



TONGARIRO TIMES

The newsletter for the Tongariro Natural History Society
January 2011

Happy New Year!!!

Kite Day 2011

New Year's Day 2011 was one out-of-the-box weather and wind-wise and both Project Tongariro and the New Zealand Kite Fliers Association pronounced the 7th annual Project Tongariro Kite Day a huge success. About 350 trampers, tourists and families enjoyed a great day out on the golf course at Bayview Chateau Tongariro. What a fantastic way to celebrate the New Year as well as increase awareness about the conservation efforts of all the hard-working volunteers that are passionate about Project Tongariro.



And to top it off, Kite Day and Project Tongariro featured on ONE News later that day. Thanks to Frank Katavich for his amazing photo which

was displayed by weatherman Tamati during his 6.25pm weather update. This was awesome national media coverage which adds hugely to our endeavours to raise the profile of Project Tongariro.

Kite Day was also the last official day for Sarah Gibb who has moved on to other employment. Kite Day was Sarah's brainchild and its ongoing success is a tribute to her. The BBQ farewell party was a great send off to Sarah and a good time was had by all! Good luck Sarah with all your future endeavours!

Photos: Frank Katavich took a great pic of Kite Day with Mt Ruapehu in the background. What a spectacular backdrop for our Kite Day! ONE News thought so!!! Rowena Cudby shot this pic of Sarah with one of the kites from her collection of 42!



Tribute to Sarah Gibb by Bob Stothart

Margaret and I have known you from the day you entered the room for your job interview for the TNHS role. You stood out from the other applicants by a country mile which made the appointment process an easy one.

Since then you have demonstrated a wide range of skills including a rare and instinctive and often courageous entrepreneurial flare.

You took on the task of organising volunteers in the park and proved to some doubters in DoC that TNHS could manage volunteers and manage them well...including telling them off when necessary.

You gathered people around you, especially people adjacent to the park in Turangi and Taupo and the ideas flowed. You can do a deal and the Land Rover sponsorship was a masterpiece of luck, chance, opportunity and professional follow-up.

Perhaps your greatest skill has been in preparing successful grant applications to corporates, benevolent trust and various community funding agencies resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash and kind, for the betterment of the Tongariro National Park which we all share a deep and abiding love for.

You lifted our profile; you gave us status with DoC; your Churchill Fellowship brought us benefits. And your understanding of tikanga Maori improved along with your computer skills. You made yourself available to members and you gave your time generously. You knew that you had the ongoing support of Lucy.

Kite Day and the Tussock Traverse are lasting reminders of your energy, initiative, organisational skills and contribution to TNHS. Along with the Hapuawhenua Viaduct, they are your legacy.

You are part of the weft and the warp of TNHS, woven into our fibres and you will always be welcomed by the members. I wish you every success in your new role. May you prosper together with your new organisation. Haere ra Sarah. Haere ra.



Thank you Bob for making a wonderful speech for Sarah at her farewell BBQ - you put into words what we all feel!

Tussock Traverse 2011

Coming Up January 29th 2011

Calling All Volunteers!



Volunteers to marshal on the course, help at the finish, cheer and encourage, turn sausages and pour water would all be welcome. This is the biggest fundraising opportunity for Project Tongariro each year as we are the sole benefactor so if you are keen to be involved we need all the help we can get..

Please call or email Nina info@tongariro.org.nz 07 386 6499 for more information.

Conservation Awards

Project Tongariro was pleased to present Monique Nelson-Tunely and Emma Phillips, both Massey University students, with grants for their ongoing studies in Tongariro National Park at the Conservation Awards evening held in Turangi on 2 December 2010.

For nearly 20 years, the Society has awarded annual grants to young Scientists undertaking research in Tongariro National Park and to date has distributed close to \$35,000 to this worthwhile cause. Society President, Karen Williams noted the grants have encouraged and assisted an impressive array of scientific research projects over the years including the study of plant and animal pests, native species, visitor use impacts, geology and the study of Ruapehu's vanishing glaciers. "Project Tongariro is aware that many past recipients of our awards have gone on to have distinguished careers in the field of science and conservation".

The 2010 grants were awarded to Monique and Emma. Moni is a MSc Conservation Biology

student whose Masters project involves the study of local populations of the small-scaled skink while Emma's work will focus on forecasting the probability and consequences of the failure of the eastern rim of Mt Ruapehu's Crater Lake.

The grants are funded from the Tongariro Natural History Society's Memorial Fund. Applications are open to any student for the study of fauna, flora, geology, volcanology, weather and natural or human history of Tongariro National Park.



