



# MOTUORA RESTORATION SOCIETY (INC)

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

Newsletter No. 57

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## BUMBLE BEES

By Chris Green

Bumble bees usually nest in cavities in the ground and one enterprising queen has decided a Pycroft's petrel nesting box with its entrance tunnel would be an ideal site.



The species is the Large Earth Bumble Bee (*Bombus terrestris*) which is common throughout the North Island and can be seen frequently on Motuora. This is a large nest which has clearly survived the winter and may be up to a year old. In Europe where the species originates nests are usually abandoned in

early winter with new queens overwintering alone waiting for spring to start their new nests. In New Zealand however they can continue to survive intact through the winter and resume breeding in the spring, as in the case here. Nests of the Large Earth Bumble Bee can have as many as 800 individuals but 200-300 is more common. The nest in the photo has been estimated to have had at least 300 last season and already looks like it may have over a 100 this season. Normally nests are initiated in September and by now would still be small with only 30 - 50 workers assisting the queen. Bumble bee nests are often found in old rodent nests, especially mice but any dry, free draining cavity that has some fibrous material present is suitable.

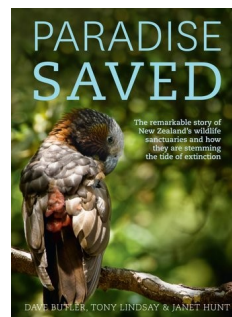
In general bumble bees are quite docile and not as aggressive as honey bees or wasps and are unlikely to sting unless provoked. Bumble bees do produce honey which they store in the circular pots that can be seen on the side of the nest with well rounded openings. They don't make honey combs like honey bees. The nest itself is made of macerated wood fibres moulded as a semi-liquid into a sort of paper/cardboard type substance which dries after being formed into the nest structure. The bee in

(Continued on page 2)

## Paradise Saved

Random House New Zealand recently published "Paradise Saved - the remarkable story of New Zealand's wildlife sanctuaries and how they are stemming the tide of extinction". The co-author Tony Lindsay, husband of our own Helen Lindsay, says he was inspired to write this celebration of the New Zealand conservation sector in the first instance by the sheer professionalism of the Motuora Restoration Society and the restoration program the Society managed. He went on to say that Motuora broke new ground in key areas of restoration planning and implementation and particularly singles out Les Buckton and Ray Lowe for their influence on the project's success. The restoration of Motuora features prominently as a case study in the book that canvasses nearly 200 illustrated projects from the hundreds up and down the country that the

authors are aware of. This beautiful celebrates the milestones that have been achieved by the grass-roots driven, but science led, fight back against species loss and habitat destruction.



The book was written to inspire volunteers and others to continue this progress and also to benefit the projects financially. You can support Motuora directly by purchasing a copy of "Paradise Saved" through the web site Tony has developed for this pur-

pose at [www.paradiseposaved.org.nz](http://www.paradiseposaved.org.nz) and selecting Motuora from the projects listed.

Any proceeds above costs will be donated to Motuora and all of any donation you make will go to Motuora.



(Continued from page 1)

this picture is likely to have emerged this spring as she has quite vivid markings and has very full yellow pollen "baskets" on her back legs as she returns to the nest.

Four species have been introduced into New Zealand to assist with crop and forage species pollination. The Large Earth Bumble Bee is the largest of these but has the shortest tongue which makes it less efficient at pollinating some longer flowers, such as red clover, compared to the other species. Only this species has been found on Motuora.

## FROM THE ISLAND MANAGER Vonny Sprey

The weather in Auckland during winter and spring has lived up to its reputation of being wet and miserable and windy. Thankfully the island's solar system meant that Motuora did not have power cuts that afflicted some of the suburbs.



### PLANTING

During the June to September planting season 2,500 trees were put in the ground. The regular workday plantings consisted of infill planting where open patches occur in the otherwise now dense bush. Also volunteers on the 5-day DOC volunteer trips planted a large number of canopy trees, bush bashing to find suitable light wells. This included over 200 nikaus at both Pohutakawa Bay and Macrocarpa Bay areas.

