



MOTUORA RESTORATION SOCIETY (INC)

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Newsletter No. 42

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LOTS OF COMPANY FOR OUR FIRST ISLAND-BORN KUAKA CHICK: 94 MORE KUAKA CHICKS TRANSFERRED TO MOTUORA DURING NOVEMBER 2009

Many undisturbed islands around northern New Zealand have thousands of seabirds nesting on them and the guano and burrowing activity of the seabirds create a distinctive seabird ecosystem on these islands.

Until recently we had just one seabird species breeding on Motuora – the grey-faced petrel – but over the past two years we have been attempting to establish a new colony of kuaka (diving petrels) in order to increase seabird diversity and abundance on Motuora.

In 2007 we successfully translocated 24 diving petrel chicks from our source population on Wooded Island, off the north-east end of Tiritiri Matangi and in 2008 a translocation of 62 chicks took place. To our delight, the first of these translocated birds have begun returning to Motuora this year.

We first picked up diving petrel calls over Motuora in May 2009 during our night monitoring of the artificial colony area. By July a pair were regularly visiting a burrow in a clump of thick kikuyu grass and in September we discovered that they had successfully hatched a chick – our first island-born kuaka! By November the family unit was secure enough for us to handle the adult birds without fear of them abandoning the chick and we discovered that one (we think it's 'dad') was a chick we'd transferred to Motuora in 2007. 'Mum' has eluded us so far but the chick has been checked, weighed,

measured and banded and seems healthy and thriving. Fingers crossed it manages to fledge successfully over the next few weeks.



Over the past month we also had several other diving petrels visiting the artificial colony area and checking out burrows. These were probably immature birds that were not ready to breed this year, but were beginning to prospect for burrows in preparation for next year. So it has been an exciting time as we watch a new kuaka colony establishing on Motuora.

The third and final translocation got underway in mid-November this year. A collecting team, headed by Robin Gardner-Gee, checked the natural burrows on Wooded Island and quickly found an ample number of chicks but discovered the chicks were more advanced than at this time last year. A decision was made to get the chicks to Motuora as soon as possible, so the planned transfer dates were rearranged and took place on 12th November (44 chicks) and 14th November (32 chicks).

Helen Gummer and a team of chick feeders were waiting on Motuora, and certainly had their work cut out for them with 70 or so chicks to feed each day! Helen has had input on all the transfers over the past three years and her expertise has been invaluable to the project.

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Members of the collection team at Wooded Island and Motuora

“..... AND A BIG THANK-YOU TO OUR SPONSORS”

To date the Motuora Restoration project has cost in excess of \$600,000. That would be a lot of membership fees – way more than the \$45,000-worth actually received. Fortunately, since the project began in 1995 the Society has been lucky enough to be given donations by countless individuals, grants by over twenty organisations and free or discounted goods from another dozen, all sufficiently convinced that we have a worthwhile project. We are supremely grateful to all who have helped us, and if this article highlights some of the more prominent donors – prominent either because of the size of their contributions or their consistent support – this is not to be taken as undervaluing any of the others.

Our first big donation came in 1998. At that time the Society had an almost non-existent public profile and an annual budget of about \$9,500, so when out of the blue the private David and Genevieve Becroft Foundation offered to buy us an inflatable (the “black boat”) worth more than our total budget we were bowled over. The Foundation has supported us with many donations since, often at critical moments.

Not long after that first big donation the Society received its first one for weed control. Weed control is not a glamorous item and there is little positive to show for it, so we were not confident of receiving money for it. Luckily the Lottery Grants Board understood the importance of weed control for re-forestation projects and provided us with the first of its many substantial grants for this and other tasks, including grants for the removal of 600 old shelter-belt pine trees.

Another substantial and frequent donor has been the ASB Community Trust, which has funded needs as wide-ranging as construction of the nursery, weed control, construction of the road up to the plateau and the ridge track, and our current very solid tractor.

Two other frequent and generous supporters have been Pub Charity and the private Chisholm Whitney Family Trust. Pub Charity was our very first donor, helping to pay for the plants raised for us before we had our own nursery, and since then provider of significant funds for several more of our varied needs, including most recently the money to fund this year’s translocation of diving petrels. Chisholm Whitney made us donations in the early 2000’s for three big capital items, a farm bike, the trailer and the yellow inflatable, all essential for our operations.

From this selection of our benefactors mention must be made of United Campervans. Their major and ongoing sponsorship, tagged only to the extent that it has to be used for expenditure related to growing trees, has been a godsend. DOC pays the Society for the part of the job that our island managers do to maintain and run the campground, but United Campervans’ contribution has been a major reason why we have been able to fund the remaining cost of employing our island managers without financial strain, as well as pay for many other costs of the planting programme.

Our volunteers have been to getting the restoration job done, but it’s due to the generosity of a large number of donors that they have been able to do it.

