HAUTURU

LITTLE BARRIER ISLAND SUPPORTERS TRUST

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NEWSLETTER
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FROM THE CHAIR

A very significant step in the Trust's development since the last newsletter has been the establishment of a scientific panel created as a resource to advise the trustees on matters scientific or technical in nature that come before us (please see page 7 for their biographies). Often these will relate to proposals for translocations either on or off the island. We are indebted to fellow trustee Matt Rayner for his work in putting together this very highly skilled panel.

Translocations both on and off the island continue to require attention, with recent departees including saddlebacks, whiteheads, wetapunga and riflemen. The highlight event for the last months was the return to the island of kakapo, a number of which were removed from the island in the late 1990s. It is delightful to mark their return.

Ongoing matters requiring attention are submissions on the Conservation Management Strategy, where a focus for the Trust is the management of concessions granted to take visitors onto the island.

We will continue organising the working weekends which are a great opportunity for members to visit the island, and there is an insatiable need for funds to assist with weed control over the whole of the island to restore and maintain the environment. All contributions are welcomed.

John Hagen – Chairman

IN THIS ISSUE

THE KAKAPO HAVE LANDED

The translocation of eight kakapo from Codfish and Anchor islands to Hauturu in April was a significant milestone both for the kakapo recovery programme and for the island. Liz Maire of the Department of Conservation was there on the day. "It's several weeks now, she writes, since the magic day we all had together on Hauturu-o-Toi, but in my mind the event is still fresh enough to make me smile. What a wonderful and special occasion it was, such a privilege to see those beautiful taonga up close."

Four of the birds that came to Hauturu from Codfish Island had previously lived on the island: Ox, a male aged 30-plus years, lived on Hauturu for 17 years until 1999; Merty, another male aged 30-plus years, lived on Hauturu for 16 years until 1998; Flossie, a female aged 36-plus years, lived on Hauturu for 14 years until 1996, and her 31-year-old daughter, Heather, lived on Hauturu until 1998. New to the island were Tiwai, a 15-year-old male from Anchor island, Doc, a 10-year-old male from Anchor Island, and Hananui and Rakiura, both 10-year-old females from Codfish. Rakiura arrived a few days after the others as she had to stay behind in Auckland to be treated for a condition rather inelegantly described as 'crusty bum'.

After a moving powhiri in the rangers garden, the birds were taken to different island tracks to be released from their travelling cages. In some groups, each bird was followed by the haunting sound of a waiata as it disappeared into the undergrowth.

Within days, the birds' locators were signalling how far they'd travelled. Heather was near Herekohu (the Thumb), Tiwai at Hauturu (summit), Doc was at the head of Haowhenua stream, Hananui was below the Waipawa Pa site, Merty was at the lower ▶

Hilary McGregor, a representative of the manawhenua of Hauturu, releases one of the kakapo.

DEIDRE VERCOE/DOC

▶ Herekohu (Thumb) and Ox and Flossie were up Waikohare stream (the Valley).

We are grateful to Liz and Deidre Vercoe (DOC) for the following FAQ on the transfer.

WHY ARE KAKAPO BEING TRANSFERRED TO HAUTURU?

Hauturu and Codfish Island are the only two large islands in New Zealand suitable for kakapo breeding which are beyond the natural dispersal ability of predators such as stoats, cats and rats. Therefore these two islands offer kakapo long-term security. This release of eight birds is a trial to determine whether they can breed on their own without supplementary feeding, now that rats are no longer present on Hauturu, for example there will be no more chick predation and a better food source available for chicks.

HOW MANY KAKAPO LIVED PREVIOUSLY ON HAUTURU?

Up to 23 kakapo lived on the island from 1982 to 1999, moved mostly from Stewart Island to protect them from cat predation.

WHY WERE KAKAPO REMOVED FROM HAUTURU?

Due to the large size and rugged terrain of Hauturu, the intensive management (including supplementary feeding and protecting chicks from rats) required at the time for their recovery, was very difficult to achieve. The birds also needed to be removed prior to the rat eradication in 2004.

