



Dawn Chorus

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Information

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 \$66.00 Child \$29.00
Senior/ Student/ Backpacker \$59.00
Ex GH: Adult \$39.00 Child \$19.50
Senior/ Student/ Backpacker \$34.00
NB. There is an extra \$3pp fuel surcharge on all bookings

Guided Walks:

Adult \$5.00: Child \$2.50

Discounts available to the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi (SoTM) on special supporter weekends

School Visits

Schools wishing to visit Tiritiri should first visit our website:

**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.

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

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 has to be at the request of the guiding & shop manager or the Supporters' committee.



Upcoming Events 2009

March 16th

AGM at Kohia Teachers' Centre

April 18th and 19th

Families' weekend

May 30th, 31st and 1st June

Working weekend

July 25th 26th

Families' weekend

August 23rd

Kowhai day picnic,
50 spaces available

October 10th and 11th

Adult's non-working weekend

October 17th and 18th

Families' weekend

October 24th, 25th and 26th

Labour weekend
working weekend

If you wish to attend one of these exciting 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

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.

Contact Details

Chairperson: Peter Lee, *Telephone:* (09) 418 1332, e-mail: chairperson@tiritirimatangi.org.nz

Secretary: Jill Courteaud, *Telephone:* (09) 239 2014, e-mail: secretary@tiritirimatangi.org.nz

Treasurer: Kevin Vaughan, *Telephone:* (09) 817 9262, email kevinv@clear.net.nz

Membership Secretary: Simon Fordham, *Telephone:* (09) 274 1828, e-mail: membership@tiritirimatangi.org.nz

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

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

Murray Anderson, *Telephone:* (09) 236 0520, e-mail: teama@xtra.co.nz

Maria Galbraith, *Telephone:* (09) 820 7342, e-mail: mariag@summerland.school.nz

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

Carl Hayson, *Telephone:* (09) 479 4217, e-mail: cgpartners@clear.net.nz

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

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

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

Tiritiri DOC Rangers: Dave Jenkins & James Lang (09) 476 0920, e-mail: tiritirimatangifb@doc.govt.nz

SoTM Guiding & Shop Manager: Mary-Ann Rowland 09 476 0010, e-mail: 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.

The Lucky Project?

In October the Supporters achieved a milestone. It was 20 years since Jim Battersby gathered a small band of volunteers together to provide aid and help to the then-struggling Tiri project. Jim has often commented in subsequent years how he never imagined in his wildest dreams that we would grow to have the size, value and influence that we have; a true partner of DoC, contributing thousands of hours of volunteer time, as well as raising hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The current role of our support group may seem natural, but like many success stories it has been a mixture of hard work, dedication, inspiration and much good fortune.

We are often asked what makes us successful and indeed I've talked about this in the past year in a number of seminars. Of course we can trot out the usual suspects: an engaged volunteer base, a diversified income stream, our guiding manager; indeed, these have been crucial. But merely replicating these, even if they could, would not guarantee success for any other project.

What Tiritiri has - what all great adventures have - are two things: something indefinable, a sense of magic, coupled with being blessed with good fortune.

In our recent brainstorming exercise many people commented on the 'special magic' of our island - what they feel, and how much they want that magic to continue. Architects

call it 'genius loci', the spirit of a place, which is why no two buildings should ever be the same. Each reflects its own unique situation. And Tiritiri most definitely is something special, a place apart.

Being an island helps, as do the cost and difficulty of getting there. But we have also been blessed in ways that are quite special, none more important than the people who have left their mark. It is impossible to imagine what the Tiritiri project would have accomplished without Ray and Barbara, for example, and the many other people who have contributed along the way. That cannot be planned for; it is pure fortune.

So next time you have a quiet drink, raise a toast to Tiritiri Matangi - the Lucky Project.

The Tiri Gift Shop

Happy New Year from your very own Island Shop.

If you have ever felt like taking Greg the takahe home with you, now is your chance. Metal garden versions are available, large \$42 or medium \$30, also pukeko large \$30, small \$25. Wire kiwi are \$26 and \$36. We have some beautiful hand painted jugs for \$25, Tiri tea towels \$10 and humming bird feeders complete with instructions, only \$22. Lastly we have managed to source a neck saving binocular (or camera) harness by Vortex. They are completely adjustable and really do take the weight off your neck for \$48; NB price does not include the model!!

To order you can either phone the island Wednesday to Sunday, weather permitting, on 09 476 0010, or email manager@tiritirimatangi.org.nz. Have a great summer,

Your shop crew.



The quail on Tiritiri Matangi

by Mark Seabrook-Davison

It has long been a mystery as to what species of quail is present on Tiritiri Matangi. Although it is obvious the quail is a small ground bird, some visitors to the island have mistaken the quail for a variety of animals ranging from kiwi to rats. For the last two years I have been attempting to solve this mystery and I can now report to the Supporters what species it actually is. But I am afraid you will have to wait to the end of this article to find out!

A helpful birder who wondered why it was necessary for me as a PhD student to do this research, suggested I take a photograph of a quail, get a reference book and I would know what species it was in a few minutes. If only taxonomic solutions were that easy! Morphologically, several of the Australasian quail are very similar and hard to tell apart and they also display similar behaviour.

