



# MOTUORA RESTORATION SOCIETY (INC)

PO Box 100132, North Shore  
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[www.motuora.org.nz](http://www.motuora.org.nz)

Newsletter No. 56

July 2014



Toby Shanley, Sian Potier, Ray Lowe and Vonny Sprey

## ISLAND MANAGER CHANGES

In May 2014 Motuora farewelled Sian Potier and Toby Shanley, island co-managers since 2012 and welcomed the new manager Vonny Sprey. Sian and Toby came to Motuora after honing their conservation skills on Raoul Island in the Kermadecs. Their unique combination of skills enabled them to manage Motuora superbly. The Motuora Restoration Society delights in the accomplishments of these young professionals and the prodigious work that they have done on Motuora. We are sorry to see them leave but wish them well as they continue their conservation work and start a family. In appreciation of their work they were presented with a book about Raoul Island. Remarkably the Society has managed to employ a new island manager, Vonny Sprey, who has also honed her environmental skills on Raoul. Originally from a farming background she has much conservation and outdoors experience. Apart from Raoul and Turangawaewae—Kapiti Island—her favourite places are Enderby Island and the diving around the Poor Knights but she suspects that Motuora will be added to that list. The Motuora Restoration Society is pleased to welcome another well qualified and capable person as Island Manager.

## Grey-faced petrel burrow count June 2014

For all but one of the past ten years, nine plots at cliff edge locations on east and west coasts of Motuora have been checked. This involves identifying active and non-active burrows and counting the number within each plot. In mid-June a team of six volunteers headed by Kevin Hawkins spent a weekend undertaking this monitoring.

Numbers seem to be down from the high recorded in 2010. However there have been two years of difficult observing conditions in a row (in 2013 very dry conditions and in 2014 lots of debris from a severe storm the week before obscuring burrows with leaf litter). As a result of this some burrows may have been overlooked.

## Summary Report on Weed Control

The objective for weed control on Motuora this year was to search the entire island. This included grid searches and systematic cliff searches by abseiling drops 10m apart. With the exception of a small area of cliff, this objective was achieved, thanks to the work of Helen Lindsay, Toby Shanley, Sian Potier. They confirmed that most of the effort still needs to go into the original bush remnant and cliff areas and that the planted blocks need little attention. While weed numbers were low in the plantings it was still well worth grid searching these areas, especially in the younger plantings, as again this year a new weed - a mature buddleia - was found. The number of mature climbing asparagus plants found was

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Invertebrates, insects and plastic contraptions!

Invertebrates are animals that do not have a spinal cord. Insects are a group of invertebrates, typified by usually having three body parts (head, thorax and abdomen) and an exoskeleton (skeleton on the outside rather than being internal like our own).



Anyone who visited the island over the summer may have seen some strange plastic contraptions hanging in the long grass around the island. Fear not— Aliens have not landed on Motuora! These were part of my research for a Master's degree at the University of Auckland which involved trapping flying invertebrates, thus they were 'flight intercept traps' designed so that invertebrates with poor eyesight fly into the panels, which stuns them. They drop down into the funnel and then into the pottle beneath which is filled with a preserving fluid. I have taken all the traps off the island and am now identifying in the lab the insects which were caught in traps over the summer. The aim of my project is to investigate whether the planted areas on the island have a similar species diversity and abundance as the areas that have naturally regenerated. Ten years ago Robin Gardner-Gee (my co-supervisor) conducted similar experiments and found differences, while so far my early results indicate that more beetle species are present on the island. I have not yet found out if differences still exist. I will be writing my thesis over the course of this year and hope to share my results with you before the year's end. I would like to thank the Motuora Restoration Society for its ongoing support. Please feel free to ask any questions - [swal229@aucklanduni.ac.nz](mailto:swal229@aucklanduni.ac.nz).  
**Stephen Wallace**

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more than expected. The majority of these plants were found right at the cliff edge.

Control of the large periwinkle and Mexican daisy cliff sites has been progressing very well mainly due to the frequency of visits to these sites. Recommendations going forward are that all Mexican daisy, Madeira vine, veldt grass, climbing dock, and periwinkle sites be checked every 2-3 months. And that the area from Home Bay south on the western side of the island and from Still Bay south on the eastern side of the island be kept clear of any mature boneseed by searching in spring for flowering plants and controlling them before they set seed.

## Wetapunga !

On 26 June Chris Green plus four assistants from Auckland Zoo released around 230 wetapunga onto Motuora. Early this year 150 giant weta were released on the island. As with that transfer this cohort was transported in bamboo refuges ready to be tied onto the tagged release trees.

This is part of the Weta Recovery Group's plan to establish several populations around the Hauraki Gulf to improve the chances of the species surviving in the event of a catastrophe on Little Barrier



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.

