

# Matiu Matters

November 2004

visitors during the ai



## Chairman's Comments

Kai ora koutou, Greetings to you all

As the new Chair of the Matiu Somes Trust, I would first like to acknowledge the work and contributions made by our past Trust members.

Thank you to *Maureen Burgess* who committed many hours and provided the drive and initiative to make the Trust an essential working entity to enhance and protect Matiu Somes Island. We wish her the best in her change of direction and move to Maketu, where she will be busy with the waders and coastal birds of the Bay of Plenty.

Thank you too to the former Trustees, *Stan Hunt* and *Neville Baker*, who have had such invaluable input. Stan had pursued a number of projects, such as establishing a pilot Guiding System for tours of the island, building aviaries for our first bird transfer, the kakariki releases, and other practical projects.

I also welcome the new Trustees, *Colin Ryder*, *Fred Allen*, *Ray Smith*, and *Erini Shepherd*, and wish them well as we look forward to the future of the Trust.

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.

Much of our time and effort is spent working together with the Department of Conservation to maintain our contact and achieve objectives that we set.

Our Department of Conservation liaison person, *Diame Cooper*, is working on several issues, such as the next bird releases. *Chandra Littlewood* and *Rob Stone* help organise work parties on the island.

Many of the 'Friends' have got more involved in Forest & Bird's tree planting, *Ray*

The Trust is committed to restoring the mana of Matiu/Somes and making it a show place the region can be proud of, not only because of its ecological and historic values, but because it provides a practical demonstration of what a real partnership can achieve.

**Mark Te One**, Chair

We'd like to reiterate what Maureen recorded in the last newsletter: *that it had been 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*

## KAKARIKI DOING WELL

Kakariki (red crowned parakeet) have been seen doing all the right things in the last few months. They have been seen mating, prospecting for nests in the nest boxes, laying eggs and sitting on them, and now we are starting to see fledgling birds being fed by parents.

Numbers have been hard to determine but they are becoming increasingly obvious as they feed, bathe and fly noisily overhead.

One of the more unusual sightings was a pair seen flying out of an old kingfisher hole in a clay bank. We had one nest destroyed when a limb of a *Macrocarpa* parted company with its tree and spilt 4 eggs onto the ground. They are now in the Te Papa collection.

Any donations to bird relocation projects, please send to *Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust, c/o Wellington Tenth's Trust, PO Box 536, Wellington*

### **PLANTINGS OVER WINTER**

The winter planting days continued to move into successional plantings as well as the ongoing removing of lawn area. The planting days went well and were mostly very well attended. Interestingly on the day that had the fewest planters, the few planted the most plants. Just goes to show what dedication and experience can do!

We are constantly meeting people who are returning to the island after a few years away who make the comment how many more plants there are and who good the island is looking. Last count was over 92,000 plants put in the ground. What an amazing effort by all involved.

This year we supplemented the plants from the Forest and Bird Nursery with plants from both Taupo Nursery and Kiwi Plants in Naenae. So far all the winter plantings are looking good and we hope the summer won't be too dry (and also hopefully not as wet as last summer – somewhere in between would be good!).

### **ISLAND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Many of you will have seen some new things appearing on the island over the last few months. We have a new little tractor that has replaced the Massey Ferguson that died noisily on a cloud of black smoke.

The quad bike has also been replaced with a newer model that has a galvanised frame to combat the all-creeping rust that is such an issue on the island. Some of the more observant will also have noticed the new frame the crane sits on – again necessitated by rust.

Upcoming work will be looking at a way to transport and store diesel on the island to meet the new dangerous goods regulations.

The historic meat safe is nearing completion and is looking great and the caretaker's house is due to be re-roofed soon.

Our winter rodent monitor went well – still no rats! We also have increased the number of monitoring boxes around the island to bring us up to a national standard.

### **David Moss**

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### **LOWER HUTT FOREST & BIRD NEWS**

*(from Stan Butcher's article in Wellington Botanical Society Newsletter)*

Lower Hutt Forest and Bird had another successful planting season with 5000 ecologically sourced natives planted by volunteers and fortnightly work parties. DoC contract planters have added another 1500. All the available spaces have now been planted, including parts of the lawn around the quarantine station and houses. The days of large group plantings are now behind us, after all the dedicated effort from 1981 when it began.

The green cloak that now covers most of the island offers habitat for tree and giant weta, tuatara, kakariki, and other birds to come, said *Stan Butcher*.