Wildlife research, especially ecology, raises more questions than it answers and the challenge for a researcher is to know how to stick to the original objectives of the research. In my case the simple question of "what is the species of quail on Tiritiri Matangi" expanded into a full taxonomic and phylogenetic study of quail species distributed throughout New Zealand, Australia, parts of the Pacific and into Asia. Okay, so I admit I got side-tracked, but my ventures into the whole *Coturnix* quail genus complex have been exciting and in turn have provided some insights into New Zealand's extinct quail species, *Coturnix novaezelandiae*.

There are three species of quail which formed the initial focus of

my research. Although there are no reliable historical records, early bird collectors and ornithologists such as Buller considered the New Zealand quail *Coturnix novaezelandiae* went extinct in the 1870's. During the very active period of the Acclimatisation Societies in the mid 19th century, many game birds were introduced to New Zealand, including two Australian quail species: the brown quail *Coturnix ypsilophora* and the stubble quail *Coturnix pectoralis*. Anecdotal

reports suggest that quail have been on Tiritiri Matangi for approximately 100 years but there are no Acclimatisation Society (Fish & Game New Zealand) records of quail being officially released onto the island. Generally it was thought the Tiritiri Matangi

quail were the Australian or Tasmania quail. There have been suggestions that past lighthouse keepers may have introduced quail to the island but Ray & Barbara Walter are unaware of this occurring. A suggestion from Professor John Craig to myself that the Tiritiri Matangi population may be a remnant population of the New Zealand quail was the instigation for my research.

The bulk of my research has involved a genetic analysis using quail DNA to compare the various species, in a similar way to a forensic scientist

doing DNA fingerprinting. Every living and extinct organism contains a unique DNA sequence and these sequences can be used to understand the relation species have to each other. DNA also allows insights into the evolution of species and their geographical

distribution. I obtained tissue samples from quail on Tiritiri Matangi and compared the DNA sequences of these samples with those from specimens of *Coturnix ypsilophora* (Australian brown quail), *Coturnix pectoralis* (Stubble quail) from Australian museums and specimens of the extinct New Zealand quail *Coturnix novaezelandiae* from New Zealand museums. The laboratory work got a bit tricky especially when we tried to extract DNA from ancient (greater than 100 years) New Zealand quail tissue (toe pads, feathers and bones).

To cut a very long and complicated story short, we obtained DNA sequences from all our samples which allowed us to construct a phylogenetic tree (which is a bit like a human's family tree), enabling us to show the relatedness between New Zealand and Australian quail species. An unexpected and exciting result



Preserved specimen of extinct
NZ quail from Cambridge Museum



Mark Seabrook-Davison and Taneal Cope measuring and taking samples from quail on Tiri.
© Clare Seabrook-Davison

from this research has allowed us to speculate as to what time the New Zealand quail evolved into a distinct species.

We did get excited at one point when our early results showed that the Tiritiri Matangi quail could be the New Zealand quail. Being cautious, we conducted further molecular analysis and found the two species were dissimilar. We expanded our analysis to include quail species in the *Coturnix* complex from other countries, namely Asia and Island groups in the Pacific. It was well worth extending our analysis as we have been able to decipher the relationship between all species in the *Coturnix* complex throughout their biogeographical range.

Well here it is. The quail on Tiritiri Matangi is now confirmed as the Australian brown quail *Coturnix ypsilophora*. As this species is reasonably good at flying short distances, we suspect that it has flown or been blown across from the mainland. I have confirmed populations of *Coturnix ypsilophora* from Tawharanui, Riverhead/Coatesville, Motuora Island and there are reports (Kevin Parker pers. comm.) of a population on Motuihe Island. Therefore it is highly probable that there are populations of brown quail throughout the greater Auckland area and distributed throughout the Hauraki Gulf islands.

There has been a conservation angle to this research as well as the taxonomic objective. The quail on Tiritiri Matangi are well established

and the good thing is that they do not detrimentally interact with the threatened species introduced to the island. For the past five years I have studied the population on Tiritiri Matangi and feel that the population is at saturation or at a maximum population level that the island can sustain: about 200-300 individuals. The quail form family groups or covies and have defined territories. I have not witnessed any interaction with other species and consider they do not compete with other ground birds such as Pukeko or Takahe. Their diet appears to be omnivorous depending on the availability of foliage, flowers,

seeds and invertebrates. There may be some overlap in foraging behaviour between quail and NI saddleback and NI robin, but there appears to be no detrimental effect on these species. I believe quail perform an important ecological function on Tiritiri Matangi as “ecological engineers”. They till the leaf litter and distribute seeds around the island. In essence, they have filled the ecological niche of the extinct New Zealand quail.

I am very grateful to the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi and Massey University for providing the funding for this research. I thank my Supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dianne Brunton, for her encouragement and guidance throughout the project. Advice from Ray & Barbara Walter, Ian Price, Jennifer Haslam and my colleagues at the Ecology & Conservation Group of Massey University has been invaluable. I thank Prof. John Craig for suggesting the idea for this research. Dr Leon Huynen has been a joy to work with and his molecular analytical skills never cease to amaze me. Finally, thank you to the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi for advice, observations of quail, helping with field equipment and the provision of quail samples.



Rifleman Translocation to Tiritiri Matangi Island

by Simon Fordham

As you read this, it is expected that a new species of bird will be included in the wonderful biodiversity of Tiri, the rifleman.

