

Wetlands Project complete



Final stages of wetland construction. Photo: Anne Rimmer

The project to build new wetlands in North East Bay was finally completed in March, two and a half years after the idea started to take shape. North East Bay is an ideal place for new ponds/wetlands as it is an unforested catchment which faces the direction of the rain sweeping in off the Hauraki Gulf. It also has areas of reasonably low gradient valley floor on which water can be easily impounded.

The project began in September 2001 with an initial field visit to search for likely sites. This was followed by a detailed field survey and design over the summer of 2001/02 before SOTM embarked on the lengthy process of gaining all the resource consents required from DoC, Rodney District Council and Auckland Regional Council. This process was completed in March 2003 and Sibley Soil Retention Ltd moved equipment onto the island in May last year. However, despite everyone's best efforts the project was defeated by last year's extremely wet winter. Despite this, Chris Sibley was able to leave machines on the island for ten months to allow the project to be completed this summer and it is expected that the ponds will fill over the winter to provide much needed extra habitat for Brown Teal and Fernbird, and a source of permanent water for all wildlife living in North East Bay.

Grant Dumbell

In This Issue:

Feature Bird
Stitchbird
Page 3

Tomtit Translocation
Page 5

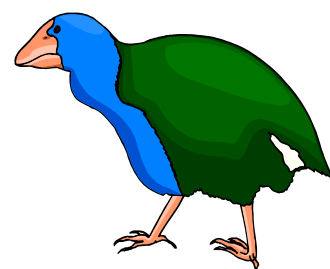
Flora & Fauna Report
Page 6-7

"From the Weed Team"
Page 8

A Virtual Field Trip
Page 9

Kokako Report &
Feature Plant
Cabbage Tree
Page 10

Events Calendar
Page 11



Deadline for Next Newsletter

23 July 2004

Editorial

One of the advantages of being Dawn Chorus Editor is that it gives me the perfect excuse to talk to people I might never otherwise meet; various visitors to the Island, DOC staff, researchers etc are all fair game for an Editor looking for a story. Most articles printed in the Dawn Chorus are a result of a specific request for a story, rather than unsolicited articles magically appearing by post or email. I would like to encourage supporters to send in either articles or photographs, as these often reflect the joy of a visit to the island, and the important place Tiritiri Matangi holds in all of our hearts.

Many Supporters are able to volunteer their time as Guides on Tiri. I have been visiting the island for many years now, with my first visit in 1992 a University field trip. Since then I have planted quite a few trees on the island, and introduced many friends and relations to the marvel that is Tiri. For the last eighteen months I have also been guiding, which is an entirely different way to experience the island.

To introduce overseas visitors, school children and locals on holiday to a place where the sound of birdsong in the bush is heard as soon as they leave the ferry, where birds can be approached closely, and be easily observed as they go about their business, in indeed a privilege. For many visitors Tiri is unlike anything previously experienced. While many exciting projects are underway to reverse the depredations of introduced mammalian predators, on the mainland the main sound heard in the bush is the wind in the trees, rather than the song of birds. To help the next generation of New Zealanders to understand the impact of mankind on the land, and most importantly, what can be done to redress the balance is a vital part of the work done on Tiri.

With this in mind, I would like to encourage Supporters with children to consider attending the [Tiri Kids Tree Planting day](#) on Sunday 20th June (see Tiri Kids flyer for details). In June we celebrate [20 years of tree planting](#) – be there on June 6th to plant a 20th anniversary tree!

Sharon Alderson

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

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:

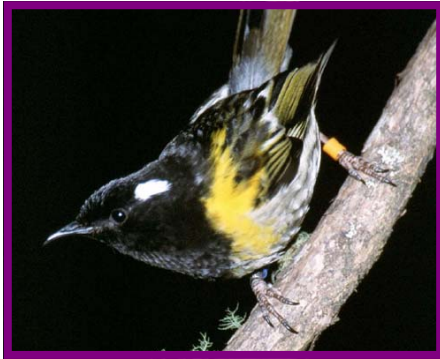
- Adult / Family / Corporate - \$20
- Overseas - \$25
- Student / Child - \$5

Page 3 Bird

Stitchbird

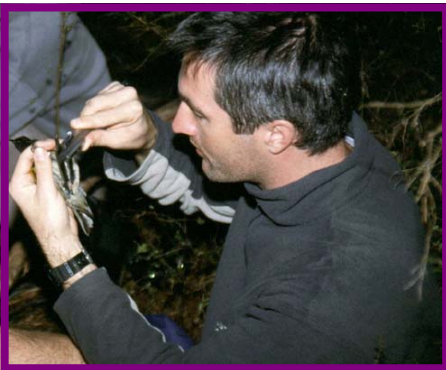
Hihi

Notiomystis cincta



Male stitchbird. Photo: Matt Lowe

On Tiri at the moment you'll find stitchbirds almost everywhere. Many of these are juveniles from the last breeding season, and if you are lucky you'll see them playing games of 'chase' and jumping on one another. It seems like fun and games at the moment, but come September these games will become something a little less innocent. My research on Tiri shows that during the breeding season all stitchbird males become obsessed with sex. Each male will be weighed down with testicles that are so big, each one is larger than his brain (so this gives you some idea of what he is thinking with).



