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| **S:\Logos HAU\DOC logos + Kowhaiwhai\DOC Logos- jpg\DOCLOGOWIDE c copy.jpg** | | | | **DOCCF reference:** | **CCPF2-**009 |
| **Date of report:** | 23 December 2018 |
| **DOC Community Fund Grantee Progress Report** | | | | | |
| **Project name:** | Braided Rivers Partnership Project | | | | |
| **Project contact:** | Sonny Whitelaw - Manager (Nick Ledgard – chair) | | | | |
| **Phone number:** | 0226378931 (033128799 / 0224386711) | | | | |
| **Email:** | [manager@braid.org.nz](mailto:manager@braid.org.nz) ([nick.ledgard@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nick.ledgard@xtra.co.nz)) | | | | |
| **Report number:** | 6 | | | | |
| **Date range of report:** | July 2018 – December 2018 (end of project) | | | | |
| **Payments received to date:** |  | **Amount** | | **Date** | |
| *Payments received from the DOCCF to date related to this project* | 1 | $ | 6,066 (incl. GST) | 19/01/2016 | |
| 2 | $ | 6,066 (incl. GST) | 16/08/2016 | |
| 3 | $ | 6,234.50 (incl. GST) | 17/01/2017 | |
| 4 | $ | 6,234.50 (incl. GST) | 26/09/2017 | |
| 5 | $ | 4,550.00 (incl. GST) | 27/03/2018 | |
| 6 | $ | 4,094.00 (incl. GST) | 18/09/2018 | |
| **Amount now requested** | 7 | $ | 455.00 (incl. GST) | *YOU NEED TO ATTACH AN INVOICE (are all details correct according to invoice template for GST registered or not GST registered?)* | |
| **Progress report:** | *Brief progress report of 250 words (approx) which should include: work undertaken, work completed and volunteer hours contributed within the period this report covers. Comment whether the project is running to timeline, and if the project is meeting all objectives, giving explanations. What are your key achievements for this reporting period?* | | | | |
| **Final report:** On page 13, I have attached a copy of the report to Lotto, the primary funding agency for this project, explaining in narrative form the goals, aims, and achievements. While it is not short, there is value it, as this project was a complex community-engagement and educational project that can’t simply by summarized with numbers or infographics. It includes failures, the reasons for those failures, new learnings, successes, and the reason for diverting some funding from trapping to aerial predator control.  **Key outcomes:**   * 21 people/businesses/groups actively recruited to assist with promotions, monitoring, trapping, and education * Several dozen (exact numbers unknown due to the viral nature of the project) groups, schools, art galleries, libraries etc involved in ‘The Flock’ project to promote awareness of the birds * 25 x site visits on 16 rivers * 8 x Environmental Accrediation Awards presented to partners. * 1 x 27 page interactive teaching resource completed and in use (inc. iPad version) * 1 x new biodiversity trust formed * 1 x new trapping group formed with the specific goal of re-introducing Kaki/black stilt into the Ashley Estuary by 2022 * 1 x trapping group currently being formed by group of farmers * 36 x signs designed and erected from Mt Aspiring to Rotorua * 350-page website now regarded by DOC as the ‘go to’ site for all things braided river * 1 x brochure + 4 fridge magnets + 6 varied bird ID kits/handouts designed and in wide circulation amongst relevant stakeholders * 1 x series of gold medal ‘braided river bird’ cheeses now being sold in supermarkets around New Zealand, each also containing a collectable ‘braided river bird’ fridge magnet. * 9 x short videos from Makarora River to Ashley River, primarily 4K drone aerial footage, to monitor bird numbers, assess island formation and weed invasion, as well as to promote their unique beauty * Between 250-8,500 views on Facebook/posting * 5 x dedicated Braid and several more assisted (multi-agency/group) bird surveys in 2018 * 1 x school created long term (decadal) monitoring programme to record and evaluate river health using scientific methods. This includes potential salt-water invasion as sea levels rise. | | | | | |

**Milestones** - *must be reported against those listed in your deed of grant. Please provide information on the progress of milestones. As per your deed of grant, please identify:*

*• the milestones that were scheduled to be progressed for this reporting period*

*• the activities or interventions scheduled to be undertaken towards achieving the milestone and their scheduled completion date*

*• the progress (in summary) of the activities scheduled, including tangible achievements.*

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| **Milestone name** | **Scheduled Activities** | **Scheduled completion date for activities** | **Deliverables** | **Activities/Deliverables Status:** complete  or  on-going/on track  or  on-going/delayed new completion date | **Progress summary on Activities/Deliverables Status: *(please provide comment)*** |
| 1.Partnership Database | Database of commercial operators and stakeholders developed across 6 river catchments | October 2016 | Completed | Completed | See previous reports – continuously updated. |
| 2.Partnership Recruitment | Visit and recruit potential commercial tour operators to monitor colony nesting birds on braided rivers | October 2016 | Completed | Completed | See previous report. While we have done more than fulfill our initial goals, the process will always be ongoing  **Recruitment since July 2018 report (see p**revious reports) : 1 farmer that is working together with a collective along the Mason River |
