

ISLAND VISITS

HAUTURU SUPPLEMENT
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TRUSTEES VISIT TO MAUNGATAUTARI

The venue for the Little Barrier Island Supporters Trust monthly meeting was a site with a difference in April: the trustees gathered at the Out in the Styx cafe, in beautiful rolling farmland inland from Te Awamutu, before embarking on a guided visit to the Maungatautari wildlife sanctuary.

This mainland island has about the same footprint as Hauturu, and covers 3400 hectares of magnificent tawa-predominant bush, surrounded by 47 km of high-tech, electronically monitored predator-proof fencing. Since the fence — the longest of its sort in the country — was completed in 2006 the Trust that operates Maungatautari has been able to complete the elimination of all mammalian predators save for a few mice (whose days are numbered!) and has reintroduced to the slopes of this extinct volcano kiwi, takahe, hihi, kaka, whiteheads and even the native fish, kokopu. More reintroductions are planned. Predator elimination has also boosted the population of native reptile and invertebrate species and the flora is rapidly recovering.

Visitors are able to easily access what is known as the southern enclosure via a series of well-built tracks. Twenty four species of native bird are present within the sanctuary, and the bush is loud with birdsong. An extraordinary viewing tower offers a view from the treetops.

The trustees had an expert guide in Maungatautari Trust director Chris Smuts-Kennedy, who will be known to many as a former Hauturu ranger. It was especially pleasing to see several of the 20 hihi introduced from Hauturu darting about as they visited the feeding stations. They, and the 60 whiteheads translocated from Hauturu in 2009, are breeding well already.

It was very heartening to see Hauturu's progeny in such a remarkable new environment, where they are reoccupying a niche that had long been vacant.

Information about Maungatautari is available on line at www.maungatrust.org.nz





BOTANISING ON HAUTURU

When Lyn Wade asked me to help identify some pressed plant specimens that had been found in the ranger's office, I confided a long held dream of mine, of making a herbarium to be kept on the island for the benefit of workers and visitors. This brought to the fore Lyn's efficiency and organisational skills, and before too long she had arranged permits and transport for two visits, one in spring 2009 and one in autumn 2010, to collect plants. The permit allowed us to range further afield than most visitors and this was of great benefit to us, both for collecting, and for verifying the presence of some plants that may have been recorded in error in the past.

In mid October Lyn and I were accompanied by Auckland Botanical Society member, Alison Wesley. Our attempt to reach the summit was stymied by our inability to hurry past all the wonderful plants along the way — such as one of the two island endemic hebes, *Hebe macrocarpa* var. *latispala*, the purple flowers of which were at their best.

Once above the junction of the Lower Thumb and Waipawa Tracks the vegetation quickly changes, and at the first sighting of *Archeria racemosa* we knew that we were approaching the cloud forest of the higher reaches. *Archeria racemosa* is an interesting tree in the Erica family, with leaves that look like very fat mingimingi leaves, and in late spring and summer, clusters of pretty pink bell-like flowers. It is only found on the Barrier

Islands, Coromandel Peninsula and from Bay of Plenty to East Cape. While not growing to be tall, some of the trees in the higher altitudes must be hundreds of years old, so massive are the trunks and branches, these freely festooned with mosses, lichens and filmy ferns.

Also growing in the same vicinity are tawari (*Ixerba brexioides*), and tawhero (*Quintinia serrata*). Northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*) largely gives way to southern rata (*M. umbellata*); neinei or spiderwood (*Dracophyllum latifolium*) to the impressive *D. traversii*; *Griselinia lucida* to *G. littoralis*; the five fingers, *Pseudopanax arboreus* and *P. discolor* to *P. colensoi*. *Raukaua edgerleyi*, a tree closely related to the 'five finger', with its variably shaped and fragrant leaves, and the primitive horopito (*Pseudowintera axillaris*) are also common. I was thrilled when Lyn pointed out a mistletoe growing on tawhero — this is the red-flowered (alas, not in flower at the time) *Peraxilla tetrapetala*, which I had never previously seen growing north of Tongariro.

