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05 Sept
9.15 Planting in the park
Sausage sizzle
2 pm AGM followed by
Guest Speaker
Councillor Christine Rose
All welcome

TAWHARANUI OPEN SANCTUARY SOCIETY INC.

Newsletter No. 33 June 2010



One hundred bellbirds enjoyed luxury living in four temporary aviaries at Tawharanui prior to being transferred to Waiheke, Motuihe and Hamilton Gardens.



Volunteers planting Twin Hills Gully at Queens Birthday weekend.

Tawharanui Open Sanctuary is a joint project with Auckland Regional Council



Coming Events

- Sun. 4 July** Workday planting trees. 9.15 am. Follow signs to plant site. Bring rain coat and clean foot wear. Sausage sizzle to follow.
- Sun. 1 Aug.** ARC workday planting trees. 9.15 am. Follow signs to the plant site. Bring rain coat and clean foot wear. Sausage sizzle to follow.
- Sun. 5 Sept.** AGM and planting in the park. Meet at 9.15 am . Bring rain coat and clean foot wear for planting. Sausage sizzle to follow. 2 pm AGM followed by guest speaker Councillor Christine Rose.
- Sun. 3 Oct.** Workday. Meet at the Woolshed at 9.15 am. Sausage sizzle to follow.

Chairman's Report



Two of TOSSI's important activities at this time of year are tree planting and your annual membership renewal.

As you know we plant 20,000 trees each year, covering two hectares, and that work is done in winter when weather conditions are more suitable for transplanting and the ground is soft. The aim is to improve the habitat for fauna - "habitat is everything" - particularly for the increasing number of birds that have been returned to the sanctuary and are successfully breeding. Another reason for planting trees is to re-vegetate those areas of the park that were converted to grassland many years ago but have now been deemed inappropriate for pastoral farming.

Tree planting is a very rewarding activity but it does take several years to see the fruits of one's labour, or the fruit on the trees the birds would say. TOSSI is fortunate to have dedicated volunteers Penny and Steve Palmer who oversee our substantial re-vegetation project. Please give them as much help as you can, for example if you know of any community or corporate groups that might be interested in getting involved, please email Steve on secretary@tossi.org.nz.

Enclosed with this newsletter is your membership renewal form for the year 01.07.10 to 30.06.11. We thank you for your past support and sincerely hope that you will continue your membership. When we apply for contestable grants it is very helpful if we can demonstrate widespread community endorsement through our high membership numbers. It is also encouraging for your committee to know that it has your ongoing backing. If you have any queries about your membership please contact Joe Crandle, our treasurer, or Dorothy Cooper, our membership secretary, at secretary@tossi.org.nz.

The biggest event held in the sanctuary recently was Art in the Woolshed 2010, superbly organised again by Helen Crosby and her team. Thank you very much to everyone who was involved – volunteers, artists, buyers, visitors, RDC and ARC. The event adds greatly to TOSSI's profile (over 4,000 people visited this exhibition) and is our largest fundraiser with \$38,500 raised this time for TOSSI's ongoing projects in the sanctuary.

Paul Williams



Left. Some of the Art in the Woolshed committee count the totals.

Right. Helen Crosby rejoices that the fifth Art in the Woolshed Exhibition is over.

Help is needed to coordinate AITW 2012, the year TOSSI celebrates their ten year anniversary. See page 14.



Open Sanctuary Coordinator Update

The drought has been the defining feature of this summer and autumn. Substantial cracks in the ground formed as soils got drier and drier. One crack at Tokatu point was over 70cm deep and ran for tens of metres! Cracked earth alongside or under the pest proof fence is a major concern as these can become continuous and form tunnels that allow pest ingress. The TOSSI fence check team kept an eye on these, and when required cracks were filled with sand or soil.

Drought conditions have impacted ARC farm operations this summer and autumn, although Tawharanui wasn't as hard hit as some due the kikuyu pastures. 150 extra ewes were grazed at Tawharanui due to lack of feed on southern parks, and 30 weaner calves destined for Shakespear have been held over until conditions improve there.

Drought also caused much angst with the 'do we or don't we' discussions around the May 2nd planting. After much agonising it was considered the wetland floor was suitable to plant, and shortly after planting the rains finally arrived.

Supplementary feeding of pateke was maintained through autumn. This feed is normally used for a short period (one month) to habituate the birds to their new home following translocation. Drought and associated dry ground conditions meant feed and ability to forage would be reduced, so feeders operated continuously to reduce dispersal to find new feeding grounds. Six new local born ducklings are currently using these feeders on the Ecology Stream.

A team of volunteer herpetologists undertook a gecko survey following a report of two green geckos. In this group was former ARC ecologist Graham Ussher who had undertaken many hours of surveying this site for geckos between 2000 and 2005, with nil records observed. To their delight this team of five discovered 15 green and forest geckos in just 2.5 hours searching in the area previously surveyed. Encouragingly, all female green geckos were observed to be gravid (pregnant). Further surveys have identified even more geckos, indicating a healthy population. Although these two species had been released on park in 2005, it is considered that these animals observed are a recovering population of lizards previously suppressed by animal pests and now evident five years after their key predators have been removed. The prize for keenest eyes needs to be shared between Ranger Kane for his 3cm bay green gecko and Jay Ruffell for his daytime long distance forest gecko observation.

