



Dawn Chorus

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Finn the Philanderer's final fling

The charismatic pateke with a roguish smile and a roving eye goes to the great dating agency in the sky

Get ready for the magnificent pohutukawa

What now for Tiritiri's takahe?

From the chair

High hopes for a year of progress



Spring is here and our animals are acting accordingly. Takahe, kokako and saddleback are all nesting, while hihi chicks have appeared and some robin and bellbird chicks have already fledged. Certainly a better start than last year.

Spring also means that the AGM is over for another year. We have a few changes to the SoTM committee with our outstanding chairperson John Stewart and committee member Linda Worth departing. Many thanks to both. Kay Milton returns and we have a new member, Chris Hannent. Welcome both. Also welcome to our new secretary, Gloria Nash, who replaces the excellent Georgina Cuttance.

We have big plans for the coming year. Hopefully we complete the incredibly involved approval stages and actually start construction of our lighthouse museum and signal mast. We have the support of key people in DOC and Auckland Council which will help considerably.

Remember the proposed new accommodation block from a few years ago? Well, the plans never went away, they lay dormant until an appropriate time, and we think that that time is now. Again there is a lot of work to do in order to get all the approvals but we will be working hard to overcome any issues.

By the time that you read this we will have farewelled ranger Jason and his family (including the irrepressible Nina) and next year we will say goodbye to ranger Dave as well. We have worked closely and well with both and hopefully will continue to do so with their replacements. We wish them good luck for the future.

Recently we held our annual Guides' Days Out. These were held on consecutive weekends and involved (for each guide) a morning walk and two afternoon workshops lead by one of our experts. Thanks to 360 Discovery for making these possible by providing free transport and to our wonderful guiding manager, Mary-Ann, who ran it like a well-oiled machine! If you thought our guides were knowledgeable before, you should see them now!

Finally, if you have had problems renewing your membership please bear with us. Our membership team is working hard to get our new software performing to specification and we hope to be there soon.

Brian Chandler



Off to Nelson: Ranger Jason Campbell with (from left) Nina, Clara and Sophia.
Photo / Martin Sanders

Tiritiri Snippets

Moving time for rangers

Both Tiritiri Matangi's DOC rangers, Dave Jenkins and Jason Campbell, will be leaving over the next few months. Dave's lengthy spell on the Island will end in April/May next year. Jason's term officially concludes on 5 December but he, wife Sophia and children Nina and Clara left the Island – and all those honorary grandparents – at Labour Weekend.

Jason and family have moved back to Nelson and their families, 'me to be a stay-at-home-dad while Sophia studies,' he says. 'I'm planning on lots of tramping and kayaking with the girls and getting my boat (a Hartley 21) back into the water.'

And what will they most miss about the Island? 'The people – all the babysitters, aunts, uncles, nannas and poppas and all the time they spent with Nina and Clara and the wonderful parcels they gave them of clothes and puzzles . . . plus the language. Nina now knows more German than her mother's native tongue, Swedish!'

It has, Jason says, been wonderful to be able to 'spend the first few years of the children's lives with them on the Island instead

of having to go away to work.'

They will also miss the birds, especially the takahe. 'Te Mingi and Cheesecake were like the family pets. When they needed to be fed pellets Te Mingi wouldn't touch Nina but would always have a go at Jase.'

Coming to Tiritiri has 'been an amazing journey, from seeing no one in the back country of the South Island to standing up in front of up to 200 people each day. Initially it was terrifying and now I quite enjoy it.'

'It has been a great experience being part of Tiritiri with 1.5 million people just a 50 minute boat ride away and hardly anyone here – so beautiful.'

Jason says he is sure Nina will remember 'all the people she has got to know most of all, and the fluffies on the ferry, the takahe and the names of all the birds – Maori and English.'

Finally, Jason says, 'I won't get a chance

Cover photo of Finn the pateke and one of his families by Martin Sanders.



NEW SIGNS: Colourful new bird signs have been erected in the Visitor Centre courtyard as part of an on-going project to update all the signs to make them more eye-catching and informative. Photos / Mary-Ann Rowland

to see everyone and want to say a huge thank you for taking me and the family under your wings; we all felt so welcomed from the first day we arrived.'

SoTM chairperson Brian Chandler said Jason had been very supportive of SoTM and 'we have developed a good working relationship with him. We are sorry to see him go.'

DOC has advertised for a replacement for Jason but no appointment has been made as yet.

Guiding fees increase

Guiding fees on the Island have increased for the first time since guiding began.

Chairperson Brian Chandler said the decision was not taken lightly and was the outcome of long discussion and debate. 'We even commissioned a comprehensive survey of Tiritiri visitors which concluded overwhelmingly that the guiding experience was an excellent one but was undervalued at \$5. In fact there were comments to the effect that visitors almost rejected the guided tour as the low price indicated that it probably wouldn't be up to much!'

As a result the rate is now \$10 per person and \$25 for a family, while the children's charge remains \$2.50.

Income from the guiding concession last year was just over \$50,000.

Just like Nepal

Tiritiri recently had a visit from four Tibetan monks and a nun who loved the Island and offered the interesting observation that it reminded them of Nepal but with ocean instead of mountains.

New faces

No elections were needed at the AGM. Brian Chandler was the only nomination for chairperson and was elected unanimously. Kevin Vaughan was re-elected unopposed as treasurer.

There were nine nominations for the nine spots on the Committee. With Brian mov-

ing to the chair and Linda Worth deciding to step down, the two vacancies were filled by social media maestro Chris Hannent and the return of Kay Milton. Roger Bray, Helen Bucksey, Hester Cooper, Simon Fordham, Carl Hayson, Peter Lee and Ray Walter all continued in office.

Sub-committee chairs Carl Hayson (infrastructure) and Peter Lee (visitor experience) were later re-appointed, while Kay takes over from Hester as chair of the biodiversity sub-committee.

