



HAUTURU

LITTLE BARRIER ISLAND SUPPORTERS TRUST

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NEWSLETTER
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FROM THE CHAIR

The Little Barrier Island Supporters Trust recently held its Annual Meeting and, as Annual Meetings tend to be, it was a good time to take stock and reflect on a highly successful year of activity in support of our treasured Hauturu. There have been some changes in trustees during the year and the group continues to be hardworking, focused and cohesive. It's a privilege to be its Chair, especially in the year when the island marked 120 years since it was declared a nature reserve.

There have been many achievements during the year, which I will list here:

- The creation of a fantastic new website (I go to it sometimes just to hear the bird song).
- Major grants from Foundation North (\$40,000) and the Community Conservation Partnerships Fund (\$132,000, over two years) to help to continue with our aggressive war on weeds.

- A grant of \$28,000 from the Becroft Foundation, which will enable us to make a video about the island in conjunction with Natural History New Zealand.
- A grant of \$14,000 from the Chisholm Whitney Family Charitable Trust, which will enable us to buy two sets of telemetry gear for the island's rangers to track birds, and will also go into the weed assault. ▶

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- ▶ • An event in the winter for supporters of Hauturu to update them on activity on the island and to farewell our former Chair Warren Gibb.
- A planned visit to the island by major funders in late November so we can show them the outcome of their support over the years. (Alas, bad weather forced its postponement. We didn't feel we should make our funders endure a wild and wet landing over the rocks!)
- A \$10,000 bequest from one of our long-time supporters, Eila Lawton, which was used to install a Norski toilet at the Orau Hut high on the summit ridge.

It's time now to look ahead to another busy year. The year will kick off with the second half of the summer spray and weed

programme for which a crack team has been assembled by the rangers. We also hope to begin work on publishing a completely updated edition of the famous *DSIR Bulletin 137*, still the only handbook on the island. There will be one sad note during the year: we will be saying farewell to ranger Richard Walle, his wife Leigh Joyce and their children Mahina and Liam. We are not sure when or where they will be going but we know already that we will miss their knowledge, skills, boundless enthusiasm and, of course, their hugs.

We are so grateful for the support of our funders and all our supporters and for our very effective partnership with DOC. Thank you all for your ongoing support of Hauturu.

Lyn Wade – Chair

RANGER'S REPORT

Life on Hauturu is never dull, and following the busy summer-autumn period Cathy and I suddenly found we had the island to ourselves for several weeks while Richard and family headed away on holiday. The winter was cold and quite windy but with a lot less rain than 2014. The stream by the office only ran a handful of times and there was no flooding on the flats this year. The island appears to have benefited from a more benign winter, with many birds already fledging their first clutches. The fruit set this year also looks to be exceptional and should help to feed the hungry mouths. The kakapo team is hoping for some breeding action for the same reason, with strong beech flowering being recorded along the Thumb Track. Richard has also been busy climbing trees to check kahikatea flowering for the kakapo team. Fingers crossed we may have a nest or two! ▶

Clockwise from top left: A baby tuatara emerges; a skink in the hand... from left: DOC mapping expert Neil Dingle with rangers Pete and Cathy Mitchell; the rare mottled kokako; up close with a chevron skink.



► WEED PROGRAMME

The weed team has settled in well, and it is great to have the Trust's support again this year for the weed team and the helicopter spraying. Part of the money has been used to engage one extra team member and to also extend the season by two weeks, as was done last year. This is to allow time to ground-control pampas within the weed plots and also in the more accessible slips. Both the weed team and the two volunteer weed teams have been working extremely well and doing a very thorough job. This is reflected in the finds to date: 203 climbing asparagus, 743 pampas, three moth plants and four Queensland poplars.

The helicopter fuel supply was set up in late September and spraying is underway, with three days completed. With the additional Trust funds we have a very good helicopter-spray budget again this year and we hope to build on the excellent results achieved in 2014.

The team from Abseil Access are also currently on the island, searching the cliffs on the western side of the island and around Orau Gorge. This is dangerous and physically demanding work, up and down the ropes all day, but it is very encouraging to see the significant impact they have made over the years. Climbing asparagus numbers have greatly reduced and they are now able to focus more effort on seedling pampas, which the helicopter has difficulty picking up.

FAUNA

We had 100% hatch rate with our 18 fertile tuatara eggs which has been very exciting, despite one egg trying to rupture part way through. Thanks to Cathy's vet skills and some guidance from Victoria University, the ruptured egg was repaired and the little tut survived. They are now waiting in the office for the weather to warm up and then we will release the two-year-olds back to the island. The one-year-olds will be shuffled across to the tuatarium, making space for the hatchlings in the boxes outside the office. And breaking news! One of the girls has started digging. There could be a fresh batch of eggs on the way soon!

We also made an exciting discovery, which you may have seen on the Hauturu Facebook page, a completely new location for Chevron skinks where we found one very nice adult! It is great to see these suppressed remnant populations re-emerging following the kiore eradication.

