Moths and Butterflies of New Zealand Trust

Pūrerehua Aotearoa

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Blue Zone

Vanessa kiwa

KiNZ a Winner

Red Admiral Return

Cover photo: *Zizina oxleyi, seen in Central Otago*. Photo courtesy Zenobia Southcombe

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Patron: Sir Robert Harvey, KNZM, QSO
Editor/Secretary: Jacqui Knight
jacqui@nzbutterflies.org.nz
Biodiversity Advisor: Brian Patrick
Treasurer: Carol Stensness
treasurer@nzbutterflies.org.nz
Advertising: Angela Moon-Jones
angela@nzbutterflies.org.nz
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Pt Chevalier, Auckland 1246
nzbutterflies.org.nz
trust@nzbutterflies.org.nz
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From the Editor

Hi everyone!

It is exciting once again to be bringing you another magazine. And once again I am always delighted with the articles which have been sent in to me by other members. For example, Brian Patrick on his adventures around the South Island has written up about the stem borer on pohuehue. Isn't it surprising... it was only a few years back that if we saw the galls on our pohuehue we might have got out a poisonous product to "get rid of them". And now we understand that there's life in those galls – it's just another part of the ecosystem.

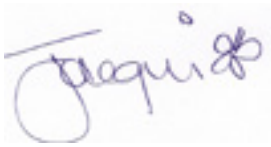
Noah Fenwick also has found a beneficial effect of the Red Zone in Christchurch. How wonderful to see the large populations of NZ blue butterflies there. Perhaps we can help Noah convince the council there to ensure there is always habitat for these beautiful little creatures.

Bianca Woyak is another great writer who makes us think... How our beautiful monarch butterflies are opening the eyes of New Zealanders to our threatened endemic species. We do hope that more teachers help raise awareness of our beautiful NZ species.

Thanks to Daltons we are making inroads in schools encouraging teachers and students to appreciate our native species with the announcement of the first Dalton's School Butterfly Habitat Award. You will find out more about our first winner, and if you are reading this, and know of a school that has a butterfly garden or habitat, please encourage them to apply for the next (Spring) Award. We love to see the work that the schools, play centres and kindergartens (etc) are doing.

I have managed to find a small corner where I can show you the cover of our 2024 calendar. Don't forget that sales of these calendars help fund our projects, so please encourage your friends and whānau to buy them. They make great gifts, and will be sent out to you in plenty of time for Christmas presents.

Best wishes!



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KiNZ

a winner

We are delighted to announce the first winners of the Dalton's School Butterfly Habitat Award: KiNZ Mission Heights.

Based in Flat Bush, South Auckland, KiNZ Mission Heights is part of the Auckland Kindergarten Association that is one of four centres offering full day care and early learning programmes for pre-schoolers. Learning is based on the NZ Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki.

Environmental education promotes critical and creative thinking skills and inspires children to become more engaged with their communities. In schools it helps students understand why the environment is important and provides them with the building blocks they need to live eco-friendly and sustainable lives.

One of the major issues that environmental education addresses is the loss of biodiversity. Last year KiNZ Mission Heights staff had noticed that monarch caterpillars were dying and put steps in place to help them survive.

"We weren't sure if it was pesticide sprayed nearby, wasps or disease," said Rahimah Milatu, teacher. "So we installed a sanctuary. The tamariki, whānau and kaiako all got involved in ensuring that our monarch caterpillars were safe."

"Lots of skills development happened: science, mathematics, technology and languages." added Rahimah. "Our tamariki, even though they are under 5, learned about what conservation meant."

"At the same time, they got to appreciate the beauty of the butterfly in its various stages."

She said that this led to learning more about NZ's native fauna and they decided to invite more butterflies and moths into their

butterfly-friendly taiao (natural environment). The team has been planting other natives and removing pest plants.

"We got rid of moth plant in Auckland Council's Howick Ward Moth Plant Pod Competition, collecting over 5,000 vines with roots and pods" she added. "We now plan to build a butterfly enclosure and this season will grow more larval food plants for our native butterflies and moths."

