

Banrock champions wetlands – nature’s wonderful shock absorbers

By **PETER ISAAC**, special correspondent.

Banrock Station of South Australia funds a worldwide conservation scheme that focuses on wetlands and the species that dwell in them. Banrock Station’s vineyard, itself was planted in a restored wetland. In New Zealand the scheme pivots on preserving the native duck, a brown teal known as Pateke. In partnership with Wetland Care NZ, the project involves releasing the Pateke into specially prepared sites where predators are controlled through trapping and fencing. Banrock Station’s preservation work in New Zealand continues to accelerate through its funded projects, one being with the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society, which controls a large swathe of public land east of Warkworth, with the Auckland Regional Council.

Banrock Station’s global ecological funding is derived from a self-imposed tithe the company levies on each bottle and cask of its brand it sells. The funds are dedicated to projects in the country where the wine has been sold. In Kenya, Banrock Station funds protection of flamingos, in Holland the re-introduction of otters, in the UK, it supports the Wildfowl & Wetland Trust. It is active in Canada, the USA, Scandinavia and Germany, among other countries.

This year, Tony Sharley, manager of Banrock Station, presented the sanctuary society with a cheque for \$30,000 to go toward the cost of keeping the sanctuary free of predators with a 2.5-kilometer predator



Mike Camm, Tutakaka Land Care Coalition, demonstrates a trapping device to Ossie Latham of Wetland Care NZ who accompanied Banrock Station’s Tony Sharley on a recent nationwide tour of the wine company’s funded projects. The Tutakaka group received \$12,000 from Banrock to help eliminate predators.



From left: Les Cave, head of the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society; Jo Ritchie, the society’s project manager; Tony Sharley; and Mace Ward, group manager of Auckland Regional Council Parks.

proof fence. Mr Sharley noted the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society Inc, known as TOSSI, show-cased the way volunteers, government, and the private sector could pool their diverse talents, energies, and resources to make progress in conservation. Tony holds a Masters Degree in Science from Monash University. His first major ecology assignment was the remediation of old uranium workings. His work resuscitating exhausted land was noticed and he became a member of the Murray-Darling Basin’s advisory committee. He is an evangelist for wetlands everywhere, pointing out they are nature’s safety valve, a buffer zone, and shock absorber, coping with the extremes of droughts and floods.

Banrock’s New Zealand partner, Wetland Care, promotes wetland awareness and works to enhance their value. One of the biggest projects is with Wairakei Pastoral, the central plateau corporate farmer, constructing habitats for wildfowl with a series of dams built down gullies.

One of Mr Sharley’s objectives is to encourage, especially in the 11 countries Banrock Station supports ecological projects, a greater consciousness of World Wetlands Day held annually on February 2. It marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits and the Ramsar Convention. ■PE