

Matiu Really Matters

December 2014



Rangers' Ramble for late 2014

On yet another blustery Wellington spring day we are sheltering from the wind as best we can. People arriving off the boat are relieved to find that the island is no stranger to the wind, always offering a sheltered spot on the opposite side, allowing them to enjoy their day in relative calm, at least until they walk around the corner! It's been a good start to the summer season with visitor numbers increasing with the warmer weather. Many people returning with friends, family and visitors to show off one of Wellington's best spots.

New summer staff have joined the island whanau, and in recent months we have welcomed a few new residents too: Seven new Forest Geckos have joined the gang, the Penguins and Kakariki are up to their normal antics and three fluttering shearwater pairs are sitting on eggs! We are hopefully that at least one might be fertile and soon to hatch. The Black Back Gulls and Variable Oyster-catchers are also sitting on eggs and are doing a great job making sure people don't get too close.

Sue Keel and Nicky Nelson from Victoria University recently lead the five-year tuatara survey. The population is looking healthy, catching more than they have in previous years, including five that haven't been seen since they were released 15 years ago and two new island-born youngsters. There are others still out there than managed to hide from the searching eyes.

We have also been digging around in our historic artifacts and now have a few more things on display in the Visitor Centre, so next time you are on the island make sure you don't forget to pop in and have a look.

Many thanks to all our volunteers, new and old, who continue to support us with their time, skills, enthusiasm, and humour. The island is the shining star of all your combined efforts.

We are looking forward to seeing you all out here enjoying this beautiful motu over the summer season. Remember people are what bring our history to life and help to create the history of the future.

Nga mihi, Jo, Aristrya, Gemma, Josh, Charlotte, Roger and Emma

And thank you all who are involved in the island for your time and efforts on this jewel in Te Whanganui a Tara

Welcome to this newsletter
from *the Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust*:

Shane Cotter Chair, Liz Mellish Deputy Chair, Mark Te One, Fred Allen, Mike Rumble, Erini Shepherd, Jan Heine.

Harbour Islands Kaitiaki Board:
Mark Te One Chair, Liz Mellish, Kura Moeahu, Rob Stone, Dr Nicola Nelson, Sarah Owen.

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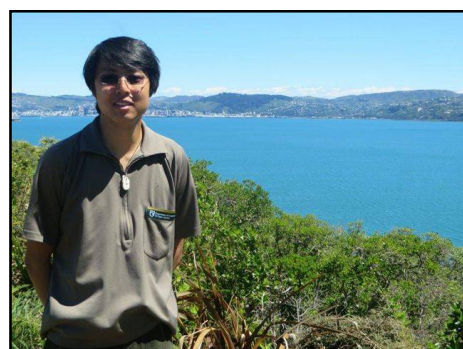
We're the *Summer Ranger Volunteers* for October and November, Gemma and Josh. We work in conservation in the UK and came to New Zealand to learn all about New Zealand wildlife and conservation.

We first stepped foot on Matiu/Somes on a blustery, stormy day and fell in love with the island as soon as we exited the biosecurity room. We were here to volunteer for two months, helping the Rangers, Emma and Jo, keep the Island reserve running smoothly as visitor numbers picked up. Wearing our new uniform proudly, we were shown around the island and introduced to our duties, although it took a week of shadowing the Rangers until we felt brave enough to give a welcome talk to visitors by ourselves.

Over the next two months we got up to all sorts. We gave a fresh lick of paint to some of the historic buildings, monitored biosecurity stations and planting sites, worked on visitor exhibits and helped with different volunteer groups. Our favourite task as assisting survey teams and getting up close and personal with little blue penguins and tuatara. Josh, being a bit of an amateur entomologist, loved getting to know the Cook Strait giant weta and Gemma found the island a fantastic place for photography and managed to fill up her computer with photos.

We had a great time working on this special island, looking after the wildlife and meeting visitors and volunteers. To top it off we now have lots of new skills to add to our CVs, which will hopefully help us into island conservation jobs much like this one in the future. We'll never forget our amazing experiences on Matiu/Somes and are so glad that volunteer placements like this exist!

And here is Aristia, *trainee Ranger* from Nelson (NMIT), who has made Matiu/Somes his favourite island (so far?).



Kaitiaki Kids Kicks Off

Kaitiaki Kids is an idea inspired by the thousands of children who have visited Matiu Somes Island.

