



## Canterbury Branch Royal Society of New Zealand Te Apārangi November 2024 Newsletter

Dear Member

Almost to the end of the year, and all the talks have concluded with good support and positive feedback and the last field trip to the University of Canterbury Campus.

This month's newsletter includes a review of the last PM Science Winner talk, the field trip, student travel awarded, branch Constitution update, and some plans for next year.

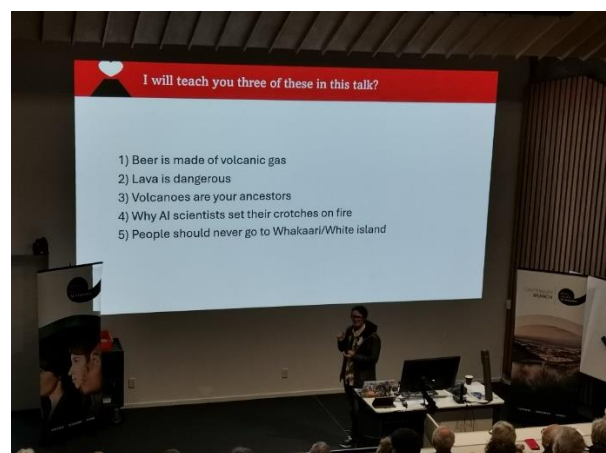
As this will be the last newsletter for this year, we like to thank you all for your support and help during the year. I also like to thank the council for their work this year, they have done a lot this year and there are exciting plans for next year and beyond.

So, we wish you and your family and friends all the best for Christmas and the coming New Year.

### The Prime Minister Science winners talk/s.

November Prime Minister Science winners talk was Prof Ben Kennedy, Prof of Volcanology at the University of Canterbury and the 2023 winner of the Prime Minister's Science Communication Prize.

Ben entertained an audience of about 85, with his approach to science communication, asking questions of the audience, in a relaxed manner, but explained the different between this approach and, the required approach when in a more formal setting like being a part of a National Science Advisory Group, or an expert witness legal proceeding.



These series of talk were in partnership with Royal Society Te Apārangī, the Prime Minister's Science Prizes Secretariat, and were well received with about 275 attending over the three talks in Christchurch and the one held in Timaru with 20, which was disappointing.

The council will undertake a debrief and if you attended any or all of the talks, we would welcome your feedback.

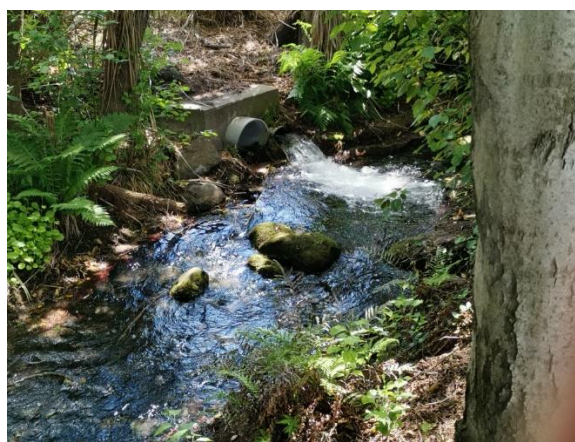
As for next year, we believe we will be offered more PM winners talks and we have others in the mix.

## Field Trip to Waiutuutu-Okeover stream in the University of Canterbury Campus

Five members and one visitor, strolled along the stream with Prof Seamus Moran and ECRs Ciara Espiner and Saskia Brown, both beginning their PhD studies, learning about the restoration efforts with the stream, how some of the used air-conditioning water is being used to supplement the flow, and the native plantings.



Looking at one of the monitoring sites



Used air-conditioning water used to supplement the flow.

## Students travel grants.

### Awarded.

Liam Gibson Position: PhD, Computational and Applied Mathematics, University of Canterbury  
Presentation: Oral Title: Modelling the rise of the adjunct population in American colleges  
Conference: - ANZIAM 2025 Conference, Location: Coffs Harbour, Australia, 2-6 February 2025.  
\$700.00

### Reports from grant recipients.

No reports received

## Branch Constitution

The council has reviewed the constitution, and we will be sending this out to the members in mid-December, as well as other relevant documents.

There are only recommendations, and at the last council meeting, the members agreed to call a meeting in February for you to give your views, then a final draft will be completed, and put to the members for their approval.

Please be a part of this as it's your society, it should reflect what you like to see the branch in the years to come.

