

Dawn Chorus



Bulletin 64

ISSN 1171 - 8595

February 2006

Fantastic flowering was bird food fiesta !



Photo: Simon Fordham

Visitors to Tiritiri Matangi Island in spring and early summer saw one of the best flowering seasons on the Island. The flax and cabbage trees produced a fantastic display and lots of bird food. This Kokako was one of the many 'honeyeaters' that gained a seasonal orange hood, photographed on flax flowers by our SoTM chairman, Simon Fordham. (See also Flora notes on pages 8 and 10).

In this issue

Kakariki update Pgs 3-4

Rifleman proposed Pg 6

Editorial

Tiri's rare endemic birds get most of the attention (with good reason), but Tiri is also a great place for people to see some of our more common birds that we often take for granted. It's easy to forget that for many visitors, a Tui or a Fantail is as special as a Hihi or a Takahe. They may be young children new to bird watching or visitors from overseas, but for many people a bird doesn't have to be unusual or rare to be special.

Children delight at the sight of Brown Quail waddling down the track in front of them, or a Fantail that comes in close. A Kingfisher speeding

through the canopy often grabs their attention and a large Kereru coming to land on the water trough in Wattle Valley is a treat for everyone. Moreporks are sometimes seen in Kawerau Valley during the day or night. On the eastern side of the island, Welcome Swallows entertain with their agile aerobatics as they pluck aquatic insects from the water in the dams. Seabirds such as White-fronted Terns and Australasian Gannets cruise the thermals around the island, and Variable Oystercatchers can often be seen in pairs on the rocky shore. For thousands of children and visitors every year, Tiri is a great place to get closer to birds of every kind. **Suzi Phillips**

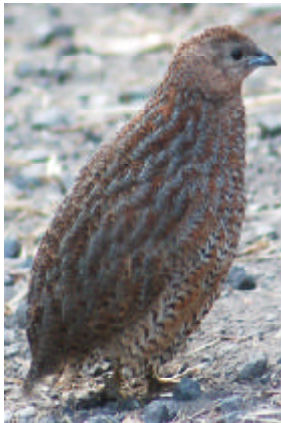


Photo: Suzi Phillips

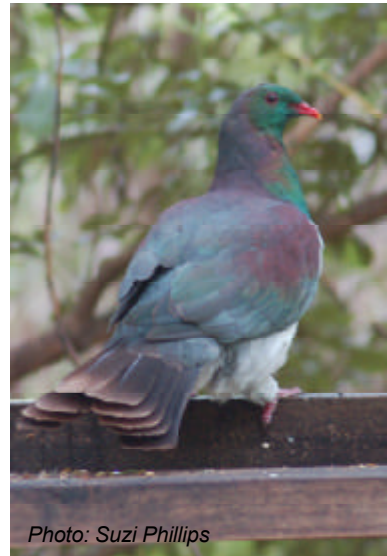


Photo: Suzi Phillips



Photo: Suzi Phillips

Deadline for next issue: 18 April 2006

Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi - Contacts

Chairperson

Simon Fordham 274 1828 simonf@clear.net.nz

Secretary

Julie Cotterill 817 8714 julieatpiha@xtra.co.nz

Treasurer

Bil Mancer 475 5997 bill.mancer@arbitrage.co.nz

Membership Secretary

Val Smytheman 278 9309 vjess@ihug.co.nz

Newsletter Editor

Suzi Phillips 4795395 suzi@dialogue.co.nz

Committee

Cathy Catto 629 3903 hlgcat@actrix.co.nz

Margaret Chappell 415 7119 getgrow@ihug.co.nz

Mark Davison 415 6654 marksd@xtra.co.nz

Kay McLeod (07)3158293 jmcLeod@ihug.co.nz

Graham Ussher 815 6622 graham.ussner@arc.govt.nz

Doc Field Officers

Barbara&RayWalter 476 0010 tiritirimatangifb@doc.govt.nz

Jennifer Haslam 476 0920

Bunkhouse 476 0920

Guides Co-ordinator

Sally Green (09)431 5758 sallygreen@xtra.co.nz

www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz

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

Latest school visits

St Kentigens x2

Northcross Intermediate

Dairy Flat x2

Teuku Sch. (Nr Raglan)

Taupo-nui-a-tia College

Seventh Day Adventist School, Tauranga

Pukekohe High School

Belmont Intermediate

Konini Primary



Hihi (Photo: Suzi Phillips)

Where are all the Kakariki?

