



New Zealand  
Biosecurity Institute

the magazine of the NZBI Winter 2025

# Protect



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New Zealand  
Biosecurity Institute

Working together to ensure New Zealand is protected from the adverse impacts of invasive species

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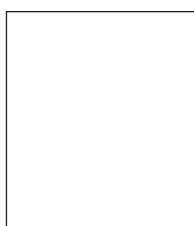
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The New Zealand Biosecurity Institute can be found on the web at [www.biosecurity.org.nz](http://www.biosecurity.org.nz)



## ■ FROM THE EDITOR

# An ever-evolving agenda and ever-changing content

Topics addressed in Protect Magazine have certainly changed over the years. Cats are elephants in this issue, as they begin to become features of the biosecurity agenda. Horses also make an appearance as pests, so too do fur seals of the South Atlantic. There's also something in the air - eDNA is now helping detect pests in the atmosphere as well as in the water. Hopefully drones won't replace dogs as (wo)man's best friend, but there seems to be no end to the uses unmanned flying machines can now be put to.

Read all about it.

CHRIS MACANN  
EDITOR

## ■ FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Progressing our role

Kia ora tatou

I was pleased to see such a great attendance at NETS this year. Close to 200 took the opportunity for learning sharing and most importantly networking. Thank you, Horizons, for hosting us all and for enthusiastically showing us your beautiful region and sharing the biosecurity highlights and challenges and within it.

I am honoured, humbled and very grateful to be the new President of the NZBI. Thank all of you for your support.

I'd like to thank Rowan Sprague for her work as president. It is reassuring that Rowan will still be about to share her advice as immediate past president and that she will still be active in organising NETS2026 in Christchurch in August, in conjunction with the Australasian Weeds Conference. A significant innovation which Rowan introduced is the mentoring scheme. Briar Cook and I will be picking up Rowan's scheme in 2026. Shane Hona and **I have been discussing the role of NZBI and we would like to build on that idea, with your support, to increase the role of the institute in promoting of career pathways and development of professional development opportunities for members.**

I am also pleased to let you know that Nick Ward and Shane Hona will be reviewing the NZBI awards programme to ensure they remain purposeful and appropriate for the industry. **I am particularly enthusiastic about creating assistance/support for students engaging in biosecurity as a career.**

My first official role as president was to present past president Alice McNatty with a Life Membership. A Life Membership is an acknowledgement of a significant and sustained contribution to the Institute at national level. It was a pleasure to work with Alice in my role as secretary and I am grateful that her contribution to biosecurity and the Institute will continue.

I'd like to thank Wendy Zapart for taking on the role of NZBI secretary. The Institute couldn't function without someone to support the work of the Executive

The NZBI Executive is a great team. I would like to thank them for their ongoing dedication and support and I am looking forward to progressing the role of the NZBI President in the wider biosecurity sector.

Ngā mihi

DIANE FRASER  
PRESIDENT, NZBI



## NETS2025: Celebrating excellent mahi across the motu



*The delicate dune ecosystem at the Manawatu Estuary.*

More than 200 members took advantage of the Lower North Island Branch's hospitality on Horizons' patch, to attend NETS2025 in Palmerston North. The theme was "**Haumaru koiora kia pai āmua - Biosecurity for a better future**". It was a healthy turn out to share challenges and celebrate successes, and to hear about good science, new innovations and best practice.

The Horizons Region covers a large area with a diverse and widely spread population, and it has a large amount of forest cover. Pest management is a large part of the council's core work. Horizon's chief executive Michael McCartney said plants are a big problem in the region. He said the challenge is monetising what the council does and getting public licence.

**"How do we sell the value of biosecurity** to our communities, to our politicians, to the entire country?," he challenged.

There is a long history of biosecurity in the region, as summarised by Biosecurity and Biodiversity partnerships manager Craig Davies.

Among the many challenges are preventing the expansion of leguminous plants on the Desert Road and battling pines in Tongariro National Park. He said working with a community focus across landscapes, with persistence and proactivity, has paid dividends.

**"They didn't use saws they used pens,"** he said, on co-operative efforts in the early days of pine control.

He noted that investing in pine control and biocontrol has had cost benefits.

**"Spending a dollar to save many is the biosecurity story,"** he said.



*Tiny local. A katipo spider at The Manamatu rivermouth.*

He said two indicators that biosecurity work is making a difference across landscapes is the growth of whio and kiwi numbers.

### From the other side of the world

Michael Lavery, from the international branch of Kaitiaki o te Ngahere showed how a successful pest control programme on islands on the other side of the planet (in the South Atlantic) could perhaps be a model for invasive species management on protected islands closer to home.

## In defence

NZ Defence Force Land Management Officer Alison Beath explained NZDF's large biosecurity programme to defend the land it manages. This included the need to maintain many types of environments which replicate conditions staff may encounter in their defence roles. The Waiouru Military Training Area has forests, wetlands, tussockland, shrublands, waterways, not to mention a desert. Conifer control has been a key component since the 1950s when **the trees became so dense that they damaged vehicles and inhibited tank manoeuvres**. As well as rook, rabbit, hare and feral cat control, work also includes deer monitoring and keeping Kaimanawa horses away from sensitive areas.

## Early early early

Kerry Bodmin from Waikato Regional Council reiterated that the most cost-effective pest management options are available when pests are absent, or in very low numbers.

Kerry presented stories showing the process of eradication - the successes, the challenges and the teamwork which enabled it. **"A consistent, constant effort on eradication species ensures success, provides learnings along the way and eventually enables resources to be redeployed,"** she said.

## Data: getting it all together

Michael Berardozi, Ministry for Primary Industries, explained progress on developing a single publicly accessible database of all exotic plants in New Zealand. There is plenty of information out there but "the challenge is to get it all together," he said.