Long term monitoring of shore skinks was repeated in April. Results show we have a generally stable shore skink population, with some new site records obtained. This stability is encouraging when we consider that since 2006, 193 shore skinks, with a bias towards adult and sometimes gravid females have been captured and relocated from the Park to establish four new populations.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will read of bellbirds translocated from Tawharanui to establish four new populations; how our new kakariki are faring; and the continuing story of our establishing seabird populations.

Matt Maitland

I can be contacted at matt.maitland@arc.govt.nz or 09 426 1200



Editorial

When I inherited the editors job in December 2007, I had concerns that there might not be sufficient material to fill the pages! How wrong I was! There is always something exciting and newsworthy happening at Tawharanui Open Sanctuary. In the next newsletter there will be the follow up article about the marine success at Tawharanui by Roger Grace.

Tawharanui is full of surprises. On returning from monitoring Pateke last week, Keith Edwards and I encountered six bottlenose dolphins feeding and frolicking at Anchor Bay.

Alison Stanes



Kakariki

In March 50 kakariki from Hauturu (Little Barrier) were released in Ecology bush. Some have dispersed and others taken up residence. Ten had radio transmitters attached to their tail feathers. TOSSI volunteers monitoring these birds found that it was more difficult than monitoring kiwi and pateke who stay mainly on the ground. We were asked to try to sight the birds and read the leg band combinations as well as hearing the signal. Chasing birds that can fly swiftly through dense bush is not easy! Signals from high in trees bounce off tight gully walls. Six birds either went into a moult, or pulled their tail feathers leaving immobile transmitters right across the park. These tiny radio transmitters have to be hunted out and retrieved. We are hoping the kakariki will settle in the park and establish a breeding population.

Alison Stanes

Bellbird translocation from Tawharanui and Tiritiri Matangi

While Tawharanui Open Sanctuary has already been used as a source for several translocations of shore skinks, this translocation was the first time that birds had been removed, and it is a measure of the success of the open sanctuary. In mid-May, a total of 200 bellbirds, (100 sourced from Tawharanui Open Sanctuary and 100 from Tiritiri Matangi Island), were released in four batches of 50 at Motuihe Island, Whakanewha Regional Park and Fenwick Reserve on Waiheke Island and in the Hamilton Gardens. This translocation was a collaborative effort between the ARC, DOC, Motuihe Trust, Fenwick Reserve and also Landcare Research and the University of Waikato in Hamilton. The Tawharanui and Tiritiri birds were evenly divided between the release sites to provide a good genetic mix, and even numbers of males and females were released at all sites.

The two source populations have different genetic backgrounds. The Tiritiri population has always been present, but declined to just a few pairs when the island was cleared and farmed. The population has increased to over 1000 now that the island has been replanted and restored. The Tawharanui population is new, being derived from a mass natural colonization from Little Barrier in early 2005. They have flourished and now probably number at least 800. Bellbirds are now the most numerous native bush birds at Tawharanui, and in late summer they are excessively abundant. In April, shortly before catching began, Kevin Parker and I surveyed bellbirds along three 500 metre transects in Ecology Bush. Extrapolation over the bush as a whole gave a total of 500 birds plus or minus 100 birds. This survey gave us some confidence that we could harvest up to 100 birds from Tawharanui without detrimental effect.

As a result of failures with previous bellbird translocations, this big collaborative release was set up to trial different release sites and release strategies. The four release sites included a 180 ha mammal-pest-free island (Motuihe), two approx 300 ha predator-managed areas on a large island (Waiheke 9500 ha) and a 180 ha predator-managed area in an urban setting (Hamilton Gardens and nearby bush reserves). Feeders were provided at all release sites, while sound anchors were placed at two of them, Whakanewha and Hamilton. At these sites the two sound anchors were placed 500 metres each side of the feeder, allowing the behaviour of birds at the feeders and sound anchors to be compared. Ipods at the sound anchors were programmed to play two-hour dawn chorus sequences of Tawharanui songs at one anchor and Tiritiri songs at the other for a 10 day period. All of the birds were individually colour banded and about 12/50 birds at each release site were fitted with tiny (0.6-0.7g) radio transmitters, attached to the bases of the central tail feathers, to allow dispersal of some of the birds to be more easily monitored.

The birds were caught simultaneously at Tiritiri and Tawharanui in mist nets and also by trapping at the sugar water feeders (on Tiritiri) during the first week of May by two teams of about 10 people each. Kevin Parker led the Tiritiri team while John Stewart led the one at Tawharanui. The birds were housed in aviaries at both sites during the capture phase. Tony Woodroffe and I built four reusable temporary aviaries for Tawharanui, while at Tiritiri we used the existing permanent aviary plus 5 smaller aviaries borrowed from the Maungatautari project. Males and females were housed separately to reduce competition at the food. Captive husbandry was a big job and the food preparation, replenishing and cleaning tasks kept Sharon Kast (Tawharanui) and Monique van Rensburg (Tiritiri) and their helpers very busy. Disease screening produced a positive *Yersinia* test in one of the Tiritiri birds, so we put the whole transfer on hold for a week while we administered antibiotics to all of the captive Tiritiri birds through their food. They were finally ready to go on Saturday 15 May, with the first releases being of the Tawharanui males at all four sites on Sunday 16 May. The remainder of the birds followed, with all of the Tiritiri birds released on Monday 17 May and the Tawharanui females on Tuesday 18 May.