Above: Rosalyn and Shahin are planting the mahoe sapling into our native garden to attract the green mahoe moth (The mahoe was from the Moth Pods - Native Trees swap programme organised by Pest Free Howick)
Below left: Ngā tamariki building connections with our fauna: Oliver guidies Kevin how to handle the pūrerehua (butterfly) safely and right: James is determined to get rid of pest plants in our taiao (environment).

Page 4: Releasing one of the male purerehua in the mara kai (edible garden), and Oliver added some anuhe (caterpillars) into the sanctuary to save them from starvation as their swan plant at home was running out of leaves.

"We are also considering where to plant nettles for the red and the yellow admirals," she continued. "We have to be very careful with small children, of course."

KiNZ Mission Heights will also raise awareness in the community of the different butterfly species, enhance their biodiversity and learn conservation actions. So the $200 worth of products that they will receive from Daltons will be a huge boon to them.

Maurice Mehlhopt, Chair of the MBNZT, explained that many people think a 'butterfly garden' means a swan plant and monarchs.

"Like most Kiwis I wasn't aware of our native species of butterflies and what to plant to attract them – but I'm learning. And there are so many moths to identify. There is so much that the MBNZT plans to turn around the loss of our species."

The MBNZT encourages schools to plant gardens or habitat bursting with biodiversity to be used as outdoor classrooms. This allows children and teachers to explore environmental issues, engage in problem-solving and take action to improve the environment in their schoolgrounds out in the fresh air.

The judges of the Dalton's Award, both retired teachers/ environmental educators, were highly complimentary of the standard of the entrants:

"They were all winners, and their embracement of environmental education is a credit to them, children, teachers and other supporters. Overall, it was pleasing to see that teachers used the context of nature to enhance their development of knowledge and skills from across the curriculum when exploring, creating and testing explanations arising from a study related to butterflies.

With regards to the effort of KiNZ Mission Heights, they commented:

"The development and testing of explanations relating to the actual experiences of working with both plants and animals in a practical and hands on manner ensured a deeper learning."

"This will help the children to further develop and appreciate the interdependency between plants and animals that enable both species to survive."

"We were impressed by their caring attitudes towards monarchs, making natural habitats and planting a good variety of natives including Muehlenbeckia for copper butterflies and mahoe for the native green mahoe moth along with nettles for admirals."

Entries for the next Dalton's School Butterfly Habitat Award close on 1 November.

Red Admiral

Return

I wonder who remembers what happened in Auckland, 20-something years ago. Where were you at that time?

In May 1999 the painted apple moth (*Teia anartoides*) was discovered in Glendene in the west of Auckland. This moth is a voracious and indiscriminate eater and a threat to forestry, horticulture and quite possibly our native forest.

In January 2002, after much debate, aerial spraying begn covering target areas in the west of Auckland. It wasn't a popular decision as Foray 48B, the spray used, was known to kill all moths and butterflies and there was also concern about human health.

The aerial spraying took place for two years until the moth was successfully eradicated... as well as other species. Monarchs and cabbage white butterflies have since come back to the city, but since that time the red admiral butterfly has hardly been seen in Auckland.

While several individuals have been trying to reintroduce the red admiral to Auckland, this summer a group of members is being set up to pool their efforts and make a concerted effort. The project, which is dependent on funding (already applied for), will be threefold.

Photos thanks Christopher Stephens (top) and Rob Herd (on yellow flower)

1. We will embark on a PR campaign to ensure that people are aware of the beautiful red admiral. In the past, when people have been asked what NZ butterflies they recognise, they will mention two: the monarch and the cabbage white. However, when they see the red admiral they are amazed at its beauty. And to find out it is endemic and only found in Aotearoa New Zealand amazes them.

Creating awareness will be a top priority!

2. Auckland residents will also be encouraged to plant more of the red admiral's host plant(s), stinging nettle. Plants will be grown locally. Although the red admiral in the wild uses *Urtica ferox* as its host, it is also known to use other *Urtica* species on which to lay its eggs.

