



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 18 MARCH 2016

Chairman's Update

For some time I have been hanging out for evidence of new bird species confirmed on Motu Kaikoura. While the bird monitoring report from Mel Galbraith inside this newsletter does not identify any new species it does confirm a very positive trend of increasing numbers of the species we already have on the island. I'm trying not to get my hopes up too high but there have now been a number of anecdotal reports of kakariki and bell bird sightings on the island. Whether they are tourists or the start of a local population it's too early to say but I remain hopeful. Certainly the increase in abundance of bird numbers and sustained low rat numbers are positive signs.

And speaking of rats, the rat monitoring exercise carried out this February measured the presence of rats in 6 of the 50 monitoring tunnels. This 12% figure, while we would always like it to be lower, is still an excellent result given that at this time of year rats numbers are escalating. This is testament to the hard work being under taken on island and the strict rat eradication regime overseen by Trustee Mike Lee. Our control monitoring line on Great Barrier immediately to the south of Kaikoura registered a 80% figure!

Both I and another Trustee were caught out by the dark while setting the tracking cards in the monitoring tunnels in this most recent exercise. It is amazing how a track that is easy to follow in full daylight suddenly disappears when the light grows dim. Our Health and Safety procedures kicked in and by using the radios that we both were carrying and communicating through Great Barrier Radio we both made it back to base safely. Thank you Great Barrier Radio for your ever vigilant service. A reminder, nevertheless, not to take the island for granted.

And speaking of tracks, this recent visit to the island has yet again reinforced the value of the perimeter track. Put in mainly for our rat eradication programme but useful also for botanical monitoring – see account inside – and for casual keen (and fit!) visitors. It is a valuable resource and we need to keep it well maintained to ensure its usefulness.

Progress towards the replacement of the lodge is proceeding. We are currently about half way through raising the funding required to fill the gap (\$200,000) between the insurance that we had and the estimated cost of the new building. Being remote is great for our environmental objectives but pushes up building costs considerably!



Also inside you will find:

- reports from our on-island caretakers
- an account from a recent volunteer
- a progress report on restoring Bradshaw house, and
- an account of a flying visit to the island for urgent repair work.

Check out the dolphins below and some cute birds on p.6

Again thank you all for your support – we can't do it without you!

Harry Doig
Chair

COMMENTS FROM OUR TEAM ON THE ISLAND

An Update in Jan 2016

Summer has been going smoothly out here at Motu Kaikoura Sanctuary for us.

Rat lines have been a large part of our lives with more tracks and rat stations to maintain.

There has been a lot of effort put in to making them as effective as we can with the resources we have.

We have had the usual increase in humans out here too, in these warmer months. Quite a few boaties on holiday have been exploring the island and wanting to talk with us about the Island, along with our annual visit from the terrestrial ecology and avian enthusiasts or experts.

It has been pleasurable keeping up with the annual broods of Pateke, Banded Rail and Oystercatchers with only a few minor losses this year and it seems that the cicadas are extra loud this year too! Resorting to ear muffs lately has often not been just for machinery operating purposes...

We have had Zuza, a volunteer from the Czech republic staying for the last fortnight. It has been wonderful having an extra person on the team and Zuza is such an excellent addition out here that we will be very sorry when she has to leave again.



That's all for now

*From the Stannard Family.
Clint, Jacinda, Xyra and Soren*

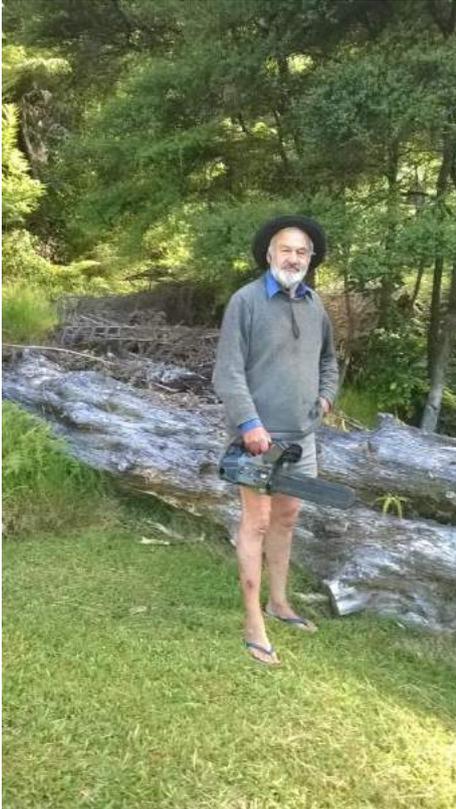


Xyra kayaking with dolphins





Nick Mitchell



For me not having kept a diary my recollections are a matter of generalisations rather than specifics. In between a couple of visits to Dunedin and 6 to 8 weeks in Rotorua the rest of the time has been spent on the yacht.

