



Motu Kaikoura

An open sanctuary promoting wilderness education, ecosystem restoration and public recreation on an offshore island

KAKA COMMENTS

MOTU KAIKOURA TRUST SUPPORTERS' NEWSLETTER ISSUE 9, JANUARY 2011

Man (and women) vs. rodent – The battle continues

The Trust has received expert advice from DoC's Island Eradication Advisory Group who have identified a number of options for the Trust to consider about how we proceed in this battle. The Trust is also being helped by Auckland Council (ex ARC) experts who will advise us of the current rodent density. Meanwhile rodent baiting and trapping continues but until we receive the AC report we cannot be sure whether we are controlling rodent numbers or merely taking a small percentage off the top of the rodent numbers.



As this edition goes to print the bird survey group is on Kaikoura. We look forward to hearing what they have heard (and seen).

Ongoing maintenance and development of facilities on the island continues including a major rebuild of most of the wharf thanks to an ARC grant.

Inside Will gives his (strong) views on pollution and polluters the results of which he sees washed up on the shore. Other visitors to the island share their experiences including Stan who has helped us with redeveloping our web site.

Want to know more about Motu Kaikoura?



Check out our new website

www.motukaikoura.org.nz



I wish you all the best for 2011.

Thank you for your ongoing support.



Harry Doig (Chairman)

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(Photos of EOS yacht in Man O' War Passage. Above – the messy business of ratting. Photos by Harry Doig)



Update from Will Scarlett- Caretaker

Tena Koutou

Beachcombing has become an interest since I have been spending so much time tending traps and bait stations on the coast. It's a natural really. You need to keep your head down and eyes on the terrain as it's mostly rock hopping. "Choice finds" are few and far between.

A great all-weather bean bag seat and two quality fenders are welcome additions to the Trust's boat, and a pair of expensive binoculars proved not to be waterproof as written on the casing but it gave me a fascinating time pulling it apart and gluing the best bits back together for a reasonable monocular.

Driftwood is often a treasure that makes my eyes wander and a few worn and sea bleached pieces now lie around my garden and deck. Natural art works carved by nature.

The most noticeable flotsam though is the rubbish, especially in the bays where wind and tide have pushed it all up- to settle in a mess of seaweed and driftwood. Clothes pegs, tennis balls, plastic bottles, odd shoes, jandals, bic lighters and glass.

Three summers ago I picked up bottles of a new brand of beer just new on the market, Steinlager Pure. When you find more than a few you wonder if they are all falling off the boat or being purposely ditched. I've heard a discussion about bottles being okay in the sea as they are mostly made of sand and wear down but many don't. When a storm comes into these shallow areas where boaties anchor a sea swell off the bottom brings the bottles back up, many of them breaking in the process.

I haven't missed out the hundreds of plastic articles on the tidal edge. The most numerous by far are amateur fisher bait bags of all sizes and descriptions, on every beach, caught in the seaweed and lower branches of trees, and also broken bleached pieces are scattered in the vegetation way above the shore.

Many years ago when the first beach clean ups took place (Auckland Uni Geography Dept had something to do with it) identifying where rubbish came from and tracing it to the producer was part of the project. Those early cleanups identified blue plastic strapping as used in the commercial fishing industry as a problem and to the industry's credit they changed the way they packaged their bait as soon as they were made aware of the extent of the problem.

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But whose is the amateur bait bag problem? The users or the producers? If we want to solve the problem I think we need to set our sights on the producers of plastics. Didn't agenda 21 at the Rio conference on pollution 20 odd years ago make the decision "producers pay"? Like the plastic strapping problem maybe it's time to find a new way of packaging fisher peoples products and get plastic bags of boats completely.

Amateur fishing has become a huge industry. Did you know we consume so much bait we have to import it from other countries. Is that a sad indictment on the state of the industry? Fishing magazines have become cover to cover advertisements



for conspicuous consumption. Even the articles are advertisements. Just look at the thousands of boats around the Gulf. Rocket launchers and rods bristling like porcupines and all the products and toys come in plastic bags.

Hooks, sinkers, plastic baits, frozen baits, berly bombs, poppers, flashers, jogs and lures. You name it and you will find it washed up on the foreshore.

It's time the amateur fisher and the producer of their products cleaned up their act.

They are even making baits out of plastic now and feeding it to the fish, while feeding the fisher on a million dollar advertising campaign to buy it.

Another new coastal pollutant has been noticed in the hundreds of bright green polyester rope pieces and knots from the mussel farm industry. These are the pieces used to tie the mussel rope to the backbone. I have now collected over two sacks full that have washed all around the island to land on every beach. I have taken this problem up directly with the Coromandel Mussel Barge workers and expect them to stop washing it over the side.

Port Fitzroy harbour is breathing the sea in and out like a big live lung. It's dynamic. Our most common wind is the sou wester which brings with it a lot of flotsam from the Hauraki Gulf and dropping it on our western shores. Tides and currents suck it into the harbour, collectively over time clogging up nature's lungs.

We have to do better.

Noho ora mai

Will

The WOW Factor - Garth Civil (Offshore admirers!)