| 3.Publicity / Education and monitoring/management protocols developed | A. Develop information/publicity materials tailored to each river and commercial operator in consultation with iwi.  B. Develop monitoring/management protocols tailored to each river and commercial operator in consultation with iwi  C. Develop accredition measures for levels of engagement of commercial river operators | October 2016 | Completed | Publicity /Education Ongoing  Monitoring / management / accreditation processes developed | See previous reports.  **Subsequent outcomes since previous report:**   1. Publicity  * several articles in local newspapers announcing arrival and location of birds. * Facebook posts receive greater attention than ever. * Greater informtion sharing between stakeholders * Greater understanding of the unique nature oif these birds and braided rvier ecology  1. Montoring protocols now well developed and being used. Improved bird counts using a drone where possible 2. Completed and implemented |
| 4.Implementation of Partnership Monitoring / Management | Participants promoting birds and monitoring / managing bird populations at regular intervals using agreed protocols | April 2017 | Completed | Promotional material printed and started to be distributed - on track  Simple protocols for reporting now in place. | See previous reports; also ongoing because of the need for uniquely tailored promotional material. |
| 5. Stakeholder surveys and feedback anaylsis | Feedback sought and through surveys from stakeholders, with analysis completed to refine and improve engagement strategies. | Sept 2018 | New end-user promotion/management protocols produced, due to better understanding of how the needs of stakeholders can be met to encourage their involvment with protecting and enhancing br habitats, halting the decline in braided river bird populations in Canterbury. | Completed. | 1. Completed. See ‘Objectives: Section 5’ below |

**Objectives/Progress of Key Performance Indicators** *- How are you progressing against your Key Performance Indicators as per your deed of grant*?

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| **Your Project Objectives**  List the project objectives as per your deed of grant | **Key performance indicators (KPIs)**  List the KPIs as per you deed of grant | **Progress against your KPIs** | **General comments on progress towards KPIs** |
| 1. Develop a comprehensive database of commercial tourism operators in Canterbury that utilise braided rivers as part of their day-to-day business. | Database of commercial operators and stakeholders developed across river catchments:   * Ashley * Waiau * Hurunui * Waipara * Waimakariri * Rakaia * Rangitata * Lower Waitaki * Ashburton * Orari * Wilberforce * Harper * Pareora * Makarora * Dart * Mason | Total number of operators and other potential stakeholders identified in 15 river catchments. | Database in place. |
| 2. Increase accuracy of records of the distribution and numbers of colony river nesting birds through working with commercial operators | Minimum 6 visits to commercial operators and stakeholders that have expressed interest and willingness.  By the end of Year 1, commercial river users are reporting presence and/or absence of colony nesting birds (basic monitoring). | 1. Number of river catchments with ‘clients’ involved with biodiversity monitoring.  2. Number of operators reporting presence and/or absence of birds (involved with bird monitoring).  3. Number of operators approached but not interested.  4. Level of existing knowledge about braided rivers and their native biodiversity measured in hours spent to establish and develop knowledge. | 1. and 2.  **Ashley River** – yes ongoing and with a new trapping groups at the estuary  Waikuku Beach farm – gulls moved back to the Ashley River following weed clearing/floods  **Waiau and Hurunui Rivers** – bird counts now being undertaken regularly by DOC, ECan and Wildlife International Limited via external funding  **Waipara** – no, but the river is now effectively unsuitable for braided river birds due to willows, weeds, and ‘red-zone’ water quality  **Upper Waimakariri** - bird count completed and will recur every two years. Lupins now being actively managed.  **Mid**-**Waimakariri** – local farmer now reporting birds and on-site survey completed  (Rakaia and Rangitata are both managed by ECan under their Flagship Programme)  Lower Waitaki – DOC managed  **Wilberforce** – no reports other than anecdotal by Trustpower, but DOC is now progressing trapping  **Harper** – no reports other than anecdotal by Trustpower  **Ashburton** – yes, both reporting and management  **Orari** – annual bird survey reporting but weeds remain a huge problem  **Pareora** – no  **Makarora** – yes, now has its own conservation trust in place  **Mason** – yes, farmers’ collective in place  3. See previous reports. At community and community board meetings, we have approached dozens of farmers asking them to report bird sightings. Seven responded directly, five ultimately had birds nesting nearby or on their farms. Two assisted with protecting them and were awarded acreditation certificates. One more on the Mason River is actively working to form a local trapping group with other farmers.  A lack of large scale response should not be interpreted as a lack of interest, because birds are simply not present.  Boffa Miskell/LINZ have distributed our 1-page handouts to all river contractors to identify and report birds. Not one has responded to date. I see that as a failure of interest.  4. A much higher level of awareness across local government and private sectors has resulted in far more council funding being allocated to create suitable habitats, manage pest species, and erect two-tiered signage on locations (tier one = information; tier two = warning. See examples of Ashburton River).  Similarly, recognition of the loss of braided river ecosystems to intensicve agriculture and weeds led to the BRIDGE project, which aims to define the edges of braided river ecosystems so they can be managed as wetlands and waterways, regardless of who owns them (ie, preventing farmers from developing them). The result of this will lbe known mid-2019. Hard to assign a number of hours to this, as dozens of people attended eight full-day meetings across Canterbury. |
