Moths and Butterflies of New Zealand Trust
Pūrerehua Aotearoa

ISSUE 53 | WINTER 2025

Protecting Aotearoa

Lockdown Garden

Wings of Wonder

Tagging Update

Cover photo: Orocrambus fugitivellus *in its habitat, the beautiful Mackenzie Country. Photo and story by Noah Fenwick on page 4.*

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From the Editor

The weather may be wintry, but things are hotting up for the Moths and Butterflies of NZ Trust.

It has been (almost) twenty years since the MBNZT was formed. I noticed a piece in 'The Chronicle', Bay of Islands, about plans for Butterfly Bay, north-east of Kaeo. I asked three friends if we could form a trust to ensure the proposed development didn't destroy the overwintering habitat for the monarchs... not knowing how my life was going to change!

Twenty years on I can see what we've achieved, so much through so many hours put in by volunteers, with the support of a handful of corporates, funders, and with the continued backing of our financial members. We should all be very proud of our accomplishments.

Think about what we're doing, bringing the red admiral back to Auckland. This project could be repeated in other parts of NZ—but the Auckland project is reaching out to "more than" Auckland. Look at what we've learned about the forest ringlet with the help of funding from a Lottery grant. And we're hopefully going to turn things around for our monarch butterfly, which is being hammered by the introduced, pest wasps causing numbers to fall dramatically.

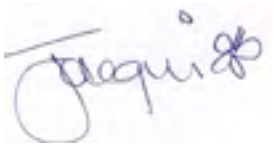
It's wonderful to have the backing now of many schools where monarchs are being tagged to learn more, and our developing relationship with the wonderful House of Science.

This issue I have the help of the talented graphic designer Victor Storchi, from Brazil, another volunteer who cares.

You will learn more as you turn the pages of your Winter magazine, reading about some of the exciting projects happening. About the little moth almost overlooked in the McKenzie Basin. How monarchs have affected the learning of children at the Whangamatā Kindergarten, the work of Sean Clancy and other volunteers on outlying islands and regions, and how migrant Lepidoptera can help protect NZ.

But there's more, much more than that when you turn the pages. The stories you read reflect your work, your contributions... I'm just the one who finds the stories and puts them together in some sort of order.

Thank you all.



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OUR HEROES

Lockdown Garden

By Jenny Taylor

It's been an unlikely connection, and it took place at my backdoor.

Just prior to the 2020 Lockdown our Mackenzie Park Twizel subdivision was expanding. Land clothed with wilding pines, tussocks, Vipers Bugloss, St John's Wort, Hawkweed, etc was being cleared to make way for houses. Places that were previously fenced off were now open to access.

I began to notice on occasion a red or yellow admiral flying around. A firewood expedition to harvest the fallen wilding pines led to the discovery of nettles. They were Urtica dioica and appeared to be the result of stock food brought in for deer and thar. The red admiral's chosen native nettles, particularly Onga Onga (*U. ferox*) don't appreciate the Mackenzie Basin's climate.

At the time of the Covid "Hit" I was spending increased periods in my garden. As any keen gardener knows, there is always room for another plant. However, with only 850 square metres on our section, things were getting tight. Our property backs onto a very undeveloped 'greenway'. Oh - bare ground is like gold to a gardener!

And so the Lockdown Garden was born and is now home, at last count, to 78 varieties of perennials, bulbs and annuals plus trees and shrubs. Naturally, relocated nettles are a part of the mix, and to my delight, have been adorned with the glistening, pearl-like eggs of the yellow admiral with some caterpillars snuggly wrapped in their nettle leaf sleeping bags. We are also blessed with abundant southern blue butterflies and many moths including the day-flying magpie moth.

"Make the place and they will come."

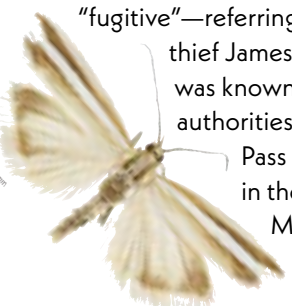
Mackenzie's Most wanted

Looking at a rare grassland gem in Canterbury's Mackenzie Basin

By Noah Fenwick

In the early autumn in the Mackenzie Basin the array of life that is so present in summer begins to dwindle. It seems that all life forms have finished their stint for the season but a small, inconspicuous moth begins to emerge from its hidden cocoon and arises from the earth. It lives in the mix of rank and dry grasses along the Grays River, in the southern tussock grasslands of the Mackenzie Country. Locally, it is abundant, with large gatherings of these moths resting on the grasses, erupting haphazardly when disturbed. These are *Orocrambus fugitivellus*, a small grass moth endemic to this area. It is considered rare as it is specifically only seen here, along the Grays River and surrounding lands. They flutter laboriously, with short little wings and a small body.