Obviously this is not the sort of plant which you would grow in public areas, where anyone is likely to come into contact with it. The sting is not lethal but it is a nuisance.

People will need to be taught that it is a simple matter of finding a dock leaf to crush, rubbing the juice from the leaf on the sting, to neutralise it.

And they also will be told about the benefits of having nettle in their garden. It is a great plant, with similar value in the kitchen to fresh spinach: full of iron. Steaming them for a few minutes neutralises the sting.

You can also make a nutritious tea or a soup from nettles: it is an anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, analgesic, anti-infectious, hypotensive and anti-ulcer. It prevents cardiovascular disease. It truly is a superfood! Just make sure that there are no caterpillars on it before you harvest it.

And it is a brilliant addition for the compost or as a foliar spray. A natural, organic liquid plant food is full of growth-boosting goodness including nitrogen, calcium and magnesium.

3. Admiral butterflies in various stages of metamorphosis will be translocated to Auckland from neighbouring catchment areas. Eco-sourcing the admirals from Northland or the Waikato will be a top priority to ensure there is little marked genetic variation between populations and the butterflies are more suited to local conditions.

The eggs or caterpillars would be transferred under cool, dark conditions to their new location, into a butterfly house with insectproof mesh, and most of the butterflies released after they have eclosed. Some adults will be retained in the house and hopefully will mate to build up numbers.

One of the worst pests which affects admirals is a parasitoid wasp, *Pteromalus puparum* (see Issue 41, Winter 2022).

"The wasp infects the caterpillar at the stage of hanging in a 'J'," said Norm Twigge, former MBNZT trustee. "As soon as the caterpillar sheds its skin the wasp will inject its ovipositor into the soft pupa and deposit anything up to 150 eggs!"

"Those wasps will patiently wait up to two days near the hanging caterpillar, or sometimes even on it, and are ready to do their deed when the skin is shed," he added. "Occasionally an admiral pupa will violently shake and swing when touched or disturbed. It is a defensive move to try and shake off the likes of a wasp."

We would welcome other Auckland-based people getting involved in this project. If you are able to do so, own a caterpillar castle or parasite-proof butterfly house, or are keen to talk to people about the beautiful red admiral, please do get in touch with me: jacqui@nzbutterflies.org.nz .

Neil Hunt Park

Update

by Dave Fischer

Some of you may recall that our habitat at Neil Hunt Park in Lynmore, Rotorua, was certificated last year. Here's a photo of what happened in Cyclone Gabrielle!

A large oak tree toppled down, causing damage to a number of trees and shrubs. However, the oak has now been all cut up for firewood, apart from the stump which will be retained as a feature.

We have also replaced the trees and shrubs and the habitat is now looking better than ever.

The most exciting event coming up is our first group tour! We invited the local Forest and Bird branch along to see what we have been doing. They are coming in the Spring and we hope to show them as many plants and trees in flower as possible. They are a very knowledgeable group so I'm sure we will both benefit from the visit.

Before and after photos.
Dave and his grandson, Douglas, pictured

Kaipātiki

Certification

by Jacqui Knight

On the shores of the Eskdale Stream, on Auckland's North Shore is an innovative EcoHub addressing sustainable initiatives. The EcoHub, managed by Kaipātiki Project, has two community nurseries for native plants, compost hubs and teaching gardens, streamcare, regeneration and restoration projects and is the base for many EcoFest North activities held in the late summer.

The EcoHub was opened in October 2021 and by the end of six months they had run over 60 volunteer sessions and hosted over 20 events with an environmental focus!

But I haven't mentioned the most important part!

On 2 ha of what was previously "wasteland", growing all sorts of noxious weeds, between the houses in Eskdale Road and the native bush of Eskdale Reserve, an orchard and community nursery is now a hive of activity. Here, after eco-sourcing seeds, the team propagate and pot up tens of thousands of native plants a year, nearly a hundred different species.

