

## ***All in a days work...*** ***Ian Price has a close encounter of the six- legged kind***



Photo: Suzy Phillips

During demolition of the old shop and potting shed a few of Tiri's more rarely seen inhabitants were visible. Many tree weta were encountered in the process. Tree weta are very common on Tiri, but as they are nocturnal, they are not usually seen by daytime visitors.

*More about the weta on Page 10.....*

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

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## Editorial

As usual there is plenty going on out on Tiri. While the long hot summer days have been great for visitors, the island is starting to show the effects, with dams drying out, and tanks rapidly emptying. The birdbaths are very popular, so the volunteers who keep them clean and filled are kept very busy. Many visitors are treated to excellent views of the birds taking advantage of the reliable water supply in the baths!

In addition to providing a "model of conservation" as the title of Anne Rimmers book suggests, Tiri is in some cases able to provide practical assistance to other conservation projects. In recent years this has included the provision of founder populations of some bird species, as well as assistance and information. It is a fantastic achievement to have reached the stage that it is possible for some of the Tiri birds to found new populations elsewhere. Recently robins have been transferred from Tiri to Great Barrier Island, and hihi from Tiri to Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. Bird translocations are carried out under permits from the Department of Conservation, with many requirements to be met, and procedures to be followed, before birds can be moved. The effect on the population providing the birds in considered, as well as the reasons for the translocation. Permits would not be issued unless the population was considered large enough or stable enough to support the removal of birds.

While this may be seen as an indication of success of the Tiri project, it is important that we don't lose sight of the main aims of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi. These aims include the promotion and enhancement of Tiri, and heightening public awareness of the role of Tiri as an Open sanctuary. The new Visitor Centre will certainly help fulfil those aims locally, and contributing to other conservation projects must surely be supporting those aims further afield.

I like to think that our feathered ambassadors are spreading the word to those who may be unable to visit Tiri themselves, but can see the value of such a project when they have birds such as robins and hihi in their own "backyards" contributing to their local Dawn Chorus.

*Sharon Alderson*

## School Visits

Otumoetai College  
Sunnynook x 3

Auckland Diocesan x 2  
Murrays Bay x 2

Liston College x 2  
University of Wisconsin  
UNITEC

Coatesville  
Kohia Terrace  
Trident High—Whakatane  
Westlake Girls x 2  
Hawera High

Westgate Home Schools  
Kristin School

Henderson North Primary  
Kingsway

Gladstone Stayover (Conservation Unit)

St. Cuthberts College  
Otahuhu Intermediate x 2  
Westlake Boys  
Barclay Intermediate (Hamilton)  
Fucino School x 2  
Stanmore Bay  
Kings College

## Deadline for Next Newsletter: 22 July 2005

### FOOD, FOOD, FOOD!

Many recipes have been received for the proposed Tiri recipe book but there is still room for some more. So please send your culinary delights to:

[kdh42ak@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:kdh42ak@yahoo.co.nz)

or

102 Grampian Road, Auckland 1005.

No recipes too big or too small! Also is there any one out there with desk top publishing skills and an aversion to being paid for their services? If you are the person we are looking for please contact Sally at the above address.



# Kakariki

Red Crowned Parakeet  
*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*

## Page 3 Bird

*At this year's AGM Luis summarised some of his initial research into the breeding habits of the kakariki. For those who missed the AGM here is a summary, prepared by Luis.*

One of the most common birds on Tiri is the kakariki (*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*). The species is characterized by its bright green plumage and crimson forehead and forecrown. They belong to a group of parakeets that formerly extended from Tahiti to New Caledonia, Norfolk Island and many sub-antarctic Islands. At present, however, they are absent from large areas as a result of habitat modification and introduction of mammalian predators. Kakariki are omnivorous birds that forage from ground level to upper canopies. On Tiri, they feed on pohutukawa buds and leaves, grass seeds (either green or ripe), flax buds, flowers and seeds and on a variety of herbaceous plants.

They can nest in almost any place: flax bushes, rock crevices, holes in trunks, artificial nest-boxes and even in the bunkhouse!!! For many years Barbara and Ray have noticed a pair of parakeets using a narrow hole underneath the kitchen window. If you stay in the bunkhouse at the right time (January-February) you'll hear the noisy chicks.