So, what's so special about this small moth? Firstly, it's only found in this specific Grays River area, which is unusual as there does not seem anything particularly different about it—perhaps other populations are yet to be discovered? Secondly, it is a relatively new species to science, only being named in the 1950s—by George V Hudson. Technically, he named the species from his grave as the species was included in the publication called Fragments of New Zealand Entomology—which was published posthumously by his family. The specific name, *fugitivellus*, comes from the word "fugitive"—referring to infamous sheep thief James Mackenzie, who was known for running from authorities near the Mackenzie Pass and Canterbury in the 1850s—and the Mackenzie Basin was named after him.



Orocrambus, the genus of *O. fugitivellus*, is completely endemic to NZ and are known commonly as the NZ grass moths. They are generally associated with grasses, as their caterpillars usually depend on specific grass species for food. Currently, 52 species are described and are found in a range of different habitats, such as lowland grasslands, sub-alpine and alpine tussock grasslands, bogs, swamps and slow-flowing streams.

> "It seems that all life forms have finished their stint for the season but a small, inconspicuous moth begins to emerge from its hidden cocoon."

The area where *O. fugitivellus* is found is a mix of dry and wetlands, with the reserve we visited, Glen Rock Conservation Area being quite dry in early March, due to the lack of the rain that summer. Regardless of the drought, the moth was exceedingly abundant, seemingly pouring out of grass swards when disturbed.

This area, along the Haldon Road and opposite the Grays River, is quite simple in vegetative composition. A matrix of exotic and native grass dominates, with some relic native shrubs scattered about. Some of these shrubs, such as *Olearia odorata*, were evidently grazed by livestock. On a nearby hill, small boulders are present, with dryland lichens and mosses inhabiting this space.

Other lepidoptera fauna in the area include *Lycaena bolderanum*, the Canterbury alpine boulder copper, other *Orocrambus* species such as *O. vulgaris*, either *O. lewisii* or *O. ordishi* (I am told these two species cannot be reliably distinguished from each other in the field) and the currently undescribed species, *O.* "mk"—first noted in the area in the 1990s and also endemic to the basin. Some other endemic moth species here seen flying in March were *Tawhitia pentadactylus* and *Asaphodes abrogata*.

It is most important for the survival of this species and others like it, to conserve adequate habitat. Unfortunately, questions about *Orocrambus fugitivellus* are still left unanswered.

The primary host plant of the species is not known—assumed to be some sort of grass, but the caterpillar has never been observed. A study could be conducted of this area, to identify caterpillars and discover the host plant. It is peculiar that this species is only found around this part of the Mackenzie Basin.

What makes this specific area suitable for this moth?

The female adult, although we did not see it, is apparently flightless with reduced wings (brachypterous). How does this affect the distributional limits of the species?

The Glen Rock Conservation Area seemed to host a strong population of these moths, but management of loose stock, potential weed threats and adequate access to the reserve needs to be addressed. If habitat can be adequately conserved, and some more questions answered—the species could be steadily conserved and cherished as a characteristic species of this landscape.

Hopefully next season and seasons to come, this fugitive-like moth can be caught on the wing yet again.

Discovery Update

By R J B Hoare

The Butterfly Discovery Project began in July 2021, with the intention of creating a phylogeny or DNA genealogical tree of the NZ copper butterfly family, to resolve the ongoing confusion of the NZ species.

To date there has been substantial progress in examining and obtaining boulder copper material for further study, and some preliminary work towards DNA sequencing.

In November 2024 I visited probably the two most substantial boulder copper butterfly collections on the planet.

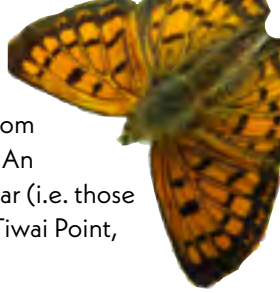
First, I visited Brian Lyford in Queenstown and spent an enjoyable afternoon looking through his magnificent and important personal collection.

Brian is an exceptionally dedicated lepidopterist and told me that in recent years he has made a special effort to collect copper butterflies wherever he could find them throughout the South Island.

His collection is rich in very recently collected material that should be ideal for DNA extraction and sequencing.

