



# Dawn Chorus

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Tiri & Tango *Page 4*

Duvaucel's geckos *Page 6*

Red crowned kakariki *Page 8*

Life on the reef *Page 10*



Congratulations to Sonya Galbraith who took this fantastic photograph of Greg at Hobbs beach. It won second prize in the New Zealand Herald's summer photo competition.

## Getting to Tiritiri Matangi

360 Discovery™, which is operated by Kawau Kat Cruises, operates a regular ferry service.

**BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL!  
AND AVAILABLE ONLY FROM:**

360 Discovery Bookings  
on **0800 888 006** or  
**www.360discovery.co.nz**

*Departs:* Every day **Wednesday to Sunday** from Pier Three, Quay Street, Downtown Auckland City at 9:00 am and from Pier Z, Gulf Harbour at 9:50 am, arriving at Tiritiri at 10.15am.

*Returns:* From Tiritiri at 3.30pm, arriving Gulf Harbour at 4:00 pm and Pier Three at 4:50 pm.

*Includes:* Return ferry to Tiritiri Matangi plus approximately 5 hrs on the island.

*Weather Cancellations:* Please call 0800 FANTAIL (0800 326 8245) after 7am on the morning of sailing to confirm if the vessel is sailing.

*Prices:*

Ex Akl: Adult \$59.00 Child \$28.00  
Senior/ Student/ Backpacker \$53.00  
Family \$145.00

Ex GH: Adult \$35.00 Child \$17.00  
Senior/ Student/ Backpacker \$30.00  
Family \$85.00

Guided Walks:

Adult \$5.00: Child \$2.50

**Discounts available to the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi (SoTM) on special supporter weekends / days.**

## Upcoming Events 2008

**March 17th**

AGM - Kohia centre

**March 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>**

Easter Working Weekend

**April 12th – 13th**

Families Weekend

**April - 12th**

Tiri Kids Night Walk

**May 24th – 25th**

Families Weekend

**May 31st – June 2nd**

Queens Birthday Working Weekend

**August 23rd – 24th**

Families Weekend

**August 24th**

Kowhai Trip

**September 15th**

Social night

**September 20th – 21st**

Non-working

**October 25th – 27th**

Labour Day Working Weekend

If you wish to attend one of these special days or weekends they can be booked **ONLY** by contacting Mary-Ann at the shop on Tiritiri Matangi, telephone 09 476 0010 or e-mail [manager@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:manager@tiritirimatangi.org.nz)

*Prices:*

Ex Akl: Adult \$38.00 Child \$20.00

Ex. Gulf Harbour \$22.00 \$14.00

For non-event days please contact 360 Discovery Bookings.

## School Visits

Schools wishing to visit Tiritiri should first visit our website:

**[www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz/  
SchoolVisits.htm](http://www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz/SchoolVisits.htm)**

where you can download the school guidelines. Then contact Mary-Ann either by telephone 09 476 0010 or e-mail: [manager@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:manager@tiritirimatangi.org.nz).

**Advance bookings are essential.**

## Overnight Visits

Overnight bookings can now be made on line. To find out more and/or make a booking go to [www.doc.govt.nz/tiritiribunkhouse](http://www.doc.govt.nz/tiritiribunkhouse)

Those who are "internet averse" can still make a booking by phone by contacting the Warkworth Area Office 09 425 7812 (a small booking fee will apply).

Supporters doing official volunteer work like guiding or working in the shop, should book their accommodation through the guiding coordinator to obtain free accommodation.

This volunteer work must be at the request of the guiding co-ordinator or the supporters committee.



## Contact Details

**Chairperson:** Simon Fordham, Telephone: (09) 274 1828, e-mail: [chairperson@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:chairperson@tiritirimatangi.org.nz)

**Secretary:** Peter Lee, Telephone: (09) 418 1332, e-mail: [secretary@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:secretary@tiritirimatangi.org.nz)

**Treasurer:** Bil Mancer, Telephone: (09) 473 3997, e-mail: [treasurer@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:treasurer@tiritirimatangi.org.nz)

**Membership Secretary:** Kathryn Jones, Telephone: (09) 524 5894, e-mail: [membership@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:membership@tiritirimatangi.org.nz)

**Dawn Chorus Editor:** Paul Colgrave, Telephone: (09) 575 4515, e-mail: [editor@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:editor@tiritirimatangi.org.nz)

**Committee Members:** Cathy Catto, Telephone: (09) 629 3903, e-mail: [higcat@actrix.co.nz](mailto:higcat@actrix.co.nz)

Margaret Chappell, Telephone: (09) 415 7119, e-mail: [getgrow@ihug.co.nz](mailto:getgrow@ihug.co.nz)

Maria Galbraith, Telephone: (09) 480 1958, e-mail: [mariag@summerland.school.nz](mailto:mariag@summerland.school.nz) & [melgar62@slingshot.co.nz](mailto:melgar62@slingshot.co.nz)

Melinda Habgood, Telephone: (09) 521 9504, e-mail: [melinda@te-ngahere.co.nz](mailto:melinda@te-ngahere.co.nz)

Hester Cooper, Telephone: (09) 473 5695, e-mail: [hester@cybernet.co.nz](mailto:hester@cybernet.co.nz)

Ray & Barbara Walter, Telephone: (09) 535 6941, e-mail: [rayandbarbarawalter@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rayandbarbarawalter@xtra.co.nz)

