

NELSON NATURE



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Kokorua Inlet.

Saving habitats

Did you know that if you were to walk around the entire length of Nelson's coastline you would travel approximately 145kms and come across some unique and majestic coastal landscapes?

From Waimea Inlet at Champion Rd to Cape Soucis, the Nelson region has a variety of seascapes.

Included is the internationally renowned boulder bank, a 13.5km long strip of boulders derived from MacKay Bluff to the north and transported by longshore drift in a southwards direction.

Pepin Island, the end of Delaware spit and Haulashore Island are landforms known as tombolos, island like features that sit at the end of a sandspit or boulder bank.

Among the steep rocky cliffs that fall directly into Tasman Bay are a handful of sandy beaches that support threatened dune plants and katipo spiders.

There are four estuaries within the Nelson City area; the internationally important and largest of our estuaries is the Waimea Inlet which straddles the Nelson City and Tasman District Council boundary (and is subject to major ecological enhancement activities from a number of partners); the Nelson Haven into which the Maitai River runs and

where Port Nelson is situated, Delaware Estuary framed by Pepin Island and Delaware Spit, and Kokorua Estuary to the North, which is only accessible by boat or with permission of landowners.

Estuaries are remarkable ecosystems teeming with life, and many commercial species of fish rely on them at some stage in their life cycle.

They are also home to a number of native and migrant birds.

The Waimea Inlet is of international importance for species such as the Variable Oystercatcher and migratory species such as Wrybill and Bar-tailed Godwit.

It is also significant within New Zealand for its Banded Rail and Caspian Tern populations.

When visiting our estuaries you may come across the secretive Fernbird among the scrubby vegetation on the margins, and if you get very lucky you might catch a glimpse of a Banded Rail in the coastal rushes, although you are more likely to come across its footprints as the tide recedes.

As with all our native bird species our shorebirds fall victim to introduced mammals such as stoats, rats, cats and dogs. There-

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fore the efforts of volunteer trappers are a vital defence for these native bird species.

Nelson City Council's Nelson Nature biodiversity programme will focus on protecting and enhancing our coastal habitats by working closely with the Department of Conservation, community groups and landowners.

The work includes planting coastal edges with eco-sourced native plants that originate from the Nelson area (for example, planting native grasses on sand dunes), pest control of stoats and rats, controlling goat numbers and wilding pines on the cliff margins, and removing all stock access to estuaries.

In addition, the two Nelson Nature projects aimed at improving the health of our streams and rivers will impact positively on our estuaries by reducing contaminants entering the marine environment.

Around \$600,000 is earmarked for coastal habitat work over the course of the ten year project.

Banded Rail population found

Some of Nelson's local environmental heroes teamed up with Department Of Conservation's NMIT trainee rangers last month to set a new trap-line around Delaware Estuary to protect the native Banded Rail.

One of the most significant Banded Rail populations in the Top of the South has recently

been discovered in this area.

Ornithological Society NZ member Willie Cook and members of the Paremata Flats Ecological Restoration Team completed a Banded Rail survey at Paremata Flat Reserve, Cable Bay, and found significant Banded Rail prints along the mud-flat.

One of the reasons for the healthy Banded Rail population has been attributed to the intensive twice weekly volunteer trapping programme being undertaken at both Paremata Flats Reserve and iwi owned Uri O Te Wai (Bishops Peninsular).

The one area that was not being trapped was the road reserve along Maori Pa Rd between Paremata Flats Reserve and Uri O Te Wai. As part of Council's Nelson Nature programme, another trapping line is being established in this area, as suggested by Paremata Flats Reserve Ecological Restoration Coordinator Ian Price.

Paremata Flat restoration



Department of Conservation's NMIT trainee rangers at Delaware Estuary.

members along with the DOC Trainee Rangers have since established a track and set the traps in place and now a significant area of Delaware Bay is ringed with over 250 traps. All

traps are checked twice weekly and the team is looking for a further three Wednesday trap checkers.

Ian says, "It's a beautiful walk and will take around one and half

hours to complete. We offer full training and need a commitment of one check per month."

Those interested should contact Ian Price: ian.price@xtra.co.nz



A banded rail. PHOTO: WILLIE COOK

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