

Travis Wetland Preliminary Script

20 minute film

Dated: 05/05/2006

Writer: Kristen Weiss

Intro:

[Montage of busy city scenes, i.e. crosswalks, Cathedral Square, morning traffic; use of split screens and speeded up footage accompanied by fast-paced music; gives way to full-screen shot of Travis Wetland after black screen, music is tranquil]

Start talking after city shots, during black screen:

“With over three hundred thousand people living and working within the city of Christchurch, it’s easy to become overwhelmed by the urban city lifestyle. Even though it is known as the garden city, Christchurch has its fair share of crowded streets, noisy rush hour traffic, and short tempers. Yet nestled amidst the bustling eastern suburbs of the city lies a hidden refuge, the last of its kind in the Canterbury region. *[Fade to black; shot opens onto wetland pan]*. This is the Travis Wetland. *[slight pause, about 3 sec.]*

Now a Natural Heritage Park managed jointly by the Travis Wetland Trust and the Christchurch City Council, this restored wetland survives as one of the last refuges for native plants and animals in the Christchurch area.”

[Slight pause; Panning shots wetland, clips of flora and fauna]

“The wetland covers 116 acres, encompassing a diverse range of habitats, including marshland, swamp forest, dry margin forest, and coastal sand dune. At least 35 native bird species visit or live permanently at Travis. Shelducks, pied stilks, New Zealand Shovelers, and New Zealand Scaup all breed here. High in the trees you can find native bush birds such as Gray Warblers, Fantails, and Silvereyes.

With Pukeko shots:

Travis Wetland plays a special role in Pukeko breeding and conservation. These colorful birds are losing more and more of their habitat to housing development. As suitable wetland habitat dwindles, Travis will provide essential resources for local Pukeko populations.

Pause until end of Pukeko footage, start when plants over water appear:

Despite partial drainage for farming and years of cattle grazing, nearly eighty percent of pre-European native wetland plant species have managed to survive

on this site, including many species now rare elsewhere on the Canterbury Plains. Spider Orchids, Sundew, precious stands of Manuka, and more than 60 other native plants thrive as relics of a long distant past.

Shift to map image of Maori sites

“Travis has a colorful history, having undergone many transformations in recent history. What is now Travis Wetland was once an estuarine habitat regularly visited by Maori from the local Oruapaeroa settlement which existed on the land that is now QEII Park. Over 500 years before the European colonization of Christchurch, the Ngai Tahu people utilized the wetland’s rich sources of waterfowl, freshwater eels, flax, Manuka, and other important foods and fiber plants. Flax, generated by wetlands like Travis, was a valuable resource to the Maori who regularly used it for weaving and building even into the 20th century.

Pause until shot of farmers chopping flax:

Although the Maori modified some of the wetlands using seasonal controlled burning, it wasn’t until the late 1800’s that widespread wetland destruction escalated. Since the arrival of Canterbury settlers in the 1850’s, close to 98% of Christchurch’s fresh water wetland habitats have been lost.

[Photos of farms on the property zooming in/out, of the Florances and others]

The area that now makes up Travis was at one time subdivided and used by dairy farms, beginning with the purchase of the swamp by William Henry Travis in 1883. Around the same time, a man named Augustus Florance purchased a portion of the wetland property, and 100 years later the Florance family still owned the land and ran several dairy farms. The Florances continued to run the town milk supply business until the 1970’s, producing about 450,000 litres of milk each year. Farmers attempted to drain much of the swamp, thought active springs in the depressed land limited their success. Manuka was often cut to provide dry footing for grazing cattle.

Cattle Grazing photo

“By the time Travis was sold to land developers in the 1970’s, much of the surrounding property had already been transformed into housing developments. The encroachment of suburbanization forced an end to burning and a decrease in cattle grazing, both of which encouraged the spread of weeds like willow, blackberry, and gorse.

Newspaper articles: Plans for development

Once the land was acquired by March Construction & Merritt Holdings, plans loomed for housing subdivisions over the entire property. Housing estates

already surrounded the wetland remnants, and it seemed like Travis swamp was doomed to be completely obliterated.