By Luis Ortiz Catedral

If you are a regular visitor to Tiritiri Matangi you might have noticed a sharp contrast between the apparent abundance of Kakariki in summer and winter months. Why is that? It has been suggested that perhaps they fly across to Whangaparoa Peninsula during winter in search of food or maybe they die as a consequence of food scarcity on Tiritiri Matangi.

Under this scenario, the apparent increase of Kakariki during summer would be due to the numerous young birds born between November and March or the return of migrant birds to start breeding on the island. It has also been proposed that there is a link between Kakariki numbers and the blooming of flax.

In years of 'low' Kakariki numbers flax would flourish for the benefit of the honeyeaters guild. In contrast, years of 'high' Kakariki density will affect the honeyeaters because they destroy the valuable flower resources. These are interesting questions about the dynamics of Tiritiri Matangi.

After one and a half years of constant visits to the island, I think I can provide some clues that will help resolve the mystery by highlighting areas for future research.

I have noticed two important things: first, Kakariki have a very broad diet and second, their foraging behaviour changes between seasons. They spend a lot of

time broadly between June and early October feeding on the ground. They are particularly attracted to the leaf litter in dense replanted pohutukawa bush and in the steep gullies and cliffs around the island - places rarely visited by the general public. They are very silent during this time.

I have not been able to determine what exactly they are collecting from the ground (most likely small insects or tiny seeds); but whatever is it they pick, it must be rewarding, as I have seen birds engaged in meticulous searches among dry leaves sometimes up to 40 minutes in a single spot! .

This behaviour changes from middle October to late March when other resources become available, such as buds, flowers and fruits of a variety of species. In the same period, they engage in nest searching and mating, usually calling loudly while flying and chasing away other Kakariki.

It is no surprise they become more conspicuous along

tracks and around the lighthouse or in the paddocks where they find plenty of grass and weed seeds. This is nothing new since movements of birds across different habitats have been noticed in other studies worldwide.

This does not mean Kakariki can't fly across the sea and reach areas such as Shakespear Regional Park; they are good fliers and the distance between the island and the peninsula is well within their flight capacities, unlike Saddleback for instance.

Nevertheless, a massive migration from Tiri to account for the apparent drop in numbers would be a very noticeable event. Moreover, if food scarcity were decimating the Kakariki population, corpses would be very common.

After several months of walks covering most of the island in search of nests, I have seen only 10 dead adult Kakariki, and five of them were predated as judging from the disposition of the remains and broken bones.

In addition, from the data I gathered in the 2004-2005 breeding season, Kakariki produce only few young - one fledgling per breeding pair on average. (This data comes from detailed observations of 26 nests and less intense monitoring

of another four nests found later in the season). Thus, the annual production of young is low, and unlikely to account for sudden increases of birds.

Regarding the link between flax flowers, Kakariki, and the honeyeaters I have less information, but still have something to say. Parrots (the avian group Kakariki belong to), are considered to fill an interesting and important ecological niche as promoters of plant diversity.

Their peculiar habit of 'destroying' flower buds and unripe seeds, (usually of common species with impressive flower production, such as flax, cabbage trees and five-finger), open the opportunity for more specialised plant species to be pollinated by other birds.

It is possible that by depleting flax, Kakariki push honeyeaters to visit other flowers, unlikely to seed without the help of Tui or Bellbirds (well, it is also



*A pair of healthy looking kakariki on Tiri.
(Photo: Mike Sweet)*

Continued on page 4



*Female kakariki with a brood of six chicks
(Photo: Luis Ortiz Catedral)*

Kakariki continued from page 3

possible that they visit the feeders more often of course!!!).

The pollination of those flowers and subsequent formation of seeds would represent a valuable recruitment of young plants that might otherwise be out-competed by numerous baby flax for instance. The resulting diversity in terms of plants would have an impact in the invertebrate community and consequently in the ability of Tiri to support not only bird-life, but also our graceful skinks and the amazing tuatara.

There is evidently a fluctuation in flax flowers supply from year to year. It is also clear that density of Kakariki does have an effect on flax buds, but changes in kakariki numbers are unlikely to be so chaotic to explain patterns of flax flower production alone.

How does the pollination dynamics and seed production of other flowers change when there is abundance of flax buds around? What environmental factors cause variability in flax flower production?

What changes occur in the diet of Kakariki in 'good' years of flax buds? How nutritive are flax buds for Kakariki? Does the nutrition value of buds change over years? Does it have an effect on nectar quality for honeyeaters?

