

ISLAND VISITS

HAUTURU SUPPLEMENT

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WORKING WEEKENDS

REPORT ONE

The conversation would have gone something like this:

Piers: "Dave, I need you to repair that ding in the back of my boat."

Dave: "What ding in the back of your boat?"

Piers: "The one the *Hine Moana* made when she hit it yesterday."

Dave: "Hmmm... Why didn't you grab hold of the rope to keep her steady?"

Piers: "Well, I did grab hold of the rope, but..."

Dave: "But...?"

Piers: "But I was upside down in the surf at the time."

Dave: "Oh ... well, you always go the extra mile Piers, that's what I like about you."

The seas were a little lumpy when Piers arrived to collect us at the end of our Hauturu working weekend, but we all made it aboard safe and sound. Shane, Piers and co. did their best to steady both vessels while we all took our turns jumping from runabout to the *Norma Jean*, and to their credit, the only casualties were the *Norma Jean* (who took a little nudge from behind) and our skipper Piers, who ended up in the drink. It was an eventful end to another magical weekend on Hauturu.

One day earlier, after a thorough inspection at Warkworth DOC, we cast lines off at Sandspit and turned around the headland to make our way to Hauturu. Lesley was our stand-in group leader as Lyn was already on the island. We would soon learn from Lyn that she was involved in a botanical survey of the island and the establishment of a herbarium that is intended to become a reference tool for the study of flora on the island. Lyn was pleased to report that the week's work had turned up and confirmed some species that had previously only been suspected of being on the island.

Following the post-arrival shake-out of gear, we headed to the bunkhouse for a cuppa and a briefing from Shane. Liz was nowhere to be seen, apparently perched in her tui hide, observing them and their little orange hats as they fed on harakeke flowers. Shane's exciting news was that a female tuatara, who prefers to spend her time hidden down a hole, had made a rare appearance and that, if we were lucky, we might have an up-close encounter



as she was weighed and measured for the first time in two years. This turned out to be quite an experience and it made the weeding of the tuatarium feel like a small price to pay. We worked through most of the day in here, weeding, pruning and gathering leaf litter. Evan had the very important job of turning over some soil in key spots in order to provide expectant tuatara mothers somewhere convenient to lay their eggs.

We finished up and headed towards the bunkhouse for a full-on onion weed assault, but as the dark clouds rolled over, the thunder started booming and the rain started. Shane took pity on us and cut our efforts short. Thankfully the torrential rain didn't last too long and we were able to wander across the flats in the early dusk before sparking up the customary shared BBQ dinner. The weeding team happily shared their stories, photos, adventures and freshly-made pizza. The shared meal was a triumph: quiche, half-a-dozen salads, an array of BBQ meat, while Patricia even managed to produce a chocolate cake with whipped cream! After a cup of tea, the hardier types headed out after dark to look for wetapunga and kiwi, both of which proved quite elusive (although there was a rumour that people had seen the south end of a kiwi disappearing into the undergrowth).

Sunday gave us a great opportunity to botanise, as we crawled slowly up the Thumb track, stopping every few minutes to check out an orchid by the track, a kaka in a tree or a good example of the native broom in flower. It really was quite a luxury to have,

not one or two botanists, but five of them. If Debashis couldn't identify a particularly obscure specimen, then Michael, Diana or Lyn certainly could – and what Lesley doesn't know about orchids is not worth knowing! It was quite a luxury and we all learnt a lot as we meandered up the hill. We also noted the places at which Evan and Lyn had done their kiwi monitoring earlier in the year.

After a snack at the top (looking longingly at the forbidden path continuing up the ridge) we turned and headed back down the hill in a similar style. Those must be some of the most well-examined plants on the island, I'm sure. We had a quick lunch at the bunkhouse before heading out to different points on the flats soaking up the day, where a few of us were lucky enough to spend some time watching a pair of kokako playing in the coprosmas next to Shane and Liz's house. Paul and Judy put their field glasses to good use, but the hihi seemed to know exactly where they were, and were always a flit or two just out of sight.

