

# Hamilton Section



Project newsletter Issue 02 | September 2016

## Building roads that are 'best for bats'

Weighing in at just 8-11 grams, the native long-tailed bat doesn't register among the heavyweights of the wildlife world.



A long-tailed bat roosting in a tree bats seem to be coming out of the woodwork.

And when you consider it's black, it only flies at night, it hides in trees during the day, and it makes sounds most of us can't hear, you begin to understand that the long-tailed bat's lifestyle has rendered it virtually invisible - and in need of protection.

### Species 'at risk'

Once common throughout New Zealand, populations are in decline and the species is now considered 'at risk'. The long-tailed bat has found a niche in Hamilton's southern gullies. And the more monitoring is carried out for our project, the more

One of the indirect benefits of expressway construction is the increased knowledge and understanding that comes from research and monitoring of native wildlife.

In Hamilton, monitoring of long-tailed bats along the 22km Hamilton Section has shown they are more widely distributed than first thought. While this has delayed some enabling works, the Project Alliance remains committed to doing what's 'best for bats'.

### More widespread

Until this year, bats were known to inhabit the Mangaonua, Mangaharakeke and Mangaone gully systems between Tamahere and Hillcrest, but they had not been detected north of Percival Road, Ruakura. This meant that bat monitoring prior to tree-felling was required only on the southern half of the project. However, monitoring in 2016 has detected bats north of Percival Road. As a result, all trees now need to be monitored for bats prior to felling.

The environmental management team has drafted a Bat Management Plan for the whole project which has gone to the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Waikato Regional Council (WRC) for consultation.



The long-tailed bat roosts in trees during the day and comes out to feed on insects at night. (Photo supplied by Colin O'Donnell.)



The echo-location calls of long-tailed bats have a distinct ultrasound frequency that can be measured by devices called acoustic bat monitors (ABMs). The ABMs record ultrasound calls on to an SD memory card which records and sorts the sounds by frequency.

## WIN a TOUR - and ride in a dump truck!

Just sign up for our online newsletter and you could win a personal tour of our construction site - for you and a friend.

Everyone who signs up during September/October is automatically in the draw to win a personal tour of the project site, including a ride in the dump truck.

In February 2017, we're switching from a printed newsletter to an online newsletter, delivered by email. The online version will include videos and 'one-click' links to the latest project photos and info. That's another great reason to sign up online.



To sign up for our email newsletters go to [www.nzta.govt.nz/hamilton](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/hamilton)



That's the winner's seat on the right of our operator.



Monitoring devices are placed in trees using long poles



## The countdown begins...

We're counting down to full construction on 1 October. How will it affect your local roads?

Pages 2-3.



## Saving endangered fish

Look what turned up when we went fishing

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# Countdown to construction

By October 2016, trucks will begin hauling sand and other material across four local roads, with crossings controlled by traffic signals. By Christmas 2016, three bridges are expected to be under construction on local roads.

Sealed, two-lane traffic diversions will be constructed to take local road traffic around the bridge construction sites, where possible, with speed restrictions.

However this is not possible at Kay Road because the terrain is too steep to build a traffic diversion, so Kay Road will need to be closed temporarily to through-traffic. Kay Road will close to at the bridge construction site for approximately 13 months. The site will be excavated to provide access for the earthworks haul road, and for bridge construction. Access to properties will be maintained, but only from one direction.

Following is a summary of construction activity through to Christmas 2016:

- Osborne Road – an earthmoving truck crossing will open in October, controlled by traffic signals. Barriers arms – similar to rail crossings – will also be trialled here.
- Kay Road – temporarily closed to through-traffic from 2 October for approximately 13 months for excavation and bridge construction.
- Horsham Downs Road – an earthmoving truck crossing will open in October, controlled by traffic signals.
- Old Borman Road will close permanently to through traffic from mid-September.
- Gordonton Road – a two-way sealed traffic diversion will be constructed in October. Bridge construction will begin in November.
- Ruakura Road – bridge construction is expected to begin in December to take the expressway over the East Coast Main Trunk Rail line (ECMTR).
- SH26 Morrinsville Road – bridge construction is expected to begin in November. An earthmoving truck crossing will open here in December, controlled by traffic signals.

Motorists travelling on the busier roads – Gordonton Road (currently 9500 vehicles per day), Ruakura Road (7000) and SH26 Morrinsville Road (7000) – can expect some delays during peak traffic. The Project Alliance will monitor the effects on traffic, and manage its truck movements to keep traffic moving.

By building key bridges early, the Project Alliance can then run its earthmoving trucks under these bridges, rather than crossing busy local roads. This will minimise the impacts on traffic.

More bridges will be constructed on local roads in 2017.



These earthmoving trucks are 6WD and can weigh up to 60 tonnes fully loaded.



These dump trucks will be crossing Osborne Road in Horsham Downs from August

## Keeping students safe

Special safety measures will be in place when the earthmoving truck crossing opens on Osborne Road, just 200m from Horsham Downs School.

A trained supervisor employed by the Project Alliance will supervise the crossing before and after school to ensure students cross safely.

Traffic lights will be installed to control traffic and trucks crossing, and barriers arms will be trialled here. If successful, they may be used at other truck crossings.

Students walking and cycling to school use a single shared path. The Project Alliance is installing fences that will guide students to gates as they approach the truck crossing. These gates will automatically lock when the traffic signals on Osborne Road turn red, and unlock when they turn green, ensuring students cannot pass through while trucks are crossing. (Anyone passing through the crossing when the gates lock can press a button to unlock the gate from the inside.)

The Project Alliance is working closely with Horsham Downs School to educate students, staff and parents about how to use the truck crossing safely. If children are using the truck crossing outside school hours, the Project Alliance advises parents to send an adult to supervise them crossing.





# Project construction in 2016



## Hamilton Section Waikato Expressway

### Construction in 2016

- - - HCC/WDC boundary
- - - Proposed expressway
- Traffic signals operating
- Earthworks crossing
- Bridge construction begins in 2016

## Surprise catch of the day

A large longfin eel – estimated to be up to 65 years old – has been captured in a shallow farm drain and successfully relocated away from the construction zone.

A second smaller longfin eel was captured and relocated prior to installing culverts in an area near Lake Road. Environmental staff from the Project Alliance were expecting to capture the more common shortfin eel, but not the endangered longfin species.

The black mudfish is another endangered and unique New Zealand species that may be found here. The mudfish is able to survive long periods of dry weather by burrowing into the mud when stream beds dry up. Environmental teams use fyke nets and minnow traps to capture fish for relocation, and electrofishing when required. Electrofishing uses an electric current in the water to stun fish which then float to the surface for capture, before recovering a few seconds later.

In the southern gullies, teams will check construction areas for native lizards and relocate them prior to construction. More than 10ha within the gullies will be cleared of unwanted exotic plants and rubbish, and replanted in native seedlings grown from local seed. Many are rongoa – species traditionally used by Maori for their medicinal properties.



Environmental staff Sara Scott (foreground) and Stephanie Kirk check minnow traps for native fish.



This longfin eel – an endangered species – was relocated away from the construction zone.

## Protecting streams from sediment

To protect streams and wildlife at each construction site, an earth bund (or barrier) is formed around the perimeter before construction begins. Then a series of sedimentation ponds with special outlets are constructed.

The bunds direct stormwater run-off into the ponds to allow sediment to settle out before water is released into local streams. Silt fences are installed along the banks of waterways to trap any sediment before it flows into streams.

The Alliance will build 45 sedimentation ponds along the first 5km of this 22km project.



Can you see the worker standing at the end of this large sedimentation pond?



### Any questions?



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