

# Dawn Chorus



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***July 5th was Barbara and Ray Walter's last day working on Tiri and they were farewelled on their retirement by Rangers Ian Price and Jennifer Haslam along with guides and friends, for the ferry ride to the mainland. They are pictured here, wearing the leis they were given as they left, with SoTM founder Jim Battersby.***

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# From the Chair

We'll, it has finally happened - Ian and Jennifer have taken over the reins of Tiri while Ray and Barbara have begun to enjoy an extremely well deserved retirement.

From the SoTM perspective, the biggest dilemma was how we were going to manage the guiding and shop activities for which we have a concession.

Until we knew the make-up of the DoC personnel on the island, we were uncertain whether or not we were again going to employ a joint DoC / SoTM employee for "Barbara's roles". As it turned out, these roles have been separated, so we needed to consider how best to manage the situation.

Initially, we sought expressions of interest for the role. This not only told us who was interested, but we also received many suggestions as to the ways this could be done.

Once these were considered, it was agreed that the best option was to employ an existing guide, fulltime on the island from Wednesday to Sunday. This was subject to available accommodation and, thanks to the generosity of DoC, we were able to offer use of the bach in the first instance.

As this is now a fulltime role, we have also arranged to manage the school visits, a role previously the responsibility of DoC. as well as taking over the duties previously carried out by our guiding coordinator, Sally Green. With a clear perception of our requirements, we advertised the position, again to all guides. We then followed due process, along the lines of that used by DoC. As a result, I am pleased to welcome Megan Wilson as the SoTM Guiding and Shop Manager.

Megan is an enthusiastic guide who also has much experience in retail management. She will work closely with the committee, shop volunteers and guides for a smooth transition and continuation of the wonderful work begun by Barbara.

Now that we can look forward with confidence, it is appropriate to thank those who steadied the ship during the changeover. In particular, thanks to Val Smytheman who took responsibility for arranging a roster of volunteer "Guiding Managers", during this time. Val also spent much time on the island fulfilling this role herself.

Thanks to all of those volunteers who assisted Val and also thanks to Barbara who will continue to manage the

shop until Megan starts in early September. We are very lucky to have so many enthusiastic and willing members.

**Simon Fordham**

## Editorial

Thanks to all the guides and supporters who have helped out with this issue of Dawn Chorus by sending photos and information. One of the abiding strengths of SoTM is the way all the volunteers work together as a team for the many projects that are needed on Tiri, including the Dawn Chorus content and of course the Supporters' working weekends and the guiding.

It's great to see the smooth transition to a new era on Tiri and the continuation of the wonderful work begun by Ray and Barbara.

**Suzi Phillips**

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**Deadline for  
next issue:  
16 October 2006**

# Farewell message from Barbara & Ray

Our last day on the island was July 5th. It was a beautiful sunny day and calm seas prevailed. We had a lovely send-off on the wharf from Ian, Jennifer, some of the guides and members of the public, and as we left on Kawau Kat V some tears were shed. Looking back on all the years we have spent on the island, there have been "ups and downs", but the highlights have always been our involvement with the public, especially you the Supporters, and we thank you for all your support over those years! We have been privileged to be involved with the Supporters and the Department of Conservation throughout this magnificent project. We are sure we will see you again either at AGMs or on the Supporters Special Days on Tiri. Take care, **Barbara and Ray.**

## Retirement party from DoC

Tributes and accolades flowed at the Department of Conservation led celebration for retiring rangers Ray and Barbara Walter in June.

Despite the storm that hit Auckland, more than 100 guests gathered for lunch at the Gulf Harbour Yacht Club. Instead of everyone who was invited going across to Tiri, Ray and Barbara were flown from Tiri and back again by helicopter.

Everyone enjoyed catching up with these two remarkable people who share a combined public service of ninety years. Guests included scientists and DOC staff involved in the early restoration plan, guides and volunteers and "crusty old lighthouse keepers".

Anecdotes and a classic poem from Ian Bradley revealed that Ray and Barbara's lives on Tiritiri Matangi have not always run smoothly. Their dedication, encouragement and inspiration have been a major factor in the success of the island's restoration project as well as triggering many conservation careers and projects elsewhere.