A team of 10 was catching both kokako and North Island robin for two weeks during the winter, taking samples for genetic research. Catching was a little slow but they had plenty of time and eventually caught their full quota for both species. It included one very unusual catch, a mottled kokako. Interestingly, when banded the previous year it was a normal colour.

James Russell (one of the Trust's scientific advisers) is running a long-term grey faced petrel study in the Gulf which includes Hauturu. Sylvain Dromzee (a former weed-team member) and Cathy spent several days exploring the known sites and we were also able to locate two new burrow areas. These remnant populations are still very small, highlighting how slow recovery can be for some species. The largest site has 18 burrows, with 12 of those occupied. The smallest has just four burrows, two of which were active.

BITS AND PIECES

Former island ranger Pete Barrow and two of his sons have been on the island recently and had great fun checking out some of

their old haunts, including a few days at Orau Hut. While up on top with Richard they did a fantastic job of helping to trim the main ridge track and also Track 20. We have been trying to get these tracks tidied up for a while to assist with the ongoing kakapo and black petrel work.

Two very capable maintenance volunteers have been on the island repairing the bunkhouse, and I am currently recruiting a team to paint it in February. We have taken over responsibility for the volunteer programme now that Sue Cameron has left the Warkworth office and I have been streamlining the paper work, making it more specific to the island's requirements. If you are interested in joining one of our volunteer teams, please contact us at littlebarrier@doc.govt.nz for a registration form. The trips are normally two weeks.

The new Norski toilet for Orau Hut has now been installed and we back-loaded the old toilet at the same time. Thank you to the Trust for its assistance with this project; it is very nice to know that this is now sorted properly.

INSTALLATION AT ORAU HUT

Hauturu Supporters Trust volunteers have been over recently, and did a great job tidying up the tuatarium (this will help us to locate the buried eggs) and dealing to the onion weed. It's a rather smelly job but we are making some headway! We look forward to having the second team on the island shortly.

Richard and I would sincerely like to thank you all for your ongoing support and assistance and wish you all a happy and safe festive season.

Pete Mitchell – Hauturu Ranger

Below: 'Houston, we have lift-off.' The Norski toilet is lifted up and away to the Orau Hut. Bottom: Installation work underway at the hut.



WORKING WEEKEND MAGIC

Linda Farrelly writes about a memorable September visit to the island.

The man in the fish and chip shop gets more than he bargained for when he asks what I'm up to for the weekend. I'm off to hang out at one of New Zealand's last remaining primaeval places and to see things I've only dreamt of, is my reply. I'm still rambling on about Little Barrier Island as he hands me my takeaways, looking a little relieved as I leave.

My excitement is quashed when there's a call from Lyn to say that the weather forecast is not looking good and our best chance is now the following weekend. I decide that I'm not returning to Dunedin without having given this opportunity a fighting chance. I've been eyeing Little Barrier Island from the mainland for years so I'll wait out the week, keeping a close eye on the Met Service. I drive out to the coast and look longingly towards Hauturu. Will she welcome visitors this weekend, I wonder?

The following Saturday the weather gods smile on us, and it's a diverse group that assembles for quarantine in Warkworth. Covering a wide age spectrum and a range of backgrounds, we have only our island opportunity in common. But it bonds us quickly, and before long stories are being shared and friendships developing.

Piers Barney welcomes us aboard the *Norma Jean* and we head out to sea. He regales us with stories of his sea-faring life and I can easily imagine him being descended from a line of local pirates. As Hauturu looms ever closer we all look in awe at the cliffs rising straight out of the sea and boulder beaches that resemble a collection of giant dinosaur eggs. Hauturu has dropped the cloud cover she so often wears, and I feel humbled to finally be here. Arriving on this mystical island is made even more special by literally driving up the beach. Ranger Pete Mitchell's expert boating skills making a tough task look easy.

Once more we are quarantined, and ranger Richard Walle does a great job of welcoming us and ensuring we understand we are now on an ark, a place holding some of New Zealand's most treasured and imperilled species. As we walk to the bunkhouse our ears get a full-on bird song assault. This is what New Zealand bush should sound like!

So it's time for 'work'. Some of us head to the tuatarium to prune shrubs and the remainder are off to deflower the onion weeds. Work never felt so good, although Richard's comment to be wary of Vicky the tuatara has us on full alert. She is smaller than the rest but doesn't like to be disturbed, he says. We settle in to the rhythm of the clean up, only to be stopped in our tracks by a wetapunga. She is a glorious creature but definitely not something I want to pick up in the clippings.

Lyn announces our work is done and we have time to wander before the evening barbecue. Sitting quietly under a pohutukawa tree, I'm happily watching kaka and the saddle-backs, when around the corner runs a gang of three. It's the kokako, and they are obviously up to something, tumbling over each other through the grass. Have you ever noticed how many of our native birds have the most unique but hilarious gaits? Evolved across so many years when there was minimal predator danger, many of them will happily walk rather than fly. The kokako are no exception; running like bandy-legged mischievous children they chase each other across the lawn. My first kokako experience is forever seared in to my memory.

