

Conservation efforts at Birdlings Flat:

In the 19th century, during the colonisation of New Zealand by European settlers, Captain Price sailed his ship into an open tidal inlet on the Canterbury coast at Banks Peninsula. This inlet is now completely cut off from the sea, blocked from its natural 'breathing' with the ocean tides by millions of tonnes of gravel. It is now Te Roto O Wairewa, Lake Forsythe, and it is dying.

The Lake now becomes shallower every year as a result of silt and sediment settling on the lake bed in the absence of tides. The absence of tidal flows has also combined with escalating levels of agricultural run-off and domestic waste to create an ideal breeding ground for the highly poisonous exotic algae called Nodularia Cyanobacterium. One consequence of this dangerous algal bloom is that the water has been designated as unfit for skin contact.

An area which previously flourished with bird and sea life, and an important and sacred Maori fishery resource, the Lake is now the site of programs designed to preserve the habitat of many species. The Wairewa Runanga [the Kaitiaki or 'Guardians'] are committed to the maintenance and preservation of the Lake and its surrounds through ongoing scientific research and an action plan which includes - 1. Working to limit the organic nutrients entering the Lake, and 2. Developing and implementing an engineering solution aimed at restoring the tidal opening. The storms which frequently occur in the area can move hundreds of thousands of tons of gravel in a single day, making most engineering solutions untenable.

It does, however, appear possible to re-open the Lake with careful intervention.

Presently seeking governmental resource consent to test what is perhaps the most promising ecological solution, the Wairewa Runanga propose a simple hook groyne be constructed at the cliff end of the beach at Birdlings Flat. This process is expected to be completed within approximately two years, and the trial will take approximately five more to complete.

In support of this effort, our parent company - NZROX - is donating a percentage of profits from product sales during this time, all of which are made from pebbles collected on this world famous gemstone beach. Over the period of this trial, the aim is to pay all the initial costs of the construction of the groyne itself - approximately NZD\$20,000.