There were no nominations at the AGM for the position of secretary, with Georgina Cuttance having decided to step down due to changes in her work, but subsequently Gloria Nash (at right) agreed to take the job.

Gloria has been a member of SoTM for a number of years, and before joining had made several visits to the Island on planting programmes and day trips with family and workmates. 'I have had a lifelong interest in the outdoors, conservation and travel.'

She is a qualified Legal Executive who recently retired after 23 years' service with a suburban law firm. 'Tiritiri Matangi is a magical place and I believe I can contribute by volunteering my secretarial skills.'



On the web

Tiritiri is developing an increasingly high profile on social media.

Chris Hannent (at left), who came to the Island for the first time this year, fell in love, trained as a guide and is now on the Committee, has also started an Instagram page which already has around 1000 followers and lots of glorious photos (see [instagram.com/tiritirimatangiisland/](https://www.instagram.com/tiritirimatangiisland/)).

The facebook page run by Maria Galbraith continues to go from strength to



strength and now has over 3000 likes for its mix of great photos and interesting news about the Island (see www.facebook.com/TiritiriMatangiIsland/).

Having stepped down as chair, John Stewart is taking back control of the website from Kay Milton. The Island also continues to be recommended by users of TripAdvisor as the No1 tourist attraction in Auckland.

A century of beanies

The two Guides' Days Out last month were highly successful, with some terrific talks. They also produced a bonus of more than \$300 towards SoTM, raised by a raffle for Kay Milton's 100th beanie.

As Kay was shuffling the raffle ticket butts, Life Member Nan Rothwell (at right) came walking through from the shop mumbling, 'I don't know why I'm coming out, I never win anything.' The next minute her name was pulled from the hat.

Later, when posing for photos in her new hat, she commented, 'It's very comfortable to wear.' Looking at all the birds knitted into the beanie she added, 'There's a lot of work gone into this. I know because I used to knit jerseys for Norse Wool . . . a very, very long time ago.'



New transport

The new Yamaha Viking four-wheel drive, six-seater vehicle has arrived on the Island, replacing the old quad bike, providing safer and more comfortable transport for workers. It also sports a very impressive number plate:



B1BYE (displayed at left by Ray Walter). Treasurer Kevin Vaughan, who registered the vehicle, denied having bought it specially. 'It's just the one they issued me with. Good, though, isn't it?'



CHRISTMAS FARE: Pohutukawa nectar offers festive fine dining to saddleback and kokako.

Photos / Jim Eagles

Flora Notes

Our glorious Christmas tree

It's been a wonderful spring for clematis and kowhai blossom on the Island; now **Warren Brewer** is looking forward to the crimson glory of the pohutukawa.

The fringe of large evergreen trees that encircles the coastline of Tiritiri Matangi is formed by our iconic pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*). Pohutukawa belongs in the important myrtle family, Myrtaceae. This family contains such diverse members as eucalyptus, guava, feijoa, clove and manuka that provide timber, fruits, spice, oils and honey.

Metrosideros is a Pacific genus of about 50 species of trees, shrubs and climbers and is centred in Polynesia. New Zealand has 12 endemic species, which include some of the largest in the genus. Pohutukawa specializes in colonizing bare rock and coastal cliffsides.

It starts life as a fine, sliver-shaped, brown seed, lodging into cracks and fissures which contain enough moisture and nutrients to allow germination to occur.

Despite this uncertain beginning, pohutukawa is an exceptionally long-lived plant. Two trees on Tiritiri are over 800 years old and many others along the coastline would be well over 200 years old.

They have adapted well to their environment, with their roots spreading widely over rock faces to find nooks and crannies for anchorage as well as nourishment. They shape their canopy to cope with storm winds and their leaves are tough and leathery, the better to resist drought and salt spray.

Pohutukawa can flower from late November to early February. Each tree's flowering lasts for about two weeks and the timing is

staggered by individual trees. This gives subtle changes in intensity and leads to pleasing variations of a red palette producing a brilliant display which has earned pohutukawa its title of New Zealand Christmas tree.

The developing flower buds are tightly closed by small overlapping green sepals which cover a second layer of very small red petals. Beneath this is a mass of rolled-up stamens. When the sepals unfold to open the flower bud a single style, which is tipped with a pollen-receiving stigma, protrudes for a brief female-only stage.

Then the stamens (20-30 of them) uncoil and spread out like a brush. Each stamen is tipped by a pollen-bearing anther and pollen is now released. The mass of stamens give the flowers their striking crimson colour.

Each flower has at its centre a green glandular cup-shaped disc which secretes a copious supply of nectar 24 hours daily. The flowers are visited by birds and insects during the day and at night nocturnal feeders such as geckos and bats also come for a sugary treat.

After pollination the small petals and stamens wither and fall off. A capsule forms from the ovary and over a few months seeds develop inside. When mature, each capsule dries and splits open across the top, revealing usually three chambers full of numerous tiny sliver-shaped brown seeds. These are dispersed by wind.

The strong branches of pohutukawa can

support epiphytic 'perching lilies' such as *As-telia* and *Collospermum*. Crevices and cracks in the tough and stringy bark provide shelter for many invertebrate animals and saddlebacks and whiteheads search fissures for them. The trees are also potential nesting and roosting sites for shags and white-faced herons. Holes in the trunk serve as nesting sites for saddlebacks and rifleman.

Pohutukawa timber is hard, dense and durable. Its genus name, *Metrosideros*, means 'iron heart', describing the toughness of the wood. Maori used suitably shaped branches as digging tools in their gardens. Early European settlers found the twisted and curved shapes of branches and roots useful for boat building. It was used to make cross pieces such as knees and thwarts as well as framework for scows, coasters and pleasure boats.

