

Annual Report 2020/21



The seventeenth year of the Trust working to protect and enhance the special Lake Ōhau natural environment has been our most challenging.

On the 4 October 2020 a wildfire severely impacted on our community and our environment.

Houses and property were destroyed and the community has had to rebuild. It has been a tough time for everyone.

The wildfire burnt around 5000ha of land, destroying predominately indigenous vegetation along the lake shores, the terraces and right up to the tops along the Ōhau and Barrier Ranges. In the last 10 or so years, the Trust has plant about 3500 native plants along the lakes. Around 2880 of these plants were destroyed or damaged by the wildfire.

The Trust has 100 possum traps in the beech remnants along Freehold, Sawyers and Parsons Creeks. Thirteen of these traps were destroyed in the wildfire. We had just received 80 new predator traps. All these were destroyed when the house they were stored at, burnt down.

The Trust's gear container was untouched. We were very fortunate as the wildfire burnt all around this area at Lake Middleton.

A pretty grim time for people and our native ecosystems.

In times of adversity, people step up and the Trust has certainly experienced this. We put out information about our losses and asked people to help us replace equipment and to help fund replanting activities.

We are so very grateful for the kindness and support we have received from a wide range of people and organisations. We certainly learnt that it is OK to ask for help – people want to be able to help when disaster strikes!

During the year we received donations of goods to help us restore nature at Lake Ōhau, including materials such as plant protectors and watering cans for planting, an earth auger from Stihl and funds to purchase plants and replace the traps we lost.

Donations totalled just over \$60,000.00. A large donation of \$33,000.00 was received from the Mackenzie Lodge Freemasons – a wonderful gift that will enable us to make a special place for the community to enjoy views over Lakes Middleton and Ōhau.

Donations totalling \$27,000.00 were received from many individuals. We are very grateful for this support for our conservation activities.

Activities and events during our year that ended on 30 September 2021 included:

- We were able to source 476 plants at short notice, and with the help of 178 volunteers we planted them all in four planting sessions during autumn 2021. The volunteers spent 231 hours doing this planting.
- Two of the planting sessions were with wedding parties. It was a real pleasure to work with these groups of people from all around the country. Both sessions were on glorious autumn Ōhau days, a special event as part of a special celebration with family and friends.
- Possum trapping continued, when we were able. We caught 52 possums. Thank you to our 12 trapping volunteers, many of who are new volunteers for the Trust.
- We installed 6 tracking tunnel lines to monitor what critters are out there. One monitoring cycle was completed, with surprisingly few tracks recorded.
- Our trapping and monitoring volunteers contributed 175 hours to this work. This a great commitment to making sure possum numbers are kept low so native ecosystems such as our prolific mistletoe is not impacted by the possums.
- In addition to the planting and trapping volunteer hours, 1040 hours was contributed including administration, training, weed control, other planting and plant care and wilding tree removal. This is a big commitment of time and energy to our native ecosystems – and very much appreciated.
- The Lake Middleton grebes obviously decided that a wildfire was not going to stop them nesting on the floating nesting rafts – they raised 2 chicks on the lake during the summer of 2020/21!

In September 2021, Warren Baker, who was a Trustee for 14 years, resigned. Warren has contributed so much to the Trust over the years – his wide knowledge has been a great asset to the Trust. Warren gets out and does stuff – all the time! He is always spotting wilding trees in inaccessible places and going off to search and destroy them. Thank you Warren for your commitment to Lake Ōhau.

We worked closely with the DOC Twizel staff as we worked our way through the aftermath of the wildfire. Thank you for the support and assistance we received from Katrina Morrow and her team at DOC.

There were many others that assisted us through this difficult year – thank you.

I have been very fortunate to work with committed Trustees, Warren, Katrina and Helen. It hasn't been easy for the Trustees, with most having to deal with personal loss of property as well. Thank you for all you have done. I firmly believe that in healing nature, we help to heal ourselves and others – that makes our work even more meaningful and valuable.



Vivienne Smith-Campbell
Chairperson, The Ōhau Conservation Trust