This season, I found a total of 45 nests. Of these I selected 26, which were accessible to me and adequate for intense monitoring without disturbance of breeding females. During egg laying (December) I visited every known nest once a day to check for new eggs. Throughout incubation I kept an eye at least twice a week to remove any infertile egg and to document embryo development. After a period of 23 to 26 days I visited the nests every day to find the newly hatched chicks. The number of chicks per nest varied greatly. Some nests had only one chick, whereas another had 9 chicks at one point!!! A total of 64 chicks were born, from a total of 160 eggs. Several eggs were infertile, others were cracked after few days and some complete clutches were abandoned. At hatching, the chicks are covered in a grey down and their eyes are closed. Normally, they remain together forming a fluffy ball in the centre of the nest chamber and produce soft whines. The parents visit the nest regularly to bring food for the young. However, the pattern of feeding changed through the nestling period of the chicks. During the first one or two

weeks, most females remained either inside the nest or very close to the entrance. Once the male arrived, she begged for food with soft calls; then the male regurgitated a semi-solid soft greenish matter (mainly crushed seeds). After that, she entered the nest and distributed food to the chicks. After three weeks, most females started to forage and male and female visited the nest independently. Overall, the chicks received a 'load' of food every two or three hours. Despite this care on the parents' part many chicks starved to death. This is a common phenomenon in other parrot species and is

associated with different factors. Several studies suggest that the availability of food restricts the number of chicks that can be reared. In contrast, other studies have shown that the experience of parents is more important because even in good years (plenty of food) some parents can't compensate chick hunger. This situation will be the focus of my research in coming seasons.



**Kakariki growth** (from left to right)

Top row: Egg, 2 days, 8 days  
Bottom row: 18 days, 25 days, ~35 days

Photos: Luis Catedral

The good news is that at least one chick per nest has fledged, which gives us a total of 26 chicks produced this season. The largest number of chicks fledged from a single nest was 4. I banded these chicks and there have been some sightings of them hanging around with other juveniles.

I have a large collection of egg and feather samples and all the eggs that failed to hatch were collected for future DNA analyses. Similarly, two feathers were taken from 25 days old chicks. What are all these samples for? Well, reproduction of organisms is linked to many factors that can affect not only the number of offspring produced but also the sex of that offspring. The samples I collected will serve to determine if kakariki produce an even sex ratio or if they bias the production over sons or daughters. This information will be useful for management decisions and also of theoretical interest because at present only few parrot species have been studied from this perspective.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi and all the enthusiastic friends that helped me during this season. Without your support this project could not have happened.

*Luis Catedral*

## From the Chair

### Daphne – A tragic end to a life that brought so much joy

As the last issue of Dawn Chorus was going to press, we were all trying to come to terms with the tragic events that led to the senseless shooting of one of our favourite personalities – Daphne the paradise shelduck.

Daphne arrived on the island in August 2003 and it was immediately apparent that this was an unusually friendly bird. Subsequent investigations determined that she had been previously befriended by Jude Cox-Smith on the Whangaparaoa Peninsula who had found this “duck with attitude” some years ago on the lake at the Gulf Harbour Country Club.

She quickly became the star attraction on Tiri and delighted many visitors, greeting them at the wharf and seeing them off as the ferry left in the afternoon. She made many friends but none more so than Ray & Barbara. She became so attached to them that, on occasion, she was known to try to land on the ferry when Ray & Barbara were departing the island.

Daphne disappeared the following December, only to return late January when it was understood that she had left to join a “communal moult”, a characteristic behaviour of her species.

In 2004, Daphne was fitted with a coloured identification band so that she could be easily recognised when away from the island. When she left again last December, it was discovered that she had joined a number of others of her species for their annual moult at Gulf Harbour golf course, along with Francis, her mate from Tiri.

The head green keeper at the Gulf Harbour Country Club had been informed on more than one occasion that there were two banded Tiri paradise ducks on the lake which were not to be culled. He had agreed to advise his staff and to inform Jude when the next cull was to take place. By the time he informed Jude, on 25 January, the cull was already in progress and virtually over by the time she got there. There were only two ducks left on the lake! Miraculously one of which was Daphne, who was badly injured but still alive. Daphne had received a number of injuries including a broken wing. Jude bravely placed herself between the woman behind the shotgun and Daphne and, despite callous taunts, was able to remove her to safety. Sadly, at 5.30 PM, Sunday 30 January, Daphne succumbed to her injuries and passed away.

Not only were we devastated by this turn of events, our hearts go out to Jude who not only cared for Daphne during her moult but put herself at considerable risk in trying to save her.

At Jude's request, Daphne was returned to the island and laid to rest next to Mr. Blue. A plaque will be erected in her memory.

The events surrounding the death of Daphne have raised many questions and highlighted attitudes towards wildlife by certain sectors of society. These attitudes are generally based on a lack of understanding. It is incredible to think that the reason given for the cull was one of tidying up the golf course for a forthcoming tournament. It shows a total disregard for wildlife when our native species are slaughtered in favour of image and, what is after all, just a sport. The perpetrators of this should hang their heads in shame.

Surely by putting a lake in the golf course in the first place it was obvious that this would attract



*Daphne enjoying the attention of a visitor to Tiri. Photo: Steve Rumney*

waterfowl, including the endemic paradise shelduck and the endangered brown teal. If the club do not wish for future visits by these birds, then the habitat that attracts them should be removed. The wildlife that is attracted to water features is normally welcomed at respected golf establishments.