*Barbara holds the painting given to mark their retirement. (Photo: F. Oliphant)*



*Cutting the cake (Photo: F. Oliphant)*

A presentation of a lifetime free ferry pass from Kawau Kat will enable them to visit Tiritiri anytime they wish in the future. The intention was also announced to fly the couple to Cuvier and the Mokohinau islands to record further history of Ray's lighthouse service days.

One of those speaking at the event summed up the feelings of everyone present, "These are two of my most favourite people".

Some lovely gifts were handed to Ray and Barbara including a beautiful Saddleback painting by Lynda Harris, the life pass to Tiri on Kawau Kat, HeliTranz are going to fly them to all Ray's lighthouse haunts, a beautiful big bouquet of flowers and a huge card, signed by everyone with a poem written to capture a lot of Ray's stories. **Liz Maire**

# Supporters, Saddlebacks and seeds

## SoTM pioneer Jim Battersby recalls his first contact with Ray and Barbara on Tiri

About the middle of 1988 my Barbie and I were told about an island where 10,000 pohutakawa trees were being planted. It sounded a wonderful project.

We were told to ring "Barbara", and given a phone number. A very pleasant voice answered the phone, and said maybe we could join a planting party where there were some vacancies.

Barbara rang back later to say we could come with a group from Torbay. What excitement! The boat with 30 aboard arrived at the Island.

Barbara guided us up Wattle Valley - just a muddy track covered with Cabbage Tree leaves.

She had a tape recorder and stopped now and then to play the call of the Saddleback, so some would come near us.

We had never heard that name before, let alone its distinctive call. But we saw a Saddleback, and other birds. At the top black-haired and salt and pepper bearded Ray had a trailer load of plants ready and we were led out to plant trees.

We had taken our own spades. Ray showed us how to dig holes, put the plants in, and cover each with grass.

Meanwhile we heard something of the story of why we were planting trees. Both my Barbie and I immediately were enthralled. Ray and Barbara have always been able to enthuse people in that way.

A few weeks later we were invited back for a few days. We stayed in the bach, (now the assistant Ranger's house). We quickly realised that Ray and Barbara really knew what they were about.

The project had got under way, but was now faltering through lack of money. You should have seen their faces light up when we asked them what they thought about us starting a support group to put money into the project.

Several days later we received a list from Barbara of people she knew were interested in the project with some underlined in red who were especially interested. Ray and Barbara came to a meeting of about a dozen people in our home, and Ray spoke enthusiastically of the project of re-clothing the Island in trees, and bringing back endangered birds.

It was agreed we should try to form a Support group. Most of those on the list were contacted and a meeting arranged at St. Matthew's in the City on 24 October 1988.

Again Ray supported by Barbara spoke of the project and that meeting brought the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi into being.

It was a struggle in those early days. We had monthly meetings in our home at Browns Bay, and Ray and Barbara usually attended. They were strengthened in turn by our enthusiasm.

In the heat of February 1989, Barbie and I were invited over for a week to gather seeds.

We were captivated by what Ray seemed to know

about seeds. We found walking along the Ridge track was hot. "Would you like a motor bike?" we asked Ray. His face lit up as though he were asking Father Christmas for a special toy, he replied, "Oh, if only I could have a four wheel drive vehicle!"

It was not a toy he wanted, but another thing to make the project more efficient. And all of us rejoiced when this came about.



Tiri ranger, Jennifer Haslam with Ray and Barbara as they leave the island for their retirement. (Photo: M. Rowland).

## New guiding and shop manager starts soon



*Megan Wilson*

New guiding and shop manager, Megan Wilson, will take up her duties in early September.

Megan will live on the island from Wednesday to Sunday each week to co-ordinate the guiding, manage the shop, and organise the school visits. She comes from a background of retail management and public relations experience, and has been a guide on Tiri for three years.

Megan was appointed by the SoTM Committee in consultation with the Department of Conservation.



**Ray and Barbara Walter listen during speeches to farewell them at the Supporters' dinner.**  
(Photo: Neil Davies)

## Supporters' dinner a great send off

The Supporters' Dinner for Ray and Barbara Walter gave them "a right royal send-off" in early August. The dinner at the Waipuna Hotel, was attended by more than 250 supporters, and was a very happy occasion, says organiser Peter Lee.