Among the significant known South Island populations, the only ones missing from Brian's collection are the Milford Sound and Chrystalls Beach populations.

He told me that he has been to Chrystalls Beach on more than one occasion and failed to find boulder coppers there, so there is extreme concern about the survival of this population.



I was able to borrow 38 selected specimens from throughout the South Island for further study. An important addition to the specimens seen so far (i.e. those currently in NZAC) was Brian's material from Tiwai Point, Southland.

It was interesting to note the remarkable white wing undersides that dominate in this population; however, there was also a Tiwai female with a strongly patterned underside, indicating that even here there is variation within the population.

I was also able to visit the massive collection of copper butterflies at the Otago Museum, built up by Robin Craw, Brian and Hamish Patrick. They have provided me with samples of the Milford Sounds and Chrystalls Beach populations since that time, so I now have a 'full set' of the Patrick & Patrick potential species for further study!

> "I now have a 'full set' of the Patrick & Patrick potential species for further study!"

Having obtained Tiwai specimens from Brian Lyford's collection and impressed by their very white undersides, I went ahead and dissected a male from this population.

As before, though, I could find no convincing characters in the male genitalia that would separate this population from others at the species level. Indeed, the genitalia appear extremely like those of specimens from the other end of the boulder copper's range in the central North Island.

In January I removed a leg from each of 35 specimens of boulder copper (a mix of Brian Lyford's and NZAC specimens collected in the last 20 years) and have placed these legs in labelled vials in the freezer and databased the corresponding specimens, in preparation for future DNA sequencing.

You will find more detail about the project on the MBNZT website, under "Our Work".

Thanks!

How lucky we are to have our "heroes" who support us with funding. They put our goals within reach and we appreciate them so much. Two noteworthy heroes are Settlers Lifestyle Village, Albany, and Yealands in Marlborough.

Settlers is a secure, resort-like lifestyle village that's more like a holiday resort. There they have a predator-free butterfly house, planted nectar and host plants, and encourage their residents to take a minute or two to care for our Lepidoptera.

With a focus on sustainability, Yealands has been a pioneer producing award-winning wines. They have turned a corner of their vineyard into a sanctuary for butterflies.

If you know of corporates who would like to give back to NZ's butterflies and moths, please put them in touch with us.

SETTLERS
LIFESTYLE VILLAGE

YEALANDS
WINES
MARLBOROUGH — NEW ZEALAND

Pest Wasps

New Zealanders care very much about their monarch butterflies and are very invested in the removal of pest wasps from their gardens and habitats.

That concern was very evident from community social media pages over the summer and not just for butterflies, but for all our fauna affected by pest wasp attacks.

A few months ago, Brad Windust, co-founder, trustee and volunteer for Bay Bush Action Trust sent a short video showing a handful of wasps attacking a wētā... so it is not just the monarch which is being affected – it is much wider than that. (See the footage on our website.)

When our trustees met at our annual Planning Meeting they decided that we must take action, and we were fortunate that retired journalist Suzi Phillips was keen to lend a hand.

Know the species:

1. *Polistes chinensis*
2. *Polistes dominula*
3. *Polistes humilis*
4. *Vespula germanica*
5. *Vespula vulgaris*

> We want to know who can identify the problem wasps from other wasps, and people's awareness of their impact."

In the past, Suzi has led a restoration project at Atuanui Mt Auckland and is very concerned about the damage pest wasps are doing to our ecosystems.

She is also involved with social impact consultation and as the first step has designed a survey which will be circulated to restoration projects to determine the impact of pest wasps around the country. This will assist us with strategic planning and public education about pest wasps and their management.

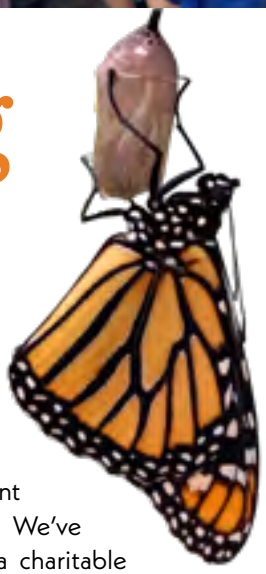
We want to know who can identify the problem wasps from other wasps, and people's awareness of their impact as well as management practices on conservation sites – whether it's a garden or a conservation group working on larger areas.