Continued on page 10

In March 50 kakariki released at Tawharanui from Hauturu Island



Kakariki are released in Ecology Bush. Sharon Kast displays a bird before setting it free.



Luis Ortiz-Catedral organised the transfer of kakariki from Hauturu (Little Barrier Island) to Tawharanui.



In May 100 Bellbirds left Tawharanui destined for Waiheke, Motuihe and Hamilton



Dr. Tim Lovegrove, ARC natural scientist, surrounded by the support team involved with mist netting bellbirds, banding and transporting them to aviaries.

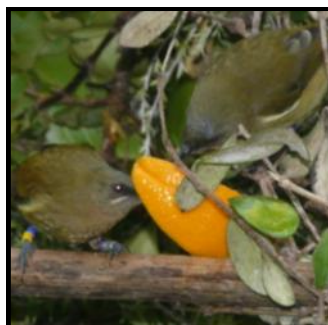


ARC Mags Ramsey stands by the four specially designed aviaries near the cottage. Each housed 25 bellbirds throughout the two weeks.



Sharon Kast spent two weeks in a mocked up kitchen, preparing concoctions of wombaroo, jam, honey, fruit cake, vegetable puree and sugar water.

Bellbirds feed greedily on fresh oranges, pears, apples and a cafe of fruit and vegetable purees.



Twice daily cafeterias of tins were filled with the prepared food and served to the bellbirds along with fresh fruit and fresh water to bath in.

What a Class Room !

Have lessons ever been like this? Look at the photo of the Wool Shed. Thanks to TOSSI and ARC, 8C & 8D from Mahurangi College were able to travel to Tawharanui in late April to spend a day to link their class room work and observe the impacts on the marine environment.

They had completed investigating the condition of the Mahurangi river beside College as part of WaiCare. The downstream effects in the Mahurangi Harbour become obvious to the students and they have extended their thoughts to the wider marine environment, this includes looking at the importance of Marine Parks and Reserves.

Dr Roger Grace's Power Point presentation in the Wool Shed (what a venue!) encapsulated all the important ideas about the value of marine reserves and maintaining the health of the catchment areas. Roger provided lots of up to date and stimulating information. The classes later spent time looking at how the land inter-faces with the marine environment, with Sharon Kast giving her unique coverage of shore birds and Les Cave relating the importance of the Open Sanctuary. The classes split up to do a beach clean-up, the debris collected was sorted and the information logged on the Sir Peter Blake website. http://www.sirpeterblaketrust.org/environment/care_for_our_coast/ It was a great day, students and accompanying parents commenting on how they have a new appreciation of Tawharanui and it's national importance as a conservation leader. A few weeks later, there was a very well attended evening at College when students reported and did presentations on their WaiCare and Marine Reserve work.

Les Cave



Roger Grace speaks to the school children on the marine environment



Students outside the info hut



Recording rubbish for the website

Ode to the second Owl Prowl at Tawharanui

17 brave explorers had a pre prowl supper as the sun went down. Jo Ritchie and I and the Puckett gang reviewed the achievements of Tawharanui Open Sanctuary (TOS) to date none of which could have been achieved without the ARC and many generous volunteers. Then off on the prowl we went, down to Anchor Bay lagoon where two pateke swam lazily past and 4 NZ dotterel conveniently sauntered down the beach.

Korimako (bellbird) abounded in the pohutukawa, darting and singing as the sun went down. Tidal pools sparkled as we rock hopped round to Next Bay and up through the paddocks to Ecology Bush where signs of recent rabbit control sparked discussion on how the eradication was proceeding. Kaka screeched and warbled in the twilight heading to roosting spots high in kauri trees. A keen eye spotted the first ruru (morepork) eyeing us suspiciously its head constantly moving up and down following our every move. Three more were spotted before we headed down into the mystery walk. It was truly an owl prowl in every sense of the word.

A short pause for Jo to confidently find the track down into the bush. And she did not get lost this year! Negotiating tree roots, pausing to marvel at huge old puriri and kohekohe, hunting for moths and weta we made our way down to the stream where the glowing eyes of koura and the cloudy splashes of kokopu caught our attention. Kiwi were heard but not seen - crashing through the bush, feathers and probe holes around moist ground and all serenaded with an evening chorus of korimako, tui, kereru, ruru, whitehead and robin.

Overhead a clear star studded night led us through the grass track and back into the Ecology trail bush with its giant old trees and the sculpted trunks of nikau. Neil the Eel did not grace us with his presence in the stream despite dangling Austin Puckett as bait! Listening to Jo talk about the success of the TOSSI and ARC partnership made me reflect on TOSSI's "early days", when Jo was the project manager and TOSSI was raising funds for the pest proof fence. The original TOSSI committee members were Hamish Alexander, Rhys Thompson, Alison Stanes, Les Cave, Paul Cavanagh, Barry Lett, Chris Roberts, and Jack Repia. Who would have imagined that we could accomplish so much in the last nine years? I could tell a lot of stories about our former project manager, but I'll save them for our next owl prowl, when we walk on the "wild side" of Tawharanui with Jo Ritchie!