Highlight of the night was the "This is Your Life" style segment, compered by the television show's original presenter, Bob Parker from Christchurch.

As Bob Parker called Ray and Barbara forward, all the supporters stood to give them a spontaneous standing ovation as they made their way to the stage.

Speakers included DOC's Warkworth area manager, Rolien Elliott, two of Tiri's founding supporters, Jim Battersby and Mel Galbraith, and scientist, Graham Ussher.

They shared some of their memorable experiences with Ray and Barbara on the island over the years.

"This especially reinforced how important Ray and Barbara have been to the whole success of the project," said Peter Lee.

The evening finished with presentations to the couple including a photo album put together by a group of supporters and guides, and the gift of a digital camera and travel vouchers from the Guides.

It was a great evening and everyone had a good time, not only celebrating Ray and Barbara's achievements, but also for many, catching up with old friends they had not seen for a long time.



### Ian Price returns to Tiri

Former Tiri ranger, Ian Price, has returned to become the new ranger on Tiri in partnership with DOC ranger, Jennifer Haslam.

Ian succeeded in the DOC selection process in June, after completing a six month contract on Kapiti, managing the Hihi monitoring there. Before that he was a ranger on Tiri for three years. Until 2002, he had been self employed in farming and property development, and had done volunteer work for DOC since 1987, including four months on Raoul Island in the Kermadecs. (Photo: Suzi Phillips)

# Tomtit sightings on the rise

The North Island Tomtits transferred to Tiritiri Matangi in April 2004 may be getting established on the island.

Sightings have increased steadily to a promising eight reports so far this year, says team leader for the 2004 translocation, Barbara Hughes.

Only one bird, known as 'Mr RG', (bands RM-GM), was known to have flown back to the Hunuwas. All the Hunua territories of translocated Tomtits have been searched on a number of visits over the past two years to check that further translocated birds have not returned to their original territories.

Occasional sightings of banded Tomtits have been made on Tiritiri Matangi since the translocation. This year the sightings have increased indicating that banded Tomtits from the 2004 translocation are on Tiri and may be breeding, Sightings as they stand for this year, (2006 - nothing reported for June and July), include eight sightings and one call record.

\* 4th January a female tomtit observed on the Wattle Track before the Hihi feeder by Tessa Galbraith (Tessa was on the Tomtit translocation).

\* 20th January at the corner of Ridge and Emergency Landing Tracks a family was observed of four Tomtits with the male having bands; seen by Ted Wnorowski from OSNZ survey. Bands: blue and yellow on each leg of male which is either of the birds known as Ray or Fraser.

\* 5th March a guide, Hilary Eifeck with a guiding group heard a single sharp call and observed a male Tomtit in Wattle Valley, just below middle water bath, with bands (-M Y and a dark colour) that identified the bird to be 'Vic', RM-YB. Hilary had spotted a male Tomtit in the previous year. She knew to not go for her binoculars, but to keep her eyes on the bird. Pictures were placed in front of the children in the group afterwards and they all identified a male Tomtit.

(This sighting was most exciting as more than one person spotted the bird and Vic was one of the first birds to be habituated in the Hunuwas. He always had a female partner and he came out of the pine forest area of the Hunuwas. He disappeared for six weeks after the disease screening. He was fed him 3-4 times on Tiri just after the translocation. First time he came in squeaking and not confident. The next time he was fed he was very confident and he looked as though he would survive.)

\* 7th of March a guide (Merril) identified a female tomtit with a red band in Bush 1 near Tuatara release site. Could be Barbara, Sonja, Rosalie or Mrs Loo?

\* 21st April a male bird was observed by a guide (Joy) in the Wattle Track near the Blackmores seat. No bands picked up.

\* 7th May in Wattle Valley a Canadian birder observed a female and said it was like a bush tit.

\* 7th May male Tomtit in Bush 1 in valley to right, below big pohutakawa. No observer recorded.

\* 11th of May a male bird was observed by a UK birder near the middle trough on the Wattle Valley Track.



Two of the 32 Tomtits released on Tiri are Mr Butterbeak (above) and Mrs Loo (below), photographed on Tiri soon after their release. (Photos: Barbara Hughes).