The Kaitiaki Kids concept is to create an innovative conservation modular programme for Kiwi Kids to be Kaitiaki Kids and through it to gain a broader and deeper level of conservation mātauranga (knowledge) and commitment to the conservation kaupapa (agenda) in recognizing their role as kaitiakitanga (guardians).

After a decade of working with children on the island, volunteer Terese Mcleod (Taranaki Whanui) and Ranger Emma Dunning know first-hand from children, their parents, caregivers and teachers of their thirst to engage in a more structured, broader and deeper level of all manner of conservation learning.

We've spent years thinking and talking about it but with little spare time between us and no resourcing we've had to become super-creative and resourceful to keep moving the project development forward, says Terese.

After a chance meeting on the wharf with an American Professor from Boston Massachusetts, the project proposal for this programme is moving another a step forward. We exchanged business cards and I learnt that Professor Michael Elmes Boston-based university runs an annual summer research programme in Wellington, says Terese, who connected their respective universities and DOC culminating in last year's inaugural research projects. This summer Terese and Emma were delighted that their Kaitiaki Kids project was selected as one of this year's strongest applicants.

"What this means is we have been assigned four full-time researchers for two months for free. The carefully selected research team has a profound passion for conservation, do conservation community work and have degrees across a range of conservation related areas. They will be able to crack some of the grunt work Emma and I can't get to, like designing surveys and conducting interviews with focus groups to formally investigate what children and adults across the relevant NZ spectrum want and think, and, to explore and work with us on how we structure the programme, its content, where and how its run and sustainable resourcing and get it to a strong project proposal stage to present to potential supporters", says Terese.

Our current thinking is this programme will have modules that kids between the ages of 8-12 years have to complete to ultimately graduate as a Kaitiaki Kid, some of those modules will cover core conservationist topics and be delivered in a range of ways closely



Some of the children who have come to Matiu/Somes Island, and represent the thousands of children who have inspired the development of Project Kaitiaki Kids

aligned to Iwi and DOC aspirations. Some module ideas are Orienteering and Mapping, Health and Safety, Bird ID, Plants, Pests and Trapping, Marine, and one on location component. While we know various groups offer conservation education and do incredible work we want to move it to another level beyond activity sheets. While the idea was conceived on Matiu/Somes Island, the dynamic duo said it has potential application across the country.

“Every child I have interacted with on the island has been a magic moment and deeply inspires me.” Some highlights for Terese include asking Laura, an 8 year-old day visitor from London to assist her with the release of moko kākāriki (Green Geckos). “We were on the bullock track and I recited a karakia (prayer), Laura repeated in her strong London accent, she was bursting with pride as she took the lead role in releasing them, things like those magic moments are priceless and provide me with the drive to keep pushing projects forward”, says Terese. Watching her nephews love and respect of the environment and its special inhabitants stops Ranger Emma Dunning in her tracks and inspires her to dedicate her spare time to the project. “Opening up more children to connecting to conservation is the main reason I work for DOC”, said Emma.

Hut building on Matiu/Somes

This summer, artists Kemi & Niko are bringing everything you love about the backcountry to Wellington. Their public art project, *Miniature Hikes*, is a series of seven miniature huts located across Wellington's diverse backyard. Hidden in the bush, at the beach and on windy summits, these colourful huts celebrate the honesty and comfort of the backcountry.

Matiu/Somes Island hosts *DOC Hut*, a celebration of the iconic tramping huts that unite people from all walks of life, from intrepid tourists to proud kiwis. The artists built the hut on the island, over two days, from materials gathered by the rangers. To discover the hut and write your entry in the Visitors Book, head south on the circuit track. Visit Keminiko.com/Miniature-Hikes for the other locations in Aro Valley, Mt Victoria, Tarakena Bay, Mt Cook, Red Rocks, and Newtown.

Thank you, **Kemi & Niko**

Matiu News - website!

Just letting you know that a “Matiu News” page on the [temporary MSICT website](#) has been created by Mike Rumble.

As well, PDF files for Nov 2013, Apr 2014, and July 2014 editions of Matiu Matters have been published.