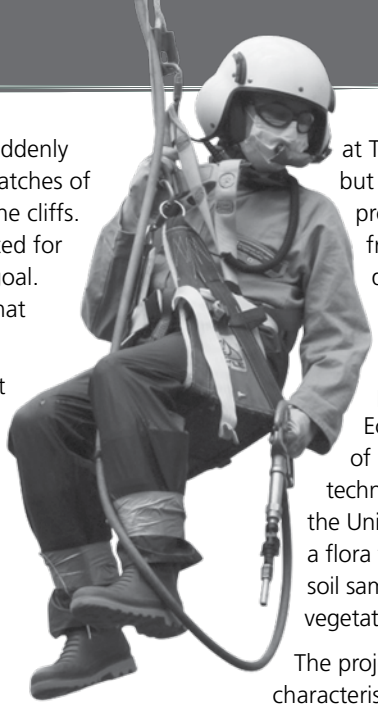
Liz Maire
Community Relations Programme Manager
Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai

RANGERS' REPORT

SOLAR SYSTEM UPGRADE Trainee Ranger, Ben Sewell, stayed on after the weed season to tackle the upgrade of the island's solar system. The original five 175W panels were augmented by the addition of four 220W panels, more than doubling the system's production capacity. After several weeks of hand digging panel foundations and cable trenches through the bouldery soil of Hauturu's coast, Ben finally completed his mission in late January when he oversaw Reid Technology's installation and connection of the panels. The increased capacity means we can include a few more electrical devices in the bunkhouse, including an electric kettle and a microwave, reducing our reliance on gas and improving the running costs and sustainability of the bunkhouse.

PAMPAS HELI SPRAYING Weather had a significant effect on this season's aerial pampas spraying programme. Full of optimism, the fuel and strop flying equipment was established on Hauturu in late September 2011. It would be another three months before we would get into the air for our first assault. Because the spraying is done from a 70m strop below the helicopter, weather conditions must be perfect, with no wind, which is rare in the Outer Hauraki!

However, our opportunity came not long after Christmas with Skyworks arriving early one still, January morning. After a few nervous first flights coming to grips with the differences between non-flowering pampas and toe toe, we were away, completing most of the coastal areas in that first three-day session. Buoyed by this progress, we were brought back to earth after flying over



Pohutukawa Flat or Hingaia on the east coast. Suddenly the task ahead felt large and onerous, with big patches of pampas dominating along the coast and below the cliffs. This area was Ground Zero and hadn't been treated for several years, with edge containment being the goal. As the weather started to close in we accepted that this Goliath would be tackled next time.

Several more months of unsuitable weather meant next time was another three months away. Skyworks returned with a new idea. Having successfully used boom spot-spraying for pampas on Cuvier Island it was decided to try this on P. Flat. With this method we covered an area almost four times larger in one trip than we would have on the strop, with a more consistent and controlled spray application. The method has its limitations, and strop spraying will always be necessary on Hauturu's cliffs, however, hopefully we won't face P. Flat with quite the same dread as we have in the past!

REPTILE MONITORING Another successful reptile monitoring season was held on Hauturu in 2012 with 14 volunteers lining up for the task from January 26 to February 19. Volunteer numbers were increased this year to allow extension of the project to survey for Chevron skink. Chevron skinks are endemic to Great Barrier and Little Barrier Islands and are New Zealand's longest lizard, growing up to 300mm in length. Only three have been recorded on Little Barrier. Unfortunately we weren't able to add to the data, with no sign of Chevrons recorded over 1200 trap nights this year. The remainder of the Hauturu reptilian suite, however, is continuing to show excellent recovery following the eradication of kiore. Back in 2006, the year Hauturu was confirmed mammalian pest-free, the capture rate was 1.63 reptiles per 100 trap nights. This year it was 9.17! Showing the most improvement are the Shore skink and the Mokohinau skink, with 80 per cent of the 330 captures this year being one of these two species.

TUATARA The 27 baby tuatara are doing well with the end of summer weigh-in showing that all are putting on weight, some more than others! With the assistance of Marilyn Shearer from Ngati Manuhiri, we released the two 2007 hatch tuatara at Track 20 in January. Before release Marilyn bestowed on the two the names Manuhiri and Rehua. We had to send one of the adult males, Rudolph, off to Auckland Zoo in March for treatment for an abscess on his jaw caused by the infection of an old injury repair.