When they are the right size to be transplanted they are planted out by volunteers in local reserves, or supplied to other restoration projects.

Kaipātiki Project also has another nursery at Engine Bay, Hobsonville Point, both of which are managed by Derek Craig, Restoration Nursery Manager. Derek has been involved in ecology and fruit tree management – both native and exotic – for many years. After studies in archaeology, ecology and sustainable land management, Derek began almost 20 years ago as the heritage gardener at Howick Historical Village, with tours and community engagement. He was designed for this job!

When Kaipātiki Project applied to have both nurseries certificated as being great examples of habitat for moths and butterflies, Grace Hall from Manaaki Whenua Landcare and I went along to see if the sites measured up to the MBNZT specifications.

Kaipātiki Project follows te ao Māori principles of kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga, to build stronger, healthier, better connected, resilient communities and neighbourhoods, more attractive to birds, insects and other native wildlife.

The site at Birkdale is almost twice the size of their Engine Bay project at 300 m^2 but Derek assured us that the whole of both properties was butterfly/moth friendly.

They use xeriscaping and waterwise landscaping, mulch and compost techniques to reduce their impact on the environment. A combination of physical and biological processes is used to ensure that any runoff to the Eskdale Stream will not contaminate the reserve.

Even though it was very wet after Auckland's never-ending winter the site was easy to walk around and I noticed that there was little compacting or even concrete, which damages the fertile qualities of the soil. We saw swan plants and nettles and we saw so many native plants such as harakeke, houhere, kawakawa, kōwhai, and pūriri, which would definitely appeal to the local moths.

We were fascinated by the native jasmine, *Parsonsia heterophylla* or Kaihua. Parsonsia is part of the same family as milkweed. At the nursery they were encouraging it to climb up the supports of the shadehouse.

"I'm looking forward to when it forms a roof, naturally," said Derek. "It will have clusters of small, creamy-white flowers from spring until autumn. When the fruit form they are like long, thin pod-like capsules which release tufted seeds which will be blown away into the Eskdale Reserve.

"The flower has a beautiful scent," said Derek.

Grace and I had no hesitation in approving Kaipātiki Project for certification. Both sites were a great example of what people can be doing for the environment, and our butterflies and moths.

Grace Hall (left, front row) with Derek Craig and and the certification plaque with staff members and volunteers

Right: Parsonsia heterophylla *flowers and seed pod (fruit).*

Pohuehue

stem borer

by Brian Patrick

The small, mainly tropical moth family *Thyrididae* has just one NZ representative, the widespread but seldom seen pohuehue stem borer, *Morova subfasciata*.

It's the same colour and size as a copper butterfly and utilises the same hostplant. Additionally, both groups are diurnal with this moth flying quicker than the coppers but at the same time of year and keeping close to their hostplant as coppers also do.

This moth has just one generation annually with adults emerging and active over the warmer months between November and March over large areas of lowland and montane NZ.

Some people regard this group of moths as quite close to butterflies in an evolutionary sense. Its caterpillars spend all their life boring in the pohuehue stems and eventually forming a gall within. When they pupate they drill an exit hole and pump up their wings.

I have found the larvae and pupal swellings on both large-leaved (*Muehlenbeckia australis*) and scrambling pohuehue (*M. complexa*), often. They have been in a wide range of landscapes, from coastal to montane forest edges, shrubland areas and roadsides.

Above: Stem galls on M. australis, *photos Noah Fenwick.*

Below: Adult moth freshly emerged from gall on scrambling pohuhue. Photo, Brian Patrick, taken at Conroys Road near Alexandra, 300m.

Blue Zone

Butterflies

by Noah Fenwick

As I took a wander through Christchurch's Residential Red Zone last summer, I realised that I was not alone – watching closely, small flickers of blue would scatter through the lawned landscape, wandering alongside me. With closer inspection, it is one of New Zealand's endemic butterflies – the NZ blue (*Zizina oxleyi*). They are everywhere in the relatively new Red Zone – and doing well. But what is an endemic NZ butterfly doing in such an exotic and disturbed landscape?

