

Spring is coming to Hikaroroa

Community conservation • biodiversity • training • volunteering



After a quieter few weeks over lambing, we're getting ready for a busy spring at Hikaroroa / Mt Watkin. September begins with two opportunities to come together and talk about biodiversity across the wider Waikouaiti landscape, followed by our annual pest and biodiversity monitoring programme and the return of regular community field trips through October, November and December.

September — Lambing & Biodiversity Community Events

7 September — EOCG Biodiversity Field Day

The East Otago Catchment Group will be hosting a biodiversity field day focused on biodiversity within our local farming landscape. It's a chance to get out in the field, share knowledge and explore how biodiversity protection can be incorporated alongside the other values and activities of working farms. More details from EOCG to come.

8 September — Biodiversity BBQ & Community Presentation

The following day, the Hikaroroa / Mt Watkin Conservation Group and EOCG Farming with Confidence programme are teaming up for a community BBQ celebrating biodiversity conservation in the Waikouaiti catchment.

Emeritus Professor David Norton will speak about long-term biodiversity goals for the wider catchment, followed by an update from MCU on what we have learned from the past five years at Hikaroroa and from HMWCG about how year one of the DOC Community Fund Project has been going. Becky Hardinge from the ORC will be the final speaker and talk about on-farm biodiversity plans and funding opportunities.

We'll share results from our pest control and monitoring, forest bird surveys and wider biodiversity work, as well as some of the exciting discoveries and challenges that are shaping where the project heads next. Most importantly, it's a chance to bring together the landowners, volunteers, community members and organisations behind this work, share some kai and celebrate what our community has achieved.



October — Monitoring Month

October marks the beginning of another major monitoring round at Hikaroroa. Monitoring is an important part of how we operate. We want to understand whether pest populations are actually declining and whether the biodiversity we're trying to protect is responding.

This year's programme will include pest abundance monitoring, annual forest bird counts, kārearea / New Zealand falcon nest searching and the deployment of lizard cover boards.

We're looking for the next cohort to train as pest monitors

This October we're looking for the next cohort of individuals who want to become trained in pest monitoring methods.

The training involves a commitment across three weekends in October: the monitoring workshop on 3 October, deployment on 10–11 October and collection on 17–18 October. We know that's a significant time commitment, but the idea is to provide something more substantial than a one-off volunteer day.

By the end of the programme, participants will have been trained and gained practical experience in three nationally standardised pest-monitoring methods, including how to correctly establish and run monitoring in the field and how to process and analyse the resulting data to understand changes in pest relative abundance.

The aim is to build a group of people who understand why we're monitoring, how the methods work and how the results can be used to inform conservation management. No previous monitoring experience is required — just an interest in learning and a willingness to commit to the full training programme. Please get in touch to register.

3 October — Pest Monitoring Workshop

We'll begin with a community workshop introducing the monitoring methods we use at Hikaroroa. We'll cover the principles behind pest abundance monitoring, the three standardised methods we'll be using, correct field protocols, how the monitoring network is designed and how the resulting data are interpreted.

10–11 October — Monitoring Deployment

Our first community overnight trip will head across the Hikaroroa landscape deploying the annual pest monitoring network. This is where trainees will put the workshop learning into practice, gaining hands-on experience running monitoring transects across both the reserve and surrounding private land.

17–18 October — Monitoring Collection

One week later we'll head back out to retrieve the monitoring equipment and complete the field component of the training. We'll then process the results and work through the data to calculate measures of relative pest abundance and compare what we've found with previous monitoring rounds.



October Biodiversity Monitoring

We'll also spend approximately 10 fine-weather weekdays undertaking biodiversity monitoring. This includes our annual 5-minute bird counts, searching suitable habitat for kārearea / New Zealand falcon nests, and establishing lizard cover boards to help us better understand the reptile communities living around Hikaroroa. Because bird monitoring is weather dependent, these days can't all be scheduled far in advance. If you're particularly interested in being involved in biodiversity monitoring methods, get in touch and we can keep you in the loop as suitable days are identified. We have space for about one person to shadow per day.

31 October — Introduction to Community Trapping

At the end of October we'll hold an introductory community trapping day. This is designed particularly for people who are interested in volunteering but haven't trapped with us before. You'll learn how our trap network works, safe trap operation, servicing and recording catches and get some practical experience in the field. From there, trained volunteers can join future community trapping trips and help us maintain the network throughout the year.

November — AT220 Trapping Month

November shifts our attention to the AT220 network, with opportunities to learn how these automated traps operate and then put those skills into practice across the wider project area.



7 November — AT220 Advanced Trapping Training Day

We'll start with a dedicated training day focused on the operation, servicing and maintenance of AT220 traps. This is an opportunity for volunteers who want to develop their trapping skills further and become more confident helping us look after the automated possum-control network.

13-15 November — Three-Day Community AT220 Trapping Trip

Save the date for one of our biggest community field trips of the year. Over three days we'll work our way through the AT220 network across the Hikaroroa landscape, servicing traps and carrying out the maintenance needed to keep the network operating effectively. It will be a chance for people trained in AT220 operation to gain substantial practical experience while helping us tackle a big piece of the annual workload.

28 November — Backup AT220 Weekend / Introduction to Community Trapping

We'll keep the weekend of the 28th of November available as a backup for the AT220 trip if we postpone due to weather. If the AT220 Trip is already completed, we'll instead use the Saturday as another Introduction to Community Trapping, giving new volunteers an opportunity to join and receive basic training.

December — Wrapping Up the Year

Early December Weekdays — AT220 Network Maintenance

During the first part of December we'll use weekdays as required to finish outstanding AT220 maintenance and repairs identified during the November service round. If you're interested in the more practical and technical side of maintaining a pest-control network, let us know and we can keep you informed as these days are scheduled.

19 December — Final DOC200/250 Service of the Year

We'll finish our 2026 community field programme with one last service of the DOC200/250 network before the Christmas and summer break.



Save the Dates

September

7 September — EOCG Biodiversity Field Day

8 September — Biodiversity BBQ & Community Presentation

October

3 October — Pest Monitoring Workshop

10–11 October — Pest Monitoring Deployment

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- October weekdays — Biodiversity Monitoring

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SPRING EVENTS 2026

Community newsletter

Want to get involved?

Put the dates in your calendar now, keep an eye on Facebook, and let us know if you would like to join any events so we can keep you in the loop.

Everyone is welcome, and no previous conservation experience is required. Whether you're keen for a community event, want to learn a new field skill, or simply want to spend a day helping look after Hikaroroa, we'd love to have you along.

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