



MOTUORA RESTORATION SOCIETY (INC)

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2012/13

Our project on Motuora has this year been a great success with plantings, translocations, weed controls and management all on target as planned.

Our main achievements of the year

- ◇ The completion of the first full year by Sian and Toby as our island managers as shown them to be fully competent and popular with all with whom they work from campers through to the committee and volunteers. It makes our life on the mainland that much easier
- ◇ Ongoing monitoring of previous translocations
- ◇ 3,580 pioneer trees plus 240 potted canopy trees planted out in the winter of 2012
- ◇ This winter we have 5660 trees growing in the nursery, including 1130 canopy trees and 4530 pioneer plants
- ◇ A dedicated Bio-diversity subcommittee who do an extraordinary job behind the scenes
- ◇ Good open consultation with iwi covering our plans and methods for future progress
- ◇ Continuing weed control using abseiling, including time spent by our managers
- ◇ A good year of volunteers' efforts with a total of 1022 hours spent on the island
- ◇ Another successful volunteer program completed in partnership with DoC
- ◇ Accident free year
- ◇ A stable and competent committee
- ◇ Three newsletters published
- ◇ Website active, well received and continuing to be advanced

◇ The solar system continuing to supply all our basic power requirements

◇ There were 15 kiwi chicks released on the island this year and with the capture of 29 mature birds (8 of which were island born) for release near Ngunguru

◇ The planting program was achieved primarily by Island Managers Sian and Toby and DOC volunteers and only one planting day by others. This was a result primarily of the frequent bad weather days at the end of each month causing numerous cancellations. (better luck this coming year we hope).

Translocation and Island Activity Report

During February and March two week-long trips were made to Whakau/Red Mercury Island to find and translocate 70 Pycroft's Petrel chicks to Motuora. The chicks were flown to Motuora by helicopter, placed in artificial burrows, and fed for up to four weeks when the last of them fledged. This is the first of three transfers which we hope will eventually result in the establishment of a new colony on Motuora. The introduction of burrow nesting seabirds to our native bush plantings is a vital step in our restoration project. The burrowing activity and deposits of guano will enrich and improve the soil structure, which will have benefits for the plants and invertebrates and all the species that depend on them.

Our thanks are due to Helen Gummer, who planned the translocation and led the chick feeding teams, and to John Stewart for his countless hours of planning the logistics of such an exercise to a remote island with no easy landings and all the biosecurity precautions needed to achieve this translocation. And of course to all the other volunteers who made this a remarkably successful project. A massive 1560 hours

Wētāpunga—unexpected find

Moeo Finaunga (Massey University Albany, Ecology group) discovered an adult sized Wētāpunga on Motuora Island last week. Moeo spotted the large insect (7-8 cm body length) on a Manuka tree approx. 40 cm off the ground while carrying out a gecko night survey with her fellow Wildlife Management students. Mac Purvin, who witnessed the find, took photographic proof and helped to confirm the species and age of the animal.

Wētāpunga were released on Motuora in 2010 and have not been re-sighted since. According to Dr. Chris Green from the Department of Conservation all individuals released three years ago were expected to have died by now. However, this animal was too large to be a juvenile and could in fact be one of the originally released weta. Even though no geckos were spotted that night, this was a remarkable find and caused much excitement among the Island rangers and DOC staff. Adult Wētāpunga may live longer than expected. The longer the adults are alive the more eggs are likely to be laid which is all good for getting the population established.

Manu Barry, Massey University



Photo: Mac Purvin 2013

HELLO FROM THE ISLAND

Sian and Toby

Island Managers

During the winter months the dams have refilled and the vegetation is looking lush and green again. The campground has been very quiet the past few months. However it looks like it will be another busy summer ahead. Bookings for summer opened on 1st July and the period around New Years Eve booked out in one day!

This planting season we have over 6000 plants to get into the ground. Many of these plants are canopy species and we have been busy with DOC volunteers getting these into suitable locations. The planting days in June and July were a great success with calm sunny weather being on our side. It was great to see a few new faces out here working hard as well as enjoying the island.

