

Matiu Matters

we have 7 out of 11
is news.

March 2004

Chairman's Comments

In spite of the weather not really playing its part this summer, Matiu Trust has been able to establish the first Guiding Concession on the island and we're very pleased that we had many customers sharing the Matiu experience.

Many thanks to all of you who volunteered to be guides on Matiu and who completed the essential First Aid and basic guiding training. Without you, we do not have a project. Especially we give a big vote of thanks to Matiu Trustee Stan Hunt, who took on board the challenge of the pilot guiding concession and through his hard work and dedication has made it a success.

At a recent meeting with Trustees, the guides and with DoC staff it was agreed to continue offering guided walks on the island when these are requested and whenever we can have guides available.

We know that the guided walks have enabled many visitors to Matiu to have an enhanced experience of the island, and the guides have said how much more they now know about the island. A real win-win situation.

We are very pleased to welcome **David Moss** as the new Ranger on Matiu, taking Richard Anderson's place. Gary Bak had been holding the fort in the meantime. The powhiri led by Koro Tamarapa on a squally morning, 17th February, meant that David was appropriately welcomed.

We are about to put our support behind Year 2 of the kakariki transfer project and the good news is that DoC says there are 7 kakariki on the island. Whether they have been there throughout the past year is not



This year I have applied for project funding to a Wellington City Council Environmental Grants fund but if this is not successful we will be relying heavily on you as supporters to renew your membership for 2004.

You will find a membership renewal form in this newsletter, and although some of you are Life Members we welcome any donations to the Trust. Look forward to hearing from you

Maureen Burgess

Chair, Matiu Somes Island Charitable Trust

About our new Ranger on Matiu

David Moss has been appointed to the Field Centre Supervisor position, replacing Richard Anderson. David has spent the last 13 years in the South Island, with the last 6 working for DOC in Southland.

Having grown up in Wellington, he was no stranger to the wild tree-toppling weather that he experienced in his first week on the island this month.

David grew up in Wilton and has a diverse background that includes teaching, managing restoration projects, chef and canvas worker. His DoC work in Southland involved running a science and environmental education programme for Southland and Otago schools. This covered a huge range of subjects, from alpine ecology to Maori stone tool quarries, and involved the full range of school ages as well as parents and teachers. His work area encompassed Fiordland and the Southland Plains but he lived in the coastal fishing town of Riverton.

His family have been very supportive of this shift, with his wife Bie (pronounced Bee) and his two daughters (Alice and Lilly) looking forward to living on an island with no introduced predators. The pet dog and goat have been swapped for tuatara and giant weta!

Gary and Helen have been very helpful in helping David adjust to island life and he is looking forward to getting to know and work with all the people, who have put so much work into the island over the years. Please make yourself known to him and remember he has a lot of new names to learn – not only people's names but some of the plant names he used to know seem to have slipped out while he was learning beech forest species names.

Guiding on Matiu-Somes

This scheme has provided guided tours for visitors to Matiu, and raised funds for Friends of Matiu projects like the Kakariki relocation. The pilot scheme has been most successful with **315 visitors** taking advantage of the guides' knowledge.

The numbers ranged from 4 to 53, an average of 26 on each of the 12 days of operation.

It will be continued when requested and when guides are available.

So let your friends and anyone know that:
Guided tours for anybody will be available on **10-11 April (Sat-Sun) Easter weekend**,
Guided tours for **booked groups of 10 or more** will be available **any day of the week**.
No pre-payments are required.

Conservation Week (1st week of August) could be considered.

For further information, contact **Stan Hunt (562 8257)**

The 16 guides received training for basic first aid (at a free special course) and on the human and natural history of the island. They were supplied with DoC's hand-out for Guiding on Matiu-Somes.

