

Summary of Activities 2025

Overview

This Annual Report highlights the activities carried out by the Trust for the year 2024/2025; the CHET audited accounts are managed by the Selwyn District Council audit process.

Key achievements during the 2024-2025 year for the Coleridge Habitat Enhancement Trust (CHET) have been:

- **Weed control** – CHET, with funding from Algidus Station, has commissioned a Weed Management Strategy for the 'Homestead Weeds' in the Algidus/Wilberforce catchment.
- **Predator control** – CHET provided **\$20,000** towards the aerial operation for wild animal control on station lands within the Lake Coleridge catchment.
- **CHET Grants** – CHET provided funding for the following projects:
 - **\$48,000** to LINZ for the agreed weed eradication programme within the Coleridge Catchment (Ryton River) and \$5,000 for the ongoing willow control work at Lake Selfe.
 - **\$50,000** (\$25,000 24/25 and \$25,000 25/26) to ECAN for funding associated with the proposed weed control project on the vegetated Rakaia River Terraces.
 - An additional **\$20,000** to ECAN for the removal of willows and conifers in the Scamander Wetland.

More information about these activities and other work follows.

Relationships with stakeholders

The CHET Coordinator has continued to liaise on projects with the following key stakeholders:

- Landowners/Managers (particularly of Lake Coleridge Station, Glenthorne Station, Algidus Station, and the Murchison family) – especially in relation to trapping activities, signage, and willow control.
- Land Information NZ (LINZ), Department of Conservation (DOC) staff – particularly in relation to predator trapping, weed control and 4WD damage to the Torlesse Conservation Area and Boffa Miskell who are contracted on behalf of LINZ.
- Environment Canterbury (ECan) – particularly in relation to the weed control programme in the Scamander Swamp and CHET's willow control project at Lake Selfe.
- Selwyn District Council (SDC) biodiversity officers – particularly in relation to willow control and weed control works.
- Manawa Energy – trapping and weed control.

Visitor Signage

CHET has invested in and maintains high-quality versions of signs warning the public to be aware of nesting river birds. These signs withstand UV exposure and wind much better so should last several years at minimum. These signs are installed at all points where the public can easily access major rivers (i.e. Rakaia, Wilberforce, Harper Rivers).

At the same time, CHET has also replaced lower-quality versions of a sign warning the public that predator traps are set in particular areas with a more durable version.

Predator Control

CHET has added 4 AT220 automatic traps to the trapping network around Lake Coleridge this year.

The AT220 is New Zealand's first multi-species, automatic resetting and reluring pest trap. It has proven to quickly and effectively clear pests' species with minimal labour costs. It is highly effective, and the 4 traps are included in the current trap lines (Harper and upper/lower Lake Coleridge).

Catch statistics

Five volunteers, with occasional assistance from the CHET Coordinator, have continued to monitor traps in areas where predators are a particular risk to ground nesting birds (either river birds or grebes).

The traps are ones purchased by CHET, BRaid and Manawa Energy. The CHET Coordinator maintains an inventory of all the traps. All volunteers record their trapping results on the Trap.NZ app giving a full picture of trapping results.

Trapping results reported during the year were:

- **Harper Village area** - 23 traps (11 DOC200; 11 Timms and 1 AT220) monitored by Manawa Energy and Andrew Welsh.
 - The Trap.NZ app is used to record catches from May 2022.
 - During the 2025 year, the following catches were recorded: 9 Hedgehogs, 6 rats, 4 stoats, 2 possums and 8 others= **Total 29 catches** (Note: not all catches were recorded on TrapNZ due to a change in phone and requirement to reload the App.)
- **Lakes Selfe, Evelyn, Georgina** – 19 traps (18 DOC200 traps; 1 DOC250 trap at Selfe from Jan 2022) monitored by Rosalie Snoyink and David Anderson
 - Rosalie and David started using the Trap.NZ app from April 2022.
 - During the 2025 year, the following catches were recorded: At Selfe - 5 hedgehogs, 6 stoats and 1 other; At Evelyn - 2 hedgehogs, At Georgina - 1 hedgehog, 1 stoat and 1 rat, = **Total 17 catches**
- **Lake Hill's Boat Harbour, Lake Coleridge** – 5 traps (5 DOC200 traps and 1 AT220) monitored by David Murchison
 - David started using the Trap.NZ app from early December 2021.
 - During the 2025 year, the following catches were recorded: 4 stoats, 6 possums, 1 hedgehog and 1 rat = **Total 12 catches**
- **Homestead Road Lagoon** - 4 traps (4 DOC250 and 1 AT220) monitored by Rebecca Rose
 - Rebecca started using the Trap.NZ app from January 2023.
 - During the 2025 year, the following catches were recorded: 1 rat, 1 stoat and 2 hedgehogs = **Total 4 catches.**
- **Landowners** continue each year to do significant trapping operations on their land, in particular to control numbers of possums, pigs and deer. Vespex is also used to control wasps.

CHET has also been participating in the University of Canterbury trial on long lasting lures for predator traps

Aerial Pest Control

On 27 February 2025, Province Wide Helicopters Ltd and Mt Algidus Station (on behalf of nine other high-country stations) submitted a request for funding to the Coleridge Habitat Enhancement Trust (CHET).

The request for funding was to undertake a coordinated programme to control wild animal pest species, principally pigs, on ten high country stations located in the area bordering, or in close proximity to, Lake Coleridge. The ten participating properties were Mt Algidus, Peak Hill, Mt Oakden, Lake Coleridge, Glenthorne, Ryton, Acheron, Acheron Bank, Coleridge Downs and Big Ben.

