

TIMARU



DISTRICT COUNCIL

Te Kaunihera ā-Rohe  
o Te Tihi o Maru

Your Natural Heritage

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# SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS

September 2021 Update

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A group of remnant Cabbage Trees  
– *Cordyline australis* on a roadside  
SNA at Station Rd, Temuka

For more information on the value of  
roadside SNAs, please see inside...



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# HE WAKA EKE NOA

## We are all in this together

Welcome to this update on Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) in the Timaru District.

The SNA programme has been in operation now within the Timaru District since 2005 and a considerable amount of work is being undertaken by landowners, volunteers, contractors and Council to ensure the long term protection of indigenous flora and habitat values within these areas.

There is however a variable level of knowledge about how the programme came about or what SNAs are and hopefully the information below will help to clarify the situation.

## What is a Significant Natural Area?

An SNA is an area of land with naturally occurring vegetation containing plant species that are indigenous (native) to the area / site and which have been assessed as having sufficient qualities / values to warrant its long term protection. SNAs can also include significant habitats of indigenous fauna, which are habitats (indigenous/exotic) that provide habitats for indigenous species (animals, birds and invertebrates).

The Resource Management Act 1991 requires all local authorities in New Zealand to recognise and provide for the protection of these areas as a matter of national importance. It also requires local authorities to control any actual or potential effects of the use, development or protection of land for the purpose of the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity.

Work on identifying these areas within the Timaru District was undertaken by local Geraldine ecologist Mike Harding between 2005 and 2016.

At the completion of the survey 772 SNA sites covering an area of 7260 hectares had been identified and recorded as being significant and worthy of protection.

These SNAs cover a range of land and ecosystem types within the District from the coast to the mountains and include coastal wetlands, lowland grassland, limestone scarp, basalt boulder field, downlands forest, old growth podocarp forest in the foothills valleys, regenerating forest on hill slopes, inland wetlands, and tussock land on moraine.

Within these SNAs there is a huge diversity of indigenous flora and fauna with populations of nine "threatened" and twenty one "at risk" plant and animal species including long tailed bat and a locally endemic limestone gentian.

These SNA areas represent the best of what remains of our native flora ecosystems and fauna habitats on privately owned land within the Timaru District.

## What does having an SNA on my property mean?

The purpose of identifying an SNA is to assist landowners and Council to effectively manage the indigenous flora and fauna values / habitats identified so that they can be retained in good health in perpetuity.

In many cases these natural values are what attracted us to our properties in the first instance and in a world where increasing pressure is constantly being placed upon what remains.

We can expect that any land on which these values are present, and being well managed, will continue to be attractive not only to its current owners but for future potential buyers should you ever consider selling.

### It means

Landowners can do (encouraged to do):

- Weed control that would not clear or remove any SNA.
- Fence off SNA.
- Graze competing ground cover vegetation if it does not contribute towards the ecological values identified for the SNA.

Landowners cannot do:

- Clearance of SNA by any means including:
  - burning,
  - earthworks,
  - over-planting,
  - spraying of vegetation for weed control purposes,
  - mowing,
  - cultivation or disturbance,
  - grazing to a level detrimental to the SNA values,
  - irrigation overspray.

Resource consent is required for any form of SNA clearance.

### It doesn't mean

- the public have any rights of access to these areas or that you are in any way required to provide for public access.
- You are obligated to fence it off
- You are obligated to conduct weed control unless required under the provisions of the ECan Canterbury Regional Pest Management Plan.

Council will from time to time arrange to visit your SNA to discuss with you any concerns you may have and where possible pass on tips, management techniques or information learnt from other SNA property owners that may be of value to you in your situation.

Additionally Council can further assist with contestable grants, rates remissions on SNA areas and in some instances may undertake pest plant control work on your SNA where this falls within the priorities set by the Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity Steering Group.

