

SUPPORTERS of



TIRITIRI MATANGI  
Incorporated

# Dawn Chorus

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Red-crowned Parakeet - Photo: Roger Bray

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# Information

## Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi

Dawn Chorus is the quarterly newsletter of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi (SoTM). We are a volunteer incorporated society working closely with the Department of Conservation to make the most of the wonderful conservation restoration project that is Tiritiri Matangi. Every year volunteers put thousands of hours into the project and raise funds through membership, guiding and also through our island based gift shop.

For further information, visit  
[www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz](http://www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz)

## Getting to Tiritiri Matangi

360 Discovery operates daily services every Wednesday through Sunday from Downtown Auckland and Gulf Harbour Marina.

### BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL!

Phone 0800 360 347  
 or visit  
[www.360discovery.co.nz](http://www.360discovery.co.nz)

Weather Cancellations: Please call 0800 FANTAIL (0800 326 824) after 7.00 AM on the day to confirm if vessel is running.

## 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)

**Advance bookings are essential**

## Overnight Visits

Although camping is not permitted on the island, there is limited bunkhouse accommodation available.

For information on booking overnight visits, go to:

[www.doc.govt.nz/tiritiribunkhouse](http://www.doc.govt.nz/tiritiribunkhouse)

Bookings can also be made by phoning the Warkworth Area Office on 09 425 7812, although an additional booking fee will apply.

Volunteers who are undertaking official SoTM work can obtain accommodation at no charge but this must be booked through the Guiding & Shop Manager (contact details below).

SoTM members who wish to visit in a private capacity can get a discounted rate by booking through the Warkworth Area Office 09 425 7812.

## Upcoming Events 2010

June 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup>  
 Queen's Birthday Working Weekend

July 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup>  
 Families Weekend

Kowhai Picnic Day  
 Sunday August 15<sup>th</sup>

September 13<sup>th</sup>  
 SoTM September Social

September 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>  
 Adults Non-working Weekend

October 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup>  
 Families Weekend

October 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup>  
 Labour Working Weekend

**Bookings for island events can only be made with the Guiding & Shop Manager (contact details below)**

360 Discovery kindly offers a discount to SoTM members for special weekends and events and complimentary fares for working weekends.

**Deadline  
 August Issue  
 Dawn Chorus  
 20 July 2010**

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“AGM”. Those three letters can often strike fear into even the most ardent member of a group – but not for the Supporters. Our AGM is a chance to celebrate the successes of the past year and have a witty and entertaining speaker – and, of course, to elect a new committee. This year’s was no different.

Richard Jakob-Hoff gave a most interesting insight into Auckland Zoo’s Centre for Conservation Medicine – enlivened with some very humorous biographical snippets! The NZCCM has forged close links with Tiritiri Matangi in recent years and has taken care of our takahe more than once.

AGMs are a chance, too, to recognise and thank the many people who so freely have given of their time. We farewelled two committee members: Murray Anderson and Graham Ussher. I would like to thank both for their contributions. Thanks, too, to Jill Courteaud who stepped down as secretary in July 2009, and to Helen Cain, who took up that post and has been re-elected. Thanks, too, to the various people who have kept the membership secretary role going in the past year – Simon Fordham, Mindy Anne, Kevin Vaughan, Helen Cain and now Zhea Warden.

Kevin Vaughan continues as treasurer, to our great relief, and committee members who have been re-elected are Melinda

Habgood (now Rixon), Ray and Barbara Walter, Hester Cooper, Maria Galbraith and Carl Hayson. We welcomed a new committee member, John Stewart. A Belfast lad (as is immediately obvious from his accent!), John has had years of conservation experience, both in his native Northern Ireland and more latterly in NZ. He’s already been snapped up for our biodiversity subcommittee.

Behind the scenes, David Meldrum continued to do a sterling job as our book-keeper, doing everything from bankings to preparing the monthly cheques to our dozens of suppliers and others. Simon Fordham continued the great Dawn Chorus editor traditions - this is of course his second stint in the role. We also have several sub-committees that are very much the work-horses of the Supporters – Biodiversity, Infrastructure and Education & Comms.

Perhaps the most visible face of the Supporters is our many guides and shop volunteers, many of whom volunteer their time frequently. In charge of them all, and our shop, is our indefatigable Guiding & Shop Manager, Mary-Ann Rowland.

Thanks to all who have given of their time so freely.

And what of the future? See later in this issue for more!

## Education for Sustainability Tiritiri Matangi Island

Dee Pigneguy

**If you want children to see the world through the lens of sustainability, you must enrich their minds and capture their hearts with experiences in nature.**

Curiosity is the starting point for learning to see the environment in a new way, and Tiritiri Matangi Island provides a wonderful opportunity to be in the natural world. It is in this magical setting where anyone can see the web of life in action and where Tiri guides introduce children to conservation, instilling a sense of wonder just by sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm for the project.

There is no need to prematurely ask children to deal with ecological problems beyond their control, we just need to get them outside exploring the landscape, letting them develop a love for the natural environment. Just ask any of the guides about their dedication to conservation, and lurking in their background will be an adult who provided fun opportunities to be in the natural world.

