



Interest Groups NEWSLETTER

December 2023

My grandma used to say : “ the older you get; the quicker time goes by”. Now that I am the age she was when she said these words, I understand what she meant!

This year has flown by but leaves us with good memories. Just paging through the newsletters of the past year gives a good indication of how active the members of the Dunedin U3A really are.

At the recent board meeting, delivering my annual report, I stated that no official report is needed. Just read all the IG newsletters of 2023! Although they go out under my name, the hard work is done by Ann Wood, ably assisted by Paul Wheeler. Thanks for all your efforts!

Also, thanks to all the members for their individual input in making the interest groups the success that they are.

Quoting Owen Marshall , from his wonderful collection of poetry, *View from the South*:

*“The true measure of achievement is not where
you get to, but how far you have come.”*

With the festive season upon us and looking ahead at the new year, we can sing along from the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám :

*Ah, make the most of what we may yet spend
Before we too into the Dust descend - - -*

Best wishes to all.

Andre Smith
IG Coordinator



I popped in to visit a friend this morning. She was out but her tiny rata tree was at home and in full flower. In Andre’s vein of reminiscing, this is what the time around Christmas signals to me. Seeing the rata glowing on the Southern Alps when heading from the West Coast to Christchurch.

A big thank you to all the Convenors of the Interest Groups. This newsletter could not happen without your willing and timely input each month.

Ann (Ani) Editor

Art Collections Group

Convenor: Anne-Marie Hutton
Monthly: First Tuesday 10 am
annemariehutton@gmail.com



Book Share Group

Convenor: Trish Irvine
First Friday, 1:30
trishjockloch@gmail.com



Dining Group

Convenor: Karen Wards
Third Friday, 7 pm
karendwards@gmail.com



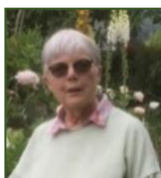
Expanding Musical Horizons **full**

Convenor: Paul Wheeler
Second Monday, 10 am
wheeler@outlook.co.nz



Gallery Group **full**

Convenor: Tash Hurst
Second Wednesday, 10:30
tash.hurst@xtra.co.nz



Gardens & Botanical Group

Convenor: Robyne Selbie **full**
Second Wednesday, 1:30
robyneselbie1945@gmail.com



Genealogy Group **full**

Convenor: Jean Tilleyshort
1st and 3rd Fridays, 10-12
s-jtilleyshort@xtra.co.nz



Lunch Group

Convenor: Anne Stratford
Second Friday 12:30
annepstratford@gmail.com



Mahjong Group

Convenor: Jean Tilleyshort
2nd & 4th Thursdays, 10 am
s-jtilleyshort@xtra.co.nz



Monday Current Affairs Group **full**

Convenor: Joy Hayward
Third Monday, 1.30
joyhayward@hotmail.co.nz



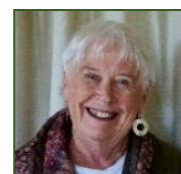
Photography Group **full**

Convenor: Ann Wood
First Thursday, 1:30;
Third Thursday, TBA
ann.wood14blaw@gmail.com



Poetry Group **full**

Convenor: Carole Bezett
Fourth Wednesday, 11 am
carolebezett@gmail.com



Singing Group **full**

Convenor: Claire Stevens
Weekly: Monday, 1 pm
cstevensnz@gmail.com



Tuesday Current Issues Group **full**

Convenor: Gretchen Kivell
Third Tuesday, 10 am
gretchen.kivell@xtra.co.nz



Waikouaiti Global **Conversations**

Convenor: Kath Ryan
2nd Wednesday 2-4pm
kathryan09@gmail.com



Walking Group **full**

Every Thursday, 10:30
Joint Convenors:
Averil McLean
averilmclean2@gmail.com
Janet Hewson
je.hewson@xtra.co.nz



Wanderers Group

Interim Convenor:
Anne Stratford
Every Wednesday at 1pm
annepstratford@gmail.com



Singing Group December

The choir finished their year on Monday 4 December, by singing to an appreciative and supportive



audience of family, friends, and several U3A Board members. This was our first 'public' performance and the group presented nine songs from our repertoire, which included Shenandoah, a Taize chant and the lively 'Sing Jubilate Deo'.