The wind began to pick up over the afternoon and Shane made the call to try to get us on the *Norma Jean* earlier than our scheduled departure time. We said our goodbyes and thanked Shane and Liz before climbing into the *Hine Moana* to take our chances with the swell. Safely aboard, we were content to let the island slip away in our wake, half holding on in the swell, half thinking about Hauturu, and when we might be lucky enough to head back.

Mark Osborne

REPORT TWO

Despite having the shortest travel distance, I arrived on the run (and late) with my biosecurity checklist, just as the DOC quarantine doors closed and the inspections began. An hour later, at the Sandspit wharf (minus any seeds, spiders, and pests) and our boots sprayed to ensure that no disease or fungus is carried ashore from the mainland, we were ready to depart. Before long we were acquainted with fellow weekend volunteers and aboard the *Norma Jean*. (Thank you Piers.)

Calmer seas or more picturesque scenes would be hard to find. In no time Hauturu came into view. Gradually the Tawharanui Peninsula and Kawau Island ridges and shorelines were left



behind. Shane met the boat, quickly transferring all gear and passengers up and over the boulder banks without incident. Phew. Seldom are the weather gods of Hauturu this kind; we accepted the kindness and spent two full fine days with little wind and cloud.

Lyn Wade (Hauturu Trustee and our group leader) mapped out very full days in the outdoors for all to experience the special aspects of this island and its wildlife. This started by Shane giving us the known island history of tuatara, and its monitoring, breeding and translocation programmes. The volunteers weeded and mulched parts of the tuatarium before lunch at the bunkhouse in the sun.

A beach clean-up was scheduled for the afternoon. We ambled and rock-hopped looking for rubbish washed up on the boulder banks. These banks are impressive in size and height; each boulder or rock is rounded from being constantly turned over and over by waves and storms. Lyn cheerfully gave reminders of what was immediately around us, sharing highlights from trips she and her family had enjoyed on the island over most of her lifetime.

We observed the springy net of *muehlenbeckia* forming a continuous mat above the reach of the tide and across the flats, and caught a glimpse of shore skinks out the corner of the eye as they moved out of sight and under the rocks. A volunteer found an undamaged paper nautilus shell nestled amongst the boulders.

greater than in 2007, but are equivalent to 2005-06.

In 2009, a new network of 58 observation stations was set up in the NE of the island close to Orau hut to determine how density estimates made in the SW sector compare to those made elsewhere on the island. Insufficient numbers of volunteers and poor weather curtailed the distance sampling programme in the NE, such that density estimates could not be made; but it was shown that distance sampling is feasible in this more rugged terrain provided sufficient person hours are available. Now that the observation stations are established, this area is ready to be accurately measured next year, given suitable weather and volunteers.

Maungatautiri Translocation Update

As yet data of what birds (determined from leg band combinations) are visiting the feeders, has not been analysed but there seem to be good numbers of birds visiting them. Two LBI male hihi have been seen at feeders, meaning that they have learnt to use them, whereas the Tiritiri birds have been raised on an island where these are a major food source. Searches for hihi nests are currently under way and already one LBI male appears to have paired up with a Tiritiri female.



It was impossible to picture how this could be carried by the seas and be deposited unbroken. We rested half-way in the shade on driftwood and pohutukawa trunks near a grove of mature trees, hunted for the flower of a rare euphorbia to photograph, and then rounded Te Titoki Point towards the west shore landing. The heat of the afternoon sun on our heads coupled with the reflecting heat off the boulders made the decision to take a swim easy. Clambering like crabs down the boulder bank, we shrieked at the cold water temperature; this was forgotten as we peered into the deep clean waters to view the kelp and seaweed.

Wandering back to the bunkhouse, we started mentally recording the bird life around us: tui, bellbird, stitchbird, kakariki and kereru all eating fruit along the track; kaka calling and whistling overhead; Grey warbler and long-tailed cuckoo heard but hard to see.