The next morning daylight saving is the reason a few of the supporters don't manage the dawn chorus, but before long Lyn has everyone roused and heading off on a botanical adventure, up the Thumb Track and then back down the Waipawa. We all benefit from Lyn's vast plant knowledge. We are introduced to a carnivorous plant and tiny delicate orchids flowering on the forest floor. Then it's back to the hut for a tidy-up and it's almost time for home.

Picking a highlight of the weekend is impossible: feeding baby tuatara, exploring for geckos and skinks, seeing a pristine stream ecosystem, appreciating our wonderful forest without the pests that ravage it and, of course, our wonderful native birds which bring the whole experience alive. New Zealanders can be proud of what DOC and the Trust have achieved on the island.

Back on the boat, Hauturu recedes into the distance. We are all richer for the experience. I notice that Hauturu has once again donned her cloud cover, her job done for the day. On behalf of the supporters, a big thank you to Lyn, Richard, Peter and Cathy for sharing the magic of Te Hauturu-o-toi with us.

HAUTURU IS A MOUSE-CLICK AWAY

Just a reminder, if you haven't already, to check out our new website. When you first click on it there is the most glorious sound of bird song, recorded on Hauturu, and a rotation of beautiful images of the island.

You can find it on www.littlebarrierisland.org.nz. We're on Facebook too: look for Little Barrier Island – Hauturu Supporters Trust. Thanks to trustee Mary Binney, our secretary Sandra Jones, and Tony Lindsay of Vega for their great work on it.





The September working weekend team.
Back row, from left: Karen Nicholl,
Dhahara Ranatunga, Linda Farrelly, John Gray,
Stephanie McLeod, Cynthia Carter. Front:
Evan Cameron, Lyn Wade and Alasdair Nicholl.



The group dealing to onion weed.

WELCOME DONATION FROM MAJOR COMPANY

The war against invasive weeds couldn't succeed without the use of chemical sprays. They are the only way to fight aggressive, persistent weed pests such as climbing asparagus and pampas. The Trust was delighted when Nufarm agreed to donate all the spray the team would need recently. This photograph shows the spray being handed over to DOC staff at the Warkworth office. From left: Nufarm's Christine Cumiskey, Dave Wilson, DOC biodiversity ranger, and Chris Brenan from Nufarm.



The spray handover at the DOC Warkworth office.

NEW PRO BONO ACCOUNTANT FOR TRUST

The Auckland accounting firm Bentleys has agreed to act as the Trust's accountants on a pro bono basis. The trust is so grateful to Nick den Heijer and his colleagues for this support. Their work will replace many years of sterling service by trustee Geoff Drew's Hamilton-based firm. Geoff has recently retired from his company, hence the need to find a new provider of these essential services.

THINKING OF A BEQUEST TO HAUTURU?

The Trust has recently developed a robust process for acknowledging bequests made to it by people for whom Hauturu was important. Such bequests are hugely important to our work on the island and can play a key part in determining whether a research or conservation project will go ahead. When budgets are tight, an extra \$3000 to \$10,000 can make a real difference, and that has certainly been the case over the years.

If you would like to find out more about leaving funds to the island in your will, please contact our secretary at info@littlebarrierisland.org.nz

WORKING WEEKENDS AUTUMN 2016

Two working weekends are planned for autumn 2016.

The target dates (weather permitting) are:

April 2/3 (back-up dates 9/10 April)

May 21/22 (back-up dates 28/29 May)

All participants need to be reasonably fit and agile and prepared to cope, if necessary, with a wet and difficult landing over large and slippery boulders. We will do a variety of jobs for the rangers, plus there will be time for walking, bird-watching and botanising.

For further details and to register your interest in either of these weekends, please ring Sandra Jones, phone 09 817 2788, or email info@littlebarrierisland.org.nz

The closing date for enquiries is Friday 12 February 2016.

Little Barrier Island/Hauturu Supporters Trust

The Trust was established in 1997 to help support conservation and research activities on Te Hauturu-o-Toi / Little Barrier Island. Supporters of the Trust receive *Hauturu*, the Trust's twice-yearly newsletter, by paying an annual subscription. The newsletter brings you up-to-date news from and about the island. Copies of past issues are available on request. Donations are also welcome. All donations are directed towards activities that are of benefit to Hauturu. To become a supporter, make a donation or offer help in some other way, please contact the Trust secretary Sandra Jones, phone: 09 817 2788.

Email: info@littlebarrierisland.org.nz

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THE TRUST

Patron: Ruud Kleinpaste

Trustees: Lyn Wade (Chair), Evan Hamlet, Ray Stone, Dr Matt Rayner, Mary Binney, Nicola Legat, David Stone, Geoff Drew, Rodger Murphy, John Clark

Scientific Advisors: Sandra Anderson (UoA), Assoc Prof Jacqueline Beggs (UoA), Ewen Cameron (Auckland Museum), Dr Nicola Nelson (VUW), Dr Kevin Parker, Dr James Russell (UoA), David Seldon (UoA)

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