

## Tiritiri Matangi Reunion

*9th November 2003*



Photo: Anne Rimmer

On November 9th 2003 One hundred and thirty people with links to Tiri came back for a reunion to celebrate it.

The group included ex-lighthouse keepers and their families, some dating back to the 1920s, members of the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park Board from the 1970s and 80s, Prof John Craig from the University of Auckland who spearheaded the replanting programme from 1984-94, early researchers, many members of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc (founded in 1989), members of the Hobbs family who farmed Tiri from the early 1900s, government scientists, volunteers and tree planters.

Fifty people attended a dinner that evening, including Darcy O'Brien, the former Chairman of Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park Board, and Graeme Turbott, the noted ornithologist.

There was only one regret: that the lighthouse was not open. It was closed in 1995, and has remained so ever since, despite many requests for it to be reopened.

Ray and Barbara Walter were happy to see so many old friends. It was a glorious day and everyone enjoyed the gathering. The event was organised by Anne Rimmer to bring together the people she has met while researching her book about Tiri. The book is due out in September.

Anne Rimmer

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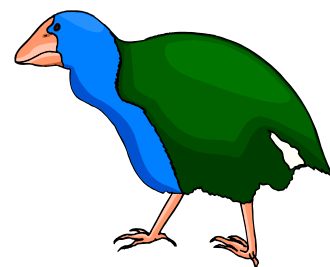
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## Dawn Chorus

Dawn Chorus is the official newsletter of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc. It is published four times a year. Contributions (including photographs) are gratefully received.

### Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc.

PO Box 34-229, Birkenhead, Auckland 1310

The Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi is a non-profit conservation volunteer group. Founded in 1988, to further the aims of the Tiritiri Matangi habitat restoration and species translocation project, our four aims are:

- To promote and enhance the open sanctuary of Tiritiri Matangi and to ensure the continuation of the project.
- To provide financial, material and physical support for the work on Tiritiri Matangi.
- To heighten public awareness of the existence and role of Tiritiri Matangi as an open sanctuary
- To do all such other lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the foregoing objects or any of them.

The annual subscription is:

- Adult / Family / Corporate - \$20
- Overseas - \$25
- Student / Child - \$5

## SoTM Contacts

### Chairperson

Carl Hayson 479 4217 cgpartners@clear.net.nz

### Secretary

Julie Cotterill 817 8714 julieatpiha@xtra.co.nz

### Treasurer (acting)

Bill Mancer bill.mancer@arbitrage.co.nz

### Membership Secretary

Val Smytheman 278 9309 vjess@ihug.co.nz

### Newsletter Editor

Sharon Alderson 299 3813 sharon64a@xtra.co.nz

### Committee

Cathy Catto	629 3903	higcat@actrix.co.nz
Sally Green	377 8416	sallygreen@xtra.co.nz
Gaye Hayson	479 4217	cgpartners@clear.net.nz
Peter Lee	418 1332	peter@natureledge.co.nz
John McLeod	631 5664	jmcLeod@ihug.co.nz
Stephanie Tulloch	575 1114	s.tulloch@clear.net.nz
Graham Ussher	815 6622	g.usher@auckland.ac.nz

### DoC Field Officers

Barbara & Ray Walter	476 0010	tiritirimatangifb@doc.govt.nz
Ian Price / Bunkhouse	476 0920	

## Editorial

As my first Dawn Chorus goes to press I would like to thank previous Editors for setting such a high standard, consistently delivering a quality bulletin with the help of many contributors. Thanks especially to outgoing Editor, Simon Fordham, for his assistance with putting together this issue. As always with a new task some teething problems were encountered !

I aim to maintain the high standards previous Editors have set, although there will be some changes made to the current format. Regular features such as the Page 3 Bird and Flora & Fauna notes will definitely be staying, and the next issue will see the addition of a Feature Plant for each issue—along the lines of the current Page 3 Bird article. I would welcome any suggestions from Supporters on any other changes or additions you might wish to see in future editions.

Contributions such as articles and photographs are always welcome, and will be printed as space allows. Please make sure name and contact details are included with any submission, so that photographs can be returned, and appropriate credit given to any published material.

*Note: Simon still has many photographs submitted over the last few years that he is unable to return due to lack of such details. If you have sent in any material and not had it returned, please contact Simon:*

simonf@clear.net.nz

I look forward to hearing from you,  
*Sharon Alderson*

**The opinions of contributors, expressed in Dawn Chorus, do not necessarily reflect the views of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc.**

**Deadline for Next Newsletter**

**30 April 2004**

## Bellbird

**Korimako/Makomako**  
***Anthornis melanura***

*"This wild melody was infinitely superior to anything that we had ever heard of the same kind; it seemed to be like small bells most exquisitely tuned....."*

wrote Captain James Cook on first hearing a Bellbird.

Anyone visiting Tiritiri Matangi Island can easily identify with his sentiments especially in May & June when the wattles are in flower & adorned with many singing Bellbirds. The Bellbird song varies regionally but is always loud clear liquid ringing notes as well as some grunts and wheezes similar to the Tui. They also have an alarm call which is a rapidly repeated harsh, metallic, scolding noise. A recent study carried out on Tiri by Lisa Ling Li has shown that there are nine common male Bellbird distinctive songs and nine common female Bellbird songs but these are not as distinctive as the male songs. The males do group singing, even at food sources, at any time of the day, not just at dawn or dusk. The females sing more discreetly usually in response to another female. Also, adult Bellbirds tolerate juveniles practicing their song within the adult territory. In most other bird species the youngsters would be chased away.