Val Smytheman, Telephone: (09) 278 9309, e-mail: [vjess@ihug.co.nz](mailto:vjess@ihug.co.nz)

**Tiritiri DOC Rangers:** Dave Jenkins & Jennifer Haslam (09) 476 0920, e-mail: [tiritirimatangifb@doc.govt.nz](mailto:tiritirimatangifb@doc.govt.nz)

**SoTM Guiding Co-ordinator & Shop Mgr:** Mary-Ann Rowland 09 476 0010, e-mail: [manager@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:manager@tiritirimatangi.org.nz)

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



# From the Chair

Simon Fordham

It is not difficult for visitors to Tiri to recognise that the Supporters are the most influential stakeholder in our magnificent project. However, we must not forget that we are not the only stakeholder and that, to maximize the potential of the project, it is imperative that we work with all other interested parties.

Our main partner, of course, is the Department of Conservation. They are the Island's statutory managers, yet do involve SoTM in all significant decisions that affect the island. Since the formation of our organization 20 years ago, we have seen a dramatic shift in the Department's attitude and there is now a strong recognition that volunteers are to be valued as they are essential to the future of conservation in New Zealand.

Other stakeholders are iwi. Whilst they choose not to be involved with the day to day management of the island, they have so often reiterated their support for our activities and for that we are very appreciative.

Then there are the various academic institutions, particularly the University of Auckland and Massey University. Their presence is most obvious by the many researchers, particularly students, who choose to study on Tiri. They not only help to create a greater understanding of the island's ecology, their presence is so often an opportunity for Supporters to learn about their work and conservation in general.

In some cases, the research can be controversial and SoTM have, on occasion, opposed specific projects. However, all research requires a DOC permit and, even though we may not agree with some research that is undertaken, we should always respect the permit holder's right to carry out such research.

It should also not be forgotten that the replanting of Tiri was the result of a research project by the University of Auckland almost 30 years ago.

As previously stated, I will be stepping down from the committee at the forthcoming AGM. In 12 years

as a committee member, I have been privileged to work with so many wonderful and dedicated people who really are the backbone of our organization. I would like to say thank you to all of you for your efforts and for making what so often could have been routine and uninteresting committee meetings into enjoyable occasions. I would particularly like to thank the Committees of the last four years for your support and encouragement whilst I have been in the Chair.

Even though I am leaving the committee, I have no intention of ceasing my involvement with the island and still expect to contribute at the sub-committee level as well as remaining involved with on-island activities.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank my wife Morag for supporting my involvement with the Committee, even though it meant some things not getting done at home as quickly as they could have. Now we can both look forward to having more time for such tasks.

## The Tiri Gift Shop

Mary-Ann Rowland is our new shop manager and guiding coordinator, replacing Megan who left at the end of January. We wish Megan well for the future.

Our new items in stock is an Eco Bag, \$15.00, and Logo free, for smart shopping.

Also a new child's T-Shirt with a NZ logo size 2-8 years and our popular little blue penguin T-Shirt, size 4-14. Both shirts are \$25.00



## Tiri by Night

**Tiri Kids Night Walk - Tiritiri Matangi Island - 12th April 2008**

This year's Kids activity is a guided night walk through the island's board walks. Some of the nightlife you may see include little blue penguins, tuatara, morepork, weta and kiwi.

This trip will also be open to all members, should you wish to experience Tiri by night.

**Bookings essential and book early to avoid disappointment.**

Departing Gulf Harbour only: 5:30pm, Departing Tiritiri 9:00pm

Cost: Family (2A&2)	\$85
Adults	\$35
Child	\$17
Senior	\$30

RSVP: 28 March to Mary-Anne: [manager@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:manager@tiritirimatangi.org.nz) or Phone the island 476- 0010.

Payment: Visa, MasterCard or Cheque  
(make payable to Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc)

Bring: A picnic dinner, warm jacket & walking shoes, torch each with red cellophane over lens, an adult to look after you

# “Tiri” and “Tango” return to their homeland

It was a short but spectacular helicopter flight from Te Anau to “Tark Valley” that infamous spot in the Murchison Mountains where Orbell first re-discovered the takahe back in 1948. I was lucky enough to be along for the ride to release “Tiri” and “Tango” into this pristine habitat, far from their tropical island birthplace in the Hauraki Gulf.

After landing and unloading the precious cargo, we crouched down amongst the grasses and waited for the helicopter to disappear back over the hill. I was pleasantly surprised to find the stunning valley was still and warm. We carried the bird boxes closer to where the grassy valley floor met the forest edge, to give the birds cover to escape into. Linda set the boxes side-by-side and as I positioned myself with

the camera she knelt down and gently tilted the boxes forward and lifted the two lids simultaneously. There was a brief moment of hesitation, then they both bolted for the scrub, giving me just enough warning to fire the shutter and capture the “great escape” (of one of them anyway, the other having shot out too quick!).

I had been enjoying an escape of my own - a ten day break from

work, sightseeing and relaxing with my partner, taking in Queenstown, Glenorchy, Wanaka, a day trip through to Haast and southern most Jackson Bay. We then traveled back through Cromwell to stay with friends Linda and Chris at DoC's Burwood Unit where Linda works raising young takahe as part of the recovery programme. I was lucky to experience feeding the hungry black chicks using the glove and fake beak method, holding a speaker in my palm which made parent feeding noises to evoke the “real thing”.

