

# Shelter from the Storm



Photo Barbara Hughes

After many years in the planning, visitor's to Tiri can now find shelter at the landing for those days when the weather is less than ideal.

Until now, on stormy days, day trippers have done various impressions of canned sardines as they have crammed themselves into the wharf shed. Not only has this been uncomfortable, there have been safety issues.

The shelter was built by Ian Higgins and Blair Martin and was

paid for thanks to a grant from the Tourism Board.

A lot of thought went into the design and it blends in extremely well with the surroundings.

Although the photo above is of a "not quite finished" Wharf Shelter, the seating has now been fitted and the project is now complete.

A grand opening is planned for Sunday 31 August. Book early to avoid disappointment.

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## Dawn Chorus

Dawn Chorus is the official newsletter of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc. It is published four times a year. Contributions (including photographs) are gratefully received.

## Editorial

After recently giving a talk about Tiri to an interested group, I had a discussion with one attendee who professed to be a "Darwinian". His claim was that extinctions are a natural part of evolution and questioned whether we should be interfering to prevent these.

It is true that species evolve to suit their environment and, should that environment change, then species need to adapt, through evolution, to suit the new environment. If that environmental change is too drastic, some species may not evolve fast enough and, if they are not wiped out, their populations are reduced dramatically.

Our knowledge of prehistory shows that, over time, many extinctions have occurred naturally and, on occasion, mass extinctions have occurred, the best known being the extinction of the dinosaurs. However, the rate of extinction has never been as dramatic as it has in recent times and there is no doubt that the reason for this is the impact that humans have had on the environment.

As pioneers settled in new environments, the damage from forest clearance and introduction of alien species has had devastating effects. In our own land, we have lost 42 species of bird in the last 1000 years and most, if not all of them have disappeared because they have not been able to evolve fast enough to cope with the new conditions.

One hopes that, in this country at least, we have learnt from our mistakes and, as it is our species that has been responsible for the damage, we not only need to mitigate the change in the environment, we now have the knowledge and ability to restore environments to a semblance of their former glory and help ensure that no further species go extinct.

Simon Fordham

## Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc.

PO Box 34-229, Birkenhead, Auckland 1310

The Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi is a non-profit conservation volunteer group. Founded in 1988, to further the aims of the Tiritiri Matangi habitat restoration and species translocation project, our four aims are:

- To promote and enhance the open sanctuary of Tiritiri Matangi and to ensure the continuation of the project.
- To provide financial, material and physical support for the work on Tiritiri Matangi.
- To heighten public awareness of the existence and role of Tiritiri Matangi as an open sanctuary
- To do all such other lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the foregoing objects or any of them.

The annual subscription is:

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

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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.

## Vacancy - Newsletter Editor

This position is still open but it is hoped that we will be able to appoint a new editor soon, the next bulletin being my last.

If you feel you would like to take on this role, or would like further information, please contact me on 2741 828 or simonf@clear.net.nz.

## Deadline for Spring Newsletter

October 31 2003

# Page 3 Bird



## G o t h e B l u e s !!!



Almost every visitor to Tiri has lifted the lid on one of the artificial nesting burrows near the landing and peered expectantly within, hands cupped to diminish the reflective glare from the glass. If they've been lucky they'll have seen the hunched form of a bird or two and perhaps large fluffy chicks if they were there in the summer. A glimpse it may be but it is nonetheless a thrill to encounter these feisty little birds in the wild. Those lucky enough to have stayed overnight and visited the shore after dusk will have been made aware of just how many penguins live around Tiri as they noisily come ashore to roost after days at sea feeding on small fish and squid.

The little blue penguin is the world's smallest and is found around the entire coastline of New Zealand, its outlying islands and southern Australia. It is generally agreed that the Australian population and the New Zealand white-flipped variety found around Banks Peninsula are distinct but there is some debate about how many subspecies or races actually exist among the others.



Photo Simon Fordham

Penguins are the bird equivalents of seals. Completely at home in the sea they use their powerful flippers to fly underwater and are capable of generating remarkable bursts of speed. They need to if they are to outrun and outmanoeuvre fish. However like seals, they are tied to the land for breeding and they need to find good protective shelter to lay their eggs and raise their young. Little blues first breed at about two years of age and once they find a suitable partner they generally stay together for life. A pair that has found a good nesting burrow either under vegetation, tumbled rocks or in a cave will try to hold on to that same burrow year after year. Additional digging and scraping sometimes extend burrows but they are generally haphazard affairs with a few bits of debris pulled together to form a nest.

Mating begins in earnest during the winter months. Although they have life-long mates, they rarely associate at sea and on their return after sunset there is a great deal of raucous calling and flipper slapping as couples acquaint with their 'mutual displays', no doubt also signalling to others that they are returned and in residence.

