



MOTUORA RESTORATION SOCIETY (INC)

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SEABIRDS AND DOTTERELS

The seabird breeding season is well underway on the Island with some species already sitting on eggs or with chicks. This year there has been a welcome increase to four pairs of fluttering shearwaters with one chick each. In previous years the maximum has been two pairs.

After a total failure to raise chicks last season, this year we have gannet chicks. At the end of November there was a total of four chicks one large and three small but no sign of other breeding pairs.



Gannet colony Oct. 17 Photo. Liz Norquay

So far, we don't have any information about breeding numbers of diving petrels or grey-faced petrels.

There are four pairs of New Zealand dotterels present at Home Bay. At the end of October one pair was observed with three chicks and another with one. The other pairs seemed not to have nests or young though there is still time for them to begin or to re-try if they have already had a failed attempt. There don't seem to be any dotterels at Still Bay

Our seabird monitoring teams have been on the Island regularly from October to monitor arrivals and nesting attempts of Pycrofts petrels. This year and next will be a key period for the Pycrofts as this is when we expect the maximum numbers of translocated birds to return and begin breeding. Last year we had our first egg laid which was successfully hatched but the chick died about two weeks before it was due to fledge.. This year we have promising results with two birds found sitting on eggs on 26th November and on 2nd December our third egg this season.

*NZ Dotterel eggs in a nest concealed among spinifex.
Photo Shelly Heise-Dunlop*



NZ Dotterel adult with chick Oct 17. Photo John Stewart



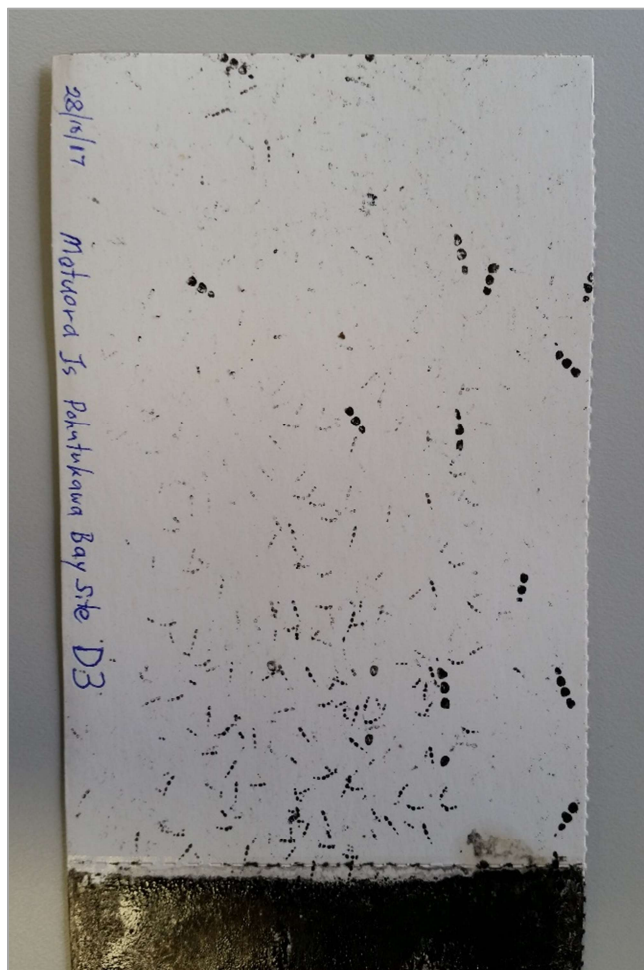


Wetapunga update

Dr Chris Green

During recent trips to the island the tracking tunnels used to monitor the wetapunga at the Macrocarpa Bay release site were moved to the Pohutukawa Bay release. Using tracking tunnels to monitor the wetapunga aims to record a presence that is independent of potential observer bias. The same grid can be used during each subsequent generation to measure potential increases in detection levels, thus giving a trend of population increase. Sixty tunnels were set up in a grid throughout the release site, 20metres apart, fitted with fresh cards and baited with peanut butter for 3 or 4 nights. There is some evidence that rainfall can stimulate adult activity with weta coming to ground to attract mates or lay eggs. Thus it was quite fortunate that a spell of rain occurred during both recent monitoring trips 24 - 29 October and 17 - 20 November 2017. Tracking tunnel cards from 3 tunnels in October and 6 in November showed footprints indicating wetapunga had visited them during that evening. The photo shows prints made by the large 'toes' of a wetapunga 'foot' forming a line of 3 or 4 large dots. Also shown is the much smaller dots making up ground weta 'foot' prints. All these weta got inked 'feet' while feeding on the bait in the inked area before leaving their prints as they moved to exit the tunnel. While on site I also spotted two adult wetapunga in bamboo tubes but neither of these were close enough to be those in the tunnels. These results are further confirmation towards verifying an established population at the Pohutukawa Bay site.