COOK'S PETREL CHICKS Cook's petrel breed only in New Zealand and its breeding range has declined dramatically since human colonisation. Because of predation there are no mainland colonies, and breeding is now restricted to two offshore islands. Hauturu is the largest breeding colony, with numbers estimated at some 286,000 pairs. Cape Sanctuary, a privately owned and funded wildlife restoration project in the Hawkes Bay, provides a pest-free habitat for Cook's petrel in an area they are likely to have formerly inhabited. Two successful translocations from Hauturu to the sanctuary have occurred already.

In early March a team of sanctuary volunteers, assisted by Hawkes Bay DOC staff, arrived on Hauturu and spent the next four days searching and collecting Cook's petrel chicks on the Thumb track and around Orau Hut. The search effort was vastly improved by the addition of the seabird dog Maddie, who approached most things enthusiastically on Hauturu except negotiating the ladder at The Thumb! The team had hoped to take 100 chicks but only 80 met the minimum translocation weight, probably due to a late breeding season. The last update from the sanctuary, in early April, was that chicks were doing well with over half already fledged. The team will be back for a final collection of chicks next year.

RESEARCH ON HAUTURU An interesting project in its second year on Hauturu is the Model Ecosystem Database Project, investigating the biota of Hauturu using genomic and remote monitoring techniques. In a collaboration between Victoria University, the University of Auckland and Auckland Council, a fauna and a flora team visited Hauturu in late March to collect leaf and soil samples, weather data, and to undertake bird counts and vegetation surveys.

The project's aim is to phylogenetically and environmentally characterise species on Hauturu. This integrated and comprehensive approach allows questions concerning ecological and evolutionary processes to be answered and provides a valuable tool for conservation management. It will allow us to understand the drivers of community assembly and ecosystem health, and therefore the impacts of perturbations such as human modification and climate change on ecological communities. In addition, phylogenetic characterization of the makeup of an ecosystem substantially reduces the labour-intensive and expert-dependent process of taxonomic identification, and opens up new avenues of enquiry about the structure and assembly of the species communities that make up ecosystems. It will also provide opportunities to discover unforeseen interactions among species from across the full taxonomic range and permit the development of predictive models of community structure and dynamics.

We look forward to the results and having the team back next year.

OTHER WORK AROUND THE ISLAND It's always helpful to have an extra hand on Hauturu as it seems a ranger's work is never done here! We've had some quality volunteer contributions this year, with the Hauturu Supporters rebuilding the rock approaches to the bunkhouse footbridge. No more tripping on the way home from a barbecue at the big house. Well, none that can be blamed on wayward stones!

A team from Canterbury visited in late March, taking a break from the shakes back home. After a number of floods in February and March the tractor ford was once again unusable. However, after a week of hauling large boulders, filling gabion baskets and pouring concrete, the ford is back and hopefully indestructible thanks to our team from down south.

We've also had the benefit of two temporary DOC staff over the summer. Ben Sewell made a huge contribution to the weeding programme and, as mentioned above, managed the solar upgrade. Jack-of-all-trades John McEwan also spent several weeks on Hauturu and his contribution, servicing and whipping the island's mechanical infrastructure into shape, was huge and much appreciated. He also established the new deck garden you see as you approach the bunkhouse – a lovely, lasting legacy.

Winter is now here and the bunkhouse has emptied. We have battened down the hatches and retreated into the office. The end of April was our first year anniversary on the island. What an amazing year it's been and along with Leigh, Mahina and Liam we are looking forward to year two!

Nichollette Brown and Richard Walle, Hauturu Rangers

IN MEMORIAM: JIM HOLDAWAY

8 JANUARY 1918 – 14 JANUARY 2012

Jim Holdaway CNZM OBE DFC and Bar, was a founding Trustee and Chairman of the Little Barrier Island (Hauturu) Supporters Trust and was fully active as a Trustee in the affairs of the Trust until shortly before his death.

Given the lifetime of commitment Jim made to the community and conservation in general, it is difficult to know where to start with this tribute, other than to refer to the comprehensive obituary by Councillor Mike Lee, Waitemata and Gulf Islands Councillor, Auckland Council, which embraces every facet of Jim's life, and is available on www.mikelee.co.nz/2012/01/tribute-to-jim-holdaway-last-of-the-greatest-generation/.

From this tribute you will see that our Trust was but one of a number of organisations committed to conservation in the Gulf that benefited from Jim's tireless commitment. This commitment culminated in the creation of the regional parks network in the now constituted Auckland Council region and the establishment of the Hauraki Gulf Forum.

