



TONGARIRO TIMES

The newsletter for the Tongariro Natural History Society

May 2008

Prepared by Sarah Gibb, Director

BIKER GETS WHEEL TURNING ON CONSERVATION

Press Release by Liane Donovan on behalf of TNHS

Jonathan Holmes not only ran 27km in the Land Rover Tussock Traverse in Tongariro National Park earlier this year, he then cycled 356 kms from Whakapapa to Wellington to raise money for Project Tongariro.

While competing in the cross country run, organised by the Tongariro Natural History Society to raise money for the protection of the Tongariro National Park, the Wellingtonian won a Land Rover mountain bike – one of only a handful in New Zealand. As his way of saying thanks, Jonathan cycled the arduous route from Whakapapa to Wellington last weekend to raise funds for Project Tongariro which is supported by car company, Land Rover.

“I was originally going to bike from Wellington to Whakapapa but then a friend mentioned that it would be all uphill, so I decided to do it in reverse and enjoy the downhill ride. The weather was perfect and the views, spectacular which made for a great day,” said Jonathan Holmes.

Both Sarah Gibb, director of Tongariro Natural History Society and fellow bike enthusiast, Glen Hazelton travelled the route to keep a watchful eye on Jonathan – Sarah in her Project Tongariro Land Rover and Glen on his bike.

Sarah Gibb said “Jonathan raised over \$700 which enabled the Tongariro Natural History Society to purchase 50 bait stations for the Mt Pihanga-Rotopounamu Restoration project. The bait stations will help eradicate pests that are endangering the National Park’s protected flora and fauna.”

Wallis Dumper, Managing Director for Land Rover NZ said “We are pleased that the Land Rover Mountain bike incentivised such a worthy act. It is one of only a few in New Zealand and we were impressed with how he said ‘thanks’. New Zealand is lucky to have a dual World Heritage site and we need to protect and care for it.”



Jonathan and Glen start their journey from Whakapapa



Our new bait stations for Rotopounamu

'PARK TO THE PEOPLE'



We hope that this will develop into a series of talks that Tongariro Natural History Society will host in cities in NZ where we know our members live.

The first is to be on June 26th, in Wellington at the National Library auditorium from 5.30 – 7.30pm. There is a charge of \$25 and all proceeds go to further preservation of Tongariro National Park. Dr Harry Keys and Dr Martin Manning will present an evening called “**Living with Ruapehu**”.

Summary: An overview of challenges and risks facing management of Ruapehu Volcano in Tongariro National Park with a focus on volcanic risk management and an introduction to the effects of global warming.

Abstract: Ruapehu is a fantastic place to climb, ski, board, hike, photograph and visit. It is also a very active volcano where even small eruptions can be very hazardous if you're in the way of a flying rock or path of a lahar. This risk is part of the attraction and should never be enough to cause over-reactions but it needs to be managed more actively than in the past.

This talk will provide an overview of volcanic risk management on Ruapehu for small eruptions and how it might evolve. Given the importance of snow and ice on the mountain and how they have changed over the last few decades, it will also outline actual and potential effects of climate.

A flyer to promote the evening is with this newsletter. This is a ticketed event only. Tickets from TNHS.

Our sincere thanks to John Ryan for a donation to get this event happening, and Mills Reef Winery for their support with 'product'.

HAPUAWHENUA VIADUCT update

Last week the water blasting of the viaduct began. The contractors, Abseil Access Ltd, are removing any vegetation, ash and some small areas of rust.

I watched these guys for a while last week and admired their bravery, working 43 metres off the ground. Good use of harnesses and ropes!

We have appointed Che Wilson to write the interpretation panels for the viaduct and along Old Coach Rd, based on research DOC and Errol Vincent have prepared.

The track to the viaduct from Old Coach Rd is being created now and so we are on track for completion of our part for the centennial in November.

Working in partnership with DOC, Atihau Corporation, Iwi, Ohakune 2000 and their Old Coach Rd committee is progressing our projects well.



A SUCCESSFUL SEASON AT ROTOPOUNAMU

By Cindy Jenkins

The Mt Pihanga/Rotopounamu restoration project has had an extremely successful season for 2007/08. The most significant event for the project this season was the inclusion of Mt Pihanga in a large scale Animal Health Board 1080 operation in November 2007. Results from this operation showed a significant knockdown of all mammalian pests including immediate zero tracking rates for rats and stoats in the tracking tunnels a week after the operation.

