

Whiteheads to new home in the Waitakeres



While most translocation reports in the Dawn Chorus focus on introductions (or reintroductions) of species to Tiritiri Matangi, in this issue we instead tell the story of a translocation from Tiri. Whiteheads have been released in the Ark in the Park pest controlled area of the Waitakere Ranges. See page 9 for more...

*John Sumich and Natasha Wilson (4) release whiteheads
Photograph: Western Leader*

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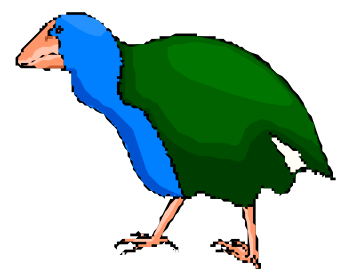
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The opinions of contributors, as expressed in the Dawn Chorus, do not necessarily reflect the views of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi

Act of Thanksgiving

There is so much about this Island to be thankful for:-

For its generation from the mud and sand of the sea around Gondwana, with an upthrust 100 million years ago, and consequent erosion;

For those who first reached these shores to make a way of life, leaving evidence of their being here;

For those who in good faith farmed the island faithfully, even though ignorant of the damage they were causing;

For those who decided that farming should cease, and the Island should be left to regenerate itself, and become an Open Scientific Reserve;

For those who decided kakariki should be released here in 1974;

For John Craig, who saw the report of this, and brought Students here to do Research;

For Neil Mitchell, who came here with his Botany Students;

For both John and Neil, supported by others, who dreamed the dream that once more this Island could be reclothed with native bush, and support myriads of birds;

For those who dreamed the dream of how this might be accomplished;

For those who caught the vision of the dream, and combined to support the Island, to make the dream come awake;

We continue to give thanks, for those who led Supporters and many other Organisations to organise and toil with joy to make the awakened dream a reality;

For Guides, Shop Workers, and countless other Volunteers, who have given freely of their time, skill, learning, and insights, in furthering this project;

For visitors of all stages of life, and especially the young, who have come to learn, many staying to help;

Especially for Ray and Barbara, with their skills, devotion, and charm, who have acted as gracious hosts on this Island, guiding and inspiring countless numbers to give of their best;

And For the Great Spirit of the Universe who has given the Vision, Inspiration, and Guidance to so many, and thus has allowed us all to touch the face of Creation.

May these blessings go into the future with those who come after us, that in this world that seems intent on destroying itself, Conservation on Tiritiri Matangi may continue as a Beacon of Hope to all Mankind.

Jim Battersby

Editorial

Labour Weekend introduced me to another of Tiri's many traditions - the "Supporters' Working Weekend". While I have now been guiding for two years, and have volunteered on the island once or twice, the Working Weekend was new to me and revealed the truth behind the old adage "many hands make light work".

Significant progress was made towards upgrading sections of the Wattle track. While I can't claim "blood, sweat and tears" went into the job, elbow grease and several blisters certainly did.

Strangely, the prospect of swinging a pick (actually I am informed the implement is called a mattock) for a couple of days is not at all daunting if you do it on Tiri ... Ask me to do the same job elsewhere and you would get a different reaction! And that is part of the magic of the island, a group of people happily gave up their long weekend to perform manual labour under slightly dodgy weather conditions - and not one of them complained.

As Jim outlines in the "Act of Thanksgiving" he wrote for the 16th anniversary of the formation of SOTM, there is much to be thankful for. I personally am grateful for the opportunity provided by such Working Weekends for me to be part of the dream on Tiri. As members of SOTM we are all part of the dream, and a few blisters here and there is a small price to pay for the privilege.

There are many other Supporters events for those unable to spend a weekend on the island—the [Waitangi Day Picnic](#) is suitable for all ages and abilities. See you there!

Sharon Alderson

Deadline for contributions for next issue:

21 January 2004

Page 3 Bird

Grey Warbler

Riroriro

Gerygone igata

"Everywhere....may be heard the long, tremulous trill of the warbler, rather a cricket's cry than a bird's. Presently, from some manuka thicket, a sombre plumaged little bird will emerge, light on some topmost twig, and pour forth to three-quarters of the globe - for in his ecstasy he nearly sings a circle - this faint sweet trill that heralds fuller spring."

(H. Guthrie-Smith in his 1910 book, 'Birds of the Water, Wood and Waste.')



Photo: Simon Fordham

One of the easiest ways of tracking down the grey warbler is to listen for this distinctive trill. Only the males sing, and although they sing all year, they are most vocal in late winter through spring. In Maori folklore this song heralded spring, the time of planting and the proverb "i hea koe i te tangihanga o te riroriro?" (where were you when the grey warbler sang?) was used to shame a lazy or careless person who had not cultivated food. They also believed that the position of the nest foretold the coming season's winds: the higher the nest, the calmer the weather would be.

