

Dawn Chorus

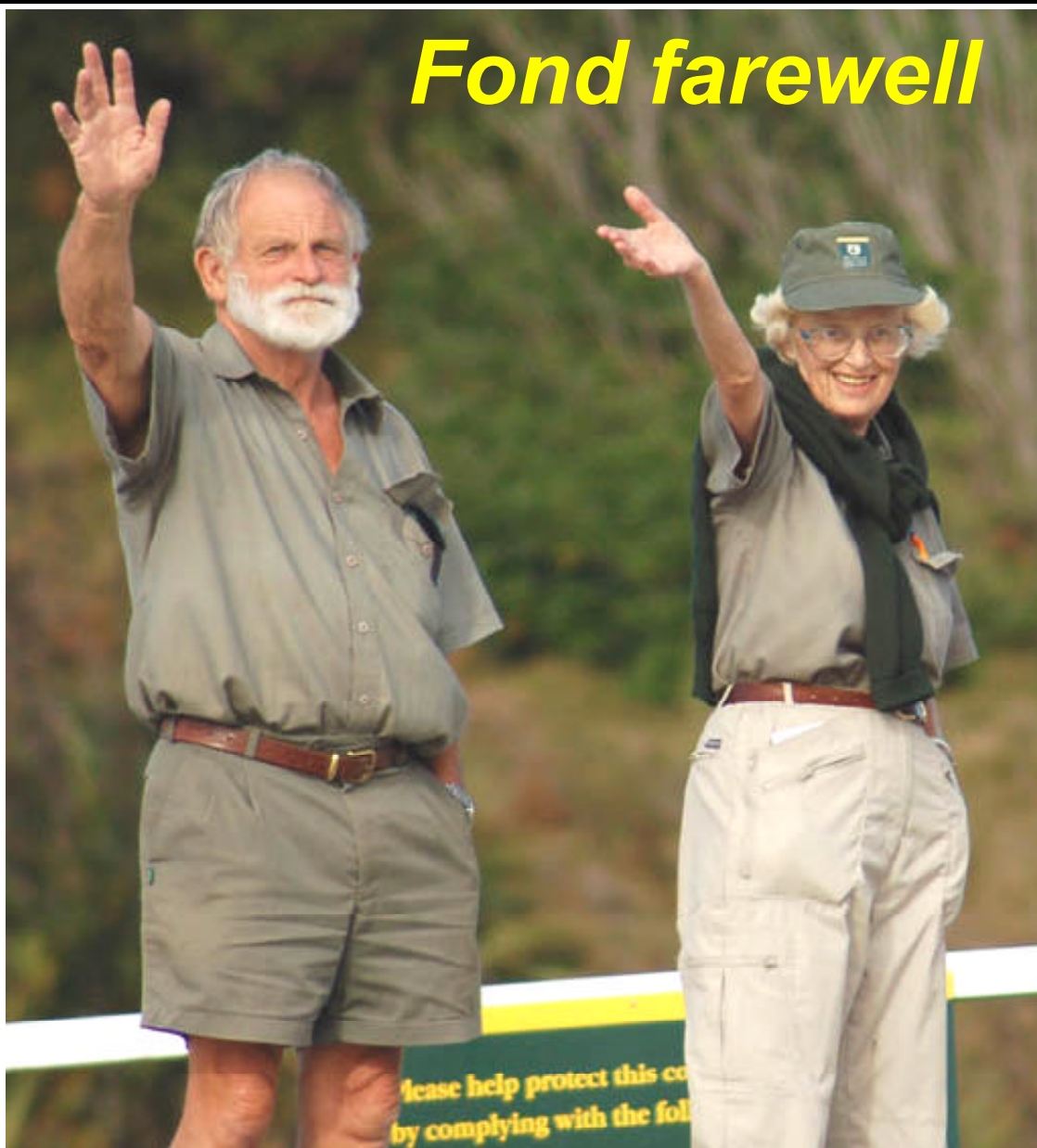


Bulletin 65

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Fond farewell



Ray and Barbara Walter wave goodbye to another boat full of visitors at the Tiritiri wharf, as they have done to hundreds of thousands of visitors over the years. Ray and Barbara are due to retire in June this year. (See page 2 and more details in our next issue).

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From the Chair

Tiritiri Matangi Island is about to undergo the most significant change since the inception of the project - the retirement of Ray and Barbara. No doubt, much will be said in the next few months about their massive contribution.

In the meantime, the process is underway to find a replacement for Ray. By the time this newsletter is distributed, applications will have closed with interviews due to be conducted in mid May. As with all permanent staff appointments on the island, SoTM will be represented on the interview panel.

Finding a replacement for Barbara will be a little more involved as she is currently employed by both DoC and SoTM. We will be looking at the options once Ray's replacement is appointed.

A celebratory dinner for Ray and Barbara is currently being arranged and details will be advertised in due course.

On another note, many members will be aware of the salmonella outbreak in early February that resulted in the loss of a number of stitchbird. It was the first time this strain of salmonella had been recorded in birds in New Zealand. Fortunately, there appears to have been no losses in recent weeks but, as a precaution, no birds will be translocated from Tiri until at least August.

While this delay is frustrating for those who have put much effort into proposed translocations, it is clearly better to be safe than sorry. **Simon Fordham**



Editorial

It just won't be the same without them.

Tiritiri Matangi Island rangers Ray and Barbara Walter retire next month after more than 20 years in which they have played a major role in the island's transformation into a world-renowned open sanctuary.

Deadline for next issue: 14 July 2006

2006 Subscriptions

Thank you to all members from throughout New Zealand and from overseas who have renewed their subscriptions for 2006.

Thank you, too, for all your affirming comments and good wishes. We appreciate your continued support.

We also gratefully acknowledge here, all those who generously sent a donation along with your subscription.

Unfortunately this is the last copy of Dawn Chorus we are able to send you if your membership is not current for 2006. (Our subscription year is the calendar year and subscriptions expired at the end of 2005).