We then followed up from the 1080 operation with using Ditrac poison in the bait stations in the Stage One area around Rotopounamu (360 ha). This control continued through to March 2008. Both of these predator control methods ensured that the birds at Rotopounamu bred in the safety of relatively low predator numbers this season. The outcomes have been amazing and if any of you have been walking at Rotopounamu recently you will definitely have noticed the difference in bird song.

Our five minute bird counts showed a significant increase in most bird species including fantail, North Island robin and kereru numbers. Some of you will remember that we had to abandon fantail monitoring last season due to a lack of numbers. We would not have had the same problem this year! It has also been amazing to see the number of robins that will approach you no matter where you are in the forest.

Tomtit distance sampling is our main outcome monitoring used now, meaning that the data from this monitoring is used to objectively assess the success of the predator control in the Rotopounamu area. This year, initial data interpretation indicates a much higher abundance of tomtits following the 1080 operation. Results have been sent to a distance sampling statistician for full analysis and the data are likely to be used in an upcoming scientific paper. Exciting stuff!

As well as the birds, the flora seemed to do well this year, including the white mistletoe and the *Dactylanthus* plots. Hopefully the hundreds of white mistletoe seeds that we propagated around the lake will start showing themselves in about four years time.

For those of you who are interested we can email you a copy of the annual report for Rotopounamu. Please contact us.

Next season will also be very exciting as we will be relying solely on the bait station operation to control rats and mice to low densities in the area. Watch this space, and please contact us if you are interested in helping out within the Rotopounamu project next season.



Cindy recognises our project area from the top of Mt Pihanga.

New Zealand Mountain Film Festival 4-8 July, 2008
Book Auction in support of the Mingma Norbu Sherpa Memorial Fund

Edited from a letter sent to us by Bruce Jefferies

On 23 September 2006 twenty-four (24) of Nepal's most accomplished conservationists lost their lives in a tragic helicopter accident in Nepal. They had just participated in a ceremony handing over the management of the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area to local communities - a major milestone achieved after years of dedicated and focused work.

One who lost his life was Mingma Norbu Sherpa, WWF's Managing Director of the Eastern Himalayas programme. Many of the significant conservation accomplishments in the region are the direct result of the vision and leadership of Mingma.

The deep connection between New Zealand and Nepal, especially in the Sagarmatha region, stemming from New Zealand's and Sir Ed Hillary's relationship with the Sherpa people, moved the Nepal /New Zealand conservation community. Mingma was educated at the first of Sir Ed's schools and later he came to New Zealand where he undertook the Parks and Recreation Diploma at Lincoln College. Mingma was well known in New Zealand conservation and mountain circles and enjoyed a special friendship with Sir Ed.

Mingma Norbu Sherpa Memorial Fund has been established to provide for post graduate scholarships for Nepal conservation management students. The fund will support young conservation leaders from Nepal, especially rural mountain areas, to attend Lincoln University in New Zealand.

The aim is to raise an endowment fund which will yield sufficient funds to support a student annually in perpetuity. The fund will be held by WWF as the Mingma Norbu Sherpa Memorial Fund, and administered by a small steering group including Dave Bamford, Bruce Jefferies and David Simmons, Lisa Choegyal (Nepal) and chaired by Jo Breese, former CEO of WWF New Zealand and a close friend of Mingma.

Lincoln University has made a commitment to cover the academic fees for two students for the next 10 years and the Himalayan Trust have made a generous commitment to cover airfares respectively for two students in this first year.

The 2008 New Zealand Mountain Film Festival (formally the Wanaka Mountain Film Festival www.mountainfilm.net.nz) has agreed that it would be very fitting to use this event to raise funds and awareness for the Memorial Fund.

This brings me to the primary reason for this letter which is basically to seek your support for a donation of books or other memorabilia that have a mountain, climbing or recreational focus for inclusion in the auction.

If you are able to offer material (or any other support) we look forward to hearing from you. If, however, you would like further background or information please do not hesitate to contact me. We are 100% committed to making the **book auction** part of the film festival a success and trust that you will seriously consider getting behind and supporting this effort. All materials for the auction should be sent to: Bruce Jefferies, 185 Stone Street, Wanaka, Otago - 9305
email: brucejefferies@xtra.co.nz - Phone 03 4437454 - Mobile: 0210678907

Warm regards, Bruce Jefferies For the Mingma Norbu Sherpa Memorial Fund steering group.