

Annual Report 2020



The sixteenth year of the Trust started with our plans and aspirations for our year of work to protect and enhance our special Lake Ōhau environment.

Our year ended, just before the 4 October 2020 wildfire had severe impacts on our community and our environment.

In last year's Annual Report, I reflected on the challenges and changes that we face as a community, country and globally, in particular in relation to climate change. In our sixteenth year, we got to experience the reality of some of those challenges.

The global pandemic (Covid-19) we are still in the midst of, shows us in New Zealand / Aotearoa, the power of being part of a community that has and continues to act in the best interests of everyone, not just with self-interest. We are very fortunate to have government leadership that has bought out the best in people and supported a kind and compassionate approach.

Protecting and enhancing our special Lake Ōhau environment may not seem to be a particular priority when we face such overwhelming global and devastating local events and challenges. The natural environment's intrinsic value pre-date us and it will continue long after we are gone. While we live in it, nature is so much of who and what we are, particularly in New Zealand / Aotearoa. It is a large part of our identity, it provides settings for our everyday lives, special events, holidays and recreation. It connects us to other living things that we can nurture, explore and appreciate. Being in nature is important for our wellbeing.

The Trust is committed to continuing to work in our local environment to make sure that it is the best it can be.

Activities and events during our year that ended on 30 September 2020 included:

- Wilding tree removal stepped up a notch with significant funding coming to Lake Ōhau from the governments Wilding Tree programme. Crews worked through the whole Basin, removing trees, right up into the hills.
- Looking after 92 beech seedlings to plant at Easter 2020. The planting couldn't occur during the Covid-19 restrictions so we kept them over winter and re-potted them in Sept for planting in autumn 2021. (these seedlings were then destroyed by the October wildfire).
- Receiving 80 new predator traps for stoats, weasels, rats etc in September 2020. These were made for the Trust at the South Otago Corrections Facility. We were very pleased to be able to be part of the scheme where inmates gain new skills by making the traps. A very big thanks to our Trustee Katrina, who spent a lot of time researching and managing the trap construction project. (these traps were then destroyed by the October wildfire).

- Updating our Health and Safety Plan and work session procedures to reflect covid-19 restrictions and new practices to keep everyone self.
- Possum trapping continued, when we were able. We caught 36 possums. Thank you to our trapping volunteers that stuck with it during the year.
- Three work sessions were held, with a total of 60 volunteer hours worked. Thank you to our volunteers.
- 702 recorded volunteer hours, additional to work sessions (including administration, weed control, planting and plant care, wilding tree removal and possum trapping). We appreciate all this volunteer time and the additional time that is not reflected here, as we know that people do other work in their own time. We are very grateful for all the support we receive.
- Planting 12 beech trees at the gear container.
- Some cotoneaster control work was undertaken by contractors but it was then interrupted by the Covid-19 restrictions.

So what next for the Trust? We are still finalising our work programme for the 2020/21 year, but it will focus on the things we can do to help restore nature after the Oct 2020 wildfire.

We appreciate the support we have received from the DOC Twizel staff and the MPI/ECan Wilding Tree Programme. Also from Rowan Sprague, NZ Wilding Conifer Group Coordinator, who provides excellent information and who also visited to help remove wildings at a work session.

I am very grateful to my fellow Trustees, Warren, Katrina and Helen. It has been a privilege to work with them during this year. Thank you for our support and sharing your time, skills and knowledge.



Vivienne Smith-Campbell
Chairperson, The Ōhau Conservation Trust