How to get to Kemi & Niko's hut on Matiu, south on the Circuit Track



Eastbourne Forest Rangers

As the newly elected Chief Ranger for 2014/15 I want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of three Rangers for their work and unwavering support and efforts for the kaitiakitanga of Motu Matiu/Somes. They are:

1. **Ray Smith**, our outgoing Chief Ranger and my personal kaiwhakaako and kaiarahi (teacher & mentor), who has been the driving force behind our Ranger programme on Matiu/Somes for well over a decade.
2. **Derek Sole**, who has been the Ranger's Minute Secretary and principle archivist and keeper of the korero tuku iho (stories of the past) that Rangers tell to the visitors to the island.
3. **Gerald Rawson**, who has been the most active and productive guide of all the Rangers over the years that I have known him. Always ready to fill a gap or to take on a big group when we are short of Rangers on a given day.

These men epitomise the best attributes of Rangers through their support of the Kaitiaki Board and DOC's work on Matiu/Somes. Ray, Derek, Gerald, your fellow Rangers honour you and thank you. I know my role will be so much easier with your knowledge and support behind me.

Rangers' December Programme

This is an outline of the programme that the EF Rangers have undertaken this December:

26 Eastbourne Forest Rangers will be guiding 363 visitors (mainly school students) on 9 guided walks during December.

Another 24 Rangers will provide cover over 12 weekend days and public holidays, manning the Whare Kiore and patrolling the island.

In all, the Eastbourne Forest Rangers will be providing 248 volunteer hours to support the island this December.

Jerry Wellington, Chief Eastbourne Forest Ranger
(jerry.wellington@gmail.com)

EFRangers always welcome Recruits

The Rangers aim to provide one Guide for each 15 persons on Guided parties. But we are stretched to provide this number of Guides at times.

As the number of tours continues to increase, we will be stretched even more and we need to recruit Rangers to act as Guides, especially those available mid-week.

As you see from the photo (left), it is an enjoyable and rewarding job.

Anyone interested should contact Jerry Wellington at matiuguiding@gmail.com

Jerry Wellington

Purpose of Study

PENGUIN PONDERINGS 2014-03
Little Blue Penguin Study
Stage Two:
Matiu/Somes Island

Stage Two is a nest-based study to obtain data about egg production, chicks fledging, and the overall health of the colony. We also hope to gain a better understanding of nest fidelity and parent-chick relationships.

Survey Teams

14-15 August: Mike Rumble, Ros Batcheler, Geoff de Lisle, Dallas Bishop, Emma Dunning, Ali Hull, Gail Rumble

11-12 September: Ros Batcheler, Mike Rumble, Geoff de Lisle, Ali Hull, Roisin McIvor, Genevieve Spargo

Surveys

The September visit coincided closely with the start of egg-laying. Chick hatching was well under way by the time of the October survey.

The birds visually seem to be in good condition, and many are showing slightly a higher weight than in the previous year. This suggests suitable food is readily available at the moment.

Interestingly, while the egg-count is already much higher than 2013 the number of adults identified (including those web tagged this season) is likely to be much lower.

One item of real interest is the massive increase in the number of unmarked adults (82, compared with 27 in 2013). This poses some interesting questions!!

Notes:

1. 1-2 July:
 - a. Feather sampling for DNA and colour by US researcher.
 - b. Samples taken from 34 birds in nests (18 individual and 8 pairs).
2. 14-15 August:
 - a. One nest with two eggs;
 - b. 4 nests with one egg seen.
 - c. No nests with abandoned eggs.
- 11-12 September:
 - a. 60 nests with two eggs;
 - b. 23 nests with one egg seen.
 - c. 2 nests with abandoned/infertile eggs.
- 9-10 October:
 - a. 68 nests with two eggs;
 - b. 7 nests with one chick and one egg.
 - b. 6 nests with one egg seen.
 - d. 7 nests with abandoned/infertile eggs.



Other Points of Interest

The Weather

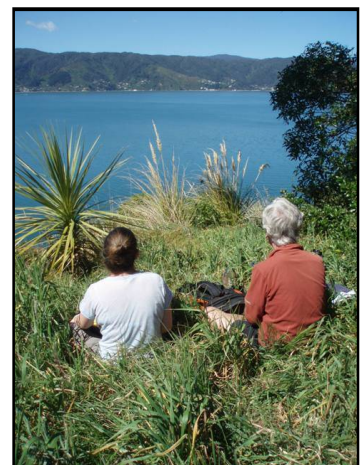
Fine weather for the September survey and great weather in October!

It is true – you simply cannot beat Wellington on any of its many good days!

The fine weather and longer daylight hours meant we were able to complete both surveys without rushing. Both surveys were completed by the morning of the second day.