The Bellbird is one of 3 endemic Honeyeaters. Although now relatively abundant in native forests, scrub areas, exotic forests, orchards and gardens throughout most of New Zealand, Bellbird numbers did drop quite markedly in the 1860's and they became extinct on the mainland north of Waikato (excluding the Coromandel). This was in part due to the rapid influx of predators such as rats but avian disease imported by mynas and sparrows could well have caused the regional extinction.

With the extinction (around 1906) of the Chatham Island subspecies (*Anthornis melanocephala*) there are now 3 surviving subspecies of Bellbird, the mainland *A. melanura*, the Three Kings Islands *A. obscura* and the Poor Knights Islands *A. oneho*.

Attempts have been made to reintroduce Bellbirds to areas north of Auckland and to Waiheke Island. Although the odd Bellbird is seen on Waiheke Island, the transfers to these areas have not been considered a success. Male Bellbirds presumably from Tiri are regularly seen at Shakespear Regional Park and in November 1993 a female was seen feeding chicks.

Bellbirds on Tiri really took off once the replanting programme was underway. A 1969 survey recorded only 24 Bellbirds but by the end of 1994 estimates gave the population as in excess of 1000! With the arrival of the Stitchbird feeders the Bellbirds quickly took advantage of this great "take away" service and this has probably also helped increase their numbers.

Bellbirds maintain the same breeding territory every year. They usually breed between September & January and often have 2 clutches. The female builds the nest of twigs and fibres with a deep cup lined with feathers and fine grass in dense cover in a fork or in the top of a Punga. Two to four pinkish white eggs with reddish brown blotches are laid at daily intervals and the incubation period of 14 days begins after the last egg has been laid. The chicks are fed mostly on insects by both parents and fledge at 14 days.



Photo Simon Fordham

Outside the breeding season, birds congregate at nectar sources and will defend a feeding territory within the tree.

When flowers are not common they take fruit, insects and spiders, especially the females who can be chased away from the flowers by the more aggressive males.

The male Bellbird is rather handsome with his olive green plumage and glossy purple head, red eye and slightly curved black bill. The wing and slightly forked tail are a dark bluish black with a line of yellow feathers near the angle of the closed wing.

The smaller female is a duller olive-brown with a bluish gloss on the forehead and crown, a reddish-brown tinged eye and a narrow white stripe across the cheek from the bill. The juvenile looks like the female but has a brown eye and yellowish cheek stripe. In all adults the ninth primary feather ends in a very small spur and it is this feature which causes the "whirring" noise which birds use to interact with each other.

Morag Fordham





## From the Chair

"We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise we harden". This quotation from Johann von Goethe, an 18th century German playwright, reflects a problem facing many New Zealand voluntary organisations today; that is the ability to replenish a mature organisation with fresh blood and new ideas. Usually an initial strong core group of members drive an organization to achieve its objectives, but as these members retire or the ability to accept change over time becomes harder, the organization begins a gradual decline. The only method to arrest this decline is for an infusion of new and younger members into the organization, but encouraging these members to join and maintaining their interest is an important challenge for any society to ensure survival into the future. Some Conservation groups such as Forest and Bird well understand this problem and have established their Kiwi Conservation Club to foster the growth of younger members, but others are not addressing this issue very well and are struggling with declining subscriptions and waning interest.

The Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi are fortunate in that our constitution specifically states that public awareness of the project is to be heightened. The inference from the start was that school and tertiary institutions would be targeted as well as interested individuals and community groups. This began with the original planting which has been a popular task for many school groups. It is satisfying to observe how many of the students are now returning to the island as adults with the Tiri conservation message firmly emblazoned in their minds from a past Ray Walter lecture or information passed to them from members. Some have progressed to become tertiary students and are conducting their thesis topics on the island. Similarly many individuals have become enthusiastic long-term members because of the encouragement given to them by Ray and Barbara, older supporters and the many shop volunteers and guides.

The Society has actively promoted education of primary and secondary school students through newsletters, books, lectures and by selective funding. For example, a new reprint of the Singing island book by Lynette Moon, made possible by the Sky City Charitable Trust, is being distributed as a reference source to many schools in the Auckland region. Additionally tertiary students have been accommodated by the establishment of a research policy and a contestable fund for projects on the island.

Because of the interest and involvement being given to these young students and individuals alike by the Society, the Supporters are in good health with a good blend of experience and youth in constant supply willing to contribute in a variety of ways. Retiring committee members can therefore pass the on baton of management with confidence, knowing new members will have a sound knowledge of the objectives and outcomes of the Society.

Talking about passing the baton, this is the final chairman's editorial from me and I wish to acknowledge all the members for their support and encouragement over the last 2 years. The Society has grown into a professional body, well respected in conservation circles and the calibre of new people joining the Supporters is very encouraging.