At only 8cm the rifleman is described as New Zealand's smallest bird, although the grey warbler is about the same weight but with a longer tail. The male is a vivid green, hence the name rifleman, whilst the slightly larger female is brown. They are predominantly insectivorous and can often be

around the upper limit of human hearing. They are not particularly loud and usually beyond the audible range for anyone with even the slightest hearing impairment.

Rifleman are part of New Zealand's most ancient lineage of birds. The wrens were amongst the first birds to arrive in New Zealand and so the rifleman are particularly unique here.

Rifleman are not endangered but they are threatened due to the fragmentation of our forests. They are poor dispersers across water and open habitats so, once lost from a block of bush, they may well be unable to recolonise without human assistance. Also, due to very small body size, populations may crash after very cold winters etc and predators can restrict their ability to recover.

Because rifleman nest in holes in trees, their nests may be more prone to predation from the likes of rats and mice. However, it is perhaps fortunate that rifleman may not be as vulnerable to predation

as some species as, unlike a saddleback for example, they spend very little time on the ground and their nesting holes are often too small for predators to enter.

Once widespread, they are now described as locally common from the Waikato / Coromandel to the bottom of the South Island. They are common on Little Barrier Island and also present on Great Barrier Island. As recently as 20 years ago, a remnant population was discovered in a kauri forest at Warawara, north

of the Hokianga Harbour. In recent years, they appear to have become extinct on Stewart Island although a healthy population does exist on nearby Codfish Island.

The rifleman has long been identified as a potential species for Tiri and is specifically mentioned in the 1997 Working Plan. After many years of expectation, and around two years of preparation, a team of ten will visit Little Barrier Island from 11 to 22 February with the intention of catching up to 40 birds.

Because of lessons learnt from other translocations, the transfer differs from larger bird species in that rifleman cannot be held in an aviary awaiting disease test results. Survival is dependent on minimizing the time between capture and release. Birds will not be caught before mid morning, thereby allowing them time to have an early feed, and they will then be transferred by helicopter for a mid to late afternoon release.

This will be the third site to which rifleman will be translocated. The first two transfers were from Codfish Island to Ulva Island, an Open Scientific Reserve in Paterson Inlet, Stewart Island. More recently, a number of birds were transferred within Hawkes Bay, from Boundary Stream to Cape Kidnappers. Numbers are increasing on Ulva Island although the Cape Kidnappers transfer was too recent (2008) to determine the long term success. However, breeding has been recorded there in the first season.

seen acting like tree-creepers, i.e. ascending the trunks of larger trees, searching for food along the way.

The common call is a sharp, repetitive squeak, at frequencies



Little Spotted Kiwi Survey

by Simon Fordham

Ever since the first release of little spotted kiwi on Tiri in 1993, a census has been held at five yearly intervals. The census consists of a combination of catching & banding birds and identifying territories from their calls. In 2007, the estimated population was 60 to 80 individuals, an encouraging result as the founder population was only 14 birds and, only five years earlier, the estimate was approximately 30 birds.

Last year, with encouragement from Wendy Sporle from the BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust, it was decided to supplement the five yearly census with an annual call count. Whilst not as accurate as the comprehensive census, when conducted in accordance with established protocols these can give a good indication of trends within kiwi populations.

An attempt to begin this last June was unsuccessful due to appalling weather conditions. It was

consequently decided to reschedule this for March each year, the exact timing determined by the phase of the moon – such surveys need to be conducted on dark nights.

The 2009 call count on Tiri will be from Sunday 22nd to Saturday 28th March. A team of 10 volunteers is required for this week. Each evening,

participants will be sited at pre-determined locations and, for 2 hours from sunset, will record direction, estimated distance and sex of any calls. Priority, as usual, will be given to SoTM members and required skills are minimal. Experience with

use of a compass will be an advantage and the ability to differentiate between male & female calls will also be required. However, both of these skills can be learnt relatively quickly.

If you would like to be considered for involvement in this, please email me at simonf@clear.net.nz or phone 09 274 1828.



Reflections of Saddleback on the Barbecue

by Simon Fordham

One of the delights of places like Tiri is not just seeing birds up close but observing their wide and varied behaviours. This was reiterated on the morning of 28 December when, at 8.00 AM, I arrived at the courtyard outside the bunkhouse to discover a pair of saddlebacks “playing” around and under the barbecue. They had apparently been there for around an hour at that stage.

In between regular interactions between the two birds, including the touching of beaks to the sounds of some delightful melodies, they would climb the legs of the barbecue and face the underside. My initial impression was that they may be gleaning insects or spiders but it was soon suggested that maybe they were looking at their reflections. This was quickly confirmed as the stainless steel drip tray doubles as a mirror.



These birds continued this throughout the day, regularly trying to communicate with the look-alike impostors. As they did so, the number of droppings, in the form of digested coprosma berries, increased around the base, testament to the fact that saddlebacks are not exclusively insectivores. I think they disappeared at around 7.00 that evening, but not before numerous images, both still and video, were recorded. These could well now be the most photographed saddlebacks in history.

This pair returned to try again on subsequent days but were discouraged by the prudent use of the barbecue cover.

It is also interesting to note that saddleback, presumably the same pair, had also begun to build a nest behind the “Premier Hotel” sign behind the barbecue, although this attempt was abandoned.

A Tiri Summer

A saddleback taking full advantage of having the flax all to itself. © Miriam Ludbrook.



Many Supporters take part in the Hobbs Beach water frisbee championships.

© Ruth Corkill.

There's nothing like a synchronised wharf jump to get into the water quickly. ©Ruth Corkill.