The grey warbler is one of the few New Zealand birds to adapt well to human modified habitats and is common throughout the country wherever there are trees and shrubs.

At around 6.5 grams in weight, this wee bird rivals the rifleman as being our smallest bird but the grey warbler is longer because the rifleman has such a very short stumpy tail. Despite the small size average life expectancy is 5 years. Being so light this dull grey bird with the outer darker tail feathers fringed with white can hover momentarily in flight to seize insects and spiders at the end of twigs and leaves where other bigger birds cannot reach. A red eye distinguishes adults from juveniles who have a brown eye.

Pairs are monogamous and stay together all year and between years. The breeding territory is established in late July - August, and the female alone takes up to 27 days to build her elaborate suspended, enclosed, pear-shaped nest with a small circular side entrance. The nest is made of rootlets, moss, lichen, twigs and cobwebs and lined with soft material such as feathers, downy seeds and tree fern scales. About half the nests hang freely from an attachment at the top and the rest are attached from the back or sides as well. All nests have a porch to guard against rain and a ledge for the parents to alight on when visiting. The grey warbler is the only mainland New Zealand song bird to build an enclosed suspended nest.

Usually 4 white eggs, with fine reddish-brown speckling, are laid at 2 day intervals (normally songbirds lay daily). Each egg weighs about 1.5 grams (23% of the females own body weight) so over 7 days the she lays a clutch equal to 92% of her own body weight!

The female incubates for 17-21 days and then both parents feed the chicks during the 15-19 day fledgling period and for up to 35 days after leaving the nest. The later care of the first brood is done by the male while the female prepares the second nest. As the grey warbler is the host for the shining cuckoo on the mainland, this second clutch may be parasitized by the cuckoo which arrives in late September or early October.

Like many other New Zealand birds, grey warblers are relatively unperturbed by humans. During his study of grey warblers, Dr Brian Gill had a female who allowed him to remove small nestlings (for weighing) from under her, while she calmly continued to brood.

There are about 20 species of Gerygone but the only other New Zealand species is the Chatham Island warbler *Gerygone albofrontata* which at 9.5 grams is the giant of the genus. Unlike the grey warbler this species has not adapted as well to human modified habitats and is only common in native forest and scrub in certain parts of the Chatham Islands.

Morag Fordham

www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz

The SoTM website has had an extreme make-over. Many thanks to Michael Foot and Fleur Schultz (supporters) for designing the 'new look'. If you haven't visited the SoTM website recently then you should have a look; over 150 pages of data, including facts and figures on most of the flora and fauna found on Tiritiri Matangi. If you happen to have one of the missing photographs and are willing to have it published on the website, please email it to sallygreen@xtra.co.nz in .jpg format. All photographers will be acknowledged at the bottom of the web page.

Sally Green

School Visits

Selwyn College
Hamilton Boys College
Northcross Intermediate x 3
Lincoln Heights
Glenfield College
Rangitoto College
Zayed College for Girls
Sacred Heart Boys
Vauxhall School
Baradene x 2
Gulf Harbour School
Glendowie College
Ramarama School x 2

Working Bees Thank You!

- Kaueranga Valley Forest & Bird
- WONZ
- Whangarei Tramping Club
- Gael Arnold's Weekend
- Manukau Tramping Club
- West Auckland Tramping Club
- Toi Toi Trekkers
- Labour Weekend Supporter's Working Weekend

From the Chair . . .

Sunday 24 October marked the 16th anniversary of the inaugural meeting of SoTM. As this occurred during a Supporters' working weekend, founding Chairman Jim Battersby organised an early morning service at the "Battersby Seat" in Little Wattle Valley. Despite rather murky weather, this was attended by 13 members who took the opportunity to celebrate the success of SoTM and reflect on some of the reasons as to why our organization is so successful.

One member at the service gave thanks for the camaraderie that exists on the working weekends. These weekends are but one example of the many opportunities volunteers have to contribute but are perhaps representative of our activities. Ever since the inception of SoTM, the common interest has brought many people together and countless friendships have resulted. Working weekends are renowned for enhancing existing friendships and creating new ones. No wonder there is always a waiting list for these. It is these friendships that are the glue that binds our organization.

Not only have many friendships been established within SoTM, relationships have been built with the many stakeholders in the project. On 7 November, SoTM will be formalizing our most important relationship by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Conservation. This MOU recognises the mutual respect that is held between our organizations and the roles of each partner.

Our partnership with DoC has not happened overnight. Nor has it happened by chance. It is the result of friendships that have been nurtured over the years. By entering into this agreement, both signatories will benefit from continuity of this relationship, irrespective of any personnel changes that will inevitably occur.

