



MOTUORA RESTORATION SOCIETY (INC)

PO Box 100132, North Shore
Auckland 0745

www.motuora.org.nz

Newsletter No. 58

April 2015

Pycroft's Petrel — 2015

John Stewart

This March saw our third, and probably final, translocation of Pycroft's petrels from Whakau/Red Mercury Island to Motuora. One hundred chicks were moved this year, taking the total transferred over three years to 262. Our collection team, pictured here, underwent biosecurity checks at the DOC office in Coromandel on 3rd March and drove to Whitianga from where personnel and a net load of gear were helicoptered to Whakau the next morning. On the first six days we concentrated on finding and checking the burrows containing petrel chicks. Only about one in ten is occupied so we searched nearly 2,500 burrows to find 250 birds. Some were adults, but most were chicks. Each one was weighed and banded and a wing measurement taken. Each day we estimated which birds from those found would potentially be at the right stage of development on 12th March – transfer day. From previous trips we know the likely range in daily growth rates and use this to make the estimates. Each time we find an occupied burrow it is marked with a yellow cattle ear tag on which we write a unique identity using the year, the finder's initials and a sequence code, e.g. 15JS1. Also, if we think the bird might be a 'taker', the burrow is marked with flagging tape. The 11th March was preparation day. Our transfer boxes, which are plastic core-flute pet carriers, were assembled and lined with newspaper and rubber matting, and fitted with dividers so we could put two or three birds in each box. Candidate burrows were recorded on GPS to help us find them quickly. Two



Toby Shanley, Tui Wright, Rachel Shepherd, John Stewart, Kalinka Rexer-Huber, Graham Parker.

match-stick sized twigs were placed at the entrance of each burrow so we would be able to tell if a chick had come out of its burrow or a parent had visited – important information for planning chick feeding on Motuora. On transfer day, 12th March, chicks were checked against criteria for wing length and minimum weight, and for health, and the burrow entrance was examined for the presence of downy feathers. Any birds which had come out overnight could not be taken as they would already be partly fixed on Whakau as their home. Working steadily all day, we had our 100 chicks in boxes and ready for departure by helicopter with just 20 minutes to spare. On arrival at Motuora the feeding team worked hard to get all the chicks into artificial burrows before dark, when time was taken to acknowledge the birds as taonga (treasure), Whakau as their place of origin and Ngāti Hei as their kaitiaki (guardian). Kaitiaki of Motuora were also acknowledged; it is important to retain an understanding of where these birds' ancestors came from as they establish a colony on Motuora in the rohe of Ngāti Manuhiri. Helen Gummer was in charge of the feeders and Kay Milton, Morag Fordham and Mel Wilmot were there to help with the arrival and first few days. Kerry Gillbanks and Shaun Trevaun took over for the next week, followed by Kay Milton and John Stewart. Helen and Vonny finished the feeding. At the time of writing, 92 chicks had safely fledged from Motuora. Ngāti Hei as kaitiaki of Whakau/Red Mercury Island are thanked for their cooperation over the 3 years of this

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SUMMER AT HOME BAY



FROM THE ISLAND—Vonny Sprey

Sunny weather and little rain from mid-December to mid-January has left the top dam bone dry and the wee island tinder dry.

Campground visitors and summer holidays

The holidays coupled with the sunny and calm days saw “full house” for the campground which was well patronised from December through into February especially the long weekends.

Nursery

A visit in early December from a native-plants-nursery-expert was very helpful and gave the impetus required to jettison trays of “never going to germinate” seeds. There is a plethora of pohutakawa in the nursery, and we will get these into the ground in this year. There will be mostly in-fill planting in the coming winter season and trees in the nursery waiting for the right conditions.

Weeds



Kevin abseiling on the cliff edge

Kevin Hawkins teamed up with me in early February and we searched cliff sites known to have periwinkle and Mexican daisy. A successful few days with some, but not heaps, of weeds located and dug out. Testament to the value of the ongoing weeding programme.

MRS workday in February volunteers did track clearing, clearing bindweed and weed clearing in the ponds. (The group felt that any mud that smelt that bad probably had therapeutic properties!) Definitely enjoyed a swim after that task.

Avian

It was marvellous to have a brown teal pair, on one of the only two ponds with water in it, produce six ducklings in early February. However just two ducklings are still surviving and although parents are very diligent the water is fetid and with little rain the pond water is receding daily and visitations by pukekoes are increasing. Another brown teal couple have been fended off the pond on a few occasions and the adult birds totally submerge if a hawk is seen overhead. Fingers crossed for these wee ducklings.

The six pairs of dotterel have not had a good year with only one pair successfully raising two chicks. Some of the other pairs laid up to three clutches of eggs only to have the sea, high tides, westerly winds and predators dealing to them. The inflow of campers saw the atten-



Pateke (brown teal)

Several of the planting blocks have been grid searched for weeds. Although only a one person search I have managed to slay a range of weeds including pampas, yucca, madeira, a re-sprouted blackberry patch, some bamboo and the seemingly ever present climbing asparagus and bone seed.



