

HAUTURU

LITTLE BARRIER ISLAND SUPPORTERS TRUST

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NEWSLETTER
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FROM THE CHAIR

Since the last Hauturu newsletter much has happened on the island that needs attention. A serious weed problem has been found in the magnificent Orau Gorge by Shane and Liz that will require some fundraising to eradicate. Increasing financial pressure on DoC does not help the situation.

Translocations of kiwi, hihi, rifleman, whiteheads and wetapunga have taken place. With the expansion of onshore and other island reservations there is increasing pressure on the various populations on Hauturu to repopulate other areas. We need to be balanced in our approach to this pressure but the preservation of Hauturu as a pristine sanctuary must be the long term aim.

And on a happy note we acknowledge the Queen's Birthday Honour, QSM, bestowed upon our retiring editor and continuing trustee, Judy Hanbury. Well deserved! Finally a grateful welcome to our new editor Nicola Legat.

John Hagen, Chairman

RESEARCH UPDATE KIORE'S DESTRUCTIVENESS PROVEN

With the assistance of funding from both DOC and Hauturu supporters, John Campbell has completed his investigation into the impacts of kiore on the seedling establishment in island forests of the outer Hauraki gulf. His work, starting prior to the Little Barrier kiore eradication, looked at seedling establishment on Hauturu, Hen and Great Barrier Islands. The work shows that kiore (and presumably other rodents) can have a significant impact on seedling establishment of a number of species, including *Pisonia brunoniana*, *Coprosma macrocarpa*, *Ixerba brexoides*, *Knightia excelsa* and *Rhopalostylis sapida*, all of which experienced increased seedling establishment post eradication, more on Hauturu than on surrounding islands. The extent of this impact is such that it is believed that over time kiore would have had a major impact on forest composition. John Campbell also believes that kiore have possibly caused the extinction of some species such as Coastal Maire and Milk Tree, and that consideration should be given to reintroducing these species. Well done to HST, John Campbell, the island rangers and everyone who assisted with this work. A full (7MB) electronic copy of the report is available from DOC Warkworth on warkworth@doc.govt.nz; quote DOCDM-434272.

Rory Renwick, DOC



HONOUR FOR FOUNDING TRUSTEE

Judy Hanbury was awarded a QSM for services to conservation in the Queen's Birthday honours last month. Judy is typically modest but her longstanding conservation achievements are to be applauded and reflect credit on the Hauturu Supporters Trust, in whose creation she was, and remains, so pivotal. Here's what Judy said of her conservation work when pressed by her successor as editor of the Hauturu newsletter: 'Roy [Judy's husband] and I would see ourselves as grass-roots conservationists who have been involved in a variety of activities over the years, from weed-pulling and tree-planting, to kiwi rescue and NI weka breeding, a Forest & Bird programme. Groups such as the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, Native Forests Action Council and NZ Native Forests Restoration Trust sparked and have nurtured our interest in active conservation over the years.'

'Our curiosity about Hauturu stemmed from Roy's reading, so when the opportunity came in 1986 to spend a long weekend on the island with an NFAC group, we didn't hesitate. We soon decided to organise visits for a group of like-minded friends and all quickly fell under the spell of the island itself and the people who managed it, especially the rangers, Alex Dobbins ('Dobbie') and Chris Smuts-Kennedy, and their wives. When Chris later pointed out that Hauturu warranted a group of 'Friends', there was something in the air (or in the wine?) and we decided to act.'

To which we can all say, thank goodness and well done!

Nicola Legat, Editor

NEWS FROM HAUTURU

Kia ora everyone

It has been a crazy time on the island since the last issue of *Hauturu* and it has really only just settled down in the last few weeks. The bunkhouse has been humming with group after group, staying for mainly translocation purposes, along with weed teams, researchers, volunteers and of course a couple of Supporters' weekends.

Let's get straight into a round up of what's been happening out here.

Translocations

Translocations are a very important tool in conservation and even when Hauturu was first put aside as a reserve in the late 1800's it was thought of as a lifeboat for many of our bird species. Now, a 'post eradication Hauturu' is able to help out other restoration projects around the country. DOC, along with Hauturu Supporters, is trying to carefully manage these translocations so as to have minimal impact on Little Barrier's genetic diversity and population dynamics. So far, anecdotally at least, these translocations have had little effect on the island.