Simon Fordham

"Carotenoids, colour and conservation in hihi"

by John Ewen

Studying hihi during their first years on Tiri led to a fascination with this amazing little bird (and island) that has lasted through a subsequent PhD in Australia and post-doctoral research in Europe. I now have the opportunity to return 'home' and re-kindle my relationship with a much larger population (recent census by DoC contractors Tamara Henry and Rose Thorogood of 139 birds contrasts to the 4 breeding females in 1995!). Despite this, hihi require intense management and reintroduced populations struggle to survive. This breeding season is the first of a four year fellowship through the Zoological Society of London, where I am developing my interests in bird colour display linked with conservation. How!? Yellow colouration is made by depositing carotenoid pigments into feathers. Carotenoids are also essential for health (they stimulate the immune system and act as free radical scavengers). If carotenoids are in short supply there may be a compromise between investing in colour or in staying healthy. Females also need a lot to produce healthy eggs (yolk is yellow because of carotenoids). Investing too much in display and reproduction may mean birds are more susceptible to disease (hihi are very disease prone). Experimental provisioning of carotenoids (kindly supplied by Kemin Industries Ltd) will help us understand these links. More from me as the project develops...

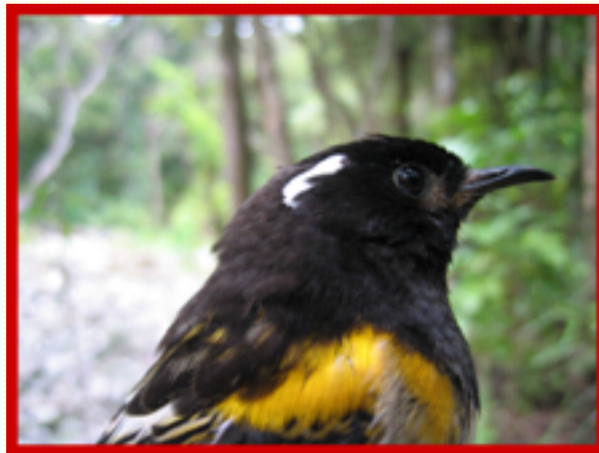


Photo: John Ewen

Karo

Pittosporum crassifolium

In New Zealand we have more than 20 Pittosporums.

Pittosporum crassifolium or Karo plays an important role on Tiri as a shelter producing plant and a source of food for the birds from both the flowers and the seed. This small coastal tree which can grow to 9 metres can be found on the Kermadec Islands as well as from North Cape to Poverty Bay.

As with other coastal plants (e.g. Pohutukawa) it has developed a thickened leaf , the undersides of which are covered by a white - grey tomentum (felt like) to protect it from excessive transpiration, this enables it to survive in extremely windy situations.

The karo this year has provided an amazing display of flowers. These are a deep burgundy red colour and while the flowering season is nearly over some may still be visible. The bonus is these flowers have a delightful fragrance which is most noticeable in the evening air.



The seed capsules are round and grey and can readily be seen if you walk along Grahams Road to Ridge track.

Photo: Brent Booker

Many black shiny seeds are contained in these capsules and are ripe around March - April.

Karo is widely used by home gardeners as shelter and to attract birds into the garden.

Jan Velvin

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

Yet another year has passed! With Christmas and the holiday season approaching we would like to thank you all for your continuing support. Tiri would not be where it is without you!

With the release of Anne Rimmer's book on Tiritiri Matangi it shows what has been achieved to further conservation in New Zealand. We wish you all a happy Christmas and hope to see you on the island at the Supporters Waitangi Day picnic day on February 6th. Please do remember to book early as the ferries are very busy at that time.

Ray and Barbara

Silvester Wetlands Open

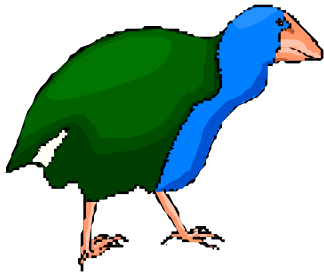
The new Silvester Wetlands officially opened on September 12th with approximately 50 people present, including Ralph Silvester, members of his family and friend Eric Geddes, Ray Walter, Rollen Elliot & Liz Maire representing the Department of Conservation, a number of committee members and many other Supporters.

In 1987 brown teal were first introduced to Tiri, with a second release in 2000 after numbers dropped during the 90s. Grant Dumbell of Ducks Unlimited identified a lack of suitable habitat as a limiting factor. The obvious solution was to construct new wetlands, a proposal that was soon put forward. The stumbling block, as ever, was funding. This was overcome when a very generous donation from the Silvester Trust was arranged by Ralph and family. Ralph first visited Tiri in 1984, with Eric, and has returned many times. He describes the development of the wetlands as "an idea that was easy—but putting it into practice was difficult". Difficulties arose with planning and paperwork delays, followed by bad weather—in 2003 work began, but it was too wet to build a wetland! Machinery was left on the island for 10 months until conditions were suitable to restart work. The construction work was finally complete earlier this year (see Dawn Chorus 57). The stamp of approval was given when a pair of brown teal moved onto the lower dam within 2 days of it filling.