| 3.Empower tour operators and allies to assist with braided river bird education/promotion, monitoring and management. | Production and delivery of two ‘field tolerant’ information packs on:  1) uniqueness of braided rivers and birds, and  2) monitoring activities, ranging from just locating and monitoring presence/absence, to trapping, habitat enhancement (weed removal and island creation) and level of breeding success. | Refined so we have a range of sign templates that can readily be adapted to suit different rivers, bird types, and messages. Both DOC and ECan use these signs, Fridge magnets of each bird are far more appealing and useful across all sectors, less likely to be thrown away by the public, and less expensive to produce.  Tour operators are not actively involved, however they act as support services to trapping groups and for bird counts | Completed, see previous reports and most recent examples of signs for Ashburton River. |
| 4. Implementation of monitoring/management protocols | Number of operators undertaking monitoring and management (measure as to degree of monitoring (once, twice etc /season) and number of management activities (trapping nights, predators caught etc) ‘Clients’ implementing monitoring/management protocols.  Summary report on outcomes of Years 1 & 2. | Level of pack use, measured by number of:  1. Operators receiving publicity material and feedback  2. Monitoring using agreed protocols  3. Trapping  4. Clearing weeds  5. Creating islands  6. Educating members of the public about braided river birds through their normal tour operations | 1. 11 primary outlets last season (see previous report.)  2. Established  3. Wilberforce River, Harper River, Lake Coleridge, Waiau River, Ashley-Rakahur, Orari River, Makarora River. Dart River uses a paid trapper who co-ordinated with us to maximise ideal locations for trapping in a braided river.  4. Primarily Ashley and Orari. More work now being undertaken in Hurunui and Waiau rivers supported by ECan, and similarly in the Ashburton River.  4-5. Fulton Hogan and Taggarts are working directly with local groups and Wildlife International Limited  6. Amuri Jet (Amuri River) and Wilkin Jets (Wilkin and Makarora Rivers) |
| 5.Reviewing outcomes from years 1 and 2 to refine strategies for engagement, monitoring and protection elsewhere - and hopefully expanded and replicated in other environments as well as rivers. | 1. Feedback from operators sought.  2. Feedback from operators received.  3. Strategies are being continually refined and improved.  4. Bird monitoring and management established  5. Final report | 1. Effective operator engagement strategies; what works, what doesn’t 2. Operators report improved business outcomes, measured by revenue and/or marketing opportunities such as achieving Qualmark EnviroAwards 3. Off-the shelf components for field kits that can be readily packaged to suit different operators and circumstances 4. Scale of monitoring and management across 6 major rivers | 1. Engagement success depends entirely on the willingness and interest of key personnel within an organisation. Trustpower, for example, worked well until middle-management was replaced with someone who had no interest in supporting staff trapping, so this fell by the wayside. However, the initial relationship developed into a broaded relationship with the Coleridge Habitat Enhancment Trust, resulting in a large scale signage framed by outdoor art, significanrly raising the level of awareness  Karikaas cheeses, on the other hand, invested financially in a New-Zealand wide marketing campaign to promote their award winning ‘Braided River Bird’ cheeses, complete with themed packaging and collectable fridge magnets. This because the owner is passionate about supporting environmentla work on the (Ashley Rakahuri) River where they are located.  Similarly, Aspiring Biodversity Trust, set up to protect braided river birds on the Wilkins and Makarora River, has developed an ongoing partnership with Wilkin Jets (jetboats and helicopters) who actively support them   1. Not successful for tour operators. NZ is not actively marketing to the bird watchers, and no tour operator will set up a business model that depends on migratory birds possibly but not definitely nesting in their area of operations for just a few months each year. 2. Completed 3. Completed and established into the future. The Hurunui and Waiau Rivers are now actively being managed by Wildlife International Management Ltd, through funding from the Hurunui Zone Committee   The Ashley River and estuary now managed by two groups in active partnership with ECan and linking with Tuhaitara Coastal Park Trust  Ashburton River now has a completed Management Plan with BRaid volunteers (who are also Forest & Bird) working with ECan to protect and monitor birds. BRaid has just provided site-specific sign designs (ECan paid for printing)  Wilkins and Makaroa Rivers actively monitored by Aspiring Biodiversity Trust  Upper Waimakari bird counts now linked to mid-and lower river bird counts to create a more complete picture over time.  Mason River farmers now working togther to ID and protect birds from predators.  One significant finding was that southern black-backed gulls are often a greater threat than mammalian predotors. Along with weeds, managing these problems is, on some rivers, far more important than trapping for mustelids and hedgehogs (although this should continue in tandem). |