September Lunch Break



October Sunshine

Sick Adult?

A relatively healthy looking Male adult was found in a nest box in the northern search area (no eggs and no chicks). It appeared to have a discolouration and slightly bald areas around its lower bill and inside its mouth.

Numbers To Date

[Figures are cumulative except for Nests Checked]

	1-2/7/14	14- 15/8/14	11- 12/9/14	9- 10/10/14
Nests Checked:	24	160	168	168
Nests + Birds/Eggs:	24	96	117	128
Nests + Eggs:	Nil	5	83	118
Nests + Chicks:	Nil	Nil	Nil	35
Birds Identified 2014 Season:	34	167	207	231
Total No. Eggs:	Nil	6	143	228
Total No. Chicks:	Nil	Nil	Nil	60
New Adults Marked:	18	62	74	82
New Chicks Marked:	Nil	Nil	Nil	3



Little Blue Penguin Project BBQ

Are you aware that the LBP Project comes to an end this year? Seven years is a long time and we won't let the project fade quietly into history!

We plan to mark the occasion with a BBQ on Matiu/Somes Island for volunteers and their partners/families.

The confirmed date is **Saturday, 31 January 2015**.

The BBQ will be an informal gathering, more of an opportunity to catch up with people who worked alongside you and to meet others who helped out before and after your time with the project.

It will take place no matter what the weather may bring as we have booked the Caretakers Cottage.

The plan for the gathering is as follows:

- Catch the 10.00am ferry from Queens Wharf or the 10.30am from Days Bay
- Informal gathering at the Caretakers Cottage
- BBQ lunch about 12.30-ish (time will depend on the cooks!)
- PowerPoint presentation and chat/stories in Caretakers Cottage about 2.00pm
- Free time before boarding ferries from MS (I recommend 3.55pm (Days Bay), or 4.25pm (Queens Wharf), but there might be a seat on the 3.10pm ferries if you need to leave early).

BBQ/meal arrangements are still being organised, but the POSSIBLE plan at this stage is for each person/family/group to bring their own food (meat, salads, etc). I will confirm arrangements in the New Year.

Please let me know as soon as possible (but definitely before Christmas!):

- If you will or will not be attending;
- the number of people in your group/family; and
- whether you will be catching the ferry from Queens Wharf or Days Bay.

Mike is happy to field emails or phone calls, and answer any questions,

Mike Rumble

the.rumbles@paradise.net.nz

04-972-3591, 021-243-6565

The Birds of Matiu/Somes: Spotted Shags

The first reported sighting of Spotted Shags nesting near Wellington were reported by John Kendrick, of the then Wildlife Service, on the 21st October 1972.

Mr Tudor Atkinson of York Bay was boating past Shag Rock, on the south-west coast of Matiu/Somes, when he saw seven shags sitting on nests. On 27th October 1972, John Kendrick and Tudor Atkinson visited the rock and found 13 nests, three of which had chicks, a few weeks old.

Ray Benfell took up employment on Matiu/Somes in July 1972 and started a banding programme on these shags, reaching peaks of 41 chicks in 1979 and 28 in 1980. he continued banding until he left the Island and Ralph Powlesland and other helpers took over/

One of the Spotted Shags hat was banded by Ray on the 27th July 1979 was found by Colin Miskelly, now at Te Papa, on Hautapu Beach about 9km north of Coromandel township, on 8th December 1979. It was alive but died shortly afterwards. Another was found on a southern Wairarapa beach.

The nearest sites to this early Matiu colony were in the Marlborough Sounds and on the Sugarloaf Stacks off the New Plymouth coast.

Since then the nesting places around Wellington Harbour have been the west coast of Matiu, below the Italian Memorial, on stacks on the south coast of Matiu, the north-east corner of Mokopuna, and north-west coast of Makaro Island.

Nesting takes place during May/June/July or when seasonal conditions or food supplies may make breeding as late as September/October and even November. They prefer to have their nests on steep rocky cliff faces.

This shag lays three eggs on a nest of grass, twigs, and seaweed and eggs take 28 to 31 days to hatch. The young are fed by both parents.

They are a marine species of shag and will fly out to sea to feed. They can be seen off Shag Rock, flying low to the water.

As they are increasing in numbers within the Harbour, it would seem that the fish stocks are in good supply. I think this is why Little Blue Penguins are also doing well on Matiu.