## Waihi River – Woodbury Eco Group

11 years ago Steve and Bindy Dakin moved to their Woodbury retirement property and having family already in Geraldine, the native bush remnants close by and abundant birdlife, the choice was an easy one.

It did not take long before they became active in wanting to improve the bush and wildlife habitats of the locality sharing this interest with neighbours Jimmy and Eve Wallace, Robbie Stewart of Woodbury and other locals.

For the past 5 years this core group along with assistance of other local community members have been working every Tuesday morning for a couple of hours clearing weeds, trapping animal pests, keeping riverbed tracks open, undertaking plantings and advocating with other landowners about the value of ecosystems and Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) in the locality.

The surrounding bush on the river terraces and adjacent properties/SNA's is mostly hardwood – podocarp forest associations dominated by totara, matai, and some kahikatea remnants with a mixed understory of native hardwoods and ferns.

The first priority Steve says was to reduce the seed burden from sycamore trees that had established on the adjacent to the Waihi River terraces from spreading into the adjoining SNA and esplanade areas. Working with a grant from Environment Canterbury the group employed local contractor Landcare Services to apply XTree herbicide to the established sycamores. This herbicide is applied as a stem spray to the trees and is absorbed through the bark killing the trees standing without the

need for felling and subsequent damage to surrounding growth.

The result has been excellent with a 100% kill of the treated trees and no damage whatsoever to adjacent vegetation. With the improved light, and other weed control activities that have followed there is an abundance of native species regeneration occurring on the treated river terraces and which will in time establish bush cover again through these areas.

Along with the sycamore and weed control has been a pest animal control programme throughout all areas using both kill traps and bait stations targeting possums, rats and mustelids (stoats, ferrets etc.)

Success has been achieved with possum and mustelid numbers now being lower. The uptake of rat baits continues to be relatively high, but baiting will continue and the hope is that overtime a reduction in numbers of rats will also be achieved.

One of the group members Robbie Stewart has established "Pest Free Woodbury" with the goal of providing advice, equipment, encouragement and coordinating general pest control work throughout the Woodbury area.

Work will be ongoing with both weed and animal pest control programmes to further improve the gains already made.

Steve is quick to point out that looking at these areas one can become overwhelmed with what appears a never-ending list of work that needs to be undertaken but says it helps immensely not to think of the area as a garden but rather an undertaking which allows the next step in the ecological change process to occur. It is never going to be a garden, and control of all



The photos above show Steve standing amongst regenerating natives while one of the volunteer team Sam Shaw attends to some trapline maintenance.

Also visible in the photos are the dead sycamore trees treated 2 to 3 years earlier.

weeds is never going to be achieved. However, with a bit of planning, and prioritising species to be targeted, then good outcomes are achievable and satisfying at the same time.

In the short term the team would love to have more involvement from and interaction with local property and SNA owners, and are convinced that the more people actively participating then the greater will be the results seen over a larger area. This is critical for establishing good corridors for wildlife and bird movement which in turn are pivotal to maintaining the long-term health and diversity of bush remnants and SNA areas.

Advocating with an adjoining SNA owner the group have been able to secure some further ECan funding to undertake fencing to exclude cattle from some of the higher value areas and already with the grazing pressure removed the change in these areas is apparent.

Steve is convinced that many landowners are underestimating the value of SNA areas on their properties seeing them as a burden rather than an asset, and over time he would like to be able to raise the level of awareness around this amongst local landowners.

A really motivating aspect of being part of a group undertaking this ecosystem improvement work has been seeing the spontaneous regeneration that occurs when even a minimal to moderate amount of weed and pest control is undertaken. Steve and Bindy love the abundance of birdlife that the bush attracts including Tui (11 seen at a feeder on one occasion last year) Grey warbler, Bellbird, kereru, Fantail, Tomtit, Swallow, White faced heron, wax eyes and a range of introduced birds. The “Morning chorus” of birdsong he says is wonderful and one of the activities the group would like to undertake is to invite the community to enjoy this naturally inspired concert on some occasion in the near future.