During their moult, shelducks are unable to fly. Had those responsible bothered to learn more about these wonderful birds, they would have realized that they were likely to disperse once their moult was complete. Daphne returned to Tiri last year on Anniversary Weekend.

It did not take long for the story of Daphne to capture the imagination of the media. It was important that this travesty was publicized. The degree of publicity exceeded our expectations and we are grateful for that. Within days, the story was reported internationally in newspapers and on radio, as well as on local TV.

It is unfortunate that, shortly after, one or more individuals vandalized the golf course. SoTM, of course, disassociated itself from this action. This sort of response is not helpful and, whilst there was always a risk of such an emotional reaction in situations like these, it only serves to bring discredit to conservation and animal welfare groups alike.

Whilst Fish & Game, who issued the permit to cull, made a few uneducated and insensitive comments, the Gulf Harbour Country Club did make an unequivocal apology and offered to donate \$2,000 to SoTM as a gesture of goodwill. Daphne was, of course, priceless and no amount of money could compensate for this loss. Having considered this offer carefully, the committee voted unanimously to accept this in the spirit in which it was intended. The letter of apology (page 5) received from Peter Wall shows that there is an opportunity to move forward. Hopefully, a visit to Tiri and other related activities will assist those from the country club to better value the wildlife that is attracted to their grounds.

Although it is important that we move on, there are still issues that need to be considered, not the least being the permit process. SoTM obtained, under the Official Information Act, a copy of the

permit to cull and mandatory report that followed. It has been our expectation that, had any of the conditions of the permit been breached, then the holder would be prosecuted accordingly. Whilst we do not have the knowledge to immediately identify if there has been a breach, there were some aspects that were intriguing. Firstly, the location of the cull was listed as a PO Box. Surely, the address described should be the actual location of the cull. Secondly, the permit refers to authorisation under the Conservation Act when in fact their authority is granted under the Wildlife Act. Whilst these two points are technicalities, they do demonstrate a certain sloppiness that may be indicative of a cynical attitude towards the whole process. Of most concern is the requirement “that alternative disturbance methods have been instituted and that killing is not to be wholly relied upon”. Surely it would not be that difficult to catch and move birds that are unable to fly. One has to wonder whether any attention was paid to this requirement.

We should also question the appropriateness of such a cull, particularly as it was so close to a number of regional parks, not to mention a world famous conservation island.

This whole affair has highlighted the fact that there appears to be little accountability and follow up when it comes to the issuing of permits to cull game birds out of season. Had Fish & Game understood the moulting behaviour of paradise shelduck, then they would have denied the permit as it was unnecessary. Once a permit is issued, it should be the case that an independent observer is present to ensure that the conditions are complied with, including whether alternative disturbance methods have been instituted. Last, and by no means least, one has to wonder whether Fish & Game are the right organization to be issuing such permits as they are, by their own definition, an “angler and gamebird hunter organisation”.

*Simon Fordham*



# In Memory of Daphne

Gulf Harbour will never be the same for Robert and Jude since Daphne was shot. We had always looked forward to her arrival for the communal moult at the beginning of December each year. Although she had been under the care of Ray and Barbara and Tiri supporters for nine months she would come straight to us and carry on as though she had never been away. The moment she arrived she would join straight in, making out she was the boss.



Photo: Robert & Jude

It was always a thrill to be with her again. She used to follow us around the golf course lake chattering as we checked water levels and the health of the many wetland birds that lived there. Being larger than mallards she was able to exert her authority by lowering her head, making zeeking sounds, and charging toward any duck to which she took exception. Occasionally this behaviour would draw an adverse reaction particularly if the object of her aggressiveness was another paradise duck, a group of pukekoe, or a swan. In these situations her main defensive tactic was to position herself between our legs where she was safe from attack while continuing her belligerent behaviour of hurling abuse. If other birds ignored her she nibbled our shoelaces until something more exciting took her fancy. Daphne always saw us arrive at the lake and would let us know where she was with her loud zeeking noises which were totally distinctive as she ran or flew toward us.

On one occasion during our tour of inspection we came across and removed a cygnet with an injured foot. The parent swans objected strongly but soon got over it. Not so Daphne! She made such a fuss she wound up all the other birds in close proximity. The noise grew to such a level that green keeping staff arrived in there buggies to check out the cause of the commotion. She truly was a duck with attitude! We miss her terribly and will never forget her! Our visits to the lake are now tinged with sadness along with anger at the stupidity of the Golf Club staff who committed an act that was totally avoidable.

Judging by the public reaction over the shooting of Daphne it was obvious that she touched many hearts with her behaviour which could be described as lovingly peculiar. She was very special! There will never be another Daphne! Her quirky little ways touched us all.

Now that the public furore has died down it is important to continue the investigation of culling permits, and Fish & Game's appropriateness to be the Agency that issues these permits. If these issues can be discussed and changes made where appropriate, then Daphne will not have died in vain.