Next job is weeding the island, for example removing the aggressive native Karo, which is subject of a weedbusters work party on **Sunday 7 November**.

### **GUIDING ON MATIU-SOMES**

The programme of guided tours organised by Stan Hunt last 2003-04 summer was a great success with the public and we would like to see it continue this coming summer. However Stan is unable to continue in his role, due to other commitments. As well a number of guides have chosen not to continue. SO:

**We are short of volunteer guides**

**We also need an organiser**

**Are you able to help?**

The organiser does not necessarily have to be a guide, so if you have appropriate skills for running the programme but do not want to do guiding work, that's OK.

Full training is given to all guides so you will be fully prepared for this rewarding task. We would like to run the programme at weekends and on public holidays from Boxing Day to the end of February.

Each guide would do 2 or 3 days duty during that period.

If you want to help, the first point of contact is Erini (Shepherd), Wellington Tenth's Trust, Phone 04-473 2502

## Weedbusters on Matiu/Somes

A volunteer opportunity on Matiu/Somes Island on **Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> November**.

We need 15 people to be 'weedbusters' for a day on the island.

We will be removing karo. Although it's a native plant it is not native to the island so is an ecological pest. It would be great to have you involved so contact me if you are interested.

**When: Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> November** (postponement date Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November)

**Where:** Matiu/Somes Island Wellington Harbour

**Transport:** On the Dominion Post Ferry: leaves Queens Wharf in the city at 10am returning 4.45pm. This will give people a chance to have a look around the island in the afternoon. Leaves Days Bay 10.30am for Matiu/Somes, returning approx. 2.45pm.

**What to bring:** DOC will cover your lunch (please contact Chandra Littlewood with any dietary requirements) and ferry costs.

Wear old clothes like overalls (that are practical to work in, don't get hooked up, and you don't mind getting dirty!), sturdy sneakers/boots, raincoat, water, warm clothing if you want to change, and glasses to protect your eyes.

DOC will provide all the 'weedbuster' tools and gloves. DOC will also get you to fill in a volunteer agreement so that they have up-to-date emergency contacts and are aware of any medical conditions.

You will need to be comfortable with crawling around smallish trees, the work will involve mostly hand pulling, some poisoning using Vigilant gel.

No previous experience is necessary: Gary Bak (Ranger on the island) will brief you when you arrive on the island. If you are interested please contact **Chandra Littlewood** on 04-472 5821; or email: [clittlewood@doc.govt.nz](mailto:clittlewood@doc.govt.nz)

## A FLUTTERING SHEARWATER PROJECT

The fluttering shearwater is a gull-sized brown and white seabird that is common around New Zealand coastal waters. Its main breeding areas are on islands off Northland, in the Bay of Plenty, and in the outer Marlborough Sounds.

The Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust wants to re-establish a breeding colony of fluttering shearwaters on Matiu Island as part of the island's ecological restoration. As the bones of fluttering shearwaters have been found in middens on the island, they are part of the island's heritage.

As a first step, it will install a solar-powered sound system, at the proposed colony site,

that broadcasts calls of predominantly fluttering shearwaters, but also other burrowing seabirds such as diving petrels, from dusk till dawn throughout the year to give the impression of an active colony being present.

This system will be used on its own for several years to try to attract some of the numerous fluttering shearwaters, that feed in the harbour during their breeding season, to take up residence.

If the sound system, by itself, does not attract sufficient birds to form a breeding colony, then we will try transferring almost fully-grown chicks to the island and hand-feeding them to the time of fledging. (This technique has already proved successful in

establishing a colony of fluttering shearwaters on Maud Island in the Marlborough Sounds). A similar sound system on Mana Island has been found to help attract transferred diving petrels back and also immigrants from other colonies.

Burrowing petrels are foundation species on many New Zealand islands, providing major nutrient inputs (droppings, regurgitations, and corpses) for terrestrial ecosystems, and habitat (burrows) for many invertebrates and reptiles. Restoring colonies of burrowing seabirds, principally fluttering shearwaters (*Puffinus gavia*) and diving petrels (*Pelecanoides urinatrix*), on Matiu/Somes Island will help

ensure the ongoing success of many other restoration projects, including re-introductions of threatened plants, reptiles, and invertebrates.

This will make the island even more attractive for visitors and an educational resource, where rare and endangered, and in some cases, iconic, endemic species can be seen in their natural surroundings within minutes of major cities.

Fund-raising by the Trust for this sound system will begin shortly, and any contributions will be gratefully received.

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Shearwater pic on address side