The NZ blue is a unique species in NZ – it is the only endemic member of the blue subfamily (*Polyommatinae*), within the *Lycaenidae* family.

It is one of the smaller butterflies in NZ. With a wingspan only reaching 23 millimetres, it is often overlooked. This is unfortunate, as the butterfly is a beautiful one – brilliant blue wings flash on the overside, with a dark-grey patchwork pattern on the undersides.

The NZ blue is distributed mostly in the drier, central regions of the South Island, mainly Canterbury and Otago. Interestingly, it is apparently absent from Southland and rare on the West Coast and Tasman. Although there are old records from the North Island, it appears to be extremely uncommon now. This may be due to the introduction of a very similar species, the common blue (*Zizina otis labradus*), which is thought to have either been introduced from Australia or flew here unassisted.

There has been some debate on the relationships between these two species, particularly as to whether they are actually different. Generally, the current consensus is that they are distinctly different species, due to morphological characteristics.

The best way to tell them apart is the underwings – the NZ blue is marked with bold, dark splotches, noticeably more pronounced compared to the common blue's duller underwings. Common blues have never been recorded further south than Kaikoura, potentially due to some unknown ecological limit. I do wonder if global warming may change this in future years, which will potentially further displace the NZ blue.

The only known indigenous host plant for the NZ blue caterpillar is the rare and local *Carmichaelia appressa* – known commonly as prostrate broom. A rare plant, restricted mainly to Canterbury's Kaitorete Spit and the Rakaia River mouth, these areas support "natural" NZ blue populations – with no other *Carmichaelia* yet known to support the larvae of this species.

So, how is it that the NZ blue is distributed throughout all of Canterbury and Otago, other than these two sites, with no host plant available? It turns out that this is an adaptable species, and the introduction of the clover (*Trifolium* sp.) for grazing has become a very palatable plant for this butterfly.

The introduction of clover shortly after the establishment of large-scale pastoral farming may have given this butterfly species the opportunity to expand around the regions, as now it could spread out with food everywhere. The flowers of clover also make a tasty food option for adult butterflies.

The Residential Red Zone of Christchurch is broken land – it once held riverside suburbs and communities but the houses and land were damaged beyond repair when the devastating 2011 earthquake struck Canterbury. After the land was sold and the houses demolished, the land has sat idle ever since, resulting in a park-like landscape in a sort of limbo.

Only garden trees and lawn remain, however some re-wilding has taken place. Part of this re-wilding would include the quiet move-in of the NZ blue, as clover is abundant here. Clover has dominated much of the lawns of the Red Zone, but also other related species of the *Trifolium* genus and pea family (*Fabaceae*) are abundant in high diversity, mostly being exotic.

Such species include bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus* sp.), alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) and vetch (*Vicia sativa*). It is not yet known if the NZ blue lays eggs on these related species, however the flowers surely provide tasty sustenance for the adults.

The Red Zone mostly surrounds the Ōtākaro / Avon River, as this was land most affected from the process of geological liquefaction. Although much time has passed with the land sitting idly by, the gears are beginning to turn as to the future of the Red Zone.

Below left: a NZ blue on a clover flower, Burwood Red Zone, Christchurch, and right, on a Carmichaelia appressa *plant, Kaitorete Spit.*

Page 10: NZ blue, photo Rob Jones

This year, I attended a public meeting discussing some future plans for the Red Zone. Much of the land is currently planned for redevelopment, mainly into wetland habitats for flooding mitigation and hopefully wildlife habitat.

Overall, this is fantastic news, as it will allow biodiversity and environmental health to flourish within Christchurch.

But this may mean we will see a disappearance of the NZ blue as its unconventional host plant may be slowly replaced.

Perhaps an introduction of its native host plant, the prostrate broom, could be a sustainable solution for this beautiful butterfly to continue fluttering through Christchurch city. But for now, the NZ blue holds on – with adults emerging every spring to glisten their bright blue wings in the grass.