Recently my wife, Kym and I had the opportunity to spend a night on the island paradise of Motu Kaikoura. We had heard a lot about the island, how it came about and the people who are working on it. Kym is a bonafide Aussie girl, I have been over there for 16 years so when and we live in Perth so the beautiful greenery of NZ really impresses us anyway. However in all of our travelling around the country, and the world for that matter, Motu Kiakoura was one of the best places we have ever visited. From the experience of the flight over there, with the landing on the small grassy airfield, to all the flora, fauna and scenery of the island and the surrounding waterways and bays of Great Barrier, we just couldn't get enough.



Bradshaw Cove is simply stunning and as one of the few sandy beaches on the island is a very popular as a swimming spot. The walk out to Pahangahou was just fantastic, lots of Cicadas, some bird life and awesome views from on top of the cliffs. What is one of the most impressive aspects is the progress that has been achieved in such a short period

and the exciting plans for the future. With the hard work and enthusiasm for the project from such people as Will Scarlett the caretaker and trustees like Rod Miller we can't wait to see how much it can progress next time.

(Photos by Kym Civil)





Mid-Winter Visit to Motu Kaikoura - A pseudo-engineer's perspective.

Stan Vause

Some folks don't consider medical science and electronics as real 'steel and concrete' engineering, so in deference I'll accept a pseudo status, which may explain the biased perspective in this offering, it's just my 'slant on life'.

The day dawned clear and comfortably mild at Kaipara Flats airfield. Having carefully weighed the modest baggage of three passengers, completed the mandatory flight plan, fuelled and warmed up the aero club's Cessna 172, Barry, our pilot was ready for takeoff from the soft, wet, grass airstrip into a ca 5 knot westerly. From the rear seats one could see the 'Irish' green of Rodney's farmland unfolding, punctuated occasionally by small areas of intensive market gardening under glass, then a brief band of more concentrated human occupation as we crossed the coastal strip heading a few degrees north of east, this bearing determined from the magnetic compass visible below the windshield. Discussion in the front seats suggested the gyro compass, which I couldn't see, was exhibiting a fault causing its readout to drift from the true course. Since visual flight rules were being applied it was of little concern for this flight, destination Claris airport

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After disembarking one passenger at Claris, the flight resumed to Kaikoura Island where the aircraft was secured and the resident quad-bike and trailer loaded with our gear. Heading downhill in a southerly direction, it became immediately obvious that my perception of the Motu Kaikoura project was well adrift. Drawing on tramping and trapping experience, the size of the island's pest control project is formidable, confirmed when viewing the trap and bait map pinned to one wall of 'the office'. It's impressive from two aspects: firstly the sheer number of bait stations and traps so evenly sited along the tracks and ridges, and secondly that this project is maintained through physical visitations by only one person regularly, assisted by a small team of volunteers rather intermittently.

Our 'work' for the day was light and easily accomplished. After inspecting the state-of-the-art 6 kW diesel alternator, we measured the route for new electrical reticulation to upper-level huts. Some hardware for the task is already on island, so we did an 'audit', more of an assessment really, of the resources needed to complete the task and those already available. One can see how in this remote environment where diesel is the main source of 'consumer' energy, there is the potential for immense long-term savings through the use of solar panels, storage cells and LEDs for domestic lighting.

It is well known that lead-acid batteries which are put to little use and receive no attention gradually sulphate up and lose their cranking-amp capacity. Such is the life, especially during the winter, of the 17-plate tractor battery on Kaikoura. A bit of forward thinking in the form of a small solar panel sited close to the tractor shed providing a trickle charge to the battery, should extend the battery's life and reduce long-term cost. From the watery, low-angle, winter sun that day, the panel was producing only about 200 mA. Although this is barely an adequate current, with improved siting of the panel on a future visit, it will keep the battery in great condition for the summer.

We were accompanied at lunch time by a family of banded rail, quite confidently pecking their way to within a few meters of the hut. With loud squawks and bursts of flight, the ubiquitous kaka made their presence felt. Hundreds of shredded pine cones provide ample evidence, even if they hadn't been seen or heard. Our timing for return to the aircraft was perfect, dry all the way uphill then a heavy shower passed over just as we boarding for the return trip. Flying westward from Claris through light rain with bright sunlight from the starboard beam made a spectacular image of two bright, wide concentric rainbows framing the northern tip of Coromandel. Once the rain cleared, the deep coastal gullies and the great 2.5 km predator-proof fence of Tawharanui came into view. The annual kiwi call census on the darkest nights in June has revealed the increasing numbers of kiwi now living behind that fence. Disturbingly, one possum



was also heard, which of course sealed its fate in the following days. Various rats have also been dealt to recently. As on Kaikoura, they keep on popping up.

The return flight at 2000 feet took slightly longer than anticipated due to a 25 knot head wind, however with military precision, Barry brought us down smoothly on the grass strip at Kaipara, completed the necessities and shut the 'plane in the hangar, bringing our adventure in the Hauraki Gulf to an end. The day was a complete success in that everything went to plan, all goals were achieved and a whole range of the limited perceptions of a pseudo-engineer were brought into line with reality.