If you have a pink reminder form with this mailout, we would be grateful if you would send it back with your subscription as soon as possible. If you are unable to continue your membership, we would appreciate it, if you would please let us know.

Any subscription queries, please contact the membership secretary, **Val Smytheman**.

Ray and Barbara are regarded as much more than just the island rangers.

They have nurtured the creation of Tiritiri from the first trees in the ground, to the welcoming of each new species of precious rare bird (and reptile), and the building of successive visitor facilities culminating in the aptly named 'Ray and Barbara Walter Visitor Centre', opened last November.

Together over the years, they have also welcomed thousands of volunteers, and Ray has supervised and co-ordinated hundreds of hours of tree-plantings, track and boardwalk construction, ongoing maintenance of all kinds, and many other projects on the island.

Barbara has been a wonderful advocate for the bird-life on Tiri, and has watched over the birds with such dedication. She has also co-ordinated guiding, run the Tiri shop, and has her finger on the pulse of Tiri. Barbara undertakes or supervises the many other tasks that need to be done each day to make the island run smoothly for visitors.

In doing this, Ray and Barbara have made hundreds of friends from all over New Zealand and around the world. For many people, Ray and Barbara are as much a part of the character and experience of Tiritiri as the rare birds that have made the island habitat their home.

They are leaving at a time when much of the hardest development work has now been completed, the restoration plantings, tracks, and the construction of a top notch visitor centre.

They will be much missed, but we wish them all the best in their well earned retirement.

Suzi Phillips

The last of the Mamakuans

By Doug Armstrong

Tiri has lost one of its great matriarchs with the disappearance of female Robin YM-RR.

She has not been seen on her territory in the middle of Bush 22 since the middle of the summer, and given the friendly nature of this bird, must be presumed dead. YM-RR was the last of the original Robins translocated to Tiri.

Two groups of Robins from the Mamaku Plateau, near Rotorua, were released in successive years, and YM-RR was part of the second group released in June 1993.

We don't know how old she was then, but she

and crockery, they'll have an accident sooner or later, so won't last forever, but not because they got old.

For Tiri's Robins, such accidents probably include things like a run of bad foraging, catching a disease, or forgetting to keep an eye on the neighbouring Morepork.

Adult Robins on Tiri have an 80 per cent chance of surviving any particular year, so their chance of surviving 12 years in a row is about 7 per cent.

So YM-RR was a lucky Robin, or perhaps a particularly smart one. She certainly seemed a sensible bird, as I'll never forget how incredulous she looked when her rookie mate MB-GW bowled straight up to their nest with mealworms right in front of us (can a robin roll its eyeballs?).

MB-GW is now a stately gentleman who has outlived his mate, but YM-RR outlived her three previous husbands. And she had great success throughout her 13 breeding seasons, producing an average of 3.2 fledglings per year (40 per cent higher than average). Tiri is now littered with her descendents.

We still have some old timers left. Female YB-WM in Wattle Valley fledged on Tiri in December 1993, so has recently celebrated her 12th birthday. Female YM-BB in Bush 2, male GY-WM in Wattle Valley and male -MG in Bush 4 all fledged in late 1995, so are now 10. Look out for these wise old birds the next time you visit.



*Tiri's last matriarch
Robin, YM-RR*

subsequently survived for more than 12½ years on Tiri.

The second last Mamaku bird to disappear was female GM-GG, who was last seen in March 2005 and must also have been at least 12 years old. (GM-GG inhabited a scrubby part of the west coast of Tiri, so it is possible that she might turn up yet).

The longest lasting male Robins were GB-GM from Lighthouse Valley and WM-RR from Bush 2, both of whom were released in April 1992 and were last seen in January 2003.

So how long do Robins normally live? The flippanant answer I usually give is "until they die".

Like many wild birds, Robins don't appear to get old and die at any particular age. Like our teacups



Tiri still has some old Robins, including YB-WM.

Salmonella strikes Tiri Stitchbirds

Transfers of birds from Tiri to other restoration projects have been put on hold for up to a year due to a disease outbreak affecting some of the Hihi population.

The outbreak was a new strain of *Salmonella typhimurium* (Phage type 195). "This strain has never before been detected in bird populations in New Zealand, but there have been three previous isolations from humans in 2002, 2003 and 2006", says the Department of Conservation's Biodiversity Islands manager, Richard Griffiths.

Salmonella is a notifiable disease and the Ministry of Health has been informed. *Salmonella* is not species specific, so can affect any species.

In the meantime, following consultation with a range of wildlife vets, all wildlife transfers from Tiri are on hold for a minimum of six months until further screening has been completed. This will affect the planned Hihi, Whitehead, Kokako, Bellbird and Takahe transfers.

Staff on the island have been advised of the risks, and the precautions to minimise them. The public will be advised when they arrive on the island that they should observe good hygiene standards. Samples will be collected from the hihi feeders at monthly intervals to determine the ongoing presence/absence of the disease.

"It appears the outbreak of the disease was isolated and the Tiri Hihi population was only partially affected," he said. "The population is reduced by about 25 per cent, although we will have a better idea at the start of the next breeding season." The halt to species transfers from the island is very much a temporary state of affairs and all going well next year, transfers will be back to normal.



Hihi in Wattle Valley (Photo: Suzi Phillips)

Rats invade Ulva island sanctuary

In February this year, two rats were caught on Ulva Island Open Sanctuary near Stewart Island.

Ulva Island is situated in Paterson Inlet near Oban, and has daily visitors by water taxi and private boat.

The rats were caught in part of the extensive network of traps and bait stations on the 260 ha island, designed to detect any rats that might make it ashore there.

Department of Conservation rangers checked the island for the presence of other rodents, but no more were found. Over the 10 years since rats were eradicated from the island, there have been 11 rats caught there.

As an open sanctuary with full public access, the risk of re-invasion by rats is high. Rats can swim ashore from moored boats, stow away in bulk supplies and building materials or even arrive in kayaks, packs and picnic baskets. They are very clever at getting aboard even the best kept boats without detection, particularly at night.