## Donations to SoTM in memory of Robin Sommerville

Mrs L A Aldridge

Miss C Abey

Allan Duffy

\* 19th of May a Tomtit call was heard near the wharf dam by a SoTM committee member, Mark Davison who knows the calls after time hearing them in the Hunuwas. **Please keep looking for Tomtits on Tiri and if you do see one, let the Rangers Ian Price or Jennifer Haslam know where and when you saw it.**

Let them know as soon as possible, so they can also check the area for the bird.

If you would like some practice identifying Tomtits by sighting or call, contact Barbara Hughes at bahughes@ihug.co.nz or phone 09-6340288.

# Kokako on Tiri - A Family Affair



*Te Karanga on Tiri. (Photo: Olivier Ball)*

**Nine years ago, we were blessed with the arrival of our first Kokako on Tiri, Cloudsley Shovell and Te Koha Waiata (aka TKW).** Cloudsley Shovell was from Mapara in the King Country, while TKW was captive bred at Mt. Bruce, his parents being from Waikato and King Country stock. Seven months later, four of TKW's brothers arrived.

When the Kokako Recovery Group chose to introduce kokako to Tiri, the main reason was to establish a population that contained the rare Taranaki gene. There were only two pure Taranaki birds left, (both males in captivity), and the idea was to translocate their offspring to Tiri to create a source for future translocations back to Taranaki where habitat is being restored through predator control. Unfortunately, the Taranaki birds had other ideas, and have only recently produced offspring.

In the meantime, Cloudsley Shovell and TKW have produced many offspring and with no alternatives available, a number have chosen to mate with either sib-

lings or uncles. It has long been known that the disadvantages of such behaviour greatly outweigh the advantages and two recent scientific papers on inbreeding suggest emphasize this.

Populations of birds that require relatively large territories, but are restricted to small islands, soon become highly inbred and this can lead to a total collapse in the population. This may explain why there is no evidence of Kokako having survived on any island smaller than Great Barrier Island.

We have already seen significant nest failure in the incestuous pairings and, if inbreeding is allowed to continue, this can be expected to get worse. For this reason, we need to improve the health of the population by splitting some known breeding pairs.

In the first instance, three males (Russell, Oscar and Belcanto) will be translocated from the island, most likely to the Hunua Ranges. All of these birds have chosen to pair up with their sisters. It is expected that, at the same time, the Taranaki male from Otorohanga Kiwi House will be brought to Tiri. He will thus have the choice of three recently separated females to breed with.

The other Taranaki male is at Mt. Bruce and successfully bred last season. It is hoped that his offspring will be moved to Tiri next year. It may well be that other genetic stock will be introduced as well.

Due to their advocacy role, our uncle / niece pairings of Te Karanga / Keisha and Te Hari / Shazbot will remain but will be prevented from breeding by replacing any eggs with artificial ones.

While all of this will mean a short term reduction in the number of kokako on Tiri, it should have little effect on the visibility of these birds as the individuals being removed are not usually in areas accessible to visitors. Longer term, it will hopefully mean a healthier and more sustainable population of New Zealand's number one songbird. **Simon Fordham**



*Te Karanga in the leaf litter (Photo: Simon Fordham)*



(Photo: Margaret Chappell)

# Flora and Fauna Notes

Compiled by Jan Velvin and Morag Fordham



(Photo: Suzi Phillips)

## Flora

### ***Clematis Paniculata***

#### **Puawananga**

#### **Family: Ranunculaceae**

We are going to welcome Spring in first this year!

Our spectacular *Clematis paniculata* is often the first sign of spring with its hundreds of white star shaped flowers occurring from late Winter to Spring.

*Clematis paniculata* is a strong woody vine that climbs to the tops of trees and shrubs covering them in a layer of white flowers.

As with many New Zealand plants the male and female flowers are on separate plants. The male flowers are particularly outstanding being bigger than the female flowers, often up to 5-10 cm across.

The leaves of this *Clematis* are also intriguing as they have different forms as the plant ages.

The dark green leaves in their juvenile form are long and narrow with smooth edges. The next form is rounded, deeply lobed leaflets, finally followed by much larger pointed leaves, (loosely an ivy shape.)