I personally think that a few unanswered biological questions are due for study in this fascinating species. For instance:

1. What is the phylogenetic relationship between the NZ and common blues?

2. What is the state of competition and hybridisation between these two species?

3. What was the historical distribution of this species?

4. Are there more indigenous host plants for the NZ blue than just *Carmichaelia appressa*? What about the common NZ broom, *C. australis*, and other indigenous pea relatives?

Vanessa

kiwa

by John Lamb

Does New Zealand really have two red admiral species, *Vanessa gonerilla* (the NZ red admiral) and *V. ida* on the Chatham Islands? Or could it be that there is a third red admiral, an ancient species only found in the Poverty Bay/Gisborne District? I have named this third admiral, *V. kiwa*.

This specimen of the ancient red admiral has been in my butterfly collection for about twenty years. This shows the upperside of the butterfly.

Note: my hand-drawn map is not to scale

About 80 million years ago during the Cretaceous period at the end of the Mesozoic era, when dinosaurs roamed the planet, NZ was actually about six islands. Two islands to the west of a faultline were separate from four islands to the east. Vast stretches of ocean water separated those eastern islands which later became the North Island, South Island, Stewart Island and Chatham Islands.

The southern islands then came together to form the west and east coast of the South Island, with the faultline between these two pushing the Southern Alps up high above the tussock-covered eastern plains.

This is a different specimen, showing the underside. This butterfly has been in my butterfly collection for about twenty years.

The ancient red admiral butterflies on the north-eastern island were totally isolated by great stretches of sea from the red admirals on the other islands and eventually evolved into a totally different sub-species, as also did the admirals inhabiting the Chatham Islands.

After many thousands of years, the two northern islands eventually became joined together, the eastern portion becoming the East Cape region of the North Island. The line of mountains along the East Coast of the North Island was formed when the Australian Continental Plate and the Pacific Ocean Plate merged, causing an uplifting of land.

That mountain range used to be under the ocean, proven by the finding of a fossilised penguin embedded in solid rock at Te Reinga, near Wairoa, in 1973. It is estimated to have lived during the Pliocene, over 3 million years ago!

To give you an idea of how long the East Cape had been isolated as an oceanic island, not far off the East Cape lies a small island called Whangaokeno, inhabited by tuatara, which are often referred to as small dinosaurs, about 50 cm long. There are two different species of tuatara: the green and the grey, with the green tuatara found on Whangaokeno Island.

They are often referred to as 'living fossils', belonging to a group of reptiles called Rynchocephalian which thrived at the time of the first dinosaurs, 250-200 million years ago in the Triassic Period.

A large undescribed species of lizard has also been noticed by deer hunters in the Raukumara Ranges in the middle of the East Cape. The lizards are about 60cm long and black, and hunters have seen them sunbathing on the top of rocks. I think it must be some type of gecko. Perhaps it is the Kawekaweau, *Hoplodactylus delcourti*, thought to be extinct.

The Kawekaweau was the biggest species of gecko in the world and of very ancient origin. There is only one preserved specimen of Kawekaweau, held in the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle in Marseille, France.

V. kiwa did not interbreed with *V. gonerilla* which would have resulted in them losing their unique identity. The caterpillars adapted to use *U. urens*, the introduced European, herbaceous nettle, which probably arrived with the early settlers, and also uses the Chatham Islands nettle, *U. australis*. I have noticed the yellow admiral (*V. itea*) also loves to use both nettles.

I recently discovered another stinging nettle in the Tokomaru Bay district which looks very similar to *U. australis*. I have never ever found the caterpillars of *V. kiwa*, on Ongaonga, *U. ferox*.

Here in the Poverty Bay, in the hills, on the plains and around Gisborne city there are areas where *U. urens* grows in abundance, mainly close to trees where farm animals have sheltered or around farm outbuildings such as chicken houses and shearing sheds where there is plenty of animal manure fertilising the soil.