Like ancient caves covered with wall paintings that projected the history, the hopes and dreams of a people, Tiri’s Visitor Centre invites the questioning mind to map the progress of the creation of a sustainable island. One visit would never

be enough to take it all in, but the colourful and engaging displays make Tiri an open book for endless discovery.

And talking of books, Tiritiri Matangi has one of the most impressive collections of non-fiction books available in a small shop. Not only are the books attractively displayed, they cover a wide range of issues relating to biodiversity and sustainability. Our bookshop sets a benchmark for other New Zealand bookshops. The shelves are crammed with non-fiction books suitable for all ages, written by New Zealand authors, showcasing stories and ideas that reflect our country, our species, geology, and natural history.

Tiritiri Matangi provides a kaleidoscope of options for introducing children to ecological literacy. A visit to this island treasure will introduce them to passionate, knowledgeable guides and volunteers, rare species of both flora and fauna, world class Visitor Centre interpretation, a truly unique book shop and an educational resource for teachers. What more could inquiring minds ask for?

**Finally, after keeping us waiting for a bit longer than expected, there are now lots of baby wetapunga (see photo) hatching in the maternity ward at Butterfly Creek.**

During May 2009 the intrepid team of Chris Green, Paul Barrett and George Gibbs collected 12 more adult wetapunga from Hauturu / Little Barrier Island during the annual monitoring trip. These were added to the captive rearing programme at Butterfly Creek and, like the earlier intake (as reported in Bulletin 77), settled in well and began mating and laying eggs. The first egg hatched in early January but we had to wait until early February for the second. Then the floodgates opened and they have been steadily hatching ever since.

Paul has reared the closely related Poor Knights giant weta, as well as many other species, and it turns out that these wetapunga babies are very different. They appear to need protein as their first meal and thus, in the wild, would be programmed to hunt far and wide to find protein sources. Thus Paul is seeing his babies being very active in the first week of life, searching all over the container. All babies are given a wide range of potential food types and protein is provided in the form of dried fish food and the occasional dead insect, both of which can be eaten. It seems that some weta are born with a poor sense of knowing what is best for them and just never get to take that first bite, and thus, after a week of roving around the container, they die. Those that do start to feed seem to settle down and are a lot easier to take care of after that. Each baby has its own container so there is no risk of the protein meal being another weta!



**Wetapunga in the Hand**

Wetapunga have 10 instars or stages of growth, with the final being the adult. We are expecting the first 4 or 5 instars to take about a month each and so far this has been the case, with some of the early weta now in third instar. Nine female weta were taken off Little Barrier Island; the eggs from five of these have been hatching, so we are getting good genetic diversity. At present there are over 100 babies under Paul's very capable care and we are looking at a release of near full grown wetapunga onto Tiritiri Matangi sometime during autumn 2011, provided they grow as predicted. A lot will depend on any slow down of growth over the colder winter months. I am keeping my eye out for good release sites, preferably two that are not too far away from each other. Each site needs to have lots of food plants, such as mahoe (*Meliclytus ramiflorus*), karamu (*Coprosma robusta*), and puriri (*Vitex lucens*), as well as good natural daytime refuges to hide in. The latter can be the dead skirts of tree ferns (*Cyathea dealbata*) or cabbage trees (*Cordyline australis*), or any thick suspended vegetation mats such as pohuehue (*Muehlenbeckia australis*) when it grows up over trees. From survey work on Little Barrier Island it seems that the younger wetapunga are quite sedentary, but when they reach adulthood they can move up to 50 metres each night when seeking mates or oviposition sites. Thus night walks on Tiritiri will become much more exciting in the years to come with these giants marauding over the landscape.



Photo: Butterfly Creek

**Wetapunga Hatchling - March 2010**

## ARTICLES FOR DAWN CHORUS

In the true democratic sense, Dawn Chorus is the magazine "of the members, by the members and for the members". Contributions are always welcome - both articles and photos. Articles should normally be up to 1200 words (1 page excluding photos) but longer articles will be considered. Small snippets are also useful. Photos should be submitted in jpg format and each image should be less than 1 Mb in the first instance. Higher resolution versions may be requested if required. We are always looking for high quality images, in portrait format, for the front cover. Please send photos and other material to:

**[editor@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:editor@tiritirimatangi.org.nz)**

# To Infinity and Beyond!

Peter Lee, Chairperson

**In the last issue of DC I outlined our strategy for the next 10 years, with its four themes of Insight, Conservation, Inspiration and Participation. Great words, but what do they mean in practice?**

At the AGM I outlined our overall strategy, but spent time talking about a few of the projects we are working on.

**A Biodiversity Plan.** It's over 30 years since the original John Craig & Neil Mitchell plan was written. Time for an update – and this year we'll be producing a brand-new "biodiversity and habitat" plan. It will include a vegetation plan, a weed management plan, and detailed plans for key species, not only existing species such as kokako, but planned species such as bats.

**Creating a "Maritime Precinct".** Based around the lighthouse and watchtower area, this will, for the first time, recognise the richness of the island's maritime history. We'll be restoring some structures, in some cases re-creating from scratch. We also plan to develop full interpretation inside the old workshop.