While in Te Anau we made a point of seeing the fantastic short film “Ata



Whenua-Shadowland" at the specially built Fiordland Cinema. The film shows off the spectacular Fiordland area and is well worth seeing if you're ever in Te Anau. It can also be ordered online\*. Local Kim Hollows had the idea for the film, which he funded along with the cinema to show it in, to showcase beautiful Fiordland, which he'd had the pleasure of experiencing during his time as a helicopter pilot, lifting deer out of the area. Now the owner of one of Te Anau's many profitable helicopter businesses, Fiordland Helicopters Heliworks, Kim helps to fund a wide range of important conservation work in the

area including takahe, kakapo, whio and rock wren conservation. He is also sponsoring the first translocation of North Island kokako to Secretary Island this year.

Of course a trip to Te Anau wouldn't be the same without a drive up to Milford Sound which was as, always, spectacular. We were sad to leave the deep south but have recently been glad to hear that all three Tiritiri birds released into the Murchisons, although having each gone their separate ways, have all been tracked recently and are alive & well.

\* <http://www.fiordlandcinema.co.nz>

Note: There were three birds from Tiritiri Matangi Island released in total. Tiri (a 4yr old female) and Tango (a yearling male) were released together, then Hauraki - a two year old juvenile (who is Tangos older brother) was released a couple of weeks later, with some Burwood juveniles.

Thanks to Linda Kilduff (Burwood Bush Captive Rearing Facility) and the Te Anau Area Office of the Department of Conservation.





# Duvaucel's geckos by Dylan van Winkel

For the past year I have been following a small population of translocated Duvaucel's geckos, on Tiritiri Matangi, by monitoring their movements and survival. This work leads towards a Masterate in Conservation, at Massey University, which I hope to complete in June 2008.



As you may be aware, in late December 2006 Tiritiri Matangi became home to 19 of New Zealand's largest geckos, the Duvaucel's gecko (*Hoplodactylus duvaucelii*). On average they grow to about 230mm total length (~ 60g), are nocturnal, and semi-arboreal, preferring to spend the days immersed within the thickets of Flax or clinging to the canopy branches of Pohutukawa and

emerging at night to feed on insects and fruits near the forest floor. These behaviours are characteristic of a cryptic animal, making them really difficult to find, especially for a terrestrial, diurnal animal like myself! Most New Zealand geckos are long lived and have a low reproductive

rate (may not breed every year). They give birth to one or two live young and it can take up to 7 years for the juveniles to become sexually mature. These factors, along with the effects of introduced mammalian predators and habitat degradation, have lead to the extinction of Duvaucel's geckos on the mainland, now restricting them to islands off the North-eastern coast of the North Island and Cook Strait.

The geckos were translocated from Korapuki Island (Mercury Island group) to both Tiritiri Matangi and Motuora Islands as part of island restoration and conservation of our native herpetofauna. The translocated geckos on Tiritiri comprised 9 males and 10 females, of which 7 were potentially gravid (pregnant) at release. Our research involves the post-translocation monitoring of the geckos, employing radio-telemetry, tracking tunnels, and artificial refuges to assess their dispersal, activity, and habitat selection respectively.

The weeks following release proved very tough as the geckos were tracked every two hours throughout the night. Countless restless nights resulted in some serious 'student-zombie' behaviour. The geckos' initial movements were consistent with the disorientation effects of the translocation, exhibiting random



movements in all directions. Many of the individuals did not disperse far and were recaptured close to the release site within the first three months. One individual, however, was located and recaptured 300m away on the northern side of Emergency Landing! This gecko was aptly named 'Jacquey' after his obvious explorative role-model Jacques Cousteau.

The months over winter became very frustrating as a serious decrease in the geckos' activity occurred, as indicated by both reduced tracking rates (footprints in the tracking tunnels) and animal sightings. I even began to worry about the survival of the animals! However, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September reasonably high tracking rates indicated a significant increase in gecko activity possibly coinciding with a flux of warmer temperatures. Another theory is that the geckos surfaced to pay tribute to their favorite human reptile ambassador, Steve Irwin, whose 1 year death anniversary (15<sup>th</sup> September 2006) coincided with the increased activity!

The start of summer however, has induced a boost in the geckos' activity levels. Tracking rates have been high and the distance between tracked tunnels infers that it is more likely that multiple geckos are tracking different tunnels, as opposed to a few animals tracking multiple tunnels. This is great news and we may expect the majority of the individuals to have survived though their first winter on the island.

What is even more exciting is the discovery of juvenile Duvaucel's gecko footprints through a tracking tunnel in January 2008!!! This is incredibly good news and the size of the prints indicates a good healthy sized juvenile. Juveniles are likely to have been born in February 2007 from the original gravid females released onto Tiri.

In conjunction with the dispersal study, I have been monitoring avian bird predators on the island, including Kingfishers, Moreporks, Pukekos, and Harriers. We are interested in the effects of native birds on island lizard populations and preliminary results indicate that a huge proportion of



the Kingfisher diet comprises native skinks.

If following 19 geckos and monitoring predators on the island was not enough, I have also been monitoring the Tuataras on Tiritiri Matangi, for the Department of Conservation. This task involves measuring and recording the locations of any Tuataras seen on the island. This study will provide data

on the health, survival, and progress of the Tuatara translocated to Tiri, in 2003.

