their honour at the annual Taranaki Environmental Awards.

East Taranaki Environment Collective and Pukerangiora Hapū have been jointly recognised as environmental heroes.

The two organisations have been selected as the joint winners of the Environmental Action in the Community category in this year's Taranaki Regional Council Environmental Awards.

These annual awards officially recognise outstanding mahi and initiatives that aim to protect and enhance our region's environment.

ETEC and Pukerangiora have won their award for their work at Everett Park, on the banks of the Manganui River east of Inglewood.

ETEC is collaborating with the Hapū and the Department of Conservation in implementing an intensive pest control programme within the park, with the traps maintained by a dedicated team of local volunteers.

The award judges said: ***"We commend ETEC and Pukerangiora for their successful collaboration in improving the biodiversity of Everett Park. The project's community-led pest control efforts, combined with educational outreach***

and stakeholder engagement, have resulted in a significant reduction of invasive pests and a subsequent increase in native bird life.

"This initiative demonstrates a successful model of community-driven conservation that benefits both the environment and the community."

ETEC general manager Kat Strang says her organisation is excited to receive the environmental award, as recent monitoring is proving the pest management activities at Everett Park are achieving some incredible results.

"For example, a monitoring operation in September using tracking tunnel cards, showed a rat tracking index of zero percent. Then in October when wax tags were used to measure possum numbers, it resulted in a 10 percent tracking index," she says.

"Both of these results are a remarkable achievement, and show the effectiveness of a varied and intensive trapping system. Rats were originally tracking at 72 percent before the trapping system was installed, and possums were tracking at 18 percent."

