

Chair's report.

BRaid AGM, November 7, 2025.

BRaid was formed in 2006, so this would be our 20th AGM. When preparing for this meeting, I realised that we have only had one BRaid meeting this year – on Feb 28. But that does not alarm me, as BRaid is still in good heart and widely appreciated, thanks mainly to Sonny and the website, plus the very successful annual seminar held on July 9, and the BFT workshop the following day.

Seminar (July 9)

We had around 165 participants who listened to 12 presentations, although a major attraction is always the opportunity to catch up with so many like-minded people. Around 70% were salaried professionals, with ECan having the largest number present. The second largest representation was by conservation groups and trusts. All the feedback was generally positive, with almost complete acceptance of the \$49 attendance charge. Major thanks are due to Sonny Whitelaw for the organizing this year's symposium, and to DOC for their \$2k donation. We are already preparing plans for another conference next year.

BFT workshop

This was organized 'on spec' for the following day, July 10, and proved most worthwhile, with around 30 attending at the ECan venue. There would never before have been such a gathering of practical expertise to work on a 'best management practice' (BMP) for this endangered species. Yesterday, we met to look at the first draft of a BMP prepared by Ellery Mayence. A final version will be ready for circulation by the middle of 2026.

Promotion.

The general interest in braided rivers, continues to be strong. The high level of institutional support was demonstrated at the July 9 seminar, where, as mentioned above, 70% of those present came from regional and district councils, government departments, universities, research outfits and environmental consultancies. Compare this human resource to what was available 20 years ago – a huge increase. Hence, our website, newsletters and Facebook page remain even more vital to service this and the public's interest. The website is acknowledged as the nation's leading source of braided river information. Thanks once again to Sonny for maintaining this high level of awareness.

Field operations

In the past we have run BRaid bird surveys, such as in the upper Waimakariri catchment - one outcome from which was exploring the opportunities for reducing the local karoro (Southern black-backed gull) population in the river headwaters. There has been discussions about, but no progress in, advancing karoro control over the past year.

We are always striving to promote field work and research in all braided rivers. Although BRaid does not have the resources to be involved directly, we closely follow management and research projects, which are regularly covered on our website, with more detailed reporting on specific studies at the annual seminar.

Funding

BRaid could not carry on without the support of ECan. This year's funding comes from ECan's Biodiversity and Rivers Restoration budgets. Without it we would not be able to employ Sonny or continue with our major annual functions - website, social media and conference.

Thanks

Finally, sincere thanks to the small band of keen people that represents BRaid. There is little doubt that we punch well above our weight, largely thanks to our ability to employ a part-time manager, Sonny Whitelaw. As stated above, this is primarily due to the support we get from ECan. Major thanks also to our treasurer, Sue Mardon. Without all this support it would be very hard to make meaningful progress.

Nick Ledgard, November 7, 2025