In June a team of volunteers led by Kevin Hawkins came out to the island to complete the annual grey faced petrel survey of burrows. Many active burrows were found within the regularly monitored plots and we have been hearing lots of grey faced petrels calls at night and have noticed quite a few new grey faced burrows around the island.

We have been doing night and day checks at diving petrel site over the and can confirm there is three new burrows located with male and female calls heard from 3 of the 4 occupied burrows including the pair using the same burrow they used last year.

The war against weeds is continuing - we have also been searching the island. One of the most rewarding aspects of doing this is being able to explore parts of the island you wouldn't otherwise get to and also finding treasures along the way. We have found a few small totara, a tawa, kahikatea and lancewood on the island which have not been planted. This is really exciting as it means more birds have been visiting the island dispersing seed and helping out with its restoration!

In the past few months a number of Motuora Kiwi have been taken off the island to be released in managed mainland areas. In April a team from DOC came out to Motuora to catch birds for transfer, we managed to catch 14 birds by midnight. The following morning these birds were released into the 400 hectare Marunui conservation block in the Brynderwyns. In May and June we had two sleepless nights assisting DOC staff catching birds for transfer to Mataia, a 1300 hectare farm in the Kaipara. These birds proved a little more difficult to catch but we managed to provide Mataia with 14 kiwi. Over half of the kiwi transferred the mainland were island born birds, this gives us an indication that there is a very healthy breeding population on Motuora.

MOTUORA KIWI FOR MATAIA AND MARUNUI

Five North Island Brown kiwi from Motuora were reintroduced to the southern Kaipara at Mataia near Glorit in 25th May and a further eight, (7 from Motuora and 1 from Matakoho Island) were released in June. Representatives of Ngati Whatua o Kaipara, family and freinds, members of the local community and schools, and supporters gathered to celebrate with land owners Kevin & Gill

Adshead the return of kiwi to this area where they were last seen 50 years ago. The people gathered were thrilled and moved to be able to be so close to this amazing bird.

Mataia became the second privately owned property in Northland to act as home to kiwi. In April, 14 North island Brown Kiwi were released on Marunui conservation site in the Brenderwyn ranges. These birds were also part of Operation Nest Egg which raise chicks each year with eggs taken from established kiwi populations in northland, hatched at Auckland Zoo and subsequently released on predator free Motuora to grow safely to maturity ready for transfer to a new home.



Kiwi ready for transfer to Mataia. Members of the collection team - Paul Corneille (DOC), Fiona McKenzie (Ngati Manuhiri representative), Pete Graham (DOC).with Sian and Toby.

were clocked up on this project alone. Well done all! We have been excited to witness the activity at the artificial gannet colony with up to 17 birds being in residence and the sighting of two eggs laid. Only one hatched, and unfortunately this chick died, but the outcome is promising for the creation of a new colony. A further 35 wetapunga were released in December thanks to the efforts by Chris Green and Butterfly Creek. 90 Duvaucel Gecko were released. These were made up of 30 captive bred at Massey University, 30 from Koropuke island and 30 from Stanley island. Many thanks to Massey for their involvement in this project. 3 Diving petrels have been heard calling from burrows on the island showing great promise for the future return of birds from our previous translocations. 4 Pateke ducklings have successfully fledged on the island.

Weeding Report

Objective of control programme

The objective is to continue follow up control to prevent the dispersal of all the target weed species and to monitor for new infestations.

Summary of work carried out 2012-2013

All active monitored sites were visited and seedlings controlled.

Grid searching and control was carried out in most blocks Mexican daisy and periwinkle cliff sites were visited regularly Cliffs were systematically searched

The time spent on weed control by the island managers has been very worthwhile and a great deal of work was achieved this year. The numbers of plants controlled are in some cases higher than in previous years but this is due to the amount of ground covered. However it is pleasing to see that the majority of species are in decline.

