



MOTUORA RESTORATION SOCIETY (INC)

PO Box 100132, North Shore

North Shore City 0745

www.motuora.org.nz

Newsletter No. 43

March 2010

SEA BIRDS CALLING

Diving petrel translocations were completed on 5th December 2009 when the last two birds fledged. A very successful and rewarding project of which we can all be very proud. Over the three year project 190 chicks were transferred from Wooded Island of which 93% fledged successfully. The best news is that the first island 'born chick' parented by a returning bird, fledged from Motuora. This is a positive indicator for the establishment of a colony. Monitoring regime is in place and in September we wait to see more birds come 'home'.

Plans are underway to begin transferring Pycroft's petrels to Motuora in early 2011. The Pycroft's petrels are regarded as a vulnerable species because they breed on only a handful of islands around the North Island. Establishing a colony on Moturoa would therefore be a real win-win situation - a win for the petrels (increased long term security through having an additional breeding site) and a win for Motuora (another big step forward in our ecosystem restoration efforts). Like the diving petrel chicks, the Pycroft's petrel chicks will be housed in artificial burrows on Motuora until they fledge - in fact we need to install 100 artificial burrows this year, a big task, some of which will be done on planting trips later in the year, so if you are interested come along and lend a hand.

We are keen to try passive attraction for several other species (i.e. playing calls on a second sound system and/or using decoys to lure in birds). Recently a restoration company called Ecoworks has used this approach with gannets at Young Nicks Head and has very rapidly attracted in breeding pairs (see <http://www.ecoworks.co.nz/Gannets.htm>). We reckon it's well worth a try on Motuora too. A very busy and exciting year ahead of us.

Topp Bird

In February Jools Topp visited Motuora as part of a promotion for Auckland Zoo's "ZooMusic" where the Topp Twins were the star attraction, and an article covering Jools' visit appeared in the March edition of NZ Woman's Weekly. In her words it was "an absolute honour" to handle

Watch out! Baby bugs about!

Wetapunga are hatching at last

After keeping us waiting for a bit longer than expected there are now lots of baby wetapunga hatching in the maternity ward at Butterfly Creek. During May 2009 the intrepid team of Chris Green, Paul Barrett and George Gibbs collected 12 more adult wetapunga from Hauturu during the annual monitoring trip. These



Wetapunga baby. Adults can grow to the size of a sparrow

were added to the captive rearing programme at Butterfly Creek and, like the earlier intake (as reported in Newsletter 40) settled in well and began mating and laying eggs. The first egg hatched in early January but we had to wait until early February for the second but then the floodgates opened and they have been steadily hatching ever since.

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

(Continued on page 3)

and release the Zoo's most recently hatched kiwi chick, raised under a scheme to counteract falling numbers in the wild. In a programme initiated in the mid-1990s the Zoo has taken eggs from forests near Whangarei, incubated them, reared the chicks for three to four weeks and then, since 1998, released them on Motuora. There, in the island's predator-free environment, they have been left until, after about a year when big enough to resist most predators, they have been recaptured and returned to the forests from which the eggs were collected. The "ZooMusic" concert was a great success and Motuora's role as a "kiwi crèche" was recognized by a sizeable proportion of the concert's takings being donated to the Restoration Society.

The day after the concert was also an occasion, because on this day the 200th chick raised by the Zoo was released on Motuora, an event attended by representatives from the groups that have been contributors to the programme - people from the Zoo, from the BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust, from DOC in Whangarei and Warkworth - and by the Press and a TV1 camera team. The Zoo was congratulated on its achievement, which had fully justified the decision taken in the mid 1990s to concentrate the raising of kiwi from eggs from the wild at Auckland Zoo. At that time a variety of other groups had been trying to do this job with patchy success. Auckland Zoo, which had had the best record, has continued to be successful, with a very high percentage of healthy chicks from eggs incubated.

Motuora Island - Bird Survey - October 2009

Participants: Mike & Sharen Graham. Kevin Parker. Luis Ortiz-Catedral.

The main purpose of the survey week-end was to monitor progress of Whitehead at the start of what will be their second breeding season since the introduction in April 2008.

In total 41 birds were recorded - 16 with bands and 25 unbanded - coincidentally the exact number of birds originally released. Several very vocal solo males were recorded suggesting their partners were already incubating on nests somewhere in the territories, and there would inevitably be other birds missed during the counts. So quite clearly the translocation of this species has been a resounding success and a healthy population is already building. We were surprised at the size of some of the territories that in comparison to Tiritiri Matangi were much bigger. This is probably a temporary situation as individuals take advantage of the current low population density of birds on the island.