Naaku Noa Naa  
Carl Hayson



## School Visits

St Kentigern School (2 trips)  
Verran School (2 trips)  
Awhitu School  
St Cuthberts College  
Milford Primary ( 3 trips)  
Hamilton Girls High School  
Chelsea Primary (2 trips)  
Gulf Harbour School  
Howick Intermediate School

## Working Bees Thank You!

Supporter's Working Weekend  
January 24– 26

The old cowshed and sheep yards were demolished and work was started on the old foghorn by stripping the paint and restoring the exterior of the foghorn shed. Also more Kawerau track work was carried out.

Many thanks to all those who worked tirelessly over the long weekend.

## Obituary

Penny Mutu, a keen birder and Supporter of Tiritiri Matangi since the early days, has recently passed away.

Poor health had prevented Pene from visiting the island over the last few years, but she kept in touch with the island by telephone, and actively supported the project by ordering Christmas presents from the shop.

Our sympathies are extended to Pene's family

# Miromiro - North Island Tomtits

*Coming soon to Tiritiri Matangi*

At the start of 2003 I had no idea how a cute and engaging 13 cm 10 gm bird could become so absorbing of time, energy and thinking. In April, as part of my Royal Society teaching fellowship year, I agreed to put together the emergency translocation proposal for bringing miromiro (Nth.Is. tomtit) to Tiritiri. At an informal meeting in the bunkhouse, during the week of the whitehead captures, Richard Griffiths (DoC Workworth), set the scene by asking if I would carry out the task, and if Dr Tim Lovegrove and Kevin Parker (ARC Heritage Department scientists) would carry out the captures.

The proposal process involved; many recce trips into the bush and pine tree areas around the Auckland region to source the distribution of tomtit populations, and consultation with:- seven iwi, Carter Holt, North Shore Forest and Bird. With support and help with the writing from Richard Griffiths, the proposal was presented to Rosalie Stamp (DoC Auckland) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July. The Plows and Mine Roads area of the Hunuas was decided on as being the best spot for capture of the tomtits due to:- the high numbers of birds present, the clear felling of the tomtit pine forest habitat, the easy access into the area, the geographical closeness to Tiritiri, the area being under ARC ownership.

In June, Morag Fordham and I started the trips into the Hunuas to source where the birds were and attempting to habituate (feed) them with meal worms. Apart from learning how to get reluctant and flighty tomtits to feed, we had to dodge large logging trucks moving up and down the roads. From August onwards the trips into the area became a regular 2- 3 per week. As well as Morag, I have been joined on the habituation trips;- by; Sharon Alderson, Mick Cleland, Simon Fordham, Vic Hunter,

and two visiting U.K. cousins coerced to help on Christmas morning!

By December 31<sup>st</sup> we had set up eleven feeding sites and had the knowledge of ten more territories. It is mainly the males who come in to feed. On a good day five of the females feed on the ground but usually it is only two to three.



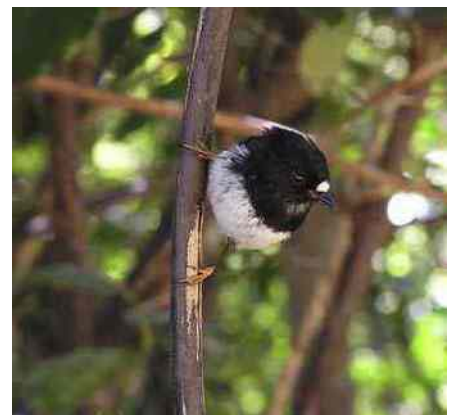
*Female tomtit*

The secretive nature and excellent brown camouflage of the females is going to make them difficult to capture.

Both the male and female have excellent eyesight and are known to spot insects at 10m. The Maori speak of a observant person as - "he karu miromiro" - "having a tomtit eye" and called tomtits "scouts" or "torotoro" due to their habit of appearing from nowhere in the forest ([www.nzbirds.com/Miromiro.html](http://www.nzbirds.com/Miromiro.html)).

We have learnt a great deal about the numerous types of calls they make, their various behaviours and the variety in nesting sites: - gorse branch forks, amongst dead pampas-grass leaves, the end branches on pine trees, in amongst keikie vine and astelias on ponga trees. On Tiri the tomtits may decide to nest in Ray's beard!

Further to the documentation process, objections were raised in September to the proposal so a thirty-page missive had to be written in reply. Disease screening was called for by DoC and that meant a permit application had to be put in place. This was approved by DoC on December 15<sup>th</sup>. The disease screening involved the temporary capture in early January of six birds by Kevin Parker for swabbing of the cloaca area and the collecting of faecal samples. The samples were sent off to Gribbles Analytical Laboratory for analysis. The results came back negative and our final translocation permit can now be signed off by DoC. The captures are planned to take place from March through to April in 2004 - 2006. We all have to hope that enough females are captured to set up the pioneer population on Tiritiri, and that the tomtit will have minimal negative interactions on the island with it's relative, the Nth.Is. robin.

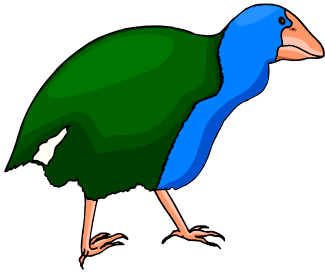


*Male tomtit*

This is a delightful bird, and with it's engaging personality, it will quickly become a firm favourite with the children and adult visitors to the island.