Control of cliff infestation sites has been more effective as they could be visited more often and surveillance at different flowering times has also been possible. However even with the increased hours it was not possible to cover the whole island in one year.

Himalyan honeysuckle and climbing dock, two species that have not been recorded on the island before, were found this year, and some woolly nightshade which has only been recorded once before. In the past most of the species that have turned up from outside the island have been wind dispersed. Climbing dock is one of these, but the other two are likely to have been brought in by birds and this may indicate that the island is becoming more attractive to birds from the mainland.

It is planned that a full search of the island be undertaken next season and all climbing asparagus infested areas be covered twice a year. In order to undertake this extended work it is proposed that the weeding hours be increased next year taking advantage of the opportunity that has been presented by having permanent staff resident on the island able to do this. This means that work can be undertaken at the optimum times, weather related delays will be eliminated, it will be possible to cover all areas within one year, some more than once.

Supporters

We have unfortunately lost the support of United Campervans

Planting in winter sunshine—June 2013



Picture Toby Shanley.

this year as they have moved forward to amalgamate with other like businesses. We take this opportunity to thank them sincerely for their unquestioning support over the last seven years. This allowed us to progress with confidence towards our goals of employing staff, managing the island, and producing greater numbers of trees for planting.

Thanks to the ASB Community Trust for ongoing funding support for our weed control programme and for funding the helicopter which brought the Pycroft's petrel chicks to Motuora. In addition we thank all the following sponsors for their continuing or new support.

Bridgestone for on-going sponsorship
Auckland Zoo Conservation Fund for funding Newsletters
The Mad Butcher for hundreds of sausages
Simon Chamberlain for contribution to translocation costs
Design Technologies for IT support
Heseltine Trust for contribution to translocation costs
Yates for potting mix
Agropro NZ Ltd for herbicides

Once again I thank the committee, each and every one of whom is dedicated to the project and who tirelessly put in the hours without question, and also to the volunteers, some of whom have been involved for many years returning for the satisfaction of seeing progress and results and keen to continue the work. It's great to be part of a voluntary organization that believes in getting on with the job, and the results achieved speak for themselves.

The Society is well placed to move forward through the coming year.

Ray Lowe,
Chairman

THANK YOU

Becroft Foundation for weed control.

Agropro NZ Ltd for herbicides.

Bridgestone for sponsorship.

Yates NZ for ongoing support with propagation supplies.

The Mad Butcher, Glenfield for support with sausages for our BBQ lunches.

Kawau Cruises for support with transport costs

WORK TRIPS TO THE ISLAND— LAST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH

On-going seed gathering, nursery and tree work, track maintenance, weeding as well as monitoring of sea birds, forest birds, lizards and insects are tasks that depend on input from members and volunteers.

Please join us on the monthly trips

25 AUGUST— Tree planting - BIG TRIP: BIG BOAT: ALL WELCOME

29 SEPT—Nursery work & weed monitoring

Moves to minimise sea bird deaths welcome

INTRODUCTION LINKING TO SEABIRDS ON MOUTORA NEEDED

New Zealand's waters and offshore islands host more breeding grounds for albatross and petrel species than any other country.

Those seabirds have learnt the easiest way to get food is to forage at the back of fishing vessels, where they risk becoming caught on baited hooks or entangled in fishing gear. An estimated 15,000 seabirds that are killed in our waters from fishing each year.

Southern Seabirds Solutions is a charity set up to encourage commercial fishing companies to take action. Fishing firms are being encouraged to do more to protect seabirds by using a form of scarecrow on their boats.

Southern Seabirds Solutions is also urging companies to install what are known as bafflers or at-sea-scare-crows on their vessels which prevent the birds from coming too close. Another measure is to batch-dump offal to mitigate damage to the seabird population.

Motuora Restoration Society appreciates the support of loyal members who donate annual subscription of \$25 to support the project. You may be receiving this newsletter because of past donation but please consider rejoining as a member again. Your contribution will advance the development of this very special place.

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