They proved this in the summer of 1998/99 when two rats got ashore on Ulva Island from moored boats. Additional trapping was undertaken and the two rats were caught within a few days. On average, one rat reaches Ulva Island every year, usually with the help of an unwitting visitor.

As a quarantine measure rat-kill traps and bait stations are maintained on the island, around likely re-invasion points.

Tiri also has an extensive network of bait stations around the coast, around buildings on the island, and along the Ridge Track. No rats have been detected on Tiri, since Kioore were eradicated in 1995.

Recent School Visits

Otumoetai College (Tauranga)
Diocesan Girls Juniors x 5
Trident High (Rotorua)
Sherwood Primary x2
Gladstone Primary
(Conservation Unit stayover)
Onepoto School
Hawera High
Maungawhau School x2
Rotorua Boys High
Northcote College
Rotorua Girls High
Henderson North Primary
Star of the Sea School x3
Kingsway School
Kristin School x2
St Cuthberts School

Bellbird social dynamics studied on Tiri

By Taneal Cope

Populations of Bellbird, although widespread in other areas of New Zealand, are locally extinct from mainland Northland.

The rapid decline of this species in Northland, as noted by early ornithologists, concerns conservationists regarding the ability of populations to recover after a disaster.

Information on life history traits including mating systems can help in adaptive management for future populations, if any population declines were to happen again.

I am currently conducting a two year study on the social and genetic mating systems of Bellbirds on Tiritiri Matangi Island.

Although I am only half-way, I have learnt a lot and developed enormous respect for these beautiful birds of our forests.

- I will try to answer the following questions about this little known species throughout my studies:
- What is the population size and success rate ?
- Which individuals are dominating feeder stations?
- How successful are the dominant males compared to the more submissive males?
- Are they monogamous?

The pairs certainly defend the territory together. However, it seems there is unequal parental investment among nests.

I want to find out if this is an effect of the males being 'poor caregivers' or a result of them being less confident in the paternity of the clutch.

My study started in August 2005. A total of 108 birds have been banded so far which represents the largest population of banded Bellbirds in New Zealand.

Eighty four males were caught and banded as well as 24 females. Most birds were banded near Bush 1 and Bush 22. However, there have been sightings of those banded birds in Wattle Valley!

A total of 32 nests were followed over the breeding season. DNA was taken from both parents and all chicks in each nest to investigate the levels of extra-pair paternity. All pairs that were followed this season had at least one breeding attempt.

Most of the nests found this season were in Cabbage Trees. Nests were built under the dead fronds skirting the trunk or among live fronds on the top of the trees. Some particularly spectacular nests were built in the peeling bark of Pohutakawa trees.

See opposite, photo of nest on Pa track. (Photo T.Cope)



Bellbird male feeding on mahoe berries in Wattle Valley (Photo:Suzi Phillips)

Bellbirds use Pukeko and other brightly coloured feathers to line their nests. However, many of the nests in Bush 1 were lined with Kiwi feathers.

Bellbirds exhibit interesting social behaviours in their marked sexual dimorphism, female territorial behaviour and male aggregations near feeders.

I am interested in further understanding their social behaviours including parental investment, individual success and degree of monogamy in each pair.

Interesting observations of individuals mating, caring for young and building nests have converted me to a Bellbird fanatic. I have some favourite individuals.... and some fond memories of the past breeding season. Keep an eye out for a few characteristic individuals this year.

A well-known oldie "Baldrick" (M-G) who has no feathers on the top of his head is most likely to be

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Bellbird dynamics

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seen at the John Craig Feeder, (Ridge Track near the Du Pont sign).

Near Wattle Valley on the Wharf track should be the little bumblebee (Ybk-YM). She fed her three chicks almost constantly without slowing down.

She gave her all to her nest and hence deserved her name and colours.

"GO-OM" who was banded at the Bush 1 feeders, was given this combination due to it's closeness to "GOON" which was highly appropriate for this feisty male!

Results of this research would give insight into the mating strategies of Bellbirds for use in management as well as for theoretical studies.

Further understanding of the life histories for Bellbirds may prove essential in future management of this species.

Future translocations of Bellbirds are planned. There is a need to understand the true mating systems to ensure the success of these plans.

A typical factor that would need to be considered based on these findings includes population dynamics (Sex ratio, Age demographics etc) of the intended population for translocation, based on the identification of the mating system.

This may have large affects on the effective population size and subsequent survival of translocated populations.

Taneal Cope is an MSc student with Massey University's Ecology and Conservation Group on the Albany Campus, supervised by Dr Dianne Brunton.



Three day old chicks from Bush 21 (Photo: T.Cope).

How you can help with the Bellbird study ...

"I am interested in learning about the use of territories and the movements of Bellbirds both in the breeding and out of the breeding season.

There is a purple hard cover book in the bunkhouse for Bellbird sightings. If you see any banded birds and are confident of their combinations (remember the bands are read top-bottom, birds' left to right), then please enter your sightings in the Bellbird book."

Thanks, Taneal Cope.



This lovely old clinker built dinghy rests on Tiri awaiting Ranger Ray Walter's retirement. When Ray has more time, he hopes to restore the dinghy that he saved from destruction while lighthouse keeper on Burgess in the Mokohinau Islands nearly 30 years ago. Ray estimates the solid Kauri dinghy is more than 50 years old.

Daphne—a duck with attitude

Daphne was a paradise shelduck who arrived, unannounced, on Tiri in August 2003. She quickly became the star attraction, greeting, befriending and often chasing visitors to the island.

Daphne had clearly been raised with no fear of humans. She was much loved, particularly by her close friends, both on and off the island.

Whilst away from the island completing her annual moult, Daphne was tragically shot during a cull on 25 January 2005 and died of her injuries 5 days later. Here she rests in peace.

Her memory will serve to remind us that humans are just one species and we must learn to share the planet with all other creatures.