Kakariki

Luis Ortiz-Catedral and his team were back earlier this year to move some more kakariki. Unfortunately Luis brought a whole lot of bad weather with him that was not picked up in his biosecurity checks and his catching suffered as a result. The Motuihe Trust would have been happy to receive their final top-up of 16 birds and it seems that the birds have been doing very well and have even bred! Another 24 kakariki were flown across to Tawharanui Regional Park, where several members of TOSSI and guests were waiting with big smiles.

Hihi & Whitehead

In March we had former Hauturu ranger, Chris Smuts-Kennedy, and some other helpers from Maungatautari Ecological Island

Trust come and transfer 60 whitehead and 20 hihi down to Maungatautari near Cambridge. Sixty whitehead seems like a lot but it took them just three days to catch them, which shows you how good the population is out here. We have had reports from Chris saying that the birds appear to be doing well.

Rifleman

Back in February, a team from Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi, led by Simon and Morag Fordham, arrived on the island, and 31 of our smallest passerines were flown to Tiritiri Matangi to try to establish a population there. The whole capture and release process went very smoothly indeed and the only complaint was that the cicadas were so loud that hearing the very high-pitched squeak of the rifleman was extremely tricky.

Kiwi

In April this year we had a team from the Rimutaka Forest Park Trust come out and transfer 20 North Island brown kiwi to the Rimutakas. The birds were caught using dogs and then radio-tracked while the results of blood tests were waited on. Reports from the Trust have been very good. I couldn't help feeling a bit sorry for these birds when I woke up during the first cold snap of winter to 5 degrees and wondered what the temperature would be like for them. Brrr.

Weed Programme

As reported in the last issue, another successful weed programme was completed by Liz and her team in November. Due to weather (wind mainly) we couldn't get Skywork out to do the pampas until late in the season and they didn't finish until January this year. Very, very positive results in that area. We went back to areas that had been done two years ago, and one area along the northern coast took a fraction of the time it did in late 2006, meaning that we are slowly getting on top of this pesky weed.

We were also able to hire a few staff to do some work on our new infestation of climbing asparagus in Orau Gorge. It meant we could get an initial spray job done before this year's

weed team starts. This new infestation was found due to funds from Hauturu Supporters Trust, so thanks very much for your donations. The weed issue is a big one out here and if we let species like climbing asparagus get away then the habitat we are providing for our native species is seriously compromised.

We are currently recruiting the new weed team for this year and they will be starting in mid August.

Hihi programme

This year Eddy and his volunteers found 25 nests, which was similar to the season before. There was a slightly later start to the breeding season this year due some bad weather; this made a slightly later finish also. Fledgling numbers per nest were down a bit on the previous season but it is unknown why this is. This was the last season for nest minding for now. Next season we are concentrating on distance sampling in other parts of the island to learn more about bird population and its distribution. Thanks again to Hauturu Supporters Trust and 360 Discovery for their continued support of the hihi project.

Tuatara

Not the flashiest season for tuatara this year: we have had two of the adults in hospital for different ailments. Rudolf went off last year with a broken jaw. It has been discovered that tuatara run straight at each other in acts of aggression and obviously Rudolf came off second best. I'm not sure how this species has lasted so long with behaviour like that. Anyway, we have him back home now sporting some nice 'mouth-bling' in the form of a wired jaw. A bit more serious was Whero, one of our top breeders. She was found to be not eating properly and tipping over all the time for no apparent reason. In February we found a large egg in her box so rushed her in to Auckland Zoo to find she had another 10 eggs inside her. The vets finally got all the eggs out but they proved infertile. A case of being over cooked is suspected. She is back on the island now but continues to have trouble feeding and is still falling over a bit. She is improving but it is a wait and see game with her.

The biggest news on the tuatara front is that one has been seen

on the Shag track. We haven't been able to catch it yet to see if it's wild or one from the tuatarium but it is quite a way from the nearest release site.

Working Weekends

Only one of these went ahead in the first part of this year. Unfortunately the second trip was cancelled due to the weather. The first one, however, was great and we got heaps of work done in the tuatarium as usual and had a lovely meal on the Saturday night. Thanks to everyone who came out and gave us a hand.