Secretary and president-elect Diane Fraser chairs the AGM assisted by treasurer Duncan McMorran and vice president Shane Hona.



A wander around Bushy Park Reserve.

The database - a collaboration with MPI, DOC, MBIE, regional councils and CRI's - will allow viewing of existing information related to established pests in New Zealand from publicly available sources.

Michael's message was reiterated in other presentations covering data coordination and better visual representation of pest work across regions.

## In and on the water

Marine and aquatic presentations covered the spread of the invasive gold clam and its effect on native aquatic communities; further developments of a wool hessian blend underwater weed mat; surveillance for high-risk species not yet established in NZ; and using water currents to model invasive organism spread.

## Serious reductions

Highlights and challenges along the road towards serious reductions in rabbit, wallaby, deer and other ungulate numbers were key features of the vertebrate control stream of sessions. Kevin Christie's story of the largest mainland rabbit eradication project in the southern hemisphere showed how **technical innovation, stakeholder collaboration, and rigorous planning overcame significant logistical challenges and delivered what may be the most successful mainland rabbit eradication project to date.**

## Prioritising potential plant pests

Prioritising thousands of potential weeds, and the importance of partnerships in landscape-

continued





Top shot with 120 points out of a possible 140, Sharon Trainor from DOC Invercargill, R with lucky draw winner Brooke Collins from Porirua City Council.

scale weed management were key topics in the plant sessions, as was the emphasis on maintaining appropriate relationships with the nursery industry.

Sea spurge, alligator weed, skunkvine, Polypodium fern and the ornamental species, Taiwan cherry, were among the pests addressed.

## The cat was the elephant

If there was an elephant in the room it would have posed as a cat. Helen Nathan from Boffa Miskell explored Māori perspectives on cat control and Sian Reynolds, also from Boffa Miskell, asked **"when do we try and break the barrier with the public so that we can make real gains with protecting our vulnerable wildlife?"**

## Up in the air too

Technology tales covered eDNA use in the air not just water, and remotely detecting aquatic weeds using underwater video imagery. Presentations on drone use in biosecurity captured a lot of interest and sparked some imagination. As well as detection work drones are also now being used to carry trapping supplies to remote places.

## Gems

A gem session of note asked for support in finding solutions to simplify the convoluted and expensive process of applying for a controlled substance licence without compromising the high standards.

Other gems touched on a smart weed alert tool for new weeds to a region, understanding biosecurity requirements in the Hauraki Gulf, protecting the Australasian bittern in Wairarapa, and potential pests spotted lantern fly and lilly pilli leaf beetle. Presentations by Unitec students featured among the sessions, and their enthusiasm showed.

## Calls for unity

Concluding plenary sessions highlighted the need to embed pathway management into pest management plans at local as well as national levels.

Waikato Regional Council and Biosecurity Taranaki celebrated the success of their regional collaborations on biosecurity projects with community groups, and suggested ways to further increase this participation.

MPI reported on the "call to action" which will be the new Biosecurity System Action Plan to strengthen the entire biosecurity system.

## Future ancestors

Mavis Mullins from Nga Whenua Rāhui spoke of work undertaken through the fund and how indigenous biodiversity can go hand-in-hand with economic activity. **"Governments come and go. People come and go, but we're doing it for the future. Let's be remembered as future ancestors. Perhaps our ancestors weren't quite as aware as we are. Let's work harder to be better ancestors,"** she challenged.

Relentless campaigner Didymo Dave Cade concluded with a rousing and positive presentation entitled "Chasing Dreams in Biosecurity", about his experiences as a tireless check clean dry campaigner, and his strong commitment to biosecurity and in particular to protecting waterways.

## In the field

Field trips saw very different samples of all the region had to offer.

**Tarapuruhi Bushy Park** : Tarapuruhi Bushy Park is an 89 ha predator free sanctuary in the Whanganui district. Installing a 4.8 km predator proof fence, and eradicating mammalian pests (except mice) in 2005 has allowed recovery of the podocarp-broadleaf forest and the reintroduction of a range of species.



Members of the 2024-25 Exexutive Committee meet prior to NETS2025. Sarah Irvine, Shane Hona, Diane Fraser, Nick Ward, Mark McAlpine, John Sanson and Duncan McMorran.



*Loving their work Warren Wright and Donna Daken from Key Industries share their enthusiasm with Kay Griffiths from The Conservation Company*

**Manawatū Estuary:** The outing to Manawatū Estuary showcased the actions of the many groups working to enhance biodiversity and promote biosecurity. In recent years the dunes have become home to sea spurge. New Zealand's only DOC ranger dedicated entirely to this plant showed the immense challenges involved in keeping it from getting a permanent foothold along the coast.

**Pūkaha Mt Bruce:** A visit to the Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre and Mount Bruce was a chance to see practical and successful conservation in action. The reserve is a restored forest and captive breeding site, home to endangered wildlife including brown kiwi, pāteke (brown teal), whio (blue duck), takahē, kōkako, kākā, orange-fronted kakariki, tuturuatu (shore plover), and tuna (longfin eels). As well as hearing about the captive breeding programme, visitors also heard about the area's rabbit control programme.

**Tōtara Reserve:** Tōtara Reserve, the only regional park in the Horizons region, is one of the best and most accessible examples of the diverse lowland forest that was once widespread in the Horizons Region. Visitors heard about pest plant and animal control, particularly trap networks and deer, biodiversity monitoring, and the complexities of managing both the natural environment and visitor facilities, including a campground.

## Awards Dinner

At the Awards Dinner, the Institute's coveted Legacy Awards were announced, to formally recognise members for their efforts.

Past-president Alice McNatty's leadership of the Institute through many roles and through testing times was rewarded by a Life Membership.

Paul Petersen received the Dave Galloway Innovation Award for his efforts in bringing new technology to classical biocontrol of plants.