"One can measure the greatness and the moral progress of a nation by looking at how it treats her animals"
Mahatma Gandhi



On the anniversary of Daphne's death in late January a small group of people gathered to commemorate Daphne with a simple service led by Rev Jim Battersby. A plaque was laid in her memory and now sits near Mr Blue's plaque, beside the Puriri tree on the slope near the Bunkhouse. (Photo: Simon Fordham).

Daphne's first week on Tiri - an appreciation

By Yvonne Vaneveld & Mike Siddens

Daphne, the paradise duck beloved by many, arrived on Tiri one winter's morning in August 2003.

We were on Tiri then, taking our turn (along with many other of you good folk), helping look after the island while Barbara and Ray were on holiday.

The exact date of her arrival was recorded for posterity in the bird diary as an item worth a special mention (huge under statement as it turns out).

We were on our way to Chinaman's Bay to service the two permanent rodent stations down on the beach.

While walking down the paddock past the fog horn shed we noticed a female paradise duck being attacked by the two resident paradise ducks that "own" that patch as their territory.

We watched for a while until the attacked duck ran away from her beating by coming over to the safety of our feet. Immediately we thought "this is pretty strange, this duck knows people!"

We walked on slowly and she followed us, staying very close. We then started talking to her (as you do), soon revising our first impressions and adding the thought that this was a duck that had most probably been reared by humans.

This was emphatically not a normal relationship we were beginning with a large seemingly wild native paradise shelduck.

Standing in windy paddocks is all very well for a while, but as we had a job to do Mike said, "come on then Daffy duck" and she happily followed us all the way into Chinaman's Bay.

For those of you not familiar, this Bay is accessed by a very steep descent down the grassland to a remote stony beach.

When we came to climb back out of Chinaman's Bay, Daphne wanted to follow us, but could not waddle up the hill and as we neared the middle of the climb we saw her fly out to sea.

We thought "that's it, she's gone", but the clever duck had actually decided to take the easy way out and met us again at the top of the hill having got there about the same time as us, by flying round the coast. We thought that was very impressive and that she definitely required a name more in keeping with her new status, so Yvonne played out loud with the word Daffy and it morphed into Daphne.

(Not in our wildest thoughts did we think that this name would end up all over the world in various media less than two years later).

Over the next days she consistently followed us around as we went for the odd walk and did our chores (are they ever this on Tiri?).

We were concerned that by staying close to us so much, she might be missing out on food, so disobeying every rule in the book we started giving her a bit of bread and water.

At nights she wanted to stay close and would roost either on the deck or the cold concrete outside the bunkroom back door.

She had responded to our talking right away with de-

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(Photo: Margaret Chappell)

Flora and Fauna Notes

Compiled by Jan Velvin, Barbara Walter, and Morag Fordham



(Photo: Suzi Phillips)

Flora

We have a very special collection of 'Off Shore Island Treasures' planted around the Ray and Barbara Walter Visitor Centre. This issue highlights three of them.

Tecomanthe speciosa

Tecomanthe speciosa is New Zealand's only representative of the large tropical plant family, Bignoniaceae. It is an endemic from the Three Kings Islands. This is a robust climber that was very nearly "lost."

To quote Mr L.J. Metcalf:-

"The one plant was discovered by Professor G.T.S Baylis in 1945 while on an expedition to the Three Kings Islands. It was found on a rock in Tasman Stream on Great Island, and only one specimen has ever been found.

Flowering specimens were secured in 1946 by Mr E.G.Turbott and from these the plant was named. All plants in cultivation are derived from this one specimen. As a wild plant it has to be one of New Zealand's rarest, although fortunately it is now quite common in cultivation."

Tecomanthe is an easily recognisable climber with large glossy green leaves. Flowering begins at this time of the year through to July. The flowers, usually produced on the older wood are tucked inside the plant, and are found in big bunches.

The individual waxy, creamy white flowers, with lime overtones, are just stunning.

Tecomanthe means having flowers like *Tecoma*, and *speciosa* means 'beautiful'.



Kaka Beak is planted at several sites around Tiri. (Photo: Margaret Chappell).

Xeronema callistimon

This plant, known as the "Poor Knights Lilly" is a Liliaceae. It is an endemic from the Poor Knights Islands and Hen and Chicken Islands.

Xeronema was described by Dr W.R.B. Oliver in 1926, and was discovered by the Misses Cranwell and Moore on the adjacent almost inaccessible Hen and Chickens group. Looking like a flax bush, with leaves up to a meter long *Xeronema* is actually a large tufted "perennial herb."

It's habitat on the islands is often on cliff faces where it grows along side *Astelia* and *Phormium* - flaxes.

In spring flower stalks up to 60cm long are produced, bearing a single "brush" comprised of hundreds of scarlet red stamens tipped with golden anthers. In mature plants many flower spikes are produced giving a magnificent display.

Xeronema means stringy thread or fibre, and *callistemon* means 'beautiful stamens'.

Clianthus puniceus

New Zealand Kaka Beak, also known as "Kowhai - Ngutu - Kaka" or Kaka Bill, comes from Moturemu Island in the Kaipara Harbour, and is from the Leguminosae family.

This is one of New Zealand's "brightest" flowering plants. The bright red flowers are stunning and a great favourite of the birds.

Its arching branches with fern like leaves have big bunches of "pea" like flowers hanging from them in spring and summer. It is rarely seen now in the wild, but is widely used in gardens.

It's also often short lived as it really is a colonising plant, and a favourite food for the slugs! Its floral value has always been recognised and I have a quote telling us that specimens were sold in England in 1831 for 5 pound each!!

Clianthus is derived from *kleos* meaning glory, and *anthos* a flower, and *puniceus* means 'crimson'.

We have to give a big thanks to all those intrepid Botanists, amateur and otherwise, that collected, named and preserved many of these plants giving us all the opportunity to still be able to enjoy them today.

A big thanks also, to all those people that have contributed to weeding the Visitor Centre garden area !!