Photo: Moni Nelson-Tunely and Emma Phillips with their Grant Certificates after the Conservation Awards.

Blyth Hut Trip by Kaye Rabarts

A weekend in Ohakune celebrated the lives and works of people a century ago. Friday night Kaye told us of the history of Ohakune which developed as a saw milling town in the first decade of the 20th century, as this part of the country was opened up to settlement with the coming of the railway. On Saturday the weather looked unfavourable, so a unanimous decision was made to only explore the parts of the old Blyth Track which Kaye and Annette had unearthed as part of their historic work last summer, and which are not readily accessible to the public. Originally opened at Easter 1910 as the Ohakune Mountain Track, it was later renamed after Joe Blyth who devoted a large part of his life developing and maintaining the track. We walked and wondered at the tenacity of the people who created this 2m wide, easy-grade

path, building numerous intriguing small bridges, culverts and huge lengths of timber corduroy to cope with the mud. We marvelled at the old time climbers and skiers who undertook this 14km, 5 hour walk to reach the Ohakune Mountain Cottage (built 1922) to indulge in their chosen sport; where now it is a 20 minute drive.

Sunday was spent walking the Ohakune Old Coach Road as Kaye pointed out some of the historic features the casual walker may not spot including the site of 3 workmen's huts with stone chimneys built into the bank; a quarry and sunken loading bay where metal was loaded onto horse carts; a partly used stack of quarried construction rocks and the old road to Horopito.



Photo: This group shot was taken at the old Blyth Hut site. Rain jackets were out in force!

Kiwi for the Tongariro Forest - A Volley's Story by Kevin Griffiths

Kiwi eggs are often uplifted by DoC staff when it's observed that the eggs are being neglected and hatching is at risk. The eggs are carefully packed, padded and kept at a comfy temperature for transport from the forest by foot and or quad bike then ute to Turangi. Here they are met by volunteers who then transport them to the "Kiwi Encounter" at Rainbow Springs, Rotorua. On arrival the eggs are met by a professional team and the procedure turns into almost hospital

admission before the process of reaching the hatching room/incubator area.

After hatching the chicks go on to the brooder room for health checks, DNA gender and feeding. Release depends on health, evidence of the ability to forage and feed etc. All kiwi are released to the forest to the area from where the egg was uplifted. Mostly this is done when the chick reaches 1kg but sometimes small chicks are released weighing as little as 300 + gms.

They all have interesting names. All relevant information, ie; gender, health, weight, sired by etc. is displayed on their "discharge sheets". These kiwi are carefully packed into kiwi carry boxes with some fronds, then into the back seat of the car, belted up, secured and transported to DoC staff at Tongariro where they are fitted with transmitters prior to release.

Recently an 11 month old kiwi named "Fly girl", named by Fly Fishing Women in support of Breast Cancer and whose DNA incidentally proved to be male was released. He had struggled to gain and maintain weight and health. This was a special egg that we had delivered and had been to visit over the 10 months he was at Kiwi Encounter, so with parenting pride we were glad to see this bird was strong enough to gain freedom. What a wonderful thing DNA is!



Photo: Truly wonderful volunteers Beth and Kevin Griffiths at Kiwi Encounter. Incidentally they did another kiwi run last week.

Upcoming Field Trips 2011

Members, do get involved in this year's field trips. What A fantastic way to explore different parts of New Zealand and meet other members.

Please contact Nina for registration forms:

email: info@tongariro.org.nz or

phone: 07 3866499 / 027628800

We have some great trips coming up: Tukino Tops 27th and 28th February 2011 and Auckland Islands 16th and 17th April 2011.

Tukino Tops – 27th - 28th February 2011



Spend the weekend with Roy and Annette Dench up on Tukino Ski field at Mt Ruapehu exploring the glaciers and old lava flows. For those of you that may not be able to accomplish these, other walks will be arranged. It is a fascinating landscape sculpted and formed by volcanic activity, wind, water and climate. We will walk and investigate this interesting part of the National Park taking time to enjoy the special alpine flora and fauna, volcanic landscapes and views.

Accommodation:

Desert Alpine Lodge, Tukino Ski Field

Auckland Islands – 16th and 17th April 2011

Saturday 16 April Tiritiri Matangi Island

The Island offers many walks and points of interest so you can choose whatever suits your fitness level or your interests. The sheer number of birds is quite incredible, you can watch them feeding from cages and troughs around the Island, the most friendly Takahe and anonymous Pohutukawa tree.