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| **Evidence of project progress:** | | | *List items attached as evidence of expenditure, work programme, work progress etc, through invoices, photos, letters of reference from other organisations etc as per the deliverables in the deed of grant.* | | | | | | | | | |
| * Braided Rivers Partnerships <http://braid.org.nz/brpp/>   Attached as one PDF document are examples. These are by page numbers:  1-8: Accreditation certificates awarded  9-12: Ashley River black-billed gulls colony 2016-2018  13-18: Evolution of a trapping group, from workshop to outcome  19-20: Letter from Aspiring Biodiversity Trust  21-26: examples of signs designed and currently in use  27: screen grab of Facebook posts showing levels of engagement  28: Letter from Karikaas  29-31: Newsletter from Aspiring re their Flock project  32: Final invoice to DOC  33-44 Final invoices as per the DOC spreadsheet (attached). | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Other contributions:** | | | *Provide total dollars and/or volunteer hours that have been contributed. (Note: if this is the Final report it will be for the entire project, if it is for a particular reporting period then report the contribution for the particular period only). Include amount / time and source of contribution.* | | | | | | | | | |
| **Contribution (dollars / hours):** | | | | | | | **Source of contribution:** | | | | | |
| $4,094.00 (inc. GST) | | | | | | | Department of Conservation sixth payment | | | | | |
| 8 volunteer hours | | | | | | | Outreach: School visits, assisting with peer student Rangiora High School long-term invertebrate monitoring | | | | | |
| 300+ | | | | | | | Kaikoura building ‘exclosure’ cages and | | | | | |
| 70 volunteer hours | | | | | | | Makarora River Aspiring Biodiversity Trust | | | | | |
| 60 volunteer hours | | | | | | | Ashley Estuary trapping group - trapping | | | | | |
| 450 volunteer hours | | | | | | | Bird counts by members. There is considerable crossover with other organisations including F&B | | | | | |
| 65 volunteer hours | | | | | | | Volunteer governance/management oversight of programme, meetings, general talks to groups and schools, publicity and newspaper articles | | | | | |
| $4094.00 inc GST  + 953 volunteer hours | | | | | | |  | | | | | |
| **Risks:** | | *What, if any risks have you identified with regard to project delivery and how are these being managed or mitigated?* | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Risk description** | | | | | **Impact of risk** | | | | **Mitigation** | | | |
| Lack of understanding of cultural significance of birds and rivers | | | | | Incomplete picture limits marketing potential to engage tourists and locals alike | | | | **Recommended:** Create a NZ-wide ‘bird trail’ . Trails themselves don’t have to be built, as the ‘trail’ would be information only, with a marketing plan to show what birds can be seen where, at different times of year. | | | |
| Lack of knowledge of possible areas of ngāti wairaki, ngāti māmoe and ngāi tahu wāhi tapu in areas where island formation/clearing or trapping may take place. | | | | | Minimal. Weed clearing and trapping is on ephemeral islands, improve mahinga kai outcomes, and assists in restoring the mauri of waterways | | | | Local district councils have established protocols; seek input from runanga | | | |
| Lack of buy-in from potential partners | | | | | Failure to implement programme | | | | While effective with Karikaas, Amuri Jet, Wilkin Jets, Trustpower, Christchurch International Airport, Waikukui Beach dairy farm, and to a degree Fonterra and Irrigation NZ, the presence of the birds is too unreliable for most commercial operators and iwi to see any benefit. | | | |
| Lack of interest due to lack of birds seen on rivers | | | | | Leaves a hole in the data | | | | Definitely a major hurdle and one that I feel we have not been fully able to overcome. | | | |
| Competition with existing groups or organisations to protect/ restore environmental values of rivers | | | | | Risks over-saturating the targeted market with environmental concerns | | | | Braided rivers have been elevated to a much higher profile. New and proven management tools mean that there is a greater likelihood of successful conservation outcomes, so there is a much higher potential return on investment, than when we started out. | | | |
| Trapping | | | | | Injury to trappers or public | | | | Implement protocols and training programmes for trappers where this does not yet exist  Ensure signage is in place. See for example signs created by Braid | | | |
| Loss/theft of traps | | | | | Loss due to flooding (economic cost) | | | | This has proven unavoidable. Lost around 2 dozen traps on the Waiau and Ashley Rivers due to unexpected flooding. | | | |