Pohutukawa is classed as one of New Zealand's 'Latitude 38' trees, along with kauri, puriri, taraire and mangrove. It is very frost-tender when young and was restricted naturally to as far south as Tolaga Bay in the North Island.

Pohutukawa was the pioneer species planted during the revegetation of Tiritiri.

The name pohutukawa is said to mean 'spray-sprinkled tree', referring to its habit of dipping its branches into the tide. Pohutu is also the name for the main geyser in Rotorua's geothermal area which spurts up and sprays several times daily.

The crimson cycle



Flower buds opening.



Flower stamens, central style and green cup form.



Stamens and petals are lost and the capsules develop.



Seed capsules and seeds. Photos / Warren Brewer



USEFUL BRANCHES: Pohutukawa boughs make a fine site for so-called perching lilies. Their twisted shape served as digging tools for Maori and formed knees and thwarts for early European boatbuilders.



ROOMS WITH A VIEW: Pohutukawa make fine roosts and nest sites for coastal birds like these pied shags.



SPRINKLED: Pohutukawa means 'spray-sprinkled tree' and refers to its habit of dipping its branches into the tide, which can be seen in many places on the Tiritiri coast.

Photos / Warren Brewer



ISLANDS OF SONG: These are the seven pest-free islands in the Project Island Song project collectively known as Ipipiri. In the foreground is Motuarohia, Moturua and Urupukapuka are behind, and in the background is Cape Brett/Rakaumangamanga.
Photo / Lara Kay Photography

The Big Picture

Bringing back the birdsong note by note

Project Island Song is an evocative name for a plan to restore the ancient dawn chorus to the beautiful islands of the Bay of Islands. **Fleur Corbett**, chair of the Guardians of the Bay of Islands, tells the story of the project and how it was inspired by the example of Tiritiri Matangi which now provides many of the birds.

The Bay of Islands is an ancient river valley near the top of the North Island, long submerged by the ending of the previous ice age, and now a remarkable feature of New Zealand's varied geological landscape that draws international visitors year after year.

There are some 150 islands here. Seven of the major islands, with their associated islets and rock stacks, make up what is known as Ipipiri in the eastern Bay of Islands. These islands offer different habitats that, historically, would have provided sanctuary for an array of native species: tieke (North Island saddleback), hihi (stitchbird), pateke (brown teal), and oi (grey-faced petrel) to name a few.

Due to the ingress of humans and many years of burning and farming, the native vegetation of these islands – broad-leaf forests of rimu, kahikatea, miro, matai and totara – was decimated, taking with it the magical birdsong. And with humans came rats and mustelids; these voracious predators would have dealt the final blow to the native species of Ipipiri, bringing silence to the islands.

But now, thanks to an incredible alliance between hapu, community and the Department of Conservation – not to mention the inspiration and support of Tiritiri Matangi – the islands of Ipipiri are beginning to sing once again.

Project Island Song is a partnership between community conservation group

the Guardians of the Bay of Islands, local Rawhiti hapu (Ngati Kuta and Patukeha) and the Department of Conservation. All partners share the same vision: to see the islands' ecosystems fully restored.

The Guardians of the Bay of Islands is a group of enthusiastic volunteers who provide financial, material and physical support for Project Island Song.

The local hapu, Ngati Kuta and Patukeha, are ahi kaa (those who keep the home fires burning) of Te Rawhiti – a community on the mainland Cape Brett Peninsula close

After some years of pest control, intensive weeding and planting, the project has reached the point that native species can be reintroduced and expected to thrive. Twenty species of birds, reptiles, invertebrates and plants have been identified for reintroduction to help create a thriving native islands ecosystem.

Toutouwai

In June 2014, 43 toutouwai (North Island robin) were brought to the now pest-free Moturua from Pureora Forest in the central North Island.

The 25 males and 18 females were welcomed by kaumatua and kuia from Te Rawhiti and released at Otupoho (Homestead Bay). About 60 people gathered to see the birds fly free from their specially adapted boxes.

The toutouwai have been banded and the Project Island Song volunteers are monitoring them, first for signs of dispersal from Otupoho Bay across the island, then for pairing and nesting.

Tieke and Popokatea

Tiritiri Matangi directly supported the most recent translocations by providing 40 tieke and 40 popokatea (whitehead) from Tiritiri Matangi for release at the end of May.

It was a complex process, well attended by volunteers, the hapu, children/schools, Project Island Song's corporate supporters and local public figures.

The tieke were divided between Urupukapuka and Moturua, bolstering a similar re-

'What a difference they're making! So many local people are involved with pest control, weeding, propagating, planting, bird relocations – truly an inspiring project. Imagine what our stunning Islands of Ipiriri will be like when these guys have completed their 20-year plan? Our very own Tiritiri Matangi right here in the Bay. What a taonga.'

– Dean Wright, photographer and Project Island Song volunteer

to the islands of Ipipiri. Through their role as kaitiaki (caretakers of the land) they have observed many changes over the years and are actively working to restore the mauri (life force) and wairua (spirit) of the land and sea in the eastern Bay of Islands.

Project Island Song is focused on restoring ecological balance to the islands, drawing together the energy, talent and culture of these local people to bring the birdsong back to Ipipiri, note by note.

COMING HOME,
top: Mayron Wihongi
and her children
Ammon, Kayah and
Faith release tieke on
Moturua; middle left:
a tieke caught in a mist
net on Tiritiri Matangi
is removed for transfer
to the Bay of Islands;
middle right: hihi
caught in the net is
checked before being
released; bottom:
Pokaihu Short and
Ruud Kleinpaste
release popokatea on
Motuarohia

Photos / Dean Wright,
Neil Fitzgerald.



lease earlier this year of birds from Mauimua (Lady Alice Island in the Hen and Chickens) to aid genetic diversity in the founder populations.