Note the blue-edged forewings.

V. kiwa is more similar to the Chatham Islands red admiral, *V. ida*, but is larger with a wider wingspan, and the markings and coloured patterns can differ on the upper and lower sides of the fore and hindwings. *V. kiwa*'s wings also have a smoother outline than V. *gonerilla*.

And why have I named this ancient red admiral V. kiwa?

The Pacific Ocean, Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa was named after Kiwa, an ancient Polynesian mariner and one of my forebears. Kiwa was a founding ancestor of the Waitaha and Chatham Islands Moriori people. The Waitaha nation were the first people to inhabit NZ, coming in double-hulled canoes to Aotearoa, the Land of the Long White Cloud, 2000 years ago.

The Chatham Islands Moriori people are a tribe of Waitaha who went to live on the Chatham Islands.

I am a descendant of the Moriori people of the Chatham Islands, on my mother's side of the family. I named the ancient red admiral *V. kiwa* because of the place where it is to be found, Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa., which is the Māori name of Poverty Bay. Tūranga-nui-a-Kiwa means the big standing place of Kiwa.

The Monarch Effect

by Bianca Woyak

I have had the privilege of going to several schools to educate ākonga and kaiako on Aotearoa New Zealand's native butterflies as part of my lead teacher role for the B5 Project (Burnside Brings Back Boulder Butterfly). Every time I ask the question; "Can you name one of Aotearoa New Zealand's native butterflies?"

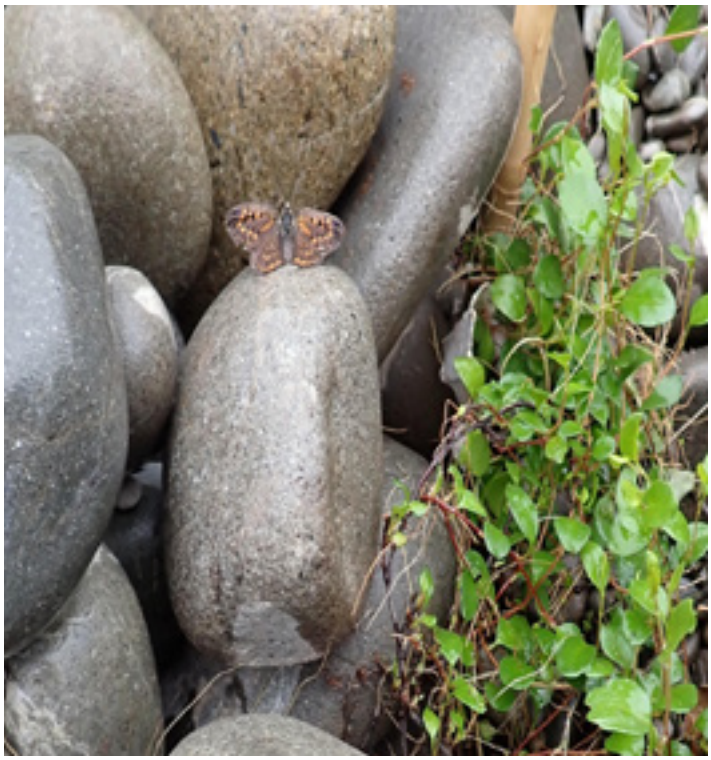
The only butterflies that are mentioned are the monarch and cabbage white butterfly. I have to admit, before I started on this journey of native butterfly discovery, I too could only name the butterflies aforementioned, and maybe a red admiral. After once again being at another school last week, and getting the same response it got me thinking, why can so many people not name a native butterfly and why do most people know so little about them?

The Monarch Effect!