Please complete the survey and encourage your friends, whanau and colleagues to take part. The survey will be on our website here.

www.nzbutterflies.org.nz/our-work/pest-wasps

Tagging

Update



You will probably know that thanks to the support of passionate citizen scientists like you we've gathered years of valuable data to help protect NZ's monarch butterflies. It has been great to see the involvement in this year's tagging programme. We've partnered with House of Science, a charitable trust with a vision of raising scientific literacy in primary and intermediate schools. The schools are very enthusiastic!

At Hoon Hay School, Christchurch, they were tagging their butterflies in the classroom, waiting until the butterfly had dried its wings and was ready to fly.

"It has been an amazing experience for all the children at Hoon Hay Te Kura Koaka as they come into my science room each week," said teacher Shelley Johnston. "They look to see how the caterpillars, chrysalises and butterflies are doing. They have all learned a lot about butterflies, and have loved looking out for butterflies in their own gardens."

"Many classes have seen me tagging the butterflies as they emerge."

It's been a team effort so far! We've also been working hard to identify overwintering sites, encouraging people to monitor populations in those areas and observing whether monarchs are in diapause or not.

Monarch butterflies typically form large clusters, sometimes containing hundreds or thousands of butterflies, and live during the cold winter months on trees in well-sheltered areas. The late summer generation forms the breeding stock for next year's population. And numbers have been dropping in most parts of NZ every year.

An indicator species, also known as a bioindicator, is an organism whose presence, absence, or abundance in a particular environment reflects the health of that environment. They act as early warning signs, signalling changes in the ecosystem that could otherwise be difficult to detect directly. With your help we can deepen our understanding of Aotearoa's monarch butterflies—and protect them for future generations.

One particular butterfly, WAA715, has now been seen three times in Redwood Park, Christchurch!

Released on 4 March in Casebrook (Styx Mill Rd) Kathy Reid photographed it on 3 May and 6 May, and on 11 June, a very wet week in Christchurch, it was found on the grass by Vicky Steele, who has been looking after monarch butterflies for many years.

"This colony always suffers in heavy rain and strong winds and is one of about 120 I have picked up there since Sunday."

Vicky takes the butterflies to her home and keeps them in a cool room until the weather improves and then returns them to their overwintering site. She said there were about 300 butterflies in this colony, less than previous years.

Moth Survey

By Sean Clancy

View from common room

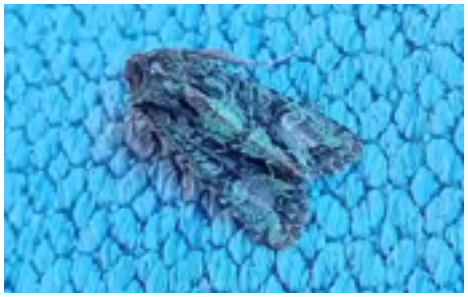
I am an ecologist based in the UK specialising in Lepidoptera. Most of my work is, in effect, a frustrating and thankless task of protecting threatened and decreasing species within habitats that are under ever-increasing pressure from urbanisation and intensive farming. While these issues are a worldwide, population-based problem they are far less acute here in NZ so it is a guilty pleasure of mine to come here during the three months of the UK winter to study your moths, working remotely on some of the UK projects and journals I'm involved with, while also visiting my son who has now settled in Auckland.

I work in a purely voluntary capacity in NZ under the guidance and tutelage of Robert Hoare of Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research, undoubtedly the foremost expert on NZ Lepidoptera. It is within this premise that I have been studying and surveying the moths of NZ since 2018 (with the unavoidable two-year pause during Covid) covering sites throughout both main islands plus periods on Stewart and Chatham Islands. Often these are sites with historic records of significance that have not been looked at for many years and sometimes they relate to targeted surveys at sites where baseline moth data is needed or where ongoing studies are helping to guide future management strategies.

The latter is the case at the Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre where I stay for several periods each visit to run light-traps and assist in the general ecological studies of the unique environment present there. I was delighted therefore to be invited by Rosemary Barraclough of the Motu Kaikōura Trust to join a small group of ecologists spending four days mid-December on Motu Kaikōura (lying just off Great Barrier Island) located 90 km northeast of Auckland, in order to carry out a baseline study of the moth fauna on the island during the period of December.

The island (564 ha) was largely pastoral farmland for over 100 years. Reverting pasture has transformed into secondary successional shrubland, linking pockets of mature coastal broadleaf forest with some local stands of exotic pines. Like neighbouring Great Barrier, Motu Kaikōura was also infested with feral cats (*Felis catus*), black rats (*Rattus rattus*) and Pacific rat or kiore (*R. exulans*). Feral cats, fallow deer (*Dama dama*), pigs (*Sus scrofa*) and rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) were progressively eradicated by the Trust in the period up to and including 2008.