Obviously the answers are not simple and there is plenty to be learned from the ecology of our red-crowned friends... hopefully I'll extend my project on Tiri for some more years to try to unveil these and other secrets of the Kakariki.

Many thanks to Dianne Brunton, Terry Greene, Rose Thorogood, John Ewen and Taneal Cope for fruitful and passionate discussions about this topic.

What's new in Kakariki research?

This summer our Red-crowned Kakariki have been very busy with many chicks and even double clutches in some cases!

Some chicks have left the nest already, but they are still poor flyers, so if you come across a clumsy Kakariki look out for band combinations, as most of the chicks have been banded.

This is the second year of the Kakariki project. Over two seasons we have monitored 56 breeding attempts, mostly breeding pairs nesting in wooden boxes, but also natural nests in flax, mahoe, burrows and pohutukawas. This is the largest number of nests ever studied for this species!

We continue exploring issues related to clutch size, brood size and chick survival and we have some exciting news regarding implementation of new equipment that is helping us deepen our understanding of the breeding ecology of the Kakariki.

At present we have detailed information on the micro-environment of several nests thanks to the installation of small data loggers. These devices register changes in relative humidity and temperature in the clutches and provide good information on the incubation performance of different females.

This will be analysed in relation to number of eggs hatched. Besides this, we installed four infra-red cameras in selected nests and we have recorded numerous interactions between parents and chicks during feeding events.

This is invaluable material to assess the relationship between brood size, chick age, sex and survival.

At the moment we are working on some special videos to make them available as education material in the visitor's centre.

We have also received additional support to extend our project! Idea Wild

has generously provided a computer for the video monitoring system and Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society has granted funds to obtain other field work gear.

In addition to these, other organizations sponsor this research and we want to thank to all them: Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi, the Ecology and Conservation Group at Massey University, The Parrot Society UK, and Stiftung Avifauna Protecta.



Ready to fledge! The age of these three chicks ranges from 30-35 days. (Photo: Taneal Cope)

**Luis Ortiz Catedral and Dianne Brunton
The Ecology and Conservation Group
Institute of Natural Resources
Massey University, Albany Campus**

From the Chair

One of the many advantages of the MOU with the Department of Conservation is that we now have a formal consultation process for informing each other what we plan to do on the island. Accordingly, these are some of the things that we can expect to happen in the near future:

Alternative Power Sources

At our last AGM, we gave overwhelming support to the idea of downgrading the generator use in favour of solar and wind powered generation (the generator currently uses around 18,000 litres of diesel per year). In the short term, we expect to see the battery bank upgraded and solar panels installed.

Three 20m wind turbines will be erected where the old milking shed used to be (in the paddock, south of the weather station).

As they require, consents & permits, they will be in-

stalled at a later date.

Disabled Access Track

As part of the funding arrangements for the Visitor Centre, SoTM have agreed to construct a disabled access track from the wharf to Hobbs Beach. A preliminary survey has been carried out and construction can be expected to begin this year.

Translocations

Three proposals have been received for the transfer of birds from Tiri in the near future. We have already given our blessing to the transfer of 60 stitchbird to the "Ark in the Park" project this month. Our support has also been requested for the transfer, next month, of whitehead to Tawharanui Regional Park and bellbird to Moturoa Island (Bay of Islands). These requests will be considered at our next meeting.

Simon Fordham

Gecko spotting by night

Fifteen months ago, it was reported in Dawn Chorus that a population of "brown" geckos had been rediscovered at The Arches. They were subsequently confirmed as the common gecko, *Hoplodactylus maculatus*. Their presence was first indicated by footprints in a rodent tracking tunnel and confirmed by observation in cliff crevices. These would have been common on Tiri until kiore almost eradicated them. The remnant population sought refuge in the crevices where predators were unable to penetrate.

I visited the Arches last Labour Weekend, but was only able to pick up one pair of eyes from a distance and these disappeared as I got closer. The highlight that night was numerous common diving petrels flying overhead, a few being visible by torchlight.

October was still a bit cool for these "cold-blooded" creatures, so I was excited at the prospect of seeing them in summer when the pohutukawa were in flower. Despite a somewhat mediocre flowering season, our expectations were exceeded as there were more than enough flowers around to keep them interested. We visited on several occasions in late December and early January with up to five geckos observed on some nights, sometimes from less than two metres.