This February is our last month of field work after which the long tedious task of data analyses and writing up begins. It has been a great year and it is amazing that places like Tiri exist, providing safe havens for endangered creatures and enabling them to persist into the future.

Dylan van Winkel  
surfing\_aardvark@hotmail.com





# Conserving one species by studying another?

January 16th 2007, Location: Tiritiri Matangi Island, Hauraki Gulf. Species: Red-crowned kakariki (*Cyanoramphus novaeseelandiae*).



Photograph © Tobias Cerhak

8:30 am – 10:15 am

Making observations about M-Y (metal-yellow) nest. I am standing 15 m away after checking with a mirror and hand-torch that the female is inside the nesting box. It is a sunny and still morning. M-Y and I are old friends. The first time we met was in October 2004, the same day that I captured her on a mist-net, put her in a dark cotton bag for weighing and later measuring her beak, tibia and wing. Once measured, I plucked a few feathers from her belly and finally put a couple of bands on her legs, while she managed to bite my fingers (after this rough encounter I still want to think she sees me as a friend and not as some sort of ferocious predator!).

10:20 am

M-Y exits the nesting box after her partner (an un-banded male) repeatedly vocalises with “soft calls”. The male is perched right on top of the nesting box. Both kakariki fly to a nearby *Coprosma* shrub, about 10 m from the nest. The female displays the “begging-for-food” posture as soon as they land together; the male approaches and “regurgitates food” (possibly Cabbage tree seeds) by grasping his partner’s beak and jerking his neck vigorously. The male’s eyes are pinning in and out while he delivers the crushed seeds. In between regurgitations, the male uses the “short soft squeak”. The feeding session finishes after 6 regurgitations, each one lasting around 6 seconds. Both kakariki stretch wings, rub their beaks on the same branch they are

perching on, and finally both ruffle their feathers. The “preening session” lasts 3 minutes. The male takes off and calls as he leaves whereas M-Y remains silent on the branch preening her back feathers and stretching again.

10:25 am

While M-Y is still perching, I approach the nest to check the contents. Using a torch and extendable mirror the bottom of the long nesting box becomes visible and I distinguish 6 eggs. After rubbing my hands with anti-bacterial liquid I put a pair of latex gloves on. Then proceed to remove the clutch and check the fertility of the eggs. The eggs feel warm. Having carefully placed them on a plastic container lined with sterile cotton pads I proceed to shine a bright light through the egg shells, one at the time. All eggs seem fertile; they all have a net of red veins and near the centre a rosy dense spot: a red-crowned kakariki embryo.

This is the fourth breeding season that I collect data about clutch development (i.e. egg to fledgling) of red-crowned kakariki on Tiritiri Matangi Island. This ongoing research is part of my PhD project at Massey University. In general, I am interested in using the red-crowned kakariki as a surrogate species to assist conservation measures for its close relative, the critically endangered orange-fronted kakariki (*Cyanoramphus malherbi*). The latter is New Zealand’s rarest kakariki and one of the most threatened parrots worldwide. Last year, the Department of Conservation reintroduced orange-fronted kakariki on Maud Island in the Marlborough Sounds as a strategy to increase numbers. Because of their rarity, orange-fronted kakariki are difficult to observe in the wild and not much is known about their habits. Also, they nest high on trees and checking the nest contents can be risky. Climbing to a nest at the wrong time might cause the pair to abandon. In contrast, red-crowned kakariki are common on offshore islands and are better studied. They nest on

a variety of sites (including nesting boxes) from ground level to tree-tops, making monitoring an easier task. During breeding, red-crowned kakariki display a set of stereotypical behaviours (such as the ones in quotation marks above). The sequence and duration of these behaviours can be used to estimate the stage of the breeding cycle very accurately. This means that even if we cannot see the contents of a nest, we are able to identify which phase the nest is at. This information is invaluable when it comes to decide whether or not to climb up a tree containing an orange-fronted kakariki nest. Alterations in the sequence and duration of the stereotypical behaviours can also tell us if something is going wrong and thus intervention can be decided with no delays, for instance removal of eggs or supplementary feeding of nestlings.

April 15th 2007, Location: Maud Island, Marlborough Sounds. Species: Orange-fronted kakariki (*Cyanoramphus malherbi*).

11:05 am

Making observations about M-GY (metal-green, yellow) nest. I am standing 35 m away. Cloudy skies, only a little wind. It is very quiet. I cannot hear or see any orange-fronted kakariki, although yesterday I saw M-GY with her partner above the nest.

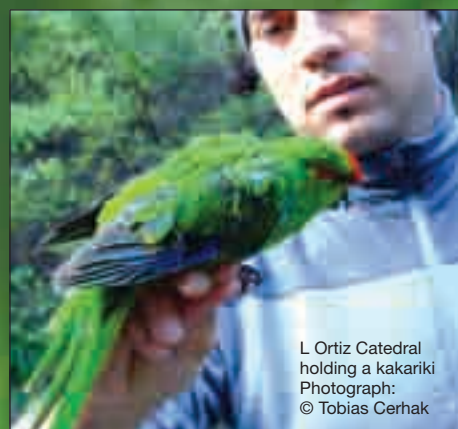
11:45 am

OG-M (orange, green-metal) arrives in the area vocalising with “soft calls”. After a few seconds M-GY emerges from the nest and both kakariki fly to a Mahoe branch some 15-20 m away. M-GY assumes the “begging for food” display and her partner starts regurgitating food. My volunteer Mark and I approach the nest. The entrance hole is some 2 m above the ground. I ask Mark to climb on my shoulders and shine a torch inside to look for eggs. We both feel butterflies in our stomachs. I can see eggs! He shouts cheerfully. It seems that M-GY’s nest is going well. And so is my PhD project.