Robert Cox & Jude Smidt, Phone (09) 428-4000

Dear Friends,

Like so many others, - fellow Guides, Supporters, Staff, Visitors - especially School Children - I was saddened, yes even outraged, by the news of Daphne's passing, and the manner of her death. To us, it seems inexcusable. Simon's letter to the Press was a masterpiece, sadly twisted by a journalist, it seems, for a "good front page story". We applaud Simon for his very able and forthright presentation of the case.

Still lovingly remembering Daphne and her quaint antics, it is now time for us to step back and think about what has happened, and what this event is going to mean to us, who are proud to be Supporters, and so many others who at least in part share our views on conservation.

On many counts, what has happened is a terrible blow, and understandable negative human reactions so easily rise to almost choke us. I am not at all saying that Daphne was "only a bird"; indeed she was a much loved friend, worthy of the mourning we feel. But already hints are arising of negative reaction, of hatred towards the golf club and the individual who perpetrated this act, thoughts of revenge and retribution. Respectfully I suggest these feelings do nothing constructive, rather endanger our peace of mind and the God-given nobleness I believe is a prime characteristic of us all. And don't each of us at times make mistakes, and get our priorities wrong? So many of us have felt deeply the bond that is our togetherness, not just a concern for conservation, not just a common purpose we have found, but a deep love there is among us whatever our creed. It is a love, I believe, that permeates the Island of Tiritiri Matangi, and what we there have learnt, as well as accomplished. As we reflect, don't we all feel **that** is the Spirit of "Our Island"? To love as we do, is something very precious, surely not to be besmirched by a reaction of hate towards whatever happens, or whoever is responsible.

The Golf Club feels remorse and, I trust, the one who fired the gun. Hopefully, this can cause us to find, even be it with great difficulty, forgiveness and reconciliation towards those who have hurt us. If we can do that together, it will add to our greatness of mind, not diminish it. I suggest it will be a better way to preserve Daphne's memory, and the contribution she made to our lives. Conservation includes bringing and restoring beauty of mind and spirit, as well as the material, to this wonderful world. Are we big enough to accept that and offer forgiveness? If we can do that, it will add to the stature of this wonderful Island, and go on increasing its power of Love.

Jim Battersby,  
Founding Chairman

*Dear all*

*Please find enclosed our cheque which we pledged following the most unfortunate shooting of Daphne. Much has been said, written and explained. We deeply regret the outcome and will ensure better processes and communications will never allow a repeat.*

*I do hope you can apply these funds to some worthwhile activity which will demonstrate we do care. I would welcome the opportunity to visit Tiri and meet some of the key members of the "Supporters".*

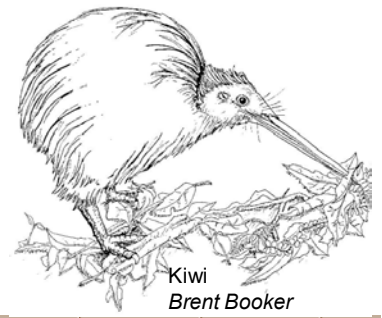
*Best regards*

*Peter Wall  
Manager  
Gulf Harbour Country Club*



# Flora and Fauna Notes

Compiled by Barbara Walter, Morag Fordham & Jan Velvin



## Flora

It seems this season we cant get away from the beauty and majesty of the **Kohekohe – *Dysoxylum spectabile***. It is a delight to walk through the Kawerau Track at present and see the fruit everywhere, the birds are having a real party. On Saturday in a single tree to the right of the bridge we watched Tui, Saddlebacks, Stitchbirds, Bellbirds and, as a bonus, a Wood Pigeon feeding on the fruit. The kohekohe fruit hanging like grapes is still very prevalent on many trees. If you have a look at the boardwalk you will see the scarlet remains of the seed flesh and the seeds. As you walk up the Kawerau Track between the Stichbird nest and the feeder many of the Kohekohe have their new branches of flower buds growing out of their trunks. Judging by the number of buds we look like getting another bumper season.

A lot of our plants are flowering or forming flowers at the moment, some are very small but worth pausing to observe.

The ***Muehlenbeckia complexa*** is covered in flowers as is ***Muehlenbeckia australis***. This plant is a vigorous scrambler and can be seen on the roadside to the left of the entrance to Wattle Track.

The Wattles themselves are setting buds which look like they are covered in suede.

Most of this year's fruit on the ***Pseudopanax arboreus*** has gone, the buds you see are for this flowering season – remember they take a year to ripen. On the corner of Grahams Road and Wharf Road a group of ***Pseudopanax lessonii*** are covered in fruit. They are always later than ***P. arboreus***.