The presence of formed and paper roads that provide for good access to areas has greatly assisted their work.

Community participation has further been encouraged and delivered when a Timaru District Council owned esplanade reserve on the Dakin’s property was planted with natives improving the passage of bird movement between the river and inland SNA sites. Council was able to assist by providing plants, traps, baits, and advice.

The local bush remnants provide habitat not only for birds and animals but also an impressive range of invertebrates – insects, moths, butterflies etc. Because of their generally very small size this important component of any successful ecosystem is often overlooked but forms a vital part of the food chain for many birds, and animals such as lizards. Around 2 years ago nationally renowned entomologist Brian Patrick undertook a survey of invertebrates in Conway’s Bush which adjoins and rated the experience as “one of his best nights ever” observing and recording a large and diverse range of findings.

Steve and the team are passionate about their work and gain immense satisfaction from the knowledge that their activities are helping to ensure the long term health and vitality of these critically important ecological areas.

Anyone wishing to join Steve and the team would be welcomed and Steve can be contacted at 03 692 2931

## Port Blakely Geraldine Forest

Located in the foothills south west of Geraldine between SH79 and the Te Moana river lies the Geraldine Forest owned and managed by forestry company Port Blakely Ltd.

The forest is approx. 5500ha in size and is managed along with another nearby forest at Saddle Peak also owned by the company.

Within the Geraldine Forest are some 25 separate SNA areas totalling 454ha, representing almost 8.0% of their total forest area, and making the company one of the largest owners of registered Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) within the Timaru District.

One of these SNAs “Maori Gully” is 83 ha and is a good example of podocarp hardwood forest associations. The Maori Gully site features many mature podocarp trees such as kahikatea, matai and totara. Working with the Department of Conservation, Environment Canterbury, Timaru District Council Biodiversity Steering group, Long Tailed Bat working Group, ecologist Mike Harding, Arowhenua Iwi and neighbouring property owners, Port Blakey have identified that this SNA provides habitat to a colony of the highly endangered Long Tailed Bat or “pekapeka” once common over large tracts of the South Island but now restricted to just a small handful of locations some of which are in the South Canterbury area.

In addition to the bats a range of native bird species including rifleman, bellbird, fantail, kereru, and NZ falcon also flourish within the Maori Gully area and adjacent plantation forest areas managed by the company.

In November 2019 a monitoring programme at the SNA using wax tags and ink tunnels showed possums and rats to be the predominant threats to fauna and flora values present. Following this Port Blakely established a network of some 130 bait stations over the site to control these pests. The annual control is being jointly funded by Port Blakey and The Timaru District Council as part of the Councils SNA Enhancement Grant scheme over a 3-year period. Post the co-funded 3-year period

Port Blakely aim to continue the annual control as part of their overall Long Tailed Bat and biodiversity enhancement programmes.

At that time, a harp net trapping operation was undertaken in an attempt to catch long tailed bats with a view to tagging any caught animals with a radio transmitter and then releasing them. Two individuals were caught, tagged, and released. This not only proved the presence of the bats within the Maori Gully area, but subsequent radio monitoring of the released animals has shown this new colony to be resident within the Maori Gully area and adjacent properties.

This colony is monitored each season during suitable weather conditions ( warm dry nights) using automatic bat monitors and this will be undertaken for the next 5 years to obtain a general assessment of bat population trends at the site, along with seasonal harp net trapping and monitoring to identify specific maternal roost trees.

The bait stations are activated each year in November ahead of the impending bat breeding season which runs from December to March with the intention of reducing numbers of both possums and rats over this time and providing the best opportunity for any young bats bred to be able to grow and fledge without predation.

## Port Blakely Geraldine Forest

Port Blakely Health, Safety and Environmental Manager Zac Robinson says that so far this strategy appears to be working well and while it is difficult to establish how many new bats are being added to the population it is hoped that the monitoring programme will show some trend over time.

