

Makarora Field Camp Jan 8-13th 2024

The Amazing 2024 Makarora Field Camp was delivered by Aspiring Biodiversity Trust in association with Birds New Zealand. The residential event was oversubscribed with 14 places filled by the end of September. Attendees spanned from all over New Zealand, extending from Northland to Gore in Southland, ages ranged from 13 years to 17 years old. Including Birds NZ Young birders or young individuals with an interest in birds/nature to those that were keen to pursue careers within the environmental sector.



The educational five-day field camp was held in the Makarora Valley, at the head of lake Wānaka with a focus on birds and the local ecosystem/ geophysiography. Attendees left with an understanding of the value of the Makarora Valley as an important site for indigenous biodiversity from ridge to river. Field activities included 5 minute bird counts, mist netting/bird banding, braided river bird monitoring and river crossing techniques, invasive predator control for introduced mammals and avian predators (Southern black-backed gull). Monitoring techniques for whio, invasive predators, bat and moth surveys coupled with informative presentations.

A total of 42 bird species were recorded during the week (including awesome nocturnal viewing of ruru/morepork) as well as over 70 species of lepidoptera, with additional records of invertebrates, other fauna and flora. Best practice for biological recording was encouraged with sessions on the important National Bird Atlas programme/ Ebird (from local verifier R Schofield) and I Naturalist. Bonus activities included a high rope assisted tree climbing demonstration, canopy mist net assemblage, natural foraging and an interactive quiz (consolidating knowledge gained) with prizes!

The Wonderland Makarora team did a great job with evening meals and morning brunch and the Makarora Country Café supplied a super packed lunch!

Feedback following the event was super positive and included requests for another event and a two-week session!! The moth species count combined for Makarora is now 100+! Including some rare micromoth records, also a rare bee fly and an interesting spider!



Thanks to the Aspiring Biodiversity Trust Team; Rachel Hufton, Anthony Coote, Nicky Davis and Taylor Coon (ABT Volunteer from Montana), Paul Cuming (BirdsNZ Regional Rep), Richard Schofield (BirdsNZ Otago/EBird Verifier), Graeme Loh (BirdsNZ Otago), Sara Dean (Parent), Simon Binzeggar (Parent) for their keen involvement and help during a fantastic week of birding and biodiversity emergence. Plus, Carey Knox with his infectious moth work! Also, generous sponsors and the local landowners who helped enable this worthwhile event.

Testimonials

It was absolutely amazing. So many expertise in so many different fields, saw morepork and brown creeper for the first time previously only heard. And my first encounter with wrybill, I learned soooo much! It was also incredible to connect with people who have a similar passion for birds.

Audrey – Queenstown

Very fun, definitely enjoyed it learnt heaps about NZ birdlife and ecological importance of the Makarora region, also met some amazing new people, very grateful for the experience.

Ethan – Auckland

This was a great experience and really awesome to reconnect with nature with likeminded people. I learnt a lot of new calls which is something I had never done, also learning about moths, skinks, and geckos which was completely new to me. Jake – Whanganui

I learnt so much from this week about the nature and wildlife in this area, the huge amount of work that the ABT puts into the conservation project and how the whole ecosystem matters. It really is an experience which I will remember for the rest of my life. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

Lucy – Auckland

A lovely opportunity to experience the things I love with people who are different to me but enjoy the same things. It was very inspiring and provided insight into things I could pursue in the future. Guthrie – Dunedin

I enjoyed it because it gave me insight of what happens around a conservation site. I learnt a lot more than I thought I would and absolutely loved it! Jai - Gore

I wanted to say a massive thank you to Rachel, Nikky and Anthony for organising an amazing camp. I know it requires a huge amount of time, energy, money and effort but please know it was truly appreciated and will be a formative experience for them all. It was so well organised and the mentors who attended were amazing. Sara Dean (parent) - Auckland

The camp exceeded what I thought it would be and it's definitely added some different and broader perspectives and extended Caiden's inspiration. Caiden has expressed that it was such a great experience, thanks for you and your team's work putting this together. Simon Benzeggar (parent) – Hamilton



Keen future bird banders – look out Banding office!