The popokatea release marked the first native species reintroduction for Motuarohia (Robertson Island). The birds were accompanied by Mana Whenua from Tiritiri Matangi and welcomed by Te Rawhiti hapu at each of the three release sites.

Ruud Kleinpaste of the Air NZ Environment Trust was warmly welcomed at a powhiri at Te Rawhiti. He saw the strength of the project 'through the aroha and wairua on the marae. This is where conservation starts'.

Blandy Witehera, Rawhiti resident and hapu representative for Project Island Song, sums up the experience: 'I arrived home to Rawhiti after four nights away with my fellow kin, chasing our dream of one day walking the islands of Ipipiri to the sounds that replicate the lovely birdsong of Tiritiri Matangi, to enjoy seeing our moko, the next generation, experience Aotearoa as it once was. Tiritiri Matangi made this all happen.'

'It has been a very humbling experience for us to catch and handle these manu (birds). I would like to thank all the Guardians Trustees for giving us the ability to follow our dream, DOC for their support, and the good volunteers of Tiritiri. Thank you all on behalf of the kai mahi and hapu. Mauri ora. Arohanui.'

Project Island Song would like to extend their sincerest thanks to those who made these recent translocations possible: the volunteers, mana whenua, the hapu at Te Rawhiti, the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi, the sponsors and the Department of Conservation.

To find out more about Project Island Song visit www.projectislandsong.co.nz

www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz





TRAGIC FAMILY: The Tiritiri takahe family of (from left) Westy, Raumati and Ariki with their chick on Motutapu shortly before they were shot. Photo / Art Polkanov

Takahe programme continues despite tragedy

The tragic shooting of four takahe on Motutapu, three of them from Tiritiri – especially coming at the same time as the death through illness of Mahuika – has shocked all those involved with the birds. DOC's takahe ranger **Philip Marsh** provides an update on how the Island's role in the takahe breeding programme is progressing.

Over the past few years several changes have taken place within the takahe population on Tiritiri Matangi.

This has involved retiring a pair to Auckland Zoo (Montague and Ahikaea), removing a number of sub-adults to other secure sites and introducing some new blood to the Island. It seems that Tiritiri is now best suited to holding three breeding pairs. Attempts have been made, over the past two years, to boost the population back up to four pairs, but with no luck so far.

Recently we broke up a pair (Te Mingi and Cheesecake) because they had an Rx6 rating (see the explanation of Rx values in

the box below); Te Mingi was the issue in this case, having a common bloodline. We also decided to try to improve some of the Rx values at other sites. Te Mingi, along with sub-adult son Pukekohe and juvenile Mohio, was sent to Tawharanui. Tussie, who was involved in an Rx6 pairing on Mana Island, was introduced as a partner for Cheesecake, with whom he would make an Rx1 pairing (one of a number of such transfers completed in August/September 2015). Tussie decided he preferred Anatori and paired up with her. This leaves the following: Anatori/Tussie = Rx1; Edge/Ranfurlly = Rx1; Nohoa/Turutu = Rx6.

This is a good result (though Cheesecake

probably doesn't think so). Nohoa is a problem bird as she is inbred and her genetics are common within the population. She is likely to be removed in future and replaced with another female. We hope that breeding success will be better during the 2015/16 season. We are considering where we can utilise Cheesecake; she will still be a valuable bird with the right male as she is only 11 years of age. Takahe are productive up until 15 years of age.

Some interesting results came back from disease screening completed on Tiritiri prior to the three males being transferred to Tawharanui. Blood samples from these birds and from Cheesecake showed high uric acid levels, indicating kidney function issues. These results, together with the death of Mahuika from kidney failure in August, raise the question of whether this is an underlying problem for Tiritiri takahe. Further testing, on Tiritiri and at other sites, will be necessary to learn more.

Motutapu

It was a devastating blow for all those who work with takahe to lose four during a pukeko cull on Motutapu Island. Raumati, Ariki and Westy, all raised on Tiritiri, were killed along with their juvenile, a big hit to the Motutapu population. It was especially disappointing to lose the first juvenile successfully

What is an RX value?

The RX value is on a scale of 1-7 (1 being good, 7 being unsuitable for breeding). It combines mean inbreeding coefficients, relatedness, and how common the bloodline of each bird in the pair is. An RX1 or RX2 will always be an unrelated pair with uncommon bloodlines so it is critical to have these birds in a safe site and ideally encourage double/triple clutching.

We have no RX7 pairs but a few RX6. These are birds with common bloodlines that will make RX6 with pretty much whoever they are paired with. We use these as foster parents where possible to reduce the prevalence of their genes, and enhance others.

The last few years have seen a lot of birds moved between islands and other secure sites in an attempt to improve the quality of our breeding pairs of takahe.

raised there.

Following these deaths, a pair and their juvenile from Maungatautari were introduced to the vacant territory. This had been planned for some time and the takahe management team was keen to send a message that we still had full faith in Motutapu as a site for takahe. The deaths were due to human error, and breeding efforts to date have indicated there is nothing wrong with the habitat and resources available.

During the 2014/15 season a lot of breeding potential was shown, with six pairs/trios producing eight nests. As the population is made up of relatively young birds, this was a promising start. Takahe do not reach their best breeding years until 5-14 years of age and those currently on Motutapu have an average age of 4.5 years. We hope for further success during the 2015/16 season, and to date seven pairs/trios have nested. The following months will determine whether Motutapu continues to deliver on its promise of being a great site for takahe.