Cost:

From Auckland – Adult \$66.00, Senior \$59.00

From Gulf Harbour – Adult \$49.00, Senior \$44.00

Contact: Frank Katavich 09 620 6650 or

fkatavich@xtra.co.nz

Sunday 17 April Motuihe Island



Pest-free Motuihe Island has been undergoing restoration for ten years under the direction of Motuihe Trust in conjunction with DOC. It is a little jewel in the Hauraki Gulf with white sand beaches, easy walks, remnant kohekohe forest and 360 degrees views. Kakariki and tieke (saddleback) abound. We may also see North Island robins and whiteheads. Maori inhabited Motuihe for about 800 years. The island was a quarantine station from 1872. It was also a prisoner-of-war camp and a children's health camp.

Cost:

Family \$66.20, adult/senior \$25.20, child \$15.80

Contact: Margi Keys 09 443 6919 or

makeys@nettel.net.nz

Oruatua Conservation Area Trapping

by Shirley Potter

Thanks to \$3000 of funding from Environment Waikato, two Project Tongariro members have their hands full. Shirley Potter and Karen Ardin (Ardy) who live in Tuki Road, Oruatua close to the Tauranga Taupo River are in the process of establishing trap lines and deploying 50 DoC 200 traps in the Oruatua Conservation Reserve.

DoC is helping to place the traps to best advantage and Project Tongariro interns are helping to deploy them. Shirley says "It's a win-win, as the traps were purchased from the Coromandel conservation group, Moehou Environment Group and were delivered for free by Diane Prince who is also a member of Project Tongariro."

Some 'informal' trapping has already been done in the area over the last 4 - 5 years with a collection of home-made boxes and rat traps as well as regular possum trapping. The difference has been noticeable with kereru seen in Tuki Street for the first time in decades and the odd Ruru heard at night.

Shirley and Ardy have high hopes that the DoC 200s will target stoats and weasels and really make a difference to the birds. While out on the trapping runs, pest plants including cotoneaster, berberis, sycamore, Japanese and Himalayan honeysuckle, hawthorne and pines are also hit hard by the dynamic duo.



Fancy a little exercise? Shirley and Ardy are keen on local support with the monitoring of traps and gelling of weeds in the area. Contact Shirley on 021 2122 777. Tracking tunnels will be set up and the information relayed back to our sponsor.

Photo: Shirley and Ardy hard at work establishing trap lines in Oruatua Conservation Reserve.

Volunteering at the Whakapapa Visitor Centre

by Bob and Margaret Stothart

Since 2003 Margaret and I have assisted DoC staff in the Visitor Centre during the busy time between Christmas and after New Year and sometimes at Easter and Labour Day weekend. We usually spend about 14 days there (at Christmas) offering advice on walks, passing on information about the park and answering multiple questions about tracks, plants, birds and volcanoes.

The visitors, over 1500 on some days, come from Germany, Japan, Poland, Australia, Czechoslovakia, America, Canada, Britain, New Zealand, India and elsewhere. They come in family groups, alone, newly married, old-timers, cyclists, trampers, travelers all and hungry for information about tracks, toilets, kiwis, heights of the mountains, length of tracks. Where are the toilets? What bird is that? Where is the nearest supermarket? Where can I camp? What is the weather going to do? Where can I get petrol? How far to the snow? Is the chairlift really going? Where is the 42nd Traverse?

The large relief map of the park, surrounded by location photographs and lights which fascinate youngsters, although old and dated, is the most used item in the Centre, the most photographed and the most stood around as tracks are discussed in planning or retrospect.

The Centre is a mine of information about all aspects of conservation in the park and most questions are straightforward but how do you respond to:

“Where is the track?”

“Do the mountain huts have caterers?”

“Should I leave my car at the end of the track?”

“Is the gas too dangerous to climb Mt Ngauruhoe?”

“Where can I tie my dog up while I do the crater walk?”

We enjoy this contribution to the park especially the variety of questions and the multicultural nature of the visitors. We'll be back next year.



Photos: Karen Williams assisted with the crater lake walk on 2 January and said a meltwater pond, complete with ice floes, in Central Crater (not Crater Lake) was an interesting feature of the climb. Also captured by Karen was a group photo of the crew that made it to the crater that day.

2010/11 Intern Update

by Kris Taipeti

This summer has seen the introduction of four Waikato University students (Stacey Bryan, Gina Heron, Kaitlin Morrison and Kris Taipeti) who have joined Project Tongariro's internship programme. The interns are all undertaking biological-related degrees at Waikato University and have completed two of the four years required, except Kaitlin who has completed three. This is proving to be a good opportunity for us to test our knowledge and gain practical skills for future use in the laboratory and in the field.