## Luis Ortiz-Catedral Profile



L Ortiz Catedral  
holding a kakariki  
Photograph:  
© Tobias Cerhak

Luis Ortiz-Catedral was born in Santa Anita, a small town close to Guadalajara City in Mexico. He obtained his BSc Degree (Biology) at the University of Guadalajara in 2001.

He arrived in New Zealand in 2004 to pursue a Master of Sciences degree in Ecology at Massey University. His Master's research was focused on the breeding ecology of the red-crowned kakariki on Tiritiri Matangi.

Currently he studies a PhD in Conservation Biology at Massey University. Luis' research compares how wild and captive kakariki cope with translocations.



# Life on the Reef

Text & Photos by Simon Fordham

About 250 metres west of the Tiritiri Matangi wharf lies a rocky outcrop which, at high tide, is separated into two islets by a narrow channel. Although not legally part of the Scientific Reserve, for all intents and purposes it is still a part of the island ecosystem and provides habitat for a number of shorebirds.

Regularly seen on this reef are such species as white-fronted tern, Caspian tern, variable oystercatcher and pied shag as well as black-backed and red-billed gulls. The terns and oystercatchers have been known to breed here each season and this summer was no exception.



Over the years, there have been intermittent sightings of the endangered New Zealand Dotterel on this reef so I was delighted this Christmas to discover a breeding pair at the northern end. However, instead of using the small area of shellbank, they chose to nest amongst the white-fronted terns. The nest, which contained the usual 3 eggs, was 1 metre above the high tide mark and less than 1½ from the nearest tern nest.

The nest of the NZ dotterel is normally an unlined scrape on sand or broken shell, the colouration of the egg camouflaging well. However, the shellbank on this reef is unreliable as any strong winds from the west tend to wash over this area. By choosing to nest where they did, on the leeward side of the rock, they are afforded better protection from storms but they lose the advantage of camouflage as the eggs are obvious when laid in ice plant. It was therefore very disappointing but not surprising when two of the eggs were predated by a red-billed gull.



What was delightful was to see the female dotterel land on Hobbs Beach one evening. She only stayed a short while before returning to the reef and one presumes that, with the reef unable to provide sufficient food, the sandhoppers of Hobbs Beach provide adequate fare.

Most white-fronted terns that breed around Tiri do so on the eastern side



of the island, although the best feeding seems to be in the Tiri channel. They can often be seen flying low across the island, with east-bound birds carrying a small fish for their hungry chicks. A number of white-fronted terns do however breed on the reef where there are at least two rocks holding small, dense colonies. Caspian terns, however, prefer to nest in colonies on shellbanks and sandspits so we are fortunate we have at least one pair nesting here.

Whilst visiting this reef during breeding is not to be encouraged, some boaties do land here and wander around. Unfortunately, a sign placed to deter casual visitors was washed away in a storm a few years ago. The most important thing to consider is the welfare of the nesting birds. Do not walk over the shellbank as all breeding species here have eggs that camouflage really well and, despite the risks, some do still choose to lay here. Neither should you try to climb the rocks where the birds nest and, if arriving by kayak or other boat, a pair of binoculars will allow you good views without any need to land on the reef.





# SoTM Committee Nominees

There are no nomination for **Treasurer** as yet. If you are interested, please contact Simon Fordham or Bill Mancer for more details (contact info is on page 2)

## **Peter Lee** (Chairperson)

I've been an enthusiastically- active and passionate conservationist and SoTM member since 1990! I'm a marketing manager for a financial services company, was self-employed for a while, and this has provided some useful experience in a number of areas.

Many people will remember me from my first stint on the Committee, 1994 to 2004, including 2 years as editor of Dawn Chorus, 2 as secretary, and 3 as Chairperson from 1999-2002, during which I put together the first-ever 5-year plan and started off the visitors' centre planning. I'm also a regular guide (though not as regular as I would like!) and working weekender.

After a 4-year break from the committee, I have some great ideas for building on Simon's good work. SoTM really is ready for the next phase of its growth into a superb education and research facility and to take a real leadership role, with DoC, in the Auckland area and nationally.

## **Jill Courteaud** (Secretary)

No info received.

## **Cathy Catto**

I continue to be actively involved with the Island, being responsible for the Communications and interpretation Sub committee. 2008 will see the interpretation panels and displays in our Visitors Centre, a project I have been involved in for 18 months.

Being a longstanding committee member, I bring experience and knowledge to the society.

## **Maria Galbraith**

I've been a guide on Tiri for several years, and a volunteer for over 20!

After being a committee member for a year, I have found the experience really worthwhile and rewarding and so would value the chance to continue my contribution in this way.

## **Melinda Habgood**

I would like to continue to be a committee member to help give something back to the island that has given me so much. I joined the Supporters Committee last year and am excited about the possibility of continuing to be part of the team that helps guide the island to a successful, sustainable future.

