



# Friends of Flora Newsletter

WINTER EDITION No 136 June 2026



Photo credit – Martin Howard

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## From the Chair - Sandy Toy

Work is underway to repair the access to the Flora via the Graham Valley. It's a big job and we applaud the effort to make the road more resilient to the storms that hit with increasing frequency and ferocity. We are looking forward to easier access as Spring approaches.

FOF's 25th AGM was a wonderful occasion, and it was a privilege to report on the achievements of the group over the last year. Last winter's storm wreaked havoc on the access to the Flora and had devastating consequences for many in the wider Tasman Region.

The effort that the Committee invested to ensure FOF's entire trap network was serviced more or less monthly was huge. Our volunteers' also stepped-up big time: 54 FOF volunteers logged 4,158 h (520 days) of activity, including 114 overnight stays. Trapping was not the only activity, essential mahi on nine biodiversity outcome monitoring projects was also completed.

It was also a privilege at the AGM to acknowledge the mahi, vision and commitment of FOF's founding members who refused to accept that loss of taonga like whio was unavoidable. I'm delighted to welcome two new members, Jenny Gaudion and Andrea Goodman, to the FOF Committee.

Winter is a busy planning time for the Committee with our annual review of our joint Operational Plan with DOC. We welcome and need feedback and suggestions. Please get in touch with thoughts on how FOF operates, things we could do better or any projects that you're keen to lead.

FOF works in partnership with the Department of Conservation and we're pleased that the prefeed for DOC's National Predator Control Programme aerial 1080 operation covering the Flora/Cobb area has been completed. FOF's monitoring data has provided evidence of the level of predators as well as the benefits of intensive control for many of our most threatened species in the Flora.

Thank you to all the FOF volunteers who have done the hard yards up the hill and behind the scenes over twenty-five years. My thanks also to all our supporters, and funders and to our partners in DOC.

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### **Ruru – a good omen** - Peter Born

Anthropomorphizing - to ascribe human form or attributes to (an animal, plant, material object, etc) We're not supposed to do it but I'm sure we all have and sometimes it can't be helped. Peter Born, trapper, committee member & health & safety officer shares an encounter.

While setting off up Saddle Creek (F line) from the Flora Road to check some of the Grecian traps, a curious ruru (morepork) came flying up behind me and flew so close that I could feel its wing tips just touch my head. It then landed in a tree not far in front of me and turned to check me out, presumably to see what I was up to in its neighbourhood. I continued slowly towards it while pulling out my phone to take some photos.

Surprisingly, it stayed in place looking at me, even extending its neck a bit to get a better look at me, giving it very much a look that said "what are you doing here?" (I anthropomorphize, I suppose.)

I continued approaching until only about a meter away and stood watching it, while it watched me, for several seconds, before it decided "enough of this" and headed on its way.

A good omen for the day, I'm sure!



## **More praise for Caring for Kahurangi** - Chrissy Kaneen/Sandy Toy

A huge congratulations to Sandy, Robin & Ruedi for winning the NZ Mountain film and book festivals - Mountain and Adventure Heritage Award for Caring for Kahurangi, The inspiring story of Friend of Flora.

The NZ Mountain Film and Book Festival reports:

Stories of community conservation and life beneath the waves have taken top honours in this year's competition.

Our annual competition celebrates literature exploring remote places, adventure, conservation and the people shaped by wild environments, with awards presented in two categories: Mountain and Adventure Narrative and Mountain and Adventure Heritage.

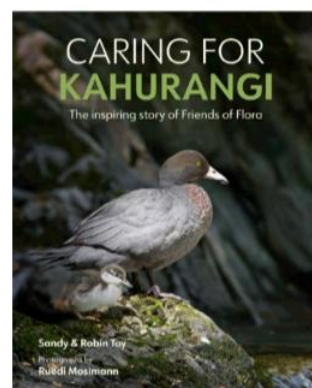
The Mountain and Adventure Heritage Award has been awarded to Caring for Kahurangi: The inspiring story of Friends of Flora by Sandy and Robin Toy.

Beautifully illustrated with photographs by Ruedi Mosimann, the book tells the story of one of New Zealand's most successful community-led conservation efforts. Over 25 years, volunteers from Friends of Flora have worked to restore biodiversity on the eastern edge of Kahurangi National Park through predator trapping, bird translocations and ecological monitoring.

Head Judge Derek Paterson praised the book for "drawing readers into the battle to preserve a section of Kahurangi National Park". He said the book was "well-written" and that "Ruedi Mosimann's superb photography lifts the book to its winning heights." Sandy and Robin Toy said, "We're stoked to receive this award. It takes a team to look after places like Kahurangi and we would have had no story to tell without 25 years of hard mahi from Friends of Flora volunteers. It also takes a team to produce a book and working with Potton & Burton has been a privilege; they are outstanding.

