



TONGARIRO TIMES

The newsletter for the Tongariro Natural History Society
May 2011

Auckland Islands Members' Field Trip by Karen Williams

In mid-April, 14 members took part in our latest member field trip to the "Auckland Islands". No, not the real thing but we did make two separate day trips to Tiritiri Matangi, and to Motuihe with Auckland as our base. Frank Katavich led the Tiri trip accompanied by Harry Keys, William Keys, Karen Williams, Shirley Potter, Karen Arden, Maureen Smith, Chris Potter, Mary Monzingo, Elaine Cooper, Doug and Doris Downs and Geoff and Liz Brunton.



Wet weather did not spoil the enthusiasm of this group who were in raptures over the sound of bird song on this lovely forested island, especially in the areas of old bush. We saw dozens of bellbirds, stitchbird (hihi), saddleback (tieke), kereru, kakariki, Australa (sian) brown quail, and it was a thrill to see Greg the takahe near the visitor centre. The activity and noise around some of the feeder stations was something to

behold! There was plenty of time to cover a lot of

ground while still having time to bird watch. A hot cup of tea was very welcome from the beautiful new visitor centre close to the lighthouse. Calm seas made it a very pleasant outing on board the Tiri Kat. Margi Keys led the trip to Motuihe, joined by Harry, Karen, Shirley, Ardy, Maureen, Chris, Mary, Elaine, Doug, Doris, and Hazel Shepherd.



Sunday was fine and warm with no hint of rain. It was a scenic cruise aboard the ferry via Devonport and Rangitoto with outstanding harbour views. Like many of the islands, Motuihe has a fascinating history and the signs are everywhere: from Maori occupation, to farming, quarantine station, prisoner-of-war camp and naval training base. We saw saddleback, tui, wetas, fabulous pohutukawa, taraire in fruit, and the prolific kohekohe with its pretty flower and sticky seeds. Oh yes, Elaine spotted a skink!

It was interesting to meet some of the volunteers from the Motuihe Restoration Trust who've been working since 2003 in active partnership with DOC to restore the island's natural environment. Well over 50,000 plants have been grown; all from seeds collected on the island, and planted out by volunteers. It will be good to come back in 10 years to see what a difference they have made.



Thanks also to Mt Ruapehu Ski Areas for including Project Tongariro on their website. Visitors to RAL's website now have the opportunity to find out more about us when they go to www.mtruapehu.com and are able to make a donation when they make a purchase on the Mt Ruapehu website. This is great to help to build our profile and we are pleased to have Ruapehu Alpine Lifts as a partner in our efforts.

Trade Me Auction - Original 1954 Chairlift Sale

The original 1954 Mt Ruapehu chairlift chair sold for \$1,011 on Trade Me. The successful purchaser, a very excited Alistair and Helen Craig of Auckland battled the wind and snow and pick it up at Whakapapa. They are going to use it as a garden swing chair in their backyard. Interestingly, Alistair's grandfather was one of the few men who helped build this chairlift way back in its heyday. Thanks to Mt Ruapehu Ski Areas for donating all proceeds of this auction to Project Tongariro.



Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust (WCEET)

Waikato **Catchment** Ecological Enhancement Trust

Taking steps to improve our ecological heritage

We are very excited to announce Project Tongariro has secured multi-year funding allowing us to continue to work on the restoration of Te Matapuna o Taupo Moana (South Taupo Wetland). This wetland is situated between Oruatua and Waihi and at 150ha in size, it is one of the largest wetland areas in the North Island. It also includes the Waimarino Recreation Reserve at Motuoapa. Funding to the tune of \$40,000 per annum has been made available for the next four years (2011 - 2014) by the Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust (WCEET). The Trust has been the major funder of this important ecological project contributing more than \$200,000 over the past five years.