My involvement with Tiritiri (and membership of the Supporters of Tiritiri) spans seven years, therefore I am able to bring my extensive knowledge and familiarity with the island and its every day working life to the Supporters Committee. My work on Tiritiri has ranged from conducting my Masters thesis research on copper and moko skinks (2002/2003), to joining the weed team during the summer of 2003/2004 and volunteer guiding since 2003. I currently work as an ecologist at Te Ngahere, where I work in the field of ecological restoration. I feel my scientific and research background when combined with my restoration experience in a commercial environment will be of great assistance to the committee.

## **Ray and Barbara Walter**

Ex rangers on the island. Have very strong interest in the island and SoTM as volunteers and members of SoTM.

## **Murray Anderson**

My first visit to Tiri was a family trip in 1996. I have been over almost every year since, as a volunteer in a wonderful array of small jobs, including planting.

I am a commercial grower with a business exporting Orchid flowers. I have always been interested in flora and fauna and as with my business, would bring to the committee a disciplined and pragmatic approach to any arising issues.

It's great to be a part of something successful and I hope I could be involved in a greater capacity with what is a brilliant ongoing project at Tiri.

## **Val Smytheman**

My involvement with Tiritiri Matangi (since 1992) has enriched my life beyond measure. I have taken part in many working weekends, am a guide, and have often helped out on the island when the regular staff have been on leave. I have been on the committee since 2000, serving as Membership Secretary for 5 years. I am currently a member of the Bio-diversity and Shop & Guiding sub-committees. 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.

## **Hester Cooper**

I have a strong science background and have been a guide on Tiri for the past six years. I joined the SOTM committee two years ago to help grow the research programme on Tiri. I want to ensure that supporters' research money is spent to advance work on Tiri and to support the work of the DoC staff. I would really like to continue this work so that we encourage research projects which add to our understanding of the island.

## **Carl Hayson**

Having previously had 15 years of experience on the committee in a variety of roles including treasurer, secretary and chairperson, it seems strange to be reapplying for a committee position again. However the island has a magical allure to it and I feel lured back to the ongoing work on the island. Before I retired from the committee I was involved in several historical projects which I have continued to oversee and would like to see the projects completed. I would also like to continue to give something back to the island that has given so much to myself and others and with the history I have, I feel I can still contribute some value to the committee and the work that continues to go on.

# Flora Notes by Warren Brewer

The long spell of settled summer weather has seen the culmination of what has been a most spectacular flowering season.

On the island there has been a dominant group of 4 flowering plants, each one trying to out perform the others. The cabbage trees began with their scented sprays of small white flowers. Our birds are now being rewarded with the subsequent ripening fruit. Next came the flax with its orange/red standards. The sighting of many "orange crested" bellbirds and tuis showed just how abundant the flower heads have been this summer. Pohutukawa and kanuka flowers followed closely. The pohutukawa blossoms have been the best for several years and their clever use of the palette of red has seen crimson, scarlet and shades of orange being brilliantly displayed against a green backdrop. The kanuka trees looked as though they were dusted with icing sugar with their clusters of tiny white blossoms.



Cabbage tree blossom



Pohutukawa flowers

Let us take a closer look at one of these fabulous four by featuring NZ flax.

Massed plantings of flax greet us on our arrival at Tiritiri Matangi. While often taken for granted at home, this plant is highly prized overseas for its striking ornamental effect. It has also become popular through the development of many coloured or variegated forms.

Flax is capable of surviving in swamps, on cliff tops and bone-dry cuttings. Its leaves have a unique feature as the lower part folds together like a book with the inner surface fused. The leaf then opens above this into a flat blade.

Flax has played an important role in Maori life. It was used to make clothing, food containers, mats and fish traps. Fibre was obtained from the leaves by first scraping them with mussel shells. The extracted fibre was then washed, dried and bleached in the sun. It was then finally rolled into



Kanuka flowers



a double thread for weaving. Flower stalks were made into rafts and nectar from the flowers sweetened fern root meal. The orange gum from the base of the plant was administered as an antiseptic and as an aid to stop bleeding. When flowering, flax provides nectar for our honeyeaters. The seeds are eaten by kakariki and the bushy clumps provide shelter and nesting sites for penguins.

#### Further flax facts:

Samuel Marsden took flax back to Sydney in 1815 where it was made into rope. Some time later flax rope was tested by the Royal Navy. It proved to be stronger than the hemp rope that they had been using. The subsequent adoption of flax ropes by the Royal Navy led to flax mills being set up in N.Z. by the 1870s.

Michael Joseph Savage (born Victoria Australia 1872) emigrated to N.Z. in 1907 and spent his first 6 months here cutting flax in the Manawatu region. He shifted to Auckland in 1908 where he became involved in the trade union movement. First elected to parliament in 1919 he became prime minister of N.Z. in 1935.

By 1916 flax was N.Z.'s main export. Unfortunately a combination of phormium yellow leaf disease establishing in the 1930's and the

later manufacture of synthetic rope fibre caused the N.Z flax industry to collapse by the 1960's.

Our flax has been difficult to define botanically. Early botanists tried to squeeze it into known northern hemisphere families. It has gone from lillies to agaves, then to a new family PHORMIACEAE. Now it has been placed in XANTHORRHOACEAE, the principal member of which consists of *Xanthorrhoea* species Australian grass trees.