Cam Speedy's passion for ecology and wildlife, and dedication to getting the balance right was rewarded when he received the Peter Nelson Award for achievement in vertebrate pest management.

Chris Hale's dedication to high standards and professional development was recognised when he was awarded the Peter Ingram Award for sharing and advancing knowledge of pest plants.

Rory Johnson was awarded the coveted Stook for best presentation. Rory's paper focused on the multi-species prioritisation tool he and members of the pest plant team at Horizons have been developing.



*Manawatu Estuary's extensive volunteer trapping network explained*

Following the formal dinner, Horizons staff took ownership of the evening, literally, by entertaining the night away with their in-house band, made up of present and former staff members.

## New officers

At the annual general meeting incumbent NZBI Secretary Diane Fraser was elected President, replacing Rowan Sprague who stepped down. Wendy Zapart from Auckland Council was elected to the position of Secretary, vacated by Diane. Shane Hona was re-elected Vice-President and Duncan MacMorran was re-elected Treasurer.

## Working with passion

President Diane Fraser farewelled all, acknowledging the excellent mahi across the motu. She said members continually worked with passion, often under pressure with some doing more for less. She noted that restructuring in some areas makes it even more challenging.

## Haere mai Ōtautahi

Marcus Girvan invited one-and-all to meet again in Christchurch for NETS2026 which will be combined with the Australasian Weeds Conference 2026 from August 23 - 27 2026. Vertebrate pest sessions will run concurrently and in combination with plant and wider biosecurity sessions.

See you there.

"People come and go but the whenua remains."

**CHRIS MACANN,**  
EDITOR





A volunteers' weedbusting kit explained at the Manawatu Estuary.



Didymo Dave Cade shares the message.



Top shot with 120 points out of a possible 140, Sharon Trainor from DOC Invercargill, R with lucky draw winner Brooke Collins from Porirua City Council.

“Most of the time I’m out in my truck on my own talking to weeds.”

- Anon

“They are not happy to see us. We have to carry a broomstick.”

- Michael Lavery on Arctic fur seals

“I could make it sound like fun, but the thought of actually doing the work... out in the hot sun... is...”

- Anon

“Five tons of pure aggression. You don’t want to get in their way.”

- Michael Lavery on the Southern elephant seal

“In the end words are great but it’s the work on the ground, the mud on your boots... dirty fingers... and cold wet days that matter.”

- Community volunteer

“It’s easier to ask for forgiveness and get permission later.”

- Community volunteer

SHARE, LEARN, CONNECT, AND GET ENERGISED:

## President's welcome to NETS2025

Haumaru koiora kia pai A4mua - Biosecurity for a Better Future

Haere mai welcome to NETS2025

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 74th NZBI National Education and Training Seminar (NETS) held in Palmerston North Te Papaioea. This three-day conference provides a multi-sector and multi-agency forum for discussion and debate on how we can collectively work to protect our native flora and fauna, landscapes, people and culture. NETS provides [a fantastic opportunity to share, learn, connect, and get energised](#).

The theme for this year's NETS is 'Haumaru koiora kia pai 4mua – Biosecurity for a Better Future'. This theme recognises the reason why we do biosecurity work, as well as the opportunities to learn from each other to improve and achieve better outcomes.

NETS would not be possible without a dedicated and committed Organising Committee, and this year it was a 'lean team' of five. I would like to thank the NETS2025 Organising Committee for all their hard work pulling this conference together: Craig Davey, Jack Keast, Michael Beech, Daniel Hurley, and Mark McAlpine. I'd also like to thank the many others who have helped make NETS2025 happen, from organising the field trips to offering to give a presentation.

A big thank you as well to this year's sponsors for their generous support: Biosecurity New Zealand, Horizons Regional Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council, Boffa Miskell, NIWA-Earth Sciences New Zealand, Key Industries, Rural Assist, NZ AutoTraps, Unitech and Wildland Consultants.

NETS is [as much about learning as it is about networking](#), and I encourage you all to take advantage of this. Even if you've been to many NETS before, make sure you talk to someone new and learn about the work they do.

ROWAN SPRAGUE  
NZBI PRESIDENT





## Let's continue to do great mahi for a better future

The NZBI released this story for the media ahead of NETS2025 to promote Biosecurity Week 2025.

Let's continue to do great mahi, for a better future.

That's the thoughts of the NZ Biosecurity Institute which today launched Biosecurity Week, aimed at highlighting the activities of all those involved in keeping New Zealand protected from invasive species.

Institute president Dr Rowan Sprague said with competition for funding, **it's vital that biosecurity remains to the forefront of all New Zealanders' hearts and minds**. The theme for this week – Haumaru koiora kia pai āmua Biosecurity for a better future - recognises the reason why we do biosecurity work, as well as the opportunities to learn from each other.

Biosecurity Week is promoted each year by the NZ Biosecurity Institute, the networking organisation for all people involved with biosecurity.

The week centres around the Institute's annual national gathering known as NETS, to be held this year in Palmerston North.

Dr Sprague said the conference will look at how the latest research and technology can best be used to help the sector to protect native biodiversity and primary productive industries.

Dr Sprague said top technology topics to be discussed this year will include remote detection of pests on the ground, in the air and under the water. She said wallabies, feral cats, invasive shellfish, and invasive pest ferns will be among the many pest species in the conference sights this year.

"As well as needing innovation like the use of remote sensing technology and system efficiencies like the prioritisation of pest species, the sector will always need people power," Dr Sprague said.

## BRINGING HI-TECH TO CLASSICAL CONTROL:

# Paul Peterson wins the Dave Galloway innovation Award

Bringing new technology to classical bio-control of plants, has won Paul Peterson from Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research (now part of the infant Bioeconomy Science Institute) the 2025 NZBI Dave Galloway innovation Award.