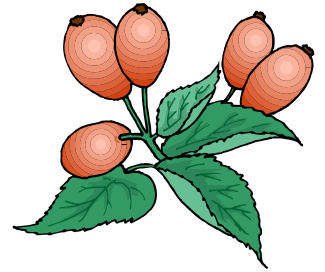
Consult the Tiri website for further information on the tomtit: [www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz](http://www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz)

*Barbara Hughes*  
(article and photographs)



# Flora and Fauna Notes

Compiled by Barbara Walter & Morag Fordham



## Flora

Over summer the *Parsonsia heterophylla* (Maori Jasmine / Kaiku, Kaiuwhiria), *Melicytus lanceolatus* (Mahoe / Whiteywood), *Vitex lucens* (Puriri), *Myoporum laetum* (Ngaio), *Leptospermum scoparium* (Manuka), *Cordyline australis* (Cabbage tree / Ti kouka), *Carmichaelia aligera* (Native Broom), *Dodonaea viscosa* (Akeake), *Muehlenbeckia* (Pohuehue / Wirevine), *Metrosideros excelsa* (Pohutukawa), *Rhabdanthus solandri* (NZ Gloxinia / Taurepo, Waiu-atua), *Pseudopanax lessonii* (Houpara) have all flowered or are flowering now.

We also have a few *Phormium cookianum* (Mountain Flax / Wharariki) on the island & they are also in flower.

At Fisherman's Bay the *Ipomea caricea* (used to be called *Ipomea palmata*) with its dark purple flowers can be seen. Tiritiri Matangi is the southern most area for this plant.

Unfortunately despite good flowering many plants have not formed a lot of fruit & many of the *Coprosma repens* (Taupata), *Coprosma robusta* (Karamu), & *Melicytus lanceolatus* (Mahoe / Whiteywood) have no fruit at all.

Our *Elingamita johnsonii* are now forming flower buds & one can be seen in Big Wattle Valley walking from the lighthouse past the Blackmores seat & before the swampy bit on the right hand side. The leaf is similar to the *Corynocarpus laevigatus* (Karaka). This species was discovered on the West Island of the Three Kings Islands by Major M.E. Johnson in 1950. The name commemorates the passenger steamer "Elingamite" which was wrecked on the rocks beneath

the cliffs of West Island. The three Tiri trees come from the DSIR.



*Elingamita johnsonii*  
Photo: Jan Velvin

## Fauna

### Takahe

Although JJ's chick hatched on 4/12 the chick was dead on 7/12 & the other egg was an early dead embryo. She & Blackwatch then left the lighthouse area for a few weeks only reappearing in the middle of January.

Glencoe & Mungo (his son) moved in to the vacated lighthouse area so when JJ & Blackwatch returned there was a bit of a "dust up" but everything is peaceful at the moment.

Ahikaea, Bellamy & their chick are well as are Greg, @dot & their chick. Greg has taken the family down to Hobbs Beach for the summer so we are back to doing "Greg Watch" as he stalks the Hobbs Beach visitors looking for sandwiches, chips & other junk food both for himself & the chick. They have occasionally wandered

over to the Wharf Dam but Ossie (Brown Teal) soon chases them away. One day recently Greg was seen swimming in the sea off Hobbs Beach & the chick was also in the sea bathing.

Kristina has put on some weight & is now looking more grown up. She has moved up to the Ridge road to avoid Greg & the family.

Although Iti & Blossom renested the egg was again infertile.

Irene & Blake played at nesting as no eggs appeared to have been laid.

We still have 5 lone males - Whetu, Whakama, Glencoe, Rossie & Mungo.

Over summer the Takahe begin to look like feather dusters as they begin to go through their moult.

### Stitchbird/Hihi

It has been another good breeding season. See Sandra Jack's report.

### Kokako

Cloudsley Shovell & Te Koha Waiata have successfully reared 2 chicks, Russell (OG/M) & Eunice (WO/M). She immediately nested again. Two chicks hatched at the beginning of February but were unfortunately predated by harrier hawk.

Shazbot & Te Hari have reared one chick, Amelia.

Kahurangi & Bel Canto's chick Dash, a female fledged too early & was never seen again. She too immediately nested again & their chick also hatched at the beginning of February.

Ruby (last year's chick) has paired up with Kaha (he & Shazbot produced Kanuka 2 years ago) & started building a nest but nothing has come of it as she is still very young.



As Ruby has lost a band she now has the same band combination as Shazbot - RM/- but in Ruby's case the metal band can't be seen as it is covered by the red band. These 2 pairs of birds are in adjoining territories which can be confusing as they sometimes feed from the same trees.

### **N I Robin**

There are now 40 pairs (down from 42 at the start of the season). Some of the Robins bred twice & over the season Askia & Elna counted 109 chicks of which approximately 50% have been seen since fledging.

### **Whitehead**

Busy parents feeding chicks are being seen everywhere.

### **Saddleback**

Our oldest Saddleback (over 18 years old) was seen feeding a chick & he now appears to have moved back into his old territory.

During the night while roosting on the ground one of our juvenile Saddleback was eaten by a Tuatara.

In early December on a recent visit to Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, Barbara Hughes observed an ex Tiri Saddleback opening the Kaka food dispenser & then proceed to jump around with a large piece of corn cob in its beak which it then fed to the hungry offspring. Seemingly this smart Saddleback has worked out a way of obtaining food even though the dispenser is set for the weight of a Kaka! Another Saddleback & a Blackbird have also been seen obtaining food the same way. It appears to be a more successful breeding season than last year but Wattle Valley & the Kawerau track have been quiet.