We have really enjoyed singing together this year, and there has been steady progress from singing in unison, to singing regularly in four parts. We're looking forward to continuing that progress next year. As all the current members are planning on



returning, our roll is still full, and we have a waiting list for potential future members.

Claire



It was a pleasure to be asked along to the final day to, once again, enjoy the singers in good voice. We will be back with our cameras in 2024 to record the great work ethic of this leader and group.

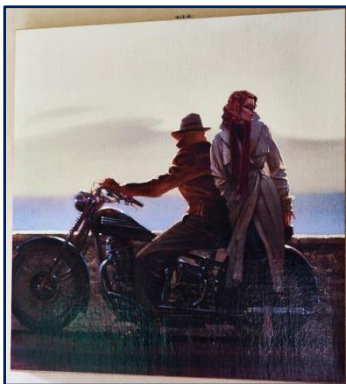
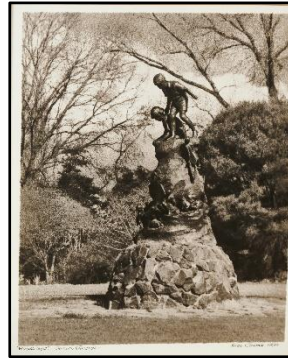
Ani (Ed)

Art Collections Group December

Our visit, early this month, was another very interesting one. We went to the home of Trevor and Sandra and their dachshund, Dog. The couple are widely travelled and have an eclectic collection of works on paper or canvas plus objets d'art. They also have some beautiful old furniture.



Prominent among the art was an 'old master' and several photographs by George Chance. Trevor himself is a keen and accomplished photographer.

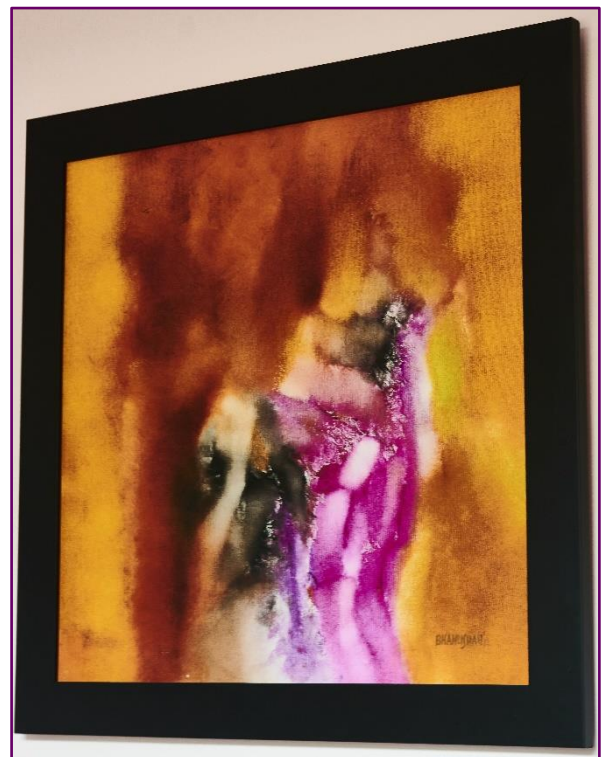


My favourites were a French seascape and a couple of Great Gatsby-like prints of a glamorous couple.

We were asked to look at one painting and say what was depicted. *Anne-Marie won't tell you, but she was the only one of us to come up with the correct answer. What do you see?* (Ed)

R: *The Dancing Pair* – Bhanushah

Below: *Cobb & Co* – Peter Beadle



We were intrigued to see one of the largest printers we have ever come across.



Above: *Water of the Leith Brewery* – George O’Brien



R: *The Tree* – Noeline Grant



Above: *String Quartet* – Reinhard

L: *The Bird on the Gate* – Geoff Williams



We spent a great hour here looking around the home and being entertained by our hosts and then met up again for coffee in St Clair at Fugue. Anne-Marie

Walking Group December



In late November **Anne-Marie** took us through those old streets of Maori Hill during a bit of rain. She does her homework, so we now know who



lived in some of these special historical residences.