As the monarch butterfly is so big and colourful compared to the original NZ butterflies it is hard not to be bamboozled by it. As so many primary school children look at the life cycle of the monarch by bringing a swan plant into class, this is of course the butterfly's name on everyone's lips (It should be noted that I have done the life cycle of a butterfly with the yellow admiral in the classroom. I brought a garden variety stinging nettle inside after it had eggs laid on it. The ākonga loved the caterpillars and noted how they looked like fuzzy bears!) With so much publicity through American documentaries about the migration of monarchs, it is hardly surprising that this is the main butterfly people think of when they picture 'a butterfly' in their heads. The problem is that this butterfly has captured so many hearts in Aotearoa NZ that many people are forgetting about our original endemic butterflies.

What You See Is What You Get!

In our home gardens most of us like to plant things we can eat, things that look pretty or a native tree. By planting vegetables from the brassica family like cabbages, broccoli or bok choy you will see an abundance of the pest cabbage white butterflies in your garden. Students will always mention that they see these critters in abundance, especially in the summer. We like to make our gardens look pretty by planting flowering plants, the bigger and brighter the flower the better. The problem with this is most of these flowering plants are not native to Aotearoa NZ. This therefore means that our native butterflies will not be attracted to your yard, as even though butterflies will drink nectar from most flowers, their caterpillars will only eat the leaves of their native host plant. Even if you try to plant some native trees, most native caterpillars will not eat these, rather their host plants are smaller shrubs like *Muehlenbeckia complexa* and *M. axillaris* or from the tussock family. And let's face it, I doubt many people are planting ongaonga, our native stinging nettle that is poisonous, in their yards or our public parks to attract admirals. Therefore, if we are not seeing our native butterflies on a daily basis in our gardens and parks, then they are out of sight and out of mind.



Boulder copper with Muehlenbeckia axillaris

Really cute boulder copper butterfly. Note the big eyes!

NZ Iconic

How do we educate the wider public about our precious butterfly taonga which are unique to Aotearoa NZ? How do we get the words admiral, copper, blue, tussock and ringlet on everyone's lips? We need to get our native butterflies up on the NZ iconic list of the kiwi, wētā, tuatara and tūī.

So what can we do?

We can educate the wider public about our precious butterfly species. Help people see that without our smaller insect friends, our iconic creatures would not survive. If you are a teacher remember we have the Unit Plan and resources on the MBNZT site to help educate ākonga about NZ butterflies.

We do need to start planting the butterflies' host plants in our garden, so they are more of an everyday sight. We need to protect our wild areas where these butterflies are currently living and look at extending this habitat by planting out further areas with our butterflies' host plant.

Let's face it, if the wētā can be iconic for being ugly, then why not our butterflies for being so cute and beautiful?

I would love to hear any ideas you many have to help publicise our native butterfly species, feel free to get in contact by email: biancawoyak@gmail.com.

Two enthusiastic B5 students: Finn (top) with a common copper and below, Valentina with a boulder copper on her hat.

Social

Media

Do you know how social media can help our butterflies?

Social media is a collective term for the apps (short for application, a computer program) that focus on communication between like communities of people. It allows people to share ideas, opinions and information through digital networks. This is great for collaboration but a lot of older people find these channels confusing, worrying and possibly unsafe. But social media is popular with younger people and those who are comfortable with digital technology and smartphones.

The MBNZT uses most social media platforms and we have a wonderful team driving our marketing and social media:

Aashna Rahi has just completed a double degree, Bachelor of Communication Studies and a Bachelor of Business, majoring in Public Relations and Marketing at AUT. She has been volunteering for the MBNZT for over two years now. **Vicky Zhang** is majoring in Marketing at the University of Auckland and will graduate later this year. Before she came to NZ she was involved with Toastmasters, achieving the rank of Distinguished Toastmater and holding several leadership positions within the organisation.

You will find the MBNZT on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok, X (which was Twitter) and YouTube. Please tell your friends and family, and ask them to like our pages and follow us. It really does help get our message out there.

Here are some of the posts which Aashna designed for Conservation Week. We also posted these in our e-news which is emailed every Friday morning.

Recently I asked if people were interested in receiving the e-news weekly. The response was overwhelmingly in favour of them continuing weekly or as time allows. You can sign up at www.mb.org.nz .

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