Nocturnal geckos can be found by picking up the distinct pink eye shine, best achieved by using a head light and binoculars. As you get closer, the reflection is clear without binoculars, but some of the geckos will retreat. You may also be fooled by one or two moth species which also have pink eye reflections, but most moth reflections are white.

A word of warning, though: This is a dangerous area, even during the day, so extra caution is required at night. Do not visit alone and ideally visit in a group of three or more. Needless to say, never walk whilst looking through binoculars and keep well back from the edges as there is loose rock in the area.

It is hard to imagine that these geckos have only survived in the one area, as there are a number of similar refuges elsewhere on the eastern side. Hopefully, additional populations will be discovered in the near future. **Simon Fordham.**



Common gecko on Tiri. (Photo: Simon Fordham)

Rifleman proposed for Tiri

A translocation of Rifleman from Hauturu to Tiri may be the next step in Rifleman conservation within the North.

The aim is to increase the number of sites and populations where Rifleman can breed successfully. Tiritiri Matangi Island offers an immediately available site and has the advantages of an absence of mammalian predators, and the presence of strong breeding populations of other birds that live in similar habitats to Rifleman on Hauturu (Little Barrier Island).

The male Rifleman is slightly smaller than the female, and thus he is the smallest New Zealand bird. Although similarly diminutive as the Grey Warbler, Riflemen 'stand out' by their peculiar and endearing body shape and their constant, high pitched vocalization.

If you see, but do not hear a Rifleman up close, chances are you spent too much time at rock concerts in your youth and have lost the ability to hear high frequency calls.

Once spotted, a group of Riflemen will be somewhat easy to observe because they hunt for small insects and other arthropods by flicking their wings, probably to scare nearby prey and to grab them while these try to escape.

The Rifleman, *titipounamu*, *Acanthisitta chloris*, belongs to one of New Zealand's most ancient avian lineages. Although it is a relative of perching birds, (passerines), from around the world, New Zealand wrens are unique in that they represent a long and solitary branch of the evolutionary tree.

Genetic differences between New Zealand wrens and other passerines are very large indeed and several scientists assumed that Rifleman, Rock Wren, and the extinct Bush Wren and Stephen Island Wren, are as old as the New Zealand archipelago itself, separating from the rest of passerine lineages on nearby continents about ~80 million years ago.

To an ornithologist, and a newcomer in New Zealand like myself, the Rifleman is as iconic as Kiwi or Tuatara.

Despite the uniqueness of its evolutionary history and the social complexity of its breeding system (Rifleman, much like 30 per cent of New Zealand's other land-birds, are cooperative breeders with related and unrelated helpers attending nests in which they have no direct descendants), there are only a handful of detailed studies on this species.

Most published research was conducted on the locally abundant South Island subspecies, while the North Island subspecies which occurs only at two locations north of Auckland, including Little Barrier Island, Hauturu, awaits its first long-term investigation. This is illustrated by the surprising 1994 description of the survival of a Northland population of Rifleman

in the kauri forest of Warawara.

Clearly, Rifleman as a species has a wide range of distribution, but these miniature birds are absent from much of the North Island, and even the South Island populations may not be as strong as perceived.

During a recent walk in Ark in the Park with Brent Beaven, who led the only previous translocation of the species, he told us how the extinction of Rifleman from Stewart Island went unnoticed for several years.

Brent then put together a translocation plan for rifleman from Codfish Island to Ulva Island and in February 2003, 30 individuals were hard-released on Ulva.

Although the translocation had a setback of mortality during holding the birds at the capture site, the release was a clear success with this translocated, multi-generational and growing Rifleman population now established firmly in the Rakiura Ecological Area.

Translocation of Rifleman within the Northern distribution of the species will increase the number of sites and populations where Rifleman can breed successfully, and Tiritiri may be the first opportunity to do this.

Concerns about the age of and the cavities in forest stands on Tiritiri Matangi and their suitability for breeding by hole-nesting Rifleman are alleviated by the adaptability of the species.

For example, in Kowhai Bush, Kaikoura, Riflemen use nest boxes for breeding, and despite the mature forest on Ulva Island, nests are often in ground cavities. In November last year, together with Josie and Mel Galbraith, we found a Rifleman nest under the eaves of the visitor centre at Tasman Glacier, at Aoraki.

During the past summer we began to study the behavioural and habitat characteristics of Rifleman on Hauturu. Together with research assistant Ian Johnson, we conducted preliminary surveys of Rifleman, Whiteheads, and other arboreal insectivorous birds on Little Barrier Island to determine the space and habitat use patterns of Rifleman breeding groups along the western slopes of Hauturu.