The added bonus with *C. paniculata* is the seed which is contained in soft, silky, silvery plumes. These are windborne to scatter the seed. These seedheads can be seen maturing from mid spring to mid summer.

In the last few years the plants on the top side of

Grahams Rd and Wharf Rd corner have flowered well and are worth looking out for now.

While walking down any of the ridge tracks look across the bush in the valley's for clouds of white flowers.

Footnote: A number of selected male forms (cutting grown to retain the large flower size) of *Clematis paniculata* are available at garden centres for home gardener use these days. Check the label.

## Fauna

### **Takahe**

Kristina and Rossie's chick, Poncho (M/Y) is a male. Sadly Calico disappeared in mid April and she is now presumed dead as is Glencoe who disappeared in the last week of May.

Whetu has been in yet another fight but is recovering well. Blackwatch and his son Lou are still together around the lighthouse area.

Greg and his daughter Tiri are often together. Greg regularly still comes down to the wharf to meet and greet the visitors from the ferry.

On Thursday 15 June two new females Mahuika and Cheesecake arrived. Mahuika was released down behind the Bunkhouse where there are four lone males and Cheesecake was released down by the Emer-



## Flora and Fauna Notes - Continued from page 8

gency dam. Initially they found one another and stayed together in the vicinity of the Lighthouse Valley dam, but recently Mahuika has been seen around the lighthouse area with Cheesecake not far away.

### Stitchbird/Hihi

All the "poo" samples taken came back negative which is encouraging. However the population is estimated to have dropped by around 25 per cent as a result of the salmonella outbreak last year. Those remaining are looking fat and healthy.



*A male Hihi feeding on mahoe berries in Kawerau Valley in July. (Photo: Suzi Phillips)*

### Brown Teal/Pateke

Now that the dams have water in them the Teal have returned to their favourite haunts. Daisy and Ruan are on Fishermans Bay dam, Connie and Ralph are on the Wetland dams, Finn (sometimes) and Blue Bonnet are on Lighthouse Valley dam, Jemima and Ossie are on the Wharf dam. The three females, Dolly (unbanded), Aggie (M/YW) and Solita (-/M) are on the Bunkhouse dam.

Connie nested at the end of May but has recently reappeared without ducklings so it is assumed that the nest failed. Jemima might be nesting.

Despite pairing up with Blue Bonnet, Finn still comes back to the Bunkhouse dam to spend time with Solita so he is still a Philanderer.

### Kokako

Chinook and Zephyr continue to visit the Visitor Centre area giving pleasure to everyone who is lucky enough to see them. See also article on page 7.

### Little Spotted Kiwi

There have been a lot of sightings over the winter months.

### Other Birds

In late April during the day on the Kawerau track Don (guide) saw a Morepork attacking a North Island Robin.



*Brown Teal beside Wharf dam (Photo: Suzi Phillips).*

The Robin gave out an alarm call and the Whiteheads and Bellbirds came to the rescue and mobbed the Morepork. A few days later at day break the Kiwi Conservation Club saw a Morepork take a Bellbird at the big water trough in Wattle Valley.

The Myna numbers on the island are the lowest that Barbara Walter has ever seen.

In mid April a Fantail was seen by Yvonne (guide) bathing in the shower base on the Wharf road. There are a lot of Fantails around the Lighthouse area at this time of the year.

Over two nights at the end of April, Mel Galbraith banded 20 new Grey-faced Petrels. Towards the end of May a banded petrel was caught that had been banded in 1998 at Mt Maunganui.

Since the end of June the Penguins have returned to take up residence under the Rangers' house.

### Tuatara

One Tuatara was seen during the day towards the end of May and there were evening sightings throughout May.

### Other Fauna

One day in late May a pod of Dolphins swam around the ferry as it left the Wharf.

A pod of Orca was seen in the Bay on 12 May.

Eight Eagle Rays were seen in the water on a night walk in mid May.

Late in April Chris Green (DoC) checked the Argentine Ant sites and found only two very, very small infestations.

*A Whitehead feeding on insects (Photo: Suzi Phillips).*



# Finding a basket case on Tiri

By Olga Brochner and Jono Higgins

A visit to Tiritiri Matangi is always an adventure because you never know just what you are going to see. There are birds, plants and even Tuatara sightings.