**Hobbs Beach Track Upgrade.** This vital route badly needs improving to make it safer for the thousands of visitors who use it each year. We have agreed with DoC to take on the responsibility to upgrade it, and DoC provided some money as a contribution towards it. We are planning to undertake the project over the coming months.

**Updating our Website.** The current one, ably supported by Sally Green, has given us good service, but website developments and the increasing needs of our stakeholders mean we can now provide an even better portal onto the open sanctuary project. Later, we'll also be able to provide for secure, online payments, which means you'll be able to renew your membership online and we'll also look at online shopping.

**Accommodation Upgrade.** Perhaps the biggest project we're ever likely to undertake is a reassessment and redevelopment of the island's accommodation needs to ensure they will meet our requirements into the future. It's clear to everyone that something has to be done – it's too small, crowded, inflexible and (in the case of the ablutions block) in serious need of overhaul. If you've ever stayed in the bunkhouse, you'll know just what I mean! Rather than tackle everything piece-meal though, we've decided to look at the total picture.

**What's our Role?** We are acting as "lead managers", and are involving DoC, researchers and our own Supporters to come up with a concept that will work. We accept that, if it is going to come off, only the Supporters has access to the resources such as money and time. However, it will very much be a joint project, an alliance of DoC, universities and ourselves.

**What's Planned?** It's still all at the very initial stage. Just to allay any fears, we don't want an elaborate, over-the-top

and intrusive structure catering for lots more overnighters, we want something low-key and in keeping with the island's environment. We do have to cater for the varying needs of researchers (who come and go at odd hours and need space to lock away equipment), DoC staff, contractors, our own staff (such as Mary-Ann), volunteers and visitors.

**Where are we at?** So far, we've coordinated a meeting of the key interested parties. We've agreed on the broad outlines of what we want and who should be catered for. We're also "future-proofing" the project – for example, by considering the possibility of the island having three rangers. When you consider that each ranger may have family, you can see why it's so important to be very clear about what's needed so we don't wind up with a huge complex. What's most wonderful is how quickly we've all agreed on what we want – and what we don't want. Having clarity and agreement will mean a greater chance of coming up with a truly successful result – and getting the money to build it.

Whatever gets built will be done so in an environmentally-friendly way, consistent with our values. It will allow volunteers, visitors and researchers to continue to interact – that's one of the most valuable things that happens now in the bunkhouse. It will be flexible; it will cater for couples as well as groups.

**What about Funding?** No decisions have been made about how it will be funded. We don't even know the cost! In an ideal world, DoC would take care of some of the costs, and it may yet do, but we are all realistic enough to sense this is probably unlikely. However, we won't be taking on any responsibilities until we know we have funding in place. So, if you know of any good sources of funds – corporate or charity – please drop me a line!

[chairperson@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:chairperson@tiritirimatangi.org.nz)

## Get updates regularly

Once a month, I send all members with a current address an email with news and latest happenings. If you are a member and you are not receiving the Chairperson emails please make sure that we have an up-to-date email address for you by emailing:

[membership@tiritirimatangi.org.nz](mailto:membership@tiritirimatangi.org.nz).

with your name and address. You should also check your email spam folder as, in some cases, it may have been misdirected there. If it has, you should mark it as 'Not Spam' so that the next email doesn't get directed there. The other thing to do is make sure that 'chairperson@tiritirimatangi.org.nz' and 'secretary@tiritirimatangi.org.nz' are set up as trusted email addresses.

# Community Conservation Groups — their critical role in the conservation of New Zealand's threatened species

Mark Seabrook-Davison

**Community conservation groups (CCGs) have established themselves as important contributors to the management and recovery of New Zealand's threatened species and the rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems. The Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi (SoTM) can be proud of their 21 year contribution to the conservation of some of New Zealand's most threatened species.**

The role of CCGs such as SoTM is seen by the Department of Conservation (DOC) as critical in the recovery of these species. In many respects, SoTM has led the way in asserting the important role that CCGs play in the conservation of New Zealand's biodiversity whether it is ecosystem rehabilitation, advocating for threatened species, contributing to research or providing environmental education for schools. The joint project between SoTM and DOC is a conservation model admired and emulated by other conservation groups in New Zealand and overseas.

What amazes me as a relative newcomer to the experience of Tiritiri Matangi is that, with the will and dedication of people passionate about conservation, rehabilitation of a degraded ecosystem takes a relatively short time. One only has to compare the island now with photographs of the island prior to the instigation of the revegetation programme. Since the first planting began a quarter of a century ago, the island is now clothed in vegetation providing habitat for a complex array of birds, reptiles and invertebrates. Anne Rimmer, in her 2004 award-winning book "Tiritiri Matangi – A Model of Conservation", records that between 1984-1994, 280,000 plants were planted and this equates to 17,500 people, contributing 70,000 hours of voluntary labour over ten years.

Except for the North Island tomtit, all translocations of the 12 bird and 3 reptile species have been successful. A measure of this success has been the number of species that have established self-sustaining populations, such as North Island saddleback, red-crowned parakeet, whitehead, North Island fernbird and little spotted kiwi.