Certainly, the regeneration of native species within the SNA is impressive due in part to the trapping programme and additional pest control that is undertaken throughout the forest, but also to the fact that no livestock grazing is undertaken within the Geraldine Forest. Good wildlife corridors exist between SNAs within the forest which allow bird and seed movement between areas to occur freely. Port Blakely's forests are managed to an internationally recognised environmental certification standard. Under this standard the company has classified the Maori Gully SNA as

a High Conservation Value Forest recognising the importance of this area. This requires development of a management plan for the area which includes specific measures that ensure maintenance and /or enhancement of the recognised values, along with annual monitoring, engagement with and reporting to all stakeholders.

Management of all SNA areas within the Port Blakely Forests is a high priority and prior to harvest of any adjoining plantation areas extensive pre harvest planning is undertaken to ensure that any projected impacts from the harvesting process have minimal or no impact on the SNAs. Zac says Port Blakely contractors do an exceptional job of protecting SNA areas during harvest in extremely difficult and steep terrain.



Two views of Maori Gully. Left showing regenerating bush and newly planted plantation forest around the perimeters, and right looking into base of gully where many large podocarp trees are located.



Zac Robinson at one of the bait stations within the Maori Gully SNA

Additionally, during the harvest process regular on ground monitoring is undertaken to ensure that the planning recommendations are followed and that any edge disturbance of the SNAs is avoided where at all possible. Often following harvest SNA boundaries are reviewed, and the company is looking at how it may add additional area to these SNAs that will ensure future plantings and harvests have even less impact.

Along with reviewing how to increase the size of SNAs within the forest when prudent to do so, the company is also looking to establish a wetland near to the SH79 boundary of its forest which will provide additional ecotype, biodiversity and habitat to the forest.

Within the Geraldine Forest is a colony of New Zealand falcon – karearea, which Zac says have a particular liking for the habitat created by freshly harvested cutover areas, and Port Blakely have a specific management plan for these birds within the Geraldine Forest and other plantation areas they own and manage elsewhere around New Zealand.

The company maintains a strong community focus and engagement programme and locally has procured and makes available for community use several bat detectors to assist with identification of other long tailed bat locations / colonies.

Zac says the company is always working to improve the quality of the SNAs and the environment in general and while the surveys undertaken on SNAs within their forests in 2012 provide a benchmark they would be keen work with Council to undertake more follow up monitoring to document and measure changes to these areas to better gauge the effectiveness or otherwise of their management processes.



Photo showing recently harvest areas which finger down between an adjoining SNA area.

## Roadside SNAs

Roadsides – the grassed areas that are found on each side of the formed roads on which we drive are largely ignored areas of land.

Taken for granted as a by-product of the very necessary task of providing transportation needs across the landscapes these roadsides have an important and increasing role to play in the preservation of ecosystems and habitats across the District – and not only ours.

Look at any unmown roadside and you will observe a level of biodiversity largely absent from the cultivated and grazed paddocks over the fence. While a great many of these plants are introduced grasses and other species, roadsides often provide a last refuge for a range of remnant native plants once far more common across our landscapes.

Additionally, they provide habitat, food and other resource for birds, lizards, invertebrates and animals living in our landscapes.

Despite the values they bring general experience suggests that many people

have yet to recognise the significance and importance of these roadside habitats and the need to manage them in a way that enables the valuable contributions they make to our environment to be retained and where possible enhanced.

Just as they meet the need of providing for our transportation, they also are corridors along which birds and wildlife move providing linkages between other areas of remnant native plants and habitat in our landscapes.

Threats to these roadside ecosystems include.

- **Mowing.** Many roadsides are now mown and while this provides a tidy appearance and is visually pleasing the action itself significantly erodes the environmental value of roadsides.