### **Red-crowned Parakeet (Kakariki)**

Appear to be breeding well again this season.

### **Brown Teal**

It has been a great season as we have 13 surviving ducklings & 7 or 8 adult ducks.

At the Wharf Dam Ossie has started to chase away his ducklings leaving only one with Jemima, possibly a female.

Finn continues to stay with Eva & their 6 offspring. This family can often be seen up around the lighthouse at night time. Ruan their first duckling left the group a couple of months ago. The juveniles are now being chased away by the adults.

Daisy & her 3 offspring are still on Fisherman's Dam.

### **Fernbird**

Occasionally, sightings of birds, all unbanded. It is assumed they are again breeding this season.

### **Little Spotted Kiwi**

They are often seen at this time of the year. One lucky visitor saw a Tuatara which then scooted into the bush disturbing a Kiwi which ran out from the same spot!

### **N Z Pigeon (Kereru)**

At Anniversary Weekend Simon Fordham, Peter Lee & Val Smytheman were watching a small number of Swallows & 6 NZ Pigeon gliding towards the pine trees behind the bunkhouse when they noticed that one of the Swallows was deliberately chasing one of the Pigeons. Peter Lee actually saw the bird land on the gliding Pigeon & they all saw the swallow rest on the wing.

Ricardo Palma (who studies lice & other parasites on birds at Te Papa) thinks it is possible that the Swallow was feeding on any of the ectoparasites living on NZ Pigeons. The name of the blood sucking flies is "louse flies" (family *Hippoboscidae*) & they are known to parasitize many NZ terrestrial birds including NZ Pigeons.

### **Other Birds**

DAPHNE our fourth ranger who disappeared at the beginning of December reappeared on 25 January. It is presumed she went away to moult as she is looking very plump (where's that orange!) & smart in her new plumage. She is already starting to get birds & people back into line.

Our lone Weka was seen on a regular basis over Christmas.

A pair of Kaka was regularly seen in the gum trees, on the Kawerau track & eating seeds in Ray & Barbara's garden around Christmas.

The penguins have been moulting.

The Kingfishers at the Wharf have nested twice this season as have the Spotless Crake at the Wharf Dam (1 chick & then 2 chicks).

The Brown Quail have again had small clutches.

There are at least 4 Morepork chicks this season. The one pair have often been seen at night when people are out looking for Tuatara.

The Variable Oystercatchers on the Reef had 3 chicks, the pair at the Wharf had 2 chicks & the pair on Hobbs Beach produced 3 chicks this season.

A Reef Heron was seen between North West Point and North East Bay at Anniversary Weekend.

A male Tomtit was seen on the Kawerau Track around Christmas but disappeared again just before New Year. A male tomtit is currently being seen in Wattle Valley, it is not known whether this is the same bird.

A Black Shag was seen on the Reef just before New Year.

Around Christmas there were quite a few sightings of a Long-tailed Cuckoo.

The Tuis & Bellbirds are still nesting & there are also lots of fledglings around.

### **Tuatara**

They are being seen during the day as well as at night. A couple of lucky guides & their groups have watched one on the Kawerau Track.

One Tuatara was seen eating a worm & another one was seen eating a Saddleback.

Two clutches of eggs have been discovered which is very exciting.

### **Other**

A Lesser Wanderer Butterfly (Australia, Pacific Islands, Asia & Africa) was seen at Anniversary Weekend.

# 2003-04 Weed Team Report



It was with great anticipation that I returned to Tiri this season to continue the weed control programme. Memories of waking in the morning to the sound of the bellbirds and listening to the kiwi at night had long ago banished thoughts of wasp infested flax fields and strangling bracken and twiggy coprosma.

I was also excited at the prospect of seeing the results of last years efforts and being part of a great team of people again. We were fortunate to have Peter involved again this year, and Sharen who came along again for a couple of weeks. With the addition of keen new weeders Melinda, Vivien and Laura the blokes were feeling seriously outnumbered.

The main focus of the weed control programme that Ian has implemented is to eliminate the seed source of weeds on the island and this means finding and controlling all the adult weed plants before they have a chance to seed.

So although we were not yet expecting to see much of a reduction in the total number of weeds present, as new plants are continually germinating from the seed bank in the soil, we were hoping to see a large reduction in the seed source.

We did not search the whole island again this year. Work was slightly slower than before as we decided to dig out the honeysuckle rather than spray because of the level of regrowth. That coupled with the fact that we had to wind up the cotton meant that we did not have time to cover all areas. However those that we left out were relatively weed free last year.

The following are some of the highlights of what we found:

- ◆ Although seedlings continue to appear in large numbers on previous sites no new sites of flowering or seeding mothplant were found. This is tremendously satisfying as this is one of the hardest plants to keep from spreading.
- ◆ Other species for which no flowering plants were found are Chinese privet, tree privet, periwinkle, mistflower and briar rose.
- ◆ Japanese honeysuckle continues to be the hardest to control. Forty four per cent of plants of this species controlled last year had regrowth, and many new young plants were found including a few that had reached flowering stage. However those reaching flowering stage are reduced by fifty five per cent in comparison to last year.