The breeding season can be quite protracted with first

eggs appearing this year in July – the earliest ever for Tiri. Generally most females lay their two eggs through August and September and both adults take turn about with the incubation on a more or less day on, day off kind of arrangement. Both eggs hatch within hours of each other and the parents continue with their turn about guard duties but this time the focus is on returning with food to regurgitate for the chicks. The young are covered in black fluffy down feathers at first but this is replaced by a second down in a chocolate brown colour after about ten days. The growth rate is so rapid at this stage that both parents need to be out at sea all day in order to bring in

enough food to support them, the youngsters left to fend for themselves in the burrow during the day. Eventually, thirty-five or forty days after hatching the chicks outweigh their parents and with their down replaced by a beautiful sky-blue set of feathers they are ready to fend for themselves. The youngsters get the hint to leave the nesting burrow when their parents stop feeding them and stay out at sea.

The breeding season is pretty hard on the adults and they will have lost a great deal of weight and condition by the time their offspring head out to sea. However, gluttons for punishment, the early breeders will sometimes try and get in a second round and produce another pair of chicks before the end of summer. These are the experienced, well-established pairs with burrows in the top end of the shoreline real estate.

After the hectic activity of the breeding season, things tend to quieten down a bit around February as birds spend more time at sea putting on as much condition as they can before the next trial – moulting. Each autumn, adult birds need to spend a week to ten days ashore confined to burrow as they replace their old tatty feathers with a brand new smart suit of clothes. They lose their waterproofing during this time and are unable to go to sea. It takes a lot out of them and they can lose up to 40% of their body weight during this process. A few weeks to gain condition again and, guess what, it's time to think about breeding again. Such is the year of the penguin.

Continued on Page 4 →

## Blue Penguin—continued from page 3

It can be fairly tough going for a little bird to survive year after year as they can be extremely vulnerable at certain critical times when, through moulting or breeding, condition is compromised. A sizeable storm at sea or something that temporarily restricts food supply during these periods can result in widespread mortality. Newly fledged youngsters are particularly vulnerable. Despite all of this, many do live to a ripe old age. Eighteen years is the record for banded birds on Tiri but elsewhere they are known to get to twenty.

There is still a great deal we do not know about this charming little bird despite many years of study by many people. In particular, it is their life at sea that is particularly difficult to study but with increasingly sophisticated technology this is now being attempted. Julia Chen is currently studying the Tiri population as part of her Masters degree at the University of Auckland and is using radio-tracking technology in order to study the movements of penguins in the Hauraki Gulf.

Despite their declining numbers around many parts of New Zealand due to dog or stoat predation, the blue penguin is holding its own in many places and it would seem, at least anecdotally, that the Tiri population is growing.

So the next time you happen upon a little blue sheltering in one of those nest boxes, spare a thought for the lot of this charming little bird – and if it's wearing a backpack it will be one of Julia's birds doing its thing for science.

Graham Jones

**NUFARM NZ LTD**

**GENEROUS WEED  
CONTROL  
SPONSORSHIP**



Nufarm NZ Ltd who have been supporting the weed control programme on Tiri in the last twelve months, have now generously agreed to increase their support to the sum of \$5000 P.A ongoing, this will be made up of both product and cash.

Tiri supporters have just received a cheque for \$2500 from Nufarm which will go towards the cost of paying weeders this year.

Nufarm NZ Ltd will be our sole herbicide sponsor, and make available their scientific expertise to assist us in the battle against weeds on Tiri.

This is a very generous sponsor, with consistency being so important in weed control, Nufarm NZ ltd long term commitment will go along way in achieving this goal

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the following from Nufarm NZ ltd for their support and advice:

*Patrick Clement, Nicola Smith, Chris Brenan and Miles Cain.*

Ian Price

## KOKAKO ON HAUTURU

The most notable visitors have been six koka ko around the bunkhouse and gardens since the end of May. The two pairs and two young at first ate all the leaves off the big capsicum plants and chilli shrubs in the garden. Including the hot red chillies! They then demolished the silverbeet, eating the white stalks to soil level. Cabbages were left like skeletons, with only the hard centre ridges of the leaf left. Now that the garden is trashed, they spend a lot of time eating coprosma foliage and the Mercury Bay grass on the lawn edges. A young parapara (*Pisonia brunoniana*) looks as if it's been attacked by possums. The birds have eaten all the fresh shoots, totally stripping the top of the plant.

They are very social, sticking together all the time, and they get agitated when parted. It's quite comical to see them dart across the lawn, one or two hopping with long hops, then a couple skipping with hops, then a last one running as fast as it can to catch up, sometimes having to run back to see where the others are.

