

Matiu Really Matters

May 2015



Rangers' Ramble for April 2015

Wow where has the year gone! First I would like to say a huge thanks to all our wonderful summer staff this season. Aristya, Gemma, Josh, Charlotte, Kea, Freddie, Jen, and Mike, you have all made a huge contribution, enhanced the visitor experience, and been amazing help for Jo and I.

We also give our thanks to our regular volunteers who of course always make a difference. Even those who just come out to the island once provide a lot of much needed help. The Island's success is credit to you all.

Unfortunately due to Wellington's amazing summer we ended up with an extreme fire danger risk. This forced us to close the island at 1pm daily for seven weeks. This took some getting used to, we lost a few trees and smaller plants and the sheep went on a much needed diet, but thankfully it began raining and the island is again green and bursting with life.

In March we celebrated 10 years of Karobusting on the island as part of a Whakawhaunaungatanga Day. The day was a great success, with many different volunteer groups having the opportunity to get together and see the different pieces of the pie. The day included unveiling of a new mural (see next page) that acknowledge the Karobusters work, and art exhibition with all the works made by people with connections to the island, and all proceeds donated to the island as well.

Many other things have happened through the summer and so far this autumn, we could write pages but we think it is best you see it for yourself. Hope to see you out here soon.

Jo, Fenella and Emma

Nga mihi, Jo, Emma, Aristya, Gemma, Josh, Charlotte, Kea, Freddie, Jen and Mike

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 Matiú/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, Paul McArthur.

District Matiú/Somes Island,
Kapiti Wellington District Office,
Department of Conservation
PO Box 5086, Wellington
Ph 04 5686555 fax 04 5688688
matiusomes@doc.govt.nz
www.doc.govt.nz

Hello from Mike, Ranger Volunteer

I have just completed my second year as a March ranger and again I have gained considerable satisfaction from the wide range of duties required of me.

Having a lot of experience behind me of both wildlife and meeting people, my daily contact with visitors from around the world and passing on the conservation message is very fulfilling. Not only do I have a great affection for New Zealand but I consider it a real pleasure to work with Pakeha and Maori alike. They are such nice people on Matiu Somes.

My love of nature has resulted in me being in contact with some amazing birds and wild creatures. I even have grudging respect for Cedric the ram! I also have my name on the island which is the real icing on the cake for me and I am very grateful to everyone who has made my Matiu Somes experience so special.

Cheers from Mike (Greenman)



The gathering at the Karobusters 10th anniversary.



The splendid mural celebrating the Karobusters' 10th, south end of Motel unit. (The real person is Jerry W.)

The Wellington Conservation Management Strategy Review is underway

You can be involved, find out how at:
www.doc.govt.nz/wellingtoncms

The Conservation Management Strategy (CMS):

- identifies how to manage places to achieve national conservation outcomes
- aligns with DOC's strategic direction to clarify priorities for managing conservation resources
- guides decision making, eg on applications to undertake commercial activities and for our own purposes
- guides where recreational activity can occur
- describes conservation outcomes to be achieved through milestones and actions
- provides the basis for reporting to conservation boards.

This CMS applies to a vast area from Wellington, up the east coast through the Wairarapa and Tararua Districts, across the Ruahine Forest Park, from Taihape out to the mouth of the Turakina River and back down the Rangitikei and Horowhenua-Kapiti coast to Wellington.

Provide feed back through the online survey,
<http://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/have-your-say/all-consultations/2015/wellington-cms-consultation/survey/>

OR, attend a CMS pre-consultation workshop are being held for key stakeholders.

Kapiti workshop:

Monday 18th May, 5.30pm to 8.30pm, Paraparaumu Library meeting room, Supper provided

Wellington workshop:

Wednesday 20th May, 5.30pm to 8.30pm, Wellington Central Library Mezzanine meeting room, supper provided

Local DOC staff will facilitate this workshop and collect information about the conservation values and aspirations you have for the Wellington region. This information will help us to draft a CMS that will guide managers and the public and establish Wellington conservation objectives and priorities.

Please RSVP with any dietary requirements by emailing Matt Barnett, mbarnett@doc.govt.nz, before Friday 8th May.

Kia pai to ra

F&B News

Twenty six years ago work commenced to turn the MAF vegetable garden area into a nursery to raise plants for the restoration of the island.

The number of plants raised peaked in the period 1998 – 2000 when over 7,000 were planted annually.

In recent years plants have been raised for infilling and understorey planting. DOC have been purchasing trays of seedlings and our volunteer group have been bagging them up, raising some 1,500 plants annually.

At present we have up to fifteen members who can be available for work. Eight of them have been very active for twenty or so years. Last year the team averaged eight for the ten Mondays worked.