The Trust now oversees and funds the island's ecological recovery, with a full-time ranger present. The main work is predator control. With black rats effectively eliminated in 2020, the only significant pest remaining is the Pacific rat. As the island evolves ecological monitoring has become increasingly important.



Ichneutica plena

Orocrambus ramosellus

Pantydia sparsa

Cryptaspasma querula

Mercury Vapour Trap

Portable LED trap

UV trap

My survey involved operating three light traps over the three nights plus some diurnal work, with identification of the catch carried out during the day and the retention of voucher specimens of a few of the small microlepidoptera to be taken back to Robert Hoare at the NZ Arthropod Collection in Auckland for further study and analysis to confirm or determine to species level. It was a real benefit having Dr Peter Maddison on the island as the light-traps I was operating inevitably produce a large by-catch of non-lepidoptera and Peter was able to begin the process of identifying a wide range of other insects attracted to the lights.

The traps used included a mercury vapour light-trap and a UV trap operated from the mains supplies in two of the buildings on the island, plus a portable battery-run LED trap which was placed in different localities each night within the regenerating forest.

The final tally of 107 moth species recorded during the period represented a good return given the less-than-ideal night-time conditions which were generally windy and cool. These included several significant records including an example of the endemic geometrid *Pseudocoremia dugdalei* recorded by day, an exceedingly rare and little-known species confined to the Auckland area and new to me. There was also an example of the endemic noctuid moth *Bityla sericea* recorded from the light-traps, a species with a scattered but very localised distribution across both main islands which I had only encountered once before in the Tasman district of South Island. Further visits at different times of year and/or in better conditions will undoubtedly reveal a rich moth fauna is present on the island.

Some may question the purpose of such surveys; in short, moths offer a readily available and reasonably accessible window into the biodiversity present within a site. Many species have specific needs in terms of host plants for the larval stage or habitat/substrate-type necessary to support viable populations. They can also be some of the best indicators of the effect of climate change with many recently colonised species currently extending their range southwards through NZ at the expense of some of the more important endemics the country supports. With a greater level of time and funding available, greater analysis of the species recorded and their individual requirements can be used to determine certain aspects of future management strategies. Spending time with, and getting to know, the small, dedicated team of ecologists there was an added bonus!

Subsequent to the Motu Kaikōura survey, I carried out further targeted survey work for Forest & Bird at their Blowhard Bush Reserve in Hawkes Bay, continued ongoing studies for the Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre and Project Parore in the Bay of Plenty, and carried out single night surveys at a number of other sites including the Denniston Plateau and Ōpārara Arches on the West Coast, and a private reserve to the west of Raetihi in the Manawatū-Whanganui region of the North Island.

Writing this in a frosty UK in March, NZ seems a long way away but already looking forward to returning in summer 25/26 when I have a licence to carry out surveys on the DOC Reserves on the Chatham Islands. This probably means that I'll be confining myself to surveys on the North Island during the remainder of my next stay but if you have a site that you feel would benefit from the data/information provided by a moth survey please get in contact and I will certainly endeavour to include your site in an upcoming itinerary of site visits.

Meet the survey team

Windblown Pests

By Toni Withers

Protecting Aotearoa from Wind-Dispersed Pests is a five-year research programme (Oct 2023–Oct 2028) led by Scion and supported by MBIE. In collaboration with Taranaki Regional Council, Taranaki Mounga, and the University of Canterbury, it aims to strengthen Aotearoa's biosecurity by developing a wind-based warning system to predict when and where insects and pathogens may arrive and spread.

The programme focuses on managing the aerial pathway for pest movement by identifying "airbridges" formed under specific weather conditions. It will modernise wind trajectory modelling, study airflows between land masses like Australia and NZ, and explore how organisms survive long-distance travel in extreme atmospheric conditions.

Wind has brought several invasive pests to NZ—including myrtle rust and fall armyworm—with no current tools to manage this pathway. With climate change potentially increasing the risk, this project addresses a critical biosecurity gap.

At a recent "Meet the Scientists" event in Taranaki, engagement reached new heights as 150 tamariki from six schools explored the world of moths through hands-on activities. Entomology Senior Technician Mike Davy used laser-cut wooden moths, live specimens, and art to teach kids the difference between native and exotic species.