The young ones seem to have been practising their song over the past month, only occasionally finding the long organ-like sound they are famous for, mostly mewing almost like a cat and making lots of "Tuk-tuk-tuk" sounds. I have also heard them chattering like a kakariki.

They will probably return to the higher forest for summer but you can be sure there will be plenty of silver beet for them next year – they certainly prefer it to cabbage. I wonder how the early pioneers handled these voracious eaters in their gardens?

—Reprinted from Issue 9, December 2002 "Hauturu" by kind permission of Will Scarlett.



## From the Chair

The month of August is traditionally the time that conservation week is held in New Zealand and this special week offers an opportunity to highlight issues, generate awareness and share the experiences, success and challenges of all those working to restore the balance. This year the emphasis is on an area of a little known area of conservation and that is the preservation of New Zealand's historic heritage. During the week of August 4<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Conservation, Auckland conservancy, will be conducting tours through the recently restored Fort Takapuna and the North Head tunnels, both of which offer opportunities for the public to view these important edifices reflecting the military history in Auckland's past. One of the unfortunate aspects of Auckland's growth over time has been the disinclination to preserve historic structure for future generations to see and understand the earlier periods, and it is to DOC's credit that they have been able to restore some of these structures for future generations to view.

Tiritiri Matangi has historic structures of it's own that are of importance to New Zealand's maritime heritage. Notwithstanding the importance of the lighthouse itself, there are original lighthouse keeper's cottages (one which is very familiar to those staying overnight on Tiri), a lighthouse signal station building (built ca 1912) and three different types of foghorns representing the various stages of the development of this signalling device in New Zealand. Dare I mention another historic aspect in that the station has the sole remaining Lighthouse Keeper still extant on a lighthouse compound anywhere in New Zealand. (Sorry, Ray). The importance of this station becomes even more evident when one realises that after the last lighthouse was automated in 1990, almost all incidental lighthouse buildings on all other stations had been demolished because they were no longer required by the keepers, and a lot of history disappeared with them.

However, Tiri is in a different situation from all other Lights in New Zealand. It's proximity to Auckland and the high numbers of visitors seems to have prevented the buildings associated with the lighthouse being scrapped and they have somehow survived relatively intact, albeit now deteriorating. The availability of Ray Walter, a former keeper in the lighthouse service, gives an exceptional opportunity to act as an advisor to any restoration project. Therefore the circumstances exist to preserve the last remaining lighthouse compound in New Zealand for everyone and to potentially offer new interpretation and guiding possibilities for visitors to Tiri.

So in this conservation week celebrating New Zealand's historic heritage, where do we see the future role of Tiri's future contribution to our history and how are its structures to be prevented from being left to decay? First it must be agreed that this part of maritime heritage must be worth saving and judging by the visitors to this area, it must assuredly be. Secondly, SOTM may be able to offer some future funding as we are allowed to do in our constitution, but this must not be at the expense of impending heavy financial commitments to the visitors centre, intended translocations, education and research, all due within the next year. If SOTM see this as a project that has merit and may be the only organization that can do anything about it, it will rely heavily on the ability of charitable organizations to donate funding so that we can arrange with DOC to preserve a valuable piece of the historic estate. Already the Endeavour Trust has contributed some finance to the restoration of the Foghorn building on Tiri and this is to be commended. Hopefully this is just the beginning of future funding from such organizations.

It is well known that lighthouse is internationally recognised as a symbol of one of the most successful community conservation projects in the world. With some assistance, it could be become a nationally acclaimed representation of a long forgotten phase of New Zealand's maritime history. Let us hope so.

Carl Hayson

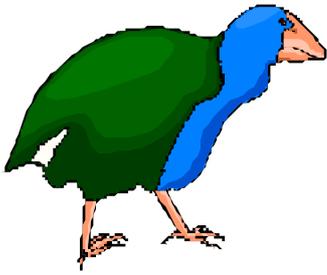
## Tuatara to be Released on Tiri

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of SoTM committee member, Graham Ussher, it is expected that, weather permitting, 60 Tuatara will be released on Tiritiri Matangi on Saturday 25 October. This is the Saturday of Labour Weekend.

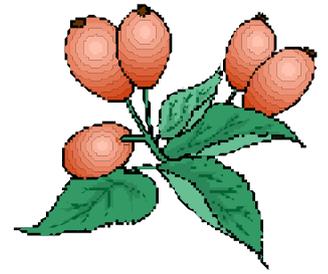
This is a public release and has been organised and funded (mainly through sponsorship) by SoTM, so members are encouraged to attend. Bookings will need to be made with Barbara (not Fullers) on 476 0010.

## Nappy Change Facility

As a result of requests by mothers with babies visiting the island, we have now purchased a new fold down nappy change table which will be installed in the women's toilet block. Thanks to Fibre Reinforced Plastic (NZ) Ltd who supplied the nappy change table at a discounted price.