We looked for and found nests and fledglings, (some of which were quite loud, fluttering and displaying conspicuously on the forest floor to beg for food from the adults in their breeding group).

We are now analysing spatial data and measures of behavioural responsiveness of Rifleman groups to playbacks of vocalisations. This information will enable us to formulate and formalise a plan for the translocation of this unique New Zealand bird with hopes of its continued presence and success in our backyard. **Mark Hauber, University of Auckland.**



Photo: Suzi Phillips

Penguin study looks for answers

The Little Blue Penguin population on Tiri is being closely watched this year.

Massey University marine biologist/ ecologist, Jacqueline Geurts, is monitoring 77 active nests to establish baseline data, and study their feeding and breeding ecology for her MSc thesis.

"I'm looking at what type of food they are eating, where they are feeding (using tracking devices), and their breeding success this season," says Jacqueline.

"These birds are biological indicators for looking at the health of the marine environment around Tiri," she says.

Jacqueline uses stomach regurgitation samples to determine what the Little Blue Penguins are feeding on and the size of fish they are eating. Daily nest checks have allowed for identification of nest attendance, reasons for nest failure and overall breeding success.

Her research project began in July last year and she is based on the island for four days each week. She initially found 93 nests on Tiri, has monitored up to 77 active nests through the season.

Chick mortality is high with many chicks starving to death when the parent birds have not returned to feed them. Usually parents share the incubation and feeding duties.

"The chicks rely heavily on both parents feeding them, so if one parent does not return, they can die from starvation," she says. "Of 77 nests that we have now only 14 birds so far have fledged, so the high abandonment rate is a problem."

When abandoned, older chicks are capable of leaving their nests in search of food. They may starve, or



*Jacqueline Geurts holds a Little Blue Penguin.
(Photo:)*

drown because they lack adult plumage.

Stormy weather and a shortage of their usual food may have contributed to the high abandonment rate in recent months. Little Blue Penguins have been found dead in their hundreds on beaches around Northland and Auckland, in one of the worst beach wreck seasons for years.

On Tiritiri, Jacqueline has found more than 17 beach wrecked LBPs. Necropsies will hopefully show the cause of death. **Suzi Phillips.**

Predator fencing for Shakespear sanctuary

Shakespear Regional Park at the end of Whangaparaoa Peninsula is the nearest mainland coast to Tiritiri and is a natural spill-over habitat for some species of Tiri birds.

In 2004 a group called Shakespear Open Sanctuary Society Inc (SOSSI) was formed to help progress Auckland Regional Council plans for a mainland island at Shakespear Regional Park.

The coastal link between the two reserves has prompted SOSSI to invite any supporters of Tiri to take an interest in the park "across the water".

In the near future the ARC will finalise its plans for the park. This is likely to include a predator proof fence such as that used at Tawharanui which will require fundraising.

This will call for a major effort on the part of SOSSI, but fortunately Shakespear Regional Park has the advantage of sitting on the end of a peninsula with a very narrow neck, so the fundraising and construction will not be too daunting a task, if this option is chosen.

As many Tiri supporters will know, the ARC runs annual planting days in all the regional parks and over the years Shakespear Regional Park has benefited hugely from revegetation.

SOSSI is assisting with this, and two recent plantings provided members with interesting work on the foreshore and in the wetland by the park entrance. Developing the wetland is a particular project adopted by SOSSI, and may attract some of the Brown teal which are occasionally seen on the Shakespear Park pond.

For any information or if you would like to help at Shakespear Park Contact SOSSI at phone: 09 424 5055 or email: info@shakespearopensanctuary.org.nz For our part we will keep you informed of "stray" Tiri birds which settle, once the park is predator free. Richard Chambers



(Photo: Anne Rimmer)

Flora and Fauna Notes

Compiled by Jan Velvin, Barbara Walter,
and Morag Fordham



(Photo: Suzi Phillips)

Flora

It is certainly flowering and fruiting time at Tiri . Almost every plant seems to be somehow contributing to the food chain.

The first thing you notice on arrival is the mass of *Phormium* - Flax pods, then looking a little higher the *Cordyline* - Cabbage tree fruit forming in bunches. A pale blue colour is visible on some fruit when this is ripe. Next the *Sophora* - Kowhai pods hanging down, the green pods are from this season.

Lots of other fruit is ripening and beginning to show colour such as the *Coprosma* berries in reds and orange, and the *Macropiper* - Kawakawa showing signs of orange.