Paul has been part of the weed biocontrol group at Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research for the past 30 years. Paul has always been interested in how to bring technological advances to advance classical weed biocontrol. Early on, Paul spearheaded the development of MWLR's digital sampling method to help assess percentage cover in plot photos more reliably. In the past decade, Paul has worked tirelessly to integrate drone technology and aerial remote sensing into multiple aspects of weed biocontrol, a good example being the success and impact of the Desert Road Legume Management consortium. More recently, in the Cook Islands, Paul has integrated these technologies to cover two critical needs. The first was for baseline information on weed distribution and extent of invasion: Paul compared satellite imagery, aerial photos and drone imagery as well as RGB [red, green, blue] vs multi/hyperspectral imagery to capture reflected light that cannot be seen with the naked eye vs. LiDAR laser technology [laser imaging, detection, and ranging]. His [maps produced by these methods, along with the help of AI, informed the community of stakeholders about how much more widespread and dense than originally thought these two species of invasive trees are](#). This information was critical to inform appropriate management strategies. The second critical need was for a practical and [safe method for sampling treetops in difficult terrain to assess establishment of biocontrol agents](#): Paul has experimented successfully with close-up drone photography, and even a claw attachment allowing a drone to retrieve foliage samples of suspected biocontrol agent damage, both allowing safe confirmation by the human on terra-firma below. Paul's innovative approaches will continue to serve the specific project in the Cook Islands in long-term monitoring of biocontrol agents, and in changes to weed abundance and distribution. This proof of concept will benefit other Pacific nations and can be applied to invasive weeds in New Zealand.

## DAVE GALLOWAY INNOVATION AWARD

The Dave Galloway Innovation Award is named in memory of Life Member Dave Galloway who passed away in January 2016. The Dave Galloway Innovation Award is designed to recognise innovation in biosecurity. It will encompass work carried out with both vertebrates and invertebrates, terrestrial and aquatic. This award can be presented to an individual, group or organisation.



DEDICATED TO GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT:

## Cam Speedy earns the Peter Nelson Award

Cam Speedy's dedication to getting the balance right, and sharing his knowledge in an engaging and memorable way, has rewarded Cam Speedy with the 2025 Peter Nelson Award for achievement in Vertebrate Pest Management. Here is the citation prepared by his colleagues:



*Cam Speedy with the Peter Nelson Memorial Award with Warren Wright from Key Industries.*

Cam Speedy has been passionate about ecology and wildlife both native and introduced all his life.

During one of his first jobs carrying out kiwi surveys throughout the Bay of Plenty he camped in his car adjacent to various stream mouths so he could fish the mornings and evenings targeting trout on his fly rod before heading out into the bush for the night.

Likewise, his early career with the New Zealand Forest Service in the Kaimanawa Forest Park kindled his interest in forest ecology and sika deer management.

The demise of the Forest Service saw Cam transition directly into the newly formed Department of Conservation where he provided technical support around pest animal management for the Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy.

As a DOC staff member Cam was a champion for recreational hunters and he walked a fine line because his personal views on deer management were a little too radical for his employer. Around three decades down the track, Cam's theories on leaving the stags and harvesting the hinds being better for the deer herd and the forest are now being voiced by more and more hunters and forest managers alike.

After leaving DOC, Cam joined EPRO, one of New Zealand's largest professional pest control companies. In his new role, Cam helped plan and deliver more hectares of pest animal control in any one year than most DOC pest control staff achieve in their whole career.

Cam's next career change saw him working for Genesis Energy, setting up a private consultancy company, Wildlife Management Associates, while playing a pivotal role in establishing the Sika Foundation, combining his passion for the mountain ranges, the rivers flowing out of them, and the wildlife living within them.

Cam lives and breathes rivers, forests, trout, deer, native wildlife and introduced predators - presumably he finds time for his much-loved family and friends in there as well.

Anyone who has witnessed one of Cam's presentations on deer management or predator control, quickly realises **his greatest gift is his ability as an orator**. He can share knowledge in an exciting way that is engaging, understandable and memorable.

Cam is quick to point-out that his *kōrero* is an accumulation of learnings from many people, and he uses the word "we" to acknowledge, in one of his catch phrases, that **"There's no IP in Predator Free"**

With an entire career dedicated to getting the balance right with introduced animal management to achieve healthy habitat, Cam is a worthy recipient of the Peter Nelson Award.

The Peter Nelson Memorial Trophy is awarded annually by the NZ Biosecurity Institute to individuals or organisations, for achievement in Vertebrate Pest Management within New Zealand.

The trophy is a carved kokako standing on a limb above the skulls of small predatory mammals - a rat, a possum and a stoat.

## DEDICATE TO HIGH STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

# Peter Ingram Award for Chris Hale

Waikato-based Chris Hale has been rewarded for his steadfast commitment, mentorship, and advocacy to plant pest biosecurity over almost three decades. Chris received the 2025 Peter Ingram Award for sharing and advancing knowledge of pest plants. Here is the nomination penned by colleague Heidi Pene:

It is with great respect and admiration that I nominate Chris Hale for the Peter Ingram Award.

Chris is the long-standing manager of C.G. Hale Ltd and has been a dedicated member of the Biosecurity Institute since 1996, when he began his career as a Pest Plant Officer. Over nearly three decades, **Chris has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the biosecurity profession and has played a pivotal role in both operational delivery and professional development within the industry.**

Chris has served as Chairperson of the Central Branch and has been a regular and enthusiastic attendee at both branch meetings and NETS conferences since their inception. His contributions to the institute and the wider sector are significant and enduring.

Until very recently—when he and his team joined Waikato Regional Council—Chris provided outstanding support and leadership to his staff. **His advocacy for biosecurity and his dedication to high standards of training and performance have been evident in the longevity and loyalty of his team.** He has continually encouraged professional growth by supporting staff attendance at NETS conferences, branch meetings, and active involvement in institute activities, including presentations, workshops, organising committees, and session chairing.