When we created the Trust, Jim's achievements and reputation gave us an immediate authority which has become a cornerstone of the success of the Trust. His experience enabled us to explore and extend the basis of a relationship with the Department of Conservation and his intimate knowledge of local government enabled us to make the best of his advocacy in public forums and elsewhere. Throughout, and in every context, it was Jim's unfailing courtesy with whomever he dealt, that characterised these relationships.

Jim became the weeds eradication champion on the Trust, an activity which was dominant in our original and ongoing contributions to Hauturu, both in the doing (working weekends) and in the providing (obtaining funds) from a number of sources (for professional eradication). A letter from Dennis Marshall, Chairman of the National Parks and Conservation Foundation of the 5th of May 2001 enclosing a cheque for $5,800 for prickly hakea eradication contained a personal accolade to Jim.

Jim's extensive research and advocacy to the then structure of local government, particularly those jurisdictions fronting the Hauraki Gulf, through district plan reviews, council biosecurity policy, and at a regional level was persistent and effective.

Above: Jim releasing releasing one of the first Hauturu kakariki transferred to Motuihe Island.

It was the cumulative effect of Jim's persistence that gave us the confidence boldly to pursue issues. An example was his quiet but effective support of our involvement in the resource management processes leading to resource consent for a poison drop to eradicate kiore. He gave us and the cause of eradication as an issue a standing that was ultimately to succeed. The calibre of the Trust's involvement in these processes was such that there were no appeals and the eradication took place. With the results of that eradication becoming evident, Jim's eyes would light up at meetings as he could see the realisation of the potential that Hauturu represents to all of us, and in particular, to him.

Jim figured prominently in the fun that we had socially. In the oasis of Jim and Ann's Northcote property and its spacious grounds dominated by natives, we hosted our annual Christmas party when we could give thanks and enjoy the company of those with whom we had dealt. Jim's mana was such that we could always rely on the current Minister of Conservation attending as well as other prominent political figures and representatives of many kindred organisations.

It was a spacious home on a large section and the views to the bush beyond were inspiring, as were the birds. I remember sitting with Jim reflecting on his life, particularly in its association with the land, he said he always loved "messing about with the soil". Sitting in his living room with the sun streaming in, he reflected on the drastic transition from a forested to a denuded country that at last we were beginning the long haul back to restoring some of its precious biota. He reflected that nearly every island in the Hauraki Gulf now has a preservation society, with active planting and use. "To see that happening so generally and so successfully is rewarding," he said. That has changed.

Jim is survived by Ann and family. No tribute to Jim would be complete without acknowledging Ann and her commitment to the Trust and, in particular, to Jim. If you refer to Councillor Lee's obituary, you will read of the circumstances of their introduction and much of their life together.

The Trust is presently pursuing, with Auckland Council and other conservation interests with which Jim was involved, the setting up of an annual Jim Holdaway Memorial Conservation lecture.

To our dear friend, may you rest in peace.

David McGregor, LBIST Settlor Trustee

DOC

LENDING A HAND

It's my job to source volunteers for the department's three volunteer programmes – reptile monitoring (summer), weeding (winter, October and November) and bird monitoring by distance sampling (September, October and November) – on Little Barrier each year. It's a chance to spend an extended period (minimum two weeks) on a very special island, contributing to the biodiversity work of the department on its premier Nature Reserve. Each of these programmes has specific skill sets.

For reptile monitoring the criteria include an interest in reptiles, good eyesight and photographic skills, and past experience handling wildlife. Selected volunteers will have a high fitness level and be comfortable walking for long distances on Hauturu's famous boulder bank to reach the more remote pitfall trap sites that are checked on a daily round. For the volunteer weed programme we need volunteers who can maintain motivation while grid-searching for weeds on steep and crumbly terrain and are good team players.

Volunteers for bird monitoring by distance sampling will be extra fit and agile, familiar with calls of saddleback, tui and hihi (stitchbird). Experience in very challenging terrain, off track, will be an advantage. There are occasional opportunities to assist the ranger with general maintenance tasks, generally in winter or mid-spring. Handyman skills and a high fitness level are required.

You can contact me on aucklandvolunteer@doc.govt.nz, phone (09) 425 0978 or call into the Warkworth DOC office for a chat. You can also browse more volunteer opportunities on other islands in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park at www.doc.govt.nz/aucklandvolunteers.