The *Pseudopanax arboreus* trees laden with deep red-purple fruit are also more noticeable. Remember this fruit was set last February- March.

On Cable Road the *Knightia* - Rewarewa is forming deep red seed pods, Hurry or the Kakariki will beat you to them!

We talked earlier about the *Melicytus* - Mahoe having separate trees carrying male or female flowers. This is easy to see at present. The fruit is beginning to form on the female trees.

The grey *Pittosporum crassifolium* - Karo pods are also very visible.

Many plants are still flowering: The *Muehlenbeckia* we talked about last time is in full flower and Barbara Walter has noted that the Kakariki are enjoying them. A wonderful show of *Olearia* flowers (Tree Daisy), can be seen on some bushes on Grahams Road and Hobbs Track.

It is a great time to visit and have a look at the plants at their various stages of flowering and fruiting... But you had better be quick as they are sure to be on the menu for someone!

Fauna

Takahe

Whakama and Calico are now together, in spite of him pecking her a lot ! Ahikea and Montague's chick is now three months old and doing very well. Kristina and Rossie's chick is a couple of weeks younger and has been named Poncho. It is quite delightful watching Poncho getting in and out of the water tray outside the shop. Both chicks are colouring up well. Blossom has now gone to Mount Bruce. He is in a holding pen where he can see the other two Takahe. Eventually he will be released into their pen. All the

other Takahe are fine, but have started their moult, so look a bit like colourful feather dusters. Another female is coming from Burwood next month.

Stitchbird/Hihi

All the first clutch nests have fledged including the natural nest. There are 31 second clutches, but to date, 11 of these have failed with some of the chicks dying immediately after hatching. There are 15 active nests with 40 chicks and five nests yet to hatch. This high failure rate is being attributed to a lack of food with few pohutakawa flowering now, and because of the dry weather, there are less insects. The feeder use is up due to the newly fledged juveniles using the feeders.

Brown Teal/Pateke

Jemima and Ossie (Wharf Dam) have ended up with one duckling who has a very cheeky personality and has been named Gonzo. Don (a guide) saw an eel trying to pull Gonzo down into the water and in response, Jemima and Ossie forced Gonzo out of the water. As a result of this the eel nets were set.

Finn the Philanderer continues to spread himself around and is spending a lot of his time in the Bunkhouse Dam with up to five females in his harem. Connie and Ralph (new wetland dam at North East Bay) still have four ducklings who are now almost as big as them. Connie appears to have done most of the work as Ralph is rarely there.

Daisy and Ruan are now on the stagnant dam as Fisherman's Bay Dam is nearly empty. It is hoped that Daisy is now nesting.

Kokako

Cloudsley Shovell and Te Koha Waiata's chicks have both fledged (bands B-YM and O-YM). She is definitely the 'Super-Mum' of the kokako world as she was seen carrying food and feeding one chick and then immediately picking up nesting material which she carried back to the nest she was building. She has recently abandoned the three eggs on her second clutch nest.

Shazbot and Te Hari's chick has also fledged, (band, OM-G).

Bel Canto & Kahurangi also fledged one chick. Eunice and Oscar had two chicks, but sadly one was found dead at the base of the tree. The nest was again poorly constructed and the chick may have

Flora and Fauna Notes - Continued from page 8



Te Koha Waiata (left) leads his two juveniles through a wind-throw break in the bush near Wattle Track. (Photo: Suzi Phillips).

fallen through the base of the nest. The surviving chick was banded M-RO.

Poor Ruby and Russell's second clutch of two eggs was infertile again. Perhaps he is still too young? Sadly Keisha and Te Karanga's two eggs were also infertile.

Brothers, Zephyr and Chinook, have taken up residence near the visitor centre and it is wonderful to hear and see them most days.

North Island Robin/Toutouwai

There are 37 breeding pairs. Of these 12 have first clutches, 16 have second clutches, 8 third clutches, and one fourth clutch. There are 21 nests with 64 fledglings. High Morepork predation is a problem for the Robins in Wattle Valley.

Saddleback/Tieke

Recent nests have had a high failure rate due mostly to mites which breed abundantly in the hot weather.

Red-crowned Kakariki

One nest was found to contain nine eggs. It was a very good breeding season. See articles on pages 3-4.

Fernbird

One fledged chick was seen near the wharf at the beginning of December. One morning over the Christmas period, Sue and Ashley Reid (guides) saw seven Fernbird within a few minutes.