Often, we only had to 'imagine' what the house/property looked like from the drive.



Barrie was super organized with a walk starting at Woodhaugh to the Ross



Creek area with the main objective of seeing the waterfall. Many of us did not know it existed. He kept us moving at a good pace crossing streams and we dodged the DCC works that keep our trails in good shape.



Enjoying coffee at the Gardens to celebrate an excellent walk.





Janet kept it local with a meander through St Kilda to the Esplanade and return. Nice and flat except for a bit of Cliffs Road.



Shona intended to treat us to something out of town. The relatively new Waihola walking/cycling track, but we had to cancel the walk due to high winds.



So, instead, today we met at the Mosgiel Christmas tree at 9:55 and finished at 11:30. Eighteen walkers ... some faster than others.

Nice flat tramp through some streets, country pathways, then back along Gladstone Road



to the Aurora Café for good coffee and food at reasonable prices.



Cheers,
Janet
(doing her Rudolph, the reindeer impression)

Mahjong Group December

We have decided to play every week, starting again on January 11. We play a friendly game, not too organised or competitive, and it doesn't matter if people don't come every week.



For anyone who has ever wanted to try Mahjong, but doesn't know how to play, we will have beginners' sessions next year, on the 1st of February, and the 7th of March. Come and see what Mahjong is about with no obligation to continue.

We think it's great, we enjoy the company and the stimulation for our brains. Contact me if you're interested.

Jean

Genealogy Group December

Our last meeting for the year was at Toitu, where we worked on researching our early settler ancestors, and then had coffee and chat at the cafe. We have had a productive year, with everyone gaining new knowledge and enthusiasm as we worked together.



We start again on the 2nd of February. While the group is full, we have no waiting list at present, so let me know if you'd be interested, so you can be next to join.

Jean

Gardens and Botanical Group December

The final garden visit for 2023 was held on a blustery, cool Wednesday as you can see from the photos of our well clad, intrepid gardeners exploring the hillside garden of Shona McCrae in the teeth of a gale.

Shona invited us to hold our Christmas lunch at her lovely home, which is perched on the cliffs above St Clair, close to Cargills Castle. Shona and her husband purchased this site, designed, and built the house and then tackled the garden. A challenging site as the winds are fierce and at the time there was no existing shelter so patiently over about fifteen years, they have created shelter and viewing spaces from each room in the house to encase their garden treasures tucked into shelter beds and crevices amongst the hardy tussocks and grasses. Native plants mingle happily with exotics and create a perfect example of planting to the conditions.



The day we were there provided a perfect example of the tactile value of grasses and tussocks creating



movement and height around the more exposed parts of the garden. The native lancewood and cabbage trees add height and texture around the house along with perching spaces for the birds. Variegated flaxes add colour and form to the front of the section and Oamaru stone sculptures add another layer of interest to the garden.

Along the front of the house is a public walkway which is screened with low hedging to preserve the views from the house out over the cliffs and beyond. Truly a dramatic background. The back of the house is more sheltered and here Shona has created displays of hydrangeas, rhododendrons and other treasures carefully selected for her conditions. It was an interesting

afternoon for all of us as we learned how to make the best of challenging sites.

Shona said it has been a work in progress over the years learning which plants can cope with the conditions and how to get joy from her garden. She even has had to cope with plants being ripped out of the soil by the wind. Over time she has found what works best and how to create sheltered pockets for plants to thrive. Sometimes the birds help with new species appearing amongst the tussocks.

We were lucky to get our tour of the garden completed before the rain arrived so inside we went for a very tasty lunch of Christmas treats and tasty nibbles.

We were not a big group for our final outing, but we had a very interesting afternoon, and we are looking forward to more garden visits in the New Year.

Merry Christmas and a safe and happy holiday to you all.