Matt Lowe measures a male stitchbird's cloaca
Photo: Matt Lowe

Because bird testicles are internal, the only clue of this in a live bird is

an enlargement of his cloaca (vent) from its storage of vast quantities of sperm. So why do they need so much sperm? The answer comes from their unusual mating behaviour.

Males pair up with a female in their own territory, while at the same time seeking to copulate with every other female on the island. This means that if a male wants to ensure the chicks in his nest (or someone else's) are his, he needs to produce lots of sperm to dilute the sperm from other males. Now sperm doesn't come cheap, and so they don't waste it. Males know exactly when a female is going to lay her eggs by visually assessing her weight and only attempt to copulate with her at times when she is weighed down with developing eggs. This means that in the days before the female lays, she may have up to 10 males chasing her for hours at a time in an attempt to copulate. During this time her own partner copulates with her in a co-operative manner, with him standing on her back after a brief courtship display. Other males are not so gentlemanlike, and will force her to the ground, onto her back and copulate in a face-to-face position (the only bird in the world that can do this!!) despite the female struggling to get away.

Now not everyone is obsessed with the size of birds' testicles like I am, so here are a few stitchbird facts that aren't related to sex.

Stitchbirds used to be found over the entire North Island, but today are restricted to Little Barrier, Tiritiri Matangi and Kapiti Islands and the Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre. Their name is thought derived from their characteristic "stitch" call (which is best described as clicking two river stones together) which they give when agitated or disturbed. The most commonly known Maori name is hihi, however there are many other names this bird used to be known by (e.g. tiora, kotihe, tiheora), with these names probably derived from the 3-note male territorial call "Ko-Ti-He". The stitchbird is one of the few New

Zealand birds where the male looks strikingly different to the female. Maoris recognised this and named them accordingly; hihi-paka (male) and hihi-matakiore (female). The female was named after the Polynesian rat "kiore" because of her brown face and whiskers. These whiskers are unusual in nectar feeding birds as they are more typically seen in birds that specialise on insect feeding (the whiskers are sensors that act to help direct the snap of the bill when taking insects while flying). Because the stitchbird has these whiskers it is not surprising that insects comprise a large proportion of its diet. Until very recently, the stitchbird has been thought to be one of New Zealand's 3 honeyeater species (along with the bellbird and tui). However, recent DNA evidence suggests that they are not honeyeaters and in fact belong in a different bird family. To which family they do belong is a focus of current research.

Matt Lowe



Female stitchbird, note the whiskers.
Photo: Matt Lowe

Comparative figures from this Hihi breeding season and last year's season:

| | 2004 | 2003 |
|------------------|------|------|
| Eggs | 283 | 191 |
| Chicks | 149 | 103 |
| Nests | 69 | 48 |
| Failed egg rate | 19% | 26% |
| Chick mortality* | 32% | 28% |

*in the nest

Data from **Sandra Jack** (see P.10)

School Visits

Rosehill (3 trips)
Niki School
Birkenhead Primary (6 trips)
Henderson North
Towai School
Diocesan School (2 trips)
St. Josephs
Willow Park (2 trips)

Trident High (Whakatane)
Otumoetai College
Westlake Girls High (2 trips)
Auckland Boys Grammar (2 trips)
St. Dominics
Rotorua Girls High
Kingsway High
Matamata College
St. Peters College
Katikati College
St. Cuthberts College
Auckland Girls Grammar (2 trips)
Kristin School
Orewa College

Working Bees Thank You!

- Auckland Tramping Club
- Barbara & Ivan Reilly's group
- Theresa & David McIntyre's group
- Supporters' Easter Working Weekend

Don't Forget the Tiri Shop!

Gifts suitable for all occasions!

A good selection of books for
adults & children:

Great winter reading for those
days when the weather prevents a
visit to Tiri!

Ask Barbara - 476 0010

From the Chair

This, my first report from the chair, will serve as something of an introduction and, more importantly, recognition of those that have gone before me.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, as an enthusiastic yacht owner, I used to sail to Kawau Island, perhaps two or three times a year, and would usually pass Tiri on the eastern side. I, of course, had no idea then that this island would become so much a part of my life. I first visited Tiri in January 1993, not long after meeting my wife Morag, who had twice visited the island previously.

We anchored in a calm Fisherman's Bay and spent a couple of hours on Tiri. From that day on, I was hooked. Tiri has that effect on people. Very quickly, we began participating in working weekends and, in 1996 I joined the committee. In recent times, I have enjoyed the editorship of the "Dawn Chorus" and now have the privilege, and challenge, of leading our wonderful organisation.

The project, of course, would not be where it is today without the countless individuals that have "made a dent" over the years.