# Flora, Fauna & Fungi Notes



Compiled by Barbara Walter & Morag Fordham

## Flora

At Queen's Birthday Weekend an enthusiastic number of Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi, under the watchful eye of Ian Price & the Lighthouse Gang (Takahe), planted out approximately 3000 small trees & flax in the sheep paddocks.

The *Dysoxylum spectabile* (Kohekohe) has flowered well this winter providing lots of food for the birds.

*Clianthus puniceus* (Kakabeak) started flowering towards the end of May which is the earliest it has ever flowered.

In the middle of June, the first flowering *Sophora microphylla* (Kowhai) of the season was seen on the Wattle Track and now many trees are in flower.

Both the pink and white *Leptospermum scoparium* (Manuka) are flowering profusely. *Vitex lucens* (Puriri), *Pseudopanax arboreus* (Fivefinger / Puahou), and *Coprosma robusta* (Karamu) are all in flower.

The *Brachyglottis repanda* (Rangiora), *Geniostoma ligustrifolium* (Hangehange / Maori Privet) and *Melicope ternata* (Wharangi) will soon be in flower as their flower buds have formed.

There was also another bout of flowering *Melicytus lanceolatus* (Mahoe) in mid June.

## Fungi

At the end of June there were 3 Basket Fungi opposite the Stitchbird feeder in Wattle Valley.

## Fauna

Takahe  
Sadly we have lost three Takahe in the last three months. Kaitiaki, the dominant male from the Lighthouse Gang disappeared in May. He was well

known for his love of sandwiches (with or without wrapping), potato chips (bag included) and anything edible he could steal from unwary visitors. Aroha, the first chick born on Tiri to survive into adulthood, displayed uncharacteristic behaviour at the beginning of June disappearing a week later. However, her chick Mungo (a male named by St Kentigerns College) continues to do well under Glencoe's care. Mary (Kristin (deceased) and Ahikaea's chick) disappeared towards the end of June. However, their other chick, Kristina (YM-W) is doing well and is still with her mother Ahikaea and older sister Sapphire.

With the loss of Kaitiaki, Blackwatch has now moved into the Lighthouse Gang as the dominant male and is usually seen with JJ and Blakie. Whetu, @Dot and Bossy Rossy hang around the same area. Although Whetu is now more or less accepted back with the gang he still doesn't roost with them.

@Dot again left Greg and spent a couple of weeks with the Lighthouse Gang before returning to him. Currently she is keeping her options open as she continues to move between Greg and the Lighthouse Gang. Naughty girl has been seen alone with Whetu several times in the sheep paddocks!

Stitchbird / Hihi  
Matt Low (researcher) estimates that at present there are around 125 Stitchbird of which at least 50 are juveniles. A report of Matt's finding can be found on page 7.

When the natural food sources become scarce from time to time the feeders become extremely busy and extra feeders are utilised.

Kokako  
Most recent sightings have been in Wattle Valley. The Kokako Recovery Group have indicated that they would like to translocate one or more rare Taranaki males to Tiri as part of the program. They also wish to swap eggs with Hunua birds to diversify the genetic

stock in both locations.

N I Robin  
Åsa Berggren (researcher) counted 90 Robins in mid June. A report of Åsa's finding can be found on page 7.

Whitehead  
At the beginning of May, some of our transferred Whitehead were seen in the Hunuas.

Saddleback  
One Saddleback around the nursery area has been seen several times drinking sugar water out of the feeder bowl. A Saddleback who appears unable to fly has found an old roosting box on the floor of the potting shed and is using this.

Red-crowned Parakeet  
For the first time ever, Barbara has recently seen them eating Hebe flowers.

Brown Teal  
Finn the Philanderer continues to share his favours between Eva and Daisy and until recently had spent most of his time with Eva on the Bunkhouse Dam and just had the occasional one night stand with Daisy. However at the beginning of August he went back to Daisy and after three days on her own Eva's feminine charms worked and Danny moved back ..... but for how long?

Ossie continues to chase Greg (Takahe) away from the Wharf Dam.

Towards the end of June, a shy Brown Teal was seen at the Pumphouse Valley Dam but took off when approached so no bands were read.

Fernbird  
A pair hung around the Bunkhouse Dam area for quite a few weeks and one was heard around the Wharf shelter when it was being built. In July there has been 19 sightings including two banded birds and two who were seen having a beak to beak encounter (perhaps a territory dispute), so possibly there are 10 - 15 birds on the island.

Grey-faced Petrel

A further 12 birds were caught over Queen's Birthday weekend, five of which were new and have been banded.

Blue Penguin

At the beginning of May, two birds from Bird Rescue (one a Tiri bird) were released from the Fullers ferry back into Tiri waters.