Approaching the summit of the Thumb (Mt Herekohu) the track leads along a narrow ridge, and it could be seen why people are largely excluded from here, as the fragile layer of peaty soil could so easily be destroyed. The vegetation becomes more open, with the rocks covered with white-flowered rata (*Metrosideros albiflora*) and mountain flax (*Phormium cookianum*). At this point we looked longingly up at the summit of Mt Hauturu, and decided that we had run too short of time

to tackle it on this day. We couldn't resist clambering down the chain ladder that descends from the Thumb, and then we wearily retraced our steps.

For the rest of this visit we explored the lower tracks, where the kauri/hard beech forest has its own association of plants, with orchids, fan fern (*Schizaea dichotoma*), comb fern (*S. fistulosa*), strap fern (*Grammitis rawlingsii*), korokia (*Corokia buddleioides*) etc. On the Waipawa Track the small yellow-flowered clematis (*C. cunninghamii*) and native jasmine (*Parsonsia capsularis*) are two creepers that were flowering well. We also botanised the near coastline and Tirikakawa Stream.

For the March trip Lyn and I were accompanied by other Bot Soc friends, Anne Fraser and Mike Wilcox. Lyn, Anne and I, by exercising great discipline of mind on the climb up, managed to maintain a steady pace on a second attempt of the Summit Track, and were rewarded by reaching the summit of Mt Hauturu by the early afternoon. On a fairly clear day the views were fantastic – sweeping around over Great Barrier, the Mokohinau Islands, the Hen and Chickens and Bream Head, Tamahunga, Kawau, and Mt Moehau. To see the vegetation patterns of the island laid out below us, with the steep ridges and gullies radiating from the several high peaks to the coastline, was an unforgettable experience. It was pleasing to see that mistletoe was not restricted to the one or two plants we had previously noted, but was commonly growing on tawhero. Four small trees of hutu (*Ascarina lucida*) have long been known to grow on the Summit Ridge, but we also found half-a-dozen seedlings of a size that suggests that they would have germinated since the kiore eradication.

The next day Mike arrived on the *Hauturu*, with a view to taking advantage of the low afternoon tides to continue his seaweed studies of Auckland and the Hauraki Gulf. Our boulder-hopping walk eastwards around the coast to the Awaroa Stream allowed us to note the coastal vegetation and to explore the stream mouths as we passed them, and at low tide Mike attempted to snorkel for algae, though the swell made this rather difficult. Tragedy struck on the return trip, as a weary Anne stumbled and broke a bone in her ankle, and had to hobble painfully over the intervening distance to the bunkhouse.