Thanks to those who braved the walk in the dark, the donations that were received and the interest in the park and the open sanctuary. Tawharanui is a wonderful example of the success of people working together towards a common cause. Thank you again to all who came and all of you who visit, support and volunteer.

Sharon Kast



Owl prowl participants listen attentively to Jo Ritchie



The Owl Prowl group heads for the bush

4 April Sunday in the Park



Resident Ranger Maurice

On Easter Sunday, twenty-seven volunteers signed in at the woolshed. Some headed west to weed in the dunes, while others worked at the TOSSI nursery. The weed brigade, equipped with sharp "weapons" formed a line marching forward with purpose to eradicate the few remaining dreaded apple of Sodom and mighty lupin, ripping out fleabane in their path, leaving rolling dunes of meuhlenbeckia in their wake.

Maurice Puckett gave a lively talk after the BBQ, complete with an Easter bunny! Thank you to duty ranger, Becky Trigg.

Sharon Kast



Mighty volunteers prepared to attack dune weeds



David Stone demonstrates changing saw blades

2 May ARC Sunday Plant Day

The ARC Planting Day at Tawharanui Park on 2 May brought forth a brilliant sunny day to greet almost 70 people who arrived there to start this season's planting. The first area fortunately chosen was the wetlands at the bottom roadway below Twin Hills. The lack of rain for almost all summer and extending into autumn has made the slopes and sheep track terraces of Twin Hills a mass of cracked hard yellow clay, almost impossible for a spade to penetrate to make an adequate hole for the new plant's roots much less than for the plant to survive. However a few days of light rain in late April had produced enough water into the wetlands to support the 3400 flax, manuka, and cordelyne planted there by the volunteers on this, our first Sunday of the four in 2010 winter planting sessions.

A barbeque provided by ARC complete with cole slaw, potato salad, fruit, hot and cold drinks, biscuits and beef sausages from Stubbs Butchery in Warkworth was a welcome reward for the workers after their morning labours. With 22,000 plants having been raised in the nursery again this year, the "rain willing" target for the June planting will be 5,000 plants each day so we need lots of folks to come and help us enjoy a day (or two) planting and eating BBQ in the park. Conservation Volunteers of New Zealand will again provide a group of enthusiastic youth who come to NZ to work on such projects during their holidays. On the days before the planting, CVNZ guys and girls haul the plants out to the Twin Hills area from the nursery and spread them out to individual sites under the direction of Steve Palmer, TOSSI's planting guru. Come and join us for a Sunday in the Park with TOSSI on the first Sunday of each month throughout the year. This is a great way to celebrate a day out in one of Auckland's premier parks with good exercise, supportive companionship, children's entertainment, and a significant contribution to our heritage.

Steve Harrison

Queens Birthday Weekend Saturday and Sunday 5/6 June.

15 plant loads were transported from the nursery to the gully behind Twin Hills.



Trays of plants are pulled down the hill with ropes in preparation for the Queen's Birthday planting weekend.

Those of you who lay in bed on the Sunday of Queens Birthday weekend missed out on a satisfying and fun day. I admit the day didn't seem promising but as we had a group of young kea and cub scouts committed to coming we thought we should get out there. It looked even worse on the way out especially when we came round a corner to find Maurice Puckett busy chain sawing a fallen gum which was blocking the road. From there on the day improved and although not all the sea scouts made the trip we ended up with 47 adults and 45 children. As a result good inroads was made on those plants we had laid out during the week. Again we have to thank the dedicated work of a small group of nursery workers and CVNZ for getting the plants out as this is more difficult than planting them. Even the youngest of the keas spent 2 hours in the field helping with planting. Having worked earlier in the week with a group of older teenagers I was impressed with the lack of complaining from the cubs and keas. They certainly earned their BBQ lunch, expertly prepared by Elizabeth Harrison and Dorothy Cooper.

The planting on the Saturday was of a more routine nature and although it was windy and threatening the 60 planters remained dry. We appreciated the number of enthusiasts that managed to get back up the hill after lunch. By the end of the weekend we had over 5000 trees in the ground.

For those of you feeling just a little guilty for missing this weekends planting there will be further plantings on **Sunday the 4th of July and Sunday the 1st of August.** We still have 11,000 trees to get in the ground and these trees do nothing for the bird habitat sitting in the nursery.

Steve Palmer





Volunteers enjoy barbecue lunches organised by Elizabeth Harrison.



Dorothy Cooper with Steve and Elizabeth Harrison cooking sausages.



Organisers return from the gully behind Twin Hills, triumphant that 4000 trees are in the ground.