- ◆ Mexican Devil seedlings are still appearing on most previous sites but the good news is that it has not spread any further, and twenty eight per cent less seeding plants were found this year.

- ◆ In total the seed source of all species has been reduced by about sixty eight per cent.

- ◆ All boxthorn on the cliffs has been targeted thanks to Ian's tireless efforts.

All this is really encouraging and with continued follow up we should soon be a long way towards an almost weed free Tiri.

So a big thank you to all those involved, Peter for putting up with the Amazons (don't mention duct tape), Sharen for being my minder again for a couple of weeks, Melinda for her constant positive outlook (despite getting the most wasp stings!) and of course the line dancing lessons, Vivien for her thoughtful perspectives (don't mention tattoos), "Rambo Laura" for her endless energy, and Ian who can sleep easier now that we have gone! And of course we are always appreciative of the support and encouragement given to us by Ray and Barbara and all the Supporters.

And finally a big thank you also to our sponsors who make the weed program possible, you the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi and Nufarm NZ Ltd

**Helen Lindsay**  
**Weed team leader**

If you are interested in reading more details of the findings from the Tiri weed programme you can obtain a copy of the report from Ian Price.

*Pictured above, Left to right: Peter Crow, Vivienne Milton, Helen Lindsay, Melinda Habgood (absent: Laura Young)*

*Photo: Ian Price*



## Kakabeak planting programme on Tiri

Thelma Wilson from DOC Warkworth in October asked us to assist the Kakabeak management programme by increasing their numbers on Tiri. Thelma was keen to identify areas on the island which would be best suited for the plant, through observation at other sites she felt areas where Petrels were nesting should be trialed.

Over 60 seedlings were planted at various places around the island in late October, due to the time of year rain crystals were placed with the seedlings along with snail bait, both water and snail bait were given on a regular 7 to 10 day basis, despite this, losses have been high.

Due to the losses a number of Kakabeak have been planted in plastic bags to carry on to a greater size in the hope this will improve their survival chances. Planting will continue this winter, a lot earlier than last year, in the hope of giving their survival chances a boost.

Will keep you updated,  
*Ian Price, Ranger*

## Stitchbird/Hihi Update



Photo: Peter Crow

We should have a total number of fledglings this year of around 155! (last year's fledgling total was 103). The majority of this season's fledglings came from the first and second clutches. Two females attempted third clutches though both failed (one female was thought to be dead, but was seen recently, minus a foot but happy, after getting her metal band caught on one of the hooks in the Kawerau/Bush 1 feeder - a freak accident!). There were 42 first clutch nests, 25 second clutch and with the 2 third clutch nests, a total of 69 nesting attempts, of which only 13 failed to fledge one or more chicks.

This season was very mitey with a huge

proportion of nests treated for mites, which kept Su Sinclair and I very busy. We had a few oddities to keep us bemused. One chick's eyes failed to develop properly and was blind, as well as having both back toes double-clawed - probably a genetic throwback which sadly but luckily died in the nest. Our "tongue" female, with a hole in her lower mandible where her tongue pokes through, attempted to breed this year (she didn't breed last year) but her eggs did not hatch - this may have had to do with the fact that she didn't bother to incubate them for a day! Perhaps next year she'll try again?

In other strange occurrences a well-known older female was seen attacking and killing one of her chicks in the nest. There have been plenty of theories about this going around, including a lack of food at the time - but who can really know what goes on in the life of a female stitchbird? We had a few other instances where chicks were discovered dead, either outside the nest itself or on the ground. Perhaps mothers are taking "natural selection" into their own hands?

*Sandra Jack  
Ranger*

## Subscription Notice:

Thank you to all members from throughout New Zealand and from overseas who have renewed their subscriptions for 2004 (almost 2/3 of our 1615 members). Thank you, too, for your affirming comments, good wishes, and Christmas/New Year greetings. We appreciate your continued support. We also gratefully acknowledge all those who generously sent a donation along with their subscription.

To those whose 2004 sub is now overdue (you will have a pink reminder notice with this mailout), we would be grateful if you would continue to support our wonderful island by forwarding your subscription at your earliest convenience [as our subscription year is the calendar year and subscriptions expired at the end of 2003](#). Please note that, unfortunately, we will be unable to continue sending the Dawn Chorus to non-financial members.

Any subscription queries, please contact the Membership Secretary,

Val Smytheman

## TIRITIRI MATANGI MARINE RESERVE

The results of the draft proposal for public submissions that Tiritiri Matangi supporters sent into the New Zealand Underwater Association are as follows:

There were 213 submissions received from SoTM, representing 13% response rate; 170 in favour of a marine reserve around Tiritiri, 23 in favour of a marine reserve around the Whangaparaoa peninsula, 24 opposed the marine reserve altogether.

Thank you to all those people who sent in submissions. As further developments take place we will keep you informed.

*John McLeod*

# Tiritiri Matangi Bird Survey

*Ornithological Society of New Zealand*

*November 2003*

A full complement of 16 took part in the November 2003 survey on Tiritiri Matangi that completed a full 17 years of both spring and autumn bird counts. The weather was excellent and the island was looking exceptional – clearly benefiting from the recent rain. The impact of which has been a good looking fruit set on the Coprosma that will benefit the birds later in the season, but more immediately the rain has stimulated the pohutukawa and flax flowering and that has brought abundance to all.