Jan Velvin

Fauna

Takahe

On 1 April after wandering down to the far end of the island before returning to the lighthouse area, JJ our first and oldest female Takahe, disappeared. She was fifteen and a half years old and has produced countless offspring.

Ahikaea and Montague's chick, Hauraki (nicknamed Mo - we can't officially call him this as there is already a bird with this name) has been banded. Montague has already given Mo a guided tour of the island.

Apparently Calico has taken exception to Whakama pecking her as they have split up. Tiri and Mungo have also gone their separate ways.

Kristina, Rossie and their chick Poncho are all fine. Whetu has been in yet another fight but is well apart from the loss of a few feathers. On most boat days Greg continues to meet the ferry and usually sees it off at the end of the day. Two females (one from Burwood and one from Mana Island) are expected to be transferred to Tiri soon.



A light breeze ruffles young Poncho's shiny new feathers as he strides across the lawn near the lighthouse. (Photo: Suzi Phillips).

Stitchbird/Hihi

The breeding season is now finished. There were 53 first clutches which produced 228 eggs of which 178 hatched chicks and 137 of these fledged. There were 25 second clutches (including failed nests) which produced 109 eggs of which 78 hatched chicks and 23 of these fledged. This gave a total number of 160 fledged chicks which is slightly down on the 180 from last season. Currently the Stitchbird have plenty of natural food, so are not using the feeders very much. (See report on the Salmonella outbreak elsewhere in the Dawn Chorus.)

Brown Teal/Pateke

Due to the very dry weather a lot of the dams are low or empty so the birds have moved away in search of



Mostly male Bellbirds mob one of the sugar water feeders in front of the Visitor Centre. (Photo: Suzi Phillips).

water which makes it very hard to monitor them.

Two of Connie and Ralph's four juveniles were caught and banded and are thought to be males. By the beginning of March only the parents and two of the juveniles were present on the upper dam at NE Bay and since then they have all disappeared.

Gonzo, Jemima and Ossie's juvenile could not be caught to be banded before he was chased away from the wharf dam by his parents. Ossie is now in breeding plumage again.

In the second week of February Daisy appeared with five ducklings but then Ruan and two of the ducklings disappeared. By the end of the month the whole family had gone as there was no water left in their dam. Finn the Philanderer is now spending all of his time with Blue Bonnet on the lighthouse valley dam.

Rose is on her own on the lower NE Bay dam and is seen occasionally. There are still two females on the bunkhouse dam. In the middle of March three Brown Teal were seen on the pond at Shakespeare Park, but it is not known if they are Tiri birds.

Kokako

Cloudsley Shovell and Te Koha Waiata's chicks turned out to be one male, (named Hammond), and one female, (named Piper).

Shazbot and Te Hari's chick, a male called Wurlitzer wasn't feeding properly and died soon after fledging.

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Fauna - Continued from pg 9

The other two chicks, Quaver (Kahurangi and Bel Canto's offspring) and Kiri (Eunice and Russell's surviving chick) are still to be sexed.

North Island Robin/Toutouwai

The total number of chicks fledged was 69. There were nine first clutches, thirteen second clutches, nine third clutches and two fourth clutches.

Saddlebacks are being seen especially on the Kawerau track and along the wharf road in the weeds. There are plenty of Kakariki around again.

Fernbirds are frequently being seen along the wharf road.

Other Birds

The sugar bowls outside the Visitors centre are being frequented by lots of Bellbirds.

The Pukekos are also partial to the sugar water and are constantly trying to find new ways to access the sugar bowls.

At the beginning of March a Whitehead was seen drinking water out of one of the water troughs in Wattle Valley. This is very unusual behaviour and was probably due to the very dry conditions.

Quite a few Blue Penguins have been washed up dead in recent weeks.

At the beginning of March a male Tomtit was seen near the middle water trough in Wattle Valley by Hilary Elfick (guide).

In early February a Long-tailed Cuckoo was seen on the track to the Tiritiri Matangi Pa site.

Two Kakas were seen in the gum trees at the end of March.

One afternoon a Morepork was seen unsuccessfully trying to catch a Stitchbird by the Blackmore's seat in Wattle Valley. After this the Bellbirds were clearly hostile towards the Morepork.

Little Spotted Kiwi are frequently being seen at night. Spotless Crake are sometimes being seen at the top of the firebreak.

A pair of Paradise Shelduck has recently been seen in the sheep paddocks.

The Grey-faced Petrels are starting to return to their burrows.

