

# Matiu Matters

June 2003

## Chairman's Comments

### A Month of Change for Matiu

June has seen the report from the Waitangi tribunal on land claims, the kakariki release, and learnt of Richard's departure from Matiu, all momentous changes for Matiu.

The Friends of Matiu Somes Trust believe the Waitangi Tribunal report for the Port Nicholson Block will benefit the ongoing partnership created between the Trust and Iwi.

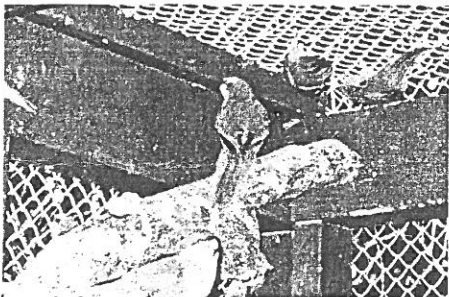
"All indications suggest strongly that iwi will be continuing with the policy of keeping Matiu Somes as a protected area for natural flora and fauna, for the use of the whole community."

The Chairman, Dr Ngatata Love, of the Wellington Tenth Trust who is also the main claimant, has made it clear that Matiu Somes is an icon site, because of its Maori history and subsequent occupations. The Wellington Tenth Trust is also a major supporter of the relocation of kakariki to Matiu Somes, and the Matiu Island Trust has always had significant iwi participation in its development and decision-making.

Maureen Burgess

Chairperson, Matiu Trust

## BRINGING BACK THE BIRDS



A wonderful event has happened. Eleven Red-Crowned Parakeets or kakariki (*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*) are now flying free on Matiu. This was possible because Matiu Trust and the Friends obtained approximately \$8000 in donations and sponsorship, mainly by the efforts of your Chairperson, Maureen.



A further transfer of male and female birds may happen depending on the effects the 11 new boys have on the vegetation. About \$2500 more in donations are required if the second transfer is to go ahead. Donations can be made to Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust, c/- Wellington Tenth Trust, PO Box 536, Wellington.

## Transfer Day, Friday 30 May

A blustery day had us wondering if the helicopter from Kapiti with its load of 11 kakariki would get to Matiu. But it did come in about 11.30, welcomed by Kaumatua Koro Tamarapa, and Anni Parata. The birds, a precious cargo, were carried in their boxes, down to the refurbished aviary (see Bird Preparations). There Koro said a karakia, their boxes were opened inside the aviary, and the birds soon got into the important business of feeding and drinking. Hans Tenberge, a kakariki breeder from Maungaraki, who came over each day for the next week to check on their behaviour, was happy with their reactions.

If you want information about kakariki, what they are, why they were chosen as suitable birds to transfer, then read the leaflet enclosed with this newsletter.

## Release Day, Saturday 7 June

The day dawned splendidly, being fine with very little wind, and 100 folk took advantage of their invitations to be on the island for the release of the birds. It was as popular as the October 1998 day when the tuatara were released.

Koro initiated proceedings with his stirring speech (and although he translated only a small part of it, the intensity of feeling was obvious). Richard outlined the events leading up to the day, Jan Heine, on behalf of Maureen your Chair who could not be there herself, outlined your involvement

through the Matiu Charitable Trust. Stan Butcher talked of Forest & Bird's enthusiasm for re-planting on the Island which has enabled this island to become a refuge for birds like the kakariki. And Margaret Shields, for Wellington Regional Council, expressed her support for the project and to be present at the release.

These formalities over, we followed Koro to the aviary where he blessed the birds, and Richard opened the hatch. Almost immediately one, then a second, a third, a fourth zoomed out, and the macrocarpas were full of kakariki chatter. They were so busy exploring their new home, and about an hour later they were way down the other end of the island, high above us, chattering and looping the loop, while we gawped below (see photo).

Truly they are a magnificent addition to the taonga of Matiu.



### Follow-up Monitoring

So now that the kakariki are part of the Island life, we need to keep watch to see what they do, how they get on, and record what we see.

Volunteers are wanted to monitor them because, according to the Notes for Volunteers produced by DoC, every bird should be sighted at least once a week, until mid-June; sighted at least once a fortnight until August, and thereafter sighted at least once a month until the decision to transfer more birds is made (likely timing May 2004).

The birds are colour banded on their legs, and the colour combinations are to be recorded. The information recorded will be used to assess the success of the programme and will guide future translocations. Intensity of observation decreases as the birds get over the stress of being transferred, and adjust to their new environment, i.e. they are less likely to die from the stress.

It is hoped that this release of parakeet will be just the first of a number of native

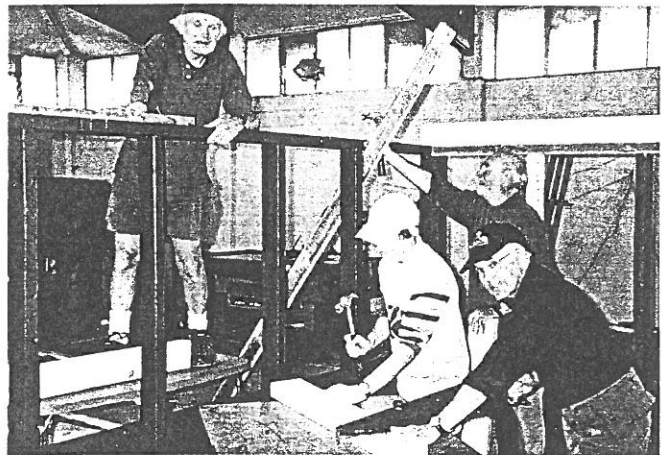
species to be released. If you would like to help with monitoring the birds, phone Lynn, Sally or Rob at DoC, 04-4725821.