Chris's ability to connect with people sets him apart. His excellent communication skills, calm reasoning, and credibility—particularly among the farming community thanks to his dairy farming background—have made him an exceptional ambassador for biosecurity. His practical knowledge of agricultural weed control is unmatched.

His leadership has extended beyond his own organisation. Chris has contributed to interagency collaborations, including the Tutsan and Yellow Bristle Grass Action Groups, and he has managed significant national pest programmes in the Waikato region, such as White Bryony and Manchurian Wild Rice. He has also been involved in national incursion responses for high-profile threats like Painted Apple Moth, Guava Moth, and Velvetleaf.

Chris Hale is a true stalwart of the institute. **His steadfast commitment, mentorship, and advocacy have made a lasting impact on the pest plant profession** and the people within it. Honouring him with the **Peter Ingram Award** would be a fitting recognition of his exceptional service, leadership, and legacy.



*Chris Hale with the Peter Ingram Award.*

Peter Ingram was the pest plant coordinator at Environment Bay of Plenty when he died in August, 2001, not long before his 61st birthday.

Peter Ingram had a passion for learning, shared his knowledge and discussed ideas and theories. He was especially encouraging of his team at Environment Bay of Plenty to further their education, apply for study awards and take advantage of learning opportunities. He was a past president of the Institute of Noxious Plants Officers, a predecessor organisation of the NZBI.

The Peter Ingram Award is given to a member of the Biosecurity Institute who has successfully undertaken or enabled others to achieve, relevant to pest plant education, control or management.



LEADING THROUGH A  
DYNAMIC TIME:

## Life Membership for Alice McNatty

Alice McNatty has served 12 years on the NZBI Executive Committee, first as secretary, then president, and then past president. She served as president from 2019 - 2021 and during this time [led the NZBI through a dynamic time in biosecurity, including the Mycoplasma bovis eradication programme, increases in funding for biosecurity work through the Jobs for Nature funding, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Alice's leadership guided the NBZI through new ways of sharing information](#), such as an online NETS and AGM in 2021. Throughout these 12 years on the Executive Committee, she invested her time, energy, and passion to help the NZBI and its members succeed.

A Life Membership is an acknowledgement of a significant and sustained contribution to the Institute at national level.



*Life Membership recipient Alice McNatty (L)  
with incoming president Diane Fraser.*

MORE THAN JUST DATA AND GOOD  
INTENTIONS

## Rory Johnson receives the "record in wood"

Fittingly it was host member Rory Johnson who was awarded the coveted Stook for best presentation. Rory's paper focused on the multi-species prioritisation tool he and members of the Pest Plant team at Horizons have been developing over the past year. Invasive plant management at the regional scale is a complex task that requires more than data or good intentions – it demands [a clear framework for decision-making, resource allocation, and strategic coordination](#) across councils, agencies, and communities. In response, the team created a tool designed to support region-wide strategic control of invasive plant species in the Manawatū-Whanganui Region. The tool integrates ecological impact, species traits, external pressures, and local knowledge across 15 species covered by Horizons' Regional Pest Management Plan. While its primary function is to generate prioritised species lists, its real strength lies in what it surfaces: the importance of shared values, transparent planning, and flexibility in weed management across varied landscapes. The tool is not a silver bullet – but it's a conversation starter, a planning aid, and a step towards more strategic and transparent plant management.

The Stook is a carved wooden staff created by former Institute member Robb McGuinness, who described it as "a cross between a sword, a stick, and a book – a record in wood." This particular Stook, carved from Pacific Mahogany, has been a symbol of excellence in pest management since it was first presented in 1984. Previous winners have described it as an historic record of "who's who" in the world of biosecurity.

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**“a cross between a sword,  
a stick, and a book  
– a record in wood.”**

## Unitec degrees produce excellent outcomes for the biosecurity industry

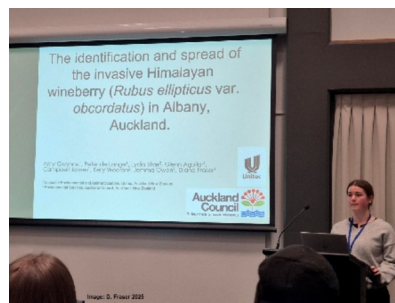
There is talk in town that there is a need for more biosecurity education and professional development for the industry. Action is underway to investigate the provision around New Zealand and the role that NZBI can take in increasing awareness and access to this education.

As you may know, I have been providing Bachelor of Applied Science (BASCI) students in the School of Environmental and Animal Sciences (EAS) with the opportunity to showcase their research projects at the NZBI NETS conferences for about the last decade. Generally, this has involved third-year undergraduate research students which is uncommon and a challenge to present at a conference. I applaud all the students for having the courage to step up to this challenge. In addition, I thank all participants of NETS for being so supportive at the conference and for the provision of research and work opportunities, such as Chelsee Neverman, Kayla Rench, Sarah Killick and Imogen Bassett of Auckland Council, Adam Field of NZ Biosecurity Services Limited and Peter and Frank Visser of Key Industries to name a few.

This year I was delighted to bring five students from the School of Environmental and Animal Sciences to the conference to present their work, which included collaborations between Unitec staff and Auckland Council.