Saturday 5 June barbecue outside in paddock



Sunday 6 June barbecue inside the woolshed

Bellbirds continued from page 4

Since the releases, staff, contractors and volunteers have been busy following the radio tagged birds and checking activity at the feeders. Hazel Speed coordinated volunteers and the monitoring effort on Motuihe, while David Bryden and Rosemary Gatland looked after the two Waiheke sites. Calum Ninnes, Neil Fitzgerald and John Innes coordinated the Hamilton team. While data on the releases was still coming in when this newsletter went to press, there have already been some interesting observations. Very soon after release, some radio-tagged Motuihe birds visited Waiheke and then returned, while some Waiheke birds also visited the feeder on Motuihe and then returned to Waiheke. On Waiheke, there were movements between Whakanewha and Fenwick Reserve and birds also dispersed to Oneroa, Church Bay, Onetangi and Orapiu. At Motuihe, about 13 birds (12 ex Tiritiri 1 ex Tawharanui) regularly used the feeder during the first couple of weeks. The Whakanewha and Hamilton feeders were not used at all, while that at Fenwick reserve was used by up to 8 birds. There was quite a lot of activity around the sound anchors at Whakanewha, while very little activity was noted at the Hamilton sound anchors. Many of the Hamilton birds appeared to disperse quite quickly out to a distance of 5-20 km, with some of the more distant birds picked up from a plane by Calum Ninnes. On 31 May, the corpse of a radio-tagged Tawharanui female was recovered from a rat's nest in a tree between Te Awamutu and Pirongia. There have also been losses of at least two birds on Waiheke. The rat-eaten remains of one of these, a radio-tagged Tiritiri male, were recovered on 14 June by Mike Lee and Andy Spence at Rocky Bay. The most remarkable dispersal has been that of one of the Tiritiri males, released in Hamilton and found during the first week of June back at one of the feeders on Tiritiri. Sharon Kast, Alison Stanes and James Ross have scanned all likely frequencies at Tawharanui, but there has been no evidence yet that any of the radio-tagged Tawharanui bellbirds has returned home.

By mid-June, many of the radio tags were fading as they only had a 3-4 week battery life. Records from now on will depend mainly on observations from the public and records of colour banded birds noted at the feeders with small automatic cameras. It is hoped at a reasonable proportion of the birds will settle inside the predator-managed areas at the four release sites, and the feeders are being kept going to assist this process. Transect counts will be carried out during the summer to survey the numbers and to check for un-banded locally-bred young birds.

Tim Lovegrove



Some of the kiwi listening volunteers back in the warmth of the Vol Hole.



David and Jill Stone check the compass bearing for the kiwi they have just heard.

National Kiwi Call Count Survey 11, 12 & 13 June at Tawharanui

Oh what a night! Volunteers spent 2 hours on 3 consecutive nights recording kiwi calls, as part of a national survey. A moonless night is the best time to hear kiwi. All 3 nights were dark and cold at the 6 listening sites, but add a blinding rain to the mix and everything looks different. Finding a way back to the warmth of the vol hole was the real challenge. Fewer kiwi calls were heard this year, but that does not mean there were fewer kiwi, it just means that the kiwi are smarter than the volunteers! Thanks to all that braved the elements and your participation is appreciated.

Sharon Kast

Hauraki Gulf Earns Seabird Capital Title

The Auckland Region was well represented at a Seabird Symposium held at the University of Auckland in April. This event posed the question whether a seabird plan was required for the management of seabirds within the Hauraki Gulf.

The premise that triggered this symposium is the lack of recognition of the value of the Gulf for seabirds. Figures presented on the day conclusively place the Hauraki Gulf as the richest seabird habitat in the world - 99 recorded seabird species, (half of these are petrels). This number includes 25 breeding species (three breeding only within the Gulf), 22 regular visitors, 24 rare visitors and 26 vagrant species.

It is comforting to know that we can refer to the Hauraki Gulf as the seabird capital of the world given that Auckland is also renowned as the globe's weed capital, according to Mel Galbraith OSNZ.

Successful survey of the headland for Grey-faced Petrel at Tawharanui.

On Thursday 27 May Grey-faced Petrel were heard from Shag Bay all the way around the headland towards the bay between Elephant Point and Maori Bay. A lot of flying activity with reports from all observers of groups of birds (up to 10) flying in formation with spectacular acrobatics. A lot of circling around some sites like Elephant Point and Ngaio Bay, and these together with an area on the loop track appeared to be where most of the calling was concentrated. Penny and Steve Palmer had one bird land beside them as they were monitoring the burrows and both were definitely active (they could see the tails of the birds inside). Colin Binstead and I were at Elephant Point and could smell 'petrel' from amongst the flax below where we were standing. That slope is marked for future investigation. Calling began soon after we were on site around 1745hrs. We all started heading back to the Trig rendezvous at 1930hrs.

Although no new burrows were detected I did find a third burrow in the vicinity the 2009 burrow the following Saturday. This appears to be active and it, along with the other two will be monitored in coming weeks. All very positive. The number of birds flying about does appear to indicate there are more pairs are breeding on the headland. At this time of the year breeding birds will be out at sea during their pre-laying exodus, a time when the females especially will be 'growing' their eggs for laying from late June/early July. Most of the birds seen and heard displaying during the survey will be non-breeders prospecting.

Kiwi call count survey volunteers in mid June observed and heard many Grey-faced petrel circling at Tokatu Point. Our next GFP survey is planned for Wednesday 7 July. Please contact Sharon Kast if you'd like to join in. Thanks to everyone on the survey for your time and enthusiasm.