A lot of the plants that flowered during spring are carrying seed. A good example of this is the **Wharangi- *Melicope ternata*** on Wharf Rd. The roadside on the left above the entrance to Wattle Track is lined with these bright green shrubs. The seeds are shiny black and very evident. This plant is in the same family as citrus. Carrying on up the road to the right new **Manuka – *Leptospermum scoparium*** seed capsules can be seen. If you can beat the Kakariki it is worth looking at the seed pods on the **Rewarewa – *Knightia excelsa*** which can be seen on Cable Road.

Also providing a feast at the moment is **Karo – *Pittosporum crassifolium***, its grey ball like seed capsules are opening revealing many sticky shiny black seeds. These can easily be seen on Grahams Road and Cable track. A group of Karo is also on Wattle Valley Track as you enter Little Wattle Valley, by the seat.

It is a fun time to be on the Island (when isn't it!) at present as many of these trees carrying fruit and attracting the birds are lining the tracks not only giving the birds a party treat but us as well!

Jan Velvin

## Fauna

### Takahe

The Takahe are all well and looking great with their new plumage. Blake and @dot (she had been seen from time to time with Glencoe) have started wandering around the island again. Meanwhile Greg is still being a beachcomber so "Greg watch" remains in force. Rossie has fought with both Blackwatch and Glencoe but no one was seriously injured.

In a few weeks time JJ and Blackwatch chick will be sexed and banded, and will be called either Lou or LuLu after appearing around the public loos when the parents, after many weeks brought the chick out of hiding.

### Stitchbird/Hihi

At the beginning of February 25 juvenile and 5 adult male birds were successfully translocated to Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. All of the birds are being seen regularly at Karori, using the feeders in the sanctuary.

The Stitchbirds on Tiri are using the feeders a lot at present as there is only a little natural food around. They are even eating unripe *Pseudopanax lessonii* berries plus Kohekohe and Karamu berries, Puriri and Manuka flowers. The Wattles are normally available by now but they are slow to flower due to the lack of rain. The birds are also using the water troughs in Wattle Valley due to the dry conditions.

### Brown Teal/Pateke

Recently Eva got stuck in the fence down by the bunkhouse dam and damaged her leg so she was put in a pen to be easily treated. It was decided to send her to Bird Rescue but sadly she died before this happened. It is thought that she was about 8 years old and had produced many ducklings over the years. One of her recent ducklings has coloured up into male plumage very quickly. Another 3 ducklings have been banded (M/YB, M/Ry and M/YW). At present there are 2 males and 4 females on the bunkhouse dam.

Jemima and Ossie are keeping a low profile at times on the wharf dam as there are several Harriers working the area. She has finally had her transmitter removed by Richard Griffiths (DoC).

In the middle of March Ruan twice left Daisy and their ducklings on the narrow NE dam and was seen on the Lighthouse Valley dam with Blue Bonnet chasing away Britannia. On the 25/3 one of their ducklings was found alone and was still abandoned the following day so the



duckling was taken to Bird Rescue and is doing well.

Also one day in March, Ralph was seen by Jude Smidt-Cox (he and Connie were living in the new Wetlands) on the Gulf Harbour Country Club pond. As most of the dams are now dry the Brown Teal have disappeared into the undergrowth looking for moisture.

## N I Robins

At the beginning of April 27 adult Robins (14 males and 13 females) were successfully translocated to Glenfern Sanctuary on Great Barrier Island. Roland who was monitoring the Robins this season has gone to the Sanctuary and has already seen quite a few of the birds.

## Kokako

The Kokako have had an amazing breeding season with the discovery of two more chicks giving a total of 9 chicks for the season. In mid March, Oscar was discovered feeding a fledged unbanded chick. His partner Eunice was a chick from last season. It is quite unusual for a bird to breed in her first year. However it was all too much for her and she has left Oscar to be a solo dad and is now with her brother Russell.

At the beginning of April Shazbot and Te Hari (who produced Blue earlier in the season) were seen feeding a fledged unbanded chick so Shazbot must have sneaked off to lay more eggs once Blue fledged.

In mid March a pile of juvenile Kokako feathers was discovered (probably Harrier predation) but at this stage the dead bird's identity is unknown but it is thought to be either Zephyr or Blue.

## Tomtit

There have been more sightings of both male and female birds mainly around the Wattle Valley area but also on the Kawerau track and one sighting near the Ridge Road /Cable Road intersection.

## Other Birds

There have been many sightings of Kiwi. Early one evening at the beginning of March, two Morepork were seen actually sitting on top of the Stitchbird feeder in Wattle Valley with a third Morepork on a tree nearby.

On 9/3 three Reef Herons were seen on the reef off Tiri and the following day, 2 were seen on the rocks beside the wharf.

A Long-tailed Cuckoo was seen in March.

Kaka visited the island at the beginning of April.

The Little Blue Penguins have finished moulting and are sometimes seen in the penguin boxes during the day.