ADVENTURE CRUISING COMPANY
AGPAC PLASTICS
ASB BANK COMMUNITY TRUST
AUCKLAND ZOO CONSERVATION
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DAVID & GENEVIEVE BECROFT
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MENTAL TRUST
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ROYAL FOREST AND BIRD PRO-
TECTION SOCIETY (MID NORTH
BRANCH)
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TANNERS TIMBERWORLD
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UNITED CAMPERVANS
WARKWORTH ROTARY CLUB
WWF NEW ZEALAND
YATES NEW ZEALAND LTD
ZONTA CLUB OF HIBISCUS COAST
AREA

**Thank
you!**

(Continued from page 1)

Krill is the natural diet of kuaka but they can be successfully reared on a diet of canned sardines. A diluted sardine "smoothie" seems to be going down well and the chicks are in very good condition.

The chicks are housed in artificial burrows on Motuora and hand fed daily until they have developed their first coat of feathers and are ready to leave their burrows and take up an independent life at sea. Each night five to ten chicks fledge (head off to sea) so by late November a number of the artificial burrows on Motuora were empty and a final group of chicks could be collected and housed in the vacant burrows. On Saturday 21st November 18 chicks were safely transferred from Wooded Island to Motuora, bringing this year's total to 94 chicks.

This is a tremendous result, and thanks go to the collection teams, the feeding teams, the logistics manager Helen Lindsay, the Tiritiri Matangi rangers, and all the people who pitched in to prepare and install extra artificial burrows, make extra bird bags, shred paper to line the transfer boxes, and all the other tasks required to prepare for transfer day! Thanks also to the help provided by Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi - it's great to be working together to enrich the Hauraki Gulf islands.

PICNIC on MOTUORA FEBRUARY 28

Following on the success of last year's family picnic and fun day on Motuora there will be a trip for members, volunteers friends and family to relax and enjoy this special place. THAT'S RIGHT, NO LIST OF JOBS TO BE DONE — JUST COME AND SHARE SOME GOOD TIMES!

Bookings essential – details will be advised via e-mail closer to the time.



FROM THE ISLAND

In July 2009 the island power supply changed from diesel generator to solar power and everything is running smoothly. The new back-up generator has been programmed to start automatically when the battery charge drops down to 55%. Batteries are then charged back up to 80% over a time period of 2 hours. Even during winter with a number of overcast days, there has been enough power to run the basic daily household needs without generator back-up. Maintenance is minimal. We check the voltages of the battery cells every month and keep an eye on the state of charge, voltages and currents of the system, which is giving us an understanding of the output of certain appliances and tools so we can use them accordingly. Oh yes, and it's quiet!

The 2009 planting season saw 21,000 plants put in the ground by the end of September. Now the nursery is looking good with over 1,000 canopy trees ready to plant for next year, plus around 10,000 pioneer plants filling up root trainers. The sites where trees will be planted have been sprayed as preparation for easier planting (so that the thick kikuyu grass will have died down).

The kiwi recovery team returned to Motuora during October to recapture 11 kiwi destined for Tutukaka. Kiwi dog 'Jade' arrived to sniff out the birds and the team found the kiwi easily. These birds were all in good condition with one huge male weighing over 3 kilos. Having spent their youth in the Motuora 'crèche' they will hopefully survive in the wild.

A survey of whiteheads took place recently and good numbers of unbanded birds were identified. Also, recently we have spotted at least one kereru hanging around Motuora. The diving petrel translocation is in the final stages, so bird numbers and diversity are steadily increasing.

Andrea and Deane

Motuora Restoration Society (Inc) The Society is undertaking the restoration of native forest to create habitat for endangered species on the island. Membership costs \$25 per year for individuals or families, and \$5 for students.	<i>Chairperson</i> Ray Lowe 09 422 2057	<i>Deputy Chair</i> Robin Gardner-Gee 09 445 6997
	<i>Secretary</i> Kit Brown 09 446 0618	<i>Treasurer</i> Gillian Thomas 09 426 1481
	Les Buckton 09 425 9619	Helen Lindsay 09 816 8227
	Simon Chamberlin 09 422 7217	Eilene Lamb 09 427 8911
	Kevin Hawkins 09 424 7444	Liz Norquay 09 424 7444
	Bruce Ross 09 445 1140	

Biodiversity Sub-committee Robin Gardner-Gee, Sharen Graham, Richard Griffiths, Melinda Habgood, Shelley Heiss-Dunlop, Helen Lindsay and Kevin Parker.

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 planning season of 2010 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 on the following dates in 2010

Tree planting is dependent on ground condition (usually April to September) on other trips tasks includes weeding and nursery work

28th March, 25th April, 30st May & AGM, 27th June, 25th July, 29th August, 26th September, 31st October, 28th November

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

Boots or stout 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).

United Campervans for ongoing sponsorship.
David & Genevieve Becroft Foundation for contribution towards solar power system.
Firestone for contribution towards solar power system.
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.

*Thank
you!*



**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»