Robyne



Tuesday Current Issues Group October/November/December

The **October** meeting of our group took place two days after the election, so it was natural that most of what we talked about were issues raised by the election.

The different makeup of the members of parliament and the rise and fall in numbers of parties was a major topic. There was discussion of what the Labour Party did wrong in their two terms which reflected in their poor results. There was a lot of discussion on the attitude of the different parties to climate change, agricultural emissions, and the role of Fonterra. The rise in numbers of the Greens and the Maori party and NZ First were other topics.

A different subject concerned the role of the Howard League for Penal Reform which several members are actively involved in, and how prison numbers would be affected by the policies of the new government.

Our final discussion was about the Australian referendum and the reasons for the result.

October certainly produced a wealth of current issues to discuss.

Jenny R

From our **November** meeting:

- The book 'Killer in the Kremlin' by John Sweeney – a discussion about Vladimir Putin
- Concern about current politics in the USA – do we know enough about how their political system?
- Concern for Israel and particularly Palestinians in the Gaza Strip – history of the area, Palestinian experience under 75 years of restrictions, the actions of Hamas, life under fire, the need for a ceasefire.

From our **December** meeting:

- Movement of people (migration, immigration, refugees) throughout the world will continue to rise with increasing economic hardship, exploitation, conflict, global warming, reducing water supply, and more. At least some of this has been brought about by actions of colonising countries exploiting poorer countries for hundreds of years.
- Concern about the reduction of pig farming in New Zealand.
- We enjoyed potluck Christmas food with our morning coffee and shared our plans for the festive season.

Gretchen Kivell

Poetry Group December

Our final meet up for the year only just squeaked in as such on the 20th of the month. The hostess was our convenor, Carole, who had chosen today's theme of 'Festive Poetry'. We shared a delicious and very festive lunch complete with a glass of bubbles and swapped our secret Santa presents. The stipulation for these was not the usual five- or ten-dollar value, but that they must have been bought from an op shop.

Some of us, however, went armed with poems that didn't quite match the brief. It seemed with all the strife in the world just now, that frothy was not the way to go.



A Christmas Poem by Wendy Cope

*At Christmas little children sing and merry bells jingle,
The cold winter air makes our hands and faces tingle
And happy families go to church and cheerily they mingle
And the whole business is unbelievably dreadful, if you're single.*

Two of our members each chose a poem based on the famous First World War incident where there was a Christmas truce, singing, a football game, and a sharing of gifts between foes. One poet, Siegfried Sassoon a war poet, and the second, Carol Ann Duffy, the Poet Laureate of Great Britain, 2009-2019. Ani

Everyone Sang by Siegfried Sassoon

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields; on - on - and out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away ... O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done.

The Christmas Truce

By Carol Ann Duffy

Christmas Eve in the trenches of France,
the guns were quiet.
The dead lay still in No Man's Land –
Freddie, Franz, Friedrich, Frank . . .
The moon, like a medal, hung in the clear, cold sky.

Silver frost on barbed wire, strange tinsel,
sparkled and winked.
A boy from Stroud stared at a star
to meet his mother's eyesight there.
An owl swooped on a rat on the glove of a corpse.

In a copse of trees behind the lines,
a lone bird sang.
A soldier-poet noted it down – a robin
holding his winter ground –
then silence spread and touched each man like a hand.

Somebody kissed the gold of his ring;
a few lit pipes;
most, in their greatcoats, huddled,
waiting for sleep.
The liquid mud had hardened at last in the freeze.

But it was Christmas Eve; believe; belief
thrilled the night air,
where glittering rime on unburied sons
treasured their stiff hair.
The sharp, clean, midwinter smell held memory.

On watch, a rifleman scoured the terrain –
no sign of life,
no shadows, shots from snipers,
nowt to note or report.
The frozen, foreign fields were acres of pain.

Then flickering flames from the other side
danced in his eyes,
as Christmas Trees in their dozens shone,
candlelit on the parapets,
and they started to sing, all down the German lines.

Men who would drown in mud, be gassed, or shot,
or vaporised
by falling shells, or live to tell,
heard for the first time then –
Stille Nacht. Heilige Nacht. Alles schläft, einsam wacht ...