Reptiles recently translocated to the island have also successfully bred. Young Duvaucel's gecko have been recorded in 2009 only two years after release.

There is a big difference between protection and conservation of indigenous wildlife. The New Zealand Wildlife Act 1953 broadly provides protection for native species but this legislation can be criticised for the number of exemptions and its lack of ensuring the conservation of threatened species. Protection is an inert term which says a species is protected in law but conservation is an active term that demands that some management action is done to prevent a species' continual decline towards extinction. Over fifty percent of New Zealand's birds and reptiles are recorded as threatened.

Tiritiri Matangi has excelled at conservation, contributing to the national recovery programmes of critically endangered species such as kokako, takahe, stitchbird and little spotted kiwi. Tiritiri Matangi has been seen as an experiment with both DOC and SoTM not necessarily knowing how mixing translocations of threatened species with rehabilitating a degraded island environment would work. Much of the success of this ad hoc approach has been the pragmatic approach of accepting that experimental translocations can fail. SoTM has gone through a rapid learning curve, with Tiritiri Matangi now seen as a source of birds to be used to seed other restoration projects.

It is now accepted that, owing to habitat constraints and availability of resources (food, territories), Tiritiri Matangi cannot support the number of

offspring produced each year and the surplus need to be transferred to other refuges. Supporters should see this as another success of the project and it is pleasing that SoTM is involved in managing many of the transfers of the island's offspring. Other projects, such as Karori Sanctuary, Motuihe Island and Tawharanui Regional Park, have benefitted from transfers from Tiritiri Matangi. Mistakes have been made in the past with poor communication between DOC, researchers and SoTM with the management of kokako an obvious example. With the Memorandum of Understanding, such problems can be avoided. DOC is working on a new translocation template that should make the translocation proposal process more structured and transparent. SoTM has contributed extensively to the before and after monitoring of species translocations with assistance from researchers from Massey University. Such monitoring is critical for the success of biodiversity rehabilitation.

I have just conducted a survey which indicated a good awareness amongst a sample of the New Zealand public of New Zealand's rare and threatened species as well as showing strong support for the funding of conservation. This support translates to the close affinity that New Zealanders have towards environmental issues and New Zealand's image portrayed to the world of an ecologically responsible country. There has been an increasing impetus for local communities to establish protected wildlife areas managed by CCGs. Conservation projects established by CCGs have a common goal to promote conservation and rehabilitate degraded ecosystems.

Although these groups are rehabilitating

mostly land administered by DOC or Regional Councils, an increasing amount of privately owned land is being converted into wildlife reserves or covenanted to protect biodiversity. CCGs, especially SoTM, have shown that they can provide volunteer labour and fund-raising skills to considerably supplement the conservation effort of DOC.

Although there is no formal nationwide governance infrastructure that CCGs adhere to, some are formalising their relationship with DOC and Regional Councils with the formation of Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). Some of the more established restoration projects such as Tiritiri Matangi Open Sanctuary and Karori Wildlife Sanctuary are actively involved with threatened species research, contributing expertise and funding to translocations and monitoring programmes. The establishment and management of these conservation projects are succeeding with a momentum of their own. To augment the success of CCGs, it is recommended that the conservation advocacy role, research and educational benefits of these projects could be promoted by DOC and the Ministry of Education. The memoranda of understanding existing for some DOC/CCG partnerships could be used as a benchmark.

Wildlife tourism contributes \$NZ2 billion per year to the New Zealand economy with the contribution from conservation projects of CCGs becoming increasingly important. The popularity of Tiritiri Matangi has seen the need to limit paying visitors to the island at 32,000 per year. It is estimated that approximately 3,000 international birders visit Tiritiri Matangi each year. These birders, who are committed to viewing New Zealand endemic bird species on their "list", stay in New Zealand for 1 to 4 weeks, spending an average of \$1,400 per week, potentially contributing \$4,340,000 - \$17,360,000 per annum to the New Zealand economy. From talking to some of these birders during my time as a guide, they told me that Tiritiri Matangi was chosen as they could easily see species such as stitchbird, takahe, North Island saddleback and kokako. Birding in the USA is a burgeoning business with an estimated 46 million birders actively pursuing this activity with an annual expenditure of \$31.67 billion (\$US).

In my opinion the results of the Tiritiri Matangi project have exceeded expectations. From the beginning, the intention was to open the restoration project to anyone who wanted to get involved, and through harnessing the enthusiasm of the public, the island ecosystem is being rebuilt and is showing the first stages of functional complexity.

*Mark Seabrook-Davison is a PhD Student at the Ecology & Conservation Group, Institute of Natural Sciences, Massey University (Albany Campus).*

## 10 Years Ago

- Argentine Ants were first discovered on Tiri. Despite ongoing monitoring and eradication attempts, this South American pest still persists but is believed to be very close to extinction.
- SoTM welcomed its 1000th member.
- Work began on the construction of the implement shed with the pouring of the concrete slab.
- Tiri's first Assistant Ranger, Shaun Dunning, left the island after 5 years to pursue a career further up the DOC ladder. Shaun now works at Head Office in Wellington.