At the last AGM, two past Chairmen retired from the committee, both of whom have made very big dents. Peter Lee joined the team in 1992. He served as Newsletter Editor for three years and was the Chairman from 1999 to 2002. Amongst Peter's many achievements, he was the architect of the "Five Year Plan".

Carl Hayson joined the committee in 1989, just a few months after the "birth" of SoTM, and holds the record for the longest service. In his 15 years on the committee, he has been Treasurer, Secretary and, for the last two years, Chairman. Amongst his many achievements Carl has always recognised the importance of building strong partnerships with other stakeholders in the project. He has contributed significantly to the excellent relationship we have with our key partner, the Department of Conservation.

Two other members who have made significant contributions also retired this AGM. Gaye Hayson, for the last three years has assisted our treasurers with the day to day bookkeeping, no mean feat in an organization of our size. John McLeod, who joined in 1999, has been the driving force behind the proposed Visitors' Centre. We are fortunate that John, Carl and Peter have offered to continue, in an off-committee role, in the quest to raise the money required for the Centre.

Space only permits a brief mention of the achievements of these members but the contribution they have all made has been tremendous. Thank you!

It is something of a relief that six new members have stepped forward to offer their services on the new committee. As the project evolves, new challenges and opportunities arise and I have no doubt that we have the skills and enthusiasm to add to the achievements of the last 16 years.

Simon Fordham



Female tomtit in the hand of Richard Griffiths (DOC)

Photo: Xenia Meier



Kevin Parker holding a male tomtit, note bands on legs

Photo: Barbara Hughes



Morag Fordham and Barbara Hughes release tomtits on Tiri

Photo: Vic Hunter

Tomtits arrive on Tiri

With the release of North Island Tomtits (Miromiro) on Tiritiri Matangi on April 14 and 15, the number of bird species translocated to Tiri has now reached eleven.

An early start on Wednesday morning saw four capture teams heading out into the Hunuvas. By 7am teams were in place, and the first nets set. Tomtits were captured by luring them into mist nets, from which they were rapidly extracted, and taken to "central processing". Birds were then weighed, measured and banded before transfer into individual boxes. The birds stayed in these boxes during transport, by car and then helicopter, to Tiri.

The hard work and dedication of the translocation team, led by Barbara Hughes, over the previous year (see article in Dawn Chorus 56) certainly paid off, with an astounding 23 birds caught on the first day. This far exceeded expectations, as it was optimistically thought that 20 birds might be captured over both days! Even better news was that 11 of these birds were females, which had been expected to be more difficult to catch than the males.

Richard Griffiths (Project Manager, DOC), Barbara Hughes (Translocation Team Leader), Morag Fordham (SoTM) and Vic Hunter (SoTM) escorted the tomtits to their new home on Tiri. Rain failed to dampen the enthusiasm of those present at the release (see photo at left), and all of the birds appeared to be in good condition as they left their boxes. The tomtits were initially released into selected bush areas, although they are expected to disperse throughout the island.

A further 9 birds (2 more females and 7 males) were caught on the second day, making a total of 32. Stunning weather made the helicopter flight a delight for those on board; John McLeod (SoTM), Sharon Alderson (SoTM), Sonya Gerritsen (Student/ Researcher) and Elna Broesder (Student/ Researcher). Again the release went smoothly, with all birds seeming unaffected by their travel experiences.

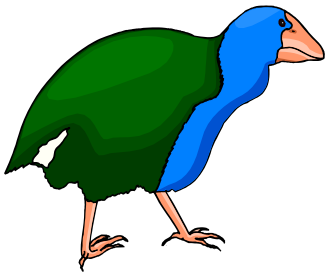
A group on a guided walk reported seeing one of the tomtits released the previous day, indicating that at least one bird had already moved away from the release area. Barbara Hughes spent several days on the island monitoring the birds after release, and reports that six individuals were positively identified by their leg bands, with other calls heard and several less conclusive sightings (i.e. leg bands obscured) made. Further post-translocation monitoring is also planned.

Sharon Alderson

With the sale of parts of Yates, including the division responsible for potting mix, we are fortunate that **NZ Peat** based at Maramarua have kindly agreed to supply us instead. The provision of potting mix helps greatly with the nursery work done on the island, as all seedlings for later planting are raised on the island. **Thank you, NZ Peat.**

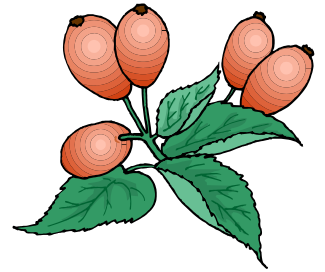
From Barbara Hughes:

I'd like to express my thanks and appreciation to everyone in SoTM for their support of this project and to Kevin Parker for an outstanding job in managing the tomtit catching teams. Also a big thank you to the following members of the translocation team, many of whom gave up valuable work time to spend two to three days of rough living with little sleep in the Hunuvas: Sharon Alderson, Mick Cleland, Morag Fordham, Mel, Josie, Maria & Tessa Galbraith, Kaye & John McLeod, Xenia Meier (SoTM), Richard Griffiths, Sandra Jack, Rosalie Stamp (DoC), Rose Thorogood (Ak University), Ian Fraser (Ak Zoo), Elna Broesder, Sonja Gerritsen, Yoran vanBoheemen (Research Students). A mention must be made of the last minute activity by Kaye McLeod of running up 20 black holding bags, John McLeod and Mick Cleland putting together 23 insulation boxes for the birds to travel in and to Sharon Alderson for a donation of meat for the translocation team meals.