While the primary value of wetlands is maintaining water quality and supporting unique wildlife, there is also recreation value in kayaking and game bird hunting. The introduced gray and crack willow are fast growing and had begun to dominate Te Matapuna Wetland. Willows turn wetland into dry land through large root masses and by trapping sediment. Project Tongariro and the Department of Conservation have been undertaking willow control since 2005. Major progress is being made with willow removal and, in time, this will assist to restore and preserve the native biodiversity in the wetland. Much has been learned about threatened wetland plants and critters that live there such as rare land snails, skinks, banded rail and a wide range of waterfowl. Te Matapuna is one the society's key projects and we're indebted to WCEET for their ongoing support of its restoration.

Members Take Pest Control to New Levels...

Shirley, Ardy, Lucy and Sarah went walking in to Oturere Hut one weekend in April and we dropped down in to the valley to look at the Waihothonu spring. Ardy spotted a couple of willows and she, Shirley and Lucy dived on them with a vengeance! Sarah reckons she had a chance for a nice little break while they got stuck in. The willow didn't have a chance!! Notice – they are all were wearing Tussock Traverse hats. Very funny. Apparently they all did that without realising.



Notice of AGM - 8th October 2011

Plenty of notice for the upcoming 2011 AGM so you can join us on the weekend of 8/9 October and make a weekend of it.

The meeting will be held Saturday 8th October at 10am at the Forest and Bird Lodge in the Lodge Clearing at Whakapapa Village. This is a lovely new building and we have been offered great rates for staying overnight at the Lodge. We are arranging some group activities for Saturday afternoon with pre dinner drinks and catered evening meal from 5pm. Guest speaker Dr Harry Keys will be presenting "Erebus Volcano - Science, Adventure & Romance".

On Sunday, we have organised a members' field trip into the Kaimanawa Wild Horse Country to see rare plants and horses. This will be a fun-filled day and an opportunity to undertake an excursion across Army Land that is not usually available.

So do make plans to join us for the whole weekend so you can partake in this neat adventure.

More specific details regarding the AGM, group activities, accommodation, costs and the Wild Horse Country field trip will be included in the next newsletter.

..... **Dactylanthus Conservation**

by Jo Nash Biodiversity Ranger Department of Conservation, Turangi Taupo Area Office

In March, Project Tongariro members Shirley, Ardy, Kevin, Beth, Noel, Lyn, as well as DOC biodiversity rangers Fiona and Jo had a very productive and enjoyable day up at Kakaramea which is one of New Zealand's top Dactylanthus sites. Dactylanthus is New Zealand's only completely parasitic flowering plant. Dactylanthus is endemic to New Zealand and is currently listed as chronically threatened and in serious decline. It is completely dependent on its host plant (often lemonwood, mahoe, lancewood and others) for

water and food and has a unique relationship with the short tailed bat (another endangered New Zealand species). The bats pollinate Dactylanthus and are attracted to the sweet smelling nectar produced by the flowers. Unfortunately possums are attracted to these flowers as well and rather than pollinating the flowers, they eat them. There are nearly 300 known Dactylanthus plants up at Kakaramea and our main effort to ensure the survival of Dactylanthus is to cage the plants to protect them from browser damage. On our latest trip up to the site with Project Tongariro members we managed to cage 110 plants. We have another 50 known plants to cage and then we will be focusing our efforts on finding and caging new plants and monitoring seed success of caged plants. We will be making another trip up to Kakaramea to cage the remaining plants in the winter so if you are interested in helping out with this great project, please contact info@tongariro.org.nz





have benefited from these awards enabling a wide range of research to be done in the Park.

From heather, to bats, skinks, kiwi, stoats, to visitor stats, to geology, to lahars, to botany and climate. An amazing legacy. Have a look at the past recipients and their projects online. The amount of the award shall be determined annually by the executive (originally up to \$1000 but since 2002, up to \$2000 as long as the society is in a position to fund the awards).