| **Health and Safety:** | *If relevant please describe any health and safety activities completed within this reporting period including: frequency or number of health and safety meetings held; training provided to employees, volunteers or contractors; safety improvements made to your project, new hazards identified or significant amendments to your safety management plan. Please provide any material or information relating to the occurrences of safety incidents, injured personnel.* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ***Description*** | ***Location and date*** | | | | | ***Action taken and outcome*** | | ***Reported to? E.g. regulatory authority*** | | | ***Follow up action taken*** | |
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| **General comments regarding Health and Safety *(if relevant)*** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| None. We have a H&S plan in place and regularly refer to it, particularly when working with school groups | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Final report:** | *If this is your final report relating to this project you should record totals for project. For example: total length of fence constructed, area treated with possum control, overall assessment of project success, as well as your forecast on the long-term future / management of the land involved in the project.* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Background**  The aim of the project was, broadly, to engage braided river users (iwi, tourism, farming, and recreational) in assisting with the monitoring and protection of two endemic braided river bird species: the nationally critical black-billed gull and nationally endangered black fronted tern, with the goal of better breeding success for these unique taonga species. The project was to generate a positive outcome for these birds as ‘flagship birds’ with an understanding that there would be wide-ranging collateral benefits for (a) other specialist endemic birds and species including nationally endangered invertebrates and reptiles, (b) the ecological role and biodiversity of braided rivers as specialist habitats and, (c) their hydro-geomorphological function and intrinsic value as globally rare landscapes.  **Programme**  Stages 1 and 2 (communications/marketing strategy and establishing a contacts’ database) involved contacting key stakeholders (river users) to establish interest in protecting the birds. We simultaneously developed environmental benchmarks and accreditation awards (Stage 3) to encourage businesses to participate. From the outset, it soon became evident that these birds and braided river ecosystems (a) suffered an identity crisis, and (b) were being decimated by uncontrolled encroachment of intensive agriculture plus weed (introduced pest species) invasion. Both impacts were on a sufficiently large scale to alter the hydrology of rivers, effectively destroying ‘braided’ rivers by converting them into single channel ‘normal’ rivers with little to no biodiversity values and virtually no endemic species. Hence, while pursing the partnership project, we simultaneously enhanced our communications strategy to expand public awareness of the birds and their habitats, and break down the silo effect between researchers, river managers, and river users.  We ran two seminars each attended by over 150 people including senior DOC staff and scientists, scientists from three universities and two Crown research institutes, and ECan councillors, which enabled us to promote the Partnership Project across multiple sectors. We also ran trapping workshops specific for braided river predator guilds (these differ to forest and urban predator guilds) and collaborated with DOC on others, designed dozens of signs; worked with businesses, local government bodies, DOC, and private individuals to develop and implement several ‘partner’ projects to protect and enhance birds; designed and created a range of off-the-shelf bird ID kits; produced educational resources for schools (PDF and iPad resources available here: <http://braid.org.nz/the-flock/teaching-resources> ); built and maintain a 350-page web site now considered by DOC as the ‘go-to’ site for ‘all things braided river’; reach up to 8,000 people through Facebook posts (see examples facebook.pdf attached) and lobbied local government and councils to recognise and protect braided river ecosystems through a range of strategies. Finally, we distributed around 1,000 fridge magnets with images of the birds. These magnets appear in the most diverse locations, including the dashboards of heavy plant equipment used by gravel extractors on riverbeds (apparently so drivers can ID birds).  **Achievements**  We developed productive relationships with multiple businesses and organisations, awarded environmental management accreditation to 8 of these (2 farms, 2 gravel extractors/roading contractors, 2 jetboat operators, a power company and a cheese making company) and developed good to excellent collaborative relationships with many others who were not eligible for awards as they have only just started to report seeing birds, or were government or third sector groups tasked with environmental protection (the purpose of the accreditation awards being to encourage businesses including farmers to participate in positive environmental actions). Our signs (some permanent, others temporary) are now used by DOC, ECan, and community groups along rivers and lakes from Rotorua to Makarora. Educational materials are now used in some schools and libraries, along with the outreach/community art project ‘The Flock’ that’s since been adopted