This results in a reduction of the natural foods available to a range of birds, insects and animals such as lizards, preventing seeding of grasses and native species, and encourages a thicker / dense mat of introduced grasses which respond well to mowing / grazing to establish often at the expense of native species or higher value introduced species which need more light and space to survive.



An unmown roadside showing a diversity of plant species and food / habitat for wildlife.

Of course, mowing to ensure safety for road users, intersection visibility etc is critical and will continue where required.

- **Spraying.** Control of weeds especially brush weeds such as gorse and broom, as well as grasses around drains, marker posts, intersections etc is important. Often though during spraying operations by-kill of high value plants such as many of our native grasses, shrubs, mosses and lichens occurs depleting this natural resource. Brush weed spraying of roadsides is now undertaken by Council and the contractors undertaking this work are required to be appropriately skilled, and knowledgeable about the plant values present to avoid damage to these.
- **Cultivation.** Any form of cultivation will reduce or eliminate remnant values and is not permitted.
- **Grazing.**
- **Inappropriate use / storage.** Excess vehicle use of roadside berms, and storage of baleage can contribute to a reduction in roadside ecosystems.



Storage of baleage can damage delicate roadside plant communities.

### What can you do to help?

Being mindful of those actions which have the ability to damage the remnant and habitat values on our roadsides is a good starting point so where possible:

- Avoid unnecessary or damaging use of roadside for vehicle and machinery movements
- avoid stocking and grazing and look at reducing mowing.
- If possible, avoid overspray from adjacent irrigation systems as the extra water provided by these can dramatically alter the existing habitat.
- Avoid using them for storage of silage or baleage and seek Council, approval for this if necessary.

Over the next few months Council will be identifying roadside SNA sites with special markers that provide some guidance on appropriate use and who to contact for queries. Please advise council if markers are missing.



An eco-friendly roadside – unmown and with existing native remnant values

## Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity Steering Group

This group was established in 2018 to assist Council with the development and implementation of a biodiversity policy aimed at ensuring the protection and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity values within the Timaru District.

The group is comprised of representation from TDC Council Planning and management staff, an independent environmental consultant, Arowhenua Runanga, Dept of Conservation, Central South Island Fish and Game, Environment Canterbury, Forest and Bird, Federated Farmers, independent landowners, QEII National Trust and the Forest industry.

Council is conscious that issues relating to biodiversity values are complex and such issues can impact on landowners, and a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties throughout the District. Experiences both nationally and internationally show that protection and enhancement of biodiversity values is best realized through strong relationships with landowners, community support and partnerships.

The Ecosystems and Biodiversity steering group helps with this by ensuring that information and actions contributing to required outcomes is sought from a wide cross section of the community and will lead to decisions being made that are informed, have a broad and inclusive focus, and meet the requirements of the Council Biodiversity policy.

Over the next few pages we look at 2 representatives from that group: Federated Farmers representative Andrew Steven and independent landowner representative Peter Evans.

## Andrew Steven

Andrew has been with the steering group since its inception and was offered the role of representing Federated Farmers, one that he was happy to undertake. Andrew and wife Victoria have been members of Federated Farmers for more than 30 years and both have active interests in all aspects of farming and the environment.



His role on the steering group as he sees it is to provide a voice for the rural community at the table and to ensure that issues are as much as possible dealt with in a practical manner that achieves the desired results and is acceptable to the farming community. Listening to what others have to say is also important as seldom does one section of the community have all the answers when it comes to finding solutions to many of the challenges facing biodiversity in New Zealand today.

Andrew and Victoria farm a mixed property in the Rosewill area near Timaru and lease a further property on hill country near Cave. On the Cave property there are several registered Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) as well as QEII covenanted land which they both value as a means of protecting a range of indigenous vegetation and habitats on the property. Their management of these areas includes keeping a close on eye grazing pressures, weed and pest control, fencing out of some areas altogether to exclude stock, and undertaking revegetation plantings at selected sites to further improve values.