Chris Gaskin

Short Stories from Tawharanui

A local ornithologist who shall remain nameless was taking an evening walk at Tokatu Point and stopped to water the shrubbery! To his surprise, while he was standing there, he saw two green geckos! This has prompted scientists to visit the area and find that a remnant population is breeding successfully.

A botanist visiting Possum Gully discovered a small birds nest with soft white fur like lining, having fallen out of a tree. In order to see what the fur like material was, she took the nest home and put it in her compost bin where the fur like seeds grew into many moth plants, one of the worst weeds in New Zealand! On informing park staff a search followed and a serious infestation was found in a gully nearby. As a result this has been thoroughly dealt to.

A kakariki monitor thought she had found another kakariki picked up by the telemetry gear from Twin Hills. When she checked her list she realised she was picking up a transmitter that had been retrieved and was being stored in the office in the Vol Hole! (The Vol Hole is a shortened name given the Volunteer accommodations next to the rangers office.)

Volunteers stood for an hour and a half in the dark and the rain at sites around Tokatu Point while grey-faced petrel in twos and threes wheeled over their heads swooping and hollowing. It is the time of year when these birds are performing a mating ritual before they settle in to nesting sites. Next month they will be clearing their nest burrows in preparation for the season and then they go into a quiet period called the honey moon. The volunteers completely undeterred by the fact they were cold and dripping wet returned to the Vol hole ecstatic about the Grey-faced petrels they had seen. The Vol Hole was a buzz of excitement as volunteers stood crowded around a warm fire caressing cups of hot drinks..

Alison Stanes



New Zealand storm petrel

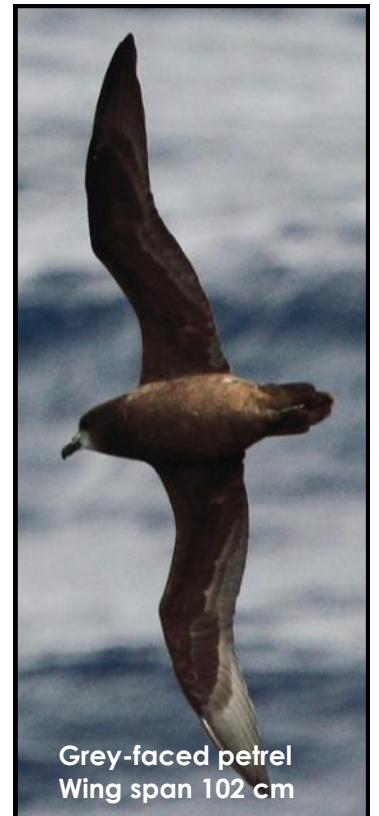
Left. New Zealand storm petrel were thought to be extinct until 1993 when they were re-discovered in the Hauraki Gulf. These birds have a white belly and a distinct sweep of white above the tail compared with the more common white - faced petrel pictured below. Another way of identifying New Zealand storm petrel, is that their feet extend beyond the body when they are flying, The white-faced petrel do not.



White-faced storm petrel

Left. White-faced storm petrel are small around 20 cm and weigh 45 grams. Like the New Zealand storm petrel they feed on a wide variety of krill, plankton and small fish while dancing suspended daintily over the water.

Right. Grey-faced petrel nest only in NZ. They are returning to Tawharanui to breed. GFP travel long distances to feed, often leaving chicks in the nest burrow for six or seven days!



Grey-faced petrel
Wing span 102 cm

Dolphin visit Tawharanui



Three of the six bottlenose dolphin spotted feeding and frolicking at Anchor Bay
If you see dolphin at Tawharanui, check out the nicks on the dorsal fins. The dolphin on the left is nick-named Nick. Please record sightings in the Vol Hole TOSSI diary.

Dolphin make random visits to Tawharanui. These bottlenose dolphin were photographed at Anchor Bay on 4 June.



Pelagic Tour off the shores of Tawharanui

At the last minute Sharon Kast, my twin and myself joined a seabird trip guided, by Chris Gaskin in the outer Hauraki Gulf, an area that is globally important for 14 species of tubenose seabird (petrels and shearwaters). This was a great opportunity to see species that might one day call nearby Tawharanui home. Grey-faced petrel last year returned to Tawharanui and nested.

At Ti Point Sharon arrived clutching a book, *Seabirds—an identification guide*, which she had plucked off the book shelf as she rushed out the door. It was a thick book missing a dust cover, and slightly worn at the edges. Inside were the most exquisitely painted ocean birds of the world all lined up for ease of identification. One of the international visitors on the tour saw the book and stepped forward and said "what edition is it, first or second?" Sharon answered, "why?" and hesitated before she went on, "did you write it?" "Yes", said Peter Harrison as he took it out of her hands to have a look. "I did the paintings too, I am an artist, its the second edition, that's worth \$900 US dollars" Sharon replied, "I bought it at a book sale for \$25 NZ." Peter happily autographed Sharon's book for her.