Other Birds

The Moreporks on the Kaware track have two chicks which are regularly being seen both during the day and at night.

The Kingfisher chicks at the wharf fledged just after Christmas.

Tomtit sightings are on the increase too. A female

Tomtit was seen by Tessa Galbraith (guide) on January 4, but she was unable to see if the bird was banded or not. A family of Tomtits was seen by an OSNZ member on January 19. Two adults feeding two fledglings near the Ridge Road and Emergency Landing track junction.

Pukeko bred very late and no more than one or two chicks with a family.



DoC Kokako researcher Tamara Henry, checks on Cloudsley Shovell's second nest using a pole mounted camera. (Photo: Suzi Phillips)

Get to know with your SoTM Committee nominees

Cathy Catto

My involvement with Tiritiri Matangi for over 15 years has been a family affair, with my husband Ian and our son Jonathan. Together we have been involved with tree planting, building bridges, guiding and developing signage. While helping the island, these tasks have given us many laughs, experiences and friendships. Being part of the 'Tiri family' is important to us. My qualifications in Management and Education have assisted me with my committee roles of education, interpretation and recently the fit-out of the

Visitors' Centre. I look forward to being involved with Tiritiri for a least another 15 years.

Margaret Chappell

I became aware of the Tiri re-planting project in the mid 80's through contact I had then with Little Barrier Island. This began a continuing involvement and led to countless visits on planting trips over the years. I have a strong interest in sport and bring to the committee a background of many years of sport adminis-

February 's Featured Plant Notes



Phormium tenax (Harakeke or Flax)

Family: **Phormiaceae**

The most common question guides received during November - December was "what is that bird with the orange head?". It seemed the birds had developed a new fashion like a new haircut, everywhere you looked was a orange head !! Not to be out done by the other plants profuse flowerings that we have been raving about this year, the flax decided it was their turn to put on a show. Barbara Walter says it was the best ever.

The flax plant is a distinctive, instantly recognisable feature of the New Zealand countryside.

A magnificent display on Tiri, forms a guard, greeting us on either side of the road from the wharf like a welcoming committee. At present these plants are laden with seed pods, still giving us an indication of the strong flowering season.

The flax plants role on Tiri is two fold:

- As a plant which will thrive in hostile situations and provide shelter and ;
- As a nectar provider during November and December, especially liked by the Tui, Bellbird, Saddle-back, and Kakariki.

Reading through the old books, flax has collected a reputation for an array of uses ranging from "the farmer never wants for a piece of twine" to "a pulp made from the roasted and macerated roots is sometimes applied as a poultice for abscesses, while a decoction of the same is said to act like a charm on chilbains".

Some other closely related plants found on Tiri are Cordyline (Cabbage Tree), Astelia, Xeronema (Poor Knights Lilly), Arthropodium (Renga Renga Lilly). **Jan Velvin**

Get to know with your SoTM Committee nominees

Margaret Chappell (Continued)

tration experience at Club, Provincial and National levels. I have enjoyed applying this background to the SOTM Committee, and in particular, working with Cathy on the Communication and Education sub-committee. Through guiding I have enjoyed sharing my Tiri experience with many hundreds of visitors.

Hester Cooper

I have a science background and I'm passionate about wildlife. My association with Tiritiri began in 1991 as a visitor and I have returned many times, and helped out as a guide for the past four years. In recent years I've also been able to contribute as a research advisor for Tiri. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to serve on the Committee, particularly with advice on research programmes and the commissioning of research.

Simon Fordham (Chairman)

My first visit to Tiri was in January 1993 when Morag and I called into Fisherman's Bay and took a walk to the top (Morag had previously been on a planting trip). Needless to say, that was a life changing experience. We quickly became involved in the project, particularly on the working weekends, and I joined the committee in 1996.

Prior to my involvement with Tiri, I had a passing interest in wildlife but very little understanding of the issues of conservation. Today, I have a passion for nature and preserving what we have left for future generations.

Julie Cotterill (Secretary)

I first visited Tiri in the late 1980's planting trees with the Alpine Sports Club and was so captivated I kept coming back!! I have been a guide for five years now and especially enjoy guiding children and families. I have now held the post of secretary for three years now and am delighted to be nominated for a possible fourth term.

Bill Mancer (Treasurer)

I am a chartered accountant in public practice, with a passion for the environment. I enjoy participating with the Supporters as an officer of the society, and am keen to serve again as treasurer and committee member. SoTM is a very special organisation, and deserves to have committed and capable people within its leadership.

