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Native birds flying home to Tiromoana Bush

Native birds including rare species are becoming more common in Tiromoana Bush.

Recent bird monitoring reveals increased sightings of native species such as tauhou/silvereye (up 104%), piwakawaka/fantail (up 52%), and significantly of species previously rarely seen at Tiromoana Bush such as pīpīwharau/shining cuckoo (up 72%) and ngirungiru/tomtit (up 1014%). The nationally 'at risk-declining' pūweto/spotless crane and koitareke/marsh crane were also detected at the Kate Pond wetlands for the first time.

These are some of the fascinating findings from the completion of the second round of bird monitoring in Tiromoana Bush, a 407-hectare regenerating native forest located in Waipara in Hurunui District.

Transwaste Canterbury Ltd (Transwaste) who owns the adjacent landfill in Kate Valley owns Tiromoana Bush and is funding an ambitious restoration project that includes tree planting and creating wetlands, pest control and monitoring. Transwaste Chair Mr. Gill Cox says bird monitoring is important to understand whether the regenerating native bush is also providing a suitable habitat for native birds and fauna.

'Our vision for Tiromoana Bush was to enable native flora and fauna to thrive in a regenerating native forest', says Gill Cox. 'Monitoring is critical to assess whether planting trees and removing predators is providing a suitable habitat for native birds to flourish. It's very exciting to learn the restoration project is working and native birds, particularly rare species, such as the tomtit and spotless crane are making their home in Tiromoana Bush.'

Bird monitoring to determine which species are present in the bush and in what numbers began when the restoration project started in 2005. Monitoring was carried out in October each year from 2005–2009 and again from 2017-2019 says Dr David Norton, a professor from the University of Canterbury's Te Kura Ngahere | School of Forestry who wrote the *Tiromoana Bush Restoration Management Plan* in 2004 and provides ongoing advice to Transwaste on the bush restoration project.

'The steady increase in native bird diversity at Tiromoana Bush is an encouraging sign', says Professor Norton. 'It's gratifying to see previously rare native species such as tomtit, kererū, and shining cuckoo become more abundant in Tiromoana Bush. The restoration planting and natural forest regeneration is creating greater habitat diversity, which together with predator control is enabling more native birds to live in the bush. The monitoring is incredibly valuable because it allows us to identify trends and assess whether our restoration approach is working and what if anything needs to be done differently.'

While many native birds are flourishing in the bush, there was a decline in observed korimako/bellbird (down 24%) and exotic species such as finches (down 52 to 71%). Professor Norton says some species are more vulnerable to predators, and despite an on-going pest eradication programme it might take some years for all species to recover.

'To restore birds we need to both establish suitable habitat including food resources and nesting sites, and control predators like weasels and cats', says Professor Norton. 'While we've been doing predator control for a year now, the full benefits may take several years to become apparent. We'll have a much better idea of our success when we next monitor bird numbers in three or four years time.'