At the beginning of July, a bird was found sitting on an egg which is earlier than normal.

Other Birds

New Zealand Pigeons are very visible at present, eating the fresh new Kowhai leaves and flower buds.

Our lone Weka was heard again at the end of June.

There are lots of Silvereyes in the Wattles along Wharf Road.

The Bellbirds are starting their courting. Belle has been using the Stitchbird feeder in the Kawerau Track.

As many as 12 Fantails at a time are being seen.

Barbara has reported a 'suspected' Myna imitating the night call of the Little Spotted Kiwi.

The pair of Paradise Shelduck has returned to the back paddocks.

At the beginning of August a rather friendly female Paradise Shelduck arrived on the island. She has been seen trying to enter the bunkhouse without any food ..... or a sleeping bag!

In the nursery area, we have a male Blackbird with a white collar which at a first glance makes him look like a Tui. He's actually paired up with another male Blackbird – one way of controlling introduced bird numbers!

Little Spotted Kiwi

It is now 10 years since Little Spotted Kiwi were translocated to Tiri, with 10 birds released on 4 July 1993 and another 6 two years later.

Current population estimates are in excess of 50 birds.



## Researchers' Reports

### Stitchbirds

There are approximately 125 stitchbirds on the island, according to information gathered by EcoQuest and myself in June. Over two weeks I saw 120 birds (67 adults) and 53 juveniles. This means that just over half the young birds fledged have survived to this date. The female who nested in the natural cavity last season appears to have fledged 4 chicks (2 boys and 2 girls) and 3 of these were caught and banded (there is still one unbanded female left on the island). The male M/RR from the 1995 transfer and the female G/M from the 1996 transfer are still alive, although M/RR is looking his age and I would be surprised if he survives to breed this year. Daisy the one-eyed female and Pete the one-legged male were not seen during the survey and it is likely that they have died. The weights of most stitchbirds is exceptionally good indicating that there is plenty of food at this time of year (although they still rely heavily on the supplementary feeders). The heaviest male was 56 grams which is 12 grams heavier than the heaviest male during the last breeding season. Stitchbirds can be found everywhere on the island at the moment and there are two males calling around the nursery and bunkhouse area.

Matt Low

### North Island Robin

I surveyed the island when we were there in June and found quite a few robins - 90 individuals! This is at least as many as there are as I think there might be a few more hanging out in areas that are hard to access, like really steep places on the north coast. Also, the weather was not ideal all days for the survey (a bit of wind and rain make them not as easy to detect, or rather, it is hard or uninteresting for them to hear me). I also found that they are harder to census now during the winter as they are not as interested in responding to taped calls as during the breeding season. It is also tricky in that it is easy to miss them as some of them, when responding to the tape, approach quietly and sit a bit away and just watch me.

Of the "old" ones from last breeding season I found 56. 8 of them had a new partner (a fledgling from last year). The rest of the 90 were all new fledglings from last year - so that's quite many. Though I expect several of these not to make it to the coming breeding season, either because they get taken by the morepork or that they don't find enough food at their present sites. I found both single birds and pairs in new areas, so it will be interesting to see if they will stay there and breed successfully. A couple of the new areas are:

- The south-eastern part of Bush 3, crossing over ridge track and in to the small bush E of it, where a pair hang out (and can be seen sometimes on the track).
- The north-eastern part of Bush 22, where at least two new birds have crammed themselves in between two existing territories. This area was not used before. This expansion is good (if it still exists later on) as it shows that the bush is maturing and more areas are becoming useful for the robins. If there is anything else you want to know - just mail me!

Dr Åsa Berggren

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# Tiri through Caledonian Eyes

Becky Lewis



Only hours after arriving in New Zealand I was shipped onto a boat bound for an island called Tiritiri Matangi. On arrival I could hardly believe my eyes, there were these giant dinosaur like birds wondering around grazing like sheep, and that was before I met the lighthouse gang!!

There seemed to be life all around me, colourful and loud, it was as if the bush was alive. Compared to Scotland everything looked and felt very foreign, cabbage trees and flax and birds so close I could almost touch them. I remember feeling dead tired but there was so much to see that sleeping was quite out of the question. I was also here to do work so before I could take everything in I was shown the ropes. My job was to search the island for robins (not the ones with the red breast), and this I did for several months with Andrew Kent and Dr Asa Berggren. I enjoyed my time so much on the island that I returned several times throughout the year to survey the robin population and then again in November when I took a break from robin hunting and took up following Stitch Birds (Hihi) for PhD student Matt Low. After a brief trip home I have now returned to New Zealand to do my own research, a Masters by thesis only through Massey University, Palmerston North. My name is Rebecca Lewis, I am a Zoology (hons) graduate from the University of Glasgow, Scotland. I was drawn to New Zealand because of its wonderful and unique bird life, an interest which inevitably lead me to my research topic!

