



Taylor River weed reduced

Good progress has been made removing exotic river weed and dredging the Taylor River in central Blenheim.

Andy White, Rivers and Drainage Engineering Manager, said the summer control programme was progressing well.

“The river level has dropped as a direct result of our efforts. Boat skipper Dave Fowler has been cutting and removing up to 20 tonnes of weed daily.”

Under the rules in the Marlborough Environment Plan, river works are not permitted in the Taylor and Ōpaoa rivers from 1 February to 30 April to avoid the whitebait spawning season. “Construction of Council’s new weedcutter boat is now complete with trials underway in Christchurch ahead of her delivery next month. Cutting of the Ōpaoa Loop will commence upon her arrival, ensuring the team can be focussed from 1 May on removing weed from the Taylor and Ōpaoa rivers.”

“We will also be planting the reshaped river banks with native plants in April, improving both bank stability and shading out the invasive pest weeds.”

Mr White noted that sediment in the river had built up by about a metre over the last 10 years, due to a mixture of seismic activity



📷 Dave Fowler on board the soon-to-be-retired River Queen weedcutting boat

and more frequent heavy rain. Additional capital and operational budget was approved in the Long Term Plan last year to improve the hydraulics of the two rivers through targeted dredging and replacement of Council’s weedcutter boat.

“We’re also developing a comprehensive Taylor and Ōpaoa rivers management plan, working with Council’s Environmental Science and Parks’ teams,” Mr White said.

The budget for sediment removal is \$150,000 this year and \$650,000 for 2025/26.



All in a flap

If you work in Blenheim’s CBD, you may have noticed a lively colony of seagulls has taken up residence on top of the buildings around High Street.

They’ve been causing a bit of a flap, leaving a mess and being very vocal about it while they’re at it. Marlborough Roads’ CBD cleaning team has been working to mitigate the effects of the gulls’ presence. Cleaning efforts are being intensified, with a sweeper unit, water cart and water blaster used from 2am from Monday to Wednesday to remove the mess from the pavement. The success of the new cleaning initiative will be monitored and adjustments made if required.

Council’s Catchment Care Advisor Amy-Grace McIlraith said while it’s understandable that many people view seagulls as a nuisance, are a protected species.

“These Red-billed Gulls, or Kākāhu, are native to New Zealand and are considered a taonga (treasure),” she said.

“Unfortunately, their numbers are declining and they are classified with the same threat status as the little blue penguin.”

“So, while their nesting in town can be inconvenient for us, from an ecological point of view it’s positive to see them breeding successfully.”

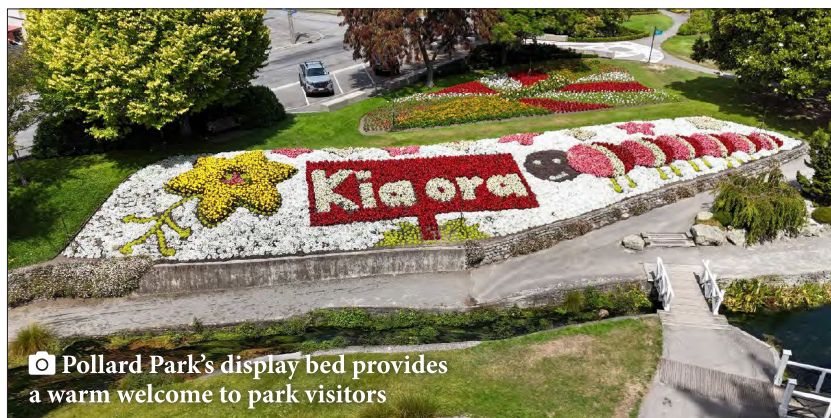
The breeding season runs from November to February. As this season concludes, they will be winging it elsewhere in search of food. This means their stay in town is temporary, and patience should reward us with a return to normal and quieter times.

Café patrons should not leave food unattended - please remember to put your rubbish into one of the street rubbish bins.

DOC is responsible for native bird protection. To find out more, please go to: www.doc.govt.nz/nature/conservation-status/threatened-birds/

Pollard Park display bed impressive

Bright red, pink and white bedding begonia ice blocks are greeting visitors to Pollard Park.



📷 Pollard Park’s display bed provides a warm welcome to park visitors

The colourful show of annuals is in the spectacular display bed, beside the creek by the Parker Street entrance.

Council gardeners keep this bed varied and interesting by changing the display, which requires plenty of thought and initiative as well as careful planning, usually done during the winter months.

The current design is a team effort by Council gardeners.

The white backdrop is achieved with alyssum, while yellow marigolds are used in the flower “stick man.” The rest features

an assortment of bedding begonias.

Other colourful beds in the park feature red and white geraniums, irises and miniature sunflowers.

February is a busy time for Pollard Park with lots of families visiting as well as visitors from cruise ships.

Staff have been busy with routine maintenance including dead heading roses to ensure a constant show and tidying the perennial borders and cottage gardens.

Waihopai River bridge officially opened



📷 The impressive new bridge spanning the Waihopai River

A new bridge spanning the Waihopai River, replacing one swept away in the July 2021 storm, has been completed on time and below budget.

Members of the local community celebrated with Mayor Nadine Taylor, councillors, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi representatives, Marlborough Roads staff and contractors earlier this week on site to mark the occasion.

The new single-lane structure is 110m long, 4.1m wide and has

seven 16m spans which tower nine metres above the river.

It was built by Egypt Ltd, a Nelson-based bridge contractor with the support of consultants.

The project cost was approximately \$4M including design and construction, road realignment, surfacing and drainage, geotechnical investigations, land

and consents, coming in \$1.1M under budget. The project was

95 per cent funded through NZTA’s Financial Assistance Rate.

The local community was provided with a temporary Bailey bridge which provided access to the upper valley from September 2021.