Tracking tunnel card showing large wetapunga footprints
Photo Chris Green



Native bees

Dr Chris Green

With the onset of spring there are a lot of flowering trees on Motuora which are attracting various insects as pollinators. Many of these are native bees, mostly in the genus *Leioproctus*, which are black and 5 - 13mm long depending on the species, so quite small. Unlike introduced honey bees and bumble bees, all native bees are solitary. They collect pollen from flowers, attach it to their back legs (see photos) and deposit it at the end of burrows in clay banks, or exposed soil, even sand. After adding some nectar the solitary queen bee lays an egg in the mix then

seals the burrow. The egg hatches into a grub which feeds on the pollen and nectar until mature, pupates and emerges from the burrow the following season. I have seen several different species of these solitary bees very busy amongst karamu, taupata, manuka, cabbage tree and native broom flowers, to name but a few, during recent spring visits to the island. There are about 18 species of Leioproctus bees distributed throughout New Zealand and can be extremely common. So next time you are beside a flowering tree or a clay bank this spring-summer check it out for small round holes with these very busy bees coming and going constantly.

Native bee busy in native broom, with wolf spider hunting even smaller insects. Photo Karin Gouldstone

Native bee on taupata leaf showing size of the bee relative to the leaf. Photo Liz Norquay



Three generations go planting trees



The picture shows Nancy Auguston with her daughter Sandra Watson and grand daughter Caroline Watson taken at the northern end of Motuora where they recall putting in trees several years back when on a planting trip. Nancy (seated) has fascinating memories of a time much further back when her and husband, the late Ron Auguston, together took guided kayak tours to many bays and islands around Hauraki Gulf including Motuora in the 70s and 80s. Ron designed and made the Sea Bear kayaks in the early days of fibreglass and was undoubtedly as a pioneer in his day. The guided trips developed from his business making and selling kayaks at their home in Henderson.

Plants for next year

Coastal mahoe and mangeao were taken to Motuora Sept 17 from neighbouring island restoration project on Motutapu island and are will be ready for planting out next year

Photo Shelly Heise-Dunlop



Water tank project at final stage

The job of moving all four plastic water tanks to one location has a final step to go. The sand in the bags Kevin Hawkins is carrying (pic opposite) will be leveled to form a stable base for the two tanks currently empty and on their sides. Once in place they will be plumbed into the system that provides water for the plant nursery and campground as well as the ranger's home.

Photo. Liz Norquay



Dam planting proves worthwhile for wildlife

Urs Steck and Colin Cords engaged in "wet feet planting" putting in carex plants at the edge of the dam. Watched quietly from the other side of the dam by four brown teal, pateke.

Photo Liz Norquay



MEMBERSHIP FOR INDIVIDUALS OR HOUSEHOLDS IS \$25 PER YEAR

Contact: mrsadmin@motuora.org.nz or phone any committee member if you have any questions about membership.

THANK YOU to all those who have renewed their membership to Society for the 17-18 year.

THANK YOU

Department of Conservation CCP Fund - support with weeding costs.

Foundation North - support with weeding costs.

Simon Chamberlin for generous and ongoing support towards cost of restoration work.

Heseltine Family Trust for generous and ongoing support towards cost of restoration work.

Kawau Cruises for support with transport costs.

Auckland Council Regional Environment

& Natural Heritage - support with transport of volunteers to the island.

Motuora Restoration Society	<i>Chair</i> John Stewart	09 428 4541	Bruce Ross	09 445 1140
The Society is undertaking the restoration of native forest to create habitat for endangered and absent common species on the island, and translocating such fauna and flora.	<i>Secretary</i> Liz Norquay	09 424 7444	Helen Lindsay	03 528 4020
	<i>Treasurer</i> Nattu Nataraj	09 624 6247	Roger Harker	09 6366507
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