These organic constructions were found on Hobbs Beach, left by a mysterious visitor who clearly wanted to spread holiday joy.

© Julie Cotterill.



These visitors skipped the ferry tickets and came of their own accord. © Ian Higgins.



After a long day bird-spotting, Ava Williams enjoys the water down at Hobbs.
© Sarah Galbraith.



Early morning dawn makes a silhouette of a tui.
© Mary-Ann Rowland.



Sunset over the Hauraki Gulf and mainland as viewed from the bunkhouse. © Val Smytheman.

A Guiding Experience

by Des Mann

Guiding on Tiritiri Matangi is at best satisfying and enjoyable, at worst exciting and unpredictable. It is certainly never dull. We decided to guide on the last two days of the 'everyday' summer season, staying overnight in the bunkhouse. The first of those two days was seductively warm, but not for one member of my group who thought it was extremely hot. His reason for this became apparent later.

My usual introduction focused attention upon the fact that Tiritiri Matangi is a 'scientific reserve'. It is more than a scenic reserve or just a pleasant place to see some rare birds and have a picnic. I hope always to ignite an awareness of New Zealand's uniqueness, and of Tiritiri Matangi in particular. The invasion of this country by aliens – people, plants and animals – has unravelled some millions of years of evolutionary history. In a way, Tiritiri Matangi is a microcosm of a process which was the New Zealand phenomenon for the last 800 years. Now, on Tiri, we are attempting to overcome the damage. And so with this introduction ... I was away, hoping that by the end of the day some glimmer of a new perspective, a scientific viewpoint, would emerge.

Little did I expect my introductory comments to be reinforced by the member of the group who had thought the day to be extremely hot! He was an American citizen who had arrived early that morning after a flight originating in Cleveland, Ohio (where the temperature was -10) bound for Auckland via Los Angeles, only 20 hours earlier! He could hardly wait to clear customs, drop his baggage at a hotel and phone 360 Discovery to find if there was space available for a day on Tiritiri Matangi. To visit the island on his only available day before embarking on a ship the next day was the fulfillment of an ambition to experience this unique island!

Armed with an informative book on the NZ biota and a heap of background reading, he was ready to extract everything he could from the day, at the end of which he thanked me for 'firing' it along as we walked the Kawerau Track.

Already he had made notes about the penguins he had seen from the boat on the way over, to which he added comments from my introduction and other observations as we went. Near the landing toilet block he spotted "a bird with a fan", to which the piwakawaka responded appreciatively with a pirouette and a display of acrobatics. Later, from the track railing overlooking Hobbs Beach where I was talking about the reforestation project, three stingray were seen patrolling the water off the beach.

A short distance further on kingfishers, whiteheads, saddlebacks, robins and parakeets made their debut. The final tour de force came at the first of the feeder stations on the upper Kawerau where stitchbirds and bellbirds were active. As we watched, a very well-fed kereru alighted on a tree about two metres above our heads.... "Ye gods, what's this?!" was spontaneously exclaimed by our American visitor. To add to the scene came a tui determined to dispute the right to a treetop perch. A power struggle between kereru and tui ensued, a classic Darwinian struggle for survival and part of the way our eco-system functions. In this case the tui lost!

Upon reaching the top of Coronary Hill we saw a very large container ship steaming towards Auckland. This served as a timely reminder to the group that New Zealand continues to be under threat from aliens. Despite the utmost vigilance they do arrive – anything from furry fungi to aphids and ants. It can never be assumed that it is possible to reach a self-protected defensive stasis for our biota.

I felt that the objectives I had in mind for the day had been achieved, all within the context of

the 'big picture'. Our indigenous flora and fauna bear the imprint of an evolutionary history replicated nowhere else on our planet. Our American visitor claimed that the day was everything he wanted and an unforgettable experience.

Our second day of guiding was a non-event. The onset of adverse weather was sufficient to cancel this 360 Discovery trip. With no further ferry sailings until Wednesday, this left us with the problem of leaving Tiritiri. A 'rescue' trip to Gulf Harbour was negotiated. DOC ranger James advised us as to the possible time. This proved to be uncertain—at first it was early morning, then about midday, then late afternoon. Finally, the party of eleven people: three guides, two research students and eight visitors including two young children, gathered at the wharf in readiness for a 4.30 dash across the Tiritiri Matangi passage.

We watched a superb display of seamanship as Colin, master of the ferry, manoeuvred into a berth. This was not the end. Vigorous swells of more than a metre put at risk the safety of the moorings, the boat itself, and, most of all, the possibility of boarding passengers without mishap. A decision to abandon the attempt came quickly. We were left to spend another night on the island and await developments.

Meanwhile, scratch meals were successfully devised and shared. We were told to be ready for a possible 6.30am departure the next day. Early morning kiwi calls ensured that the bunkhouse came alive by 5.30am as we prepared to leave again. The weather was now moderating although the western sky was glowering.

This was a memorable experience, with much credit due to DOC ranger James for keeping us informed and the 360 Discovery team who landed us safely at Gulf Harbour at 6.50 a.m. Monday 19th January.

Mary-Ann Rowland Wins Travel Award

Our very efficient and effervescent Guiding & Shop manager, Mary-Ann Rowland, has been awarded a special travel prize by Cathay Pacific that will see her travel to the UK for two weeks.