The Whitehead population was spread around the island in the coastal cliff forests as well as in the more mature plantings at the southern end of the island. Like many other birds some were also attracted to the macrocarpa pines on the south west coast.

Red-crowned parakeets used to be more abundant on Motuora but for some reason have declined in numbers. For most of the week-end the extent of our observations suggested there were no more than one or two lone males living in the western coastal forest area, however in the last hour before leaving we were surprised and delighted to have repeated sightings of a pair on the opposite side of the island. They were in great colour and their behaviour suggested they had taken up residence.

32 different bird species were recorded from a total of 252 birds counted during 16 x 5-minute counts at the various OSNZ points around the island. Flax all over the island was in full flower as were the flame trees by the house and together they attracted good numbers of tui - 47 recorded in total - the most abundant bird on the island. Starlings that also enjoy flax and are roosting in big numbers in the east coast forest were the second most abundant bird with 31 recorded. Third place went to goldfinch with 26 records - they were thriving on the thistles that are in profusion in the more recently planted areas. The most widespread bird on the island is the grey warbler and it will be interesting to see if this status remains as the whitehead population increases.

A brown teal male with a transmitter and a female mallard partner were seen briefly on the dam but disappeared just as quickly, and our last bird was a reef heron that wafted by just as we were boarding the water taxi.

Mike Graham

Thank you!

United Campervans for ongoing sponsorship.
Lottery Grants Board contribution to weed control.
Design Technologies for IT support.
Yates NZ for ongoing support with propagation supplies.
The Mad Butcher for continued support with sausages for our BBQ lunches.

NuFarm for sponsorship of supplies of herbicides.
Yakity Yak Kayak Club for generous donation.
Heseltine Trust for costs associated with translocations.
Auckland Zoo for generous donation towards general expenses

MOTUORA RESTORATION SOCIETY

Be part of the restoration of this unique island in the Hauraki Gulf (between Kawau Island and Whangaparaoa).

Motuora is a recreation reserve jointly managed by the Motuora Restoration Society and the Department of Conservation and the former has taken on the task of restoring the island with native bush and endangered species.

The majority of the island has been planted, tracks are formed and weeds controlled. The winter planting season will see completion of turning paddocks into native bush. We have 10,000 young 'pioneer' trees to go into the ground this year plus 1,000 canopy trees. Beyond that work will continue on the programme of translocations of sea birds, lizards, plants and forest birds.

Work trips to the island in 2010

**25 April, 30 May & AGM, 27 June, 25 July,
29 Aug., 26 Sept., 31 Oct. 28 Nov.**

How to get there: Contact Eilene Lamb (09) 427 8911, Hibiscus Coast or Robin Gardner-Gee (09) 445 6997, Auckland, for more information and to book. Water taxi numbers are limited. Please make definite bookings as early as possible and let organizers know of any cancellations.

Water taxi departs Sandspit 8.00 am and returns to Sandspit at 4.00 pm.

Fare: Adults \$20, Children 5-15 yrs \$10, under 5 yrs free. (*Adult must accompany children*). Parking for the day \$7. (free parking is available on the street, but you need to allow time to walk to the wharf).

What to bring shoes (and a plastic bag for muddy boots at the end of the day), raincoat, warm clothes, garden gloves, sunscreen, hat, snacks and drinks for your morning break. Sausage sizzle and cuppa provided at lunchtime.

Biosecurity Awareness Please ensure that your footwear and clothing is clean of soil or seeds that may introduce unwanted weeds to Motuora. Also ensure that there are no pests stowing away in your bags (insects or rodents).

Pacific Gecko update

The Motuora Native Species Restoration Plan recommends that Pacific gecko be translocated to Motuora, in order to provide a pest-free haven for these small geckos and to help rebuild the island lizard fauna. Melinda Rixon has been investigating how to put this recommendation into action, and a proposal was submitted to DOC to transfer Pacific geckos from Little Barrier Island. After considering the proposal DOC has asked that we carry out an additional survey, to ensure the LBI population is large enough to be able to supply the 40 Pacific geckos needed for the translocation without negative impact. MRS agreed as it is important to respect a source population and ensure it remains healthy and strong. In March Melinda headed out to LBI again to catch and count geckos. Initial results are encouraging, as more geckos were located than in the 2009 survey.

Distinguishing features— gecko and skink



Sourced from www.teara.govt.nz

NOTICE

AGM of Motuora Restoration Society
30th May, on the Island
See Agenda enclosed



**MOTUORA
RESTORATION
SOCIETY (INC)**

«Title»«First Name»«Last Name»
«Contact Name»
«Address 1/Organisation Name»
«Address 2/Address 1»
«Address 3»
«Address 4»
«Post Code»