## Robins Can Count

Dr Kevin Burns (Victoria Uni, Biological Sciences) and Dr Jason Low (Victoria Uni, Psychology) have completed research which showed that the North Island Robin is one of the few animals in the world that can "count".

The robins watched as different numbers of meal worms were hidden in hollowed out tree trunks – they always then went for the bigger meal. They could distinguish the difference between numbers up to seven.

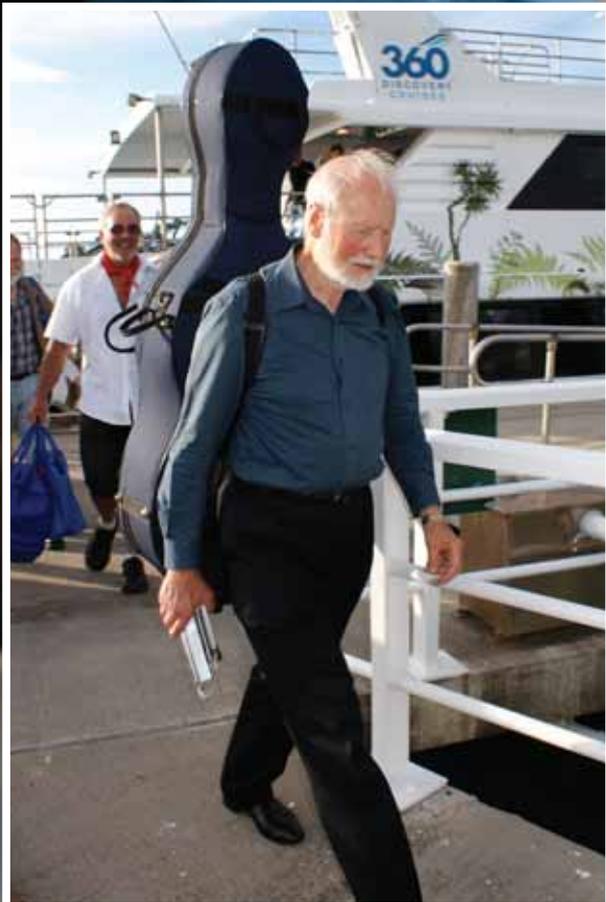
Researchers had noticed that female robins will tend to observe where their male partners hide their cache and when the male is away foraging for food, the female will usually "raid the cache and rob their partner blind". The female will always raid the cache with the largest amount of food.

## Insurance Costs Sponsored by QBE

SoTM has a number of assets, including the Visitor Centre, Implements Shed, and various vehicles and machinery. All is insured for us by QBE Insurance, who have generously paid the premiums for us.

This saves us a great deal per annum, which can then go straight towards projects on the island.

We are grateful to QBE for their continued support, which has been in existence for several years.



## Summer Concert

On a balmy February evening an appreciative audience enjoyed the talents of our very own guide, Jim Hessel, Peter Wedde (viola) and Graham Falla (cello) performing Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert.

It was a beautiful evening and the initial part of the concert was accompanied by a bellbird. At one point a moose was seen over the audience.

The lighthouse shining above, beautiful weather and good company, we could not have wished for a better evening.



# ncert

The audience witnessed  
... (violin), along with  
..., playing pieces from  
... bert.

...t of the concert was  
...orepork swept down

...music and great  
...d for more.

Photos: Alison Bray



# THE BIG PICTURE

One of the most exciting things in conservation today is the sheer number of emerging volunteer

projects, both local and nationwide, many having been inspired by what has happened on Tiri. Each serves as a reminder that, whilst our project is a leader in many ways, we are but one piece of the jigsaw that forms the Big Picture of conservation in New Zealand.

In the fourth in this series of articles that highlights some of these projects, we head south to Orokonui Ecosanctuary, a 20 minute drive north from Dunedin.

## Orokonui Ecosanctuary

Chris Baillie

**In the 1980s many native bird species were still threatened with extinction because of forest destruction and predation by introduced animals. Most people were unable to encounter any but the commonest native birds, except in distant National Parks.**

When cartoonist Burton Silver visited Dunedin in 1981 he got together with friends from the then TVNZ Natural History Unit (now NHNZ) to discuss how this might be remedied. They came up with the outrageous idea to build a giant aviary in Dunedin and grow a native forest in it. This would provide a safe habitat for native birds and enable many people to experience them.

More people became interested in the concept, and in 1983 the Otago Natural History Trust (ONHT) was established to explore the prospects. Several sites around Dunedin were

assessed, including the reinforced concrete framework of a derelict fertiliser factory and the huge modern recreation hall of the recently closed Orokonui Psychiatric Hospital. Unfortunately, none proved suitable, and by the early 90s the trust decided to disband.