Unfortunately the pukekos caused havoc with their "let's pull out the wee plants game". However, approximately 200 pulled out plans were replanted then protected by laying cut manuka branches over them. This, to date, has resulted in reducing a 40-60% pull-out rate to 0% in the trial area. Thanks to Josh for the suggestion)

### WEEDS

Helen Lindsay and Richard Sharp were on the island at the start of October to work on the weeds on the cliffs edges. With assistance from yours



Inserting canopy plants in planted bush



Helen Lindsay weeding cliff edges

## THANK YOU

**Bridgestone Ltd.** for sponsorship.  
**Terranova Planning**, for sponsorship  
**Simon Chamberlin** for donation towards tractor repair  
**Shaun Trevan** for arboist work on damaged trees  
**Becroft Foundation** for donation towards tractor repair  
**Heseltine Trust** for donation  
**Agpro NZ Ltd** for herbicides  
**Yates NZ** for ongoing support with propagation supplies

**Congratulations to Sian & Toby upon the birth of their baby girl in August.**

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> 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.



truly a good onslaught was launched on the boneseeds, holly fern, periwinkle, climbing asparagus and a scattering of a few pampas, lantana – not of course forgetting the onion weed – all happily hanging on to the cliffs edges.

### CAMP GROUND

1<sup>st</sup> July at 12.00 a.m. saw the opening of bookings for the summer holidays. Already campground numbers are steady from mid-December to mid-January, with full house from 27<sup>th</sup> December to 4<sup>th</sup> January. The bach is booked every weekend from now through to after Easter, with weekdays also being snatched up January and February. So Motuora is on-the-map as a great place to visit.

One booking enquiry acted as caution for those who book from another country. Several emails were received from a lovely lady in UK enquiring about bach booking. Information was duly sent about the island and bookings were made. Then she copied me into her email booking the water taxis where she indicated that she could be available for pick up in Picton any time from 9.30am. A hasty email explaining where Motuora Island was in relation to Marlborough sounds was sent. A retraction of the booking was made from a geographically wiser overseas visitor looking for an island with a similar sounding name at top of the South Island!

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Sadly the island's tractor decided to mix its oil with water via a cracked block and had to be shipped off the island in early October for repairs. My apology for those visiting for the current long grass on the top tracks at present. But the visit of the barge enabled a heap of defunct equipment and scrap to be removed off the island rather than leave the kikuyu to do the 'comb over' conceal.

### AVIAN

The birds are breeding – the blue penguins in Toby's nesting box have a couple of argumentative offspring. Another couple decided to go for more open plan living by setting up house under an old mower body but seemed puzzled then happy with a nest box replacement.



The gannet colony blossomed from 4 to 24-26 birds in early October, with shameless amorous displays common-place (hopefully boding well for a population explosion).

There are at least four breeding pairs of dotterels at Home Bay with two pairs now with chicks at foot. The parents mercilessly dive bomb any pukekos who

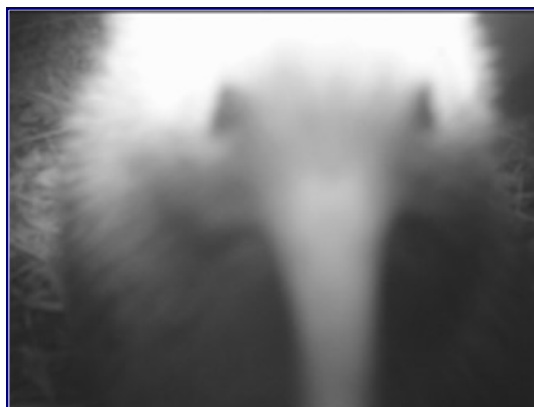


Tractor and scrap leave the island

even glance sideways at them. Another pair has a lovely nest with a view overlooking Still Bay. Meanwhile the paradise ducks resident on the top dam are proudly escorting their eight offspring around the dam.

A check of fluttering shearwater artificial burrows found one bird apparently nesting and feathers in another burrow. The motion camera has been set up in front of the nesting burrow so this will hopefully give concrete evidence of habitation.

Two groups of baby kiwi arrived from Auckland Zoo and the motion camera caught them emerging from their burrows and moving immediately to searching for food. One obviously modern kiwi came right up to the camera a doing a "selfie".



## WORK TRIPS TO THE ISLAND

*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.*

*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 - nursery**

- planting
- plant monitoring
- weed monitoring
- tracks
- infrastructure
- bird translocations
- chick feeding
- bird monitoring
- lizard monitoring
- administration

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

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



Canopy plants are now the main focus in the island nursery. Planting each canopy species plant will take a lot longer than we have been used to. However with 2-3000 pioneer species plants expected to be ready to go in the ground next winter as well the regular planting trips will continue.



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Address Block