Yet sometimes the bush shares other amazing sights, such as the delightfully bizarre, but stunning *Ileodictyon cibarium* otherwise known as basket fungus.

The basket fungus belongs to the Phallaceae family, supposedly one of the strangest families in the fungus kingdom. As with the basket fungus, most have strange forms.

The other major characteristic Phallaceae are noted for is less amusing. It relates to their unusual smell, in fact they stink hence the tag of "stink horn fungi".

Judge them not too harshly however, as the smell has the important role of attracting the insects needed to spread the fungi's spores.

The fungus kingdom is almost a cross between plants and animals. Fungi can't photosynthesise, so instead of making their own food they live off and absorb their food which ranges from dead organic matter to living plants.

For most fungi, the true body is a network of hollow tubes, hyphae. When these form a mass, known as the mycelium, this runs through wood or soil or whatever the fungi is growing and feeding on.

From this comes the more conspicuous fruiting or reproductive body formed to produce and distribute the spores.

The basket fungus is no exception. It begins by emerging from a puff ball-like looking egg. The basket emerges relatively quickly too, and the Maoris referred to these fungi as "droppings of ghosts" because of their sudden appearance.

The basket itself is white and resembles a soccer ball shape, except it is hollow and consists of a lattice-network: most extraordinary. (See photo). The spores line the inner surface of the basket and are enclosed in the slime mix which is where the stink comes from.

According to the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network, there are approximately 1.5 million species of fungi worldwide with an estimated 22,000 species in New Zealand. Only 7,500 of them have been recorded so who knows what other strange forms might be out there. Plus there is always the introduced

fungi species. The orange pore fungus (*Favolaschia calocera*) is also seen on Tiri, but it is actually a fungal weed.

According to Landcare research, it is an introduced species that may displace native species and even affect insects used to feeding on native fungi!

For those of you planning any sort of Tiri fungi recipes, the basket fungi is not edible. It is however worth a look, so keep an eye out for a different type of basket case next autumn.



*The basket fungus found on Tiri. (Photo: Jono Higgins).*



*A Tui sings from the wattle trees. (Photo: S. Phillips).*

# New focus on Quail genetics

By Mark Seabrook-Davison

More than once during a guided excursion an enthusiastic visitor to Tiritiri Matangi has exclaimed, "there goes a Kiwi !"

Nearly always the little brown bird turns out to be a quail. The quail have also been mistaken for rats or thrushes. Thankfully, rats have been eradicated from Tiritiri Matangi.

The quail on Tiritiri Matangi remain a mystery as there are no records of quail being released onto the island. Professor John Craig suggested that the Ecology and Conservation Group of Massey University could re-research the Tiritiri Matangi population and ascertain what species it is.

The quail are either the New Zealand species, *Coturnix novaezelandiae*, the Australian brown quail, *Coturnix ypsilophorus*, or a hybrid of these two species.

A research proposal to study the population on Tiritiri Matangi was submitted to the Department of Conservation and the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi.

Both have given their approval with the Supporters providing some funding. The research involves collecting feather and blood samples from the quail on Tiritiri Matangi and comparing their genetic make-up with specimens of quail from Australian and New Zealand museums.

A result will finally clarify one of the remaining mysteries of the birds on Tiritiri Matangi. However, a result is still some time away as the quail are out-smarting the researchers.

Visitors to Tiritiri Matangi may have seen researchers catching birds using mist nets. These are very fine mesh nets that are strung along the side of roads or patches of vegetation and safely catch birds as they fly into them.

A different catching method is required for quail as they are ground birds. A series of cage traps have been placed around the island in an attempt to catch the quail. The traps have one-way flip doors that the quail push through and can not get out again.

For the safety of the quail and other ground birds such as Takahe, the cages are only set for short periods of time. Unfortunately for me as the researcher, the quail have shown no interest in the tasty food that I have put in the traps.

It may sound peculiar, but my next attempt at catching them will be with a whitebait net. Ray told me that such a netting method has been used to catch Takahe. While I chase the quail with my whitebait net, I will be analysing the samples I have received from Australian and New Zealand Museums.