Flora and Fauna Notes

Compiled by Barbara Walter &
Morag Fordham



Flora

The *Ipomea caricea* is still flowering on the cliff faces at Fisherman's Bay. This occurs here naturally but some was planted at Emergency Landing in Lighthouse Valley.

Apart from one fruit, the fruit on the *Elingamita johnsonii* tree in Wattle Valley shrivelled up. However a couple of new flower buds have now appeared.

The *Pittosporum crassifolium* (Karo) fruit is ripe. The *Pseudopanax arboreus* (Five-finger/ Puahou), *Vitex lucens* (Puriri) and *Dysoxylum spectabile* (Kohekohe) all have flowers and fruit forming at the same time.

Recently Stitchbirds have been seen eating the green fruit off the *Pseudopanax lessonii* (Houpara) although there are now some ripe fruit available. *Coprosma propinqua* is now forming fruit.

The Manuka and Wattles are all flowering. Opposite the Nursery it is nice to see the *Tecomanthe speciosa* in flower. The *Cassinia retorta* (Cottonwood) has both flowers and seeds.

The Rewarewa (very little), Whau, Wharangi, Kowhai and Olearia are all seeding.

Fauna

Takahe

There are currently 16 adult and 2 juvenile Takahe on the island.

All the birds apart from Whetu (who was recently beaten up and would now give a skinhead a good run for

his money, he is so bald) are looking great sporting their new plumage. In some cases lovely new bands complete their ensemble as Irene was caught and had a faded blue band and a missing red band replaced (MB/R). At 14.5 years old she is the oldest Takahe on Tiri. @Dot was also caught and rebanded (RM/G). Blackwatch has eluded capture so is still missing his black band. His mate JJ at 13.5 years old is the second oldest Takahe on Tiri.

The good news is that both our chicks are female. Greg and @Dot's chick has been called Tiri and Ahikaea and Bellamy's chick is called Calico.

Recently @Dot has been seen on her own, leaving Greg to teach their chick Tiri some of his bad habits. Not long ago they were caught eating carrot cake that they had stolen from a visitor. Also either Glencoe or his son Mungo managed to delve right down into a ladies handbag and steal a banana which they then squabbled over. At least it was a healthier snack than the potato chips and sandwiches that are often stolen by the various Takahe around the Lighthouse area.

From time to time Kristina has been seen with Rossie but at this stage they are just friends. If either of these birds gets too close to the Lighthouse Glencoe and Mungo chase them away.

Stitchbird/Hihi

Now that a lot of the fruit and flowers are finished the Stitchbirds are using the feeders very heavily.

The summary of the 2003/2004 breeding season is as follows. In the September census of the 109 birds recorded 30 were adult females, 32 were adult male and 47 were fledglings. During the season 149 chicks fledged from 69 nesting attempts. 80% of the eggs hatched and 34% of the chicks that hatched died. In the February 2004 census 188 birds were recorded of which 34 were females (12 of which were last years juveniles), 50 were males (20 of which were last years juveniles) and 104 were fledglings (70% survival rate).

See also "Page 3 Bird" for more information on the hihi.



Greg, @Dot & Tiri, December 2003

Photo: Val Smytheman

Kokako

It has been a good season with the successful fledging of 4 chicks, 3 of which are female. The last chick (Kahurangi and Bel Canto's) named Keisha fledged in mid March. We now have 4 adult pairs, 2 adult lone males and 4 chicks. Kanuka has not been seen for over 6 months and is presumed dead.

See P10 for more on the kokako.

N I Robin

At the beginning of April 30 Robins, mainly pairs and a few juveniles were successfully captured in under 24 hours and then transferred to Windy Hill on Great Barrier Island where they appear to be settling in well. This is the second time that Robins have been taken from Tiri to establish a population in areas where they have not been present for many years.

Whitehead

Appear to have had another good breeding season as they are very visible all over the island.

Saddleback

There were a few late nests this season with some chicks still in nests in mid March. Currently Saddlebacks can be seen eating the sticky Karo seeds.

Originally our Saddleback came from Cuvier Island. Some have since been sent to Mokoia Island in Lake Rotorua and Karori Sanctuary in Wellington.

Red-crowned Parakeet (Kakariki)

There were a few late nests with chicks still in nests in mid March. There are lots of birds being seen feeding on fleabane on the sides of the roads.

Brown Teal

Most of the juveniles have been chased away from the natal areas. Two of Daisy's ducklings are males and they are already getting their breeding plumage which is very early but Brown Teal can breed in their

first year if they are healthy.