Cariad, the song was a sudden bridge
from man to man;
a gift to the heart from home,
or childhood, some place shared ...
When it was done, the British soldiers cheered.

A Scotsman started to bawl The First Noel
and all joined in,
till the Germans stood, seeing
across the divide,
the sprawled, mute shapes of those who had died.

All night, along the Western Front, they sang,
the enemies –
carols, hymns, folk songs, anthems,
in German, English, French;
each battalion choired in its grim trench.

So Christmas dawned, wrapped in mist,
to open itself
and offer the day like a gift
for Harry, Hugo, Hermann, Henry, Heinz ...
with whistles, waves, cheers, shouts, laughs.

Frohe Weihnachten, Tommy! Merry Christmas, Fritz!
A young Berliner,
brandishing schnapps,
was the first from his ditch to climb.
A Shropshire lad ran at him like a rhyme.

Then it was up and over, every man,
to shake the hand
of a foe as a friend,
or slap his back like a brother would;
exchanging gifts of biscuits, tea, Maconochie's stew,

Tickler's jam ... for cognac, sausages, cigars,
beer, sauerkraut;
or chase six hares, who jumped
from a cabbage-patch, or find a ball
and make of a battleground a football pitch.

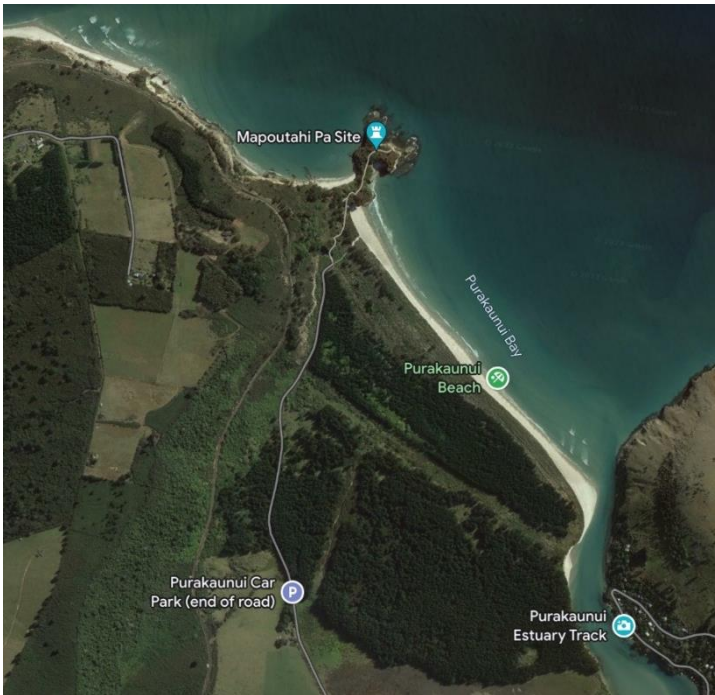
I showed him a picture of my wife.
Ich zeigte ihm
ein Foto meiner Frau.
Sie sei schön, sagte er.
He thought her beautiful, he said.

They buried the dead then, hacked spades
into hard earth
again and again, till a score of men
were at rest, identified, blessed.
Der Herr ist mein Hirt ... my shepherd, I shall not want.

And all that marvellous, festive day and night,
they came and went,
the officers, the rank and file,
their fallen comrades side by side
beneath the makeshift crosses of midwinter graves ...

... beneath the shivering, shy stars
and the pinned moon
and the yawn of History;
the high, bright bullets
which each man later only aimed at the sky.

Photography Group December



I have included the map because you may well want to do this walk during the summer. From just before Port Chalmers, head up to the left and follow the signs towards Orokonui Ecosanctuary. Take a right turn and head towards Purakaunui. Just past the school, take the road to the left and head down towards Osborne. Go across the causeway and follow the water around until you come to Purakaunui Car Park and the end of the sensible road. With a 4WD vehicle you will be able to drive further but the road, walkable, some puddles to be skirted, is not recommended for your average car.

