



Minutes of the BRaid General Meeting held on Thursday September 14, 2026, 2 pm at DOC office, 31 Nga Mahi Road, Sockburn, Christchurch

The Chairman, Nick Ledgard, welcomed those present: Sonny Whitelaw, Sue Mardon, Grant Davey and Ellie Resendiz (ARRG), Frances Schmechel and Amy-Grace McIlraith (ECan), Edith Smith and Peter Howden (Ashburton), Bec Simpson (Boffa Miskell) and Colleen Philip (BirdsNZ).

Apologies: Emily Wium, Ellery Mayence, Ailsa Howard, Val Clemens, Peter Smith, Don Geddes, Donna Field.

Minutes of the last GM (November 7th 2025) were confirmed as a true and correct record. Sue/Sonny. All Action Items have been attended to, or are dealt with at this meeting (see below).

Financial. Sue presented the Income and Expenditure report for 1/07/26 to 14/09/2026. Cash Flow for the period was - \$7,846.16, due to ECan funding being received prior to June 30 and Conference expenses paid after July 1. Our brought-forward balance at the start of the financial year was \$32,311.94, with that at the end of the period being \$23,405.31. Our major expense is for Manager wages, which are provisionally secured until April, 2027, when results of new funding application will be known.

Resolved: 'That the financial accounts be received and approved'.

Sue/Edith. Carried

Membership. We currently have 160 members (registered with contact details), with 330 persons on our email list. Subscriptions are no longer required, but donations are welcomed, and currently exceed what was made from subscriptions.

Outreach / Manager's report. Sonny's report is the same as presented to the AGM – available on our website. A vote of sincere thanks to Sonny for her work, without which BRaid would not exist.

July 8 2026 Conference. This is the highlight of BRaid's year, and was the usual success, as reported in the Managers report. 140 people were present, 70% of whom were salaried professionals. All feedback was positive, with the main matter raised being a need for more question time.

Conference, 2027. A Conference 2026 debrief meeting (Aug 25) agreed to aim for a reduced number of speakers (11) with flexible speaking times, and 20 minute Q&A sessions before each break. The intention is to hold a 2027 conference in July next year, with the first planning meeting in early February. Major thanks are due to Sonny Whitelaw for the organizing conferences.

Black-fronted tern (BFT) best management practice document. A need was confirmed at a workshop on July 10 last year which was attended by over 30 participants. As a result, the first draft of a best management practice (BMP) has been written by Ellery M and sent around for committee feedback. A second draft will be circulated to appropriate stakeholders, before the final version is completed by the end of 2026.

ECan korero (May 7). This invitation to present on braided river (mainly Ashley-Rakahuri) issues turned out to be a very useful opportunity to speak to 7 Councillors.

ECan / DOC Braided River projects. Frances reported on the projects, the budget for which is now significantly reduced. However, there are Biodiversity Operational funds directed at priority areas, most of which involve braided rivers. The main points made by Frances's are included under the river reports covered below.

River reports.

- Waiau / Toa - Clarence. Focus is on island creation/maintenance and weed control, with predation (including cats) remaining a major concern.
- Waiau / Upha. The main emphasis here is on the Sharks Tooth island, once again well used by BFT. However, their success last season was severely curtailed when displaced by black-billed gulls
- Hurunui. Not targeted this year, apart from some ongoing SBBG control.
- Ashley-Rakahuri. Grant D updated the well-monitored situation on this river. Weeds were noticeably absent, but this will not continue without assistance from good floods. Wrybill numbers remain good, with over 20 nests and 80% fledging. BFT numbers high (including 1 largest-ever colony), but fledging success only 13%. This is despite more man-hours than before, and doubling of traps around colonies. Over 300 BBG nests, but predation by cats and harriers mainly responsible for only 37% fledging. Plans for regular video updates this season using Instagram. A PhD study (topic to be decided) has been started by American student, Ellie Resendiz.
- Waimakariri. No survey undertaken, but bird numbers appeared normal, with more BD present. SBBG control continues, but impacts harder to determine as more nesting under vegetation cover. Weed control in the upper catchment is ongoing, implementing the Boffa Miskell-written strategy. Comment was made on the rapid down-river spread of Russell lupin, the extent of which could be monitored more closely. There was a brief discussion on BRaid's concern about the small (but increasing?) SBBG presence and the potential for its control.
- Ashburton. On-going predator control. A 3000-bird BBG colony in upper reaches of N. Ashburton, with good fledging reported. A BFT colony in lower section failed due to human disturbance.
- Rakaia and Rangitata. On-going funding for the considerable work carried out in previous years in the Rangitata through Jobs for Nature has largely ceased. ECan-funded outcome monitoring was completed, but with trapping no longer occurring there, a recommendation has been made to reprioritize these resources. Weed and predator control continues in upper Rakaia.
- Orari. Opihi / Opuha. No update, but Edith reported that Orari group still active. Discussion about a local seminar to promote more management of these rivers.

***Action:** Edith S to explore possibility of a local seminar to promote/discuss local management initiatives on these smaller S. Canterbury rivers.*

- **General Business**

- 3D bird models. Brief discussion about how these could be better used for promotion / awareness. Software available, low 3D printing costs.
- Climate change. Sonny commented on El Niño threat, and potential major impact on river flows. Alpine-fed rivers up; foothills-fed rivers down.
- Survey methodology. A brief discussion on this matter raised the need for a workshop to look at all bird survey procedures. Possibility to make use of new technologies.

***Action:** Frances / Nick to explore potential for a bird survey workshop.*

- **Date for next meeting.** Planned for late February 2027.

***Action:** Nick / Sonny to organise*

- **Close of Meeting.** 3.30pm.

Action items.

1. **S. Canterbury rivers workshop:** *Edith S to explore possibility of a local seminar to promote/discuss local management initiatives on these smaller S. Canterbury rivers.*
2. **Bird survey workshop:** *Frances / Nick to follow up.*
3. **Next meeting:** *Sonny / Nick to organize a BRaid meeting in late February.*