Work on the island been mainly track clearing and the start of water blasting the Bradshaw house.

Getting the light weight Ozito chainsw was the big break through and it proved far more versatile than I expected. Prior to this I had been using a machete and have the RSI to prove it.

Having now been on the yacht since August this is my longest stint and feel totally adapted to the life.

The resident Oyster Catcher birds at Bradshaw as well as the ones in our bay had 3 chicks apiece but both pairs have finally ended up with one each. A natural attrition or bad luck?

Mel over for a bird count felt the kereru were increasing and the banded rails seem to have had a

very good year.

Building on 2015 the year of 2016 could be very exciting with the potential of a new lodge and Bradshaw house up and running and the island infrastructure pretty much complete.



AND COMMENT FROM OUR LATEST VOLUNTEER

I'm Zuza - the volunteer at Motu Kaikoura. I wrote a little something about my stay here at Kaikoura:

When I was coming out here, I didn't really know what to expect. I've never done conservation work before, or volunteering for that matter, although I've always wanted to. I just found a phone number in a book (Paradise Restored), called it and the next day I was on a ferry to Great Barrier Island. I came for a week - and already been here for two!

My scope of activities is much wider than it originally seemed. I like doing rat lines, it combines my favorite pass-time of tramping with doing something really useful and helpful for the people (and of



Ratters Jacinda and Zuza



course the birds!) on the island. Doing the coastal track was very different - climbing over rocks and oysters, sometimes falling in the water, but also fun, and I especially appreciated Nick and Jacinda checking on me every once in a while to make sure I was OK; as they do with every track - there's always a plan of when I should be back and where they'll come looking for me should I not turn up at the agreed place. Jacinda always has a plan for the day and makes sure that everything runs smoothly.

But I get to do so much more than "just" rat lines! Nick has been great in letting me (and teaching me how to) drive the mule and help clear the tracks with a chainsaw and a machete; and in his spare time we play Scrabble or go fishing...

Jacinda and the girls have opened up their home to me and made a real difference to my stay, without them I probably wouldn't have stayed this long. We always find something to do, whether it's a walk to the plum tree, going for a swim, clearing the beach or playing games on rainy days...

We had a wonderful evening with all the people on the island when we got together for dinner one day, everyone brought something to eat or to drink, I prepared a special meal that we eat on Christmas in the Czech Republic - it was lovely to get together with everyone and hear about their experiences and share a bit of my culture with them.

I've also been enjoying watching the wildlife around here - the kakas, moreporks, silver-eyes; a family of banded rails with tiny black chicks who always come by in the morning... What I haven't been enjoying too much is the group of wetas that, as I found out on night four, also inhabit my cabin. After a bit of an internal struggle I gave in and pitched my tent. Now everyone is happy :)

I'm really glad and thankful to be a part of this project, even if for a little while, and I wish you all the best for the future.
Keep up the great work!

Zuza Hrebcova





A Botanical Update

Maureen Young

I was fortunate to be offered a space on the bird monitoring trip in December, and was pleased to be able to check out most of the round-the-island track. I didn't get to do the Bradshaw Cove to Mt Overlook section, but look forward to seeing that part in the future. It was a pleasure to find that on the whole the track has a gentle gradient, and wasn't too difficult at all, and it opens up parts of the island that were previously hard to access.