Tuatara

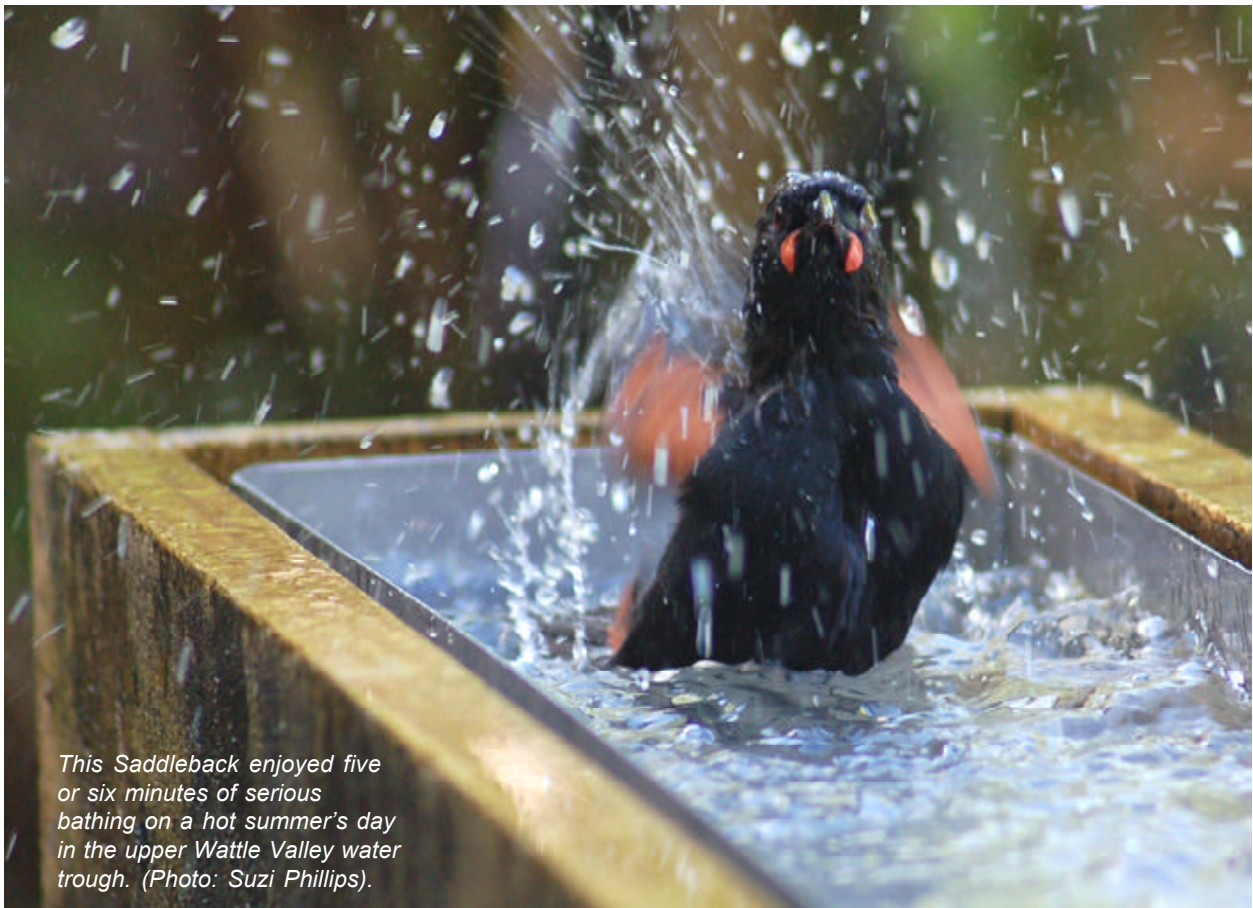
Tuatara are frequently seen at night and occasionally during the day.

Other Fauna

A Red Admiral butterfly was seen in Little Wattle Valley at the beginning of February by Isabel Still and Morag Fordham.

A giant centipede hitched a ride up to the implement shed under the base of one of the collected empty Stitchbird feeders being brought back for washing. Despite a dunking in Napisan and subsequent wash it did recover and took off at break neck speed!

Morag Fordham and Barbara Walter



This Saddleback enjoyed five or six minutes of serious bathing on a hot summer's day in the upper Wattle Valley water trough. (Photo: Suzi Phillips).



Tiri Shop

The volunteers who look after the Tiri shop on a regular roster are some of the most hard-working and dedicated volunteers on the island. They include from left, Elizabeth, Jill and Nan.



A Kakariki basks in the sun on Tiri. (Photo: Suzi Phillips)

Working Bees

A big thankyou to all these groups that have helped on the Island.

Anniversary weekend Supporters

Auckland Tramping Club

Ivan and Barbara Reilly Weekend group

OSNZ Weekend Bird Count - 20th year

Daphne - a duck with attitude

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lightful little calls of her own and would call softly as we went out at night for our toilet visits.

Daphne could not have got much sleep in the wee hours (and Yvonne spent a few minutes hunkered down on the stoop with her at least twice a night).

In the days that followed, Daphne followed us around a lot and didn't mind being carried for a bit if she got tired.

She would also alternate walking with flying, if she felt like it. If we saw her flying overhead, we could call her in to land at our feet!

One of the longer walks she did with us was from the wharf, up over the ridge and all the way down to Emergency Landing.

It was hard to go home that week, but we were leaving her in the expert care of Ray and Barbara, and we were very lucky to enjoy her company many more times over the next 18 months.

That first time we left, she tried to board the ferry as it pulled away from the wharf and we had to flap at her (for a change) to drive her away!

She repeated this performance in months to come and we all became adept at deviously going to the wharf without her.

We all have our own memories of interactions with Daphne. In the short time she was with us she touched our hearts and delighted our many visitors. There are lots more tales to be told of her adventures, not least the successful wooing of our feisty duck by the proud and incredibly brave male named Francis. But that's another story.

Birding on Tiri 1945-1946

This article was written in the 1970s by Auckland ornithologist, Richard (Dick) Sibson, (1911 - 1996), looking back on his early visits to Tiri in 1945-46. Dick Sibson is a past president (twice) of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand and founding member and past chairman of the Miranda Naturalists Trust. He arrived in Auckland from England in 1939 to teach Classics at Kings College, until his retirement in 1971. There he established the College's Bird Club and gave hundreds of pupils the opportunity to join birding field trips.

Local naturalists are well aware that the rehabilitation of Tiri-Tiri Island seems to be succeeding admirably.

Of the thousands of native trees and shrubs which have been planted, many are now of a significant size. The experiment of releasing Saddlebacks has exceeded all expectations. Red-fronted Parakeets and Whiteheads, more recently introduced, seem to be prospering.

Perhaps there will soon be an established population of Brown Teal. The absence of all alien mammalian predators, except Kioie Rattus exulans, seems to be one of the keys to success.

In the mid-1940s when I first set foot on Tiri-Tiri, the island was an important lighthouse and signal station, perpetually manned.

Most of the island was grazed by cattle and sheep. Along the west coast there was a fringe, mainly of pohutukawas; the eastern side was more open. Trampling and browsing by stock had thinned out the understorey of such forest as remained in a few gullies.

I have no recollection of the grove of Australian lophantha wattles which now covers the southern slopes below the lighthouse road and providentially flowers in winter. These alien wattles are now much favoured by Bellbirds and Saddlebacks.

Thanks to the Auckland Harbour Board and the crew of the lighthouse service vessel I paid my first visit to Tiri-Tiri on 5 December 1945.

