



MOTUORA RESTORATION SOCIETY (INC)

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Pic: taken in 2000 by Ray Lowe



Pic: October 2012 by Toby Shanley

THIS IS MOTUORA TODAY

PYCROFT'S PETRELS—PLANS MOVE AHEAD

Permit for the Pycroft's Petrel translocation has been received. Planning is well in hand for two trips to Red Mercury: a 'recce' trip mid-February 2013 and a collection trip around the early March 2013.

During the collection visit in March, chicks identified as suitable during the February visit will be weighed, measured and banded. The aim is to take chicks that are between 10 and 20 days from fledging. This age group is preferred for the following reasons i) chicks this age will have emerged for only a few nights (if at all) before being transferred to Motuora, ii) chicks this age have minimal time on the artificial diet, and iii) taking chicks late in the breeding season has less impact on the parent bond at source burrow. 100 artificial burrows anticipated for this project have already been installed in a suitable area on Motuora positioned to exit beneath a natural tree root; as the birds would do for themselves. This site will be used over consecutive years as once Pycrofts fledge they do not return for 3 or more years.

Wetapunga Update

Wetapunga, or Giant Little Barrier Island Weta, was released on Motuora in September 2010 as half grown weta. These would have matured into adults around the end of 2011 and early 2012. On reaching adult these wetapunga would have come down to the forest floor occasionally throughout their life



to find a mate and subsequently lay their eggs in the ground. To detect these adults a grid of 100 tracking tunnels, as used for rodent surveillance, was set up throughout the release site and beyond. With the help of John Stewart and Kay Milton these tunnels were loaded with inked tracking cards during August 2012 and after a week wetapunga footprints were found on five cards. This was fantastic confirmation that they were still active on the ground at that time of the year. (see pic. Chris Green holding tracking card) During October Sian and Toby reloaded the tunnels with new tracking cards to repeat the monitoring. However, one or more pukeko discovered the grid and proceeded to remove the cards and generally invalidate around 80% of the cards. Unfortunately this made it difficult to show if adult wetapunga were still present. It is estimated that by now this first generation of wetapunga will be near its end and the next generation will currently be eggs in the ground, due to hatch in 2013.

The next phase of the establishment programme involves another transfer of approximately 35 half-grown wetapunga in early December from Butterfly Creek having been reared by Paul Barrett. A special set of new bamboo refuges has been placed throughout the same release site as the earlier release ready for the new arrivals. Because tree weta are also fond of these half sized refuges they have been sealed with folded cabbage tree leaf plugs so the tree weta cannot get in. These plugs will be removed on the day of the release so the wetapunga can enter and remain within the refuge as long as they need to before finding their own natural forest refuge. Another release from yet another different set of adults is due in approximately 12 – 18 months time. This will continue the process of building a robust population of the largest species of endemic giant weta and is a critical part of the recovery programme for the species.



Chris Green

STOP PRESS!! ON 2ND DECEMBER 35 WETA WERE SAFELY TRANSFERRED TO MOTUORA AND INTO THEIR NEW HOMES

THE END OF AN ERA

This month has seen the end of the sponsorship from United Campervans and also Bridgestone. United Campervans has merged with Tourism Holdings Ltd, which has decided against continuing the sponsorship, and as Bridgestone came to us through their relationship with United Campervans their sponsorship has been discontinued too.

United Campervans' sponsorship arose from the wish of the company's owner, Kay Howe, to offset the carbon emissions from her company's vehicle fleet by planting trees. In 2006 in the course of a conversation with one of our members Kay became aware of the Society's existence and its tree planting programme. She invited the Society to meet her, asked how many trees we planted each year and how much each tree cost, and offered to fund the Society to the extent of the cost of the maximum number of trees able to be raised in the Motuora nursery. Her only request in return was that her company be allowed to mention its relationship with the Motuora restoration project in its publicity material. We welcomed the generosity of this offer, which for the last seven years has enabled the Society to run the restoration project, and in particular to employ its own island mangers, without anxiety as to funding. Over the years, Kay

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HELLO FROM THE ISLAND.

Sian and Toby
Island Managers

Spring arrived bringing with it the usual blustery westerly's as well as some beautiful calm warmer days. The campground has had the odd visitor but it has still been relatively quiet out here.

We had a great turnout at the end of August for the one and only planting day for the year, with the Kawau Cat bringing around 65 people out to the island, many of them from the Bridgestone company. With a great effort from everyone we managed to get all the remaining plants in the ground and a great day was had by all.

In September Helen Lindsay came out to the island to continue her war against weeds. Over three weeks we managed to grid search a large proportion of the island and remove any weeds lurking within the plantings and bush remnants. We also managed to check some of the cliffs by abseiling with help from Richard Sharp. However, there are some areas on the island we cannot abseil to and these include two rock stacks on the eastern side of the island. To help with the control of weeds in these hard to reach places we enlisted the help of Skyworks helicopters. On a calm day in early October Skyworks came out and sprayed boxthorn, boneseed and a few pine trees that we were unable to reach by abseiling the cliffs. An added bonus of having the helicopter out here was that we were able to get a bird's eye



view of the island and take some aerial photos. *See the front page to compare against earlier shots taken from the air in 2000.*

The change in season is evident in the bird life around the island. There are three pairs of dotterels at Home Bay one of which has laid eggs. We have also seen five paradise ducklings up at the top dam. In the last month we have released seven young kiwi, and are expecting more soon with eggs ready to hatch at Auckland Zoo. There has been quite a lot of activity at the gannet site with up to a dozen birds seen amongst the decoys. A few of the gannets seem to have made nests but we are yet to see any eggs.



We have recently commenced posting regular blogs on the Motuora Restoration Society website, so for regular updates as to what is happening on the island check out www.motuora.org.nz

Duvaucel's

gecko transfer will get underway during summer 2012/2013 with an associated 5-year monitoring project. Manuela Barry, from the Ecology Department at Massey University Albany is leading the project which will supplement the two small populations on Tiritiri Matangi and Motuora Islands, re-introduced in 2006. The proposal is to transfer 90 geckos to Tiritiri Matangi Island and 90 geckos to Motuora Island in December 2012/January 2013. Each island will receive a mixture of captive reared geckos (from a breeding programme at Massey), and wild geckos sourced from Korapuki and Kawhitu /Stanley Island.





Pics:- Eleanor Barwell, HR Advisor, Bridgestone. August 2012

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has been able to increase the input by persuading her tyre supplier, Bridgestone, to sponsor the project by donating to the Society a percentage of its income from its sales of tyres to United Campervans.

Both companies encouraged their staff to become involved with Motuora through attending work-days as volunteers, and during the seven years of our relationship we have often been able to welcome a number of them, despite the best efforts of the weather to put them off.

To Kay, and to the local management of Bridgestone, we extend our heartfelt thanks for the absolutely wonderful assistance they have given to the restoration of Motuora. We hope they get satisfaction from the knowledge that they have made a real and concrete contribution to the survival of New Zealand's natural biodiversity.

Thank you

ASB Community Trust for funding support for costs associated with next year's weed control and costs associated with planned transfer by helicopter of Pycroft's petrel chicks from Red Mercury to Motuora.

United Campervans for sponsorship.

Bridgestone for sponsorship.

Yates NZ for ongoing support with propagation supplies.

The Mad Butcher for continued support with sausages for our BBQ lunches.

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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