Although there are large parts of the island covered with little else but kanuka, with gorse rapidly colonising beneath, there was much to excite a botanist with a love of seeing natural regeneration taking place. On the western track a rock outcrop, besides sporting ancient kohekohe trees, and the largest wharangi that I have ever seen, shelters three ancient mangao trees. In the 2007 botanical report, only one tree and a few seedlings were reported, so this new find explains the increasing number of young trees. A small species of sedge was added to the species list. Saplings were seen of special trees such as the coastal maire and the pink-flowered *Pittosporum umbellatum*. The gullies are filling with lush green growth, often just the common hangehange, but that is a good beginning. Sharp-eyed Jack, with only a description that it looks like a pinkish four inch nail, managed to find three stems of the very special orchid, *Danhatchia australis*, in Taraire Valley.



On the eastern section of the track kawakawa is the species that fills the gullies, and that is a sign that birds are busy dispersing seeds. Although it was too late in the season, apart from one plant, for the sun orchids to be flowering, the seeding stems were very much in evidence all along the tracksides. I spotted some species of plants that were just doubtful records in the past, and new records were kohuhu (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*) and the rather rare *Pimelea orthia*. This latter was a nice surprise for me, as it is a plant that I take a particular interest in, and it was growing quite close to *Pimelea tomentosa*, also an uncommon small shrub.

Mel reported that the bird counts show that kereru numbers have increased, and that was borne out by our observations of bird-dispersed seedlings being more widely distributed than could be accounted for by any other means.

MOTU KAIKOURA BIRDS COUNTS, December 2015

After disastrous weather forcing the cancellation of the 2014 bird survey trip, the team was delighted to have 4 fine days for the surveys in December 2015. The usual bird species were seen, both in the count transects and in general wandering over the island. Regular team members felt two species noticeably more abundant – kereru and banded rail.

Kereru seemed to be being observed in more locations across the island. This could be cumulative effect of improved higher breeding success, and more fruit available, with the reduction of the rat population. The vegetation growth is most impressive, especially the occurrence of juvenile pūiri, taraire and kohekohe. Kereru feed on the fruit of these trees, and disperse their seeds - the presence of the seedlings is a good omen for the future kereru population.



Also, banded rail were heard across the island, but observed around the accommodation area more frequently than in the past. While they have always been present, this trip they seemed to spend more time in the open, and less likely to bolt for cover. There was one chick that was seen daily, but sadly two very young dead chicks were found. We consider these deaths were the result of animosity between neighbours. Such territorial arguments may be the outcome of an increasing population, again due to low rat densities.



Banded rail with demanding chick in tow



Morepork nest on the ground- the bundle of fluff are three chicks sleeping off their night meals

Another species worth a mention is morepork. Their presence was noted by their evening calls, and quite numerous around the accommodation. Several nests with chicks were found, including one on the ground. Ground-nesting morepork is a sure sign that disturbance is minimal, again perhaps the result of rat control.

The bird surveys started in 2006, so 2015 was significant as it was the 10th year of gathering data. Some ecological researchers consider 10 years as the minimum time for meaningful long-term data. So it is timely to report fully on the data surveys, to provide a big-picture view of the bird species and changes in abundance. This report will be available later in the year.



Morepork chicks



Oyster catcher eggs

Mel Galbraith



BRADSHAW HOUSE RESTORATION

Bradshaw House is situated at Bradshaw Cove which is located on the northern side of the island. The house is located approximately 80m inland from the coast.



The building was previously assessed by Andrew Dodd in 2006 and was described as being built during or just after WW11.

Two years ago DOC archaeological staff did an island survey focusing on Bradshaw house restoration as it is listed as historically significant.

Also 2 years ago the roof was replaced and later a grant was obtained through Environmental Initiatives Smarty Grants for some of the cost of an open fire chimney replacement, being a significant feature with Hinerua stone surrounds. All material needed for this Firth chimney is now on site and Clive Wood, registered bricklayer, is able to start the rebuild as soon as a consent is granted.

Nick Mitchell, an on island volunteer, has reglazed all broken windows and earth has been removed from the lower weather boards.

All paint and equipment to remove old lead paint is also on site. The paint was purchased at a large discounted price from Trade-X, Warkworth. **Thanks to Trade-X for their support.**

It is hoped to continue restoring this old house to its past character, situated on a most amazing site with the beach a short walk away. We can then rent to supporters, conservationists, writers, poets, philosophers!!!!