As this is a heavy commitment for the 16, ***Stan is still keen to hear from more people interested to train to be guides.***

A Very Special Commemoration

Rose petals strewn around Mokopuna on Sunday 14 March, commemorated Kim Lee who died there 100 years ago. Over 90 people gathered around the monument on Matiu/Somes to offer food, drink, paper money, and to burn incense in his memory, and to talk of the changes in attitude to the Chinese people and to leprosy during that 100 years.

Kim Lee, a 56 year-old fruiterer suspected of having leprosy, was quarantined on Matiu in 1903 but transferred to Mokopuna when other inmates of the station objected. He had to live in a cave there, food being brought to him by boat, or by flying fox if the sea was rough. The conditions were enough to wreck anyone's health, and he died on 14 March 1904.

Those who visit Matiu frequently often stand on the northern point and wonder about Kim and how he coped. We all felt deeply the significance of the occasion, and are thankful to the China Society, DoC, and all those who made it happen.

Koro and others, by memorial stone, on Kim Lee's Day

Koro Tamarapa is welcomed as a member and as our very own kaumatua, although no stranger to the island at all.

So how's Matiu itself?

With all the rain, the trees are growing well, but it has also caused a few slips and wind-blown trees, that David had to deal with in his first week.

The island was not closed at all because of fire danger, which was a bonus for the Guiding trial.

Work Parties coming up

Wild Weeding – for hangers on the cliffs

This work requires more technical skills (ropes and abseiling techniques) than the average volunteer possesses, and is being done very well by tramping club members, such as from Hutt Valley Tramping Club. The main areas of work are the steep faces at the south and eastern ends, and the targets are boxthorn and gorse, and we did find blackberry lurking in a rock gully!

Karo Weeding – for people handy with big loppers and saws.

Karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*), is native but probably didn't grow south of Poverty Bay before human arrival. It's well established on Matiu/Somes and is a big job to control because of its huge seed bank in the ground and numerous seedlings lurking in the shade waiting for some sunlight to get growing.

However Poneke Area has secured a small amount of funding from the "Weedbusters" programme which is intended to foster community/volunteer work in weed control.

Species like karo require a large time effort and are best done by groups so this funding will help pay for ferry travel, tools and herbicide for groups coming over to control karo.

We have trialled a couple of day weeding trips and these were very successful. However a full weekend may be more productive.

Keep an eye out for more information about this, starting in **late April** and running on through the year. Currently Poneke has a database of email addresses of people who have worked on karo, so *if you wish to join this list send an email to Rob Stone at rstone@doc.govt.nz. Snail mail addresses also accepted.*

Forest and Bird workers have also been karo killing on their fortnightly work days on the island.

Kakariki Project

The first translocation of red crowned kakariki to Matiu/Somes appears to have been highly successful. In February a dead kakariki was found near the ranger's unit and sent to Massey University for autopsy. Although it was unfortunate that it died (most likely from striking a window), of importance was Massey's assessment that the age of this bird was less than six months old, and of course it was unbanded.

Whether nesting occurred on or off the island, we now have 4 or 5 birds being seen and heard regularly around the island.

*The second phase of the transfer, to bring 10 females and 10 males over from Kapiti, will now go ahead in **late April**, with a highly skilled team of volunteers from OSNZ, Forest and Bird, and DOC staff.*

These kakariki will be kept in the aviary on Matiu/Somes for a week or more, or less, under the watchful eye of Hans TenBerge, who has been breeding parakeets for many years and can assess how well they are coping with aviary life.

Roost boxes which have been weathering for a few months on the old tennis court will be in place around the island before the release.

Volunteers to monitor and record observations of kakariki are part of the programme and if people wish to join this team they can send names and addresses to Rob or Chandra clittlewood@doc.govt.nz. If you did this work last time we will have your name already and will be in touch to see if you wish to help out again.

VI notice – urgent request for assistance with the monitoring of kakariki on the next transfer in April 2004.

We need a monitoring co-ordinator and a team to do the monitoring.

Any offers of help, please phone *Maureen Burgess* on 021 246 8844 or 577 1096 (evenings) or email *maureenburgess@xtra.co.nz*

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