Pond weeding – Claire Murphy, Colin Cordes and Liz Norquay

Charities Commission Registration Number CC 10250

Motuora Restoration Society 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> Ray Lowe	09 426 6900	Bruce Ross	09 445 1140
	<i>Secretary</i> Kit Brown	09 446 0618	Helen Lindsay	03 528 4020
	<i>Treasurer</i> Nattu Nataraj	09 624 6247	Liz Norquay	09 424 7444
	Les Buckton	09 425 9619	John Stewart	09 833 7059
	Kevin Hawkins	09 424 7444	Colin Cordes	09 638 7726

Biodiversity Sub-committee John Stewart, Melinda Rixon, Shelley Heiss-Dunlop, Sharen Graham, Robin Gardner-Gee, Helen Lindsay, Kevin Parker, Manuela Barry, Su Sinclair, Richard Griffiths & Chris Green.

dant increase in red billed and black-backed gulls and beach disturbance which put paid to any eggs and chicks, with the chicks at Still Bay sadly providing a snack for a black-backed gull.

The one fluttering shearwater nesting in an artificial burrow in November did lay a fertile egg but our motion camera recorded a late night altercation with another flutterer which resulted in abandonment of the egg.

Little blue penguins have been busy. There have been encounters with nests in tree roots at the top of the island and frequent encounters of purposeful adults trekking up and down roadways and through the campgrounds. A pair resident in the nest box near the house fledged and left early returning in February to moult. Another pair in the nest box near the boat-shed had to run the gauntlet through the campground during December and January. Eighteen wooden nest boxes have been installed along the shore at Home Bay to Macrocarpa Bay. Two of these are designed to view into through a perspex lid. We hope they all get used by the little blue penguins.

Gannets have built twenty nests this season. Of these, eighteen nests had eggs laid in them and fifteen of these eggs hatched (the other three eggs were infertile). Of the fifteen 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. Decoys and the recorded colony sounds playing daily have proved successful. So well done the gannets!

Gannet chick—new arrival



Penguin nest boxes awaiting installation



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project as we sourced the birds from their rohe, while Ngāti Manuhiri are thanked for the guidance they have provided to the Restoration Society in the negotiations supporting this project. As with all projects of this size, there is a huge amount of work behind the scenes not least of which is gaining funding. The Motuora Restoration Society would like to acknowledge the generosity of the Chisholm Whitney Charitable Trust who supported this year's translocation.

Adult Pycroft's Petrel



Pic. Toby Shanley

The chicks go to sea for at least three years before returning to their home colony to find a partner and a burrow. This means birds from our first transfer in 2013 could begin to arrive back at Motuora later this year. Our plan is to monitor the site through Sept 2015 to Feb 2016. Hopefully there will be some good news to report.

Duvaucel's geckos find Motuora to be paradise

judging by their body condition and growth rates! The monitoring team captured 59 very healthy looking individuals during their March 2015 survey. Most animals are much heavier for their size than when they were taken from the wild or the captive breeding programme in 2013. The biggest surprise for me was that young geckos reached maturity after only two years on Motuora – something that has never been documented in the wild! The comparably low numbers of insectivorous birds, great abundance of invertebrates, diversity of berry and nectar producing plants and lack of mammalian predators likely create favourable conditions for these large lizards. Duvaucel's geckos can easily reach densities of 800-1000 individuals per ha – Motuora could be well on its way to become a lizard Mecca! However, only time will tell and we need to be patient as it will take many decades to build up such densities.

Manu Barry
Massey University



Philip La Roche with a Duvaucel's gecko

WORK TRIPS TO THE ISLAND

26 April
31 May
8 June
26 July
30 August
27 September
No workday in October
29 November

There are many tasks that depend on input from volunteers. Get 'hands-on' and join us on the regular work trips.

Opportunities for on-going volunteer work in the following areas of interest -

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

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

www.motuora.org.nz

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.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Motuora Restoration Society's Annual General Meeting

will be held on Sunday, 31 May 2015 on Motuora Island (Potting Shed).

At 1.30 p.m.

If the work trip to the island is cancelled due to bad weather the meeting will be held at

St. John Ambulance Hall, Silverdale Street, Silverdale. At 1.30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the May 2014 AGM
2. Matters arising from the Minutes
3. Financial Report
4. Chairperson's Annual Report
5. Election of Officers and Committee Members*
6. Subscriptions for the 2015/2016 year
7. Any other business

*The officers of the Society comprise the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary, and the Constitution calls for at least two other committee members. Nominations for all these positions will be accepted by mail, to be received by the Secretary at PO Box 100132 North Shore, Auckland 0745, by Thursday 28 May 2015. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor at the meeting. All nominees, proposers and seconders must be financial members of the Society.

Notice of Motion

At May's AGM a motion will be proposed to change the Constitution to delete the requirement to advertise forthcoming AGMs and other General Meetings in newspapers. This requirement costs the Society around \$70 every year, and as far as is known has never prompted anyone to attend.



**MOTUORA
RESTORATION
SOCIETY (INC)**

Address Block