Sharon Alderson

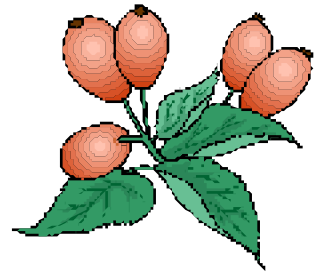


Ralph & grandson Louis open the Silvester Wetlands
Photo: Cathy Catto



Flora and Fauna Notes

Compiled by Barbara Walter &
Morag Fordham & Jan Velvin



Flora

WHAT A FLOWERING SEASON WE ARE HAVING!!!

Firstly the *Dysoxylon spectabile* - *Kohekohe* gave us the display of the century now it appears all our other plants are following suit. Most of our plants flower throughout the spring period so if you are interested now is the time to pack up that camera and visit. An added bonus is the perfume now in the bush created by *Genistoma* - *Hangehange*, *Pittosporum crassifolium* - *Karo*, and *Cordyline australis* - *Ti kouka* - *Cabbage tree*, among others.

Giving magnificent displays of flower at the moment are:

Leptospermum ericoides - *Manuka* both forms the white and the pink example can be found on Ridge and Cable tracks.

Genistoma - *Hangehange* found easily as it lines most of the tracks. As you are walking stop where you can smell the spicy perfume strongest and look for a shiny leaved plant the small whitey - green flowers are on the stems.

Cordyline australis - *Ti kouka* have set flowers very early many new heads are starting to appear.

Myoporum laetum - *Ngaio* these attractive dark red speckled flowers can be seen along the beach front. Also note the thickened leaves developed to withstand harsh conditions.

The *Clianthus puniceus* - *Kaka Beak* on Wharf Road still has some lovely red flowers. It is interesting to note that it is classified in the same plant family as the *Sophora* - *Kowhai* the Pea or Papilionaceae Family. Barbara Walter has noted that the Kowhai have had their longest flowering season ever. The flowers have been seen since June and can still be found. We have a particularly nice form of Kowhai on Tiri good size flowers and lots of them.

The *Clematis paniculata*—*puawhananga* at the corner of Ridge and Grahams road is almost finished flowering. It is a very good example. Clematis have separate male and female flowering plants. The selected forms (named varieties / cutting grown) found in the Garden Centres are all male forms. The flowers are bigger so give the best floral displays.

Phormium tenax - *Harakeke* - *flax* are now sending up flowering spikes everywhere.

Good examples of *Knightia excelsa* - *Rewarewa* trees and flowers can be found on Cable and Ridge track particularly between the top of Kawerau and the Du Pont sign. The tree is very upright with long hard serrated leaves. The flowers are the colour of red wine. This plant is one of only two members of the Protea Family in the New Zealand Flora. The other is *Persea toru*.

The *Vitex lucens* - *Puriri* have flowers and fruit as have *Macropiper excelsa* - *Kawakawa*.

The red bunches seen on the *Pseudopanax arboreus* - *five-finger* are the seed forming. It takes 12 months to develop so is from the flowers of February and March.

Many other plants are also fruiting and flowering so take the time to have a closer look as the flowers are often small and "savour the perfume, it is a delightful time to be wandering in the bush.

Fauna

Takahe

@Dot has continued to "play the field" having been seen once with Mungo, then back to Greg but more recently has paired up with Rossie and they have been seen copulating. Although Kristina had a fling with Mungo at the end of August she has now paired up with Glencoe who has been beaten up by Rossie. Blake briefly returned to Irene (who at 14 years old is our oldest bird) but left again and young Mungo has moved back in with her. Mungo paired up with her last season for about 10 days until Blake chased him off and took over but deserted her after the breeding season finished. Apparently the saying "many a tune is played on an old fiddle" must apply in the bird world too as these much younger birds keep courting her. JJ and Blackwatch are still together and she is now nesting. Ahikaea and Bellamy, with last year's chick Calico as helper, have one chick. Iti and Blossom have built a nest but after 2 days the egg which was soft shelled was found squashed outside the nest. Bubble, an infertile male who used to live on Tiritiri Matangi Island until he was transferred to Te Anau a few years ago, recently broke a leg, lost a lot of weight and sadly died at nearly 14 years old. Total population is now 259, up from 242.

Stitchbird/Hihi

A survey at the end of August gave us a total of 141 birds (78 males, 63 females). Survival rates were 81% for adult females, 92% for adult males and 63% for juveniles. By the end of September 137 birds had been accounted for. The birds have started nesting but the first nest found has been abandoned and both adults are missing. There is a morepork in that vicinity. One pair are building a natural nest in the hole of a large pohutukawa tree. It is in a completely different territory to the only other natural nest ever built on the island. Already there are 3 chicks. In mid September 3 of our Stitchbird were transferred to Mt Bruce. In August a Stitchbird was observed using its foot to tilt the lower feeder in Wattle Valley to get at the last remaining drops of sugar water.