Nest predation is one of the most important factors affecting nest success in birds. In New Zealand where the introduced predators are decimating the native bird populations the need for more research into the factors influencing predation of nests is urgently required. The aim of my research is to devise a more specific and sensitive method of measuring the predation pressure on nests, to develop a system that can be applied as a monitoring technique to measure the predation pressure on bird nests in remnant areas of bush. For this study I am testing the effect of using artificial nests and eggs to measure the predation pressure on natural nests. The success of these artificial nests will be compared to the

success of the natural nests of the North Island Robin (*Petroica australis longipes*).

For this study I have chosen 9 reserves which are located all over the North Island! These include Karori (Wellington), Bushy Park (Wanganui), Paengaroa (Taihape), Boundary Stream (Hawke's Bay), Waipapa and Waimanoa (Pureora Forest, Waikato), Waotu (Waikato), Wenderholm (Auckland) and last but not least Tiritiri Matangi. At each site I have placed 30 artificial nests with two eggs per nest. The nests are hand-made using leaf litter, which is bound into a nest shape using netting and string. The eggs are made of clay, which remains soft. When a nest is depredated the predators leave marks in the soft clay which allows me to identify the predator. The nests were run during the breeding season of the North Island Robin (late August until early September). The nests were checked regularly for signs of depredation (thanks to Anne Rimmer, Matt, Asa and Troy for your help with the Tiritiri nest checks!)

Now that the season is coming to a close it is time to look at the eggs, all 1200 of them! From first impressions I think the main culprits are ship rats (*Rattus rattus*) but I suspect that further analysis of the eggs may tell me more. I am confident that I will see some interesting results, which I look forwards to sharing with you all. I have left a couple of display nests on Tiri, see if you can spot them in Big Wattle and Little Wattle!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have supported me during my time on Tiri, not just financially (funding from Tiri supporters) but through kind words of encouragement. Thank you to Ray and Barbara that made me feel like Tiri was a home from home!

**Building Update**

**Visitors' Centre:** The design engineer is currently drawing up the structural details. When the final working drawings are completed, they will be submitted for building consent and tender..

**Foghom:** Renovation is taking place at the moment

**Wharf Shelter:** This is now finished, complete with seating. It is looking great and fits in well with the landscape

SoTM member Anne Rimmer is currently writing a comprehensive book on Tiritiri Matangi.. If you have any old photographs that are suitable for inclusion, can you please contact her on (09) 478 6142 or rimmer@ihug.co.nz

One of the outcomes of the signing of the lease for the Visitors Centre is that the profits from the sale of trees grown in the nursery now go back to SoTM, not to DoC, as was the case in the past . It is not a large income but it all adds up .

# What's in a Name?

## TIRI TAKAHE NAMES, DATE AND PLACE OF HATCHING, PARENTS

*Compiled by Val Smytheman*

Irene (f)	28.12.89	Burwood Bush	
	named already		
JJ (f)	27.11.90	Maud Island	(mother - Maudie)
	first seen as a chick by Jean (Bucknell) and Joan on Maud Island		
Greg (m)	11.12.92	Burwood Bush	
	after Greg Chalmers from DuPont who played a major part in enabling Tiri to get takahe		
Iti (Manuiti) (f)	19.1.94	Tiritiri Matangi	(Stormy/JJ)
	means 'small bird' -- a small chick		
Whetu (m)	21.11.94	TM	(Stormy/JJ, but fostered to Mr Blue/Aroha)
	means 'star' --- Mr Blue and Aroha's foster son was sure to be the star of the season!		
Whakama (m)	21.12.94	TM	(Greg/Pounamu, but fostered to Bubble/Irene)
	means 'shy' --- a very shy chick - and still shy!		
Glencoe(m)	24.11.95	TM	(Stormy/JJ)
	named to recognize the support of Glenfield College since 1984		
Blossom (m)	3.1.96	Maud Island	
	named already		
@ dot (f)	14.10.97	TM	Stormy/JJ)
	named by Shaun Dunning because of his interest in computers		
Ahikaea (f)	3.10.97	TM	Greg/Pounamu)
	means 'first of spring' - Ahikaea hatched early		
Bellamy (m)	21.10.98	TM	(Greg/Pounamu)
	named after David Bellamy		
Blackwatch (m)	17.10.00	TM	(Kristin/Ahikaea)
	named to recognize the support of St Cuthbert's College (their uniform is Blackwatch tartan)		
Rossie (m)	31.10.00	TM	(Kaitiaki, Whetu/JJ)
	named to recognize the support of Rosehill Intermediate		
Blakie (f)	1.11.01	TM	(Kaitiaki, Whetu/JJ)
	named in honour of Sir Peter Blake		
Sapphire (f)	1.11.01	TM	(Kristin/Ahikaea)
	full name 'Blue Sapphire' - named by Tiri Kids		
Mungo (m)	26.10.02	TM	(Glencoe/Aroha)
	named to recognize the support of St Kentigern College. Mungo is the familiar name for St. Kentigern		
Kristina (f)	5(?) .11.02	TM	(Kristin/Ahikaea)
	named after her father, Kristin (who was named to recognize the support of Kristin School)		



