



Welcome to the latest edition of the Wildlands Christchurch news. This year, Wildlands celebrates its 40th birthday! Wildlands has 11 ecologists based in Ōtautahi. Read below, about two interesting projects recently undertaken by the Christchurch team.

Environment Canterbury Spray Consent Technical Advice

Wildlands recently worked with Environment Canterbury (ECan) to review and assess the ecological impacts of aerial and ground-based glyphosate and triclopyr herbicide application. ECan uses herbicides to control exotic weeds, which are a significant problem in Waitaha/Canterbury's waterways. Wildlands' investigations concluded that controlling weeds around Canterbury waterways will generally benefit biodiversity, though managing potential negative impacts on indigenous vegetation, terrestrial invertebrates, lizards, bats, avifauna, and bees was appropriate. Wildlands developed measures to mitigate adverse impacts, and suggested numerous consent conditions to address these impacts. This large project spanned 67 ecological districts and hundreds of waterways. Wildlands' reporting contributed to responsible and effective conservation of waterways, particularly braided river ecosystems which are internationally significant.

Tāwhaki Whenua Rejuvenation Plan

Kaitōrete is a coastal spit between the Pacific Ocean and Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihōra. This area is known for their unique ecology, naturally rare ecosystems, and significance to tangata whenua. The spit hosts species of international importance, as well as species that are endemic to Kaitōrete. Recent and historic land use has degraded the whenua, and cultural connections have been lost or impacted. Wildlands worked with mana whenua (Wairewa Rūnanga, Te Taumutu Rūnanga) and the New Zealand Government under the Tāwhaki Joint Venture (Tāwhaki) to develop a whenua rejuvenation plan. This plan forms part of the Kaupapa to heal and rejuvenate the unique whenua at Kaitōrete.



Ephemeral wetlands with dry pan and indigenous bachelor's buttons are one of several threatened environments at Kaitōrete. This habitat hosts naturally uncommon species.



Indigenous dryland grassland habitat at Kaitōrete, with *Rauvila australis* At Risk - Declining in foreground.

Dr Des Smith – Director, South Island Regional Manager, and Senior Principal Ecologist

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Des manages Wildland's South Island team and is responsible for providing high level ecological advice, peer reviewing reports, and the running of Wildland's South Island operations. This role gives Des an important overview of ecological issues in the South Island. Des has provided expert evidence and participated in hearings relating to mining, braided rivers, disturbance to wildlife, and District Plan reviews. Des has 29 years' experience in ecology and wildlife management, with wide ranging expertise on indigenous and introduced fauna in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Dr Justyna Giejsztowt – Senior Ecologist and Technical Specialist

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Justyna is an ecologist and biostatistician with more than 15 years' professional experience working across government, commercial and academic sectors. Justyna has a high level of scientific, modelling and statistical literacy. She is a recognised expert in biodiversity offset modelling and the mitigation hierarchy. She manages complex ecological projects such as assessments of ecological effects for large projects and monitoring programmes in remote environments. Justyna provides ecological advice and peer reviews reports for works undertaken throughout the South Island.

Sam King – Senior Herpetologist

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Samantha has over 12 years' experience in conservation and ecology. Sam manages the South Island lizard team, and undertakes or oversees all lizard related work in the South Island. This work involves undertaking fauna surveys and the preparation of assessments of ecological effects and lizard management plans. Sam and her team also implement lizard management, including lizard salvages and translocations. Sam has a detailed knowledge of relevant legislation and policy. Sam completed an MSc investigating genetic and phenotypic methods to determine species of threatened green gecko.

Dr Della Bennett – Senior Avifauna Ecologist

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Della is a highly experienced ecologist with wide-ranging expertise on indigenous and introduced avifauna in Aotearoa with over 12 years' experience. Della has conducted ecological significance assessments and prepared ecological effects reports for a wide range of habitats, including forest, braided river, wetland, coastal and oceanic environments. She has provided expert evidence and participated in hearings for solar farms, wind farms, aquaculture, transport and residential developments. Della has a PhD in Biological Sciences, PGDipSci (distinction) and BSc from the University of Canterbury.