Reg Cotter, OSNZ



Alas, not a Spotted Shag, this is a white-fronted shag (would you believe?) Photo Phil Benge

Spotted shag:

Forest & Bird Nursery

The nursery, established 28 years ago, continues to play an important part in the revegetation of the Island, plants being raised for infilling and understorey planting. Kohekohe, tarata, hundreds of grasses and some Spaniards are the main varieties ready to be planted out next year and several hundred rata seedlings have recently been potted up.

The nursery is tidy apart from some long grass at the ends of a few boxes and some mulching is required.

The support team of some fifteen regulars have shared the work and this year have made ten trips to the Island. Many geckos are hanging out in the tool shed, so many that on a recent visit, shed gecko skins littered the floor.

Alex Kettles

Tramping Club gets down to work

Mid-winter weekend is too popular these days so Hutt Valley Tramping Club has shifted its volunteer effort to the spring equinox weekend, this year 11-12 October. Also with the longer days, more jobs can be done for Jo, so from Ranger's view, spring is better too?

Onion weeding was first on the south-west point, under the poking scratchy taupata, and fiddly work winking out tiny bulbs from the rock cracks. We followed that with a trickier job of removing an old MAF sign and its rusted pipe supports. Got it broken up but lugging bits up the cliff was not a good option. That was a reason for a boat trip instead, an additional trip to one that Jo had to make to Makaro with the Karo Busters. All these volunteers make for busy weekends for the Rangers.

Sunday was making the new chipper work, for it to demolish the piles of branches we'd broken up for it, a fence was painted, a gate was re-slung. Checking the rodent tracking stations along the east coastline was an interesting exercise in scrambling. A forest gecko in one of the stations was a bonus, and keen to show us his/her top side and under side (as you can see).

Still had a rush to clean up and get off the Island by the appointed time. Thanks Jo for organising us all.



Jan Heine



The pipe work that supported the disintegrating MAF sign (above)



Here's my beautiful top side



but don't you want to see my super soft under side too?

2014 & a successful translocation

Report on transfer and fledging of fluttering shearwater chicks (*Puffinus gavia*) moved from Long Island to Matiu/Somes Island in 2014

Prepared by Helen Gummer and Shane Cotter for the Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust and the Department of Conservation (February 2014)

Seventy-seven fluttering shearwater chicks *Puffinus gavia* were transferred from Long Island to Matiu/Somes Island in a single operation on 10 January 2014. This was the third and final transfer in a translocation project initiated by the Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust (MSICT) and supported by the Department of Conservation (DOC).

Transferred chicks were selected from Long Island using wing length and weight criteria developed during previous transfers to Mana Island (Wellington region). Transferred chicks ranging 2–4 weeks from fledging were housed in artificial burrows on Matiu/Somes Island, close to a sound-attraction unit broadcasting fluttering shearwater calls. Blockades prevented chicks leaving burrows prematurely; removal of these proceeded on an individual basis, based on weight, wing length, wing growth rate, and down coverage criteria, to allow chick emergence behaviour prior to fledging.

All chicks were hand-fed on a daily diet of tinned sardines in soy oil blended with water and a seabird vitamin/mineral supplement, via syringe and crop-tube. All chicks were presumed to have fledged successfully from the Matiu/Somes Island colony site with an excellent chance of post-fledging survival. Up to five chicks will have departed at slightly less than the suggested 385 g minimum weight requirement for birds to return as adults. Chicks fledged at average weights falling between those recorded for the 2012 and 2013 cohorts.

The majority of chicks (at least 82% of fledglings) stayed on Matiu/Somes Island for longer than the suggested minimum period of 18 days at the release site.

Included in the final fledging total are nine chicks considered to have disappeared prematurely from their artificial burrows based on their weight and/or down cover and/or wing length/growth rate. All of these chicks disappeared in good condition and had enough body weight to carry them through to successful fledging within the optimum fledging weight range without further hand feeding prior to their respective estimated

departures. At least five of these chicks would have spent >18 days at the release site.

There were no major health concerns with any of the chicks during their stay on Matiu/Somes Island. However, one chick lost some of its tail feathers and fledged when new ones had not emerged. Two chicks were found on the mainland on the second (at Tawa) and third (at Wellington) mornings after they had departed the island. Both were taken to The Nest at Wellington Zoo for care where one chick with pododermatitis died as a result of internal bleeding from physical trauma. The second chick was returned to Matiu/Somes Island on 13 February for its final fledging attempt.