Every year, Cathay Pacific's New Zealand arm awards six New Zealand charities and other worthy causes a return trip anywhere in the world that is serviced by its network. Awardees can use the travel award to undertake research, attend seminars or conferences or other things that will be of benefit to their organisations. Competition is naturally intense, so we were delighted when we were successful.

During her time in the UK, Mary-Ann will visit a number of conservation



volunteer projects to see how they engage volunteers, communicate with stakeholders and educate and engage the public.

We believe that through this we will be able to take a significant jump forward in generating revenues to enhance what we can achieve on the island, including translocations of further species. It may also be of benefit by helping us to find ways to better fund key threatened species research that is of vital national importance and identify latest concepts in effective volunteer management.

Finally, as SoTM is seen as a leader in the New Zealand context, we will be able to share our learnings with other conservation volunteer groups.

by Peter Lee

SoTM Committee Nominees

List of nominations for 2009 committee

Chairperson - Peter Lee. Nominated: Simon Fordham, seconded: Helen Cain

Secretary – Jill Courteaud. Nominated: Helen Cain, seconded: Morag Fordham

Treasurer – Kevin Vaughan. Nominated: Peter Lee, seconded: Jill Courteaud.

Committee - Murray Anderson, Hester Cooper, Maria Galbraith, Melinda Habgood, Carl Hayson, Graham Ussher, Barbara Walter, Ray Walter. Nominated: Peter Lee, seconded: Jill Courteaud

Peter Lee (Chairperson). Peter is the current Chairperson and is keen to carry on. He believes there is still a lot to do and many challenges. He wants to use the experiences gained in his 12 years on the committee, as well as in the past year, to help meet these challenges and to make the most of opportunities as they present themselves. He believes his business life as a manager and a senior marketer is also useful and that the relationships we're building with DoC and others, through regular meetings, are now really important. In the past year Peter initiated some strategic planning and brought in a new budgetary process

and he wants to see these really take root in 2009 to form the basis for some exciting developments in future years.

Kevin Vaughan (Treasurer). Kevin is an SoTM member who has a background in accounting and management. He has spent many years overseas before returning to retire in New Zealand.

Jill Courteaud (Secretary). Jill is an easily recognisable face, putting in lots of hours as a regular weekend shop person and occasional guide. For the past year she has served as secretary and is wanting to continue in this role this year.

Murray Anderson. Murray joined the SoTM committee last year and enjoyed the opportunity very much and would like to continue to be part of this team. Murray believes Tiri has been a great success for all concerned and feels he could contribute again with a pragmatic approach to arising issues.

Hester Cooper. Hester has a strong science background, has been a guide for over seven years, and is particularly keen to grow the research programme. She is currently chair of the biodiversity & habitat subcommittee, which oversees and makes recommendations on all translocations, biodiversity and research matters.

Maria Galbraith. Maria has been a guide on Tiri for several years and a volunteer for over 20. A committee member for two years, she has also been part of the education and communication subcommittee and is looking forward to contributing to another year of progress.

Melinda Habgood. Melinda has a long involvement with Tiri – she completed her Master's thesis on copper and moko skinks (2002/03), joined the weed team (03/04) and has been a volunteer guide since 2003. She is currently an ecologist at Te Ngahere where she works in the field of ecological restoration. Melinda believes this combination of a scientific and research background combined with her restoration experience in a commercial background is of great assistance to the Supporters. Her particular interest is bio-diversity.

Carl Hayson. Carl has had over 16 years of experience on the committee including taking on the roles of treasurer, secretary and chairperson. He retains a strong interest in all aspects of the island with a particular interest in promoting the historical side.

Graham Ussher. Graham has been on the Committee before and is keen to return. He has had a long involvement with Tiri from the days of being a student, and Graham's Road is named after him. Currently he works as a restoration ecologist for the engineering firm Tonkin & Taylor and he has worked for the ARC. He has a lot of experience in biodiversity, conservation management and biosecurity issues.

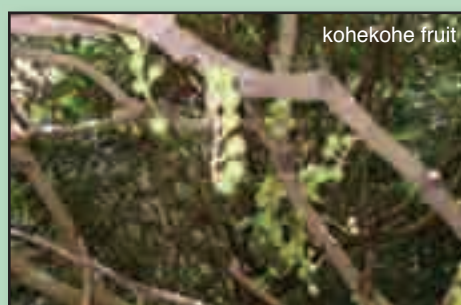
Barbara and Ray Walter. Barbara and Ray are well-known to everyone as ex-rangers on the island and are keen to see the Tiritiri project continue. They have a keen interest in the flora and fauna of the island and the volunteer input.

Flora Notes

by Warren Brewer

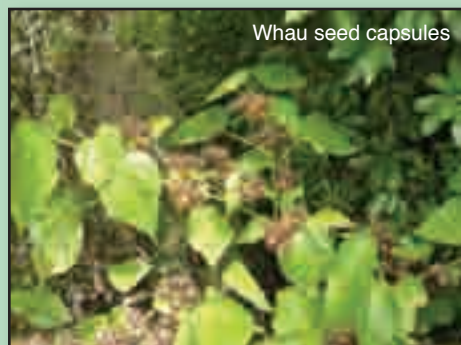
Fruit and seed formation has now replaced the flowers in the forest. This new activity gives us a lot to look at with the following three examples meriting special attention.