We hope this book filled with Ruedi Mosimann's beautiful images will foster an appreciation that Aotearoa's wild places are so much more than the view or a resource to be exploited."

The festival was held in Wanaka in this month and Sandy, Robin & Ruedi were amongst the speakers. It's wonderful how the book has given them more opportunities to share their stories and ours, far and wide.



## Minutes secretary sought

Chelle has done a fantastic job of minute secretary for the FOF Committee, but is unable to continue to do this longer term.

Chelle has done this ex-officio, (a member of a board or committee by virtue of the office or position they hold, rather than by being directly elected or appointed to the committee itself).

The role is a great opportunity to get to know more about FOF and contribute to its functioning.

The Committee usually meets every 2-3 months for a few hours, currently during the day in Motueka. Please get in touch if you may be able to help. Sandy Toy Ph. 0272352845



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## FOF 25<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY & AGM Guest speaker – Robbie Burton - Sandy Toy

Much has changed since Friends of Flora began. A network of stoat traps spreads over 100 km<sup>2</sup> enabling whio to flourish and roroa to spread across the hills and valleys. FOF's AGM in May celebrated this 25th milestone along with the outstanding amount FOF has achieved this last year despite the difficulties of access.

Guest speaker, Robbie Burton entertained with stories of his career in publishing some of Aotearoa's finest books. Cindy and her team produced wonderful kai, and Elise stole the show with her 25-year anniversary cake. The cake told FOF's story with decorations crafted to illustrate FOF's projects. The detail on the kea, kiwi, whio, butterfly, gecko, giant wētā and traps is exquisite. FOF has many uniquely talented volunteers!

Thanks to everyone involved in this special evening.

If you'd like to see the FOF Annual Report, send a message to [fof@fof.org.nz](mailto:fof@fof.org.nz)



## 1080 Pre-feed under way – Leon Everett

Originally scheduled for 2027, the Cobb 1080 aerial predator control operation was brought forward to winter 2026.

This change in timing was in response to elevated predator numbers following a localised “mini mast” in 2025, and recent monitoring showing a mast was unlikely to occur in the area in 2026, contrary to earlier modelling.

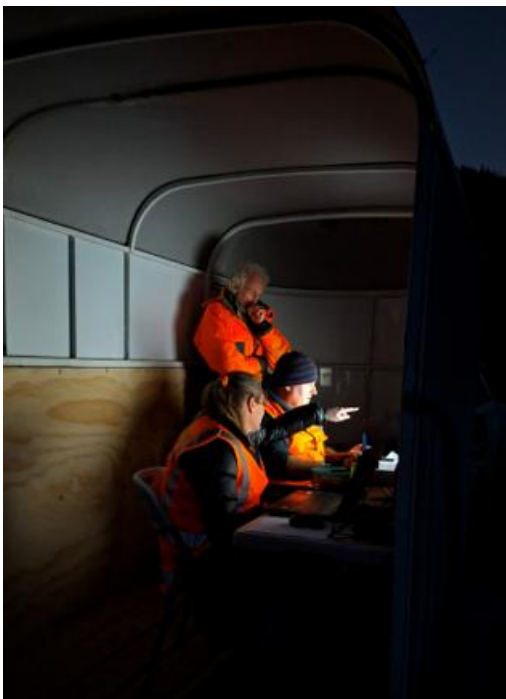
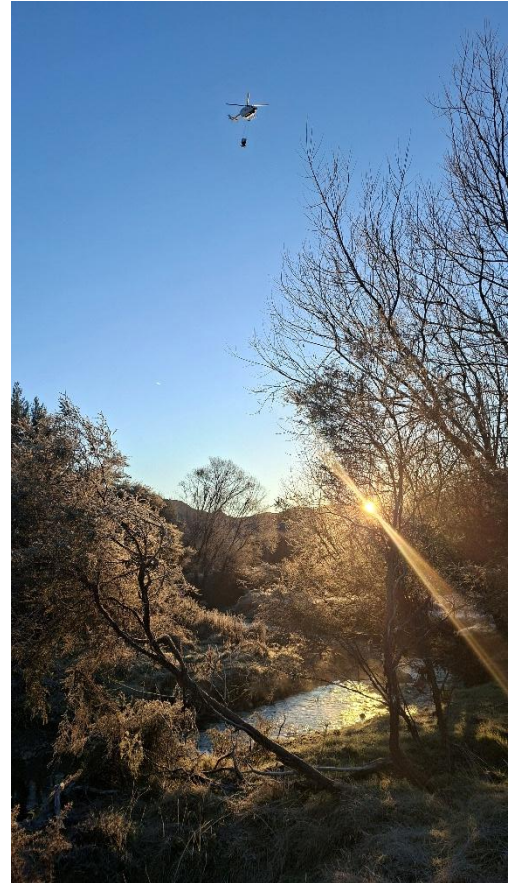
DOC staff and the delivery contractor (Sawland Environmental) moved quickly to carry out operational planning, including consulting adjoining landowners who were made aware of the treatment area boundaries being closer to private land than was the case in recent operations.