Kokako

We now have 6 pairs. One of last year's chicks, Keisha (juvenile) has paired up with Te Karenga who has been patiently waiting for a mate since he arrived on the island in 1998. Eunice (juvenile) and Oscar have also paired up and even built a very small, untidy unusable nest. She is a very young bird so will build better nests as she matures. The other established pairs are Cloudsley Shovel and Te Koha Waiata, Shazbot and Te Hari, Kahurangi and Bel Canto and Ruby and Kaha. Shazbot is busy tidying up the nest she used last season. It is unusual for a kokako to use the same nest and this is the first time it has happened on Tiri. Now there are only 2

single birds, Amelia and Russell, both juveniles from last year.

NI Robin

A very early nest containing 2 chicks was discovered at the beginning of September and these chicks fledged before the end of the month. The pair in the nursery are nest building and apart from 3 pairs who are doing nothing, all other pairs are busy with fledged chicks (18), chicks in nests (15), or sitting on eggs (11 nests). Only 2 chicks have been found dead, another 2 have disappeared (morepork predation?) and to date only 5 nests have been found collapsed or abandoned. A recent survey found there are 33 pairs of robins and 8 single males compared with 41 pairs at the same time last year.

Red-crowned Parakeet/Kakariki

Numbers appear to have dropped over the past couple of months. As a result fewer of the flowering flax spears are being eaten. The parakeets have been feeding in the karo which has also taken pressure off the flax flowers.

Brown Teal

Eva and Finn (bunkhouse dam) produced one duckling at the beginning of September and she is probably nesting again. Jemima and Ossie (wharf dam) produced 4 ducklings in mid September but by the end of that month they had all disappeared (one was found dead on the shortcut). The pair on the new dam at NE Bay, named Ralph (RW/M) and Connie (M/YG) produced a duckling at the same time but it too disappeared within a few days. Harrier hawks hang around this area and one was even seen standing in the shallow water only 2 metres away from Connie. Daisy on the Fisherman's Bay dam has been successfully courted by Ruan (GR/M) and they have chased off her remaining juvenile, Blue Bonnet. Blue Bonnet is now on the pumphouse dam with either 1 or 2 other females. A nice surprise at the beginning of October was the discovery of a bird with 5 ducklings in Little Wattle Valley. It is likely to be Danny (Eva's spurned partner) and an unidentified mate. Towards the end of August an unfriendly brown teal was sighted on the pond at Shakespear Park.

Saddleback

The saddlebacks are busy breeding and there are several nests with eggs and one nest with 2 chicks.

Fernbird

There have been regular sightings including 2 males engaged in territorial fighting.

Tomtit

There have been occasional sightings including a male seen at Pohutukawa Cove at the beginning of August, a female seen at the bottom of the shortcut near the wharf dam and a female seen on the Kawerau track at the end of September.

Blue Penguin

One night in August Ray and Barbara had penguins under their bathroom floor. Nesting has started and the first of the penguin igloos on the waterfront is in use.

Bellbirds

There are 50 bellbirds colour banded with up to 2 bands per combination. These birds were marked to allow research into male and female singing behaviour. Please report any sightings (via the Editor), with the following information: band combination, bush patch, time of day and date.

Other Birds

A kaka was sighted near the bunkhouse in mid September and recently a bird has been sighted around the nursery area.

The shining cuckoos have finally arrived and one was heard behind Ian Price's bach and another was heard on the Kawerau track.

The tui have "had a ball" feeding on the kowhai flowers and in late August 45 tuis flew out of the last three kowhai just before Graham's Road.

Due to all her fighting, Daphne our paradise shelduck had a claw ripped out of her middle toe which made her limp for a couple of weeks but did not slow her down! She is finally behaving more like a duck having paired up with Frances who is now almost as tame as her. Another male, Mr Parry fought with Frances and ousted him for a while but Frances won the return bout. The pair who are seen on the paddock behind the lighthouse are nesting.

At Labour weekend a grey-faced petrel chick was found on Hobbs Beach and has been taken to Bird Rescue.

Tuatara

In September there was one sighting on the Kawerau track but now that it is warming up sightings are becoming more frequent. On a recent survey Graham Ussher found a female who might be carrying eggs and a male in excellent condition - the best he has ever seen.

Tiritiri Matangi— A Model of Conservation

Anne Rimmer's lovely book "Tiritiri Matangi: A Model of Conservation" was launched at Takapuna Library on Nov 8th.

As well as the conservation project, the book describes the island's Maori history, the farming period, wartime activities, and the historic lighthouse.

While writing for the general reader, Anne has also included information on the island's flora and fauna, with special sections for each endangered bird. The lavish illustrations, often several per page, include rare historical photographs and magical bird studies. The photographs came from 50 different photographers. Over 400 copies were ordered in the Supporters' prepublication offer.