Guardians fight developers

It was at this point that local concerned citizens, recognizing the hidden values of the wetland, rallied together in a battle to save this unique area. For 10 years, local residents and conservation groups fought the developer's plans, eventually creating the Travis Wetlands Trust in 1992. The group, led by Ann Flannagan, argued for 130 acres of land to be protected and restored, and circulated a petition asking the city council to purchase the property to this end INSERT PHOTO OF ANN?. In 1994 the city council agreed to the purchase, and to this day manages Travis Wetland in conjunction with the Trust.

Tipped for Heritage Park

Once the city council purchased Travis Wetland, local residents encouraged the council to pass resolutions permanently protecting the site. Fortunately, the council too recognized the importance of wetland protection and obliged, deeming Travis Wetland a Natural Heritage Park.

Before and After photos

Thus began official plans for the complete restoration of Travis Swamp into a viable wetland habitat. The city council and Travis Wetland Trust created a detailed draft of their plans. In 1998 and 99, the first streams and waterways were excavated, followed by the 2.5 hectare lake in the middle of the wetland.

Back to wetland shots

Today, several species of wetland birds have returned to Travis as a result of its restoration. Travis Wetland provides an important link in the eastern green corridor system, allowing wildlife a protected pathway through Christchurch's urban and suburban zones.

Wetland Walk sign

Travis boasts a restored, diverse wetland environment, which visitors can enjoy from a 3.5 kilometer long trail and boardwalk system circling the park. Along the route there are 12 information points that correspond with descriptions in the Travis Wetland Field Guide available from the Wetland Trust.

People Walking

Visitors can learn about Maori heritage, restoration efforts, and local plants and animals simply by strolling around the park. The walkways are great for leisurely walks or hearty jogs, and can be enjoyed by the entire family.

You can also view the wetlands from a birds-eye perspective on the Park's observation tower, or get an up close view of water-fowl from the bird hide, and be sure to stop by the Travis Wetland education centre during your visit.

A Park Ranger is employed on-site, and Trust members continually devote much of their time to the preservation of Travis and its historical significance.

Volunteer Footage starts:

Since the Trust's formation in 1992, dedicated volunteers have been working to restore the swamp as a Natural Heritage Park.

On the 3rd Saturday of each month, volunteers gather at Travis Wetland to take part in the on-going restoration process. Everyone who is keen is encouraged to join in on these mornings. Volunteers play an essential role in native plant protection, weed and pest control, and park maintenance. Each month, there are new opportunities for volunteers, as well as new sights.

Thanks to years of volunteer efforts, several native plant and animal species have been successfully reintroduced at Travis. Manuka, Flax, and native sedges now dominate the landscape. Scaups, Pukeko, and stilts roam freely through the tall grasses.

Wetland and wildlife shots:

Travis truly is a unique urban refuge. Rescued from annihilation, the Park now proudly provides prime natural habitat for native species as well as ideal recreational and educational opportunities for all ages. While the Travis Wetland Trust has come a long way in its restoration goals, their efforts are ongoing, and the Trust expects that the wetland will not be fully self-sustaining for another 20-30 years. . Cattle grazing is still used on part of the land to control weeds until native vegetation takes hold. Visitors to Travis Wetland have the unique opportunity to witness the transition of pasture land back to its original habitat structure.

Challenges still hinder complete success, such as domesticated cats and dogs that hunt vulnerable native reptile and bird species, or car traffic, which kills Pukekos on a regular basis. The Trust is actively researching solutions to address these problems. Continued management will be essential to preserve this delicate ecosystem.

Members of the Travis Wetland Trust encourage interested individuals to take part in the process by volunteering or joining the Trust. Without the passion and dedication of local residents, this prized wetland habitat may never have survived. If you would like to find out how you can help Travis Wetland, please contact the Trust for more information. CLOSING SENTENCE.

[Close with last shots of Travis, overviews, wildlife, etc.]

[Freeze frame of wetland while credits role, fade to black]

INCLUDE SOMEWHERE?

The Trust has several key aims:

1. To restore and enhance wetland habitats that were once representative of the Canterbury Plains
2. To preserve public access while protecting and preserving the native plants and animals
3. To develop and educational, scientific, and recreational reserve at Travis