Flax feature detail of leaf

From Greek xantho, yellow rheo, to flow (a glassy resin flows from the base of the trunk cf. orange gum from flax base).

Our flax belongs to genus *Phormium*, which contains two species:

1. *Phormium tenax harakeke*  
Gk phormos, basket, wickerwork (weaving)  
tenax holding fast

2. *Phormium cookianum* mountain flax.

Maori describe about 60 varieties of flax differentiating them by their leaf shape, colour and fibre quality. They all belong to *Phormium tenax*.

N.Z flax should not be confused with the blue flowered northern hemisphere flax, the fibres of which are treated and woven into linen.

*Linum usitatissimum* linen flax



Flax flowers

## **Takahe**

Ahikaea's and Montague's chick is now very large and the family are often seen along the Ridge Road.

Cheesecake and Rossie have produced one chick. As she is a first time mum, Rossie has stepped in and is being the perfect dad. The chick is the star attraction around the Visitor Centre. Although Mahuika and Blackwatch produced two chicks they had both died by mid December.

Mungo and Edge are still together in the NE Bay/ Wetlands area.

Greg' despite his advancing years is up to his usual summer pastime of hassling visitors picnics in search of nasty nibbles down on Hobbs Beach. Blake has recently returned to the lighthouse area.

Whakama is still around the Eastern track/ Wetlands area.

## **Stitchbird/Hihi**

This season there have been seventy one first clutch nests. Of these, fifty seven went on to successfully fledge one or more chicks, with a total of one hundred and fifty first clutch fledglings (one first clutch nest still remains to fledge). Of the remaining thirteen first clutch nests that failed, five were not incubated, seven had all chicks die before fledging, and in one the female died during incubation.

Of the forty five second clutch attempted, to date seventeen have failed, sixteen have chicks, eleven have eggs still to hatch and one nest has fledged chicks.

## **Kokako**

Unfortunately Cloudsley Shovell's first nest was predated. She quickly built another nest and she and Te Koha Waiata successfully produced two chicks, Punga (YM-R) and Fern (W-YM) at the beginning of 2008.

Our other pairs are all in their usual territories.

Two of our Taranaki birds appear to have paired up with last season's chicks. Te Rae is often seen with one of the unbanded birds near the bottom of the Kawerau track. Pukaha is usually with Moby at the back of the Visitor Centre. Paranihi appears to be on his own and has been seen

around the Cable track area.

The Waipapa pair released in early October are very elusive and to date only Mawhero has been seen.

## **Brown Teal/Pateke**

Blue Bonnet (Emergency dam) only has one duckling left.

Solita and Finn (Bunkhouse dam) still have four ducklings but Finn (the Philanderer) has reverted back to his old ways and is now spending a lot of his time with Blue Bonnet.

Bella, Ossie's new mate, is now more confident with people down at the Wharf dam.

Ruan and Rose are together on the upper Wetland dam.

## **North Island Robin**

The robins have nearly reached the end of their breeding season. Currently, there are seven nests still active. These include several females incubating their eggs and seven nestlings. About sixty seven pink-banded fledglings should be moving around the Island, trying to find suitable habitat to establish their own territories.

Overall, it has been a successful breeding season.

## **North Island Saddleback**

A mixed season with a lot of the later nests being abandoned possibly due to this prolonged dry, hot weather. We have definitely lost at least one nest to myna predation.

## **Red-crowned Parakeet/Kakariki**

They have started nesting a little later than usual.

## **Fernbird**

Although the fernbird mainly eats invertebrates one was seen eating mahoe berries.

## **Other Birds**

A morepork has been roosting in the cabbage tree behind the Visitor Centre. His mate has since produced a chick and now the whole family are often seen in this area (the chick has even tried roosting inside the Visitor Centre!). A chick and the parents are also frequently seen on the Kawerau track.

Up to three kaka have been seen from time to time around the Visitor Centre.

Three New Zealand pigeon were seen on one of the cabbage trees near the Visitor Centre.

The first of the brown quail chicks started to appear around Christmas time.

Myna numbers on the Island appear to be higher this year.

The spotless crane are very visible now that the water level on the Wharf dam has dropped. They have a second clutch of two chicks.

A pair of paradise shelducks had their two ducklings predated just after Christmas.

The white-fronted terns, black-backed gulls and red-billed gulls are nesting on the rocky outcrops around the island.

The variable oystercatchers now have chicks.

Around Christmas time a New Zealand dotterel was found nesting out on the reef amongst the white fronted terns. The nest contained three eggs but unfortunately two of these were predated by a red-billed gull.

## **Other Fauna**

With the warmer weather there have been lots of Tuatara seen, including three at Pohutukawa Bay.

The common geckos, including three juveniles, have been seen feeding on the Pohutukawa blossom around Fisherman's Bay. A recent survey found over twenty five individuals, including gravid females and juveniles, in this area.

Recently one of the lizard tracking cards showed that we have at least one juvenile Duvaucel gecko on the Island.