The large pohutukawa tree at the end of our boardwalk transect was sensational and for most of the day was a scene of non-stop bird action. The flax flowers are also in great profusion this year and they too attracted a great many birds that are easily identified by an orange yellow pollen crown.

The outcome of this combination of good weather, the flax flowering and the pohutukawa splendour has predictably given us good count numbers on all transects and the two observation points. The numbers are well up on last year. It's a good example of what makes most bird surveys a very imprecise science, but in so doing it also gives emphasis to the immense value of keeping such work going in the long term. Like the beach patrols and wader counts the value of the numbers recorded each time increases with the passage of time that gradually reveals the genuine trends.

One scientific paper on this survey work written by Dick Veitch and I has already been published. The paper mainly concerned the impact of rat eradication and as our OSNZ survey spans the time before and after the eradication of kiore in September 1993 it has unique before and after data.

A more general paper has been in

draft form for some time but will only be sent to Notornis once a full 20 years data has been accumulated.

The data has also been used to compare results of other short-term surveys. Quite recently for example it was used in a three day survey aimed at estimating the total population of whiteheads ahead of them being caught and released in the Hunua Ranges. In this survey the whitehead was judged to be the most common bird on the island.

On this survey I was very pleased to record fernbird for the first time while counting on transect 2 – the coastal sector above the cliffs on the most northern part of the island.

Finally to a contentious point that will be good to include in this short report because hopefully it will attract some comment for the next newsletter and we all might learn something. It concerns grey warblers.

Tiri Supporters do a great job with Dawn Chorus and in amongst reports in the latest edition was a brief comment to the effect that grey warblers were plentiful – both seen and heard. I have asked Barbara about grey warblers in the past and have always received a very similar response, but I'm not so sure.

To me it's the main mystery in our long term survey because essentially grey warblers have done nothing in 17 years. The best average counts for all transects in spring were 9.0 and 9.1 birds in 1998 and 1999 respectively. The best autumn average was 9.2 in 2000. The overall average for both seasons over 17 years is 4.89 birds. I don't call that plentiful, and the very small number of shining cuckoo we have recorded in the period suggestively endorses these figures.

Given that our collective efforts with tree planting since 1984 have

dramatically improved the environmental conditions on Tiritiri, the big question for me is how come the grey warbler hasn't benefited from it in the same way as other species. The fantail for example has shown an obvious increase in numbers.

If there are clues in the survey figures they are cryptic, so meanwhile we can only indulge in conjecture. We can safely eliminate predation and nest site competition as factors leaving us the difficult explanations such as competition for food from expanding populations like the whitehead.

What do you think?

*Mike Graham*  
Auckland OSNZ

*(Feedback via Dawn Chorus Editor, email preferred if possible).*

## Don't Forget the Tiri Shop!

Gifts suitable for all occasions!

Birthdays,  
Weddings,  
Anniversaries...

Also a good selection of books for adults & children.

Ask Barbara - 476 0010



## Calendar of Events

**2004**

**Monday 15 March**  
Annual General Meeting  
(with guest speakers)

**April 9—12**  
Supporters' Easter  
Working Weekend  
(only a few places left)

**May 1—2**  
Supporters'  
Families  
Weekend

**FULL**

**May 15 –16**  
Supporters' Non-Working  
Weekend

**Sunday 6 June**  
Bellbird Trip & Planting—  
20 YEARS  
Since the first planting trip!

**June 5—7**  
Supporter's Working  
Weekend

For all of the above  
(except AGM)  
bookings must be  
made with Barbara,  
not Fullers  
**476 0010**

*Please book early, to  
avoid disappointment, as  
these events fill up fast*

## Can you help?

Anne Rimmer is still looking for good photos to include in her book about Tiri. The book goes to the publisher next month, and is due out in springtime. She is particularly looking for the following:

- ♦ Before and after photos taken from the same spot. Most 'before' shots are now obscured by trees.
- ♦ Photos of hard-to-reach spots, e.g. the eastern side of Tiri especially if photographed from the sea.
- ♦ Photos of key people, especially if they are doing something interesting.
- ♦ Photos that show more than one thing, e.g. recognisable people or landmarks in the foreground with a background showing newly-planted trees.
- ♦ Photos of tree-planting where the people look attractive, rather than bent over, bottom facing the camera.
- ♦ Photos taken at important events, e.g. the opening of the Kawerau Track, or a bird release.
- ♦ Funny photos.
- ♦ Good close-ups of birds/flowers/plants.
- ♦ Atmospheric shots of the bush or the coast, sunrises, clouds, dew on leaves.
- ♦ Any photo which has the 'Wow!' factor, or the 'Feel-good' factor, no matter what its subject.

Please contact Anne directly. She'll want to see a photocopy or low-resolution email of your photos now but will need the original print or a very high-resolution scan of any photo that is to be published. No money is offered but all photos will be acknowledged in the book.

Anne Rimmer  
46A Braemar Rd  
Rothsay Bay  
North Shore, NZ

Phone: +64 9 478 6142  
Mobile: 021 666 358

Email: [rimmer@ihug.co.nz](mailto:rimmer@ihug.co.nz)

## THANK YOU

A special thanks to the Values Team from St Cuthbert's College (Faye, Brent, Amanda, Kim and Anna) who have raised an additional \$1500 from sales of the colouring books they produced as a Year 12 project. (This is in addition to colouring book sales made on the island).

