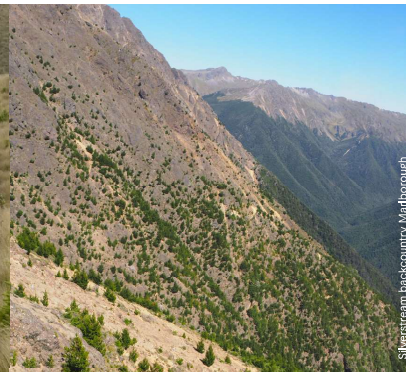




Image: New Zealand Geographic



Seed rain Central Otago tussock plains



Silverstream backcountry Marlborough



Northland dune lake - unique and vulnerable

Wild About Wildings

THE BATTLE FOR AOTEAROA'S OPEN LANDSCAPES



An Invasion On The Wind

Wilding pines are spreading faster than they can be contained. Introduced trees are invading open landscapes, with seeds carried kilometres by the wind. They grow rapidly, spread aggressively, and take over land faster than native vegetation can cover.

Did you know ▶ In 2026, around 2 million hectares—1 in every 13 hectares—are infested. At current funding levels, this could reach 9 million hectares, or 1 in every 4 hectares, by 2056.

How Did We Get Here?

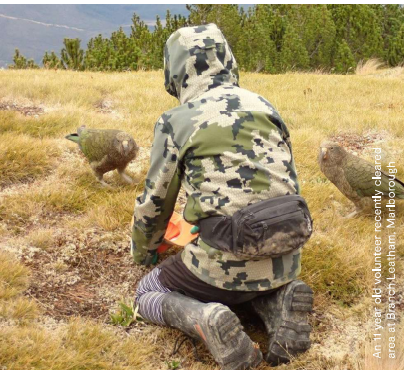
What began as a solution has become a crisis. Contorta pine, Douglas-fir, and Radiata pine were introduced for erosion control, shelter, and timber, but many have escaped cultivation, with Contorta pine being the most invasive.

Did you know ▶ Wilding species now spread unchecked across mountains, farms, and conservation land, colonising up to 20 times faster than native plants can re-establish.

Vanishing Landscapes

Open spaces are disappearing as wilding pines transform iconic tussocklands into dense forest. Natural landforms become obscured, and the character of entire regions is gradually altered.

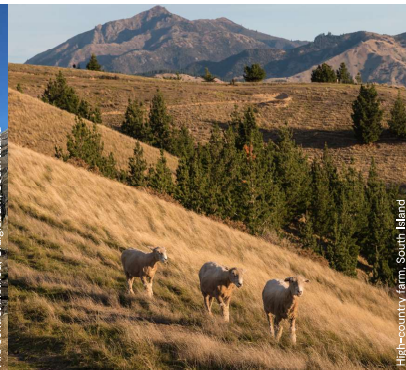
Did you know ▶ A wilding infestation can spread from bare hillside to closed canopy in under 20 years, often outpacing efforts to control it. Once these open landscapes are lost, restoration becomes difficult, costly, and time-consuming.



An 11-year-old volunteer recently cleared an area at Birch-Leatham, Marlborough.



Fire control method, Craiglaburn, South Island.



High-country farm, South Island.



Marlborough local volunteers

A Fight for Survival

Native ecosystems are being pushed out. Wilding trees out-compete native plants for light, water, and nutrients, causing habitats to disappear and the species that depend on them to decline. This shift is widespread and ongoing.

Did you know ▶ Wildings now threaten over 25% of New Zealand's land area with ecological change, placing native biodiversity under sustained pressure across many landscapes.

Fuel for Fire, Thirst for Water

Wilding pines create dense, resinous forests that significantly increase fire risk, particularly in remote areas. Risk of fire is a combination of probability and consequence e.g. the consequence of a wilding fire in an urban area (like Queenstown) would be very high. They consume large volumes of water, reducing river flows and affecting irrigation and hydroelectricity generation.

Did you know ▶ Mature wilding pines can use over 40% more water than native vegetation.

When Trees Take Over Farms

This is more than an environmental issue—it is also an economic one. Wildings overrun pasture, reduce productivity, and are avoided by livestock once they become too woody to graze. They threaten farming, tourism, and rural livelihoods.

Did you know ▶ Every hectare that is lost to wilding pines can mean up to an 80% loss in usable pasture. Left unchecked, the cost continues to grow.

Turning the Tide

We can win this if we act now. Control works when it is properly funded and started early—removing seed sources and targeting trees before they set seed is critical. Early removal of seedlings can cost up to 20 times less than clearing mature pines. Insufficient funds are slowing progress and risking hard-won gains. Be part of the solution by pulling seedlings early, supporting control programmes, advocating for funding, and getting involved.

Visit wpn.org.nz/helpsave.