Thanks to Stan for the development of our new website; www.motukaikoura.org.nz

Make sure you take a look!

Studying Invertebrates on Motu Kaikoura

Kirstin Foster

Unitec New Zealand student

The main aim of this study was to determine if rat control measures have benefitted the ground invertebrates on Motu Kaikoura. Hand searching of leaf litter was conducted on Motu Kaikoura and a comparable area of Great Barrier Island that has not received rat control. The diversity of the terrestrial invertebrates was not significantly different between the two islands. It is possible that invertebrate populations on Motu Kaikoura may not have recovered sufficiently from past predation to show increased diversity, or that the degraded state of vegetation on the island cannot yet support a diverse invertebrate community.

Weta boxes were also installed in both areas. The occupancy rates of the boxes were dramatically higher on Motu Kaikoura than on Great Barrier Island. This could show that Weta populations are actually higher on Motu Kaikoura, or that the insects on this island are taking advantage of artificial shelter in a more degraded environment.



Pseudoscorpion found on Motu Kaikoura

Thanks to the Motu Kaikoura Trust, Mel Galbraith, Dr. Nigel Adams, Will Scarlett, Emma Knight, St. Peter's College staff and students and many others who gave much appreciated assistance.

A team of students and staff from St Peters College visited Motu Kaikoura over Easter. This was the team that built the Weta boxes featured in the last newsletter. The visit, supported by BAYER NZ Ltd and the ARC Environmental Initiatives Fund, allowed the students to see the end result of their labours, and to take part in the first survey. The excitement of opening the boxes seemed to dispel any fears of weta that the students may have had. In one of the sites, there was about 90% occupancy, with many boxes having a multitude of residents. Ongoing surveys may assist in tracking changes resulting from the impact of rats.

Sean Oddy records data about the wetas emerging from one of the boxes.



The St Peters College 'team" (standing - Sean Oddy, Sam Wojcik, Mark Reddy, Mr Mike Kelly, Jayanth Miranda; Front - Athanasius Santa Maria, Mr Kevin Barker, Jed Murzello, Jason Pinto)
Photos by Kirsten Foster

STOP PRESS!!

Just received from Auckland City Biodiversity Monitoring Team led by Jeff Cook and report prepared by Mark Mitchell states “overall rat density across the island is relatively low (16%), indicating a small degree of success with current control measures.”

Windy Hill, a mainland sanctuary on Gt. Barrier counts, in an outside untrapped area, monitoring indicates 76% with sanctuary levels ranging from 3.2 to 14%. Average 8.6%.

Our big advantage is that we have a moat around our island so invasion potential is significantly less. I feel that with an improved user friendly track network our average could be brought down to the magical 5% level.

All credit to Will Scarlett for achieving this result as well as maintaining defenses on Gt. Barrier and outer islands protection plus all the day to day management of running the island. Windy Hill, approximately the same area has around 4 full time workers to achieve their result.

Rod Miller (January 2011)

Happenings

- Conservation volunteers- it was good to see the conservation volunteer group – a very positive team – dealing to our pine tree problem. Pulling, cutting and poisoning after drilling with our stihl drill. This group was made up of volunteers from five different countries who enjoyed their stay on the island and on the wet day did lodge and toilet cleaning.



- Other improvements – the installation of a Norski wilderness toilet at the airfield. Many thanks to Pub Charity for the funding.



- The major happening following a successful application to the ARC Coastal Enhancement Fund we have been able to purchase a new pontoon and gangway to replace our sinking relic. The pontoon is now in place but gangway waiting for transport by Skywork Helicopters to the island.



- Will and Josh Scarlett steady work on the chalets and the conversion of one chalet to an office. with new floor, ranch slider and windows.

We now have the benefits of a second hand washing machine donated by a supporter, restored by Rod.



Sanctuaries Workshop

Rod and Rosalie Miller attended the Sanctuaries Workshop at Orama, Gt. Barrier, along with many other volunteers from around NZ. This included a talk and walk on Glenfern Sanctuary (Tony Bouzaid) and Windy Hill (Judy Gilbert) Rod also gave a presentation on Motu Kaikoura which was in clear view to all from the ridge at Glenfern.

Although, unfortunately we have incursions of rats - the latest DNA testing has proved that suspect mice were not so. So at this stage it appears we only have rats. **IT IS MOST IMPORTANT WE MAINTAIN OUR BIOSECURITY TO PREVENT THE INTRODUCTION OF MICE** as these are the most troublesome animal to get rid of from the various reports from other mainland sanctuaries, etc.

Regrowth gorse has been sprayed on the airfield which remained in very good condition all through the winter.

I recently completed my 205th flight to the island. The airfield being a very important link to the mainland



Volunteers are welcome.

Cost share flights available.

Contact Rod Miller.

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Thank you.

Rosalie Miller
Motu Kaikoura Supporters

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*“Having vision is not enough.
Change comes through realising the vision
And turning it into a reality”*

Sir Peter Blake