The Supporters is in a transition phase, becoming more education and less development focused. Through the Supporters we will be able to further environmental awareness, sharing the knowledge that is gained while protecting native species entrusted to the care of Tiritiri Matangi. I will ensure that the Supporters vision is one that will continue to inspire support and commitment from people that seek a better environment.

Kay McLeod.

Since 1986, when John and my family came to plant trees on Tiri we have been involved in many projects. Education and research are important. Further introductions of lizard's invertebrates, bats, plants and birds are to be hoped for. I would like the marine environment around Tiritiri Matangi better understood and protected. Tiritiri Matangi is in partnership with many organisations and together we provide a haven for New Zealand's endangered species and a place the public can experience this.

Suzi Phillips

I first visited Tiri with our young family in 1993 and since then have returned many times to plant trees and enjoy the sanctuary. I have helped as a guide on Tiri for several years, and did a year checking the tracking tunnels each month. I'm also enjoying my new role editing the Dawn Chorus. Tiritiri was one of the first places to demonstrate the vital role of community involvement in a restoration project. Now it's a premium site for environmental education for children, visitors and locals - thanks to the vision of its founders, and the continuing commitment of everyone who works to make it such a success.

Mark Seabrook-Davison

I have been on the SOTM committee for two years and have seen significant developments on Tiritiri Matangi such as the building of the visitors centre. Another significant milestone has been the development of the Memorandum of Understanding between SOTM and DOC which has allowed input from Supporters into conservation issues such as bird transfers. I am currently a PhD student at Massey University studying species recovery of New Zealand's threatened species. Prior to returning to university, I operated my own landscape design and environmental consultancy business.

Val Smytheman

I have been a member of SoTM since 1992. Since then I have taken part in many working weekends and in more recent years have also helped out on a number of occasions when Ray and Barbara have been off the island. I have been on the committee since 2000, am a member of the Biodiversity Sub-committee, and Membership Secretary since 2002. My roles are supported by a strong sense of commitment, a love of the island and a desire to contribute to its current success and future development.

You are invited to attend the AGM on Monday 13 March 2006. See details on page 2 of this issue's wrap cover.

Interpretation on Tiritiri

The new signs at the wharf shelter are the result of a year reviewing the interpretation and signage on the island.

Together with the Department of Conservation, the Committee have formulated the Interpretation Strategy; this will allow a uniform and balanced approach to the island interpretation and links with the information given on our guided walks and other publications. The strategy identifies specific areas for signage including the Wharf, Visitor Centre and Historical sites to prevent the island being cluttered with signs and logos.

The new Wharf shelter signs give details of the early island history, replanting project and photos showing before and after shots of planted areas.

They were designed to give boaties information about the island, together with key themes for the visitors waiting for the departing ferry.

The signs' images are screened on to aluminium using a feather image background and mounted on Onduline (the shelter roofing material), a very eye catching effect. Our signs covering the bird transfers to the island, situated in the Visitor Centre area, have been re-hung around the lawn area giving a fresh look to go with our new premises.

The Interpretation sub-committee are working with Department of Conservation to tender the task of providing information and interpretation within the centre.

The Department has funding under Project Hauraki for this purpose and also to produce an educational resource for School children, specific to Tiritiri Matangi. **Cathy Catto**

Interpretation signs on Tiritiri Matangi were updated recently. Below is one of the new Wharf Shelter signs (at left) that tells the story of the replanting programme, and (at right) the Honeyeaters sign is one of those re-hung in the new areas around the Visitor Centre.



The children's area in the Visitor Centre.

Inside our Visitor Centre

High priority once the Visitors Centre was completed for the committee was the children's area and the shop.

The idea of a children's area was developed to cater for the 8000 school children plus family groups that visit the island annually.

A large mat, tiered seating and cushions together with large box of children's story and reference books and puzzles, provide an area where children can extend their ideas and knowledge of the island and natural environment.

The walls feature two large wall hangings done by primary school children, together with leaf notice boards allowing display of the letters and drawings that the island receives from children.

The transfer of the shop to its new location went without a hitch after months of planning. The shop profit is a major source of funding for the Supporters.

The brief was to design a space that could be managed by one shop assistant on a quiet day yet cater for the busy summer months when four shop assistants are required.

The shop fit-out was funded by a grant from the ASB Charitable Trust and includes a large store room.

A big thank you to Barbara and the 10 'shop ladies' who volunteer their time to run the shop and provide visitor information through the year. **Cathy Catto**