This year the closure of the Island at midday resulted in our first visit being delayed until mid April. The watering system had been operating and coupled with high temperatures the team was facing a jungle of weeds.

What a relief and pleasant surprise to find on our arrival that DOC staff had put a weed eater to good use and the group was spared tedious, unproductive work. All plants were weeded and the nursery is in fine shape.

We are looking forward to receiving the next batch of seedlings.

Alex K.

Ornithological Society Teen Field Camp

Between 7th and 12th April 2015, 11 teenagers aged 15 to 18 participated in a field camp with the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ) to teach them birding skills. This camp was initially to be based solely on Mana Island. However, on the afternoon before departure, and on close inspection of the weather forecast, it was decided to turn the "Mana Island Teenage Field Camp" into the "Mana/Matiu Teenage Field camp". With rain and gale-force winds predicted for several days and the sea too rough to get out to Mana Island, the camp went to Matiu/Somes Island for the first few days until the weather improved. It was a fortunate change of plan because everyone had an opportunity to see penguins and tuatara up close on Matiu/Somes, and experience another island.

Participants in the camp were taught mist netting techniques, surveyed blue penguins, visited the fluttering shearwater colony as well as exploring the island both during the day and at night giving great views of giant wetas and tuatara up close.

The fluttering shearwater colony was visited – one bird was discovered in a burrow during the day. Twelve different birds were caught over two nights. There were two 2012 Matiu/Somes Island transferred chicks, both in burrows with other birds. The other ten birds were: six Mana Island transferred chicks (1 from 2006, 3 from 2007 and 2 from 2008), and four immigrant adults. Four pairs were located in burrows plus two individual birds in the same burrow but on separate nights. This bodes very well for next breeding season which begins in September with three of these pairs being male/female partnerships unlike last season when only one male was resident at the colony.

The list of birds seen over the 3 days on Matiu/Somes Island totalled 27 species including fluttering shearwater, blue penguin, australasian gannet, little shag, spotted shag, little black shag, reef heron, paradise shelduck, mallard, variable oystercatcher, arctic skua, black backed gull, red billed gull, white fronted tern, NZ pigeon, red crowned parakeet, kingfisher, silvereye, grey warbler, fantail, tui, blackbird, song thrush, dunnoek, house sparrow, chaffinch and starling.

Shane Cotter

Unveiling of Eastbourne Village Mosaic Walkway

Mosaic creators, Ellen Giggenbach (daughter of Johanna G, EFR) and Nancy Barclay, have produced eleven fine mosaics of local birds, like the Pakaha, Fluttering Shearwater (photo by Shane Cotter on right). They grace the footpaths on both sides of Rimu Street to bring new life to the village. See Eastbourne Herald 25th April for more.

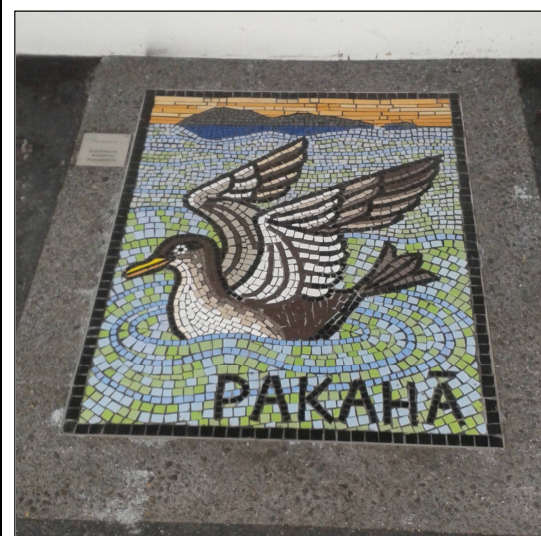


Read Matiu for Mana Island!



Learning some birding techniques on Matiu.

Photos: Peter Reese, NZOS



A Pakaha is set in stone, on an Eastbourne Village pavement

Eastbourne Forest Rangers

Under the direction of Jerry Wellington, Jo Greenman, and Emma Dunning, a number of the Eastbourne Forest Rangers who are involved in Ranger duties relieving DOC staff at weekends and their times, and in guiding, gathered in the Caretaker's Cottage, Sunday 12th April, for a planning session.

It was a productive mid-afternoon with discussion about topics that are good, and ones that we are having difficulties with. The BBQ was one of the good topics of course!

One of the main issues is coping with the large numbers of children in some school groups. Small groups are fun and the children have fun too as you can see in the photos. Large groups need a lot more adult input to keep everyone happy and gaining productive time on the island.



Muritai School could tell you about their tactics, but it looked like a siege against the folk of Big Tyre Fort. Photos: Jan Heine

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.