Then in the mid-1990s the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary in Wellington showed a better way of achieving this aim. A forested valley was pest-proof fenced and introduced pest animals eliminated. Native birds and reptiles were reintroduced. A former ONHT trustee, Ralph Allen, thought

### South Island Tomtit

with its distinctive yellow breast



Photo: Dave Curtis

maybe something similar could be done in Dunedin, which has a wealth of forested hills and valleys. In 1999, working for Wildland Consultants Ltd, he narrowed the choice of sites down from five contenders to the 230 ha of DoC conservation land in the Orokonui Valley, wrote a formal proposal, and took it to the Dunedin City Council. Perhaps a bit surprisingly, given Dunedin's marketing as the "Wildlife Capital of New Zealand", it gained little support from the councillors.



Visitor Centre Site

However, rejuvenated by the recruitment of three new trustees (Kelvin Lloyd, Jim Wilson and Stewart Harvey), the ONHT vigorously pursued the possibility. Work started in earnest on the Orokonui Ecosanctuary proposal in 2000 with a questionnaire to the local Waitati community and a big stakeholder workshop. After being joined by Diane Campbell-Hunt, who had written the "how to" book based on the Karori experience, and Rose Clucas, representing local iwi Kati Huirapa, in 2003 the trust started organising fundraising and a feasibility study.

The vision was to provide pest-free natural habitat where native flora and fauna, including long absent species, could thrive. There would be no exploitation by people, or threats from the predators and herbivores they brought to New Zealand. Operating costs would be met by charging admission. People would encounter native forest inhabitants in a natural setting, and awareness of our natural heritage would be increased.

Things moved quickly after the feasibility report was published in late 2004. Once it was clear that the money for the fence could be raised and the project was being managed competently, the Otago Conservator, Jeff Connell, responded by appointing the trust to control and manage the DoC land. Even more significant was his decision to gazette the land as Nature Reserve, giving it the highest possible level of protection. Before long the trust purchased 18 ha of freehold land contiguous with the DoC land to complete the catchment. The wonderful gift of another 60 ha of adjacent land meant that 307 hectares of the Orokonui Valley were available for protection. Operations Manager Elton Smith was employed, and once the pest-proof fence was

completed around the valley in 2007 introduced mammals were removed by intensive poisoning, trapping and hunting. Multitudes of volunteers from the Trust's membership of over 1000 people carried out baseline surveys of flora and fauna, cleared wildling pines and gorse, planted thousands of native plants on the Trust's freehold land, and helped with track construction and administration.

Since the pest removal, populations of common native birds have flourished. Kaka, saddleback, jewelled gecko and robin have been reintroduced. Native plants have regenerated spectacularly and a rare plants garden has been established.

Chris Baillie was employed as General Manager, and oversaw fundraising and contracts for construction of an environmentally sustainable visitor and education centre designed by Dunedin architect Tim Heath. On completion of the building Orokonui Ecosanctuary was formally opened by Emeritus Professor Sir Alan Mark, New Zealand's senior statesman of conservation, at an inspiring ceremony on 30th October, 2009

Orokonui Ecosanctuary represents the efforts of many hundreds of people who wanted to give something back to the organisms which lived here before humans arrived. Expecting nothing in return apart from the satisfaction of seeing the fruits of their labours, the supporters of Orokonui Ecosanctuary have enabled the completion of a wonderful facility that could barely be contemplated a decade ago.



**South Island Saddleback**  
unlike the North Island species, this lacks a gold band at the top of the saddle

Photo: Dave Curtis

This is just the beginning. Many more species will be returned. The great trees of the forest - rimu, totara, pahautea, miro, matai and kahikatea - will increase in numbers and importance. An abundance of birds and lizards will thrill visitors during the day and, in time, the nocturnal call of kiwi will be heard again. Orokonui will show what eastern Otago might have been like before people and pests arrived.

The Ecosanctuary is open to visitors for guided walks and unguided walking 7 days a week and runs a curriculum-based education programme. Enquiries to (03) 482 1755, info@orokonui.org.nz.

Two big questions are being asked on the island at the moment - when will the rains arrive and what effect will the prolonged dry spell have on our native fauna? Whilst it appears that the drought is about to end, there are already signs that it has arrived too late for some birds, particularly juveniles.

## Takahe

The survival of four chicks in a season is a record for Tiri, particularly as we now have a comparatively low population. This is, perhaps, testament to the value of careful genetic management.

Early March three of the four chicks were taken south to Burwood Bush to join five other island-bred chicks (from Kapiti & Mana Islands). All have settled in well with their foster parents and siblings. Already they have been seen cutting tussock with their beaks, instead of chewing or pulling as with imported grasses on Tiri.

Greg & Cheesecake's daughter is spending the winter on Tiri.

All of the chicks previously translocated from Tiri, and taken to Fiordland, have recently had their radio signals picked up, with the exception of one, who is

believed to have had a faulty transmitter.

Sadly, the oldest known takahe has died at the age of 27. Alpine was one of the first birds in the Takahe Recovery Programme. After hatching from an egg removed from the wild in 1982, she was hand-raised in a garage. During her breeding years her progeny totalled over 15 birds.

## Kokako

Unfortunately, in early April the predated remains of Renge (parents Te Karanga / Keisha) were discovered.

Te Hari has now paired with Punga, another close relative.