Little Spotted Kiwi

There have been many good sightings in recent weeks. Sadly a dead Kiwi was found near the shop water trough and the bird has been sent off to the Auckland Museum.

Fernbird

At the end of February Kevin Parker carried out a survey and saw 10 birds compared with 2-3 sightings at the same time last year. During April there have been some very good close sightings on the Little Wattle Valley track amongst other spots.

Tomtit

See Article on P5. As all these delightful wee birds are banded, it would be appreciated if sightings can be reported as it is really important to see how many birds have settled successfully on Tiri.

Other Birds

One of the Morepork nests was checked and contained some robin bands and a saddleback leg. The Morepork in Wattle Valley has been seen near the stitchbird feeder and was mobbed by the Whiteheads, Bellbirds and Saddlebacks.

Daphne our Paradise Shelduck has the occasional night off the island. She doesn't like the pair of Paradise Shelduck who hang around the Lighthouse and actively chases them away.

The NZ Pigeons (Kereru) have been very visible eating large quantities of Cabbage tree fruit.

It has been easy to see the Spotless Crakes down at the Wharf dam because the water level is so low.

The Grey Faced Petrels are starting to arrive back. A few were caught over Easter and some of these were new and have been banded.

Little Blue Penguins are coming ashore again.

During March a White Faced Heron was seen up by the nursery area.

Australasian Harriers have been very visible over the past 3 months.

The Bellbirds are really singing well. Lots are using the stitchbird feeders.

Tuatara

Since it has cooled down there have been fewer sightings of Tuatara. Jonathan (student researcher) and Claire (student researcher) and her dog "Apple" who has been trained to sniff out Tuatara are currently on Tiri to help establish where our Tuatara are living.

Other

At the end of February a male and a female Blue Moon Butterfly blown in from Australia were seen on the Ridge. This is the first time that a female has been seen on Tiri.

A pod of about 30 Dolphins was seen in Fisherman's Bay at the beginning of April and on 28 April 10 Orca were seen in the bay to the left of the Wharf.

JEAN THE BUDGIE, R.I.P.

About two years ago, when Ian McLeod was a DOC ranger on Tiritiri, a visitor to the island asked him the name of the yellow bird in the bunkhouse. Ian's answer was that we don't have any yellow birds on Tiritiri. When he had a look he found a green and yellow budgie hiding in the corner of one of the rooms, covered in cobwebs.

Ian named her Jean after Jean Batten because she must have flown over the ocean to get to Tiritiri. She was put into a cage, and a call went out to Fullers to bring out some budgie seed as there was none on the island.

After a few days she was transferred to the McLeod household in Mt Eden, as DOC believed that it was not appropriate to have a budgie in a cage on a scientific reserve. Unfortunately, a couple of months ago she died, after spending a couple of happy years with two other budgies.

John McLeod

Confessions from the Weed Team....

Two of last Summer's weed team members tell us what it is really like out there in the war against weeds on Tiri



VIV MILTON :

Every time the work began to seem hard there'd be a Toutouwai or Piwakawaka there beside me and any difficulty would dissolve. After about two days of working there I realized it was the first job I'd ever had which I was doing for love rather than money. I realized that the birds give me so much peace, and to help them to thrive in any way was also helping myself. My body sometimes felt so shattered at the end of the day but always by the next morning I felt so good about what my purpose there was that getting up quarter of an hour earlier to enjoy the sunrise was never too difficult.

And the weeds. I remember finding my first obscured honeysuckle, hiding in a Karamu I think it was, and it felt so great. I often felt like I was on a jungle safari hunt for weeds. And with each one found the jungle was a slightly safer place for the natives. I have such a passion for native trees and it grows stronger all the time. I learnt more about the New Zealand bush from my wise team mates on Tiri in one month weeding than throughout three whole years of university. I'm so grateful to Helen, Sharen, Ian, Melinda and Peter for their patience with my endless questions and for sharing their knowledge. I feel so blessed to have had the opportunity to be on the weed team. And in case any little moth plant seedlings escaped our scouting eyes, I hope I will be there next year to yank them out.



MELINDA HABGOOD:

November the 11th came around and it was day one of my weed team experience on Tiritiri Matangi. Along with Helen, Sharen Ian and Viv my goal for the next two months was to cover as much of the island as possible and find and eradicate any noxious weeds such as Japanese honeysuckle and moth plant. Before any of this could be carried out, we needed to don our 'weeding outfits'. This included our brand new overalls, soon to get ripped and filthy, weed eyes a.k.a. safety glasses and a belt with various accessories attached such as a spray bottle full of herbicide, and secateurs. Now the team looked the part and was ready to tackle any weed that came our way! Viv and I, the "inexperienced weeders" of the group, were eased into it relatively gently. It wasn't until we fare welled Sharen and welcomed Peter onto the team that we began searching the infamous Lighthouse valley. We then realised how difficult dense flax, twiggy Coprosma, bracken and Muehlenbeckia can be to get through when trying to keep a straight line and remembering to look for weeds! However no matter how impenetrable the vegetation appeared to be, the days never lacked smiles and giggles (and a number of "oh dears!" from Ian and Peter) due to the ongoing games and jokes and the fantastic personalities of the crew. This was soon realised by Laura who joined the team after Christmas when the Asian paper wasps were out in force (I think I hold the record at 6 stings in 10 days!). I thoroughly enjoyed my time on the Tiri weed team and learnt a lot thanks to the vast knowledge of my fellow team members. It further enforced my appreciation of incorporating an organised weed control programme into restoration projects such as Tiritiri Matangi