Tiritiri takahe elsewhere

Below is a summary of the takahe from Tiritiri who are living elsewhere, plus news of some less fortunate outcomes:

- Patiki (b. 2008, parents Montague and Ahikaea) – Released into Murchison Mountains and currently in a pair. I saw this pair in November 2014 but we were unable to catch them. We are not certain whether they have been successful in nesting.
- Apiata (b. 2008, parents Blackwatch and Mahuika) – Released into the Murchison Mountains and was paired up until 2012 when his mate died. I have seen him three times over the last couple of years and he is currently single. Apiata is living up to his name as he covers a lot of country in the Murchison Mountains.
- Lily (b. 2009, parents Montague and Ahikaea) – Currently at Burwood for the breeding population. Last season produced her first juvenile (Kitekite) who will shortly be released into the Murchison Mountains.
- Elwyn (b. 2009, parents Blackwatch and Mahuika) – Currently at Burwood as part of the breeding population. Produced his first juvenile (Silberhorn) in 2013 and second (Earland) in 2014. Silberhorn was one of the pair recently introduced to Rotoroa Island.
- Takarua (b. 2009, parents Blackwatch and Mahuika) – Currently at Burwood. Spent a couple of years on Secretary Island, Fiordland, as a trial to see whether takahe could survive and breed there. Has been back at Burwood since 2013 and produced his first juvenile (Hunua) last season. Takarua and partner will stay at Burwood as breeders and Hunua will be released in the Murchison



CIRCLE OF LIFE: Mahuika (above) feeding her chick Apiata; (below) replacement takahe from Maungatautari released on Motutapu.

Photos / Martin Sanders, Art Polkanov



Mountains before Christmas.

- Wal (b. 2010, parents Te Mingi and Cheesecake) – Currently at Burwood as part of the breeding programme. Produced his first juvenile (La Perouse) in 2013 and a second juvenile (Owharoa) last season. Both these offspring will be released into the Murchison Mountains prior to Christmas.
- Beacon (b. 2011, parents Blackwatch and Mahuika) – Currently on Motutapu Island and part of a group of four. Has attempted to breed the past two seasons but has been unsuccessful. High hopes for this season.
- Pukekohe (b. 2013, parents Te Mingi and

Cheesecake) – Has apparently paired up with two females at Tawharanui. Dad Te Mingi is nearby but so far hanging out alone.

- Mohio (b. 2014, parents Te Mingi and Cheesecake) – After several weeks at Tawharanui he was taken to Auckland Zoo for treatment of an underlying condition that means he is not putting on weight.

There are two other takahe released into the Murchison Mountains over the past 10 years who may or may not still be present: Hauraki and Harakeke, son and daughter respectively of Montague and Ahikaea.

- Tango (b. 2006, parents Montague and

Ahikaea) was released in the Murchison Mountains and survived until 2014, when we found him dead (likely drowned in a lake). We are uncertain how many juveniles Tango produced with his partner during his time there.

Ella (b. 2009, parents Greg and Cheese-cake) lived on Motutapu for three years but was found dead in September 2014, possibly predated by a harrier.

Rautangi (b. 2012, parents Montague and Ahikaea) had been introduced to Cape Sanctuary in May 2014. She had paired with a male there and produced a juvenile in their first season. All went well until March this year when their juvenile was found dead aged five months. Cause of death was undetermined. Rautangi was found dead one week later with similar symptoms and it is suspected both fed on a toxic plant, probably foxglove. This is the first occurrence of this kind that we are aware of; all foxglove plants will be removed from the site in future.

Takahe buried in 'beautiful and moving' ceremony

The four takahe who were accidentally shot were given a formal burial on Motutapu Island.

Their bodies were brought back to the island by iwi representatives and carried up to the burial site in a woven harakeke kete that had been made for them.

They were buried within an area of established bush close to the territory where they had lived, between recently-planted puriri and wharangi trees. It was a beautiful and moving occasion.

In the afternoon a family of three takahe was brought to the island from Maungatautari.

They were released in the area where the dead takahe had lived and started their first chick, which seemed a great spot for a takahe family to be. Everyone remarked on how beautiful and healthy-looking the new birds were.

The release was an uplifting end to what had begun as a sad day and cemented a determination to learn as much as we can from what happened in order to do better for these wonderful endangered birds in the future.

Helen Bucksey



RASCAL AT REST: This pateke may look innocent but Finn the Philanderer didn't acquire his nickname for nothing. Photo / Martin Sanders

Roguish pateke dies after 13 years of philandering on Tiritiri

Tiritiri's best-known brown teal, Finn – widely known as Finn the Philanderer – has been found dead. **Barbara Walter**, who developed a great affection for him during her many years on the Island, looks back on his colourful life and rather sad end.

Finn the brown teal, or pateke, was very much one of my favourite birds and one of the great characters of Tiritiri Matangi.

Ray and I used to make a daily patrol of the Island and he was one of the birds we used to see the most regularly.

Finn was released on the Bunkhouse Dam in June 2002 at the age of one year. At that time a total of eight pateke were released on that dam and the Emergency Landing Dam.

Four of them were immediately predated by harriers but Finn thrived.

When released he was banded with left leg blue, green, red and right leg metal, but he later lost his green band.

He was named Finn after young Finn, the 12-year-old SoTM member who released him. Finn was a very keen young ornithologist and was our first very young guide.

As his namesake's fame, and nickname, spread, young Finn asked me what a philanderer was. I told him to ask his dad! Goodness knows what answer he got.

Finn (the pateke) had several mates over the years. He was mainly found on the Bunkhouse Dam but in his pursuit of

romantic interest he was also seen on other pateke habitats such as the Upper Emergency Landing Dam.

At one stage he had ducklings on both dams at the same time and Ray and I would check them out every morning as part of our bird round.

Inevitably Finn became known as Finn the Philanderer or as Casanova.

However, even the greatest reprobates sometimes have to slow down due to old age, and over the past two years we mostly saw him on the Bunkhouse Dam where we noticed he had developed a limp. Ray built him a ramp to let him get out when the water was low.