Time was short, but I was able to make a few notes on the birds which I found between the jetty and the lighthouse garden and along the rocky south-east corner, where three species of the seabirds, so typical of the Hauraki Gulf, were breeding.

Little Blue Penguins were tending eggs or chicks. One pair had burrowed unwisely and lost its eggs through water seepage. Another bird was still incubating two eggs, one of which was much larger than the other. Something of a surprise was a small breeding colony, at least six pairs, of Red-billed Gulls. At that time these gulls were not thought to breed near Auckland and the huge winter population was assumed to come from big colonies on some of the outer islands such as Mokohinau and Three Kings.

This small colony was well sited on a rocky islet sur-

rounded by surging water. One bird was seen feeding two downy, but upstanding chicks. Others appeared to be brooding eggs or small chicks.

An extended colony of perhaps 500 pairs of White-fronted Terns occupied nesting sites on rocks and cliffs.

Most of the chicks were passing from the downy to the feathering stage but on one flat, readily accessible area some chicks were newly hatched and about thirty eggs were still un-hatched or abandoned.

Casualties, both of adults and chicks, were numerous as seems to be normal in most big tern colonies. On this my first trip I logged only three species of native passerines, namely: a pair of Pipits near a streamlet at the ternery; a pair of Grey Warblers frequenting the shelter of taupata, six metres high, among the wind-battered trees near the lighthouse; and three Fantails in pohutukawas.

Missing from my first visit's list were Kingfisher, Silvereye, Bellbird and Tui. As expected, eight introduced Europeans were logged.

Skylarks were abundant and in full chorus over the



Tui on Tiri (Photo: Suzi Phillips)

green pastures. A couple of cock Chaffinches sang among the pohutukawas; a family of Goldfinches was on the wing.

A Yellowhammer was on its own. Blackbird, Song Thrush and Starling had obviously bred and the inevitable House Sparrows had followed in the steps of European Man.

Seven weeks later on 18 January 1946 Jock Brookfield and I landed on Tiri. The Red-billed Gull colony was deserted, but a single bird was seen at the jetty.

At the White-fronted Tern site, only about a score remained of the hundreds which had been present at the height of the nesting season.

That day we had time to explore northwards into the gullies where some scrub and big trees remained. We noted six Bellbirds and one Tui, some Fantails, a singing Riro, and some small noisy flocks of Silvereyes. The pohutukawas along the west coast yielded four more Bellbirds and a Tui.

Pipits occupied rough open country. Chaffinches are

clearly well established, but song had ceased. In the 1940s this demure and modest European was expanding its range around Auckland and had colonised many of the offshore islands.

In the second half of the twentieth century both the Hedge sparrow and the Pipit have declined in some districts to the point of disappearance - regrettable losses.

How many Pipits and Dunnocks are there on Tiri in the 1990s? In northern New Zealand the brisk song of the Dunnock could once be heard during most months of the year with an 'off-period' roughly from mid-January to mid-April.

My third visit took place on 10 May 1946. Several Bellbirds were heard and one Tui was seen. A Riro was singing.

Skylarks were in good voice over the open country and a single Song thrush had started his winter song. A flock of Goldfinches enjoyed good foraging among the weeds on the rough coastal slopes.

There were flocks of Starlings. Little Tiri had become a starling roost, which probably accounted for the vicious growth of box-thorn on the islet.

One of the keepers told me that penguins had started to come ashore again to claim nesting holes. An enjoyable visit with no spectacular observations.

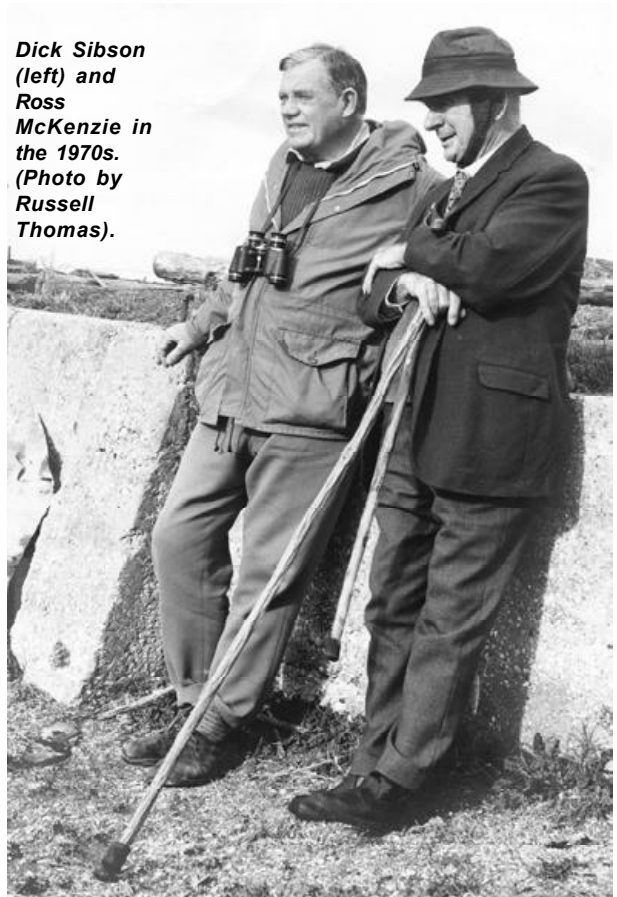
When I returned a week later on 17 May, I was able to walk over much of the island and to fill some gaps.

A very satisfactory discovery was a breeding colony of 50-60 Pied Shags on the western cliffs below what I had come to call 'Tui Gully'. This flurry of autumn nesting fits in well with what has since been learnt about the two peak breeding seasons of Pied Shags around Auckland (see Notornis, 1956. 7:20-25)

A few scattered pairs of Pipits occupied the rough stony terrain they prefer. The presence of Dunnocks was confirmed by those diagnostic 'tseeps' coming from likely scrub. One small flock of Yellowhammers may have been a family party. Two Song Thrushes seemed to be in full vocal competition.