So far we have all loved our time here. Since our arrival two months ago, we have met and worked with numerous people, all of whom are extremely friendly and kind. DoC staff, Project Tongariro members and other community-based people have all taken us on board and taught us helpful skills. Some activities we have participated in include:

- pest control / monitoring at Lake Rotopounamu
- marshaling The Goat race
- working with the Whakapapa kiwi team
- painting the Hapuawhenua viaduct
- rafting for Blue duck monitoring
- broom flying

We now have just over one month of the internship left. Our schedule is looking as interesting as ever and we are keen to get into it. Nina Manning and Jo Nash are currently monitoring our programme and are doing an amazing job. We look forward to the upcoming weeks, hopefully the beautiful weather sticks around.



Photos: Intern Kris Taipeti holds and releases a kiwi.

Woody the Weed Visits Owhango School

Conservation intern Gina Heron did not expect to have to dress up as Woody the Weed recently as part of her internship with Project Tongariro in Tongariro National Park. "Being Woody meant I had to wear a really embarrassing suit, with sexy, sexy tights" said Gina, who is one of four Waikato University students working in the park this summer. Gina was helping DoC Ranger Bruce Harvey to help children at Owhangao School identify weeds growing in the area - all part of the department's educational Weedbusters Programme.



Photo: Intern Gina impresses the kids at Owhango School

Bogies, Lokey's, Skids and Haul Lines

by Kaye Rabarts

Clayton Backwood, an Archaeological student from Auckland, is working with Kaye Rabarts as historic work continues this summer in the Ohakune to Whakapapa area. Saw milling was the industry which developed the Waimarino district. We are 50 years too late to see much in the way of material remains but the timber industry has left clear footprints in the earth. Large concrete engine blocks are often all that remains of mill sites which once covered acres. But sometimes we find intriguing remains like a

large “Dutch Oven” used to burn sawdust and power the mill plant. Tramways stretch for kilometres along well formed tracks, over large and small bridges (often still partly intact) through deep cuttings and across high causeways. “Haul lines” where logs were pulled through the bush by steam haulers, are sometimes up to 4m wide and 2m deep and appear as long straight trenches in the scrub. Log skid sites are numerous: a platform built of logs, where logs destined for the mill were loaded onto bogies and towed along the tramline by a bush “Lokey”. Pokaka tramway is exceptional in that much of its 2km of wooden tramline is still intact. Where a secondary industry of post and batten splitting occurred, low grade logs left by the timber industry were utilised; here all that is left behind are areas of battens and post which split badly, so didn’t meet the standard of the farmer.

We are enjoying our days in the Park living in Ohakune at “Capri” the cosy DoC house which is our home and office.

National Park and is currently involved in interpretation work on the Chathams with DoC. She got top marks from the group who all enjoyed a culturally, botanically, historically, geologically and scenically-rich glimpse on the 10 day tour.



Everyday brought highlights ranging from tree carvings, rock drawings, seal colonies, finding ancient fossilised sharks teeth and exploring the stunning beaches and reserves. Seeing Chatham Island forget me nots on the coastal beaches, inter-mixed with whale bone and fishing buoys, was an unforgettable sight. We hiked to many beautiful parts of the main island and also spent one day on Pitt Island, including a visit to Flowerpot Bay. Three half days of volunteer work included assisting the Chatham Heritage and Restoration Trust on replanting Chatham Island forget-me-nots in beach dunes near Waitangi and removing South African ice plant from a reserve.

Of course we also ate the seafood, the Chathams are famous for, including paua cooked five ways, and brought crayfish home! Kaye is leading another trip to the Chatham Islands for society members in spring 2011. To find out more email: info@tongariro.co.nz

Photo: A rewarding pile of rubbish accumulated after a morning of volunteering at Waihi Station: Karen Williams, Shirley Potter, Roy Dench, Peter McNaughton, Bryony Hales, Harry Keys, Chris Potter, Kerk Taylor Hart, Annette Dench and Val Hart. No wonder Kaye christened this year’s tour party ‘the bone people’!



Photo: Clayton Blackwood and Allen Munn (DoC Ohakune) taking a lunch break at a well appointed hunters camp near a logging site in “Holt’s Clearing”

The Bone People

by Karen Williams

This was the second trip to the Chatham Islands led by Project Tongariro’s Kaye Rabarts. Kaye works on historical sites both in Tongariro