The Grey-faced Petrels are starting to arrive back and recently 3 were banded.

## Tuatara/Lizards

One evening, at the beginning of April a Tuatara was seen along Wharf Road. There have been lots of sightings in the usual areas.

Morag Fordham & Barbara Walter

## WARNING!! Argentine Ant Alert

Argentine ants have arrived at Gulf Harbour Marina. There are quite high numbers around rubbish skips and bins with thin trails around edges of the car parking area. These ants should not pose too much of a risk to Tiritiri visitors passing through the marina area unless goods or luggage is left on the ground for reasonably long periods, at least several hours. The risk would be greater for bulky items left overnight at the marina en route to Tiritiri. Remember, for Argentine ants to invade the island a whole nest needs to be transported, not just a few workers. The odd ant getting on footwear or even hanging onto a day-pack is not a problem at all. DoC is looking to encourage marina management to instigate control measures.

## Life Membership for Mel Galbraith



Mel in action: Hobbs Beach, Tiri. Photo supplied by Mel.

Mel Galbraith was awarded Life membership at this year's AGM. For those who do not know Mel a brief summary of his involvement follows. Mel has been a part of the Tiri Supporters since it was established, and along with his family, had been involved with the project even before that. As Jim Battersby states "Our first Secretary, and later Chairman, Mel Galbraith, was meticulous in detail, so knowledgeable, far seeing, steeped in conservation, and supported by a wonderful wife and family. It was Mel especially, who guided our footsteps in those early days, who kept opening possibilities before us, and who knew significant people and where to contact them, to assist our cause."

Mel has been involved both in organisational capacities and as a guide and willing worker on many occasions. Through Mel's encouragement, many students have become involved with the island. He assisted DOC in the planning and organisation of the transfer of hihi (stitchbird) to Tiri, and facilitated the participation of Glenfield College students in the actual translocation. Mel's family have also been involved with the third generation of Galbraiths recently appearing on the island.



## Weed Team—2004/2005 Boxthorn Bites the Dust!!

The team came from far and wide this summer to do battle with weeds. One team member was enticed out of the Kaweka ranges and another came all the way from Wellington for the privilege of bashing through the twiggy coprosma and flax in pursuit of the elusive but tenacious honeysuckle, Mexican devil and moth plant.

The whole island was grid searched again and results are very encouraging. Only seven adult honeysuckle were found compared to seventy five in 2002/03 and one adult moth plant compared to twenty two in 2002/03. Overall the number of adult plants found was reduced by eighty six percent from

for monitoring and control of particular sites. Supporters have shown enthusiasm for this and thanks to all those who have participated. However the biggest battle this year was with the dreaded boxthorn on Little Wooded Island. Dozens of huge boxthorn plants were removed from the difficult steep and rocky terrain in the very hot and humid weather conditions of early February, which was necessary due to this being the time of year when the petrels were not around. Special mention should be made of the efforts of the chainsaw



*In action—Little Wooded Island. Photo: Shelley Heiss-Dunlop*



*Ready for action on Little Wooded Island. Photo: Shelley Heiss-Dunlop*

2002/03 levels. The approach of digging out plants instead of spraying has proved very successful in reducing regrowth on honeysuckle. Mothplant continues to be a concern, seeding sites identified by past ranger Shaun Dunning in some cases over 7 years ago continue to produce seedlings, and for this reason the "adopt a mothplant site" program was implemented, where supporters took responsibility

operators Ian Price and Richard Griffiths for not only working so hard in very difficult conditions but also having the energy left to row us all back at the end of the day! The removal of these large plants has been a major achievement to complement the tremendous effort that Ian has made to clear boxthorn from the cliffs of Tiri over the past three years. To demonstrate how important it is to remove the seed source, it should be noted that Ian removed two hundred and sixty seedlings of boxthorn from the cliffs this year.

As always it has been my privilege to lead such a dedicated grid search team and I would like to thank Rod for the tin whistle lessons, Claudia for mothering us all, Charlotte for all those questions, Jenny for lots of laughter, and Shelley for showing



**Mile-A-Minute**  
*Dipogon lignosus*

### What's that Weed?

A vigorous climber which takes advantage of forest margins and open areas, where it smothers other plants. The flowers are pea like, coloured white to pink and the seed is held in pea like pods. There are four significant infestations on Tiri, especially under the *Macrocarpa* behind the Generator shed.



# Biosecurity: Protecting Tiri from Pests

Preserving New Zealand's biodiversity is at times like trying to look after a piece of crumbling chocolate cake in a chicken coop of starving hens. Tiritiri Matangi can be thought of as one of those crumbs, the hens of course being the suite of pests introduced to this country. To save our biodiversity we either need to knock off the 'hens' or get what's left of the cake on to the other side of the fence as quickly as possible. In Tiri, we are very fortunate in having a 'fence' already in place; it is known as the sea.