Photo: Roger Bray

Greg preening after a bath



Photo: Simon Fordham

Male bellbird

## Bellbird

In May, 100 Tiri bellbirds were caught and translocated, along with 100 from Tawharanui, to four sites - Hamilton Botanic Gardens, Motuihe Island and two sites on Waiheke Island.

Some interesting observations were made during the capture. Whilst the average weight of an adult male is around 30g, on Tiri this was 37g with the heaviest a massive 54g. It is assumed that the dominance of adult males at the sugar feeders has something to do with this.

On the other hand, relatively few juvenile birds were captured, many having to be released as they were significantly underweight. This could well be due to a lack of natural food and consequential low survival rate as a result of the drought.

As this translocation is experimental to a degree, some of the birds will be fitted with transmitters to monitor dispersal, if any.

## Other

In May, a male tomtit was sighted after singing in a puriri at the top of the Kawerau Track.

In March, an Alexandrine Parakeet (similar to the Ringneck Parakeet) was discovered, caught & subsequently removed from Tiri.

It is intended to again remove some of Tiri's kokako from the island so as to make room for new blood lines for breeding with "Taranaki" birds. These birds will be sent to Ark in the Park and the Hunua Ranges.

## Stitchbird

In March 20 new birds (13 ♂ & 7 ♀) were introduced from Little Barrier Island to improve the genetic mix on Tiri. This followed the translocation of 80 birds to Maungatautari, Kapiti Island & Karori Sanctuary in February.

## Brown Teal

Finn & Solita have 3 ducklings at the Bunkhouse Dam. There are 2 birds at Fishermans Bay and four at the Silvester Wetlands.

# What am I?

by Hilary Elfick

The beak of a bird  
who never learned flight,  
toes tipped with talons,  
I step out at night.

The head of a snipe,  
but come close: I am bear,  
for the shafts of my feathers  
sprout only pure hair;

With whiskers of cat  
and ears just as keen,  
yet haunched like a rabbit  
with a caught rabbit's scream.

In my bones there is marrow,  
and I don't have a tail  
and the start of my wing's  
small as your fingernail.

I can hear like a dog  
I can sniff like a hound;  
with the short sight of hedgehog  
living close to the ground.

I sleep in a burrow  
cannot climb up a tree,  
envy gannet and petrel  
flying over the sea.

Neither robin nor slowworm,  
neither reptile nor hare,  
I am lost, I am legion.  
I belong everywhere.

# Flora Notes

Warren Brewer

The flora notes for this quarter have been influenced by the effects of the prolonged drought which occurred for all of March and well into April over most of the upper 1/3 of the North Island.



On Tiritiri Matangi, by the first weeks of April, the storage levels of many of the dams were critically low. The wharf dam had been empty for many weeks and resembled a parched watering hole from the Australian outback. Our forests were by now best described as being dry, dusty and distressed. The trees worst affected were mahoe, kawakawa, hangehange and karamu. Some examples of mahoe, laden with fruit, were terminally compromised.



Despite all this, the forests still managed to provide food for the birds. Ripe hangehange seeds, purple berries from inkweed and seeds from opening karo fruit capsules were actively harvested. As the maturing kohekohe pods opened, the fleshy coverings around the seeds were exposed for the birds to eat. Early flowers from the brush wattle also supplied a welcome source of nectar.

**Hebe forms New Zealand's largest genus of flowering plants. Its members express a wide ecological and morphological diversity with their habitats ranging from coastal margins to alpine regions up to 2800m above sea level. This is considered to be the highest altitude for a flowering plant in New Zealand. Their form varies from large-leaved shrubs or small trees to examples with small scale – like leaves.**

Eighty eight species have been described (An Illustrated Guide to New Zealand Hebes, Bayly and Kellow, Te Papa Press 2006). Hebe is regarded essentially as a New Zealand genus as 85 species are endemic. Two species occur in South America as well as the South Island NZ (possibly being distributed from NZ by sea birds such as albatross). A single species *Hebe rapensis* is endemic to Rapa in French Polynesia.

Species were first formally described by botanists on Cook's 2nd voyage in 1773 and were placed in the genus *Veronica*. Daniel Solander, botanist on Cook's 1st voyage, had described 5 species but his findings were not published. After having been originally placed in *Veronica*, in 1921 the new genus *Hebe* was established for them. So their name changed from a Christian saint to a pagan immortal. Hebe is the goddess of youth.

On Tiritiri Matangi we have growing koromiko (*Hebe stricta*) which can be prominent in coastal scrub. Its range is naturally restricted to the North Island. Koromiko forms a shrub or small tree with dull green to green-yellow lance-shaped leaves. Its tiny flowers are compacted into dense inflorescences longer than the leaves. The flowers are sweetly scented and vary in colour, being lilac, mauve or white.

Koromiko has long been valued for its beneficial effects



Koromiko seed formation 7 April 2010

in cases of diarrhoea and dysentery. It was mentioned in "Martindale: The Extra Pharmacopoeia" 1895, listed as an import from New Zealand, and used as a remedy for chronic dysentery and diarrhoea.

"Tincture, 1 in 5 proof spirits. Dose ½ to 1 drachm".

Another early use describes liquid from boiling the leaves being used as a mouth-wash or gargle.