But after last year's ducklings were fledged his limp became worse and when his two offspring became large juveniles they drove him and his mate from the dam – the opposite of what should happen!

The female disappeared and Finn moved upstream away from them. Obviously his health continued to deteriorate and he was recently found dead by a visitor.

Finn was 14 years old which is a grand age for a pateke.

Barbara Walter

GOTCHA:
A rifleman
delivers a
tasty insect
snack to
the nest.

Photo / Kay
Milton



Fauna Notes

Busy start to breeding season

Things change so quickly at this time of year. With all the birds breeding, it's hard to keep up with numbers of nests and who's doing what. So the spring edition of Fauna Notes is always a brief snapshot of a rapidly developing situation.

Takahe

Phil Marsh's article (on pages 8-10) describes the latest developments in Tiritiri's takahe population and the reasons for them, so there is no need to add much here.

Sadly, Mahuika died of kidney failure in August. She was a favourite among regular volunteers and had made a good contribution to takahe conservation, producing four sons with her partner Blackwatch, all of whom are still alive and well. As Phil suggests, her illness may indicate a problem for Tiritiri birds, some of whom have died around her age (she would have been 13 this spring).

While it is a shame to see Cheesecake on her own, she too having been productive in recent years, we are hoping for a period of stability for our three pairs: Nohoa and Turutu, Anatori and Tussie, Edge and Ranfurly. As of late October, Nohoa and probably Edge have nests but Anatori hasn't started.

Kokako

During the pre-breeding survey and the weeks leading up to it, almost all the birds thought to be present were seen alive and well, a few of them in new partnerships.

By mid-October the breeding season was well under way with a possible 16 pairs to keep the kokako team busy.

As always, Lucky (partner Bariki) was one of the early nesters, and we think it must be in the genes as her daughter Hinerau (partner Tupoki) started around the same time. Hinerau was the first to start incubating.

Cloudsley Shovell also started building in early October. Perhaps her new partner Bandit will enable her to produce fertile eggs for the first time since 2011-12. Cloudsley's former partner, Te Koha Waiata, has been seen frequently hanging around the margins of his former territory.

For the first time since his arrival in 2008, Poutama has formed a partnership that has lasted more than a few weeks. His partner Tiara was incubating by late October, so we are hoping he will make a contribution to the population at last.

Hihi

Chris Smith, our hihi researcher from 2012-13, made a welcome return to Tiritiri with his partner Megan, to join Mhairi McCready, this year's researcher (at right), for the latest pre-breeding survey.

They counted 129 birds: 93 males and 36 females. Mhairi has since found another five females, but it's still not a good ratio as the males can get pretty crazy during the breeding season and make life difficult for females.

By mid-October there were nine breeding



Mhairi McCready, this season's hihi researcher, advises that her name is pronounced Vary. 'It is a Scottish name but I am from Gloucestershire in England.'

Mhairi says she has long wanted to get involved in conservation projects 'and hoped that it would take me all over the world. So far I have worked in Honduras, Mauritius, Saint Lucia and now New Zealand.

My experience in Mauritius really confirmed that I am a bird person; I spent two breeding seasons working with the Mauritius fody, an endangered passerine. My next adventure was in Saint Lucia where I conducted a survey of the endangered white-breasted thrasher.'

While in Mauritius she met Donal Smith, the previous hihi researcher, 'so when John Ewen sent out an e-mail looking for a replacement Donal suggested it to me. I of course jumped at the chance and here I am! I have really enjoyed my first month here and I'm hoping for a great breeding season for the hihi.'

attempts, two of which had hatched (four chicks each), with the rest at incubation stage. Plenty more nests were completed and ready for eggs; there can be a gap of a few weeks between building and laying.

October also saw the return of Helen Taylor, who is collecting hihi sperm samples for her research with Otago University. The males were co-operating nicely and she hoped to sample all 93 during her two-week visit. One of the males seen during the survey is unbanded and Mhairi is keen to know his whereabouts, so please keep a look out if you are visiting the Island and let Mary-Ann or one of the guides know if you see him.

Tieke

With such a poor season in 2014-15, we thought that this year could only be better, and so it seems, at least from the evidence of the first few weeks.

Our evidence comes from the tieke nest box scheme, as natural nests are hard to find unless you come upon them by accident. The first nests with eggs were found at the end of September, so by the time you read this there should be chicks being fed and the early ones will have fledged.

John Stewart's study continues this year, so if you see any colour-banded tieke, please make a note of the band combinations and let him know (johnreastewart@gmail.com).

Rifleman

Our early season survey of riflemen was hampered by illness and bad weather, so with just 13 pairs identified, results were poor compared with 2014 (20 pairs).

Things have picked up in recent weeks, however, and, as of late October, we have 22 confirmed breeding pairs. The total number of known pairs in 2014-15 was 26, so we



A HANDFUL: Morag Fordham and Chris Hannent were strolling near the Sylvester Wetlands when they saw 'this poor wee spotless crake chick' sitting on the track. Morag 'moved the chick under some vegetation for protection from possible predation' and Chris took the photo.

are hoping that, for the sixth successive year, we shall be able to demonstrate an increase in the breeding population. It is particularly encouraging that birds have been found in locations where they haven't bred before, but also puzzling that some previously occupied areas have been abandoned.

Bellbirds

Bellbirds have also made a good start this season. By early October, there were already several nests with chicks.

Michelle Roper and her team were particularly pleased to find a bird who had been banded 10 years ago by Taneal Cope during her research on bellbird breeding ecology. His bands are red over red on his left

leg, green over metal on his right.

Wetapunga

Lighthouse Valley has been identified as the site for a new release of 'teenage' wetapunga, which we hope will take place in November. Unlike previous releases, this will be a low-key, non-public event. This will give us three sites on the Island, being monitored separately, where we hope wetapunga will become established.