This was our second trip in November, and we had a fair turnout. The tide times were calculated almost to the minute. Thanks Caz. We left the carpark one hour before low tide because the

access to Canoe Beach is entirely dependent on the tide being well out and allowing time to return from the caves to the safety of Purakaunui Beach. Some walked to the beach and some of us got lucky and were ferried by jeep. We climbed the wooden steps and turned sharp right, as opposed to going straight on to



Canoe Beach, and headed uphill to the site that was Mapoutahi Pa. The start of the track is very steep and narrow. and I certainly needed a bit of help, both ways, to get over this obstacle. A

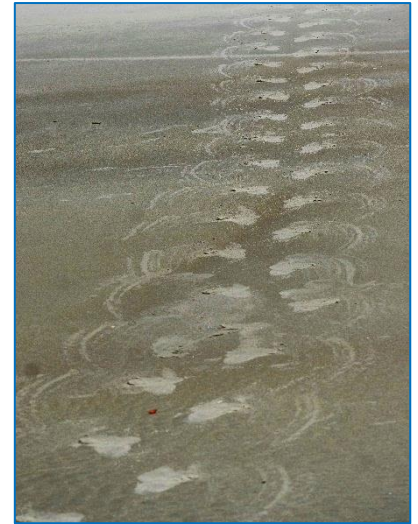
very supportive group this is. DOC had weed whacked the long grass in the morning, so the rest of the track was easy going. Well worth the ascent as the views are splendid. The group was perturbed to see at the outlook, a body in the bushes with a dog sitting alongside. However, all was well, just her owner lying down for a snooze after the hill climb, while Ella Bella Rocket Snake patiently waited.







Down we came and headed to Canoe Beach with its interesting rock formations and the prize of seeing a very pregnant sea lion coming ashore and heading up the beach to have a sand bath. One of our members remarked



that the photo (R) would make a good quiz question: what made that

pattern in the sand?



R: The rail line Waitati – Dunedin passes through a tunnel way above Canoe Beach.



It was a picnic day for most of us, but then we headed up to the Ecosanctuary for a well-deserved coffee, plus the one or two who hadn't bought lunch, and given the time, really relished their choice of the cabinet food on offer.

This tui happily posed for a pic outside the café's very clean window.

Ani

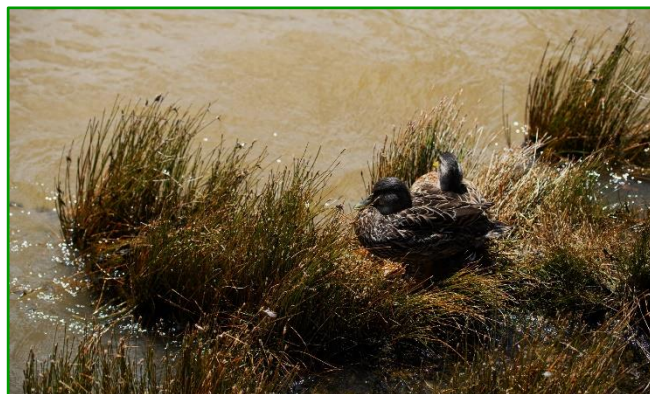
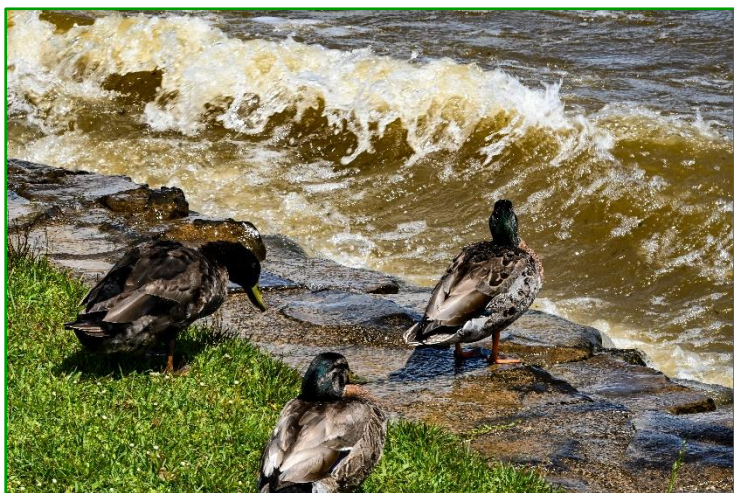


Our last trip for the year, early December, was a mixed blessing. Off we went to Waihola with the intention of trying out the new boardwalk plus a side trip to the conservation area up Titri Rd.