During World War II koromiko leaves were sent overseas to NZ troops in North Africa where they were used effectively to treat dysentery.

Hebes are popular plants in the U.K. where they are regularly used in landscaping, chosen for being "neatly compact evergreen bushes, free flowering over a long period with an interesting range in foliage and flower colour". Many hybrids and cultivars have been developed. The first hybridisation is thought to have occurred in Scotland between *H. stricta* and *H. speciosa* in the late 1840's.

Hebes have the special honour of being the only NZ flowering plants to have their own society in the U.K. The Hebe Society was formed in 1985 by a band of enthusiasts with the support of the Royal Horticultural Society. They publish a quarterly magazine, Hebe News.



Koromiko flowering early February 2010

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

Hey everyone!

You all know Tiri is a special place – but why is it so special? One reason is that it’s a safe place for our native species. On the mainland there are many introduced (or non-native) predators. These are harmful to our birds, reptiles, invertebrates, and even trees. Here’s a couple of activities to keep you busy!

Have fun, Jo

Unscramble the names of these mammalian predators and match them to their picture

TOAST

TAC

SOPMUS

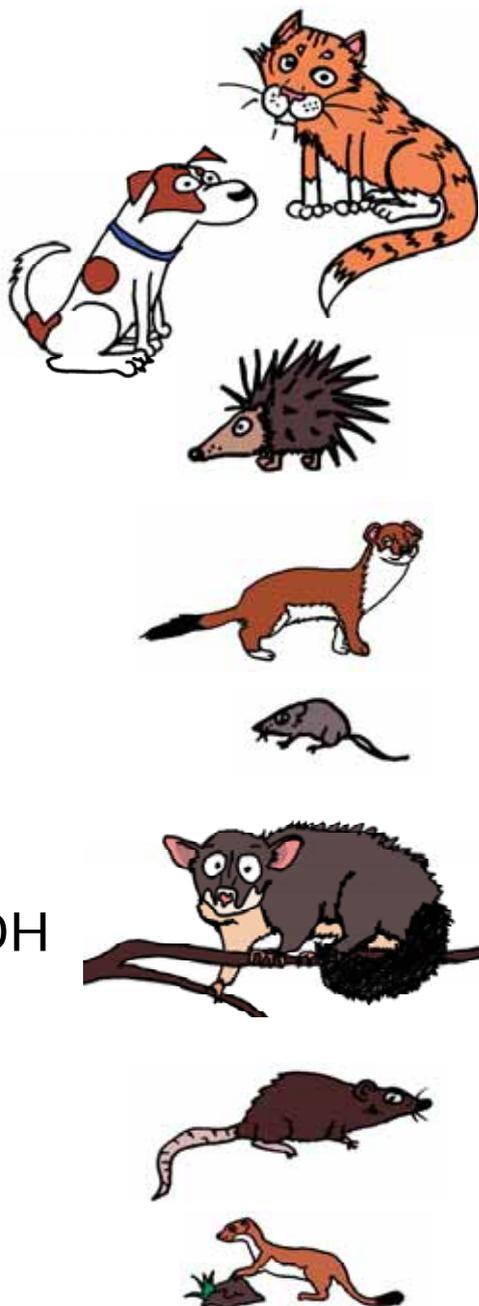
ART

SEALWE

GEEHGODH

DGO

OSUEM



## QUIZ

- Which rat species was eradicated from Tiri?
  - Ship rat
  - Norway rat
  - Kiore
- How far can stoats swim? Up to:
  - 220 metres
  - 2.2 kilometres
  - 22 kilometres
  - 220 kilometres
- Which of these is a native predator?
  - Harrier hawk
  - Possum
  - Tiger
  - Hedgehog
- What animals are NOT allowed on Tiri?
  - Dogs
  - Cats
  - Pigs
  - All of the above
- How many babies can a pair of mice have in a year? About:
  - 60
  - 160
  - 300
  - 460
- Which of these do rats NOT eat?
  - Seeds
  - Rocks
  - Weta
  - Eggs

# Tiri Shop

Here are the latest offerings from the Island "gift" shop

Blue Earth produce a beautiful range of natural plant based body care products. They contain no parabens or palm oil, artificial colourings or fragrances, mineral oils or synthetic preservatives.



Soaps - \$5 each

includes Lemongrass, Lavender, Rotorua Mud with Orange, Patchouli and Gardeners' Soap

Hand Cream  
\$22 (100ml tube)

Body Moisturiser  
\$16 (100ml tube)  
\$28 (300ml bottle)

All made in NZ

Themed Serviettes



Great for gifts and sending overseas  
\$8.50 each

Kiwi Can Fly Postcards  
Includes an NZ made sheet aluminium sculpture ready to be made up



only \$10 each

Perfect to send as a card/gift

Aluminium Wall Art  
Designed and Made in NZ



These look good inside or out  
Small - 180 to 250mm \$27.50  
Large - 400 to 500mm \$78.00

And please don't forget our Tiri vests, jackets and beanies for the winter.

You can pay by credit card or cheque Either ring or email your order.

manager@tiritirimatangi.org.nz  
09 476 0010

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



## Dawn Chorus