



# MOTUORA RESTORATION SOCIETY (INC)

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[www.motuora.org.nz](http://www.motuora.org.nz)

Newsletter No. 60

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## Fluttering Shearwaters appreciate 'New Homes'



Fluttering Shearwater chick  
Pic Vonny Sprey

We have often featured news of our developing gannet colony on the Island and we already have a new chick this season with many more birds sitting on eggs. What you may not be aware of is that during the hours of darkness the gannet loudspeaker system switches to the sounds of a fluttering shearwater colony and that this is also showing signs of success.

Last year Vonny managed to use our night-time camera to film some shearwaters. They were regularly visiting the wooden nest boxes dug in on the cliff edge near the gannet colony. A fertile egg was laid but it failed to hatch after being damaged during a fight between two birds. This initial success led us to reconsider the best location for a new fluttering shearwater colony. The speakers were originally set up very close to the cliff edge where there was only room for a few boxes to be dug in and where it was rather

hazardous for night-time checking of the birds' progress. A new spot with much more room just south of and below the site of the solar panel was chosen, and, over the winter, the speakers were moved and new artificial burrows were installed.

The good news is that these new burrows are already being regularly visited. This is promising for next year. Even better news is that two pairs of fluttering shearwaters have returned to the old site on the cliff edge and both have laid an egg and now have hatched a chick. These are the first two fluttering shearwaters to be born on the Island since our restoration project began (and possibly ever).

## Ray Lowe stands down as MRS Chairperson

After 16 years at the helm, our chairperson Ray Lowe has decided the time has come to take a rest and let the others 'take the strain'. Ray has worked tirelessly during his time as chair and has contributed greatly to what has been achieved on the Island. He has also been responsible for maintaining our relationship with the Department of Conservation which has proved an arduous task over recent years because of upheaval in both personnel and structures in the Department making it difficult to agree progress on important work on the Island. Responsibility for employee management has fallen on his shoulders, and in addition, when any problem arose on the Island, especially relating to equipment or infrastructure, the first call was always to Ray. His management and steerage of the committee through all the years has been exemplary, maintaining a very stable committee membership and a team approach allowing all parties to participate in a co-operative culture.

We all owe a great debt of gratitude to Ray and wish him every possible enjoyment in the future.

### Footnote

John Stewart's offer to take on the Chairperson role (until the next AGM) has been welcomed by the Committee.



## Kit Brown retires from Secretary role

Most of you will know Kit, and that he has been our secretary for some 18 years and has now resigned from the post. Kit has been loyal to the project throughout and a valuable right hand stalwart to me and the committee. He writes a brilliant letter and has been a sincere and

successful fundraiser for all of our projects throughout that time, raising many thousands of dollars for translocations, weeding, infrastructure etc. plus writing numerous proposals and lots more. A great team player and friend, with a passion for the administration of the project together with active participation wherever needed. Motuora is a better place because of his input. He has now handed over the reins to Peter Swedlund for secretarial duties and to Helen Lindsay for fundraising – a hard act to follow! Well done Kit and the very best wishes from all involved with MRS.

Ray Lowe,  
Chairman (retiring)

## From the Island—Vonny Sprey

### Nursery/plantings

Plantings in June and even to mid-July proved problematic due to the lack of rain making the ground too hard and dry, especially understorey areas for canopy plants. August saw the bulk of the plantings with one main infill planting and cliff plantings.



A heap of well grown Tawapou and Titoki have been planted.

MRS workday in September planted over 400 pohutakawa, ngaio, flax and taupata down the cliffs.

In the nursery seed trays are full for next years' trees. Seedlings of titoki, pigeon wood, rewarewa and karaka have germinated during October.

Signs showing 'date planted' have been installed at various noteworthly sites around the island. Sturdy posts with simple but neat signs on top give those walking the tracks an insight into the work that's gone into the forest they are enjoying.



### Weeds

Weeding, targeting boneseed on the northern-most cliff, has been one focus of ongoing weeding over winter. This was followed by planting of cliff-loving species into gorse and on the steep north facing slopes. It was a great feat for the hardy alpiners amongst the MRS volunteer and DOC volunteer groups. The hope is that this inter-planting will help to prevent the spread of boneseed still prevalent on the northern cliffs.

Grid searching for weeds with the DOC volunteers continued with people bush bashing, crawling under, over and through in the search of the quarry. Boneseed, climbing asparagus, and a significant blackberry patch were located and dispatched.

Onion weed was added to the targeted weeds list in September as patches are starting to make their presence obvious.

(Continued on page 3)

## TRANSITION TIME

Since 2004 the Motuora Restoration Society (MRS) has had a Management Agreement with the Department of Conservation which sets out in some detail our respective responsibilities, how the Island and campsite will be managed and the associated funding arrangements. However, as the Society's responsibilities have grown, particularly in relation to the employment of an Island Manager and compliance issues such as those associated with health and safety, your committee has decided that we no longer wish to continue to manage the campsite nor to employ an Island Manager. In discussions with DOC we have agreed that a Management Agreement is no longer the appropriate means to describe and agree our relationship and responsibilities, and we are currently discussing with them the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This document will describe our relationship and our respective aims for the Island in general terms. Once the MOU has been agreed and signed off we will then come to an agreement on the finer details involved in managing the Island and in ensuring the continuation of the restoration programme. We are pleased to report that, for the immediate future, Vonny has accepted contract positions with DOC (to run the campsite) and with MRS (mainly to operate the nursery and to work on weeding).

These changes will have an impact on the way we operate on the Island, and when the details have been resolved we will inform our members and volunteers of the outcome.