"My goal was to help kids connect with moths. Moths are often considered distasteful or overlooked but vital to ecosystems"

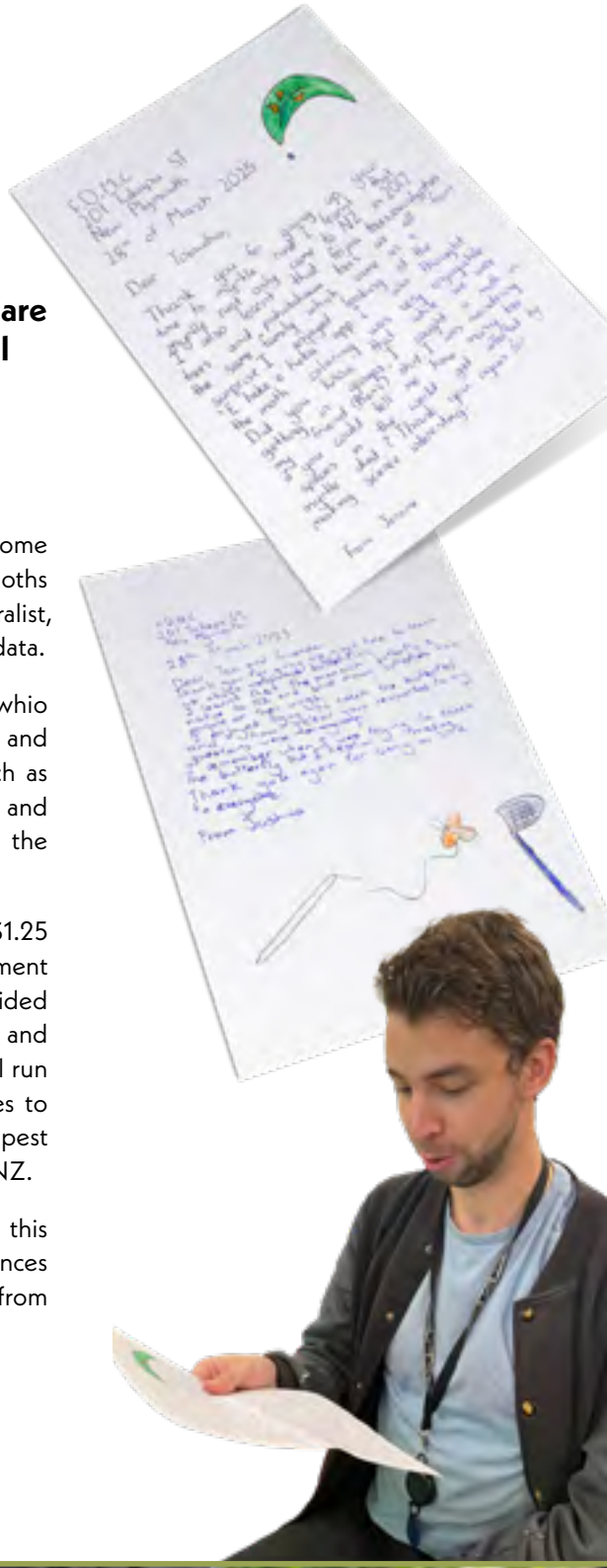
- Mike Davy

Children were encouraged to become citizen scientists by photographing moths and uploading sightings to iNaturalist, contributing to national biodiversity data.

Scion scientists Toni Withers, Taiāwhio Bryers, Dagmar Cheeseman, and Selwyn Insley also led activities such as butterfly catching, inspiring curiosity and environmental stewardship among the tamariki.

The project could save NZ up to NZ$1.25 billion by preventing the establishment of just one major pest, through avoided losses in forestry, horticulture, and biodiversity. The warning system will run in both hindcast and forecast modes to support surveillance before and after pest arrivals, and to model spread within NZ.

By bridging key knowledge gaps, this programme strengthens our defences against pests arriving on the wind from the Asia-Pacific region.



Lakes District Lepidoptera

The MBNZT is heading to Queenstown!

Austrocidaria gobiata Barred Coprosma Carpet Olly Ball

Pieris rapae Cabbage White

Percnodaimon pluto Black Mountain

Everyone knows that Queenstown is a gem in NZ's crown but these days it is experiencing significant change, with more wilderness areas being transformed into residential and commercial developments.

Many people in Queenstown and nearby Wānaka are calling out for education about sustainability and NZ's natural gardening and that's where we come in.

Our team—Brian Patrick, Connal McLean, and Jacqui Knight—will be in Queenstown and the surrounding region in early September

Brian Patrick is a professional butterfly scientist and the author/photographer for several books on natural history including two that specialised on butterflies.