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 matiuguiding@gmail.com

c/- Jerry Wellington



PENGUIN PONDERINGS 2014-04

Little Penguin Study Stage Two:
Matiu/Somes Island

Purpose of Studies

Stage One (2007-2011) focused on obtaining data needed to determine if flipper bands on adult Little Penguins were causing drag and thus were affecting their ability to forage.

Stage Two (2012-2014) was a nest-based study to obtain data about egg production, chicks fledging, and the overall health of the colony. We also hoped to gain a better understanding of nest fidelity and parent-chick relationships.

Survey Teams

6-7 November 2014: Mike Rumble, Ros Batcheler, Geoff de Lisle, Dallas Bishop, Robert Hawke, David Cornick, Gemma Bowcock, Joshua Wells

20 and 24 November 2014: Ros Batcheler, Brent Tandy, Gemma Bowcock, Joshua Wells

4-5 December 2014: Mike Rumble, Ros Batcheler, Roisin McIvor, Brent Tandy, Dallas Bishop, Geoff de Lisle, Ali Hull, Alison Ballance

22 December 2014: Mike Rumble, Charlotte Parker, Aristia Marjuika

2 January 2015: Mike Rumble, Gail Rumble

Wellington remained true to form, with basically fine and pleasant weather for the November, December and January surveys.

The initial visit in November took place in the first half of the chick hatching and feeding phase. Two more visits were required in late November to mark the many chicks that were too small earlier in the month.

The December surveys took place near the end of the fledging phase.

Adults and chicks were generally in a healthy condition, and many seemed slightly heavier than previous years. The ready availability of food in the harbour and Cook Strait may have been a primary contributor.

An item of real interest is the massive increase in the number of unmarked adults (92, compared with 27 in 2013). This poses interesting but as yet unanswered questions!!

Additional Nest Boxes

74 new boxes were installed on Matiu/Somes Island in April 2014. 44 of these boxes were in the Stage Two study area (about half the island and half the known nests). More than 20 of these boxes had penguins, some of them having adults sighted for the first time and marked in 2014. Most of these active new nests resulted in adult pairings and chicks.

The extra nests probably contributed to the large increase in the number of birds identified and/or marked during 2014 (409, compared with 268 in 2013, and 300 in 2012).

Nesting Season

The nesting season was unusually long, with the first eggs sighted in August and the last chick fledging in January (5 months). There was no obvious reason for this unusual occurrence for Matiu/Somes Island – another as yet unanswered question.

The extended breeding season meant extra trips were needed, particularly in December and early January.

We also saw for the first time a clear overlap between the chick-rearing and adult-moulting phases. In one case there were two adults starting their moult and two large and healthy chicks in a nest box. Both chicks survived and apparently fledged.

Early Moult

The moult phase for adult penguins on Matiu/Somes Island normally occurs in January-February, but this year adults showing moult signs were seen in early December. Moulting was definitely well under way by mid-December.

Like the increase in unmarked adults and the extended nesting season issues, this raises interesting but as yet unanswered questions.

Numbers for 2014-15 Season

[Figures are cumulative except for Nests Checked]

	1-2 Jul	14-15 Aug	11-12 Sep	9-10 Oct	6-7 Nov	20 & 24 Nov	4-5 Dec	14 Dec	22 Dec	2 Jan
Nests Checked:	24	160	168	168	168	168	168	21	8	5
Nests With Birds/Eggs:	24	96	117	128	131	131	131	131	131	131
Nests with Eggs:	Nil	5	83	118	122	122	122	122	122	122
Nests with Chicks:	Nil	Nil	Nil	35	96	96	104	106	106	106
Birds Identified and/or Marked:	34	167	207	231	316	373	396	402	404	409
Total Number of Eggs:	Nil	6	168	230	238	238	238	238	238	238
Total Number of Chicks:	Nil	Nil	Nil	60	163	163	178	182	182	182
New Adults Marked:	18	62	74	84	90	91	92	92	92	92
New Chicks Marked:	Nil	Nil	Nil	3	71	127	149	155	157	162

Notes: 1. Egg counts for the 2014 nesting season:

- a. 1 nest with three eggs.(probably two new eggs and an older one)
- b. 116 nests with two eggs.
- c. 7 nests with one egg.
- d. 9 nests with abandoned/infertile eggs.

2. 10 dead chicks were found in or near nest sites; this figure is lower than 2013 (15) but still much higher than previous seasons when the average was 2-3 losses.

Possible Second Clutch

Matiu/Somes penguins are not known for second clutches but we may have seen an occurrence this year.

Two previously unmarked adults were found in one of the boxes installed in April 2014; both birds were marked. Both birds were found in the box with one egg in September, but two cold eggs were found in October and were removed. A fresh egg was found in the box in November. The adult sitting on the egg was not touched but was subsequently identified as one of the original pairing. A

chick and an egg were found in the box in early December. Both chicks were marked in early January 2015.

