

Matiu Matters

December 2003



Chairman's Comments

Much of our time and effort was spent in working together with the Department of Conservation on the proposed first bird transfer to Matiu Somes Island. All Trustees are busy people and it has often been difficult for all of us to get together at the same time. I don't envisage this getting any easier but we have been able to maintain our contact and achieve objectives that we set.

As a group of environment volunteers, we could not achieve very much at all without the support of employees at the Department of Conservation. Our closest relationships in the Wellington Conservancy are with *Richard* and *Gary* on Matiu but we value our working relationships with all staff involved with Matiu Somes Island.

The support we receive from the Wellington Tenth Trust, in particular from *Erini Shepherd*, makes the work of the Trust much easier to carry out.

Our Department of Conservation liaison person, *Annabel Riley*, worked tirelessly with us and eased us through many unfamiliar processes that are part of what you need to do when working with the Department. Many thanks to Annabel for her cheerfulness, her enthusiasm, and her ability.

Our 2003 Christmas get together held at the Petone Service Centre was a fun informative gathering and we thank all those who participated in the presentations. It was a good opportunity for us to meet many of our 'Friends of Matiu'. So we look forward to getting together which each other again, this 1st December (see back page).

Many of the 'Friends' have got more involved in the tree planting and some as Eastbourne Rangers. Matiu Trust and Friends of Matiu as complementary to all the other groups.

We need to refocus again on the number of Trustees and fill the current vacancies. This will make it easier for us to spread the load. In about a year's time, I intend moving north to live in the Bay of Plenty, so I am seeking a Trustee to take over the role of Treasurer and of course it is timely for us to consider appointing a new Chairperson.

It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to be a Trustee on Matiu Trust and the friendships formed will never be forgotten.

When I look at the island now, I know that every effort we have made for Matiu has been worth it.

Maureen Burgess

Chairperson, Matiu Trust

Any donations to the kakariki project and future bird relocations please send to Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust, C/o Wellington Tenth Trust, PO Box 536, Wellington

KAKARIKI UPDATE



Kakariki/Red Crowned Parakeet

Ornithological Society member Ian Armitage, who has been making weekly visits to the island to check up on the kakariki, said the result of the release had been encouraging. Eight of the birds were counted there during a September inspection.

The remaining birds seem to be enjoying their new life on the island. "They're healthy, they're feeding well and there seems to be enough cover for them. Some have left the island, but that was to be expected." Ian said the island may have been too small for the stronger fliers. A storm the first week after their release may have also contributed to the other three birds leaving the island – the

strong southerly may have given them a boost.

Recent monitoring indicates that there are now fewer birds on the island; however this could be due to the time of year.

Monitoring of karariki on the island will continue throughout the summer. There is also a proposal to introduce another flock of male and female kakariki to the island in March/April of 2004. If you would like to help with monitoring please contact **Sue Caldwell at DoC, 04-472 5821 or scaldwel@doc.govt.nz**

LOWER HUTT FOREST & BIRD NEWS

Lower Hutt Forest and Bird completed the final open space plantings on Matiu in September, next to the Quarantine Station. They also began interplanting in the established areas where light wells had been created earlier this year. A lot of self-seeded plants were also found to have established themselves in these areas. "Over 4,500 trees were planted in total, with help from around 150 people on 3 public planting days", said Stan Butcher.

Irrigation has been set up to look after the new plantings and preparation has started for next year's plantings in the nursery and planning for smaller plantings around the island.

Forest and Bird meets to carry out nursery work on the island fortnightly on the second and fourth Monday of every month.

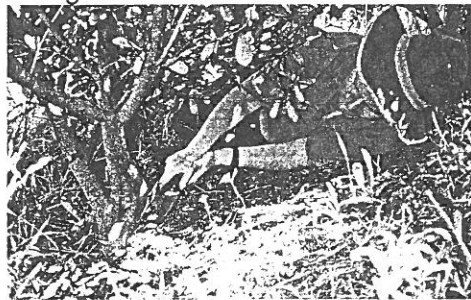
Call **Alex Kettles 569 6208** if you are interested in getting involved.

WEEDBUSTERS ON MATIU/SOMES

On Saturday 18 October twelve volunteers traveled to Matiu/Somes to remove weeds from the island. The group walked to the southern end of the island and had a training session on identifying karo and using vigilant gel. The group then broke into pairs and were set off to work armed with a saw and a bottle of gel between them. The volunteers worked until about 3pm and then had a guided walk around the island for about an hour. Weeds attacked on the day were karo, gorse and elder.

Although karo is a native species it is considered an ecological pest on the island because it was not originally found on the island. It needs to be managed because it grows so densely that other plants and trees

are 'shaded out', having little or no access to sunlight.



'Weedbuster' Cathy Simpson cutting karo

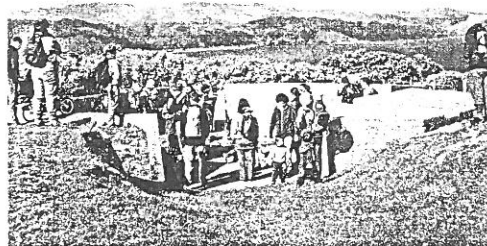
Overall the day was a success and the volunteers gave positive feedback about their experience. DoC is hoping to run more of these volunteer days in the future so if you are interested, please phone **Rob or Sally at DoC, 04-472 5821 or email rstone@doc.govt.nz, sairey@doc.govt.nz**

2003 CONSERVATION WEEK OPEN DAY

Tales of 'enemy alien' torment, quarantined animal curios and the return of the natives captivated 115 people on guided tours of historic Matiu/Somes Island on Saturday August 2. The tours were organised by DoC to start off Conservation Week 2003.