Amy Gwynne is a recent graduate of the Post-graduate Diploma in Applied Science (Biodiversity Management) and completed the required dissertation on the identification characteristics of the highly invasive Himalayan wineberry (*Rubus ellipticus* var. *obcordatus* (Franch.) Focke), the current presence of this species in the Albany area of Auckland, where it was first recorded, and its potential spread and impact in Aotearoa/New Zealand using GIS modelling and an analogue species (Japanese wineberry). Ground-based identification of *R. ellipticus*, which is similar to other *Rubus* species, showed a higher number of seedlings compared to adult plants and was found predominantly in disturbed areas near other invasive plant species. The modelling results showed that the Auckland, Bay of Plenty,

Christchurch and Nelson regions were at the highest potential risk for invasion of Himalayan wineberry. Due to the potential national spread of Himalayan wineberry and the apparent limited spread to date, containment with hopefully eradication is thought to be the best management strategy moving forward. However, further monitoring, both in Auckland and other potentially high-risk regions, is recommended. Amy was supervised by Professor Peter de Lange and myself, funded by Auckland Council, and supported by Lydia Starr and Kelly Wooton from Auckland Council and Dr Glenn Aguilar from Unitec. Since graduating, Amy has gained employment as a Quarantine Officer with MPI and is enjoying her training.



Amy Gwynne presenting at NETS.



*Rubus ellipticus*

Jemma Owen is a recent graduate of the BASCI (Biodiversity Management major). Jemma's Negotiated Research project involved a laboratory trial to determine if the lilly pilly beetle (*Paropsides calypso*), which appears to have arrived from Australia with the common hedging plant *Syzygium* species, would impact the New Zealand endemic Maire tawake or swamp maire (*Syzygium maire*) forest tree species. Tests involved exposure of adult beetles and larvae to leaves of either *S. australe* or *S. marie* to determine the extent of herbivory over a standardised time of 48 hours by measuring the leaf-margin consumption. The average percentage of leaf-perimeter damage of *S. australe* by adults was 20% (SE 2.32) and larvae 18% (SE 2.70). No herbivory was detected by *P. calypso* on the endemic *S. marie*. This is a promising result, although further research is required, and suggests that the lilly pilly beetle may be a potential biocontrol agent if the hedging plant species become invasive. Jemma was supervised by Dr Wes Web, Ben Goodwin and myself and was assisted in this study by Toby Smith, a current third-year BASCI student. Jemma is now studying in the Master of Applied Science (Biodiversity Management) in EAS.

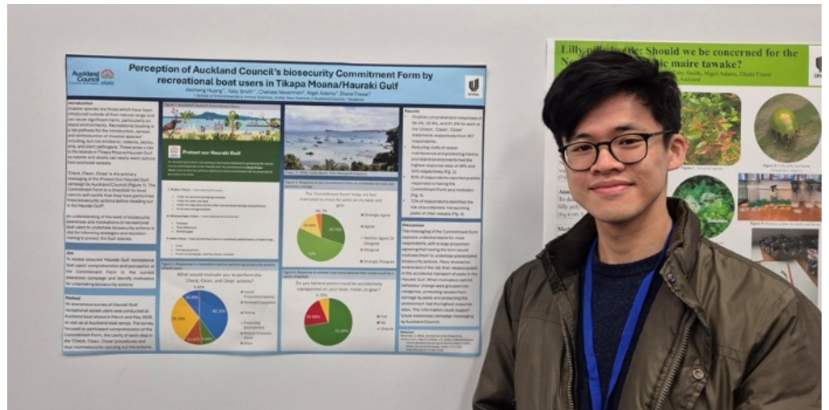
Jay Huang is a current third-year BASCI student who is completing his Negotiated Research project in collaboration with Chelsee Neverman of Auckland Council for this poster presentation. All boats, including leisure craft, are potential vectors for invasive pest spread to the protected islands of the Hauraki Gulf/ Tikapa Moana. Community engagement plays a key role in the success of island biosecurity efforts, and an understanding of the motivations and barriers to behaviour change is crucial for governing bodies

continued





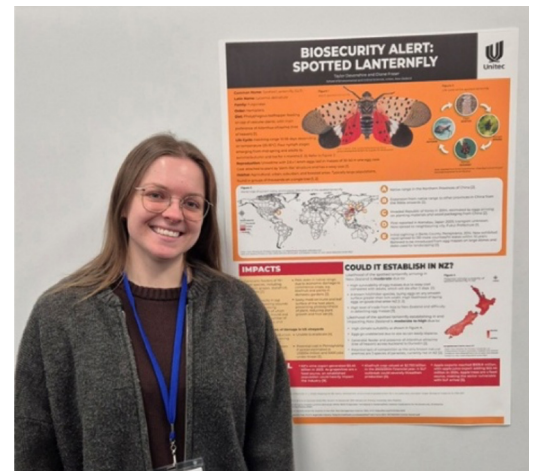
Jemma and her poster at NETS.



Jay and his poster at NETS.

who seek to protect these islands. 'Check, Clean, Close' is an Auckland Council biosecurity awareness campaign aimed at encouraging marine park users to implement biosecurity measures before heading out to sea. This study focused on recreational boat users in the Hauraki Gulf, using an anonymous survey to assess participant understanding of the 'Check, Clean, Close' messaging and their motivation to act on this message in response to an Auckland Council 'Commitment form'. Preliminary findings from this survey conducted at boat ramps/ marinas, and at the two Boat Shows held in Auckland in March and May 2025, showed that there was significant positive response (82% of participants) that acknowledged that the commitment form was easy to understand and would motivate them to complete biosecurity actions before a trip. Surprisingly, 27% of participants thought that boats were not or possibly not vectors for transport of pest. Interestingly, 'Protection or upkeep of vessels' (40% of participants) and 'Protecting the environment' (30%) were the primary motivators for performing checks on their boats. These findings will assist Auckland Council with the future development of effective tools to spread awareness of biosecurity issues in the Hauraki Gulf and promote positive behaviour change. Jay was supervised by Chelsee Neverman and myself, supported by Assoc. Prof. Nigel Adams and assisted with data collection by Toby Smith. Jay is completing his BASCI in 2025.