The book is now available in bookshops for \$39.95; however if you place your orders through the Tiri shop the proceeds go to the island. Remember: there is still time to order copies for Christmas presents.

Confirmation of Geckos on Tiritiri Matangi

Although there have been occasional, unconfirmed, reports of 'green geckos' in forest areas on Tiritiri, there have never been records of any of the native brown geckos (*Hoplodactylus* geckos) that are commonly found on other offshore islands (even in the presence of rodents) and on parts of the mainland. But now all of that has changed.

When volunteer and Supporter Russell Fulton checked the DoC tracking tunnels - set to monitor for rodent incursions on Tiritiri - he found a set of strange prints. These were confirmed to be prints of a New Zealand brown gecko - probably Common gecko or Pacific Gecko.



A young common gecko from Whale Island, Bay of Plenty.
Graham Ussher

A subsequent survey of the area at night found probable sign of geckos living in the crevices of cliffs near the tracking tunnel site. A brief search during the day of the cliff face and nearby rock outcrop found four brown geckos. Because the geckos were buried deep in rock crevices, their identity could not be confirmed, but it seems likely that they are the Common Gecko *Hoplodactylus maculatus*, a native New Zealand gecko which is actually quite rare on the mainland, but reaches huge numbers in places where introduced mammals have been eradicated.

The geckos on Tiritiri are undoubtedly a remnant of a much larger population that once inhabited the island and that has survived the turbulent history of farming, frequent annual burning and kiore. Two of the geckos found were young, indicating that there is a breeding population on the cliffs. A survey planned for the near future will help determine the size and distribution of the gecko across the island.

This discovery brings the total number of reptile species on the island to (tuatara, copper skink, moko skink, unidentified brown gecko), still well short of the estimated 10 species that once lived on Tiritiri. DoC hope that other geckos or large skinks may also have survived on the island and may slowly make their presence known as their numbers increase.

Graham Ussher



What's that weed? **Boneseed**

Chrysanthemoides monilifera

Bushy much branched shrub up to 2mtrs tall, smooth leathery entire leaves, distinctive bright yellow composite flowers in clusters, flowering Sept - Feb.

Common in coastal areas, very invasive and will dominate due to its prolific seeding, bird dispersal of seed and vigorous growth. In low numbers on Tiri, concentrated in Fisherman's Bay but scattered plants are regularly found around the island. Please inform me if you see this plant on Tiri.

Ian Price

Whiteheads in the Waitakeres

Dear Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi,

If Tiri were given a Royal Charter it would surely include the words "Purveyor of Birds to the Nation" and in August, Tiri provided a founding population of birds to yet another release site. This time, whiteheads were transferred to Forest and Bird's Ark in the Park project in the Waitakere Ranges. Years ago, Tiri's Wattle Track came to the road with an unimpeded sightline to the Ranges. Here, Carl Hayson and I chatted one day how there should be something like Tiri over in the Waitakeres. With the once scrawny pohutukawas now 4 metres high, the Waitakeres are not visible but the vision lives!

Having spent two years on the ground establishing predator control in 600 hectares, we were ready. Our team of volunteers from the Ark, the Zoo, Friends of Arataki, Tiritiri Supporters, and Auckland Uni went over in fine weather which thankfully remained so all week. Sandra Jack, our part-time manager, was "camp mother" keeping the inner man [or woman] satisfied and also with Mark Bellingham our team leader, organising the catching teams and due care of the whiteheads as they were caught over the four days.

Under blue skies at the Cascades on Friday 27, fifty-five whitehead were welcomed and released. Daringly higher than the canopy of their island home, they spiralled into the tall, mature kauri and kahikatea. Their constant cheeping, a sound not present for over 120 years, made for a very moving event.

Thanks Tiri, may we inspire others as you have!

John Sumich



Catch Team. Photo: Sandra Jack



Whitehead. Photo: Peter Crow

Ark in the Park Manager Sandra Jack explains further:

Friday, August 27th was indeed a memorable day for the **Ark in the Park** project. It marks the first of a series of planned transfers of species now absent from the Waitakeres, in the case of the whitehead, for over 120 years. The **Ark in the Park** project is a partnership between the Waitakere Branch of Forest and Bird and the Auckland Regional Council. Unlike Tiri, planting is not the priority but pest and predator eradication are. As with Tiri the projects success is thanks to a huge volunteer effort. Traps and bait stations are serviced by volunteers in 600 hectares of stunning Waitakere forest, with the aim to eventually incorporate 2000 hectares. The "short term" plan is to also bring back robin, bellbird, kakariki, kaka and mistletoes.

Eventually there is potential to see hihi, kiwi, kokako, giant weta, Helm's butterfly and saddleback return to the area.