This analysis will provide me with baseline data to which I can compare the genetic data I get from the Tiritiri Matangi quail. All going well, I will be able to tell you which species we have on Tiritiri Matangi by the time the next Dawn Chorus reaches you.

I thank the SOTM and Massey University for their support and funding for this project, Support and advice has also been provided by Associate Professor Dianne Brunton, Professor John Craig, Ray and Barbara Walter, Jennifer Haslam, Ian Price, Dr Graham Ussher, Don Merton and my colleagues at the Ecology and Conservation Group.



**Two female Takahe arrived on Tiri in June and have settled well around the bunkhouse/lighthouse areas. Cheesecake was raised at the Burwood Bush captive rearing unit near Te Anau and Mahuika came from Mana Island. They were flown north to Auckland and escorted to the island by a DOC officer. Barbara Walter released them from their boxes with Mahuika (left) strutting off elegantly and Cheesecake (right) making a quick dash for cover. (Photos: Margaret Chappell).**



# Greg features in first book for student

North Shore student, Jennifer Hutchison, has launched her writing career with a book about one of Tiritiri Matangi's Takahe.

Greg, well-known on Tiri as a bit of a character, is the subject of Jennifer's first book, titled 'Greg The Naughty Takahe'.

The book launch was held on Tiri in June and attended by her class of 60 students from Northcross Intermediate who brought with them a large celebration cake.

Her mother, Anne Hutchison, did the illustrations for the book, and says Jennifer (aged 12) has a passion for writing, especially poetry.

"In January this year, Jen put together a collection of New Zealand nature poems, called 'Staircase to Heaven' which is awaiting publication.

A number of poems and paintings for this collection were produced while staying on Tiri on one of the Supporters' weekends.

To assist with the expenses of publishing the poetry collection, Jen wrote 'Greg The Naughty Takahe' to help raise the money. Her first book is now selling well in the Tiri bookshop and is in local libraries and some book stores. Autographed copies are available from the author by contacting rhutchison@kga.co.nz

**Student Jennifer Hutchison with Ray and Barbara Walter (below) at the launch of her book, 'Greg The Naughty Takahe' on Tiri in June.**



**A new set up steps for the signal tower were installed by Ray Walter and Ian Higgins (above) on Queen's Birthday working weekend as part of the restoration of the tower. (Photo: Cathy Catto).**



## Recent school visits

Auckland Girls Grammar  
 Western Heights x4  
 Kelston Primary x3  
 Sherwood Primary x2  
 Whakatane High School  
 Kristin Junior School x3  
 Waihi College  
 Sunnyhills School x2  
 Waitakere Primary  
 Bruce McLean Interm.  
 St Heliers Primary x2  
 Kamo Intermediate x4  
 Dominion Road School  
 Northcross Interm. X2  
 Sacred Heart College  
 Roscommon School



**Shade sails have been installed at the Ray and Barbara Walter Visitor Centre thanks to a grant from the ASB Trust. Above, is one of the sails outside the rear of the centre providing shelter for visitors. (Photo: Cathy Catto).**

# Close watch on Tiri's Blue Penguins

By Monique van Rensburg

The little Blues have been coming ashore in their hundreds these past couple of months.

The gentle sound of breaking waves is over-powered by their brawling calls! They are getting ready for the breeding season (which is due to start in August/September) and this will last until the end of January for the late starters.

I have been monitoring the penguins during the non-breeding season, and have seen significant fluctuations in penguin numbers throughout this period which is not uncommon for this species. Penguin numbers usually increase prior to the breeding season as individuals come ashore to find potential nesting sites, and of course, potential mates.

Penguins are monogamous during the breeding season, and they share parental care. Thus the success of a nest depends on both parents. During this time they also compete for resources, trying to outwit each other to find the best nest spots!

The penguins are currently being banded with flipper-bands. This enables us to identify individuals, which is especially important when monitoring the breeding success of specific individuals/pairs.

I am investigating the effects of parasites on penguin health, which has been initiated by an increased interest in conservation medicine globally.

Blue Penguins are host to a number of parasites, including; ticks, lice, intestinal worms and occasionally blood parasites.

So far three species of ectoparasites have been found on the birds.

Although parasites usually occur in most wild animal populations, levels of infestation are sometimes elevated by environmental changes.