*Chairperson* Ray Lowe 09 426 6900

*Secretary* Kit Brown 09 446 0618

*Treasurer* Lakshmanan Nataraj

Les Buckton 09 425 9619

Kevin Hawkins 09 424 7444

Bruce Ross 09 445 1140

Helen Lindsay 03 528 4020

Liz Norquay 09 424 7444

John Stewart 09 833 7059

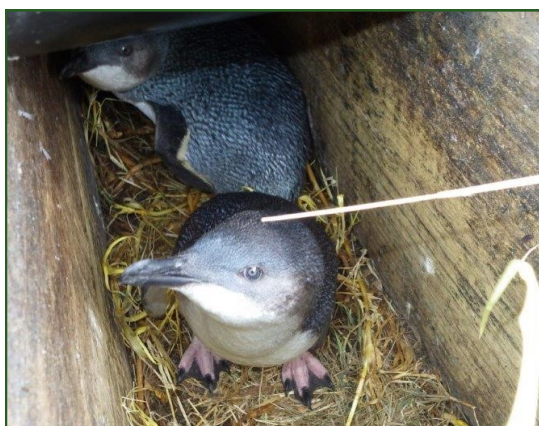
Colin Cordes 09 638 7726

**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.



## FROM THE ISLAND - First Months on Motuora

- ◇ First months on Motuora – started with a drought, went through a storm that broke several limbs off the very large macrocarpa in the campground – good reason not to camp under a tree.
- ◇ Explored the island and found it to be a charming wee island!
- ◇ An Orca came and gave her greetings while I was unloading some of my personal bits and pieces off the DOC boat.
- ◇ Found where Wetapunga live and that their more prolific cousins the tree weta keep very crowded company with up to nine found moving into one abandoned bamboo shelter.
- ◇ Enjoyed watching the gannets get up close and personal with their plastic lookalikes. They blend in so well had to get very close to discover which were real and which were plastic.
- ◇ Disentangled a pukeko from fishing line. (Yes I know they are not everyone's friend) but this poor thing was completely hobbled by the fine fishing line which was cutting into its legs and had been there for a while and was desperately thirsty and hungry. So will be on the lookout for fishing lines and made mental note for fishing visitors to take care with their lines.
- ◇ Got landed on by a grey faced petrel while on an evening wander.
- ◇ Assisted the grey faced petrel burrow count when Robin, Kevin, Sheryl, Shaun and Liz came to count the cliff edge plots which have been kept under scrutiny for the past 10 years.
- ◇ A sort of rescue (of someone who didn't actually need rescuing). Well, what does one do when a yacht and dingy with no sign of life just drifts past the island? Call Coastguard, who said keep an eye on it. But with still no sign of life after 30-40 minutes, I launched the boat with visions of administering CPR or boarding an abandoned boat. But no, just one gentleman sitting down low having a quiet breakfast and drift fishing!
- ◇ Four DOC volunteers, Ngaire, Fran, Noelene and Bev came for a four-day stint to help with all sorts of jobs around the island from releasing wetapunga, planting carex around the twin dams, totara in other likely spots and cleaning up the diving petrel burrows. They all knew the ropes having been on the island several times before and were a brilliant help preparing for the workday.



◇ On 29<sup>th</sup> June when 16 volunteers arrived on a beautiful calm day for the first planting of the season. With a total of 20 willing pairs of hands on the island three areas got planted. A host of rengarenga now adorns the Kiwi Track. Coastal cliff area on headland has cliff hugging plants and infill sites towards the northern end of the island are now also sporting new vegetation..

◇ Met the neighbours - penguins!

**Vonny Sprey, Island Manager**

## THANK YOU

**Bridgestone Ltd.** for sponsorship.

**Chisholm Whitney Family Charitable Trust** for support with cost of 2015 Pycroft's Petrels translocation.

**Agropro NZ Ltd** for herbicides.

**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

*Motuora Restoration Society appreciates the support of loyal members who donate an annual subscription of \$25 to support the project. Your contribution will advance the restoration of this very special place.*

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

*Please join us on the monthly work trips. Visit our website and record your interest to be sent the monthly reminder.*

### Trip days (Sunday – depart 8 am– return 4pm)

27/7/14 Planting—Ferry trip

31/8/14 Planting

28/9/14 Nursery & track clearing

26/10/14 – (Labour weekend ) Nursery & track clearing

30/11/14 Nursery & track clearing

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM was held on May 25th at Silverdale. Originally scheduled to take place on Motuora the meeting was transferred to Silverdale due the weather forecast predicting strong winds that would have made landing and leaving the island difficult. Twenty-two members attended. Kit Brown, Secretary, presented the Chairman's Annual Report as Ray Lowe was unwell at the time.

The following members were elected to the Motuora Restoration Society: Chairperson: Ray Lowe; Secretary: Kit Brown Treasurer: Lakshmanan Nataraj; Committee Members: Les Buckton, Colin Cordes, Kevin Hawkins, Helen Lindsay, Liz Norquay, Bruce Ross and John Stewart.

At the AGM John Stewart formally thanked Jill Thomas for her 11 years as the Society's Treasurer. Her vital contribution ensured that the Society's accounts were diligently and efficiently managed. After a vote of thanks, passed with acclamation Jill was presented with a small gift.



**Guest speaker Stephen Wallace** a Master's student at Auckland University, presented the initial findings of his study on Motuora of the insect population in the newly

planted forest compared to established remnant bush on the island.



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Address Block