On board were Chris Gaskin and Peter Harrison both international experts on seabirds. Peter informed us that water birds on land swim with their feet to manoeuvre among plants while marine birds swim with their wings. Penguins evolved from petrels we were told. "Resource partitioning," said Peter Harrison is a term used to determine how each species evolved to live and feed on different available food sources.

Large flocks of fluttering shear water were soon encountered close to the shore in shallow waters. Further off shore were buller's shear water and flesh footed shearwater. And then came white faced storm petrel who hung daintily dancing on the water, cooks petrel, who nest on Little Barrier, Australasian gannet, and fairy prion. At the lunch stop near the Arches on the Mokohinau Islands, we spotted red crowned parakeet, bellbird and tui. Grey ternlet nestled on the side of Maori Rock.

Grey-faced petrel were evasive and not spotted. However, I have been fortunate and saw them more recently off the coast of New Caledonia. Although the north east coast of the North Island is the only place in the world where they breed, they cover a large feeding territory right across the Tasman Sea and north.

The highlight of the pelagic tour was seeing the New Zealand storm petrel, thought to be extinct until re-discovered in 2003. The population is very small and Chris Gaskin has leg bands on ten to study their progress. We were offered a bottle of champagne if we spotted one with bands and two bottles of champagne if we got a photo of it! The New Zealand storm petrel was the bird Peter Harrison had come for, so that he could take suitable photos to work paintings for his next book. A chum of fish food was tied to the side of the boat and fish oil poured on the water. This can attract birds from two kilometres. Petrel have 37% of their brain dedicated to the sense of smell and it maybe even that some migrate by the smell of where they are going. In came the birds with five or six New Zealand storm petrel among them. Peter Harrison's camera with a gigantic telephoto lens buzzed with excitement and we were all happy.

Alison Stanes

For seabird trips with Chris Gaskin - www.nzseabirds.com (and go to the Trip Calendar for the Hauraki Gulf)



Goodbye to a volunteer ranger

Marine Lovero from France has been working as a volunteer at Tawharanui over the last six months. We thank her for an enormous dedicated effort at the park. She has turned her hand to a vast range of tasks and worked enthusiastically helping both ARC and TOSSI with jobs in all weather. Marine's bright cheerful happy personality will be missed. We wish her all the best for the future as she returns to her homeland.

A big thank you goes to Marine from the TOSSI committee.

Art In The Woolshed 2012

As members will be aware TOSSI ran its fifth AITW show. It proved to be another successful event both in financial terms and for profiling the park and TOSSI. TOSSI owes a big thank you to past organisers of AITW, particularly Rhys and Sheila Thompson, Alison Stanes and Helen Crosby.

The question now arises as to whether TOSSI wishes to continue running AITW. The next show is due to be held in 2012, which will coincide with TOSSI's 10th anniversary. This coincidence does open additional possibilities for combining AITW and anniversary celebrations. However if AITW 2012 is to be held there will need to be a changing of the guard on the AITW committee. Although it does seem a long way off to March 2012 a new AITW committee will need to form within the next few months in order to consider possible new directions for AITW and seek appropriate artistic participation.

TOSSI is seeking volunteers with an interest in being involved on the AITW 2012 committee. If you are interested please contact me on 09 4226441 or by e-mail, stevepenny@xtra.co.nz.

Steve Palmer

The Orca Named Putita

In 2003 an orca stranded at Anchor Bay. After twelve hours of keeping it wet it was successfully headed back to sea. It was named Putita by Ingrid Vessa New Zealand's orca guru. Putita means "Hussy" in Spanish as Ingrid initially thought it was a girl because it moved around numerous family groups. But it is definitely a bloke. Now seven years on, and some what bigger, Putita stranded recently on Ruakaka spending only two hours on the beach. Ingrid photographed him after the stranding with mum and brother off the coast of Tutukaka appearing none the worse for his adventure on shore. Orcas are identified by nicks and notches in the on the back edge of the tail, seen when the photos are enlarged.

Alison Stanes



Putita seven years ago on Anchor Bay where he was cared for twelve hours by TOSSI volunteers, DOC and Project Jonnah.
Photo: John Montgomery



Putita has the biggest fin along with mum in the middle and his brother Rua at the back. Putita has grown to be a big boy over seven years.
Photo: Ingrid Vessa

Nursery Visit

On 20 April we had a very interesting session on Tuesday, the highlight being Graeme Platte's passionate and informative talk about ecological evolution, re-naturing and other things. Thank you very much Graeme for coming up from Albany to speak to our team, and to review our nursery.

And thank you to everyone who helped and catered on Tuesday. We almost finished another round of pruning and we're up to date with bagging - the nursery is looking very good. Great work everyone.

Paul Williams



Graeme Platte

Tawharanui Camp Host

Want to spend more time camping at Tawharanui this summer? Auckland Regional Council seek to extend the period during which Camp Hosts are present at Tawharanui Regional Park. Camp Hosts are volunteers who greet campers upon arrival and support the Ranger staff by being our eyes and ears on the ground. Camp Hosts are resident in the campground and provide their own camp/tent/motorhome. Camp fees are waived. ARC will consider any length of stay between Labour Day and Easter inclusive.