This increase in treatment area provides additional control of predators that would otherwise reinvade the area, notably around the south-eastern edge which is near the Flora project area.

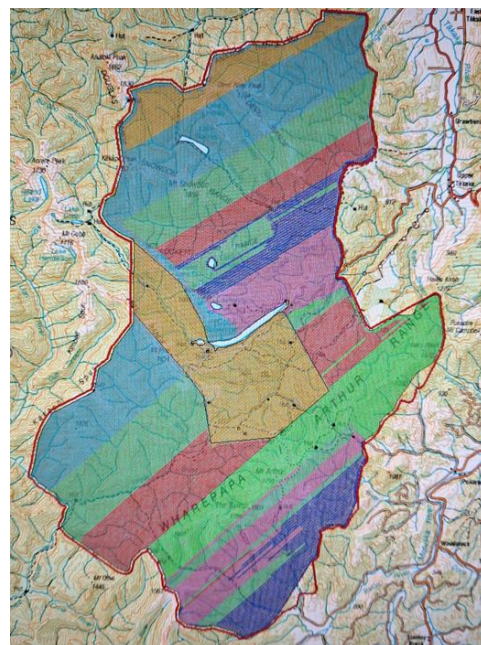
From the start of June, the operation entered “weather watching” mode to identify a suitable window to apply non-toxic prefeed. This requires suitable weather to mobilise subcontractors, install signage and set up loading zones, followed by days of low wind and cloud for accurate and safe baiting, and low rainfall so the bait doesn’t deteriorate before being eaten.

The pre-feed phase began on 9<sup>th</sup> June, with warning signs installed and most helicopters were then able to start applying bait. The loading zone only saw a few hours of sun a day, and even then, temperatures didn’t get close to double digits.

Baiting was completed on 11<sup>th</sup> June, with 70,701ha being treated with pre-feed, habituating rats and possums to the novel food supply, before following up with a treatment of identical, but toxic, bait at least five days later with a good weather window.



The different colours reflect different helicopters



## **Volunteer in the spotlight**

Most of our volunteers are the head down do the work people, but they all deserve to be recognised. We will be introducing one of our volunteers in each newsletter so you can see who the amazing people are behind Friends of Flora.

**Sandra Bishop** is one of those people who doesn't like to be singled out but is an invaluable person to us.

### **How many years have you been involved with FOF?**

Since 2009, 17 years.

### **How did you get involved?**

When I moved to NZ in 2009 and was purchasing some tramping boots, I got to talking with the shopkeeper who recommended I contact Maryann & Bill about volunteering with FOF.

### **Have you always had a passion for nature, i.e. what is your background before FOF?**

As a geologist, I spent many years in the mountains of British Columbia and a few summers in the Canadian Arctic. I was also involved in volunteer conservation work in Australia and so when I moved to New Zealand, I was again looking to volunteer and FOF was a perfect fit.

### **What do you do & what projects have you helped with in the past?**

I have been FOF's Treasurer since 2011, which is a role I enjoy. I was involved with the re-introduction of the great spotted kiwi project, which was very special and have helped out on other projects/tasks.

### **What's been your best experience with FOF?**

Working with a wonderful group of volunteers (see attached photo) and being part of a great management committee.

### **Do you have any advice for someone who is looking at getting involved with conservation or advice for some of our newer volunteers?**

Volunteering with FOF is a great opportunity to spend time in parts of Kahurangi that most trampers don't see. There are so many beautiful places that are off the normal tramping tracks.



**Photos by Ruedi Mosimann**

## **A Friends of Flora Thank you** - Chrissy Kaneen

On behalf of FOF, I would like to pass on a huge thank you to all our sponsors, supporters and volunteers who enable us to work in & for the flora and fauna in an amazing part of New Zealand.

If you have ideas, tips, questions, stories, or photos to share for our next newsletter please feel free to email me @ [chrissy2410@gmail.com](mailto:chrissy2410@gmail.com)

### **Photos from the field**



Can you tell the difference between the 2 different coloured stoats & the weasel? Hint- Stoats have a black tail. - Gerald Bruce-Smith



A stunning lunch spot for a winters day- Warren Kaneen



One of our 2 invaluable electric bikes heading home after a big day - Warren Kaneen

Hannah & Nao's trapline friend keeping a close eye on them – Hannah Neverman