Firstly, kohekohe (*Dysoxylum spectabile*) with its green fruit on branches and trunk, always attracts visitors' comments. Some of this fruit is beginning to ripen to a brown colour. Ripened fruit will split open to allow the birds to eat the fleshy seed coverings inside.



kohekohe fruit

Whau (*Entelea arborescens*) has brown, bristle covered seed capsules (unique in our flora), which are starting to split open to release the seeds inside.



Whau seed capsules

Tecomanthe speciosa. This rampant vine growing alongside the visitor centre has large green seed pods (looking like exotic beans from New Guinea).



Tecomanthe seed pods

Where have all the flowers gone?

(Pete Seeger 1961)

by Warren Brewer

With the main flowering season now over it is timely to review some of the special features displayed by our native flowering plants.

We know that visitors can comment on how few really colourful and exuberant blossoms there are to be seen. Having experienced our clear blue skies, white sandy beaches and mostly temperate climate they probably anticipated an appropriately matching floral display. Instead they find a preponderance of white or greenish flowered plants with small, shallow, unspecialised blossoms which we like to describe as delicate and understated. Visiting botanists however, class them as inconspicuous! Other distinguishing features of our flora are the high percentage of genera having male and female flowers on separate plants (dioeciousness) and that there are few plants expressing annual or deciduous forms.

How has this come about?

Firstly there is the question of climate change during the last ice age. As the temperature of New Zealand cooled, 15 plant families containing 40 genera became extinct. These families were however retained in warmer regions of the

south-west Pacific. Many of the more cold tolerant plants that did survive tended to be either wind pollinated or have unspecialised, insignificant flowers.

The predominance of white or greenish coloured flowers may be explained by our large population of native moths (over 1600 species). They play a significant role in pollination.



Coprosma fruit

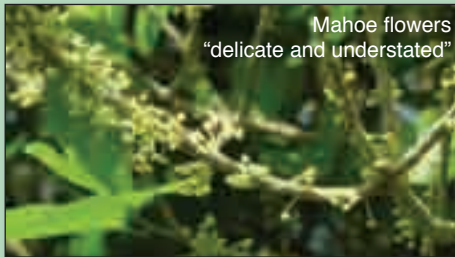
Being mainly nocturnal they rely on white or pale colours, plus scent, to guide them.

We have a small population of native butterflies (less than 20 species) which are active in daylight and are attracted by bright colours. They play a minor role in pollination.

Other possible pollinators include



Hebe inflorescence



Mahoe flowers
“delicate and understated”

Fauna Notes

Compiled by **Morag Fordham**

Takahe

Greg and Cheesecake hatched two chicks around 10 December but one died within a few days. Although they originally looked after the chick, this did not last as the chick stopped growing. It was given extra food by island staff and then taken to Auckland Zoo for extra attention. Unfortunately it has not survived.

Previously Greg has always been a great parent, even forsaking his human associates and their food titbits for the first few months of his chick's life. Perhaps it is his advancing years catching up with him. He turned sixteen on 11 December and there were appropriate birthday celebrations in his honour. Barbara Walter has provided the following notes about Greg.

Montague and Ahikaea have a chick which is doing very well and is sometimes seen along the Ridge Road. Blackwatch and Mahuika also have one chick which they kept well hidden until recently, however the family can now sometimes be seen around the lighthouse area.

Mungo and Edge have decided that nesting is not the done thing this season so they are enjoying life around the Wetlands area. Rossie and Blake, our single males, keep popping up from time to time obviously looking (unsuccessfully) for a lady friend.

Following the successful transfer of young Tiri birds to Burwood and the Murchisons over the last two years, it has been agreed that the programme

our native bees (over 40 species). These are very primitive, solitary and mainly visit smaller flowered plants such as manuka. They collect pollen but do not make honey. Our lack of any native, long tongued social bees necessitated the introduction of the honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) in 1839 to assist the establishment of widespread agriculture in New Zealand. The bumble bee (*Bombus* sp.) followed in the 1880's.

Some New Zealand plants with small flowers enhance their chances of pollination by massing their tiny blossoms together to form dense inflorescences, e.g. *Hebe species*.

It has been suggested that “the inconspicuous New Zealand floral syndrome enables flowers to be promiscuously pollinated by whatever insects are available at the time.”

When looking at the marked emphasis on dioeciousness in the New Zealand flora it would seem at first glance to be disadvantageous to need 2 types of plants to initiate pollination. However this barrier to self-fertilisation ensures variation and vigour in species which is an advantage in an isolated island setting, enhancing resistance to any adverse environmental changes. One of our most successful plants is the genus *Coprosma* with all of its species being dioecious. They have spread (adaptive radiation) and filled every niche available in their New Zealand habitat. In fact the largest concentration of *Coprosma* occur in New Zealand, followed by Hawaii (another isolated island group which has an even greater expression of dioeciousness amongst its flora).

There is some compensation for those New Zealand plants with small, sometimes wind-pollinated flowers as they often produce an abundance of brightly coloured berries, which are bird dispersed.

Acknowledgement: Inspiration sourced from Ghosts of Gondwana by George Gibbs, Craig Potton Publishing.