Sandra Jack, Manager of the project (and ex-Tiri Hihi and Kokako contractor) says "It was an amazing experience organising my first bird transfer. Of course it was made so much easier thanks to such a great team on the island!". A core group of twelve people were on Tiri for the week preceding the release. They were made up of supporters of both the Ark and Tiri (Morag Fordham and Sharon Alderson), as well as Todd Jenkinson from the Auckland Zoo, Rose Thorogood (Auckland Uni), Troy Makan (Massey Uni) and Kevin Parker (Auckland Uni) who also came to help catch the birds in the aviary on the Friday. The weather was kind and we caught 27 female and 28 male

whiteheads who all received an individual band combination.

"Being able to source the birds from somewhere as close as Tiri means reduced stress for the birds and hopefully a better chance of survival and breeding success in their new home" says Sandra. "It's always difficult to see the birds leave the island ...but to know it's the start of what eventually will be a Tiri-like sanctuary just 40 minutes drive from the city, makes it all worthwhile".

If you're visiting the Waitakeres keep your eyes peeled for these newcomers and report any sightings and band combinations to Sandra on 817 9379. However what we're really waiting for is news of birds without bands!

Sandra Jack

Birding from the Tiri Ferry

Nigel Milius



Fluttering shearwater. Photo: Nigel Milius

As a regular visitor to Tiri I have enjoyed many wonderful experiences there, but not all my most memorable recollections come from the island itself. As something of a seabird fanatic, trips to and from the island have been special too.

For instance, August 30th last year. Despite visiting the island on each of the previous two days, I had no inkling of what I was about to enjoy as I walked down the jetty at Gulf Harbour. Fluttering Shearwaters have always been my most frequently recorded seabird here, but never have I seen them in such enormous numbers as on this occasion. My notes record “thousands” on the outward trip and “tens of thousands” on the return that afternoon. Curiously, I didn’t see any other species, but what was lacking in variety was certainly compensated for in quantity! The whole sea seemed to be alive with them. Vast rafts and large, wheeling flocks.

Buller’s Shearwaters are (at least in the summer months) often seen flying by low over the water. Larger than the Flutterer, it shares the same white underparts, though above it is quite different. Pale grey with a dark “M” across the back and wings compared to the all dark colouration of its smaller relative. The entire world population (c. 2.5 million birds) breeds on the Poor Knights Islands, with most going north for the winter. A true ocean bird, and, like others of that ilk, seemingly more at home in conditions when the boat trip may not be at its pleasantest!

I have made the crossing (not often, admittedly!)

when the air has been still and the water like glass. It is in these benign conditions when it is easiest to pick out penguins resting or swimming near the surface. The sea is the true home of these birds and it is in watching them in this environment we see them in their full, graceful glory – totally unlike the rather clumsy looking beasts we see on land. These calm conditions also give the best chance of whale and dolphin sightings, though I am yet to record them myself from the Tiri ferry.

New Zealand is justly known as the seabird capital of the world, and the Hauraki Gulf is one of its jewels. Black, Cooks and Pycrofts Petrels only breed

in, or close to, the area and more widespread species such as Grey-faced Petrels, White-faced Storm Petrels, Fairy Prions, and Flesh-footed Shearwaters are here in big numbers. Then, of course, there is the New Zealand Storm Petrel, considered extinct for 150 years until rediscovered in the Gulf in 2003. All of these could potentially be seen on route to or from Tiri, so, next time you go, don’t keep the binoculars in the pack for the crossing, you never know what you might be missing!



Grey faced petrel. Photo: Nigel Milius



Calendar of Events

2004 / 2005

**Supporters Non-Working
Weekend**

**November 20-21
(only 4 places left)**

**Anniversary Working
Weekend
(FULL)**

**Supporters Adults Non-
Working Weekend
February 5—6**

**Supporters Waitangi
Picnic Day February 6
Early booking essential**

**Annual General Meeting
Monday 14 March**

**Supporters Easter Working
Weekend
March 25—28**

**Supporters Families Non-
Working Weekend
April 30—May 1**

**Supporters Adults Non-
Working Weekend
May 14—15**

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

476 0010

Dear Editor,

One of the fundamentals that drives all of us as Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi is the desire to safeguard and contribute to the integrity of the vision that has established Tiritiri as a jewel in the conservation crown, not just in New Zealand but on the world scene. We are meticulous in our care and management of the biodiversity entrusted to us and we all thrill to be allowed to share in the vision of 'Paradise Regained'.

In my view, this privilege extends not only to the precious fauna and flora of our beautiful Island and the way in which we describe them, but to the additions and enhancements we bring to the Island to help others share in the vision.

Imagine, then, the abhorrence with which I invite our guests to pause at 'The Bandstand' as they savour the joys of the aptly named Kawarau track or to rest briefly at 'The Last Seat' before striking out for the summit! I'm not altogether comfortable either with announcing (and don't) that we have arrived at 'The Petrel Station' (ugh!). Could there be other colloquialisms I'm as yet unaware of!?