A pair of Redpolls critically watched and heard, were an addition to my Tiri-list; so too were Brown Quail which I heard but did not see. Bellbird and Tui called occasionally, but the indisputably dominant singers were Skylarks.

Dick Sibson (left) and Ross McKenzie in the 1970s. (Photo by Russell Thomas).



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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

SoTM Events 2006

May 13 -14

Non-working weekend

Full

June 3-5

Working weekend

Full

June 4

Bellbird Trip

Special prices apply

June 26th

Tiri Kids Day

Special prices apply

July 8-9

Supporters Family Weekend

July 22-23

Supporters Adults Non-work

Weekend

September 3

Supporters Kowhai Trip

Special prices apply

September 11th

Supporters Social Evening

Kohia Teachers Centre, Epsom

September 23-24

Supporters Family Weekend

October 7-8

Supporters Adults Non-work

Weekend

October 21-23

Supporters Working Weekend

Special Prices Apply

for both the Bellbird Trip on June 4 and the Supporters Kowhai Trip on September 3.

To book and take advantage of these specials, phone Barbara on 476-0010.

Tiri Kids Day

Sunday 26th June

Beach clean-up and Scavenger Hunt. Come and join the fun!

Special prices apply from Gulf Harbour, so book now to avoid missing out. \$12 child, \$20 adult.

Ph Barbara on 476-0010.

Kids bring lunch, a raincoat and your adult !



For all of the Day and Weekend Trips, enquiries and bookings must be made with Barbara, not Kawau Kat.

Ph Barbara on 476 0010.

TIRI KIDS

Hand this to your kids – or pass it on to someone else's kids – to enjoy a range of activities about Tiritiri Matangi Island.

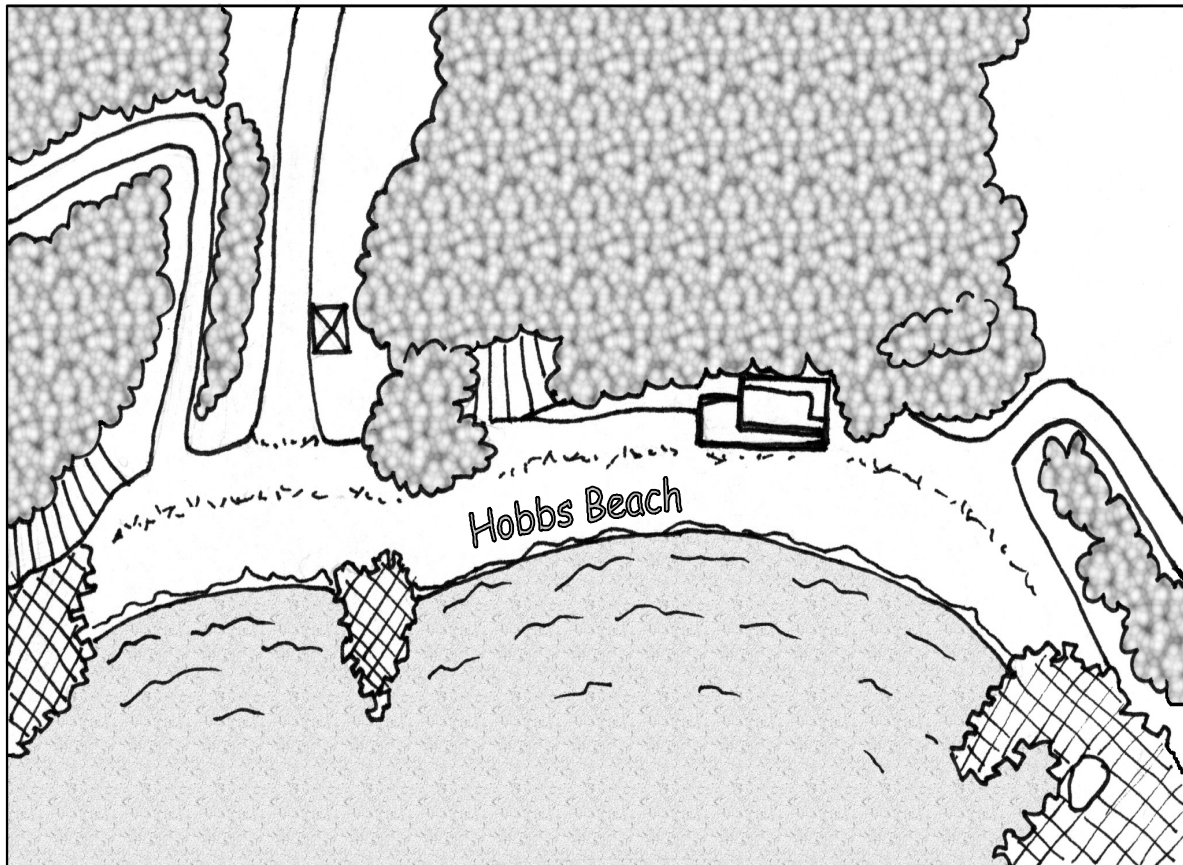
Hi everyone!

The Tirikids Day is coming up. We hope that you've booked your tickets! Here's a scavenger hunt for you to bring along on the day. There are 14 things to find around Hobbs Beach - write the numbers on the map where you spot the items (like this ²).

Have fun! Jo and Tess

Scavenger hunt checklist:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. The first flower you see. | 8. A round pebble of greywacke rock. |
| 2. The biggest pohutukawa you can see. | 9. A bird's footprint in the sand. |
| 3. A flax bush with empty seed pods. | 10. A Supporters' logo on a sign. |
| 4. A shrimp in a rock pool. | 11. A shell as big as your toe-nail. |
| 5. A tunnel that records footprints. | 12. A heart-shaped kawakawa leaf. |
| 6. Kingfisher nest holes in a cliff. | 13. A limpet stuck to a rock. |
| 7. Sandhoppers on the beach. | 14. A bird singing in the bush. |



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Dawn Chorus