As we passed the rangers' house, smoke signalled the promise of a BBQ dinner in the garden. After a quick shower, a wide range of salads instantly appeared. These were packed into fish boxes and transported on foot to the BBQ site. We chatted about our day and other adventures, discoveries and travels, shared food and enjoyed a drink. Liz (DOC Ranger) and the young fit folk from the weeding team joined us. A highlight for me was the arrival of the native bats just on sundown (referred to as the 7:49 bats). The bats (about the size and shape of an Australian swallow) come

out of the bush around this time each day, flitting and darting in every direction at a rapid pace to chase and catch insects.

Darkness arrived, warm clothing was layered on, torches tested ready to go kiwi spotting on the flats. After hearing calls and creeping silently along the tracks, we rounded for the bunkhouse. Suddenly in the silence, patience was rewarded with a kiwi seen hunting for food on the side of the track.

Keen to see the wetapunga, we shone our torches along the branches of mature pohutukawa. With two sightings, we marvelled at the size of these weta (New Zealand's largest insects). It had been an early start and a full day for many; our beds called us just as the lonely morepork called from a low-hanging branch over the workers' quarters.

Volunteers rose early next morning to enter the bush to enjoy the dawn chorus and watch the birds feeding or nest-building. The tracks nearby took us into nikau groves and virgin bush. We were rewarded for the early rising. The day's plan was to walk the valley floor, up the Hamilton track and back down the Thumb track. Climbing and descending steadily we identified plants, trees and orchids, pausing to sight a particular bird or stopping to marvel at the trenches and food pits from pre-European times.

In the afternoon we set off westwards to walk the Waipawa track and take in views of the coast and mainland from lookout points. As we were about to leave the bunkhouse, luck had it that a pair of kokako flew into the bush canopy nearby. They sang their mournful song to us as they hopped along the branches.

Before we knew it we were repacking our gear, assembling for a group photo, slipping into lifejackets ready to depart. It was all over way too soon; the island became so much smaller and the cliffs of Kawau and the coastline came into view.

Lyn, thank you for your care and sharing your knowledge and experiences so patiently and in such an interesting way. We take away special memories and the pleasure of experiencing all that Hauturu has to offer. Thanks, too, to Shane, who does everything with a smile on his face! We had such an amazing time.

Joy Paxton

MORE BIRD NEWS

Density studies

Population monitoring of hihi, tui and tieke using distance sampling was conducted on Hauturu in spring of 2005, 2006, 2007, and has just been completed for 2009. This monitoring is particularly pertinent to hihi, for which Hauturu has the world's only self-sustaining population. In each year, distance sampling has been performed at 98 observation stations in the SW of Hauturu.

Results show:

Hihi: Similar density in 2005 and 2006, a significant decline in 2007 which was reversed in 2009.

Tui: Density estimates have fluctuated over time with a non-significant increase from 2005 to 2006, followed by a significant decrease in 2007. In 2009, the density rose and although the change is not significant compared to 2007, it has been such that the 2009 density estimate is not different from that in 2005.

Tieke: Tieke populations appear more stable than hihi or tui, with no significant change from 2005-07. 2009 estimates are significantly

PLANT RECOVERY SUCCESS

Hauturu contains a stronghold population of *Dactylanthus*, Pua o Te Reinga, or wood rose, which is classified as a nationally vulnerable plant species. Surveys of *Dactylanthus* on Hauturu prior to 2000 indicated that the population and number of sites where it was found were decreasing. A survey in 2001 prior to the kiore eradication, of 36 *Dactylanthus* plants, found that few produced flowers and that fruit set was light. Of tagged plants on Hauturu only eight per cent had flowered. Most flowers had been chewed by kiore. A survey of the same plants in 2008, post eradication, by volunteers found that the number of flowering *Dactylanthus* plants had increased to 36 per cent of the tagged plants.

The number of flowers per flowering plant had also increased from an average of three flowers per plant to six flowers per plant. The overall increase in flowering for all plants was 2.7 flowers per plant. Seed set had also improved. In 2008, of the nine flowers scored for seed set, five were scored as having

moderate seed set, one as light, three as heavy seed set. In comparison, in 2001, one flower had moderate seed set and two flowers had light seed set.