## Next Annual General Meeting

The 2024 Annual General Meeting will be held on the Wednesday March 26<sup>th</sup>. Venue to be decided.

How about thinking about coming on to the council and join the team as your input, help, support and ideas will be welcomed. If you like to talk about your involvement, please contact Secretary Fiona or myself.

## Branch Podcast

We are getting there. The aim is to have the first podcasts recorded my March. There is a draft plan and this will be for the council to look at early next year.

If you like to be involved in this new venture, let us know.

## You Tube

As you might know, there's a lot of stuff on this media, many of the universities, colleges, institutions, and even Television organisations, have their own YouTube channels. Some of their content might be interest you. Below are some content that has appeared over the past few days.



Building for Soil Health (Christchurch Conversations)

Streamed live on Nov 26, 2024

Soil health is of critical importance to ecologies that support and sustain life, even in the context of a city. Soil carries out a range of fundamental functions: it is a source of food and nutrition, supports plant life, filters water and protects us against flooding. It is interconnected and interwoven with other elements, like water, air, fauna and flora. In te ao Māori, this understanding is deeply embedded in knowledge and practices. Knowing soil's importance to the wellbeing of living systems, it follows that we should be making soil health a key part of how we build our cities. After all, urban systems and living systems are also interrelated. So, what do we need to do? What urban forms can support healthy urban soil? What potential does soil hold to improve the health of our urban spaces and neighbourhoods? Join us for this He Whakawhiti Kōrero Christchurch Conversation as we explore the practices, design choices and social strategies that support soil health. First, we serve up some quick-fire presentations. Hear from our featured speakers: Juanita Hepi (Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngātiwai, Ngāpuhi), native plant kaitiaki and storyteller Zoë Avery Director, The Urbanist; Associate Director of Design, School of Architecture and Planning, University of Auckland Finally, we close the evening with some soil-inspired words from multidisciplinary storyteller Juanita Kepi.

Click on link to view <https://www.youtube.com/live/BDBthmSex4g?si=tA7oZ73J20bZkZpy>



## CARTA: The First Paleo-Rock Star: Is Lucy Still an Influencer? with Ann Gibbons

9/27/2024; 21 minutes

Lucy's 50-year legacy as a superstar in human evolution is undeniable. Yet, with newer, older fossils and a growing understanding of her ancient world, her status as our ancestor is questioned. This talk delves into how these discoveries reshape Lucy's narrative and our understanding of human evolution, likening her to a middle-aged celebrity facing new challengers. Recorded on 04/06/2024. (#39827)

EMBED

AUDIO MP3

VIDEO MP4

Click on link to view <https://youtu.be/EAEtLsu01Ew?si=-yF3HozMQ9eeQgKf>

### Link and Alert newsletters

<https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/fellows-and-members/link-news/2024/july/>

Don't forget you can subscribe to the RSNZ Te Apārangi weekly Alert newsletter shares events, news, and opportunities for those interested in exploring and discovering knowledge or reading past issues at

<https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/whats-happening/alert-newsletter/>.

### Upcoming Branch talks, field trips, and related activities

#### Christchurch talks

Prof Ann Brower- Changing the world one data point at a time.

Date: late February

Venue: TBD

#### Timaru talks

No events planned

#### Upcoming field trips

##### Christchurch

No events planned

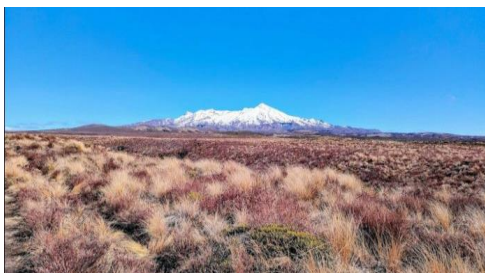


And don't forget our CO2 monitor you can borrow. Contact us and we'll arrange for you to pick it up. A guide to recommended CO2 measurements can be found at <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/in-depth/470690/whose-breath-are-you-breathing>.

All we ask in return is that you post your findings on either the branch's Facebook page or Twitter.

## From other branches and RSNZ Te Apārangi

### From Royal Society Te Apārangi



#### [Dramatic decline in Tongariro's native plants as invasive heather spreads](#)

By Dr Julie Deslippe

Native plants in the Tongariro National Park are being hit hard by the spread of invasive heather with a 40 to 50 percent drop in native species in some areas, a new study has found.