MOTH PLANT

Araujia sericifera

Moth Plant is a smothering woody climber with small white flowers, easily recognised by the large seedpods that resemble chokos. If any part of the plant is detached a milky white juice is excreted. A single plant can have 30-70 pods, and each pod can have 200-500 wind borne seeds. It is very common around Auckland city and is also present on Tiri. It is one of the few really invasive weeds we must control.

Ian Price, Ranger



Photo: Freda Crossman

A Virtual Field Trip

LEARNZ visit to Tiritiri Matangi June 8 - 11

In October 2001 over 7,000 students from schools all over New Zealand visited Tiritiri Matangi. During the three day field trip students got to know the island, its people, history, flora and fauna as part of science and social studies lessons. For students the experience was very real despite the fact they never left their classroom. Students participated in field trip events using the internet and telephone technologies. LEARNZ Teacher Audrie McKenzie working with DoC staff, was the "eyes and ears" of students.

The LEARNZ team in partnership with DoC is running another virtual field trip to the island in June. This field trip one of eight this year, will feature, arriving on the island by Rangitoto Ranger, getting to know the endangered species, visiting historical places and meeting Barbara, Ray, Ian and the team.

Funded by the Ministry of Education with support from the Department of Conservation, LEARNZ uses technologies to allow students to learn from and experience remote and protected areas. LEARNZ field trips target specific areas of the New Zealand curriculum and are supported by a substantial knowledge base. This includes background web pages, profiles of key personnel and

activities that prepare students for their visit.

Enrolling in the field trip is free to LEARNZ registered schools: annual registration is \$45 (incl gst) and can be done online at www.learnz.org.nz/register/. Each field trip is supported with five email newsletters and a phone/email helpdesk for teachers to use.

Over 170 schools from Kaitaia to Invercargill are currently registered with LEARNZ. So far this year LEARNZ has already 'taken' more than 3000 students to:

- Mueller Hut in Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park
- find takahe in the wilds of the Murchison Mountains, Fiordland
- search for whio in Kahurangi National Park

Look out for Audrie on the island during the Supporters' weekend over Queen's Birthday and hear of schools around the country taking part in the virtual field trip to Tiritiri Matangi. Already 32 classes (over 800 students) are enrolled for the trip. Please use this SoTM login to view the website (www.learnz.org.nz/) username: 9008 password: [lighthouse](#) (valid until July 2 2004)

Audrie McKenzie
LEARNZ teacher
audrie@learnz.org.nz

"The Singing Island" goes to school

Earlier this year copies of "The Singing Island" were sent to all schools in the Waikato, Auckland and Northland regions. This was a mighty effort, involving the despatch of a thousand books. Printing was made possible by a Sky City Trust grant (\$6000) and the cost of postage and packaging was met by the Supporters (\$1500).

This project enabled a wide range of children to have access to information about the Island, even though they are unable to visit. This fits with the aims of the SoTM, and falls within the scope of the 5 year plan, in terms of increasing public awareness of the work done on Tiritiri Matangi, and demonstrating the value of conservation.

Snippets:

Read all about it:

From time to time the SoTM are sent copies of various newsletters from similar organisations. These will be kept in a box at the bunkhouse so that visitors and Supporters staying on the island have the opportunity to read them. Please ensure these are returned to the box, so that everyone has an opportunity to make use of them.

Fullers' Gift Vouchers

It is possible to give Fullers vouchers, equal to the value of a trip to Tiri, as a gift. This allows the recipient to book the actual trip on a date convenient to them, as tickets are non-transferable. Talk to Fullers for more information.

A letter to the Editor

ROBIN REDBREAST

Dear Sharon,

A question I would like to put to members:

"Why has the English Robin (redbreast) never caught on in New Zealand? It has all the attributes needed for survival – feisty, decorative, omnivorous, hardy and plenty of food, nesting sites etc are available. Both sexes are identical to the human eye, so the old story that only cock birds were brought in won't work."

Does anyone have an answer?

Sincerely,

Roy Kings

If anyone has any answers for Roy, please reply via Editor—contact details on Page 2.

Ti kouka

Botanical name:

Cordyline australis

Common name:

N Z Cabbage Tree

One of the most distinctive and striking plants of the NZ countryside and bush. It's tall straight trunk, or trunks, grow 12-20 metres high with a dense mop head of leaves. Flowers are white or creamy white and strongly scented. Cabbage trees were widely planted on Tiri as they are an important food source for nectar, fruit and insect eaters.