To everyone who hasn't been out and seen the place yet, these weekends are a great glimpse of how special this place is. Very few people get to stay overnight and see what the place has to offer after dark, so put your name forward and give it a go!

Ratbag on TV

Earlier this year we had a TVNZ crew out here with DOC's Nic Valance filming for *Meet the Locals* which, for those who don't know, is a series of short items about conservation in New Zealand, screened on TVNZ 6 on Freeview. I think it is available on SKY soon. The team did several stories including one on Ratbag, a weeding story with Liz, a hihi story and a tuatara story. The stories haven't been on the box yet but once screened on TV they will be available on the internet so check them out.

Coming Up

Hauturu Supporters have taken over the kiwi monitoring programme here on the island and Lyn Wade has been busy getting her team ready to undertake kiwi call counts as part of a national programme. It's great to see the Trust involved in another part of island management.

That's about all from the island. We hope to see some more of you out here soon.

Take Care

Shane Innes and Liz Whitwell
Rangers, Hauturu Little Barrier Island

HAUTURU PHOTOS FOR SALE



Do you remember this superb view of Hauturu from the sea? And this great shot of a kaka feeding on flax? You can buy these limited edition photos provided by Liz Whitwell, and skilfully prepared for us by Shane McInnes. To see the full range of images available, go to our website www.littlebarrierisland.org.nz, or ring Judy Hanbury, (09) 817-7604, if you would like a printed version.

You can either purchase a 6 x 8" photograph to frame, or buy a photoblock with your choice of photo on it. The blocks are white, 18mm MDF with a small hole in the back for hanging; they will also sit on a shelf. Script is optional. It reads 'Hauturu Little Barrier Island'.

Price list

Photos: \$13 plus \$2 postage, or \$36 for 3 photos plus \$2 postage

Photoblocks: \$21 plus \$4 postage, or \$58 for 3 blocks plus \$6 postage

Place your orders with Lyn Wade: ddlcwade@xtra.co.nz, phone (09) 425-7019.

There are three delivery dates: end of August; end of October; mid-December (LAST CHANCE!). Please state your preferred delivery date and indicate your choice of script or no script. All proceeds go to the Hauturu Supporters Trust.

TREASURES PRESERVED

In January I was lucky enough to travel to Hauturu for two weeks as part of the reptile monitoring team and as backup assistant to John Campbell. John was on the island completing another year of his seedling survey and we had a larger volunteer team than previous years due to the inclusion of chevron skink monitoring. Another of my jobs while on the island was reviewing the office filing system and helping Liz and Shane rationalise the shelves prior to painting.

We found a couple of 'treasures'. Treasure one was two folders containing an eclectic mix of newspaper clippings, magazine articles, scientific articles and hand-written notes. Some are official documents but many provide an insight into the personal side of island life.

Treasure two was a series of pressed samples of native flora. John Campbell confirmed the samples were definitely worth preserving as a record of flora on the island. They are not in a condition that a 'purist botanist would prefer' (John's words) but he felt that if the samples and mounting pages were protected by adhesive vinyl sheets, then reclassified if necessary and put into folders, they would be a great reference tool for the island – and just plain interesting.

An SOS was sent out to Judy Hanbury to see if any members of the Little Barrier Island Supporters Trust would have the experience to complete the tasks. We had a response from two wonderful supporters. Christine Ovens, longtime Hauturu supporter and qualified librarian, spent many hours reading and sorting the files into a folder that will protect them for years to come. There are now three indexes that will allow searches via subject, name and article title. Lyn Wade, Hauturu Supporters trustee with a long association with the island and an interest in botany, was our second volunteer. She took the flora samples, and with advice from John Campbell, has completed the mounting, and reclassifying where necessary.

Both completed projects are now back on the island where they belong. If you are on the island and wish to see them just ask the rangers. To Christine and Lyn, and the Little Barrier Island Supporters Trust for their financial support of the projects, thank you so much for all the time and expertise you offered to preserve these island treasures.

Sue Cameron
DOC, Warkworth

RUUD'S RAVINGS NO 10 NO SHOW PONIES!

I love Hauturu. Just like everybody else, really. But there's something rather unbalanced about the place... and it all has to do with the way we, humans, look at Little Barrier.