We cannot confirm with absolute certainty that this was a second clutch, but all the indications point to this as the most likely explanation.

Stage One Study Result

The study team thanks Paul Scofield for carrying out the statistical analyses needed to determine if flipper bands installed on Matiu/Somes birds caused drag in the water.

The question he addressed:

“Is there a difference between the survival rate of individuals with flipper bands and those with transponders or web tags?”

The preliminary outcome:

“The Matiu/Somes and the larger study on Philip Island do not definitively say flipper banding (if done correctly) significantly affects Little Penguins”

Mike Rumble and Ros Batcheler project update to the 2014 Penguin Conference outlined progress to date and summarised the preliminary results of Paul’s work.

The End

2014 marked the end of our seven-season little penguin study on Matiu/Somes, Makaro, and Mokopuna Islands. As a result of the good work put in by the many volunteers we can make the following general observations:

- Preliminary findings from the survival rates indicate that, as far as the Matiu/Somes colony is concerned, it is unlikely that foraging birds are affected by the flipper bands installed by the team.
- Nest boxes definitely made a major contribution to the healthy state of the colony.
- The massive amount of data about Matiu/Somes little penguins collected by the team will undoubtedly be of direct benefit in future research.
- Last, but by no means least, the colony on Matiu/Somes Island is healthy and growing, as shown in this extract about success rates (table below):

Year	Hatching	Fledging	Breeding
2012	0.85	0.98	1.46
2013	0.81	0.90	1.36
2014	0.76	0.95	1.39

We marked the end of both stages in the study with a farewell gathering of volunteers and their partners/families. Over 55 people attended the day – a great turnout.



The families were given an overview of the project findings and were shown short movies about the habits of penguins returning to or leaving the island at night (and in one case the antics of a big chick waiting for a parent to arrive 'home' and feed it).



Future

Data collected by the team extends well beyond the basic information needed for Stage One (the flipper band issue). Interest in what the data might indicate prompted a range of questions among the team members. This led on to Stage Two which sought answers to basic questions about nest fidelity and parent-chick relationships. Many of the, as yet unanswered questions extend well beyond the scope of Stage Two.

The pending arrival of new maps covering the hundreds of nest sites and the tracks linking them plus the large volume of data already available have set up Mātū/Somes, Makaro and Mokopuna Islands as an ideal location for studying the habits and characteristics of the little penguins. We highlighted this point in our project update to the 2014 Penguin Conference and that quickly led to expressions of interest in carrying out more detailed research into specific activities and areas.

This interest in more research resulted in one organisation expressing strong interest in conducting a range of research studies over an extended period. We hope to have more information about this potentially positive outcome in the near future.

Thank You to our Supporters

We acknowledge and thank the following people for their support during the seven seasons the project covered:

- The many volunteers for their dedicated work over eight years;
- Jo Greenman and Emma Dunning, the current Mātū/Somes Rangers, for their support; and
- Matt Sidaway, a great supporter during first five seasons.

Their positive approach and willingness to advise and support during both stages of the study helped ensure we achieved a successful outcome.

DOC now has a substantial amount of background data about the little penguin which will be invaluable for future studies and projects about the Little Penguin.

the.rumbles@paradise.net.nz

04-972-3591, 021-243-6565

Birds of Matiu/Somes: Reef Heron

Egretta sacra, Matuku Moana

One of the most secretive birds on New Zealand's rocky/coastal shorelines is the Reef Heron. In some areas they are plentiful and others they are rare or non-existent. The Marlborough Sounds have the closest colonies to Wellington with other concentrations in the Coromandel, around the Auckland area, the east coast of Northland and Fiordland. Scattered Reef Herons are seen along the Wellington south coast/Makara and rarely along the eastern harbour.

They have nested on Matiu for several decades. First nests were seen on the south-east corner where their nests were on Elderberry branches. When these trees were removed because they were non-native, the birds shifted to the trees on the small beach below North Point.

Reef Herons are slatey grey in colour and mostly are seen in a hunched position. The male and female have the same appearance.

Their food consists of small fish, small eels, frogs, crabs and small shell fish. They obtain these by standing still by the edge of the water and then extending their rather long necks when the prey gets within range.

On Matiu they build a nest of twigs on top of sturdy branches. It is similar to a native pigeon's nest. Two to four blue/green eggs are laid from September to December. Incubation lasts 3-4 weeks. When fledged the young seem to disappear and, although banding was carried out at the southern site, they were not recorded again.

They can sometimes be seen on the sunken barge beyond the old wharf.

For more information and photos go to www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz

Reg Cotter, OSNZ



Reef heron

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 DOC Visitor Centre at wellingtonvc@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 spring 2015:
Deadline due 01/08/15 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