Photo: Sharon Alderson

Parts of the tree were used by Maori and early European settlers. The pith and inner roots of young trees were known as ti, dried in the sun and used to make a kind of porridge. The young and tender heads were used by the early settlers in place of cabbage, and the leaves were used as twine and in the making of paper.

Jan Velvin

KOKAKO REPORT



Photo: Peter Crow

Let's get the bad news over and done with now so I can concentrate on the good news. Unfortunately Cloudsley and TKW's two chicks (second clutch) were taken by a harrier, much to everyone's dismay. It was a very exposed nest, and we did capture all the gory details on camera (which is what they were bought for), but we won't dwell...

The good news is that the season for both Kokako and Hihi was a beauty! Kokako numbers were really boosted as all three pairs fledged one or more chicks. Cloudsley and TKW fledged Eunice♀ and Russell♂ from their first clutch (named after my lovely parents), Kahurangi and Bel Canto fledged Keisha♀ from their second clutch (yes the Oscar's were in the news that week) and Shazbot and Te Hari were so content with Amelia♀ (flying pioneer) from their first attempt, that they didn't bother to build a second nest. Kahurangi fledged Dash♂ from her first nest who unfortunately quickly disappeared without a trace.

Now that both Shazbot and Kahurangi have a successful season under their belts and another candle on their birthday cakes, it can only get better - Shazbot did fledge Kanuka♂ in 2001/02 but was unsuccessful last summer. In other (romantic) news,

Kaha finally had his calls answered with the lovely Ruby (Cloudsley's chick from last season). She had a bit of a practise at impressing him with her nest building skills mid-season, so let's hope that next summer she practises further... So although the Tiri Kokako genetic pool is less than extensive, three new females from this season should provide some interesting romantic endeavours over the next few years for us all to watch out for. (Anybody would think I was a daytime soap opera fan!).

I'm planning to take a break from the work I've been doing on the island for the past 3 seasons and gather some further experience elsewhere. I am currently training to be a SOTM guide and look forward to continuing my relationship with the island and all the lovely people I've had the pleasure to work with there. It's been a privilege - thanks for all your support.

Sandra Jack
DOC Contractor (Hihi/Kokako)
2001/02, 2002/03, 2003/04

Sandra reported on the hihi season in Dawn Chorus 56— For latest figures from the hihi season see inset on Page 3 of this issue

- Editor

Calendar of Events

2004

June 5-7

Supporters' Queen's
Birthday
Working Weekend

FULL

Sunday June 6

Supporters' Planting Day
& Bellbird Trip
*20 years since the first
planting trip!*

Sunday June 20

Tiri Kids Planting Day
(see Tiri Kids page for
details)

July 3-4

Supporters' Families
Weekend

September 12

Kowhai Trip and Opening of
the new Wetlands & Dam
area

September

Date to be advised

Supporter's Social Evening
(with guest speaker)

October 23-25

Supporter's Labour Day
Working Weekend

For all of the above, except
the Tiri Kids Planting Day*,
bookings must be made with
Barbara, not Fullers .

Phone 476 0010

*see flyer for details

Meet the Committee....

**Introducing six members of the Supporters of Tiritiri
Matangi Committee**

Contact details for all Committee members are listed on Page 2 of this newsletter.

Simon Fordham (Chairman) and Sharon Alderson (Editor) are introduced elsewhere in the Dawn Chorus. Ray and Barbara Walter are well known to all who visit the island and need no further introduction. You may not have met some of our other Committee members.....

MARGARET CHAPPELL

I have, throughout my life, had a profound interest in NZ's unique and very special flora and fauna and, together with Jan Velvin, became aware of the Tiri project in the mid 80's through contact we had at the time with Little Barrier Is. This led to countless trips to Tiri where we planted many hundreds of trees over the years and I also had the pleasure of being able to pursue my interest in photography by recording the amazing transformation of this remarkable little island into what we all see and appreciate today. I continue to thoroughly enjoy sharing my Tiri experience with the many hundreds of visitors I have had the pleasure of guiding over more recent years.

JULIE COTTERILL

I first visited Tiri in the late 1980's planting trees with the ASC club and was so captivated by the island I kept coming back! I have been a guide for 3 years now and the secretary of the supporters for 2 years. I look forward to another year on the committee and being involved in the ongoing developments of the island.

MARK DAVISON

Just to introduce myself. I am Mark Davison and I am a new member on the SOTM committee. I have been a guide for three years so consider myself still with an L plate. However, I have been on a variety of committees and task forces in the past and will enjoy the challenge of being a contributor to the wonderful project which is Tiritiri Matangi. I have had a career in resource management, marine research and environmental science.