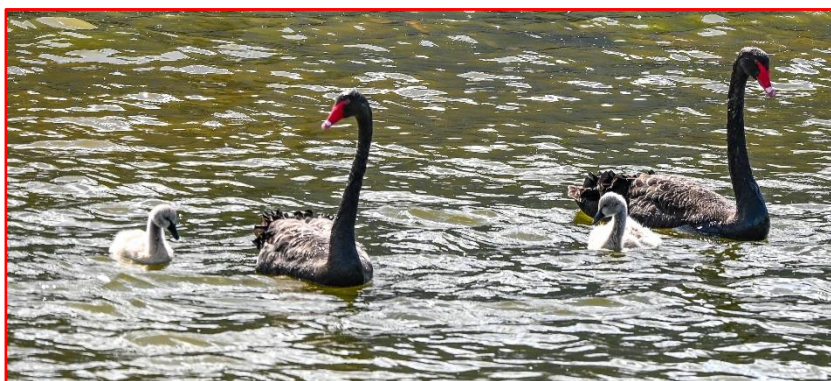
The highlight of the day for most was the fish and chip shop that weighed one's choice of fish and then cooked it to perfection. Gluten free options were available which is a rarity in your average takeaway.



It was blowing a terrible gale, and one photographer named his shot of the lake



'Chocolate Soup'. I've never seen it so rough. The ducks most definitely did not want to hop in. The swans and their cygnets were hardier souls.





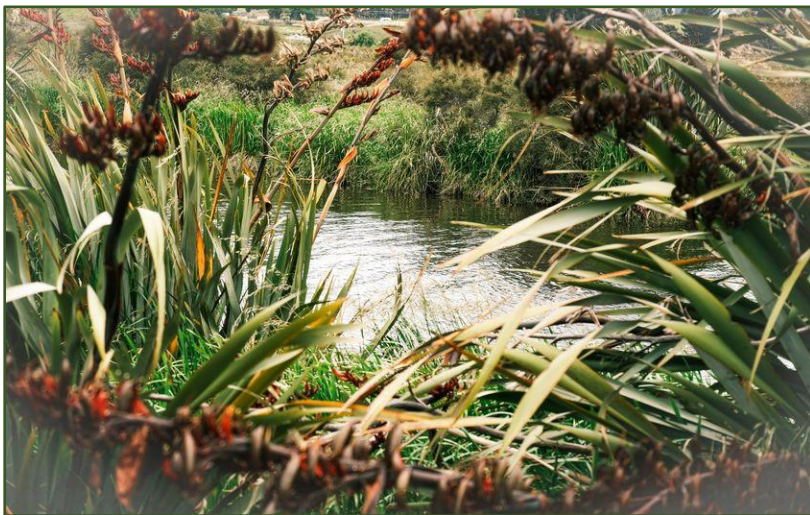
Having given up on the boardwalk idea, we headed along Titri Rd. The walk there also revealed some fishhooks when we came to a forced halt fairly near the end of the track.



With the exception of a fern bird, we didn't encounter the wildlife we expected to see. Lying low in the conditions they were! The photographer of the bird, a perfectionist, wasn't happy with the subject's



obscurity within the bush. I said to him a bird in the bush will do nicely when there isn't one in the hand.



The flaxes were flowering profusely. It seems that they are as misguided as the cabbage trees about the long hot summer we are supposedly experiencing.





The wind was insisting the flax fronds make a pattern in the dirt.



So that's it from the photo group for 2023. I'm hoping we will see some good holiday snaps on our shared FB page over the month to come. Ani