Andrew believes that the Council approach to identifying SNA areas within the District has been both proactive, and effectively undertaken, but points out that these now need to be actively managed by Council if the desired outcomes are going to be secured.

**“Good relationship building with property owners is key and where possible face to face contact is essential to achieving good outcomes to this”.**

Working with landowners who have larger areas of SNA within their properties he says would be a good starting point.

He is also of the view that a review of all current SNA sites would be useful to gauge the effectiveness of the SNA mechanism for actually protecting indigenous remnants and habitats now that they have in many cases been established for some time.” Have these areas improved, stayed the same or gone backwards since they were first assessed”? Such a review he says would provide a line in the sand around which management of the sites into the future can be discussed and agreed with landowners and other parties.

Currently costs for the maintenance of SNAs largely fall with the landowners, and while limited Council grants and some work programmes attract funding, most farmers he says would agree that if these areas are being protected for the benefit of the wider

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## Peter Evans

Peter and Jane Evans farm a mixed property in the lower Pareora Gorge area southwest of Timaru.

Involved with steering group since inception in 2018 Peter was approached to join the group following several activities and field days on their property, including winning the Farm Forestry Sustainable Farming Award which Peter and Jane are very proud of.

Peter is an independent farmer representative and says he is happy to be able to bring another rural voice to the table and advocate on behalf of rural property owners on matters around biodiversity on their land.

He has always been interested in the environment and saw the group as a good way to learn more around this and represent the rural community as well.

Peter and Jane have several SNAs on their property and feel very positive about these.

community, then the cost of maintenance should also be provided by the community.

He also feels that there is a certain amount of confusion or misconceptions around SNAs within the farming sector and that a key element of Council involvement should be ensuring that the process, responsibilities and required outcomes are transparent and clear for everyone.

At present Andrew says that the rural farming community is faced with a number of issues that are creating concerns, and management of Significant Natural Areas is certainly one of these.

He is more than happy for farmers to ring him to discuss any concerns around SNAs that they may have.

Current and previous land management practices on their land have seen these areas retained and they are now a valued part of their farming operation. “We love this country and its landscapes and see the native bush as a big part of what makes it attractive and unique for us”.

They enjoy the way their SNAs are integrated into their farming practices and the SNA process has allowed them to learn more about these areas including the range of species present, what the threats to these values are, and identifying some priorities around how these might be overcome.

The report received following assessment of their sites was comprehensive and for them brings some truth to the adage that “you can’t manage what you can’t measure”.

## Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity Steering Group

Peter says he believes the Council approach to the identification and documentation of SNAs within the Timaru District Council area initiated back in 2007 is positive and represents a good start to managing these remnants going forward. "We cannot afford to do nothing" he says with respect to looking after our natural biodiversity values. The SNA process gives the landowner some perspective to know how SNA areas on their properties can best interact with their overall farming operations.

Given the debate around Significant Natural Areas being discussed in other areas of New Zealand at the present time he thinks the process of assessment and documenting of these areas has put SNA owners locally ahead of many others around the country, and in a good position to help to address some of the concerns now being expressed.

The biodiversity working group with the experience they now have of SNAs is well placed he thinks to be able to advocate on behalf of owners via Council and the Local Govt Assn with central government to reduce barriers to landowners being more willingly involved.

A real concern Peter says is central government overriding local government without consultation or recognition of work already done.

"The recent announcement of grazing and water policy by Government with no consultation, and a one rule for the whole of the country also overriding ECan's water policy, is an example of this".

It is little wonder he says that there is a sense of nervousness within the rural community about the implementation of Significant Natural Areas requirements and what the future may hold around these.



Additionally, he has concerns around animal pest issues – "We can manage the sheep and cattle, but the huge explosion in numbers of wallaby, deer, rabbits and hares is a big problem and certainly one with the ability to impact negatively on SNA areas".

He also believes that work more needs to be undertaken locally to further improve contact and liaison between landowners over their SNA areas, to clarify any misconceptions that there may be, to clearly let owners know what their responsibilities are, and to offer advice and assistance where possible.