independently by several schools. Rangiora High School is actively monitoring river health, while Ilam School raises funds annually for braided river bird protection (not by killing pests though trapping, but by protecting nesting dotterels using ‘nesting exclosures’: see <http://braid.org.nz/ecology/nesting-cages-for-banded-dotterels/> and video blog of the experiment here: <https://www.facebook.com/BandeddotterelstudySBay/videos/1641572235921856/>  We successfully lobbied for Russell lupins, an invasive pest species smothering river beds, to be declared a pest species, significantly expanded the number of bird counts now being undertaken across more rivers (the results are added to the website by river name as they come), raised the profile of the impact of black-backed gulls (leading to their culling in some Canterbury rivers) and strongly lobbied to halt the conversion of braided rivers into industrial-scale agricultural lands.  Sharing this information on social media and website enables ready access to information and data so that problems can be discussed openly, resources shared, and comparisons of bird populations across rivers and over time can be made (critical to understanding actual bird populations). Significantly more funding has now been directed towards specific projects to protect and/or restore braided river bird habitats and informing the wider community of their significance to our natural and cultural heritage.  **Key achievements by river/catchment**  **Ashley Rakahuri River**  Experiments with island formation on the lower Waitaki (drone footage here: <http://braid.org.nz/braided-rivers/waitaki/lower-waitaki> ) and research into social attractants to encourage black-fronted terns and black-billed gulls to nest on managed islands were showcased at the 2016 Braided Rivers Seminar (papers presented: <http://braid.org.nz/about-braid/workshop-2016/>). With this information in hand, extensive surveying (by volunteers) of the Ashley River for weeds led to the first really robust correlation between weed clearing and island formation and the preferred breeding sites for river bird species. **The value of these findings cannot be over-stated.** This is a key finding to developing and implementing robust (cost effective) management protocols (the paper on this was presented at the 2017 Seminar: <http://braid.org.nz/seminar-2017> )   * Taggarts (gravel extractors): awarded a Silver Accreditation for their work in assisting with island formation and weed removal * Waikuku Beach Farm: exemplar of the Partnerships Programme. Due to weeds, black-billed gulls could not nest on the river in 2016, so they tried to nest in a paddock on an adjacent farm. Without intervention, this colony would have unquestionably failed, trampled by a herd of cows. Working with the owner and manager, protecting the colony went off without a single hitch. The outcome: an estimated 600-800 birds successfully raised 300-400 chicks to fledging; **virtually an unprecedented outcome for this species in modern times.** * Following weed clearing (funded by the Waimakariri Zone Committee) and floods (see drone footage <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHAhzyjL228>), the birds returned to breed on the river in 2017. The colony is currently (Nov. 2018) estimated to be some 2,500 birds, **the largest seen in the river in many years** (attached file titled ‘Ashley black billed gull colony 2016-2018.pdf). * A new estuary trapping group set up following one of our free trapping workshops in October 2017 (DOC funded 120 traps for them) with the goal of reintroducing kaki/black stilt in the next few years. This would be the first location outside the Mackenzie Basin that this critically endangered bird (just 120 left in the wild) would be re-introduced (see attached photo essay: Ashley Estuary trapping story.pdf) * Karikaas Cheese partnered with us to produce a line of award winning ‘braided river birds’ cheeses, to raise the public profile of the birds across New Zealand (<http://www.karikaas.co.nz/shop/Karikaas+Cheese/Braid+Series.html>). Karikaas also donates a percentage of profits to the local Ashley Rakahuri Rivercare Group. They were awarded Bronze Environmental Accreditation in 2018 (see their feedback to the Partnerships Project in the attached: karikaas.pdf). * Rangiora High School senior year students are now undertaking a regular analysis of the river for in-stream health and overall biodiversity values. This has been designed as a long term (decadal) science project to track the health of and changes to the river. The information is shared with the local rivercare group to enable a better understanding of some drivers that attract birds to certain areas and/or nesting outcomes (availability of food, water quality, temperatures etc).   **Waiau and Hurunui Rivers**   * Amuri Jet, a commercial tour operator, assisted in a trapping programme on the Waiau River in 2016. They developed tours that year specifically to take tourists to see black-fronted terns in two locations on the river, allowing them to check traps at one location during the tour. Amuri Jet also heavily discounts charters for bird surveys. Awarded Bronze Accreditation. * Working with other stakeholders (including ECan and DOC), following floods that inundated the trap line on the Waiau, a rationale to protect specific braided river bird breeding habitats along both rivers was presented to the Hurunui-Waiau Zone Committee in 2016-2017. With established research in hand, some $100,000 was allocated to clearing weeds and building islands on locations most likely to attract nesting colonies. Culling predatory black-backed gulls (just completed) was also undertaken by Wildlife International Management Limited (WIML). Public awareness of and engagement in this process is very high (see attached: Facebookposts.pdf). * Bird counts are now being undertaken regularly by WIML, DOC, and ECan along with BRaid volunteers * Several farmers expressed interest in helping to protect birds, 3 reported seeing what they thought were nesting colonies but to date, none have been found. A Mason River (tributory) group of farmers is now actively engaged in sighting birds and working towards developing a trapping programme using the remaining traps we have in hand. We will assist them in applying for funding next year for a more comprehensive trapping programme.   **Upper Waimakariri**   * A bird count was undertaken in 2016 by BRaid volunteers. This builds on the picture of prior birds counts and raised the alarm that Russell Lupins were encroaching on breeding habitats. This, along with evidence and research showing the damage lupins are doing to the hydro-geomorphology of braided rivers in general, was presented to the Canterbury Regional Pest Management Plan meetings. Russell lupins were subsequently declared a ‘pest species’. * In November 2018, volunteers working with DOC spent a week in Arthur’s Pass working on a ‘Let’s lose the Lupins’ weed-clearing campaign.   **Ashburton River**   * Two tier signs designed by BRaid are now used to (tier 1) inform people about the birds, and (tier 2) protect birds them (included in attached: examplesigns.pdf)   **Wilberforce and Harper Rivers**   * Following willow clearing of the Harper River delta, Trustpower intended to re-vegetate the area with wetland natives. However, the delta was prone to flooding and this made it an ideal ‘natura’ habitat for braided riverbirds to breed. We recommended it be kept plant free, with gravel scraped of weeds during the non-breeding winter months. As this was less costly for Trustpower to maintain, it was a win-win. They also began a small trapping progamme and paid for the cost of printing signs educating visitors about birds. * This in turn led to a broader relationship with the Coleridge Habitat Enhancement Trust (which is funded by Trustpower). That in turn resulted in a large scale signage framed by outdoor art, significantly raising the level of awareness to visitors to the area. * The Rakaia Habitat Enhancement Trust then went on to fund a significant percentage of the 2017 Braided Rivers seminar.   **Orari River**   * Fulton Hogan was awarded a Bronze Environmental Accreditation Award for their work on clearing areas for black-fronted terns. Annual bird surveys are being undertaken, but the scale of the weeds remains a huge problem. Orari, unfortunately acts as a cautionary tale and example of what other braided rivers will be like if left unprotected and unmanaged (drone footage shows the extent of weed infestation and island cleared by Fulton Hogan working with DOC and the Orari River Protection Society: <http://braid.org.nz/braided-rivers/orari-river> )   **Makarora and Wilkin Rivers**   * With support from BRaid, the Mount Aspiring Biodiversity Trust is now up and running, funded through local partnerships, with an excellent trapping and monitoring programme in place (<http://aspiringbiodiversity.co.nz/braided-river> ). They also have developed a partnership programme with Wilkins Jets using BRaid resources and accreditation. This new Trust and their ability to develop partnerships with a local tour operator and local school is an exemplar of a successful partnerships programme that retains close ties to BRaid as an umbrella organisation, but functions entirely independently using local volunteers and resources (see their feedback to the Partnerships Project in the attached: Aspiring Biodiversity Trust.pdf).   **Additional community benefits**  The Flock project was an enormously successful community art project devised as part of our marketing strategy. Along with the 600-odd birds made by mid-Canterbury volunteers, we estimate that at least another 400 were made in schools and men’s sheds, art galleries and libraries, from Makarora to the West Coast and up to Kaikoura. We lost count of the number of locations they were displayed and volunteer hours put into the project as (mostly schools) quickly adopted the idea and downloaded our resources (<http://braid.org.nz/the-flock>). Selwyn libraries ran a school holiday programme to make and display the Flock, Christchurch Airport hosted the Flock as a way of welcoming the real migratory birds back to Canterbury, and councils everywhere displayed them at parks, reserves, outside their offices and inside halls, along with signs explaining what it was about. Other conservation groups such as Mount Aspiring Biodiversity Trust and several schools have now adopted The Flock project for themselves as an annual event (see attached: Makarora Flock.pdf and Welcome Back the Birds.pdf). This led Ilam School to begin a fundraiser for nesting ‘exclosures’ in Kaikaoura. PredatorFree2050 goals notwithstanding, this is a great way that primary school children can help ‘save’ native animals rather than ‘killing’ pest animals.  The value of community art projects is well understood. In this instance, it also empowered everyone from toddlers to great grandparents into creating a collective work of art to draw attention to braided river birds.  