## Calendar of Events

### 2003

Sunday 31 August  
Grand Opening of Wharf Shelter

Sunday September 7  
Supporters' Kowhai Trip

Monday September 15  
Social Evening  
*(see flyer for details)*

October 4 - 5  
Supporters' Families Weekend



October 18 - 19  
Supporters Non-Working Weekend

October 25  
Tuatara Release  
*(weather permitting)*



October 25 - 27  
Supporters Working Weekend

### 2004

January 24-26  
Supporters Working Weekend

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

## 10 Years Ago

Excerpt from Bulletin 14, August 1993

### Prey Turns Table on Predator

We are all aware that Tiritiri provides opportunity for observation and recording of bird behaviour. This is an integral part of Ray and Barbara's activities on the Island, as well as for researchers and visitors alike.

The presence of harrier hawks on the island is well known and has often been a cause for concern. Evidence and accounts of their predatory habits is well recorded - with kiore and birds regularly falling prey. The not uncommon sight of the stripped bones of pukeko has raised concern of the vulnerability of the takahe, particularly their chicks.

On Sunday 2nd May these concerns were somewhat lessened when a unique observation of the takahe's defensive ability was made by Jo Ritchie and Ngaire Dawson.

They were returning from the wharf with the tractor when a short distance past the entrance to Little Wattle Valley track they came across Stomy and a harrier hawk. Stomy was astride the hapless harrier, which was on its back, vigorously plucking feathers from its breast. The harrier had had its lower jaw broken off and appeared to be in such a state of shock that it wasn't even defending itself with its talons, as might have been expected. Ray was called on the radio and he arrived in time to despatch the bird before Barbara and a visiting party passed by.

This occurrence has aroused a lot of interest as no other record of this behaviour has previously been recorded.

### Working Bees

*Very Special Thanks!*

- Supporters' Queen's Birthday Weekend
- Theresa & David McIntyre's Group
- Anne Moon's Rotorua Walkers
- Ecoquest
- Louise & David Gauld's Group
- Eve Manning's Group
- North Shore Tramping Club
- Women's Outdoor Pursuits
- Howick Tramping Club

### School Visits

- Kristin School (3 Trips)
- Marlborough Primary (2 Trips)
- Orewa Primary (2 Trips)
- Tauhoa School
- Bayview Primary
- Rosebank School
- Manurewa High School
- Northcross Intermediate (3 Trips)
- Corran School
- St. Michaels School
- Whangaparaoa Primary (2 Trips)



# RESEARCH ON BUGS IN BIRDLAND

## A FIRST IN HISTORY OF CONSERVATION ISLAND

David J Clarke, School of Biological Sciences, University of Auckland

The Tiritiri kiosk boasts a string of quality theses each containing highly insightful research on topics as diverse as vegetation development, historical kiore populations and several studies on the rare birds we know and love. All have contributed to our increased understanding of the island and its inhabitants. But not in 30 years of Tiri's development as a prominent conservation icon has an unsuspecting graduate student taken on the invertebrate life of Auckland's endangered bird haven.

Recently I too completed some research on Tiri, but this time the limelight was cast on the smaller occupants of the regenerating forests. I decided it was high time someone conducted an extensive study of the invertebrate communities on Tiri and so last summer I set forth peppering the island with tent-like contraptions and more inconspicuous pitfall traps in an attempt to collect data on the bugs inhabiting the island.

I set traps all over Tiri in grasslands, pohutukawa forest, mixed plantings, regenerating scrub and remnant forest. The traps were operating from September 2001 – April 2002 and my job was to collect samples on a monthly basis and process all beetles from these samples.

As Tiri is only a relatively small island having an extensive history of disturbance it came as a surprise to me to discover 315 species of

beetles living in the natural and restored habitats. Most of these species were less than 3mm in length but many larger species were also discovered.

Interestingly, a few species mentioned in the 1997 Tiritiri Management Plan were found to be in huge abundance, a definite result of the absence of kiore. My study identified pohutukawa plantings as holding the least species of beetles but still surprisingly high when compared to other bush habitats. Another interesting observation was the preferred habitat of large native ground beetles. The restoration plantings seemed to be more attractive to them than the remnant forest.