Sue Cameron, Volunteer Coordinator
Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai

EXCITING NEW TRANSLOCATIONS

Once again Hauturu is the focus of translocations that will have a major impact on other parts of New Zealand, in this case three inner-Hauraki Gulf islands.

In June, 100 popokatea (whiteheads) and 20 tieke (saddlebacks) were translocated from Hauturu, with 40 whiteheads going to Motuihe, 30 to Motutapu and 30 to Rangitoto and 10 tieke going to both Rangitoto and Motutapu.

Writes translocation programme director Hazel Speed, "With the exception of the natural population on Hauturu, releases on Tiritiri Matangi Island (1990, 1991), Hunua Ranges (2003), Waikatere Ranges (2004, 2008), Tawharanui (2007) and Motuora (2008), popokatea/whiteheads have been locally extinct in Northland and Auckland since the late 19th century. The reintroduction of whiteheads forms part of an overall restoration programme for Motuihe, Motutapu and Rangitoto Islands which focuses on establishing the foundations of a sustainable ecosystem which will then develop naturally. The forest bird communities on these islands are depauperate, and missing key species such as whiteheads which are likely to play an important role in coastal ecosystems. Establishment of whitehead populations on these islands would also increase the range of the species and, once established, could provide birds for future translocations.

"Tieke are New Zealand's most successfully translocated passerine, resulting in an increased number of tieke populations, consequently the conservation status of this species is now considered secure. The successful translocation of tieke to Rangitoto, Motutapu and Moutihe in 2011 has enhanced the profile of restoration projects, raised awareness of the plight of vulnerable native species, provided a focal point for education and given the opportunity for involvement in conservation and environmental restoration. The current proposed translocation of tieke to Rangitoto and Motutapu islands is designed to increase the genetic diversity of the founder populations on these islands during the establishment phase. The release of tieke on Motuihe is regarded as the genetic rescue of this population that started from a small founder population of 14 tieke in 2005.

"In both translocations, the proposed population composition will be as near as possible to an even sex ratio and a mix of ages. The birds will be caught using mist nets. Each captured bird will undergo a thorough physical examination to check body condition, check for signs of disease, and a single blood sample will be collected before banding. The birds will be housed together for one to seven days in an aviary with a maximum of 30 birds in each aviary. Water and a range of foods will be provided. On the day of the transfer, the birds will be caught in the aviary with hand nets and placed in purpose-built wooden transfer boxes, with several birds in each compartment. Birds will be transferred by helicopter from Hauturu directly to Rangitoto, Motutapu and Motuihe. Each release of the birds will be completed by 12 pm to allow the birds sufficient time to feed and find a safe roost for the evening."

"The translocation of whiteheads to this large new predator-free habitat close to the city is really exciting," comments LBIST trustee Dr Matt Rayner. "The number of whitehead to be taken off Hauturu is large, and if captured from one area would likely make a dent in the local population. However the species breeds extremely rapidly and I am sure that within one season the numbers will be replaced. The saddleback taken from Hauturu will augment the genetic stock of a population currently consisting of 40 birds translocated from Tiritiri Matangi to Rangitoto (20) and Motutapu (20) last August. A Massey University MSc student is conducting her thesis on the post-release biology of the birds, and so monitoring will be intensive."

ISLAND RESEARCH UPDATE

Two significant new proposals have been put forward to the Trust for its comment and approval.

Auckland Zoo's wetapunga breeding team proposes collecting 12 wetapunga from Hauturu, to breed them in captivity for future release to other predator-free areas, to display the species, and advocate for their conservation. As Ian Fraser, the zoo's curator – New Zealand Fauna, writes: "We are looking to join in with the existing captive breeding programme for wetapunga (currently at Butterfly Creek) to increase the capacity to produce wetapunga for release to the wild (initially on Motuora and Tiritiri Matangi), but potentially at other sites as directed by DOC. We are also looking to further develop husbandry techniques for the species, in particular rearing wetapunga in groups, and later in larger enclosures where they should be largely self-managing and therefore less resource-intensive. Initially, however, we will use the techniques established by Paul Barrett at Butterfly Creek. We also plan to have adult or late instar wetapunga on display in the Night Forest zone of Te Wao Nui, our new $16m native wildlife precinct at the zoo."