A Short History of Greg

Egg from Murchison
Parents: C35M and C35F
Hatched at Burwood 11/12/92
Transferred to Tiri 1/5/94
approx 18mths old



- 1) Paired with Pounamu 27/8/94
20/12/94: two eggs a) MAIA, b) WHAKAMA, cross-fostered to Bubble and Irene when just hatched.
- 2) 13/12/95: with Pounamu, KRISTIN hatched, second chick cross-fostered to Tussock and Iti but died at two days.
- 3) 9/11/96: with Pounamu – dead embryo
- 4) 3/10/97: with Pounamu, AHIKAEA; second chick fostered to Bubble and Irene, died.
- 5) 21/10/98: with Pounamu, BELLAMY
- 6) 99 season: no mate, Pounamu with Whakama!!
- 7) 1/10/00: Paired with Maudie from Maud Island, one chick, died at twelve days (Maudie stood on it). Maudie died 5/12/00 of old age and poor condition.
- 8) 2001: back to Pounamu, no breeding. Pounamu treated for suspected liver condition and disappeared Aug 2002.
- 9) 2002: paired with Adot at Fisherman's Bay – eggs broken!
- 10) 2003: with Adot – one EDE (EDE stands for Early Dead Embryo which failed to hatch), one chick, TIRI.
- 11) May 2004: Adot left him with Tiri
- 12) 2005: Tiri left him
- 13) 2006: back with daughter, Tiri.
- 14) 2007: nothing (Cheesecake was with Rossie at this time).
- 15) 2008: with Cheesecake, two chicks, both chicks died.

Photograph
© Judy Lockie

should continue. Accordingly Ahikaea and Montague's and Mahuika and Blackwatch's chicks will be transferred in early March; and Tiri genes will continue to contribute to the Fiordland population.

Stitchbird/Hihi

So far this season there have been 77 first clutches (including replacements of failed nests), and 27 second clutches. Whilst the number of first clutches is similar to last season, there are about half the number of second clutches compared to last year.

To date around 300 chicks have hatched, although as usual a considerable number have died before fledging (about 90 so far). Most nests have three chicks, occasionally up to five.

Around 160 chicks have been banded and gone on to fledge. All young this year are being banded with purple bands.

The first three chicks of the season fledged on 11 December and all first clutches have fledged.

The second clutches either have chicks awaiting banding or eggs due to hatch during January.

Kokako

It has been a very slow start to the breeding season.

Our main pair in Big Wattle Valley, Te Koha Waiata and Cloudsley Shovell, didn't use the first nest they built. The second nest failed and the chicks from their third nest were predated.

At the end of January she hatched two chicks from her fourth nest.

Moby and Pukaha (Taranaki female) from Little Wattle Valley on their very first nesting attempt ever produced one chick named Noel who has now fledged.

Amazingly, Te Karanga and Keisha from Coronary Hill/Bush 6 have finally after many years produced chicks. One died at around one week old but the remaining chick, Koha has now fledged.

Paraninihi (Taranaki male) and Fern (a chick from last season) settled in Bush 3 but their nest failed.

Te Hari and Piper who live in Bush 2 had one failed nest but produced two chicks on their second attempt. However only one chick, Skippy has

fledged successfully.

Chatters and Te Rae (Taranaki female) from Tiritiri Matangi Pa/Bush 1 area never used their first nest. The second nest failed and although they started building a third nest they stopped and have not bothered to finish it.

Poutama (the other Taranaki male released at the end of August) is still moving around and has been seen at different times with Punga (a chick from last season), Mawhero or Pureora (both Waipapa birds).

Crown, another Waipapa bird, has also been seen with these three females but still doesn't appear to have settled into a territory.

Neither Waipapa nor Naki, our Taranaki chick from last season, have been seen recently.

Brown Teal/Pateke

Ossie is being seen on the Wharf Dam on his own so hopefully Bella is away nesting.

Finn the Philanderer is as usual spreading himself around and spends his time either with a female at Emergency Landing Dam or at the Bunkhouse Dam with Solita and one of their offspring.

Some days there are up to three ducks on the Wetlands Dams. In early January an injured duck was seen near the bottom of Bush 1. The bird had lost a foot, possibly bitten off by an eel and was having difficulty walking. The fate of the duck is unknown.

N I Robin

It looks like the North Island Robins have finished the breeding season several weeks earlier this year. Most adults have stopped building nests and have started to moult. At the end of this breeding season seventy-nine fledglings have been produced and we are left with sixty-three adults; thirty-six females and twenty-seven males.

N I Saddleback

Some birds have

abandoned their nests at the egg stage but will hopefully re-nest. Mynas have also been taking over an increasing number of the nesting boxes.

Diving Petrel

On 14 November thirty nine were translocated from Wooded Island to Motuora Island, followed by a further twenty seven on 20 November. Of the sixty six, sixty two fledged with the last one leaving on 7 December.

Other Birds

There are lots of whitehead, bellbird, tui and brown quail chicks around. The red crowned parakeets/kakariki are now nesting. Although the paradise shelducks produced ducklings as usual, none of them appear to have survived. In early January two female cockatiels were seen around Fishermans Bay, presumably escaped cage birds. The morepork pair living around the Visitor Centre has two chicks. The family is often clearly seen during the day roosting in the trees behind the fence.

Tuatara

At this time of the year they are seen most nights and occasionally one can be seen during the day, especially early in the morning.