Other species

Late winter and early spring produced sightings of large pods of dolphins near the Island, and several young fur seals resting on the rocks around Tiritiri.

An unusual sighting on 27 September was of seven Canada geese circling above the southern end of the Island before heading off into the yonder.

A male tomtit visited Tiritiri on 22 October, and a kookaburra was seen at the north end on the 26th. A red admiral butterfly was seen on the Ridge Road on the same day. Perhaps the most significant event was the arrival of a pair of New Zealand dotterels on Hobbs Beach, where they had laid an egg by the end of October, though not in a very sensible place. Perhaps, like the variable oystercatchers who nest there every year, they will learn from experience and become long-term residents.

Compiled by Kay Milton, with contributions from Morag Fordham, Simon Fordham, Mhairi McCreedy, Chris Green and Michelle Roper.



BAD HAIR DAY? A 7-8 days old bellbird chick.

Photo / Michelle Roper



Annual report

Agreement with DOC simplifies approvals

An agreement with DOC making it easier to get approval to carry out many activities on the Island was one of the highlights outlined by retiring chair, **John Stewart**, in his report to the annual meeting of SoTM. The following is a summary of his report.

The past year saw the usual mix of many achievements, much hard work, some disappointments and some successes.

Following the preparation of our Biodiversity Plan we reached an agreement with DOC to carry out a wide range of low impact monitoring and management activities on the Island under a general permit which offers a much simpler and quicker method of obtaining the necessary permissions.

This coming year will see projects on the assessment of freshwater ecology, more transect counts for birds, diving petrel and fantail surveys, black-backed gull diet, monitoring surface-nesting seabirds and searching for common geckos. We have also made a small beginning with planting canopy species among our existing bush areas.

For many of our birds the 2014-15 breeding season was a poor one. We had just one takahe chick and three kokako (down from a record 11 the year before). Hihi numbers are about their lowest for 10 years, while bellbird, kakariki and saddleback productivity was low.

Fortunately there was no urgent need for a hihi translocation off the Island. However, we did have requests for three translocations of whiteheads, totalling 180 birds. We took the precaution of first doing a population survey and, when the results were encouraging, the translocations went ahead. Conducting the survey also allowed us to obtain population estimates for many of our other bush-dwelling birds and we intend to repeat this exercise to further improve our knowledge.

Twenty saddlebacks went to the Bay of Islands and three takahe to Tawharanui. Sadly, three of the takahe raised on Tiritiri were killed during the pukeko cull on Motutapu.

This year also saw our first translocation of reptiles off the Island when 59 moko skinks went to Rotoroa. Survey work on tuatara, Duvaucel's gecko and wetapunga all generated encouraging results, while shore skink numbers continue to be rather disappointing.

Infrastructure

Unfortunately, we have been unable to organise the repair of the still-leaky dams and now hope to arrange this after the breeding season.

We have agreed with DOC that over the next four years the Ridge Road, which has been muddy and slippery in recent winters, will be repaired and re-metalled. Further work has been completed on the Wattle Track which is now in much better condition.



HIGHLIGHT: The lighthouse party.

A highlight of the year was the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Tiritiri Lighthouse, as part of which the Cuvier light and mechanism were assembled and put on display. This attracted a huge amount of interest, auguring well for our plans for a permanent display of the maritime history of the Island. Progress is also continuing with the project to install a replica of the old signal mast. Design work is just about complete and we are now in discussions with various authorities to get the permissions needed.

Last year I reported the possibility of obtaining agreement with DOC on a new accommodation block and recently we have been able to re-start negotiations.

Visitor Experience

Visitor guiding continues to provide a wonderful experience for our visitors.

More new bird signs have been erected, the relief map has been restored and improved, and work continues to replace our courtyard signs with more eye-catching and informative material.

With the help of a grant from the DOC CCP fund, we have been able to give educator Barbara Hughes some extra working hours which have helped her cope with the ever-growing demands from our increasingly successful education programme.

Visitor numbers were higher this year at 31,369 (up 4%), school visits were a record high at 7,062 (up 26%) and 17,154 people

took a guided walk (up 18%). Part of this may be due to our number one position for Auckland attractions on Trip Advisor.

An idea to run a dawn chorus trip proved very enjoyable for those keen enough to catch a very early boat from Gulf Harbour and our concert was another resounding success.

Other Items

Our initiative to involve more Supporters in a wider range of projects has been a great success with many of you responding to requests for help. Nowadays we need a wide range of skills and our aim is to recruit and train Supporters to meet the needs. Our Working Weekends continue to play an important role. But we now also have trained volunteers working on weeds, the pohutukawa project, surveys of seabirds, fantails, saddlebacks, kokako, fernbirds and rifleman. We intend to continue with this initiative.

Our financial position has strengthened over the past three years, allowing us to fund all the work proposed by our sub-committees while at the same time growing our working capital. Obviously, our plans for a new signal mast, the display of the Cuvier light and maritime history, and the new accommodation block will be beyond our financial resources and so will require major fundraising efforts.

This year saw the publication of the 100th issue of *Dawn Chorus*. During the year Martin Sanders published a new *Illustrated Guide to the Island* which has proved very popular. We have made great strides in our on-line presence with the website, Facebook and Instagram all attracting increasing numbers.

Disappointingly, our relationships with DOC deteriorated during the year, partly, we believe, due to changes in staff and a consequent lack of appreciation of how our partnership has worked in the past. After some effort on our behalf, there has been a welcome change in approach from the Department. Progress has been hampered by continuing changes at DOC and yet more are planned. In addition, there have been further cuts in DOC budgets which inevitably put pressure on levels of support for work on the Island.