Every book sold contributes \$5 to the island.

For the full colouring book story see Dawn Chorus Bulletin 52.

## Geoff Moon Photographic Exhibition

Friday 19th March  
- Sunday 18th April

An exhibition of original photographs, notebooks and other materials related to Geoff's work. Some images offered for sale. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society.

Exhibition is held at:

Corban Estate Art Centre  
426 Great North Road  
Henderson  
Ph: 09 838 4455  
[info@ceac.org.nz](mailto:info@ceac.org.nz)

Galleries open 7 days a week,  
10am — 4.30pm  
entry is free



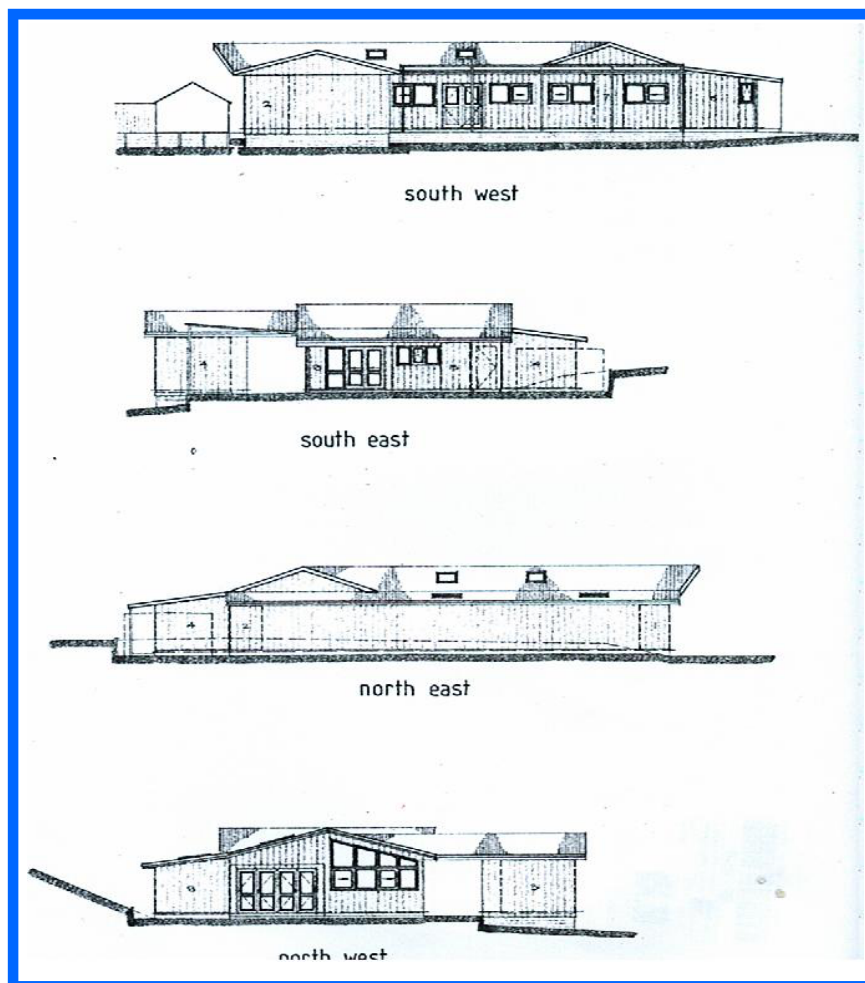
# Visitor Centre Update

*Help make the proposed Tiritiri Matangi visitors' centre a reality.*

In 1990, the committee of the day held a vision for the construction of a visitors centre on the island to provide shelter, interpretation and personal facilities in a low profile functional building. Years went by with design plans and site selection taking an enormous amount of time and not a little frustration. But after a lot of work over the last 5 years, we have all plans, leases, permissions and final quotations to construct this centre. (The detailed plan can be viewed on the wall of the nursery shed) .All we need now is the funding to construct the Centre. Simple! How much do we need? A mere \$301,754.

OK this sounds like a lot of money, but a journey of 1000 miles always starts with the first step. Already we have accumulated \$50,000 from our own budget this year, but at this rate it will be another 5 years before construction can begin and due to the nursery shed falling apart, we cannot afford to wait that long. While corporate sponsorship is still being sought, we need to approach any sources we can to raise this finance.

We do not often approach our members for additional funding as so many of you make substantial donations anyway. But this is *the* biggest project the Supporters are ever likely to undertake and we are making a one-off plea to any members who can make a donation specifically towards the Visitors' Centre fund or who can give information on funding sources that can help make up the shortfall.



All donors will be acknowledged and receipts will be given for tax purposes ( the Society has charitable status).

**All assistance will be greatly appreciated.**

*Carl Hayson*

*(Floorplans and elevations are displayed in the nursery shed)*

## Donations for Visitor Centre Fund

Please make cheques payable to : Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi (Inc.)

Or supply credit card details: Visa / Mastercard / American Express

Card Number:

Card holder's name:

Expiry date:

*Please post this form, with payment, to:*

Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi (Inc)

PO Box 34-229

Birkenhead

Auckland 1310

Or fax credit card donations to: 09 476 0010