Such influential changes are varied, and they can range from increased sea temperatures to a decrease in food supply.

Penguins are often found starved on New Zealand beaches, especially during moulting. It is likely that

the number of parasites will increase during these periods, and this can be detrimental to their health.

Massey University wants to establish baseline data on penguin ecology in the North Island.

For this reason Jacqueline Geurts and I will also look at the foraging ecology of this population during the 2006 breeding season, using GPS transmitters and

time-depth recorders.

We hope to determine the foraging and diving behaviour of the Tiri penguins to see whether we can find any relationship between their diet, breeding and periods of starvation.

There is still much work to be done, but I am looking forward to my time out on the island.

We are hoping that the results from this study will give us a clearer understanding about the penguin population on Tiri and what we can do to ensure population persistence and growth.

Thank you to everyone that has helped with this project so far, and for the support of DOC staff, Massey University, Auckland Zoo and many volunteers who willingly come out in the cold of night!

Thank you also to the Supporters and for your interest in this project.

*(Monique van Rensburg is a MSc student in the Ecology and Conservation Group at Massey University's Albany Campus).*



*Monique van Rensburg with a Blue Penguin on Tiri.*



*Blue Penguins on Tiri are banded on the top of their wing.*

# SoTM Events 2006

## September 3

Supporters' Kowhai Trip  
Special prices apply

## September 11th

Supporters' Social Evening  
Kohia Centre, Epsom Ave.

## September 23-24

Supporters' Family Weekend

## October 7-8

Supporters' Adults Non-work  
Weekend

## October 21-23

Supporters' Working Weekend

## Thank you

to those who helped on the  
recent Working Bees.

Supporters' Easter Weekend

Gloria Landers' Weekend

Theresa and David McIntyre Weekend

Louise and David Gauld's  
Weekend

Supporters' Queen's  
Birthday Weekend

Manukau Tramping Club  
Weekend

## Special Prices Apply

for the Supporters' Kowhai  
Trip on September 3.

Ex Gulf Harbour: \$22 adults, \$14  
children

Ex Akl City: \$38 ad. \$20 children.

To book and take advantage  
of these specials, phone  
Barbara on 09-535-6941

## SoTM September Social

**Monday 11 September**  
at 7.30 pm at the Kohia  
Centre, Epsom Ave, Epsom.

Hazel Speed from the Department of  
Conservation will be talking to us  
about the Kokako Recovery Plan  
and where Tiri fits into the national  
perspective.



For day and weekend trips,  
enquiries and bookings must  
be made with Simon  
Fordham (temporary) not  
Kawau Kat. Ph Simon on 09-  
274-1828 or email  
simon.fordham@xtra.co.nz

# TIRI KIDS

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

Hi everyone!

Thanks to all the kids (and big kids) who made it to the Tiri Kids day on June 25th. It was great to see you having fun! There was fierce competition to be the first to complete the scavenger hunt, but the shrimps were hard to find that day! Here are some snap shots for you to enjoy.

Be good! Jo and Tess



Compiled by Jo and Tess

Tiri Kids, P O Box 90-814, Auckland Mail Service Centre

## Notice of SoTM Extraordinary General Meeting

In 2004, SoTM began the process of reviewing the Constitution of the Society to ensure its relevance in an ever changing world. The revised document was adopted at the 2005 AGM.

One of the aspirations was that, by carrying out this revision, no changes would be needed for some years. What we did not count on was that one of the changes that we proposed would be inadvertently omitted from the final document as tabled at the AGM and subsequently registered through the legal process.

**To resolve this situation, an Extraordinary General Meeting is being called for Monday 11 September at 7.30 PM at the Kohia Centre, Epsom Ave, Epsom.**

At this meeting, the following motion will be put:

**That rule 11b of the Rules of Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc. be amended to read:**

***“Unless the Committee otherwise determines in any particular case, membership of the Society shall cease immediately where a member fails to pay the subscription due within two months of the commencement of the Society's financial year.”***

This will be immediately followed by the "**September Social**". At the social night, Hazel Speed from the Department of Conservation will be talking to us about the Kokako Recovery Plan and where Tiri fits into the national perspective.

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Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi Inc. PO Box 90814, Auckland Mail Service Centre, Auckland 1030



## Dawn Chorus