Geckos

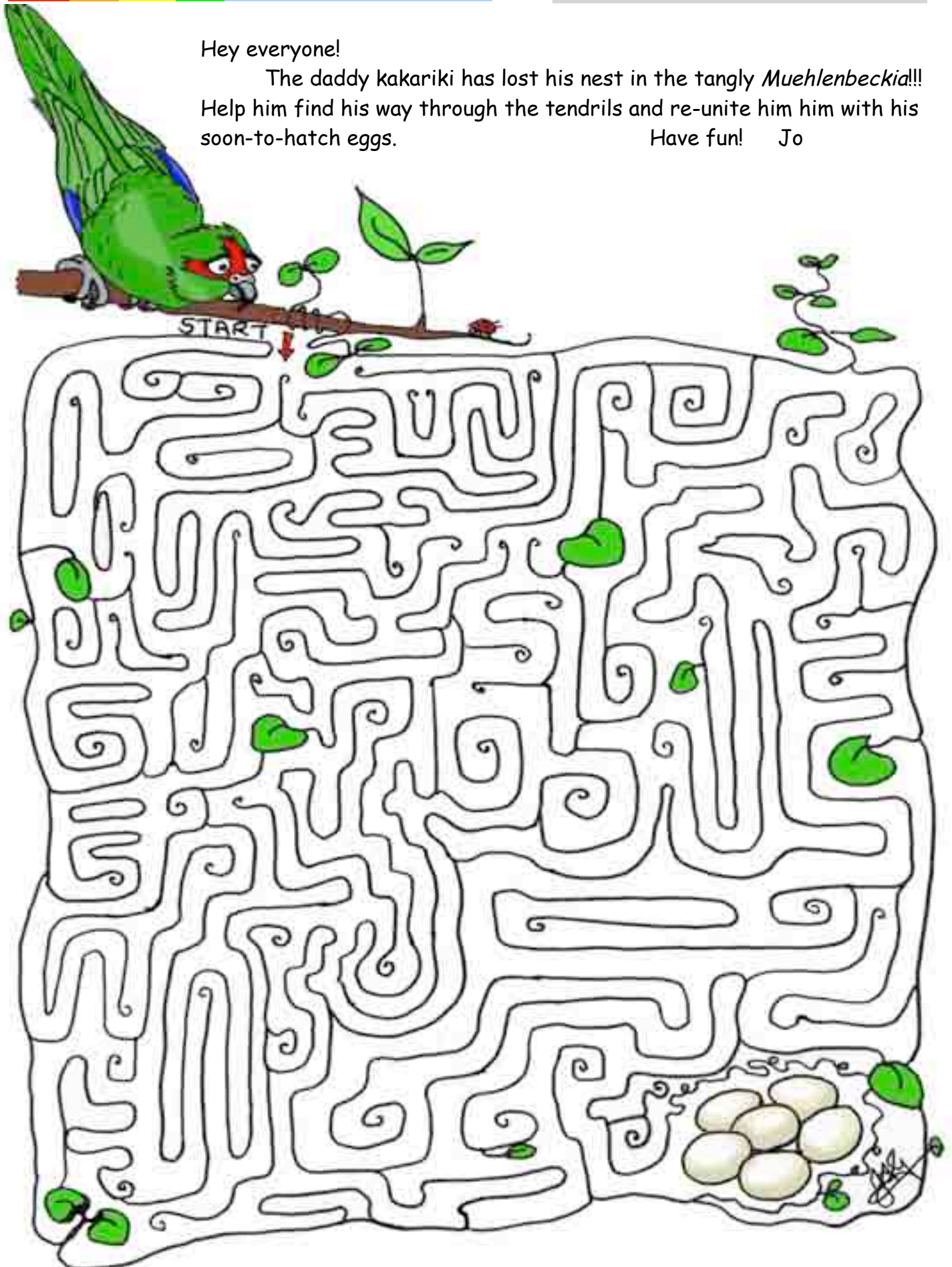
The common geckos have been seen at night feeding on Pohutukawa blossom.



Photograph
© Kathryn Jones

Hey everyone!

The daddy kakariki has lost his nest in the tangly *Muehlenbeckia*!!!
Help him find his way through the tendrils and re-unite him with his soon-to-hatch eggs.
Have fun! Jo



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 16th March 2009
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..... Peter Lee, Apologies

Minutes of Previous AGM ...Jill Courteaud,

Matters Arising..... General Business,

Financial Report..... Kevin Vaughan,

Election of Officers In accordance with the revised constitution (2007)
nominations now closed (Please see page 11 for a list of nominees).

Guest Speaker TBC

WANTED Membership Secretary

Interested in being our Membership Secretary? **Now's your chance!**

Our members are our best resource and keeping them happy is vital. As membership secretary you'll keep track of our over 1600-strong membership database.

The responsibilities include:

- processing new membership applications
- handling all aspects of membership renewal, including sending out renewal and follow-up

notices with Dawn Chorus, as well as receipting payments

• handling the inevitable inquiries. *If you're accurate, love good customer service and are willing to learn a simple database, then we'd love to hear from you.* If you want further information please contact Simon Fordham, the current membership secretary (274 1828). To apply or to express your interest, please email Peter Lee, Chairperson, on peter@naturalledge.co.nz, by Fri 27/2/09.

SoTM Funding To Schools

By Jan Ellis

SOTM has generously allocated **\$3,000** per year to fund up to half the cost of a school visit to Tiritiri Matangi. Certain criteria apply. This funding is available now to make your visit to Tiritiri Matangi unforgettable for your students. Applications close end of Term 1 so for more information please contact Mary-Ann Rowland, our shop and guiding manager, or visit our website.

Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc. PO Box 90 814, Victoria Street West, Auckland 1142



Dawn Chorus