Zoë Stone, MSc Research, Centre for Biodiversity, Biosecurity and Conservation, is conducting phenology research on Hauturu. She has been coming to Hauturu since November to collect observations of fruit and flowering quantities, and is now extending her research to collect fruit samples in areas that kakapo occupied when they were on Hauturu previously, and in which they are likely to live now they've been re-released. She will analyse samples of key fruits such as kauri for their nutritional content, to see whether they have similar nutritional composition to rimu, and therefore what might be a likely breeding trigger for kakapo. When kakapo were previously on Hauturu, faecal samples from the few chicks reared on the island had evidence of kauri plant material.

Zoe reports: "Additional species that may be important for kakapo breeding on Hauturu include hard beech (*Nothofagus truncata*), a masting species that is known to influence kaka mating, or other northern broadleaf species such as tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa*) and taraire (*Beilschmiedia tarairi*), which produce large fruits and are an important part of the diet of a range of other large New Zealand bird species. Some concerns have been raised regarding potential impacts of releasing kakapo into a relatively 'naïve' ecosystem. My research will include assessing vegetation in areas where kakapo settle after their release. By determining their foraging patterns, and through understanding the growth patterns of foraged plants, we can determine whether the reintroduction of kakapo to Hauturu has had any negative impact on the native vegetation. It may help resolve on-going concerns over food abundance, the impact on native vegetation unaccustomed to these significant herbivores, and the viability of establishing a self-sustaining kakapo population on the island."

RUUD'S RAVINGS No 15 HOW ON EARTH?

How on earth can you make a lasting impression on people, when everybody is seriously busy living their own lives and battling their own credit crunch? How can you get folks' attention onto the plight of this globe?

What the heck are we doing, with this Little Barrier Island Supporters' Trust. Is anybody actually listening?

Generally speaking, I am not a very morose or pessimistic person, but lately I have become more and more worried about, well, people! Our planet is reasonably well-equipped to deal with all the rubbish we throw at it; from global warming and climate disruption to pollution and disrespect. After all, Earth has encountered some seriously toxic conditions and extreme climates in its 4.5 billion-year-old past. I would even go so far as to point out that despite severe fluctuations in temperature, our planet has survived without a carbon credit in sight!

You see, ever since life started (3.8 billion years ago) life has made conditions conducive to life, and evolution took care of the adaptive side of things when conditions changed.

If we now fast-forward to the present day, we find a planet with a biodiversity that is absolutely brilliant. In fact, it is so brilliant that it is often referred to as the proof that God (or Allah – take your pick!) exists.

Indeed, I believe that our planet is not run by politicians, the stock markets, economists (Heaven forbid!), the media or multinational (oil) company CEOs; I am absolutely convinced it is run by biodiversity in general and by bugs in particular.

Without biodiversity everything would collapse in a matter of months. If I may borrow some great examples from that fabulous and under-rated discipline of entomology, I'd propose that their ecosystem-services are crucial to our survival. Pollination, seed dispersal, dung removal, general recycling and composting are just some of the jobs that are done, every night, 'for free'. Add to those: nutrient dispersal, providing natural products, foods and technology (silk, honey, bomb detection etc) and commercial pest control (predators and parasitoids) and you are starting to see the enormous value for homo sapiens. Remember, too, that bugs are the bottom dwellers in the food chain, feeding everything higher up the ladder.

And then there is biomimicry (whereby we learn from Nature, not use Nature) with the most brilliant examples of sustainable technology and design; after all, a 3.8 billion-year-old R&D lab must not be ignored. What you see outside is not 'Mark 1'.

Nature knows no waste; it manufactures stuff at ambient temperatures, without pressure and heavy chemicals, from glues to ceramics and from air-conditioning systems to clever collision-avoidance methodology. Nature even managed to produce its own natural form of kevlar: it emerges from a spider's bum and is known as silk. The raw ingredients are water, moths, beetles and flies. Simple enough for you?

The value of our biodiversity is akin to the GDP of a small country – perhaps more, given that we wouldn't stand a chance on Planet Earth without that biodiversity. And here's the crunch: the enormous value of biodiversity is not reflected in our GDP at all! Our old economic model was created when we were living in an empty world. Resources and space were 'endless' in those days and Nature's bountiful products were there for the taking. Now, our world is full-up; things have changed dramatically and ecological systems and economic systems are collapsing the world over – and at the same time!