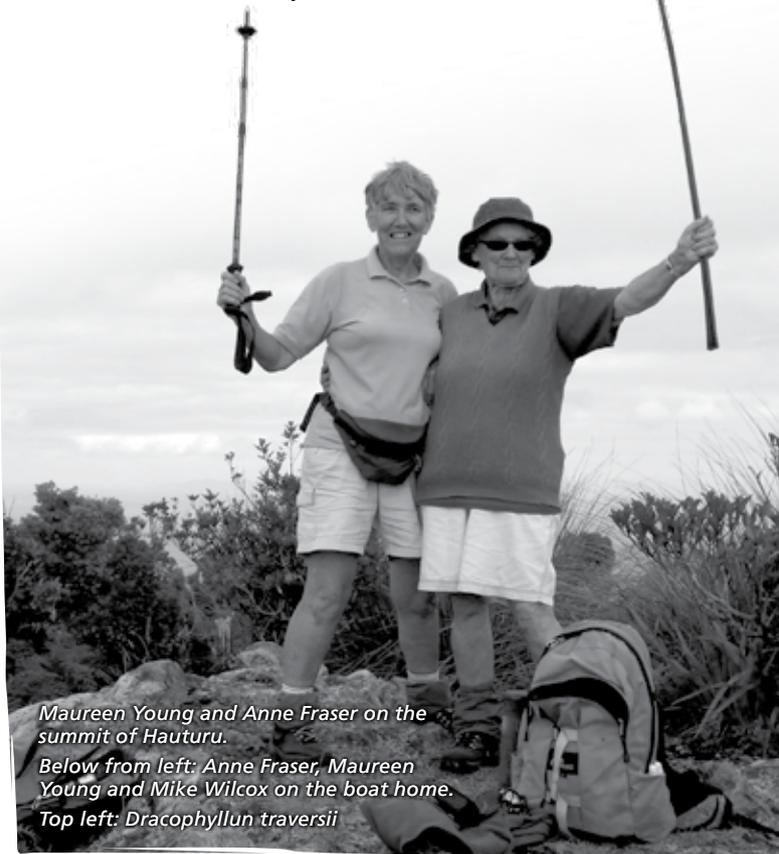
Leaving Anne to rest, the next day Lyn, Mike and I followed the kiwi-survey trail that leads up to the Parihakoakoa planeze, to check the gumland scrub. We were pleased to verify that the narrow-leaved maire (*Nestegis montana*) grows there (we also found a tree near each of the Lower Hamilton and Lower Thumb Tracks), as it was one of the species that had been recorded in the past as only doubtfully present. Taking our courage in our hands we then descended the Parihakoakoa Gorge, and Mike had good conditions to snorkel near Crayfish Rock.

I meanwhile botanised around the coast to Haowhenua Stream, and up the stream for some way. I was pleased with my finds, including coastal mahoe (*Melicactus novae-zelandiae*), NZ linen flax (*Linum monogynum*), sea spurrey (*Spergularia tasmanica*), and harebell (*Wahlenbergia littoricola subsp. vernicosa*). Lyn's sharp eyes spotted a couple of saplings of tawapou (*Planchonella costata*), the only plants, apart from the large tree in the ranger's garden, that we found of it.

As a result of these visits it is our plan to update the Annotated Checklist of Little Barrier Vascular Plants that was compiled by Ross Beaver and Alan Esler in 1988, with the addition on non-vascular plants, and to publish it as a bulletin to celebrate

Auckland Botanical Society's upcoming 75th jubilee. One of the difficulties with such a list is that while it is great to be able to verify that plants are actually present (such as *Nestegis montana*), it is practically impossible to disprove the presence of plants that have been recorded in the past without a herbarium specimen to back up the record. The various species of maire are a case in point, as many people find them difficult to identify. Mida (*M. salicifolia*) has obviously been misidentified as black maire in the past, so is black maire actually present? The heavy fruiting of mida on the autumn visit begs the question of why such abundant fruiting doesn't occur on the mainland? Is there a pollinator present on Hauturu that is lost from the mainland? Where species have been divided up, or have been given new names, a specimen is invaluable for correct identification. Sea spurrey, harebell and shield fern are three of these where we have been able to verify the correct name. The number of specimens collected for the 'Hauturu Herbarium' now numbers nearly 300, from 278 species and with photos in lieu of specimens for another eight.

Maureen Young
Auckland Botanical Society



Maureen Young and Anne Fraser on the summit of Hauturu.
Below from left: Anne Fraser, Maureen Young and Mike Wilcox on the boat home.
Top left: *Dracophyllum traversii*



SEABIRD SEMINAR

LBIST Trustees Judy Hanbury and Lyn Wade attended an excellent one-day seminar on Auckland's seabirds, hosted by the Centre for Biodiversity and Biosecurity (CBB) at the University of Auckland, Tamaki Campus, in April. Eleven presentations covered the present state of Auckland's seabirds, specific research projects, and a number of thought-provoking theses, including the role of 'Citizen Science' in seabird conservation. The day ended with a lively panel discussion, addressing the question of the need for a seabird restoration strategy in Auckland.