Shane Cotter

Update on the FSW – hot off the press

Shane Cotter went over to Matiu/Somes Island 30/11/14 to check the progress of the eggs in burrows 15, 16 and 47 and he reports

Look what I found in burrow 15, on the right!!!!!! This chick is less than 2 weeks old and is a good size already.

I last visited the colony 2 weeks ago on the 15th November when my daughter had her birthday party on the island. At that time, birds were sitting on eggs in each burrow. I haven't visited the colony at night since mid-October.

Burrow 16 still had a bird sitting on an egg.

Burrow 47 had the egg outside the burrow in the trench leading to the burrow with a bird alone in the chamber.

Burrows 16 and 47 have female/female pairings so I don't expect the egg in burrow 16 to hatch.

The parents of this chick are two immigrants, unbanded birds attracted to the site. They were using this burrow last year but did not produce an egg then. The female was first captured and banded in June 2012. The male was first captured and banded in October 2012. That night they were together in burrow 25. They were found together again in the same burrow in November 2012 and August 2013. In October 2013, they moved to burrow 15 and have been found there together in May, July and August 2014.



Burrow 5's surprise

Interested in Volunteering on Matiu/Somes Island?

Lending a Hand: This is a great way to get involved in the island. We hold two open volunteering weekends a year (spring and autumn). This is for individual and small groups to join together and help us out with larger projects around the island.

Our next weekend is:

Date: Sunday 1st March and/or Monday 2nd March

Sign up for 1 or both days.

Ferry costs: \$23 per adult paid by the volunteer.

Arrival time: 10am ferry from Queens wharf or 10.30 from Days Bay

Departure Time: 3.55 to days bay or 4.25 to Queens wharf on Sunday or 2.35 to Days Bay or 3.25 to Queens wharf on Monday

Free overnight accommodation: available for up to 10 people (bring food, torch and sleeping bag)

Sign up by sending us an e-mail matiusomes@doc.govt.nz, bring a friend or a small group if you like. Let us know when you will arrive, which day or days you wish to volunteer for and if you wish to stay overnight.

Or, if you are interested in getting together a team of friends, family or work mates we also take groups of between 3 and 15 people throughout the year and times that suit us both. Work carried out varies depending on the group, weather and where we are with our work program, but often includes painting, weeding, track maintenance, beach cleans, just about anything really. You can find more information about other volunteering options on the DOC website.

Overnight stays for Friends

We now have a variety of overnight accommodation available for Friends of Matiu. If interested check out the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz for information and bookings.

Forest & Bird Members can get a 25% discount on any Island accommodation. Contact the DOC Wellington Visitors Centre wellingtonvc@doc.govt.nz 04 384 7770

Karobusters for 2015
 For 2015 trips to come, please contact Dave Cox: dave08.cox@gmail.com

Guided Walks
Interested? Check out the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz or email Jo or Emma at matiusomes@doc.govt.nz

Matiu Really Matters* – Newsletter
 Issued c.2-3 times a year, and as required
 *Name based on that used in Wellington Botanical Society Newsletter, by kind permission of Stan Butcher, Lower Hutt Branch Forest & Bird, Wellington Botanical Society

Thank you to all contributors – without your input it would not be the interesting read it is. And thanks to the team on Matiu/Somes of Jo, Emma & all.
 To have your say, why not email janheine@xtra.co.nz
Jan Heine NL compiler



**Next issue is next year 2015:
 Deadline due 01/03/15 or about then**

Would you like to be a member of Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust & help with projects on the Island?

If so, send in your
 Name:
 Email address:
 Postal address:

 Phone :

and please tick the appropriate boxes:

Annual Membership

	Life individual	\$200
	Individual	\$20
	Family	\$30
	Unwaged	\$10
	Organisation	\$100
	Donation (Tax deductible)	\$
	TOTAL	\$

Method of payment:

	Please send me an invoice
	I have paid by direct credit into MSICT bank account (01-0542-0011679-00)
	Cheque enclosed
	Yes, I would like a receipt

Please send this form to:
 Treasurer
 Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust
 PO Box 39 294
 Wellington Mail Centre

We will send you notices and news of projects and events, by email, and newsletters from time to time. Then we can invite you to:

- take part in hands-on conservation projects
- work with like-minded people on Island projects
- receive newsletters
- stay overnight as part of a 'work' weekend