I suggest that we need to have a protocol for choosing names which will inevitably become part of the precious legacy we pass on to future generations and those names need to reflect the care and sensitivity we attach to the task and the dignity of the place in our care. In my view the 'personality cult' needs to be avoided. After all we didn't join SOTM for self-glorification!

Just as we took considerable trouble and allowed our members to participate in the birth of our aptly named "Dawn Chorus", why don't we have a competition to propose names for the places in question and any others that are pending? At the same time, we can ask members to suggest the criteria we should adopt in choosing names for the features and facilities that we and our successors are yet to bestow on our beautiful island.

Ted Erskine-Legget

Ray's Reply:

The place names on Tiritiri Matangi fall into three categories. The first is a few names that appear on all maps.

The island's name - Tiritiri Matangi, Fishermans Bay, Chinamans Bay, Northwest Point, Hobbs Beach, Paa Point and Northeast Bay. When I arrived here in 1980 some were on charts and topographic maps and are officially recognized.

The second group are names that were used by lighthouse keepers and various long stay groups; Harbour Board, University and some by early botanists. Names like Pohutukawa Cove, Emergency Landing and some that have fallen out of use like Pururi Stream and Mapou Stream.

Then there is the large group that has evolved since the revegetation programme was started. Names that were used by planners to identify catchments and valleys to help with the planting programme. They named catchments by numbers 1 to 15 anti clockwise around the island, for example, the lighthouse area is number 15 and the Kawarau Track is in number 8. To make things a little more confusing the bush blocks were numbered clockwise 1 to 23 with the Kawarau Track being in bush one. A few of these numbers are still in use by students and staff. The names that are on the brochure have evolved by staff use and usually refer to features on the track. Like Wattle Valley, Ridge Road and Cable Track. There are others that do not appear on any map and those are ones that are used by staff like the Petrel Station, Little Hobbs, Hogarths Folly and Sonya's Valley.

In the last group some of these names have been picked up by guides and are only meant to be used to help in emergency situations. The names have no relevance to the public and if they appeared on maps it would just be a clutter of pointless names. I would guess that as time goes on with staff changes some names will disappear and others will come into use. If the guides wish to use them by all means do so as the reasons for some of them can be quite amusing and some are just colloquial. I would suggest if any of you find some of our unofficial names pointless do not use them. The only names you should be officially using are the ones that appear on the brochure.

Ray Walter

Big Bertha

Part Two of a three part series on Tiri's Foghorns

Carl Hayson

In 1935, a new foghorn was commissioned on Tiritiri to replace the Gun Cotton signal, which had proved to be very unreliable. This new signal, an advanced Diaphonic 'F' type apparatus manufactured by Chance Brothers of Birmingham, had the advantage over the Gun signal of being able to issue a tremendous blast of sound that could exceed five miles and the mechanism was robust and easy to maintain.



Photo: Carl Hayson

The theory of the Diaphonic sound was based on a design for the Wurlitzer pipe organ in 1895! A special tone generator in the organ involved a piston vibrating inside a cylinder, which has slots through which air was discharged. The air passing through the slots caused a vibration which when amplified through a long cone created a powerful harmonic sound. The inventor of

An important feature of the diaphone sound was that it was two toned; a high-pitched note, followed by a sound similar to a 'grunt'. This 'grunt' tone importantly was distinguishable from all other sounds in foggy conditions and ensured that it was recognizable to all seafaring vessels.

The Tiri Diaphone was fed with air from an enormous horizontal cylinder and this air flow controlled by a set of cams through to the sounding valves. It was all housed in a purpose built building (recently restored) that kept the apparatus warm (each time the horn sounded there was a considerable fall in temperature.)

The Diaphonic horn on Tiri gave reliable service for over 50 years and personal comments from some of the mature Supporters members indicated it was a familiar and reassuring sound in foggy weather all over Auckland during this period. These same people also agreed that, at times, it often reminded them of a sound of a sick cow! Ray was the last lighthouse Keeper to operate this apparatus and he commented the machinery was becoming more difficult to maintain near the end of its life and was much relieved when a new electronic version was installed in 1986 to replace the Diaphone. However his relief was short lived, as we will find out in the next article.

The engine, valves, horn and Cylinder are currently undergoing a complete restoration, thanks to the efforts of Colin Johnstone and members of the Toi Toi trekkers tramping club.

*Part three of the foghorn story in Dawn Chorus 60—
February Edition*



Foghorn building prior to restoration. Photo: Carl Hayson

this generator also applied this principle successfully to foghorns, and this became the most common type of navigational aid in the world.

Don't Forget the Tiri Shop!

Gifts suitable for all occasions!

Including Christmas! There is still time to purchase memorable gifts from the island

The shop stocks a good selection of books for adults & children.

Including Anne Rimmer's new book:

Tiritiri Matangi—A Model of Conservation

Ask Barbara - 476 0010