There is a list of the talks with links to abstracts and pdf's at <http://www.cbb.org.nz/seminars.asp>

Of particular interest to Hauturu Supporters was Matt Rayner's presentation on Cook's petrel (*Pterodroma cookii*) breeding on Hauturu. This has been reported in part in *Hauturu* Issue 22, especially Matt's successful use for the first time of BAS geo-location loggers on a seabird as small and as far-ranging as the Cook's petrel.

Here Matt expanded on their apparent rapid population increase since the removal of kiore from Hauturu; the recent translocation of chicks from Hauturu to Cape Kidnappers (a first for Cook's petrel); the possibility, with modern technology, of tracking fledgling chicks from this new population; and the potential for the once ubiquitous Cook's petrel to be an ideal target for restoration initiatives, including inland sites. Matt also addressed the differences he has recorded between the Hauturu and Codfish Island populations including recent genetic research indicating that they are reproductively isolated and genetically distinct.

There were some recurring themes:

- The role of ever-advancing technology in monitoring seabirds, for example the lightweight and very reliable BAS (British Atlantic Survey) geolocation loggers, and acoustic monitoring devices (both used to record data for later collection and analysis).
- The increase in seabird translocations. Techniques now encompass, for example, 'sardine smoothies' for petrel chicks, and acoustic anchoring as a means to attract and/or 'hold' birds in new locations.
- Increasing habitat restoration, in which the seabirds themselves can play an important role in enhancing soil structures.

ARC chair Mike Lee concluded: "...in regard to New Zealand's terrestrial birds, I guess conservation managers will always need to intervene to help our land birds. In regard to seabirds, given their vital role in ecological processes and therefore as an essential element in island and indeed mainland restorations – it's a bit the other way round – we need seabirds to help us."



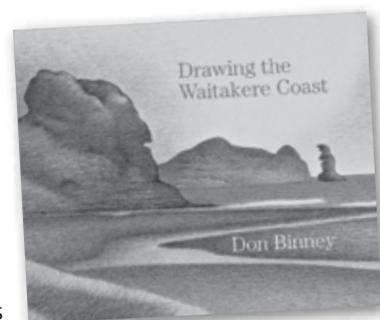
Matt Rayner with a grey-faced petrel chick on Hauturu.

TRUST PATRON'S LATEST EXHIBITION AND NEW BOOK

Several LBIST members were in attendance in mid-April when Trust patron Don Binney launched his new book, and the first showing of a suite of 24 coloured pencil drawings, at Lopdell Gallery in Titirangi, Auckland.

The delightful drawings are of Don's much-loved Waitakere coastline, from Little Huia on the Manukau north to Te Henga-Bethells. This was the wilderness that Don began to visit as a young man, under the guidance of two of his masters from King's College, who were enthusiastic and expert botanists. The experience of the Ranges fuelled both Don's growing interest in native flora and fauna and his ardent conservation activities, from which Hauturu has benefitted.

The book, published to coincide with the exhibition, is called *Drawing The Waitakere Coast*, and contains all 24 drawings and engaging text by Don, which describes a journey along the coast. It is available for online purchase via www.mightyape.co.nz. The exhibition continues at Lopdell Gallery until June 7.



About the Little Barrier Supporters Trust

The Trust was established in 1997 to help support conservation and research activities on Hauturu Little Barrier Island. Membership of the Trust is by subscription and donations are also welcome. All donations and subscriptions are directed towards activities of benefit to Hauturu.

Your subscription ensures that you receive *Hauturu*, the Trust newsletter, twice a year, bringing you up-to-date news about the island. Copies of past issues are available on request.

If you wish to become a supporter, make a donation or offer help in some other way, please contact the Trust secretary Sandra Jones, info@littlebarrierisland.org.nz

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