He has researched Lepidoptera for nearly fifty years in NZ and overseas, producing over 250 publications on the subject. He has served as a Ministerial appointment on the Otago Conservation Board, and as Past President of the New Zealand Entomological Society.

Connal, an MBNZT trustee, is a researcher in the Department of Zoology at the University of Otago and holds a Master of Science with Distinction in Zoology alongside certifications in Science Communication and Plant Science. His research focuses on the behavioural and cognitive ecology of insects, with some pollination biology and science communication thrown in.

Connal shares a love of the natural world through science outreach and communication and works as a Science Communicator at the Tūhura Otago Museum and as a board member of the Bug of the Year organising committee through the Entomological Society of New Zealand.

Jacqui is the founding trustee of the MBNZT, and over the years has become a practised speaker on the subject of butterflies, in particular monarch butterflies. She trained with the Monarch Teacher Network in the USA.

The team's goal is to inspire people of all ages to think of butterflies and moths, and other invertebrates, while they enhance their environment. Most people are keen to ensure the area remains not only beautiful, but ecologically healthy.

They will be encouraging thoughtful planting practices that support the local climate and biodiversity—especially invertebrates—so that gardens can thrive in harmony with nature.

This exciting event has been made possible thanks to a generous grant from the Jean Malpas Estate, administered through Perpetual Guardian Trust. The late Jean Malpas was a respected and active member of the Queenstown community. Originally from England, she settled in the area in the 1950s and developed a deep love for its natural beauty. Jean was an avid tramper, a passionate advocate for heritage and conservation and contributed to numerous local organisations. She worked tirelessly to protect the Wakatipu region's environment and heritage from the pressures of development and through her involvement with the Wakatipu Environmental Society, she championed the preservation of the landscape she cherished so deeply.

"We are honoured to be continuing her advocacy"

- Jacqui Knight

Members of the Moth and Butterfly Conservation Club, from left to right - Saoirse, Belle, and Abby

Daltons Award

The Daltons School Butterfly Habitat Award for Autumn 2025 goes to the Horowhenua College Native Moth and Butterfly Conservation Club at Horowhenua College, Levin.

The project is an initiative by Year 9 student Saoirse Williamson.

Judge Maureen Robertson said, "it is particularly impressive that a student from Primary level through to early secondary has masterminded this project, creating a well-functioning butterfly sanctuary from start to finish."

Saoirse, with the support of principal Grant Congdon, teachers, parents, property manager Isaiah Eager and other students, have all played an important part in creating a tunnel house to boost the admiral populations, but also mindful of all species of NZ butterflies and moths plus our colourful monarchs also in decline in many areas.

Grant Congdon has been captivated by her passion, drive and her ability to get others on board.

The carefully planned and well-made butterfly habitat provides adequate ventilation, irrigation, food and shelter for overwintering.

On one side specific host plants have been planted to support growing admirals. These are *Urtica dioica*, *U. ferox* and *U. australis*. On the other side mixed nectar plants grow to sustain adult butterflies and moths throughout the breeding season.

Saoirse is also educating others about the plight of NZ's moths and butterflies.

Our judges were impressed with her advocacy when offering to assist other schools with similar projects. First-hand experience goes a long way.

Along with the students' fundraising, generous grants and donations were obtained from Horowhenua District Council, the Horizons Regional Council and the local Forest & Bird branch.

Congratulations Saoirse and your team. Best wishes for future projects.

Princes
Of The Air

By Geoffrey Roche

Hataitai, Wellington, is a hotbed of butterfly activity in the summer; red and yellow admirals, monarchs, cabbage whites, and occasionally pea blues and copper butterflies frequent this area, Kainui Road being particularly busy.

For a number of years, I had occasionally glimpsed yellow admirals (*Vanessa itea*), sometimes in twos or threes, in rows, pursuing monarch butterflies along Waipapa Road. In contrast to the loose, flittering flight patterns normally shown of both species, pursuers and pursued flew at turns fast and straight, seemingly with purpose, then would make extremely sharp turns, with the admirals following every twist in tight formation, the monarchs desperately trying to throw off the pursuers.

The admirals would take up positions high on tree branches and on utility poles between chases.

I had given up any hope of capturing this phenomenon on film, until one early evening in March, while it was still sunny. Using my Apple iPhone, I managed to capture on video two admirals chasing a monarch among the trees at the intersection of Kainui Road and Waipapa Road. A still image from my video shows how tightly the nimble admirals could follow the monarchs.