Finally, Taylor Devonshire, a second-year student in the BASCI programme presented her work on the risk of spotted lanternfly (SLF) (*Lycorma delicatula*), which is native to the northern provinces of China, to New Zealand. The only known record of this species in New Zealand was that of a dead specimen imported in a duffel bag to Hamilton in 2021. This poster presentation resulted from Taylor's work on an invasive species assessment in her degree, which is rare for a second-year degree student. SLF is a highly invasive pest which is now established in parts of the United States, Korea, and Japan. It is a polyphagous sap-sucker of vascular plants, with a preference for the tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). Its excretion of honeydew promotes the growth of sooty mould, which impairs photosynthesis and reduces both plant growth and fruit set. This honeydew production also attracts ants, bees, hornets, and wasps, contributing to its status as a significant nuisance in urban and agricultural environments. Taylor's research found that the species has a moderate likelihood of arrival and a moderate to high likelihood of establishment and impact in New Zealand. With a wide range of host species, including economically important horticultural and ornamental plants, SLF poses a biosecurity threat to New Zealand. Taylor was supported for this poster presentation by myself and will spend the next six months at Guelph University, Canada, on an exchange before completing her third year back at Unitec.



Taylor and her poster at NETS.

The biosecurity pathway of learning in the BASCI in EAS, Unitec, is currently under review to ensure a better alignment with the needs of industry. This will provide students with a strong staircasing of learning from the BASCI into the Post-graduate Certificate, Diploma, and Master in Applied Science (Biodiversity Management) in Unitec's suite of programmes. If anyone is interested in biosecurity education, including learning while you work on a part-time basis in the Master degree, please feel free to contact me on [dfraser@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:dfraser@unitec.ac.nz).

By Assoc. Prof. Diane Fraser



Back L to R: Diane Fraser, Toby Smith, Jay Huang, Jemma Owen.  
Front L to R: Taylor Devonshire, Amy Gwynne.

## Names of new science organisations

*Published: 14 May 2025*

The Government has announced the names of 3 new future-focused science organisations that will be formed from 1 July as part of the most significant reforms to our science system in 3 decades.

These new organisations reborn on July 1st are mergers of New Zealand's seven existing Crown Research Institutes.

The Bioeconomy Science Institute brings together AgResearch, Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research, Plant & Food Research and Scion. It's stated aim is: advancing innovation in agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, biotechnology and manufacturing; protecting ecosystems from biosecurity threats and climate risks; and developing new bio-based technologies and products.

NIWA Is now known as New Zealand Institute for Earth Science and is grouped with GNS Science. It's stated aim is: supporting energy security and sustainability; developing land, marine and mineral resources; and improving resilience to natural hazards and climate-related risks.

the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) is now to be known as e the Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science.

- New Zealand Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science – strengthening public health through disease detection and response; and supporting public safety through forensic science services.

To lead this transformation, Barry Harris has been appointed Chair of the Bioeconomy Science Institute, and David Smol has been appointed Chair of the Earth Science Institute. Both bring outstanding leadership and deep sector experience and will be supported by highly capable deputy chairs and directors.

Kim Wallace has been appointed Deputy Chair for the Institute for Bioeconomy Science, with Candace Kinser, Andrew Morrison and Gray Baldwin as directors.

Mary-Anne Macleod will be Deputy Chair for the Earth Science Institute alongside directors Paul Connell, Paul White, Peter Landon-Lane and Professor Chris Bumby.

Existing governance will remain in place for the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) as they refocus to become the Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science.



14 May 2025

## Bold science reforms to fuel economic growth



*Hon Dr Shane Reti*

### Science, Innovation and Technology

The Government is moving swiftly to implement the most significant science reforms in three decades, with three new public research organisations to be formed by 1 July, Science, Innovation and Technology Minister Dr Shane Reti announced today.

"These reforms are about unlocking the full potential of science to deliver stronger economic growth and greater resilience for New Zealand. We're not wasting a moment," says Dr Reti.

"Earlier this year, the Prime Minister unveiled a major overhaul of the science system, including the move from seven Crown Research Institutes to three new, future-focused entities. These new organisations will concentrate on key areas of national importance."

The new institutes will be:

- **New Zealand Institute for Bioeconomy Science** – advancing innovation in agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, biotechnology and manufacturing; protecting ecosystems from biosecurity threats and climate risks; and developing new bio-based technologies and products.
- **New Zealand Institute for Earth Science** – supporting energy security and sustainability; developing land, marine and mineral resources; and improving resilience to natural hazards and climate-related risks.
- **New Zealand Institute for Public Health and Forensic Science** – strengthening public health through disease detection and response; and supporting public safety through forensic science services.

"These institutes will ensure our world-class researchers are focused on delivering science that drives innovation, supports our industries, and improves the lives of everyday New Zealanders," says Dr Reti.

"Critically, the new research organisations will have a strong commercial focus, with a mandate to translate science into real-world outcomes and commercial success.

"It's not enough to have great science — we need that science to power start-ups, lift productivity, and create jobs. This is about turning research into results for New Zealand's economy."

To lead this transformation, Dr Reti today announced the appointment of Barry Harris as Chair of the Bioeconomy Science Institute, and David Smol as Chair of the Earth Science Institute.

"Both Mr Harris and Mr Smol bring outstanding leadership and deep sector experience. They are well placed to guide these new organisations as they take shape and begin delivering on our vision for a stronger, more productive science system," says Dr Reti.

The Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) will retain its current governance as it transitions to become the New Zealand Institute for Public Health and Forensic Sciences.

"These changes are about focus, outcomes, and value. We are investing in science that delivers for New Zealand — science that strengthens our economy, supports our environment, and builds resilience for the future," Dr Reti says.

"I'm confident these new leaders will help us deliver a science system that is more connected, more commercially focused, and better aligned with the needs of our nation."