He agrees there is uncertainty around some issues with SNAs such as fencing requirements if any, what are the dos and don'ts, and how the SNA issue will be handled elsewhere in New Zealand.

The best outcome Peter believes is for landowners to see themselves in an equal partnership with Council and other agencies over the management of their SNA sites.

Peter is also happy for any property owners with any concerns to give him a call and have a chat.

## Meuhlenbeckia: Friend or Foe?

*Meuhlenbeckia* is a genus of plants of which there are 5 species found in New Zealand being *M.australis*, *M.axillaris*, *M.complexa*, *M.ephedroides* and *M.astonii*.

While 2 or 3 of these species are well known, and in some cases used as garden plants, probably the most widespread and well-known is *Meuhlenbeckia australis* also known as Pohuehue or wirevine.



Pohuehue – *Meuhlenbeckia australis*

This plant is seen in many of our bush remnants as a vigorous evergreen climber that scrambles over supporting vegetation often making dense mats. For many this is cause for concern and in some cases rightly so.

I am often asked what the vine is, and what can or should be done to control it.

*Meuhlenbeckia* species in New Zealand have a long history here with fossil pollen records showing it to have been a component of our flora for much of the time New Zealand has developed geologically and florally.

As such it has become an important part of our native flora and in stable environmental situations occupies gaps in the bush caused by fallen trees or areas around bush margins, needing good light conditions to thrive.

What is sometimes not widely known about *M.australis* and other members of the *Meuhlenbeckia* family is that they are host to well over 100 native invertebrates, moths and butterflies including the very bright copper butterfly, and the blue boulder copper butterflies often seen flitting amongst lower plants along riverbeds and tussock grassland areas.



Copper Butterfly

## Meuhlenbeckia: Friend or Foe?

With over 100 invertebrate species living in harmony with this plant it is little wonder then that the plant is also a favourite food source for many of our native birds and lizards. While feeding on the invertebrates' birds drop seed of a range of native species eaten elsewhere, some of which germinate and produce new plants that develop, and in time grow up and through the Meuhlenbeckia canopy reducing its domination.

It is easy to understand then why this plant favours the open areas it is often seen in, as it is nature's way of attracting birds and seed to these sites to fuel the ever-changing transformation of our landscape flora.

That is not to say that it does not create problems and in some instances its removal by cutting and treating the cut vines at ground level can and is justified.

However, given the extent to which the plant now occurs, and given that we know the role it plays in the succession of native plantings then in most instances there is no harm in

leaving it to undertake the role that nature has groomed it for. These successions take time and do not happen overnight, in most cases it might be 30 or 40 years before the plant's role has been fulfilled and alternative native bush occupies that site.

Being able to appreciate that it provides virtually a "Noahs Ark" for many of our native invertebrates, and an important food plant for many of our smaller native birds is reason enough to look at it with new eyes and appreciate the positives that it brings as well.

Also often seen persisting in fence lines along roadsides are remnant plants of the scrambling pohuehue *Meuhlenbeckia complexa*. This tough and often only survivor of the vegetation that used to cover our landscapes often gets sprayed out along with gorse, broom and other weeds.

Given that this species also plays host to an extensive range of invertebrates and bird species it should where possible be retained.



Damage incurred at the Oliver Dryland Reserve by flooding as a result of recent heavy rains. Work to reinstate the damaged areas will be undertaken over the coming weeks.



Scrambling pohuehue - *Meuhlenbeckia complexa*

## Questions or queries

If you have any questions or queries relating to Significant Natural Areas, then do not hesitate to contact the Planning Unit at the Timaru District Council by calling 03 687 7200.

Gary Foster who is assisting the planning Unit on a part time independent basis may also be able to help and can be contacted on 0274 310 637.



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**TIMARU DISTRICT PLAN REVIEW**

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