Applications for the Awards are accepted up until the end of June each year and are considered at the first executive committee meeting of the new financial year (usually in July/August). The society's executive seeks independent advice from a representative with an overview of science in the Tongariro/Tongariro Conservancy (Dr Harry Keys has assisted with this review since the awards began and continues to do so). Applicants will be advised of the executive committees' decision by August 31st and the awards are announced publically at the annual DOC Conservation Awards.

Recipients of awards are required to provide a photo and short resume suitable for publication by the society. Recipients are asked to acknowledge the society where possible in for example a research publication such as a thesis. All recipients agree to send a copy of their work, including a thesis, to Project Tongariro and are encouraged to contribute a short article to the annual Tongariro Journal. Note if no applicants meet the required standards in a particular year, an award will not be made.

To apply, contact Project Tongariro on info@tongariro.org.nz

Photos courtesy of: Nga Manu Images A possum going in for a snack of dactylanthus flowers (left), and dactylanthus flower close up (right).

2011 Memorial Awards

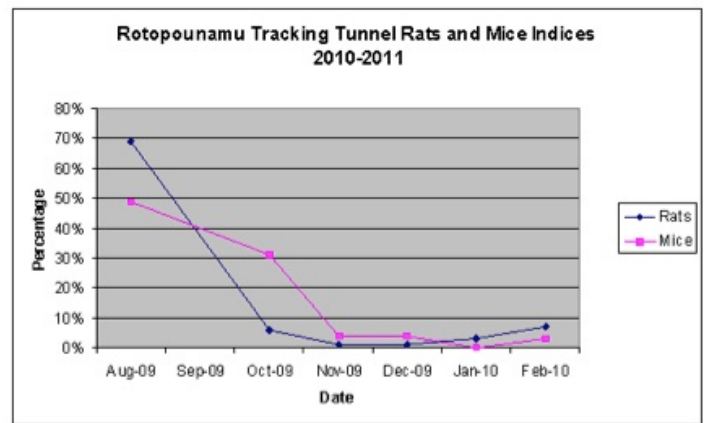
Project Tongariro's Memorial Award was established by the society in memory of Keith Maurice Blumhardt, William Edward Cooper, Douglas Neal McKenzie, Derek Ian White and Marie Pauline Williams, who died on Mt Ruapehu while testing helicopter rescue equipment on 9 December 1982. The award is open to any applicant for study – for fauna, flora, geology, volcanology, weather and natural and human history of Tongariro National Park. Since the inaugural award in 1991, 35 young researchers

Rotopounamu Update

by Jo Nash Biodiversity Ranger Department of Conservation, Turangi Taupo Area Office

The season has now wound down at Rotopounamu. The 1150 bait stations were cleared and the 50 traps were shut down at the end of March. Tracking tunnel results continued to astonish us with rat and mice indices sitting below 5% for the months of November, December and January. One of the objectives in the Rotopounamu Management Plan is to maintain rat numbers below a 5% footprint tracking index during the spring and summer period to allow native birds to successfully reproduce. Rodent numbers haven't been recorded this low at Rotopounamu since 2007.

Throughout the month of February, Project Tongariro intern students and DOC staff carried out the annual bird monitoring at Rotopounamu. This is the main form of outcome monitoring we undertake at this site. 500 bird counts have been completed however the results are yet to be analysed. I will update you with those results next time!



Renew Your Membership or JOIN Now

It's that time of year again and we would like to encourage you to renew your membership for 2011/2012 as soon as possible or take this opportunity to JOIN NOW. We have some amazing member field trips coming up this year and your membership fees of course contribute to our wide range of conservation and historical projects in Tongariro National Park. Please renew online otherwise send a cheque to Project Tongariro, PO BOX 238, Turangi. We are finalising the 2011/12 Calendar which will be published in July and is packed full of amazing field trips and awesome volunteer opportunities.

If you have any questions please contact the Project Tongariro Office on 07 386 6499 or info@tongariro.org.nz