The biggest worry for me is the rapid degradation of biodiversity and, with it, the diminished ability of the planet to evolve with the changing conditions. Besides, after coming out of a credit crunch, would you be trading carbon credits? I can smell a kiore.

Here are some keywords and phrases to think about. 'Growth at all cost'; John Key thinks like an economist; budgets for conservation, science research and biosecurity are being slashed every year; the difference between price and cost; putting the 'eco' back into economics; Nature's goods and services; natural capital; future wealth – quality of life; resources are finite.

So what about Hauturu and the Trust? Why on earth would we bother? Well, that's become a heck of a lot clearer. Hasn't it?

Ruud Kleinpaste
LBIST Trustee

Marilyn releasing Rehua the tuatara

The heights the weeders go to, to attack the invasive weeds

ABSEIL ACCESS

2011 weed team

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ANNOUNCED

Each year the Hauturu Little Barrier Island Supporters Trust receives several applications for research and translocations on Hauturu, forwarded to it by the Department of Conservation for its assessment and comment. The nature of these applications is so important, and their potential cumulative effect so significant, that the Trust decided that it would be beneficial if it could refer them to a panel of scientific advisers, all expert in their fields. The Trust is delighted that seven eminent scientists have accepted the invitation and looks forward to working with them. They are:

Ewen Cameron, an expert in New Zealand native and adventive vascular flora, offshore island floristics and conservation, who is the Curator of Botany at Auckland Museum.

Dr Jacqueline Beggs, an expert in invertebrate biology and ecology, and ecosystem restoration, who is a Senior Lecturer in Entomology at the School of Biological Sciences, the University Auckland.

Dr James Russell, an expert in island conservation, vertebrate ecology and invasive species, who is Lecturer in Quantitative Ecology at the School of Biological Sciences and Department of Statistics, the University of Auckland.

David Seldon, an expert in invertebrate biology, systematics and conservation, who is a Senior Tutor at the School of Biological Sciences, the University of Auckland

Dr Nicky Nelson, an expert in terrestrial vertebrate biology and conservation, who is a Senior Lecturer, Programme Manager and Conservation Biology Principle Investigator at the Allan Wilson Centre for Molecular Ecology and Evolution, Victoria University of Wellington.

Dr Kevin Parker, an expert in avian biology and translocation, who is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Massey University's Institute of Natural Sciences.

Sandra Anderson, an expert in plant/bird mutualisms, seed dispersal and population ecology, who is a Field Ecologist at the School of Biological Sciences / School of Environment, the University of Auckland.

WORKING WEEKEND REPORTS

MARCH 31 GROUP

H is for Habitat, A is for Awesome, U is for Unique, T is for Tremendous, U is for Unspoilt, R is for Refuge and U is for Ultimate. After the February working weekend visit to Hauturu was postponed, on March 31 we made our way down to the Warkworth DOC office in anticipation. Would our tramping shoes be seed-free? Would there be no dirt on our jackets? We all passed inspection and made our way with our group leader Lyn Wade to the immaculate *Sumo*, which was awaiting us at Sandspit.

Apparently it wasn't that rough, our expert seamaster Dave Wade advised us, although pretty much all of us felt the effects of the swells. At least one person thought the trip took half-a-day rather than a couple of hours! Landing on the West Landing, we were ferried in by Richard in his rubber dinghy. Soon enough we were dealing with the slippery, rolling boulders but we were made welcome by the greeting party of rangers Leigh and Richard and their two children, Mahina and Liam. What first struck us was the number of wood pigeons, pecking in the grass around us just as chooks would in our country yards.

We settled into the bunkhouse, and as we were watered and fed (with acupuncture needles for Pete to settle a queasy stomach) we were entertained by tui and kaka feasting in the fig tree. Richard and Leigh gave us an introduction to the island, and with a less than favourable weather forecast it was decided that we would walk that afternoon and do our 'work' on Sunday. Lyn and Leigh guided us up the Hamilton track and down the steep Valley track. We were amazed at the botany facts our diverse group contributed and we were certainly keen to learn as much as we could. We can now distinguish kiwi poo from any other thanks to Leigh, whose knowledge was boundless.

That evening we had a barbecue at the rangers' house, 'dressing' for dinner thanks to Leigh's formidable wardrobe. Activities included soccer and a visit to Liam and Mahina's museum of artefacts collected around the island. The highlight of the weekend was the night walk, on which we were fortunate to see two kiwi foraging and to hear multiple calls. To top it off we saw a morepork on the way back to the bunkhouse.