Disappointingly we know the odd 'hen' can jump the 'fence'. Some wind dispersed weeds can make it to the island on their own accord and birds travelling from the mainland bring seeds of other plants. For this reason controlling weeds will always be part of day to day management on the island. But, while we cannot control the wind and the birds there is another avenue we have plenty of control over and one that opens the door to a much wider and more destructive range of pests. The avenue I am talking about of course is you and I. Every time we hop on a boat to travel to Tiri we open a gate in the 'fence' and create the potential for pest invasion.

There are some simple precautions that can be taken to prevent pests getting to Tiri and the intent of this article is to highlight these. To protect Tiri these precautions need to be followed by all island visitors and become routine for regulars like you and I. Before I get down to specifics a few principles of biosecurity are worth mentioning. One, I am sure you would all agree with is the old maxim; prevention is better than cure. Take the introduction of Argentine ants to Tiri for example. Chris Green and numerous others have been working for nearly five years now to rid Tiri of an ant that could have been prevented from arriving by a simple inspection of supplies.

Effective biosecurity practice is easy and basic preventative measures carried out properly every time are far better than high standards implemented poorly. Tiri will be best protected when all island visitors know the value of taking precautions and are aware that in implementing them they are ensuring protection for the island.



Of the precautions to be taken, cleaning footwear, gaiters, packs and raincoats is probably the most time consuming, but the risk of introducing new weed species on these personal items is very real. These items need to be free of all soil, seeds and vegetation. Special attention should be paid to pockets, seams and Velcro as these are places where seeds can become wedged and are difficult to remove. Check your socks to ensure they are free of seeds. Food, particularly vegetables, should be inspected for soil and creepy crawlies before being taken to the island and washed if necessary.

Any gear taken to Tiri that is not secured in a day pack should be packed in a pest proof container. Plastic barrels, plastic pails, fish bins and dry bags are ideal as they can be sealed. Packs and cardboard boxes with no holes can also be used (banana boxes are unsuitable) although the edges and joins of cardboard boxes should be sealed with parcel tape. Plastic bags are prone to tearing and are unsuitable. Pack your gear on the morning of your departure. In doing so, you greatly reduce the risk of a rodent or insect stowing away overnight.

Advice from the Department should be sought before transporting any building supplies or bulk materials to the island as the risk of pest introduction with these materials is greatly increased.

*Richard Griffiths, DoC*

## Research Report: Saddleback abundance on Tiritiri Matangi

Recently Dianne Brunton (Massey University, Albany) and Rosalie Stamp (DoC, Auckland) completed a year long sampling of saddleback (and kakariki) abundance in a number of locations representing 'established' bush on Tiri (Wattle Valley, Bush 1, Bush 22). More than 130 transects were walked representing over 12 km of sampling. Sampling occurred at regular intervals throughout the year (usually every 1-2 weeks). The data are currently being analysed using the program *Distance*. The initial findings for saddleback in established bush patches are presented in Table 1. Bush 22 was analysed separately as it has had significant saddleback removals in recent years. The good news is that the density of saddleback estimated for Bush 22 is only slightly lower than the density for WV and Bush 1 (combined), so that neighbourhood appears to have recovered well! More detailed analysis will be done on the saddleback data over the next few weeks.

Area	Birds/Ha	95% CI	Area (Ha) sampled	Estimated # birds
Bush 22	9.5	6.6—13.7	5	47 (min 16 pairs)
WV and Bush 1	11.7	9.8—14.0	7	82 (min 34 pairs)
Overall	11.1	9.4—13.2	12	133 (min 56 pairs)

The kakariki data will be analysed next. Luis Ortiz Catedral (an MSc student at Massey University, Albany) will be continuing the kakariki sampling over the next year thus providing a basis for understanding longer term populations trends for kakariki on Tiri.

*Dianne Brunton*

# Wonderful World of Weta

There are currently three different kinds of weta on Tiritiri, tree weta, cave weta and ground weta. All weta are nocturnal so are rarely seen during the day and they are all omnivorous although tree and cave weta are predominantly herbivorous and ground weta tend to be somewhat more carnivorous. All are capable of feeding on foliage, fruit, and other invertebrates both alive and dead. Each kind of weta has a different life history and here tree weta will be the focus.

approaches their growth rate slows and the remaining instars take about two months each. Thus most tree weta are maturing into their final instar 13 – 15 months after hatching. Mating and egg laying will occur from late summer onwards.

During the day tree weta must be well hidden in cavities to avoid predation, particularly from birds. They hate bright light so prefer dark, very tight cavities into which they squeeze themselves. They enter

head first and brace their heavily spined back legs against the cavity walls thus making it very difficult for birds to pull them out. Clearly the cavity must be just the right size and as the weta grows larger it must either chew out the sides to increase its size or, when moulting must find a new, larger cavity. Tree weta can be gregarious and large adult males can have harems of many females.