Charities Commission Registration Number CC 10250

<b>Motuora Restoration Society</b> 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. Membership is \$25 per year for individuals or families, and \$5 for students.	<i>Chairperson</i> John Stewart	09 428 4541	Bruce Ross	09 445 1140
	<i>Secretary</i> Peter Swedlund	09 815 7427	Helen Lindsay	03 528 4020
	<i>Treasurer</i> Nattu Nataraj	09 624 6247	Liz Norquay	09 424 7444
	Les Buckton	09 425 9619	Ray Lowe	09 426 6900
	Kevin Hawkins	09 424 7444	Colin Cordes	09 638 7726
	Kit Brown	09 446 0618	Island Manager	0274 928 586

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Continued from page 1

Spring has arrived heralding the return of seabirds and land birds starting the next generation.



The new penguin boxes have had some visitations but only one pair of little blue penguins have set up home inside one (out of 19 installed).

Two of the larger seabird artificial burrows adjacent to the gannet colony now have some very fit blue penguins nesting inside. (If you think that it is a long walk up to the gannet colony (think how many wee steps mum and dad blue penguin

have to walk in the dark to feed their offspring there!). Two fluttering shearwater chicks, twenty or so gannets nesting, a dotterel nest at Still Bay with a chick, three nests at Home Bay with varying success on egg survival. To date no sign of returning Pycroft's



Spotless crane at twin dams. This well bird has been identified just once before on the island

petrel or diving petrels.

The kingfishers, wood pigeons and paradise ducks have all returned. At least six brown teal have been sighted (tend to trip over them on the paths at night).



Juvenile seals are frequent visitors on the shores the island acting as a crèche while mum is fishing.

#### Campground and bach bookings

Winter months' variable weather showed typical low campground numbers. The booking system is now via DOC web site online - [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)



## GANNET COLONY CONTINUES TO THRIVE

Last year eighteen nests had eggs laid in them and fifteen of these eggs hatched (the other three eggs being infertile). Of the fifteen that hatched three chicks died and one disappeared. By March there were eleven chicks at the site with



six or seven near to full juvenile plumage. And in the end ten fledged.

Decoys and the recorded colony sounds playing daily have proved successful.

So far this year there are approximately pairs twenty-one pairs of gannets nesting and the first of the seasons' chicks have arrived - at least two.

## Wetapunga Update

In June Vonny made a very exciting discovery when she checked the rat tracking tunnel in Macrocarpa Bay and discovered some giant weta prints! These were definitely made by an adult wetapunga and therefore confirms for the first time that there has been a full island-bred generation of wetapunga on Motuora after the first release back in September 2010. This is a very significant step on the path towards establishing this giant weta is on Motuora.

In July I spent a week with Vonny on the island monitoring for weta using 100 tracking tunnels set up throughout the release site in Macrocarpa Bay. However we were unable to get any further wetapunga tracks. Weather conditions were not ideal but it shows that the number of weta may be quite low. I will repeat the monitoring next year. Meanwhile the translocation programme continues with another group of 100 wetapunga released at the end of November. They were from Auckland Zoo and were released at a third site on the island so that all three releases can be monitored separately. This release featured "teenage" wetapunga, about half grown and should mature into adults by winter/spring next year.

The picture opposite shows bamboo tubes which act as both transport packaging and, when strapped to tree branch in the bush, as homes for the first few nights or as long as the wetapunga want to use them.

Chris Green, Department of Conservation

**Island minding** Thanks to those who put their time and effort into covering duties whilst Vonny had a well deserved holiday off the island during Sept./Oct. Although the tasks are not onerous it is vital to water nursery plants and generally keep an eye on things. Well done! Helen Lindsay, Neil Sutherland & Sheryl Corbett, Liz Norquay, Marie Jo & Alex Wilson, Sue Cameron, Sian Poitier & Toby Shanley, Peter Swedlund and Andrea Ravenscroft.



It's always lovely setting foot on Motuora but it had been some time since we'd last been and the growth was very noticeable. We were on the island for 5 days so became familiar with some of the permanent residents at Home Bay; the NZ dotterels, pukekoes that were followed by two little black poi on sticks, and the tuis were out in strength. A hawk dropped in on a couple of days, but it wasn't there for the view - we saw evidence of at least one successful meal of some small bird. The island has a mature feel about it now, less the gawky teenager and more the shape and form of a fine island habitat. Marie Jo & Alex Wilson (pictured above).

**Thank you to loyal members** who have contributed to the restoration work by paying the annual subscription fee. If you are not a member but have visited and enjoyed the island in the past, or as it is today and feel a connection with the place, please consider joining as a member. This will help ensure the project can be sustained into the future.

## Sign of the times

Sign posts at various locations give those walking the tracks an indication of which year the regeneration of the bush at that site started. Fantastic growth means a stable environment for many invertebrates, reptiles and birds.



## THANK YOU

**Bridgestone Ltd.** for sponsorship.  
**Terranova Planning**, for sponsorship.  
**Agpro NZ Ltd** for herbicides.  
**Yates NZ** for ongoing support with propagation supplies.  
**Kawau Cruises** for support with transport costs.  
**Auckland Zoo** for support with Newsletter production.  
**Heseltine Trust** for support with funding for weed control.

## WORK TRIPS TO THE ISLAND WILL CONTINUE IN 2016

Visit our website and record your interest to be sent the monthly reminder about trips

There are many tasks that depend on input from volunteers. There are opportunities for on-going volunteer work in the following areas -

- planting
- weed monitoring
- track clearing
- bird monitoring
- lizard monitoring
- administration



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Address Block