CHET approved a grant of **\$20,000** excl GST for this programme. The station owners/managers were then canvassed to see if they wanted to top up the grant and all agreed to do so, such that the full programme could proceed as originally planned.

Over a 6-day period of shooting, 473 pigs were shot along with 78 fallow deer. DOC shot Peak Hill Reserve accounting for an additional 57 pigs. In total **608** pest animals were shot.

Many of the pigs were at high altitudes up to 4,000 feet (1200-odd metres), presumably living there out of reach of all but the keenest ground pig hunter.

The fallow deer by contrast were almost exclusively on the matagouri flats near the main rivers, Rakaia, Wilberforce and Mathias.

Rakaia River Predator Trapping managed by LINZ

The Trust encourages the efforts undertaken for the Rakaia River Trapping programme. The trapping network consists of **597** traps; the trapping network runs approx. 20 kilometers along the true left and true right of the Rakaia Gorge. This network is on Crown and private land and is funded by LINZ.

Redeployment of the original trap network was required to meet the 2023 review objectives. This was a complex task and required the Contractor to complete the following actions:

- Retrieval of all traps in the network, including walking closed DOC trap lines to locate any traps lost during flood events.
- Maintenance of traps and boxes (e.g., each trap cleaned, secured if in a trap box, calibration, fixing any broken parts) before redeployment back into the field.
- A stocktake of all traps available for redeployment.
- Traps deployed along 'proposed trap lines' that had been agreed by project partners, stakeholders, and landholders.
- Micro-siting of traps on the ground (the act of refining a device's placement within the field on a scale within several metres of the desired GPS point based on appropriate land features, habitat, and vegetation at that site).
- Each trap secured in the environment (e.g., by chain, re-bar or waratah), where cattle, flood risk, or theft (e.g. on public road) may be possible.
- The layout of traps entered into the new Trap.NZ project 'RAKAIA RIVER BRAIDED RIVER BIRD PROTECTION'.

- All tracking tunnels removed and brought back to the depot during trap redeployment.

Up to the period 05/06/2025, a total of **1,236** catches were recorded and included 49 stoats, 150 weasels, and 57 cats.

General weed control

The Trust has taken a 'catchment' view in regard to weed control in the Lake Coleridge/Harper Road area. This means than rather than address specific weeds in specific areas, the view is to manage weeds within the catchment and take a systematic approach to this.

The Rytton River was the primary focus for the CHET funded control works this season. Almost **\$48,000** was spent by the contractors on a comprehensive weed control operation targeting both riverbed weeds, and the extensive willow infestation along the river margins.

Knapsack and gun and hose spraying were used to target gorse, broom, young willows, and false tamarisk plants. Drill and fill control was carried out on the large willow trees on the edge of the riverbed. Both crack and purple willow were controlled across this site. This drill and fill operation shows initial signs of successful control, with controlled trees markedly different in colour to uncontrolled trees.

A stand of willows has been left immediately upstream of the road bridge, while discussions are ongoing about their potential need to be left to protect infrastructure.

The willows around the Lake Selfe shoreline previously received comprehensive control and follow up control was carried out to target some of the regrowth and a few uncontrolled trees.

Targeted willow control works were undertaken around the Lake Selfe shoreline, focusing on isolated individuals and scattered lake edge willows. These efforts aimed to tidy up previous control areas and prevent further spread.

Australasian Crested Grebe nesting platform

Floating platforms for Crested Grebes have been successful in Wanaka by providing safer nesting sites. The platforms could offer the same benefits in our catchment – particularly better protection from mammalian predators and from changing lake levels.

The CHET Coordinator refurbished the platform (to allow for deeper lake levels), and it was relocated in the sheltered harbour outside the Murchison baches at the south-east end of Lake Coleridge. Signs informing people who see it what it is for will be erected nearby. It is easily seen from Te Araroa's Lake Hill Track.

No Grebes have yet to nest on the platform, but we are hopeful it may attract nesting Grebes.

Eel protection

Manawa Energy have been running a Tuna Heke pilot with NIWA this migration season (netting and releasing migrating eels as there is no clear pathway out of lake Coleridge for them). More information will follow following the initial pilot.

Events attended

- CHET Field Day.
- ECAN Canterbury Biodiversity Strategy collaborative workshop.
- Webinar – *The Future of Conservation Land*.
- 12-month reviews of Rakaia River Weeds and Pest Management Strategies.

CHET Trustee Representatives

Below are the people who represented Trustee organisations during the 2024-25 year:

- Selwyn District Council - Councilor Samuel Wilshire (replaced Bob Mugford)
- Manawa Energy –Ryan Kane
- Department of Conservation – Deam Turner (replaced Ronan Grew)
- Landowners – Rebecca Rose
- Fish & Game – Matthew Garrick
- Forest & Bird – Donna Field (Chairperson)
- CHET Coordinator – Andrew Welsh
- CHET Secretary – Yvonne Cookson (replaced Judith Pascoe)

Long term representatives former SDC Councilor Bob Mugford and Secretary Judith Pascoe both stepped down in 2025 following significant terms on the Trust.

CHET wishes both Bob and Judith kind regards for their time and efforts spent with CHET.

Thank you to farm managers and volunteers

Along with generous ongoing support from landowners and farm managers, several individuals voluntarily help with trapping and have done so for many years. Special thanks for this ongoing voluntary work to Rosalie Snoyink, David Anderson and David Murchison.

Thanks to Brian Lancaster for his work in the Harper area while he was employed by Manawa Energy.

Thank you to the farm managers and owners, local authority representatives and environmental professionals that the Trust has worked and engaged with. Your views, advice and consideration are much appreciated.

For more information:

Coleridge Habitat Enhancement Trust webpage:
www.lakecoleridge.co.nz/habitat-enhancement.html

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