They explored the scientific and historic reserve's past as a pa site, quarantine station and internment camp, and the island's future as a refuge for rare and endangered species.

The stories of Matiu/Somes were told by speakers in the island's historic buildings, including the last surviving barracks building. Historian **Val Burr** spoke of the harsh treatment the internees endured during their years in exile, away from their homes and families.



Exploring the gun emplacements during Conservation Week

Also open for the day was the former maximum security quarantine station where **Dick Phillipps**, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, recalled stories from his time as a livestock officer on the island.

Reg Cotter of the Ornithological Society explained how the society monitors bird populations on the island and highlighted the work being done there by Lower Hutt Forest and Bird.

Four participants welcomed the chance to explore the island and find out about its history. Thanks to the Eastbourne Forest Rangers for helping out on the day.

GUIDING ON MATIU-SOMES

Pilot Scheme for volunteer guides

During summer, from Saturday 27 December – Sunday 1 February the Friends of Matiu are providing guided walk opportunities during weekends. Trained volunteer guides will be on standby at the island's field centre. There will be morning and afternoon tours of approximately one and a half hours. This will fit in with ferry arrivals and departures. This will help raise awareness and funds for Friends of Matiu projects like the kakariki relocation.

Visitors to the island will have the opportunity to learn about its history and ecological restoration programmes, as well as gain access to some of the buildings. Most buildings on the island have not been open to the public previously. Complementary tea and coffee will be provided at the end of each tour.

Stan Hunt is keen to hear from people interested in being trained to be a guide. So to be a volunteer guide (i.e. unpaid) for visitors to the island (who pay for their guided tour), contact Stan on 562 8257.

The programme is as follows, but is still to be confirmed:

December 2003

6 December – Guide Training Day on Matiu,
13 December – A basic First Aid certificate (remember this is useful for other jobs too).

January 2004

Minimum attendance is one complete weekend (home overnight if desired) to trial the scheme. This entails leading two tours (11am & 2pm) on both days (Sat & Sun); with 2 guides per tour. Guided tours include entry to the historic buildings.

Think seriously about giving this "job" a try because it should be an interesting and pleasant way of adding to the coffers for future bird relocations.

Eastbourne Forest Ranger Roster

A roster of EF Rangers continues to be maintained over the summer months when the fire danger is high. They help the Rangers on the Island in case of emergency, and are generally available to help visitors enjoy their time there. For more information please contact **Ray Smith on 562 8587**

TRACK PARTY 19-20 July

A fresh blow over the weekend of 19-20 July meant that extra Hutt Valley Tramping Club people could join us, as their planting day on Mana had had to be cancelled. The southerly created some exciting ferry trips to and from Matiu as well.

We managed to clear a good deal of the old Bullock track that zigzags up directly from the wharf and joins the Round the Island track in the karaka forest below the Information Centre. It is a much more interesting way than walking up the road, because you walk through the forest, past the weta motels, and along by the F&B No.1 nursery.

So we dug and slashed, carted the most splendid litter up to the nursery, unearthed objects of real and dubious archeological value, and generally worked up a good appetite. While this was going on, 3 HVTC were dangling off cliffs finding yet more blackberry, gorse and boxthorn to eradicate.

The makings of a great meal plus BYO additions had been organised by Anne Ralling, DoC (miss you now you are off in Hokitika).

Sunday was brilliantly fine after the southerly, and we finished off most of the work scheduled for that work party. So much so we joined in the F&B planting in the Quarantine Paddock before lunch.

After that Don cracked the whip and we got the piles of cleared vegetation down to the pile on the beach, before leaving mid-afternoon.

Plans for a second track party are lined up to complete the work, but will now be 2004. See you there – it will be fun.

Jan Heine

Contact **Chandra Littlewood on 472 5821** or clittlewood@doc.govt.nz if you are interested.

Friends of Matiu/Somes Island Annual Get Together

It is the time again for the Friends of Matiu/Somes Island to get together and find out what various friends of the island are doing.

This meeting provides an opportunity for all community groups and individuals involved in Matiu/Somes Island (or for those who are not currently involved but would like to be) to:

- Meet with each other over a drink and a bite to eat,
- Find out where projects are at i.e. if they are carrying over into next year or if they are finished for the year what is planned for the following year,
- Get people (new and old) involved and to take on tasks,
- Meet new staff.

The meeting will run in a format similar to that of last year:

- If you or your group has been active on Matiu this year, you may want to give a 5 min presentation about your project, or a project you would like to run on Matiu next year.
- Discuss or find out more information about specific projects from project representatives at the meeting.
- Enjoy some light refreshments
- Hear a presentation from Carl Hayson, Chairman of the Friends of Tiritiri Matangi (in Auckland's Hauraki Gulf)

Last years meeting received positive feedback so come along for another enjoyable and informative evening. See you there!

Some of the activities carried out by Friends of Matiu over the past year:



Bill Milne and Stan Butcher at the 2002 get together



Clearing the old tramway track



Weedbusters take a break from cutting karo



Reg Cotter assists with weta discovery during Conservation Week