While these results are limited because only two years' data has been examined, the results indicate that the removal of kiore has benefitted both flowering and seed set, which should reverse the decline of *Dactylanthus* on Hauturu.

Rory Renwick, DOC.

RECENT BEQUEST

This winter the Trust was delighted to receive a \$2000 bequest from the estate of Lorna Mills. Lorna had a life-long love of birds and saw Hauturu as a special island for our native birdlife which she wished to support. If you wish to make a bequest to the Trust for the benefit of Hauturu, please write to the Trust at PO Box 48232, Blockhouse Bay, Auckland 0644. A prepared Form of Bequest is available.



HAMILTON FAMILY COLLECTION

This outstanding image of Hauturu's spectacular Orau Gorge, captured in 1932 by Lyn Wade's father, Dr W.M. Hamilton (later Director-General of the DSIR), shows a magnificent part of the island. It was heartbreaking, last year, to discover that climbing asparagus had gained a foothold in the gorge. This incursion shows how high the weed removal stakes are on Little Barrier and how frustrating it is that weed pests go largely unchecked on the mainland when they have such a devastating and costly effect on an otherwise pristine environment offshore.

KIWI MONITORING

The Trust took on the responsibility of monitoring the kiwi on Hauturu this year. The last survey had been done in 2002 with the intention of it being done five-yearly. Attempts by DOC staff and volunteers had been foiled by bad weather in 2007 and 2008 (July is not an easy time of year to select a fine week).

We had a great group of 12 people, some experienced, some not, with some Hauturu Supporters and two Trustees. Training was given on site by Wendy Sporle of BNZ Kiwi Trust. We had a wonderful week, managing to carry out kiwi monitoring on five of the six nights we were on the island. Plenty of kiwi calls were heard. At five of the six sites, call numbers were equal to or higher than the previous survey. In the valley where kiwi had been removed for translocation to the Rimutaka Forest Park in April the call numbers were down slightly. There were some wonderful close encounters with kiwi and our nightly treks back to the bunkhouse were interesting.

The intention is to repeat this survey annually for four more years, probably in July. So if you are interested, don't mind trekking rugged country in the dark, and can spare a week in July please contact me: ddlc.wade@xtra.co.nz or phone (09) 425 7019.

Lyn Wade, Trustee

SECRETARY SOUGHT!

Our tireless secretary Denise Le Noel is relinquishing her duties with the Trust. Denise has been the Trust's administrative secretary since 1999. She has provided us with secretarial support that would be the envy of any organisation. The records of the Trust's meetings during her tenure are exemplary and her efficiency regularly belies us. Her quiet and unassuming manner has enabled the personality of Trustees to continue to flourish and her patience with each of us in respect of myriad different issues would be worthy of a bravery award.

Fortunately all is not lost as Denise is committed to continue with the database and website (about which a book could be written!). Denise's husband Mark has been our sommelier at our annual functions. Given that vinous appreciation ranks highly with Trustees, he will be missed. The Trust wishes Denise, Mark and their two gorgeous daughters, Aimee and Claire the best.

We are looking for a new secretary. If you are able to attend up to eight meetings a year to take and circulate minutes plus undertake a range of secretarial duties to a total of about six hours a month, the Trust would love to hear from you. Please email the chair, John Hagen, on john@hagen.co.nz

David McGregor, Trustee

HAUTURU ON THE WEB!

Little Barrier ranger Shane McInnes has set up a Hauturu diary on the web. Enhanced by some super pics from Liz Whitwell it's a fabulous read. You can find it at <http://blog.doc.govt.nz/category/hauturulittle-barrier-island-diary/>

About the Little Barrier Supporters Trust

The Trust was established in 1997 to help support conservation and research activities on Hauturu Little Barrier Island. Membership of the Trust is by subscription and donations are also welcome. All donations and subscriptions are directed towards activities of benefit to Hauturu.

Your subscription ensures that you receive *Hauturu*, the Trust newsletter twice a year, bringing you up-to-date news about the island. Past issues are available on request.

If you wish to become a supporter, make a donation or offer help in some other way, please contact the Trust at info@littlebarrierisland.org.nz

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