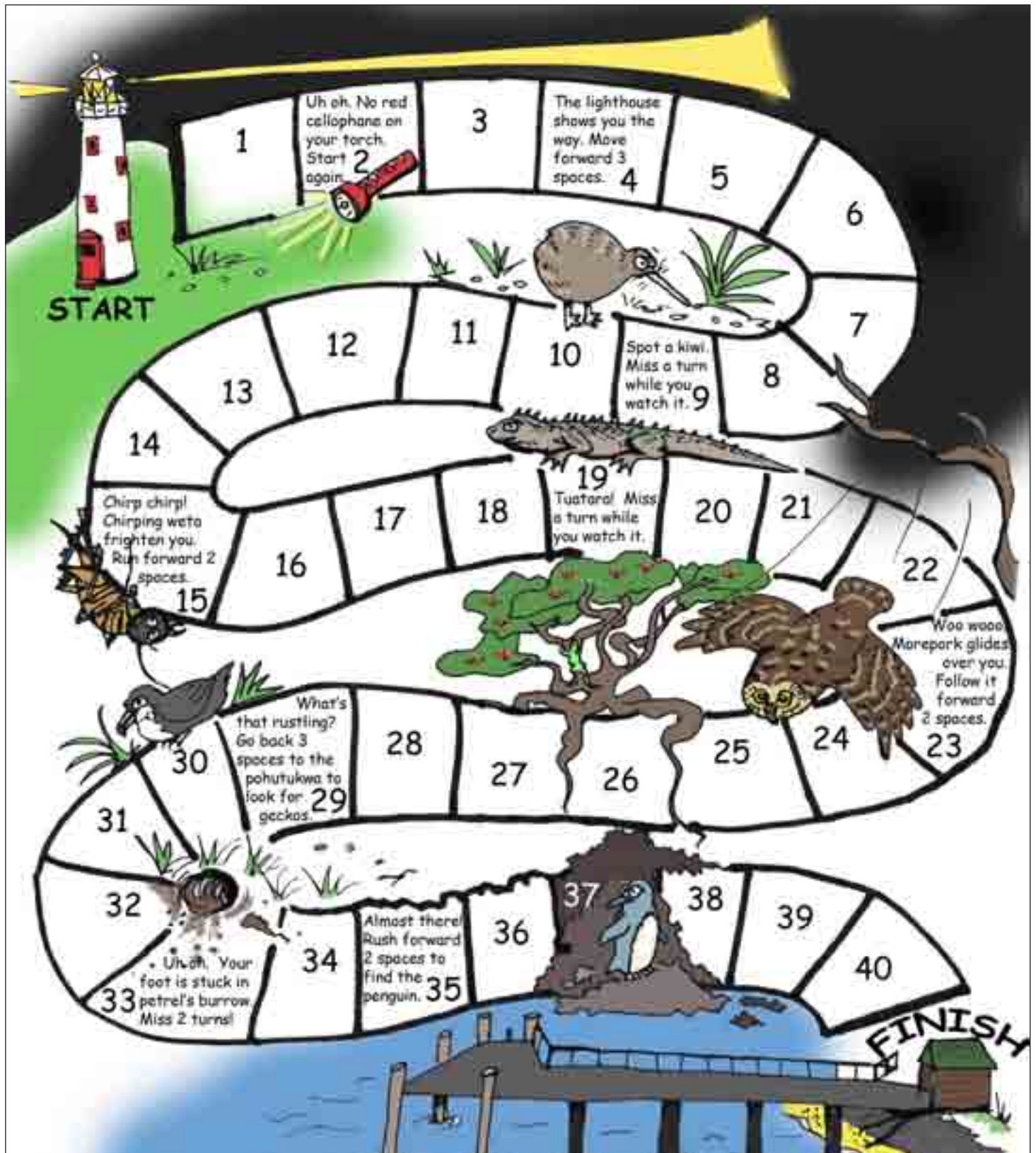
At least three of the shore skinks have been located in the same area they were released.



Hey everyone!

This time we have prepared a Night Walk game that you can play with your friends and family. There are a couple of rules before you begin: 1. You must roll a 4 to start. 2. If you roll a 6 you trip over and must miss a turn. Have fun!

Jo and Tess



# **Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc. Notice of Annual General Meeting**

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi will be held as follows:

**7.30pm Monday 17th March 2008  
at Kohia Teachers Centre, 74 Epsom Ave, Epsom**

**(Enter Gate 2 on Epsom Ave, down slope and right, into middle level of parking building. Kohia is on the far side of the carpark accessed via covered walkway. Ample safe parking.)**

**At this meeting, the following items will be included:**

Welcome - Simon Fordham

Apologies

Minutes of Previous AGM - Peter Lee

Matters Arising

General Business

Financial Report - Bill Mancer

Election of Officers - In accordance with the revised constitution (2007) nominations closed 31 January.

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**List of Nominations for 2008 Committee** (brief introduction to each candidate can be found on page 11 of this issue of Dawn Chorus)

- Chairperson - Peter Lee. Nominated: Mel Galbraith, seconded Simon Fordham
- Secretary - Jill Courteaud. Nominated: Simon Fordham, seconded: Peter Lee
- Treasurer - No nominations received.
- Committee - Cathy Catto, Val Smytheman, Hester Cooper, Maria Galbraith, Melinda Habgood, Carl Hayson, Murray Anderson, Ray & Barbara Walter (all nominated by Simon Fordham, seconded: Peter Lee)

**Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc. PO Box 90814, Auckland Mail Service Centre, Auckland 1142**



## **Dawn Chorus**