The results of the study are published in the journal *Oecologia*.

The work, funded by a Marsden Grant from Royal Society Te Apārangi, is part of broader research investigating how changes in alpine plant communities will affect the carbon cycle.

[Read more.](#)



#### [UNESCO AI Fozan International Prize for the Promotion of Young Scientists in STEM](#)

The UNESCO-AI Fozan International Prize for the promotion of young scientists in STEM is now accepting applications.

The Prize recognizes young scientists whose work contributes to global socio-economic progress and encourages greater interest in science, particularly among women and girls, to foster gender equality and promote scientific careers.

Awarded biennially to five laureates representing UNESCO's five geographic regions. Each laureate receives a monetary award of \$50,000, a medal and a diploma.

[Find out more and apply.](#)

["Hawke's Bay Scientists on Air" radio broadcasts](#), which we support, now go to air each second Monday after the 10:00 am news.

"Talking About" is the Otago Institute's podcast series. It features topical conversations about anything and everything from the worlds of Arts, Sciences, and Mātauranga Māori.

<https://oar.org.nz/oi-podcast/>

## Other items of interest

This is sad news but relates to the state of science communications in New Zealand. If anyone has been to one of their shows, this will be missed. Perhaps its time for a discussion with all involved in STEM to see what this means to science education and building a knowledge base economy.

SCIENCE / EDUCATION

# "I might cry" : Nanogirl Labs founder on liquidation

From **Nine To Noon**, 9:30 am today

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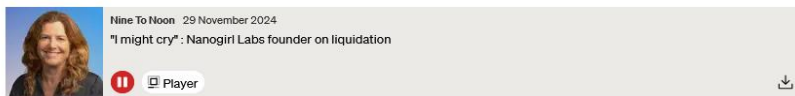


Photo: Screenshot

For eight years Nanogirl Labs brought science to young people - through live shows, education programmes and STEM kits.

But a tough business environment has seen it placed in liquidation, with the [first liquidator's report due out today](#).

Nanogirl Labs was founded by Dr Michelle Dickinson and her husband Joe Davis.

It aimed to demystify science and inspire creativity through workshops and theatre shows, both in New Zealand and overseas.

Winding up the company is another blow for the science community - which has seen [hundreds of jobs cut](#) and the [demise of funding projects like the National Science Challenges](#).

Nanogirl Michelle Dickinson joins Kathryn to explain the decision.

Tags: [education](#) [science](#)

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[https://podcast.radionz.co.nz/downloads/ntn/ntn-20241129-0930\\_michelle\\_dickinson\\_on\\_the\\_difficult\\_decision\\_to\\_put\\_nanogirl-128.mp3](https://podcast.radionz.co.nz/downloads/ntn/ntn-20241129-0930_michelle_dickinson_on_the_difficult_decision_to_put_nanogirl-128.mp3)

## Oldest known alphabet unearthed



Clay cylinders that are 4,400 years old, unearthed from a tomb in Syria, are [inscribed with traces of the earliest known alphabetic writing system](#). The tomb, discovered in Umm el-Marra in 2004, contained four of these finger-sized cylinders, engraved with eight distinct symbols. Although the characters do not correspond to a known language, archaeologist Glenn Schwartz analysed the inscriptions and suggested that the symbols represent sounds that correspond to a, i, k, l, n, s and y. The inscriptions might record people's names or label objects in the tomb, Schwartz says.

[Nature | 4 min read](#)

## Fossilized poo shows how dinos dominated



By analysing fossils of poo and vomit, researchers have [reconstructed what dinosaurs ate and how this changed](#) over time. The findings give a better understanding of how dinosaurs became so dominant, revealing that their rise, over millions of years, was influenced by factors including climate change-induced shifts in what vegetation was available, which the dinosaurs were able to adapt to better than other animals. The contents of the fossils became more varied over time, suggesting that larger dinosaurs with more diverse feeding habits began to gain prominence in the late Triassic period a little over 200 million years ago.

[Nature | 4 min read](#)

Reference: [Nature paper](#)

That's all for this month. The next newsletter will be in January but don't forget you can keep updated on the branch's Facebook page Canterbury RSNZ Branch or Twitter @CanterburyRSNZ.

If have any suggestions for speakers, field trip ideas, or even contribute something to the newsletter please contact us and if you want to help us, please contact us, your input is valued. and we are always willing to discuss anything regarding the branch with you.

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