Photo: Nicola Brady

Eggs of the Auckland tree weta on Tiritiri hatch in spring, usually during October or November. After hatching just under the soil surface the first growth stage, or instar, actively climbs up vegetation to get away from the many ground predators such as lizards, spiders, centipedes, various predatory beetles and not to mention birds. They must find a safe place to hide during the day and foliage, preferably new, spring growth, to feed on. There are many potential hiding places in trees for the first instars as they are only a few millimetres long. However, as they moult into larger weta finding a cavity or hole to hide in becomes more difficult.

Female tree weta have a total of 10 instars whereas males have between 8 and 10. The first five instars each take about a month so that by the end of the first summer and into autumn the weta will be half way through their instars. As winter

Tree weta generally avoid the ground and prefer to live in the canopy of trees. Daytime cavities well above ground are preferred and after dark weta reverse part way out at first, to make sure the 'coast is clear' then exit quickly and head up the tree without delay. While walking up trunks and branches weta are very vulnerable to morepork and lizard predation. However, once in foliage they are harder to see thus gain some protection. Adult male tree weta communicate by rubbing their back legs against their body to produce a rasping or scratching sound. They also have their auditory organs (ears) on the inside of their front legs!

Chris Green, DoC

## Editors Note:

*It is part of the long term plan to translocate Wetapunga (giant weta) from Little Barrier Island to Tiri.*

New! Improved!

## The Tiri Shop

In temporary premises during construction of the new Visitor Centre, but with all your favourite Tiri items still on sale....

Anne Rimmers lovely Tiri book  
Fantastic T-shirts  
(yes, even some with weta!!)

Call Barbara on 476 0010  
for phone orders

## No More Tiri Weather...

On the 31st of March I received a letter from the Meteorological Service that on the 1st of April that they no longer required meteorological reports from Tiritiri. This was quite a surprise. I am not sure how long meteorological reports have been sent from Tiritiri but I would think that some sort of weather information has been available since the lighthouse was established in 1864.

The meteorological instruments are to be left here except for the anemometer that is to be removed. However NIWA, who we take rainfall readings for, may take over some of the maintenance of the instruments. So the anemometer, thermometer screen and rain gauge may have a reprieve.

On the same day the Department of Conservation informed me that they no longer required daily fire reports. They now receive information from land stations. The daily fire





## Calendar of Events

**2005**

**Supporters Working  
Weekend**  
4–6 June  
**FULL**

**Bellbird & Planting Trip**  
(21 year Anniversary!)  
Sunday 5 June

**Tiri Kids Planting Trip**  
Sunday 3 July  
*See Page 12 for details*

**Supporters Families  
Weekend**  
9-10 July

**Supporters Adults Non-  
Working Weekend**  
23-24 July

**Kowhai Trip**  
Sunday 28 August

**Social Evening\***  
Monday 12 September  
\*more details next issue

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

## Mahoe

*Melicytus ramiflorus*  
**Whiteywood**

It is time to have a look at an old friend in that this tree is so prevalent on Tiri that it probably goes unnoticed by many. It is also common throughout the country in both forests and scrublands.

The form of the tree is often branched, and is fast growing to 10m. Although able to withstand wind the branches are very brittle. Mahoe has distinctive and spectacular white markings on its trunk. These white markings are the bark of the tree but they do have an associated fine white lichen.



*Photo: Jan Velvin*

The main flowering period is November - December but a smaller crop of flowers can occur in warmer areas in April- May. This second flowering period is very evident on Tiri at the moment with the added bonus of a distinctive perfume. The male and female flowers are carried on separate trees. The male flowers

are larger. Both male and female flowers are cream and are massed on the stems of the tree.



*Photo: Jan Velvin*

The fruit is bright purple when ripe and carries black seeds inside. The flowers and fruit are attractive to insects and the birds.

Mahoe wood, being brittle, is not used as a timber but the Maori people used it to light fires in conjunction with Kaikomako (*Pennantia corymbosa*).

If you are walking through the Kawerau track many Whiteywood seedlings can be seen growing in the 'lightsink' caused by the fallen tree beside the big Pohutukawa, filling a role as 'colonising' plants.

*Jan Velvin*

### *Editors note:*

*Mahoe is a favourite food of the tree weta, see Page 10 for more on the habits of tree weta.*

## Working Weekends

**Supporters Anniversary Weekend**  
**Auckland Tramping Club**  
**Theresa & David McIntyre W/E**  
**Barbara & Ivan Reilly W/E**  
**Supporters Easter Weekend**

*Thank you for lots of work done in  
HOT weather!!!*

## Constitution

At this years AGM all proposed changes to the Constitution were ratified (see DC 60 for details of changes). The amended Constitution is available on the Tiri website.

## Memorandum of Understanding

This is also available on the website. It is a large document, but a copy can be posted on request. Contact the Chairperson.