For enquiries please contact Sue Hill
sue.hill@arc.govt.nz 09 426 1200

Pateke monitors wanted

Pateke monitors required to check the pateke with transmitters at Tawharanui. Training available.
Email secretary@tossi.org.nz

Kakariki observers required

If you are walking in the park and observe kakariki, please record your sightings in the TOSSI diary in the Vol Hole. Thank you.

More volunteer opportunities

- Help with bait and trap lines-James
- Monitoring grey-faced petrel July 7 -Sharon
- TOSSI plant nursery great company- Paul
- Group planting for clubs and friends- Steve P.

Phone contact numbers above right or
email: secretary@TOSSI.org.nz

A big thank you to sponsors who make the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary project possible.

Rodney District Council
Pub Charities
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	Steve Harrison	09 425 8500
	James Ross	09 422 6760

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or Membership Secretary
P.O Box 112
Matakana 0948, New Zealand

Email secretary@tossi.org.nz
Website: www.TOSSI.org.nz

Application form for NEW MEMBERS Tawharanui Open Sanctuary

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone No. _____

E-Mail _____

Occupation _____

How did you hear about TOSSI?

Please tick how you would like to help:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planting/workdays | <input type="checkbox"/> Bird Counts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fund raising | <input type="checkbox"/> Administration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Pests | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Predator fence monitoring | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental educational | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity/promotion | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art in the Woolshed | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Membership fee:

\$20 single membership \$ _____

\$30 Family membership \$ _____

Additional contribution (optional) \$ _____

Donations over \$5 are tax deductible

Gift Membership:

Please send membership to

Name: _____

Address: _____

Amount of Gift membership(as above)\$ _____

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Please make cheques payable to Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society Inc. and return the completed form to:

TOSSI Membership Secretary
P.O.Box 112
Matakana 0948

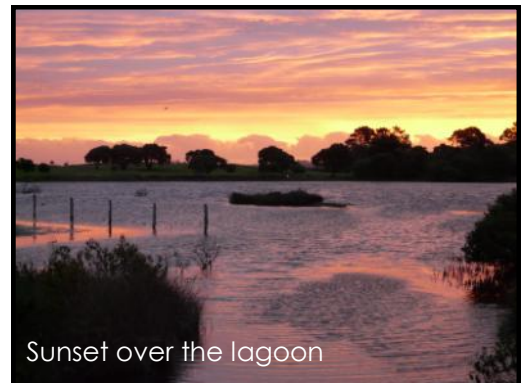
The lagoon at Tawharanui was once a quarry. Shingle was shipped to Auckland.



The lagoon water level low and land locked 17/05/10



Sunrise over the lagoon



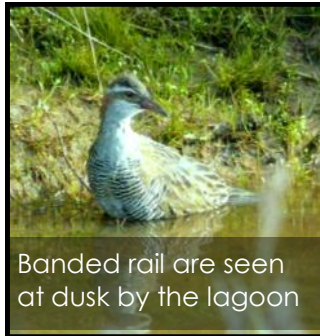
Sunset over the lagoon

The lagoon along with rain water feeds the important wetlands at Tawharanui. A combination of low rain fall and tidal action blocks the lagoon entrance more regularly and for longer periods than in the past. This season, shell fish including whelks and pipis died giving off an unpleasant odour. The question is - what will be the long term effects of continuous low water levels during summer droughts to the inhabitants of the lagoon?

Birds photographed at the lagoon, some permanent residence, others seasonal visitors.



Caspian tern sometimes visit the lagoon



Banded rail are seen at dusk by the lagoon



Kingfisher feed on the lagoon margins



Pateke sometimes venture out on the lagoon at dusk



Two pair of pied stilts reside at the lagoon

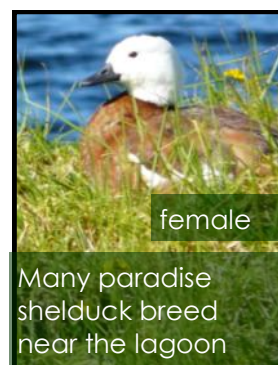


A pair of variable oystercatchers nest at the lagoon



male

Many paradise shelduck breed near the lagoon



female

Many paradise shelduck breed near the lagoon



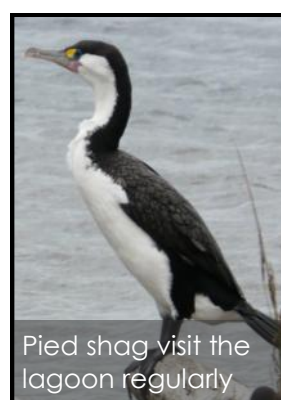
NZ shoveler, a native visitor sometimes breeds here



Spur-winged plover, common



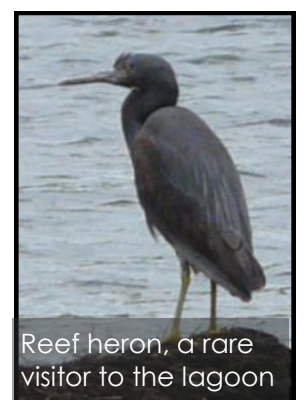
Little shag visits the lagoon



Pied shag visit the lagoon regularly



White faced heron regularly seen



Reef heron, a rare visitor to the lagoon