

# Catchment Group Story

Tairāwhiti/Gisborne | MAY 2025



## Eastern Whio Link

Waioeka River, Gisborne

Eastern Whio Link (EWL) is a farmer, hunter, fisher, and mana whenua-led catchment group driving on-farm biodiversity projects in the Waioeka River catchment (including its upper tributaries and a project footprint of 30,000 ha), situated between Ōpōtiki and Matawai.

Supported by NZ Landcare Trust's Catchment Coordinator Sam Gibson (2022–2024), and with a background in delivering large projects, EWL has managed to:

- » grow whio numbers from eight individuals to over 120 fledged chicks in five seasons
- » establish a trapping network of over 1,050 traps
- » monitor whio, kiwi, and bats across large tracts of farm and conservation land
- » deliver an innovative eDNA monitoring programme
- » establish New Zealand's first biodiversity credit, partnering with Climate Action Company.





**PHOTO CAPTIONS – Front page:** 1. Eastern Whio Link contractors learning SHMAK water testing with Amy Hardy from 'Wai Connection'. **Page left:** 2. EWL contractors identifying macroinvertebrates as stream health bioindicators with the help of Hana Hardy, 'Wai Connection' Coordinator. 3. Shannon Henare, Eastern Whio Link contractor taking a DO Reading with the help of Kirsty Gaddum, 'Wai Connection' Inanga Spawning Project Coordinator. 4. Eastern Whio Link contractor trapping predators. **Back page:** 5. The trapping system along the Makakoere Stream producing some promising outcomes. 6. Tāhuna of the Waioeka River.

# Connecting Community Groups and Restoration



## eDNA Monitoring

Applying for and delivering Wai Tuwhera eDNA monitoring across the second half of their monitoring sites. Eastern Whio Link (EWL) had historically monitored the Koranga Stream, Te Pato Stream, Waioeka Stream, Kahunui Stream, and Upper Kahunui streams, which showed a direct correlation between where high value invertebrates were present and where who were establishing home ranges. ‘

Wai Connection’ funding supported the group to monitor a further seven sites, including the Wairata Stream, Tataweka Stream, Makakoere Stream, Moanui Stream, Rauatehua Stream, Mangapoike Stream, and Karikari Streams.

This has delivered a fairly comprehensive index of invertebrate species and their distribution throughout the catchment, which has further supported EWL to prioritise where they focus their trapping efforts.



## Trapline Layout

Sam Gibson supported EWL secure \$5,000 of funding through Predator Free NZ Trust to establish 5 km of stoat traps along the Makakoere Stream. Seven volunteers and two dogs attended the trap layout. These volunteers included Jessi Morgan, Chief Executive, Predator Free NZ Trust, and Sam Rowland, General Manager, Tairawhiti Environment Centre. The three day backcountry event took place in complex environments and was considered a great weekend.



## Acoustic Survey

Anne-Marie and Sam Gibson, alongside Paddy Stewart of Sound Counts, are due to start an acoustic survey for kiwi and bats. With an historic survey completed four years ago, and predator control established specifically to support kiwi, this survey is designed to measure the impact of this control.

The population of kiwi within the catchment is small and fragmented – the survey will give an indication of whether predator control alone is enough to grow this population, or whether translocation of supplementary birds is needed



## Mental Health Leather Crafting Workshop

After a tough few years of cyclones, poor lamb prices, and plummeting forestry prices, mental health was highlighted as a concern by almost all catchment groups in the region. ‘Wai Connection’ soon realised that mental health was not part of their funding agreement. They decided to collaborate with Rural Support Trust to deliver a series of events that addressed the mental health needs of their catchment groups.

‘Wai Connection’ Catchment Coordinators Anne-Marie, and Sam Gibson, led an event at Matawai Fire Station, where members of the EWL and Motu Catchment groups attended a one day Leather Crafting workshop.

The workshop was attended by a diverse mix of young farmers, farm owners, managers, and female farmers from the local communities. Knife belts, breastplates for horses, and knife sheaths were among the most common items made. Feedback from participants was that it was great to get off farm, catch up with friends, and do something creative together.



## Taxidermied predators

Sam Gibson, with ‘Wai Connection’ funding, organised the taxidermy of a complete set of predators for EWL to support their education programmes.



## Tuna Wananga with Matawai Marae

Sam Gibson ran a Tuna Wananga with Matawai Marae and EWL with Whitiara Tairawhiti funding. At the wānanga, Joanna Barbarich taught the purakau of the local area related to tuna, and how the streams and rivers were made. Uncle Kirra trained them to catch, process and smoke tuna in the way that related to tikanga of Matawai Marae.

Sam spoke to the lifecycle of tuna. There were many attendees from pākeke to tamariki, many of whom had never processed and smoked tuna in their lives. It was one of the highlights of the Matawai Marae calendar for the year.

## Next Steps



Sam Gibson facilitated an AGM for Eastern Whio Link trustees, as well as a strategic planning session for the wider Eastern Whio Link community. This strategic planning work generated clear feedback and outcomes on how to run the project in future in accordance with the community's aspirations.



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To learn more about Eastern Whio Link, or how 'Wai Connection – Tatai Ki Te Wai' is supporting them, please contact:

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