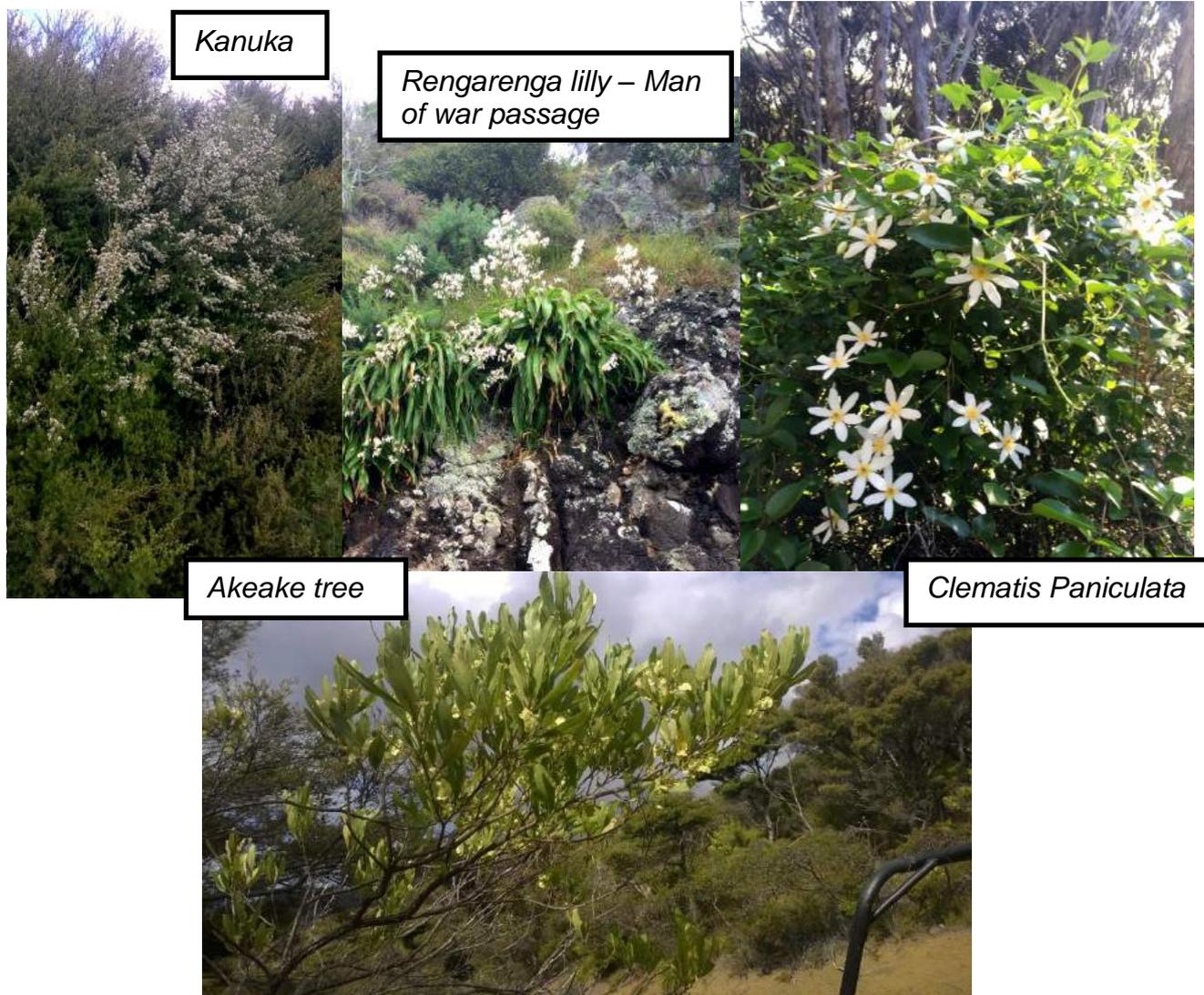
The wish list includes an old green enamel Shacklock stove with water/firebox on left hand side, to fit in where the old one had been.



Rod Miller
Trustee



A GOOD FLOWERING YEAR



Kanuka

Rengarenga lilly – Man of war passage

Akeake tree

Clematis Paniculata

GENERAL

The year has seen the usual breakdowns, mostly minor.

