**BRaid AGM, Sept 2, 2016**

**Chairman’s Report**

Welcome.

BRaid was formed in 2006, so this would be our 10th AGM. The past year has been one of good progress – especially considering that we are only a small amateur group, with the majority of us only having spare time to contribute to BRaid.

When I look back over the past year, there are a number of worthwhile activities to be mentioned. They mainly involve spreading the word about braided river ecosystems, and getting alongside (partnering) those most closely involved with braided rivers. These range from professional managers (such as DOC and ECan), commercial businesses (such as the gravel extractors, irrigators or power generators) to the general public – usually represented by interest groups and local residents.

*Workshops*.

We have had two very successful public workshops over the past year. The first was on Nov 3, entitled ‘Endangered birds on braided rivers’. Forty people turned up for the half-day session presented by professional ornithologist, John Dowding. As usual with one of John’s courses it was very well compiled and well received. The second workshop was on May 31st this year. It was a full-day session, involving talks by over 20 presenters, mostly addressing the problems associated with birds breeding on braided rivers. It was a good mix of experienced presenters dealing with well-known problems, and much younger ‘first-timers’ talking about new projects. The most pleasing aspect was the number attending – around 150, ranging from the interested public to major decision-makers such as ECan commissioners. This demonstrates the recent huge increase of interest in braided rivers – driven of course by water being the new ‘gold’ when it comes to land use options. We also had two predator trapping workshops – one in Rangiora on October 13, and one in Geraldine on Oct 31. They were well attended. Trapping is on the increase everywhere in the country, and it is important that those involved do it as time and cost-effectively as possible.

*Social media.*

Without a doubt, this is the modern way to get the messages out, especially to younger folk. We all know what an excellent job Sonny does in this area.

*Braided River Partnership Project.*

This project is where the ‘rubber meets the road’ – where we can actually make a difference to the birds breeding on the rivers. MP, Nicky Wagner, formally awarded the funds to start the Project on Sept 13 last year. In addition, Sonny was able to double our resources by successfully landing a Lotteries grant soon after. It is still early days in establishing contact with potential partners, but already our first year goals have been achieved. We had a good example of partnership development the other day, when Sonny and I met up with TrustPower and local community representatives at the head of L. Coleridge. This meeting took some time to get in place, but the end result is that we should see some bird monitoring and management being undertaken in portions of the Harper and Wilberforce rivers where virtually nothing has happened in the past. Sonny is well on the way to developing other similar relationships which could produce very worthwhile ‘on-the-ground’ outcomes in the future.

*Promotion*.

This has progressed particularly well, thanks to Sonny’s efforts. I am surprised at how often I hear mention of BRaid as an important player in braided river ecosystem protection and enhancement. As a result, outsiders might imagine us as having an impressive office in town, where Sonny sits behind an large desk with a PA hovering at her side. But, of course, it is nothing like that – we are all amateurs, and often struggle to get a quorum at our meetings.

*Thanks*

Finally, sincere thanks to the small band of keen people that represents BRaid. I always hesitate to name individuals as I am afraid of missing someone. However, Sonny deserves particular mention for being our front person. Also, special thanks to Edith Smith, who is our Minute secretary, and her husband, Peter, who has made sure that our finances are in sound shape. In addition of course, we could not operate without the support of staff from local Government departments, territorial authorities, their sub-committees and their contractors. The likes of DOC, ECan and district Zone Committees. These people are professionals, who can put what I call ‘quality time’ into helping us to achieve our goal. We might be the body which makes passionate pleas on behalf of the public, but without their support it would be very hard to make meaningful progress.

Nick Ledgard

September 2, 2016