Talk to any of the recipients of this august newsletter about the significance of the island and the answers you will get are pretty predictable. Those with a cold-blooded bias will mention the tuatara or the chevron skink. The seabird junkies rave about the Cook's petrel and the possibility of having a previously thought extinct storm petrel breeding on its terrain. Botanists love the Euphorbia and the plant communities on the slopes; the mighty kauri mingling with beech. It's all very special indeed.

The cute-lovers will ooze about blue penguins waddling about and the fourth-generation boat people mention the noise of the kiwi. Yep, those kiwis sure are noisy, especially in the first few hours after sunset. True, blue ornithologists will be enchanted by the melodious and haunting song of the kokako. I personally find that one of the most New Zealand sounds on the planet; no creature can cry as beautifully as the kokako. Kokako naturally sing in a minor key. Saddlebacks, on the other hand, drive me absolutely nuts. Can't they just tone it down for a moment? Mind you, many people will say exactly the same about me, I suppose.

Gurgling earthworms, brilliant glow-worms and impressive giant wetae make up the also-rans. Yes, invertebrates are finally starting to make it onto the top-ten lists of natural historians. The most famous invertebrate of Hauturu? Everybody knows that old show pony called *Deinacrida heteracantha*, the giant weta. The clichés are endless: as heavy as a thrush, world records in weight, 'invertebrate mice', Gods of Ugly things.

Yes, they make a noise, they raise their legs in defence (just like our tree wetas), can be grumpy and even bite – I tried it, so you don't have to! But how many of you realise that there are perhaps dozens of other species of weta on the island? Critters that nobody looks for; insects that don't even rate in the rarity stakes! These insects go about their business every night of the year, converting dead organic material into, well... smaller organic material.

You see, insects have a 'no-waste society' and the wetae are very much part of the all-important undertaker squad. Recycling is their middle name. For starters, there are 'ordinary' tree weta on Little Barrier; the same species that inhabit the northern part of New Zealand's North Island. Their food consists of fresh foliage, berries and fruit (they love tawa and puriri), but they also clean up dead insects and other proteinaceous debris.

Tree weta are fascinating to study and appear to have a complex social behaviour. Adult males keep harems in confined galleries (day-time shelter sites). The make-up of these communities tends to change from time to time, but they almost always involve a number of females, juveniles and sub-adults.



Communication is through sounds, produced by rubbing the substantial hind legs over abdominal plates. The weta's ears are situated on the front legs. You couldn't make it more sci-fi, even if you tried! Truth is: we don't know half of how these insects operate; their IT is very likely incredible, with sensitive antennae, smelling and touching everything in their environment. There are even some suggestions that they can log weather conditions (wind speed, temperature, and goodness knows what else) via their cerci, which are those small feelers that stick out from their last abdominal segments. Just imagine: having a complete meteorological station in the tip of your abdomen!

And then there are the smaller weta species, such as the long-legged cave wetas that climb and jump all over the huge tree trunks in search of some suitable tucker like fungi, mosses or lichens. Some species are 'part-time carnivores' and will grab any small invertebrate, dead or alive. Even a younger sibling is not safe.

Despite their name, cave weta don't just occur in caves. Some do indeed share daytime shelter sites in the form of moist cavities under logs or in hollow trees, others are far more solitary. They are distinguished from other weta groups by their long antennae, absence of ears from the front legs and the lack of soft pads on the soles of their feet.

Ground weta are different again. These small insects often give the impression of being soft-bodied and have a relatively pallid complexion. Their antennae are not as long and spectacular as those of the cave wetas, but they can sure jump with the best of them! Ground weta are carnivorous and live, solitarily, in small holes in the ground. Their territorial behaviour is quite remarkable, as they'll defend the home tunnel against any competitor. To keep a close eye on the environment, they are known to back into their tunnel, so that the jaws will always face the enemy. I suppose that is a good strategy if you haven't got large, defensive spines on your legs.

A really interesting feature of some species of ground wetas is the fact that females do not have an ovipositor (that curved spike that wetas lay eggs with). Those girls take reproduction very seriously indeed, by constructing a brood chamber off the main burrow and by looking after their young after hatching.

Just remember, next time you walk around the bunkhouse at night, looking for moreporks, kiwi, giant wetae and other show ponies: there are much smaller creatures right under your feet, living in dark, damp tunnels, reading bed-time stories to their kids!