Lyn Wade and her April group listen for kakapo signals.

After a sleepless night of snorers, we were up at the crack of dawn to search for glow-worms up the creek and have a morning swim. After breakfast we set to on our weekend's 'work'. After some engineering discussion Alan, Shayne, Pete, Mary and Glenda rebuilt a very well-constructed rock walkway up to the bridge to the bunkhouse, entertained during their coffee break by Mahina and Liam's ballet rendition of *Sleeping Beauty*.

Meanwhile Lyn, Margie, Cath, Kay and Janet set to weeding along the grassed areas to the Waipawa Track. Thistle-grubbing has never been more enjoyable than on this gorgeous sunny morning, with birdcall all around us. After cleaning the bunkhouse we got up close to the baby and adult tuatara, particularly Arnie, who appeared quite comfortable in our presence. As we left the island we were farewelled by a pod of 12 dolphins, a fitting departure from such a magical place, and we 'surfed' back to Sandspit in two-metre swells.

It was an amazing encounter with tuatara, kiwi, tui, kaka, korimako, kereru, miromiro, robins, multiple kararikis, wetapunga, kauri, the endangered mawhai (native cucumber) and the pterostylis (tiny sweet-smelling orchids) and so much more. We are so very grateful to have had such an experience.

Janet and Glenda

APRIL 21 GROUP

After a thorough DOC quarantine check, our party of 10 Hauturu Little Barrier Island supporters set off from Sandspit aboard *Sumo*, accompanied by a family from D'Urville Island who were visiting the rangers. The weather was calm, making the crossing smooth and fast. We were ferried from *Sumo* to the slipway by Nichy the ranger and winched onto the island to be greeted by Richard, the other resident ranger.

At the bunkhouse we had a shared morning tea consisting of a rich variety of home-baked goods. We then set to work in three teams, weeding the tuatara enclosure, building a bridge ramp from beach boulders or weeding experimental plots for *Centipeda minima*, the tiny native plant. The pohutukawa trees around the hut were alive with tuis, bellbirds and saddlebacks and at lunchtime we were also treated to a visit from two kokako.

In the evening there was a barbecue in Richard and Leigh's garden, with fancy-dress costumes for party-goers. Children and adults alike delighted in the excuse to play dress-ups! After dinner, Richard took us on a night walk to show us the giant weta. We saw two good-sized females measuring roughly 10cm in length on a pohutukawa near the bridge. Later we were fortunate enough to spot brown kiwi in five locations on the grassy flats leading to the West Landing beach.

Clockwise from top left: weeding in the Tuatarium; re-building the rock walkway; the April group; the March group.

After a good sleep we were all up early to hear the dawn chorus and see native bats still flying above the trees in the dim early light. The rest of the morning was spent tramping on the Hamilton track. We saw many more birds including whiteheads and tomtits. Lyn kept us well informed on all the different plants and animals. There was a wide variety of ferns and epiphytes, some of which showed signs of kakapo browsing. We carried tracking antennae and Leigh showed us how to listen for signals from the recently released kakapo. We managed to hear the transmitters of four birds: Heather, Ox, Tiwai and Merty (named after Don Merton), although none were seen apart from a few feathers and the odd dropping!

After lunch and a clean-up of the bunkhouse we helped with feeding in the tuatara enclosures. Then it was time to farewell our island paradise, with thanks to all the rangers and researchers for making us so welcome and answering all our many questions! It was certainly a privilege to visit such a well preserved treasure-trove of our natural history. I'm hoping to visit again as soon as I can.

Katy Johns

WORKING WEEKENDS: SPRING 2012

Two working weekends are planned for spring 2012. Our spring dates have been fitted in around the weed team. All participants need to be reasonably fit and agile and prepared to cope, if necessary, with a wet and difficult landing over large and slippery boulders. We will be given a variety of tasks to do by the rangers plus there will be time for walking, bird-watching and botanising.

Target dates (weather dependent)

October 6/7 (back-up date 13/14 October)
December 1/2 (back-up date 8/9 December)

For further details and to register your interest in either of these weekends, please ring Judy Hanbury (09) 817 7604 or email her at jrhanbury@actrix.co.nz, giving your full name, home address and phone number.

Closing date for enquiries: Thursday 23 August 2012

Hauturu 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.

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