### PREPARATION FOR THE BIRDS

#### Aviary Refurbishment

Last year Stan Hunt was asked by DOC Ranger Richard Anderson if the floor area of the existing aviary could be doubled by using recycled material (timber and netting) already on the island. Stan agreed that it could be done.

After a drawing was made of the proposed extension, an agreement was made that Richard would build the foundations – which were considerable – and Stan do the timber framework. It was also decided to prefabricate the structure in sections while using the hay barn for assembly. This was accomplished in eleven working days, spread over a period of months. Assistance was provided by volunteers Derek Sole, David McDougal, Robert Stewart and Trudi Bruhlmann.



Stan oversees his willing workers

#### Nest Boxes

In readiness for the time when the young men will be joined by some ladies, and the happy event of little kakariki, nest boxes are being built. Tawa Intermediate pupils under the watchful eye of their woodwork teacher, Ian Bunckenberg, have built 20 of the 50 boxes so far. We would like to hear from you if you too can help with this practical task of building nesting boxes.

#### Other Recent Visitors

Spotted on Matiu/Somes Island lately have been a morepork and an endangered

falcon. A morepork was last seen on the island in the early 1980s, while the falcon is thought to have come across from Eastbourne, where a small number are breeding. The falcon's prey includes smaller birds such as blackbirds. Ornithologist Reg Cotter said that, although the new kakariki may be potential prey for the falcon, the risk of proceeding with the release was worth it.

### **NEW PROJECTS FOR FRIENDS**

#### **A Threatened Plants Garden**

The establishment of this is envisaged as part of landscaping the whole wharf area. It's a project with interesting scope and if you are a landscape gardener, or have leanings that way, your ideas are really welcome to make this project happen.

#### **A New Way to Climb the Hill**

We are about to start upgrading the track that follows the line of the old bullock track used to cart supplies from the wharf to the top of the hill (constructed probably late 1800s). The track will provide an immediate immersion into the Island's natural environment. As most of the track formation is already in place, work needed is to remove leaf litter/humus, ensure drainage is adequate, and spread gravel where required.

We are looking at weekend work parties for volunteers to bring this track up to scratch.

The first 2 weekends are: 19-20 July and 16-17 August. If you want to take part, contact Sally Airey, DoC, 04-472 5821 or [sairey@doc.govt.nz](mailto:sairey@doc.govt.nz).

#### **Lighthouse Tramway**

Remember the good weekend in November 2001 for Friends? We worked on clearing the tramway from the lighthouse to the old jetty (or its remains). And the Underwater Archaeological Society searched for artefacts out to sea there. More work is needed to complete this job, so keep your ears open for news of another weekend, maybe in January with Richard Nestor, DoC historian.

#### **Conservation Week 2 August 2003:**

*Our places, our stories* – Open day on Matiu  
See [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) for more info.

### **BUSY EASTBOURNE FOREST RANGERS**

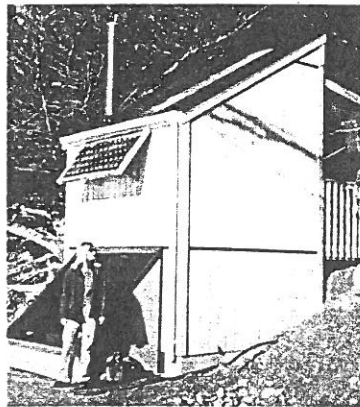
The Eastbourne Forest Rangers (EFR) have now logged 4000 hours of voluntary work on Matiu/Somes. The island receives as many as two hundred visitors a day, and the EFR help by greeting visitors, taking them through the Whare Kiore (rat-proof room), giving information about the island and its facilities, and keeping an eye out for bad behaviour such as smoking or unlicensed boat landings. During dry periods fire could potentially spread to the top of the island in as little as two minutes, hence the ban on smoking.

Ranger Stan Hunt says that the most common nuisance encountered are smokers reluctant to stub it out, though he did once come across some people manhandling a pregnant ewe for a photo opportunity.

The EFR have been operating for sixty years in Eastbourne and four years on Matiu. They currently have thirty members ranging in age from 23-76, of whom eighteen help on Matiu. Many are also involved with Lower Hutt Forest & Bird, who have been planting trees on the island since 1981. Anyone interested in joining should contact Ray Smith, [rsmith@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rsmith@xtra.co.nz).

### **BOGGED DOWN!**

The new toilet at the wharf area on Matiu/Somes Island replaces the existing one down by the northern jetty. The old one went off on the barge during the Island clean-up and has been recycled. The new one is a composting style toilet, a Sunny Dunny, and is most suitable to the site. It will be completed early July. For more, contact Anne Relling, Ponoke Area Office, DOC



Annabel Riley, now with Greater Wellington, models the new sunny dunny