Michael F Braby, in Butterflies of Australia, writes that males "establish a territory by perching". The New Zealand Butterfly Info entry on yellow admirals notes that males "are territorial and will investigate any other butterfly in the hope of it being a suitable female, especially in the late afternoon when there are more freshly emerged females flying."

It's such an amazing display to witness!

Book Review

The Observologist: A Handbook for Mounting Very Small Expeditions

By Jacqui Knight

Some adventures require passports, backpacks, and bug spray. Others need only a flashlight, a curious mind, and a grown-up willing to say "yes."

This is a gentle, imaginative guide for adults who want to raise wonder-filled children. Designed for those whose young explorers are eager to investigate the world—one backyard, garden, or rain puddle at a time—this book offers tools for turning the everyday into the extraordinary.

The word 'observologist' is a made-up word for someone who makes scientific expeditions every day, even if they are small ones. It's for children who notice interesting details in the world around them. They are expert at finding tiny creatures, plants and fungi. They are delighted when they find that earthworms have bristles, that moths come out in the daytime, and how many tentacles a slug has.

Written with warmth, humour, and a deep respect for childhood wonder, this is not a parenting manual in the traditional sense. It's a reminder that small adventures can have big impacts, that questions are more powerful than answers, and that the best expeditions are the ones taken hand in hand.

Whether you're a parent, grandparent, teacher, or simply someone who wants to reawaken a sense of wonder, this handbook invites you to see the world as young explorers do: full of mystery, magic, and moments worth noticing. Written by Giselle Clarkson, a NZ cartoonist and illustrator, I do wish I had found this book while my children were small. It is a beautifully illustrated, playful field guide for budding natural scientists.

Highly recommended!

Little wings of wonder:

How Jack's curiosity took flight

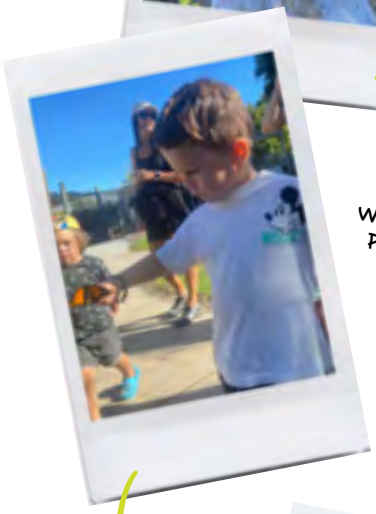
Four-year-old Jack Hamilton of Whangamatā has discovered something truly magical just beyond his backyard fence. His neighbour, the kind-hearted and green-thumbed Marilyn Fowlie, has shared with him not just her garden, but her deep love for Monarch butterflies - and in doing so, ignited a passion in Jack that has taken flight in more ways than one.

This summer, with wasps wreaking havoc on caterpillar populations, Marilyn introduced Jack to the use of "caterpillar castles" - protective mesh enclosures that keep the vulnerable larvae safe as they grow. Fascinated by the process, Jack carefully raised his own Monarchs and proudly brought his butterfly tent to Whangamatā Playcentre to share with his peers.

Inside the tent: caterpillars munching on swan plants, jewel-like chrysalises hanging in anticipation and butterflies ready to stretch their wings. With quiet confidence, Jack took the lead, explaining the life cycle of the Monarch - from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. He even taught his fellow tamariki how to identify the difference between male and female butterflies, all knowledge lovingly passed on by Marilyn.

The highlight came when the butterflies were released. One by one, they fluttered into the air, as the children waved and called out their goodbyes. Inspired by Jack's enthusiasm, Playcentre embraced butterfly-themed activities during the school holidays.

Whangamata Playcentre



Another tamariki, Jack Corbett, releasing butterflies

Jack showing his younger brother, Harry, how to release butterflies

For Jack's birthday, Marilyn gifted him Animals of Aotearoa, a book that has quickly become a bedtime favourite - especially the butterfly pages.

A huge thank you to Marilyn for her generosity and helping our community's youngest learners experience the magic of nature firsthand. Each morning, Jack eagerly checks on his butterflies, and in doing so, reminds us all of the quiet wonder found in a garden and a helping hand.

1. *Jack and his butterfly "Timmy".*
2. *Harry and Timmy the butterfly.*
3. *Marilyn and Jack getting food for the caterpillars.*
4. *Jack showing the younger tamariki, Violet and Harry, at Whangamata Playcentre.*
5. *Marilyn & Jack.*

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