Other interesting aspects to emerge from my samples were that beetles are highly diverse just about everywhere on the island, probably due to its overall youthful

appearance and good looks. Also, look out for the giant centipedes in Lighthouse Valley and be mindful to search for peripatus in Wattle Valley. If this weren't enough to keep budding naturalists entertained then perhaps the multitudes of ground-weta in bush 1 and 2 would amuse? Meanwhile, the controversial debate over whether the Giant *Mecodema* ground beetles occur on Tiri still wages...

Invertebrate monitoring in the Kawerau Valley and Bush 22 by the Department of Conservation is investigating the long-term effects of the 1993 kiore eradication on larger invertebrates, and other current research aims to detect effects of the Argentine Ant on native ant populations. With our combined forces we can surely bring Tiri into the 21<sup>st</sup> century of restoration ecology.



## Volunteer Public Planting Day at Whangaparaoa Navy Training Centre

I took the opportunity to take part in the Royal New Zealand Navy planting day on Sunday 20th July 2003 at the Whangaparaoa Training Centre. Along with a couple of other Tiritiri Matangi supporters and approx 100 other helpers we planted 2,000 trees. While many thousand more trees will need to be planted before the aim of creating a "mainland island" is achieved, the days efforts were a significant start to this.

The Navy put on a scrumptious barbeque lunch and then we took up the opportunity to catch up with the other volunteers, bask in the sunshine and take in the magnificent view over the Hauraki Gulf.

I also went for a walk along the waterfall track past the magnificent Puiriri glade and up to the lookout to see the wonderful views of the Gulf Islands including Tiritiri Matangi. It was great to see areas of native bush left by the Navy and also to see the fenced off areas around the gullies that have been done by the ARC in Shakespear Regional Park. These will be planted with native trees over time and will supplement the forest at Tiritiri Matangi.

It is very encouraging to see other groups of enthusiastic people continuing the vision of creating forests for our wildlife to survive in and around Auckland.

John McLeod

# Letters from the Next Generation of Conservationists

Dear Glenis

I am writing this letter to thank you for guiding Group E around Tiritiri Matangi Island on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2003. Our trip was very enjoyable. We also observed lots of great, rare and endangered birds.

It was great how you explained about the plants, trees, bushes and birds. Thanks for guiding us around the island. Without you, we would have been lost after the first fifty steps.

I liked seeing the Red-crowned Parakeet and the Saddleback, Whitehead, Little Blue Penguin and Tui (though it is not endangered) but I didn't see a Kokako. Oh, and the Takahe are much bigger than I thought. All in all, I had a great day (and it was worth all the endangered bird homework I had to do).

Yours Sincerely

Richard Dunn

Room 7 pupil

Orewa Primary

When I first saw the island, a calm, magical-feeling struck me as if it was calling to me. I felt it was a safe place to be and I didn't want to leave -the island, but when the time came we had to go. I felt really sad to see the island go, fading away in the mist, but I could hear the wind whistling, saying good-bye.

I now know that Tiritiri Matangi Island is a safe place for birds and helps save the endangered birds, because of all the volunteers who go there and help out. Tiritiri Matangi is an ecosystem made by people which is a safe place for birds, to develop their habitats.

I now know that Tiritiri Matangi island is an ecosystem built by people for endangered birds to come to and stay. Tiritiri Matangi Island has a light house so people won't crash into the island.

This is at the end of a very peaceful day and everyone really thought this was a very magical place, for endangered birds. This is a very precious island and it is a very important place that it is supervised by the guardians of the island.

I learnt while I was at Tiritiri how many different birds there were. I learnt how to tell them apart by their songs and I never knew there was such a bird as a bellbird, but we saw so many of them living safely on this scientific reserve.

Dear Ray and Barbara

I hope we're allowed to come to Tiri again. It was an absolutely fantastic day. Lots of thanks to you and the guides who give up time to share their knowledge of Tiritiri with others,

I was amazed when I saw the Takahe's beaks. The beaks look as if they carry a lot of power. I love the way when you open the nesting boxes the blue penguins look up at you. At the beginning there were some fantails that kept on following us. The bird I liked best was the quail because it's small and fat and is cute.

I would really like to come and stay and so would my mum. I think my dad wanted to come but he works. My sister was jealous because I had the privilege of seeing the birds.

Cameron Flewitt

Room 13, Orewa Primary School



Dear Ray and Barbara

Thank you for allowing us to come to Tiri. I really liked it, especially the Takahe. They were cute. I would like to thank my guide, Jane, for showing us around the island. I liked the way the path went through the bush, not around the perimeter of the island. I also liked walking back around the beach area and seeing the rat trap and the penguins.

I would like a Takahe for a pet but that wouldn't be possible. Coming off the wharf, I saw a huge stingray. My family now all want to go.

Hannah Parker

Room 13, Orewa Primary School