Roland Payne – Senior Vegetation Ecologist

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Roland is a botanist and terrestrial ecologist with more than 12 years' professional experience. He has an extensive knowledge of New Zealand's flora and fauna and conducting assessments of ecological significance in a wide range of habitats, including wetlands, shrublands, forest, alpine and coastal environments. Roland frequently undertakes field assessments, wetland delineations, monitoring, and prepares assessments of ecological effects as well as other reporting. He provides advice to a range of clients on ecology within relevant policy frameworks.

Dr Vikki Smith – Senior Invertebrate Ecologist

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Vikki is an invertebrate ecologist with more than 12 years' experience in invertebrate ecology and research. Vikki has skills in fauna surveying, habitat assessments and invertebrate identification, technical reviews, assessments of ecological effects and designing and implementing invertebrate management plans. She also has experience designing and carrying out pest management solutions. Vikki has presented evidence and appeared in council hearings and Environment Court. For her PhD she conducted research into the biogeography and conservation ecology of indigenous trapdoor spiders.

Dr David Johnston – Ecologist and UAV Operator

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David is a population and behavioural ecologist with more than 5 years' experience. He has extensive knowledge of the marine environment, with an emphasis on the impacts of global change drivers on population dynamics and ecosystem functioning. He has a high level of scientific and statistical literacy, and is the in-house drone pilot for the company, providing high-resolution aerial datasets from both marine and terrestrial ecosystems. He has a PhD from the University of Otago.

Dr DJ King – Ecologist

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DJ is an ecologist and environmental scientist with over six years' experience in coastal wetland ecology and vegetation. They have strong broad knowledge of New Zealand's plant communities and extensive experience in coastal plant communities, having created a plain-language resource for identifying salt-marsh plants. DJ has also contributed extensively to climate research and sea-level reconstruction using transfer-function models. They are a leading expert in foraminifera, having described one species in 2021 and used them in environmental research projects, and are familiar with several hundred species and genera.

Dr Morgan Tracy-Mines – Vegetation Ecologist

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Morgan is an experienced and enthusiastic vegetation ecologist with over six years of professional experience. Since joining Wildlands, Morgan has contributed to over 100 projects, including numerous assessments of ecological effects (AEEs), vegetation surveys across the South Island, resource consent application reviews, overseas investment applications, and preparation of evidence for hearings. Morgan has a PhD from the University of Canterbury, and specializes in the botany of the Mackenzie High Country, such as recovering native tussock grasslands in Lake Tekapo, Twizel, and Ōmarama.

Jade Christiansen – Herpetologist

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Jade is a herpetologist with five years of experience working with New Zealand lizards, particularly those in the South Island. She is proficient in conducting lizard surveys and assessments and has experience in the development and implementation of Lizard Management Plans. Jade has experience working with Nationally Critical species, including Kapiti skink, which was the focus of her MSc research. She has also worked with taonga species, such as Tuatara, at Orokonui Ecosanctuary for five years.

Anna Meban – Ecologist

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Anna is an ecologist with two years' professional experience in conservation and ecology. Anna has a MSc investigating bait preferences in rabbits in the Mackenzie and Otago districts, and has an in-depth understanding of pest management and control methods. Since starting at Wildlands Anna has been involved with a range of ecological work, during this time developing her skills in the capture, handling and salvage of lizards as well as being involved with a number of projects including lizard surveys, preparation and implementation of lizard management plans and undertaking desktop assessments of lizard values. Anna's field experience includes, mammalian pest trapping and monitoring, invasive weed control, lizard surveying and monitoring as well as lizard salvage and release.


Our Services:

- Freshwater and terrestrial ecological surveys and assessments.
- Assessments of ecological effects and solutions.
- Ecological restoration and implementation plans.
- Identification of mitigation options.
- Geospatial representation and analysis.
- Plant, bird, lizard, bat, and terrestrial and aquatic invertebrate surveys, assessment, and monitoring.
- Pest animal surveys, and weed impact assessments and management plans.
- UAV surveys for quality ecological data.
- Threatened plant and fauna management


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