SALLY GREEN

As Guide Co-Ordinator I produce and maintain the guiding manual, organise Guide Meetings every 6 weeks on the mainland to provide the guides with further knowledge

and training, send a weekly newsletter to keep guides completely up to date with the island happenings, and assist Barbara Walter with the daily sourcing of guides. As Webmaster, I have developed the Official Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi website and continue to maintain it as and when new material is necessary. This is my 4th year on the committee and even in this short time have seen many changes. I look forward to this coming year and welcome all the new committee members.

KAY McLEOD

Hi I'm Kay McLeod. I have been coming out to Tiritiri since 1986 when John and I found out about the planting program and having an interest in native plants, became involved, taking our three, at that stage, young children with us. We were at the meeting when the supporters started and have continued to be involved with this very exciting project ever since. It's been a family affair with our son Ian working for the D.O.C. as a ranger on the island and John a member of the committee and myself regularly guiding groups around the island. I see the whole environment as being important, the plants, insects, birds, marine life, bats etc as a total identity and Tiritiri being a place where people can come and experience this, and become involved in caring for the environment wherever they are. Tiritiri is a place we have in partnership with many groups and together it can only go forward and achieve even greater results.

VAL SMYTHEMAN

I joined SoTM on my first wonderful visit to the island in October 1992. Until I retired my involvement was limited to working weekends, but now, in addition to still enjoying those weekends, I'm pleased to be able to help out on the island when needed at other times. I've been on the committee since 2000, and held the position of Membership Secretary since 2002; I also enjoying working on the Bio-diversity sub-committee. I feel very fortunate that I have had the opportunity to be involved with SoTM and the island and to contribute in these various small ways.

The remaining 5 Committee members will introduce themselves in the next issue of the Dawn Chorus.

Sharon Alderson

A comment from Hawaii

In February, Pauline Sato from The Nature Conservancy in Hawai'i and her partner, Cal, visited Tiritiri Matangi. I met Pauline at the Society for Conservation Biology conference in Hawai'i in 2001 where we found a common interest in the involvement of people and communities in ecological restoration projects. After listening to my presentation on Tiritiri, Pauline expressed an intention to one day visit our island project. A visit to New Zealand to attend a colleague's wedding provided an opportunity to visit Tiritiri overnight.

Despite 7500km of separation, New Zealand and Hawaii share many plants with common lineages. The close similarity of the indigenous names for such plants was a feature that had struck me during my visit to Hawai'i. This was reinforced while walking Tiritiri with Pauline, as our conversation often centered on Maori names and their linguistic equivalents in the Hawaiian language (evidence of a common Polynesian origin). For example, the Maori *kiekie* becomes *'ie'ie* in Hawaiian - both are plant species of the *Freycinetia* genus.

Pauline commented further on this linguistic similarity after her return home, an interesting comment that I thought worthy of sharing:

"I looked up the word 'kilikili' in the Hawaiian dictionary. Kilikili could mean fine, misty rain water. Kili could mean raindrops as well as peal of thunder, to thunder. When words are duplicated, it's an emphasis. Therefore, kilikili makani (tiritiri matangi) could mean something like "thundering, misty winds". Kind of close to the Maori translation, don't you think?"

Pauline is also co-chair for Malama Hawai'i, a movement that is committed to the vision of Hawai'i as a healthy and safe island. Cal is a television broadcaster, and uses his show to promote conservation, and is a strong supporter of Malama Hawai'i as well. Video images of Tiritiri Matangi have been airing on Cal's television show for the past month, providing, in Pauline's words, inspiration for the Malama Hawai'i vision. Aloha, Pauline! (Check out the website - www.malamahawaii.org.)

Mel Galbraith

Latest arrival . . .

Ray and Ian are proud to announce the arrival of "John Deere 5320" safely delivered 5th April 2004. (thanks to Chris Sibley for barging it over)



Photo: Elna Broesder

After many years of service it was time for the old Ford tractor to retire gracefully. Having had a hard life, exposed to salt and the elements for many years, and even surviving a fire, the maintenance costs were ever increasing and safety was becoming an issue.

The new tractor delivers more power, better capability for the increased workload, as well as style and comfort for the operator! The John Deere is expected to last years, as it will be housed in the implement shed instead of the great outdoors.

Purchase of the tractor was made possible by a grant from the Scottswood Trust, a discounted price and the acceptance of the old tractor as a partial trade in by (Farm Services Ltd, special thanks to Dick Pulman). The trade in price of \$12000 was the Departments contribution, and the balance of the cost was met by the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi.

Sharon Alderson

Mothplant Site Adoption Opportunity

As another means in the battle to control weeds on Tiri, I am proposing an opportunity for you, the supporters, to adopt mothplant sites on the island. It would be your responsibility to monitor these and be responsible for the control of regrowth; at a minimum it would require you to check the sites twice a year. Does not require a high level of fitness, but you must be comfortable venturing off track.

I also require people to monitor Fisherman's Bay for bone seed and Pampas, especially in October and November, for this is when the plant is flowering. A high level of fitness is required because the area is steep and very scrubby.

This is an important request requiring commitment and consistency. Full training can be given, if anyone is interested phone or email me.

Ian Price, Ranger