*Adapted from material prepared by SIT awith additional commentary by Chris Macann*

## ENHANCING BIOSECURITY:

# Pest Weeds Workshop on Industry Engagement and Tracing for Regional Staff

Strong engagement with the rural community and robust tracing capabilities are critical for those working with pest weeds in the agricultural sector. To strengthen these areas, Waikato Regional Council is planning a two-day workshop and training tailored for biosecurity staff.

This workshop 30 April – 1 May 2026 is designed to equip biosecurity professionals with the skills and knowledge needed to foster better relationships with the rural sector and to track the origins and spread of weed incursions.

### Day 1: Forging Stronger Partnerships – Agricultural Industry and Farmer Engagement

The first day of the workshop will focus on enhancing engagement strategies with rural sector. Successful pest and weed management is a collaborative effort, this session will explore best practices for communication, cooperation, and partnership building. Participants will learn how to effectively collaborate with farmers, growers, and other rural stakeholders, ensuring that biosecurity initiatives are well-supported and implemented at the ground level. This engagement is crucial for gathering intelligence, sharing information, and gaining support for control efforts.

### Day 2: Mastering the Art of Tracing – Biosecurity Tracing Training with Field Experience

The second day will look at methodology of biosecurity tracing. This training aims to provide staff with an understanding of how to investigate and determine the source of new weed finds, and subsequently, how to predict and track their potential spread. A practical field trip to one or two active sites within the Waikato region to allow participants to apply tracing principles in real-world scenarios and observe the complexities of managing biosecurity threats on site.

### Practical Details for Participants

**Date:** 30 April – 1 May 2026

**Venue:** While the specific venue is yet to be confirmed, we are aiming to secure the JetPark at Hamilton Airport. This location offers convenience, with the workshop timing to allow participants time to travel in on Day 1 and depart on Day 2.

**Costs:** Attendees will be responsible for their own travel and accommodation costs. However, we are pleased to confirm that the Waikato Regional Council (WRC) will generously cover all workshop costs, making this workshop accessible to all biosecurity staff.

### Who Should Attend?

This workshop is a must-attend for those wishing to:

- Improve their engagement and collaboration with the rural sector in managing regional weeds and.
- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the methodology for tracing the origins and pathways of weed and pest incursions following a new discovery.

We look forward to welcoming you to this event in 2026.

Please register your interest by sending name and contact details along with number attending to [Sally.linton.nz@gmail.com](mailto:Sally.linton.nz@gmail.com) More information in the new year.

Note depending on numbers event participation maybe capped.



## Another busy year

### President Rowan Sprague's Farewell Report to the AGM

Kia ora koutou,

After a lot of thought, I have decided that I'm not going to run again as the NZBI president. Being the president has been a true honour, but I don't have capacity to commit to what the position and NZBI need. I won't be going away from the NZBI - Alice McNatty can finally step back from the past president role, which I will fill to support continuity of the NZBI Executive Committee. I will also carry on my work as co-chair of the organising committee for NETS/ Australasian Weeds Conference 2026 in Christchurch.

Another role I intend to pass on is being the coordinator of the NZBI mentoring scheme. **This year our mentoring scheme has 15 participants. I received really positive feedback from the participants last year,** and the only tweak they recommended was providing more guidance, particularly for mentors. Therefore, at the start of the scheme this year, I provided more guidance for mentors and mentees about topics to discuss with their mentee/ mentor and how to get the most out of this programme. I think the scheme is going well so far. If you are interested in being the next mentoring scheme coordinator, please let me know!

It has been another busy year for the NZBI and the Executive Committee. We have now updated our Constitution to align with the new Incorporated Societies Act, based on the feedback received from you all at our AGM last year. We've also been examining our membership record keeping systems as well as our documentation storage, as both needed updating. Big thank-you to Briar Cook, our membership officer, and Duncan MacMorran, our treasurer, for their support with this work.

A lot of my time of late for the NZBI has been organising NETS/ Australasian Weeds Conference in 2026. **This conference could be one of the biggest events ever held for the NZBI,** as the AWC event in 2024 had over 300 attendees. The organising

committee and I are working on how to combine these events so we still get the NETS experience we love.

Last year I started an NZBI 'by the numbers' in my President's report, and I thought I'd do the same this year to give you an idea of what we've been doing these past twelve months to July 2025:

NZBI by the numbers:

- Number of members: 478
- 6 branches
- 10 Executive members, plus 3 ex-officio members
- We have one recently updated constitution which meets the new Incorporated Societies Act legislation
- We administer 10 awards:
  - 4 NZBI Legacy Awards; 2 postal shoot awards; one Scholarship and one Professional Development Award; NZBI Fellowships and Life memberships
  - Of these, we awarded 3 at NETS2024, as well as 2 postal shoot awards. We also awarded one scholarship and 2 Wendy Mead Professional Development Awards and one NZBI fellowship over this past year.
- Our mentoring scheme this year has 15 participants.
- Conferences:
  - NETS2025 is our 74th NETS conference.
  - We are actively organising a combined NETS and Australasian Weeds Conference in Christchurch in 2026.
- Communications:
  - Over the last year, we put together 4 issues of Protect Magazine. We also released two press releases – our annual Biosecurity Week, and Summer Holiday messages.

I would like to offer a very sincere thank you to all the NZBI Exec members. We are a volunteer-run society, and many of our Exec members get things done for the NZBI in their own time. I would like to acknowledge their effort above and beyond to help successfully run this great society.

I would like to thank the employers of the Executive Committee for supporting us to have our meetings during work hours. The support from our employers helps immensely and also shows that they are investing in building capability and collaboration in biosecurity.

Finally, thank you to all of our NZBI members for being a part of this society, continuing to innovate and improve biosecurity outcomes, mentor and share knowledge with others in the sector.

Ngā mihi,

ROWAN SPRAGUE  
PRESIDENT

## In the spirit