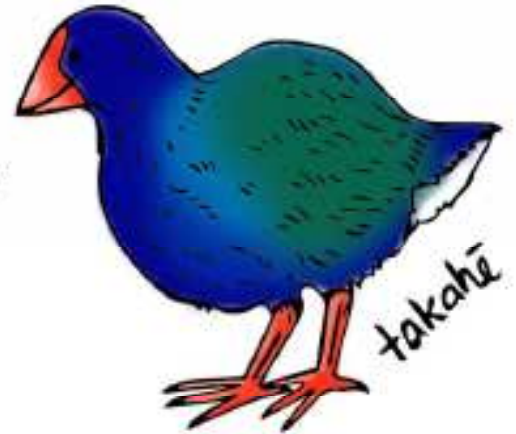
Acknowledgements

On behalf of us all, I would like to acknowledge the help and support of those who have made contributions, large and small, to the continuing success of our enterprise. It would be impossible to mention every activity in this report but they are all appreciated.



tiri kids

by Michelle Gordon



Can you tell the difference between a takahe and a pukeko?
They have almost the same coloured feathers, but they're very different – did you know?

Below are some of the differences.
Fill in the blanks from the words in the box.

WORDS:
common, bigger,
thin, beak, thick,
can, can't,
New Zealand.

Pukeko have long _____ legs, a narrow _____ and _____ fly,
Pukeko are _____, so don't be surprised if one comes by.

Takahe _____ fly, have shorter _____ legs, a thick beak and are much _____.
They're found only in _____, wouldn't you figure?
With only about 300 left in the world, they are very rare.
The takahe are a special bird, we must give them great care!

Oh, no. A takahe chick has got lost in the tall grass.
Can you help the parents find their chick?



FILL IN THE BLANKS ANSWERS
Pukeko – Thin, Beak, Can, Common Takahe - Can't, thick, bigger, New Zealand

Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi

Dawn Chorus is the quarterly newsletter of the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi (SoTM). We are a volunteer incorporated society working closely with the Department of Conservation to make the most of the wonderful conservation restoration project that is Tiritiri Matangi. Every year volunteers put thousands of hours into the project and raise funds through membership, guiding and our Island-based gift shop. For further information see www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz or contact P O Box 90-814 Victoria St West, Auckland

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Coming Events

7 December

7.30 pm Evening talk: Graham Jones, who studied little blue penguins on Tiritiri aeons ago, will tell tall tales but true about early research work on the Island. There will also be a social gathering to mark the end of the year. At Unitec Institute of Technology in the Red Lecture Theatre, Building 180. Enter through Gate 3 on Carrington Rd, Pt Chevalier. Drive past the playing fields and marae and turn left at the end into the car park. On the left you will see a large building with a red wall which is the home of the Red Theatre.

30 January - February 1

Anniversary Day Working Weekend

21 March

7.30pm Supporters' Social at the Kohia Education Centre, University of Auckland Epsom Campus. Speaker to be announced. Check the website for details closer to the time.

4-6 June

Queen's Birthday Working Weekend

Supporters' Weekends are led by guides who will show off the Island's special places. Reduced price on the ferry and half price in the bunkhouse. Children welcome.

Working Weekends are your chance to give the Island a hand. Travel is free, as is accommodation in the bunkhouse. Book through guiding@tiritirimatangi.org.nz

Visiting Tiritiri Matangi for education or recreation

Day trips: 360 Discovery runs a return ferry service every Wednesday through Sunday from Downtown Auckland and the Gulf Harbour Marina. Bookings are essential. Phone 0800 360 347 or visit www.360discovery.co.nz. Call 09 916 2241 after 7am on the day to confirm the vessel is running.

School and tertiary institution visits: The Tiritiri education programme covers from level 1 (5-year-olds), to level 13 (17-18-year-olds), to tertiary students. The focus in primary and secondary areas is on delivering the required Nature of Science and Living World objectives from the NZ Science Curriculum. At the senior biology level there are a number of NCEA Achievement Standards where support material and presentations are available. For senior students the Sustainability (EFS) Achievement Standards are available on the NZQA website. There is huge potential in that these standards relate directly to Tiritiri in various subject areas: science, economics, tourism, geography, religious education, marketing, health and physical education. The Island also provides a superb environment for creative writing, photography and art workshops. Tertiary students have

the opportunity to learn about the history of Tiritiri and tools of conservation as well as to familiarise themselves with population genetics, evolution and speciation. Groups wishing to visit should go to www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz/schoolvisits.htm or contact schoolbooking@tiritirimatangi.org.nz. Bookings are essential.

Overnight visits: Camping is not permitted but there is limited bunkhouse accommodation. Bookings are essential. For information on booking overnight visits, go to: www.doc.govt.nz/tiritiribunkhouse. Bookings can also be made by phoning the Department of Conservation's Warkworth Area Office on 09 425 7812, though an additional booking fee will apply.

Supporters' discount: Volunteers who are undertaking official SoTM work can obtain accommodation free but this must be booked through the Guiding and Shop Manager at guiding@tiritirimatangi.org.nz or 09 476 0010. SoTM members visiting privately can get a discounted rate by booking through DOC's Warkworth Area Office 09 425 7812.

Original and inspiring gifts



We have a wonderful collection of colouring books for adults, from mini ones at \$10 to larger ones from \$15 to \$25. Who needs television or the internet? Colour your way to calmness.



There's still plenty of time to buy the Tiritiri Calendar and send it to friends and relations at home or overseas. At \$18 it's the perfect Christmas or New Year gift and a great way to remind everyone what a beautiful place this is.



Our shop has lots more gift ideas including nature books, ceramics, bags, puzzles, jewellery, soft toys, artworks, natural beauty products and so much more.

Come and spend a day on Tiritiri Matangi Island, see the wonderful birdlife, enjoy free tea and coffee, buy treasures for yourself and gifts for loved ones, and support an amazing conservation project.

**For more information see www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz
ring 09 476 0010 or email shop@tiritirimatangi.org.nz**

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