These activities led to greater volunteerism and the outcomes have provided communities with the knowledge of their unique environmental heritage and crucially, the tools to help protect and celebrate them. Enabling people to help, generates an enormous sense of satisfaction and achievement, especially when large-scale problems like these initially appear overwhelming or even hopeless.  **Setbacks and lessons learned**  Setbacks and failures serve an important lesson. One aim was for the project to become economically sustainable through tactical partnerships with multiple braided river tourism operators and iwi who might benefit from developing tours to see the birds and explain their cultural context. However these birds are not iconic like kiwi or kakapo, yet are arguably at greater at risk of extinction. As they are migratory and do not necessarily return to the same sites, or even the same rivers to breed each season, only a scant few tour operators encounter them. So there was and remains little incentive for sufficient tour operators or iwi to develop a business model around taking tourists to see the birds, to protect or promote them, and little visible reason for tourists to donate towards making BRaid financially self-sustaining.  Some setbacks were unavoidable. Clarence River Rafting undertook a bird survey using tourists as bird -spotters, during their 5-day 2016 trips. It was an ideal situation, until the Kaikoura earthquake devastated the area and tourism businesses as a whole.  Engagement success depends entirely on the willingness and interest of key personnel within an organisation. Trustpower, for example, worked well until middle-management was replaced with someone who had no interest in supporting a volunteer staff-run trapping programme. While some trapping is still being done, it is ad hoc. There is still value in that, insofar as heavy plant operators are now aware of, and sensitive to the birds breeding in the area. The initial relationship led to the broader relationship with the Coleridge Habitat Enhancement Trust and subsequent signage mentioned above.  Finally, while restoring braided river bird habits is one of the ten top priorities in the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS), collaborative community approach to enact the CWMS has and continues to be overwhelmed by economic drivers: primarily irrigation for dairy farming. We had limited resources to compete with stakeholders (including the Canterbury District Health Board and district councils) whose interests in braided rivers are centred entirely on water quality and quantity, not in protecting fragile cryptic habitats and a handful of bird species few knew about. It was certainly difficult to develop partnerships with farmers who want braided river ‘wastelands’ converted into ‘productive’ agricultural land irrigated by centre pivots, especially when some stakeholder groups blame the birds, not cows, for the high nitrogen level in rivers.  On a positive note, in just these past few months Environment Canterbury have allocated resources to define braided rivers as not just water but also as complex ecosystems (see <http://braid.org.nz/2018/06/braided-rivers-the-bridge-project> ). In spite of strong pushbacks from farmers, we have presented (and will continue to do so) a robust argument to protect what remains of braided river habitats, buoyed by the significantly increased attention and additional resources from DOC, ECan, and some district councils now being directed to them. With the additional funding that Lotto has just awarded BRaid, we are reasonably confident that by 2021 braided river birds and their habitats will be much better acknowledged and understood, key breeding habitats will be restored and protected, and braided river systems will be fully recognised as crucial, globally rare ecosystems linking the mountains to the sea.  **Budget amendment**  During the course of the project, (seminars, bird counts in the upper Waimakariri River, and in consultation with DOC’s Braided River Technical Advisory Group) we re-allocated approx. $2,200.00 from funds earmarked for traps to instead be used to control of predatory southern black-backed gulls in this location. This was planned for 2018 but the expertise needed to carry this out (WIML) was tied up doing the same on the Hurunui River (see above in reference to the Hurunui River). It is now scheduled to be carried out in 2019. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Declaration:** | | | *As a duly authorised representative of the organisation:*   * *I declare that to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in all sections of this Progress Report, or supplied in support of our Progress Report, is complete, true and correct;* * *I declare that* I *have the authority to sign this Progress Report and to provide this information and that we have paid or will pay all invoices with this instalment in full;* * *I understand that information presented to the Minister of Conservation and Department of Conservation is subject to disclosure under the Official Information Act 1982;* * *I declare that the fund instalment invoice accompanying this Progress Report is complete, true and correct.* | | | | | | | | | |
| **Name of verifier** | | | | Sonny Whitelaw | | | | | | | | |
| **Position of verifier** | | | | Manager BRaid) | | | | | | | | |
| **Signature** *(by typing your name in the space provided you are electronically signing this Progress Report)* | | | | Macintosh HD:Users:sonny:letters:signaturesonnysmall.jpg | | | | | | Date | | 23 December  2019 |