Mule: Transmission failed which luckily was covered by warranty. This meant several trips and island ingenuity to repair it on the island. To take it off the island would have been a major exercise. You may remember it was flown by helicopter originally as our gangway is too narrow. It is a vital machine to us and covers most of the island's road and off-road tracks daily.

Quad bike: Only had minor problems.

Boat: Was serviced, anodes, etc, also a vital link to the outside world and baiting by boat.

Tractor: Normal service, oil change, etc. Odd leak from Hydraulics.



Robbie Smith mowing the lawns



Chainsaws/Weedeater: Normal service.

Generator: Still running sweetly with normal maintenance. Approx 14 000 hours run since new. Vital for frig/freezers. Alternative energy a must on rebuild of lodge.

Airfield: In good shape. Grass mown when required and windsocks replaced at regular intervals due to 400' elevations and lots of wind. The airfield is a vital link to the mainland for passengers, supplies and repairs.



I have made over 350 flights to the island since I first became involved.

It is a continuing privilege to be involved with such a unique island project and to see the changes from when the island was overrun by deer, cats and rats. Working with the island team is very rewarding.

Rod Miller

A Flight to Motu Kaikoura

A check of the weather on Metvue Flight shows a good day. Landing at Motu Kaikoura (KD) airfield is best with only a 10-15 knot wind. The strip is 548 metres long approximately running east to west and it is a 17 km trip from home to Kaipara Flats Airfield (KF) where the Rodney Aero Club is based with their Cessna 172 ZK EJR in the hangar.

Fuel if necessary and the usual flight checks carried out. Load the plane with the gear needed to check the generator which Robbie has phoned to say won't start. Parts and tools which I think maybe required have been obtained.

Fill in the flight plan form and phone Airways with details of flight, passenger numbers, liferaft on board, and estimated take off and arrival times.

On my first flight to Motu Kaikoura the lady at Airways queried me as to what type of plane I was flying if I could get to Kaikoura (presuming it was in the South Island) from Kaipara Flats in half an hour. She had never heard of Motu Kaikoura and did not know an airfield existed there. Since then we have become good friends and she has given us a donation.

On arrival the flight plan is cancelled (a heavy fine for late cancellations) and the plane is picketed. It is noted that the windsock once again is looking very tatty. At Motu Kaikoura we go through 3 or 4 windsocks a year as there is a lot of turbulence at 400 ft elevation and surrounded by hills, whereas at Kaipara Flats it is only one every 5 years.

On this occasion the flight is needed following an urgent call from Robbie that the generator won't start.

Robbie or Nick is waiting at the airfield in the Kawasaki mule (sponsored by Pub Charity and Lion Foundation) and we take the trip down to the headquarters. Parts which I think may be required have been obtained from Repco with the arrangement I can return what is not needed.

All hands to the job and once again the generator is working. A loose wire in the loom and a repair to the air cleaner bracket making it a stronger one and preventing oil leak through tappet cover is carried out .



A quick check to make sure all other machinery is operating satisfactorily and if necessary a stopover for the night.

Next day the procedure is reversed, flight plan lodged, etc. for the trip back to Kaipara Flats and I have now completed my 355th trip Kaipara Flats to Motu Kaikoura.

Rod Miller

Rod fueling the plane at Kaipara Flats airfield ready for a flight to Motu Kaikoura



OUR THANK YOU LIST

Our thanks to Foundation North and Pub Charity for their grants towards design and building of the new lodge.

Trade-X for paint

Auckland Council Environmental Initiatives Smarty grants towards Bradshaw chimney
Auckland Council and DOC for their contributions towards rodent eradication.

We have been fortunate over the years to have had many volunteers which has resulted in eradication of some pines and weeds encouraging regeneration of flora and fauna. Thank you.

Thanks to Ross Sutherland for the collection of chalet furniture delivered to the island.

Especially thank you to all supporters who continue to make donations to the Trust.
This financial assistance is very much appreciated.

Newsletter formatted by Rochelle Austin, student supporter.

Rosalie Miller

Photographers:
Nick Mitchell
Rod & Rosalie Miller
Mel Galbraith

Thank You



MOTU KAIKOURA TRUST SUPPORTERS

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THANK YOU

Rosalie Miller
Motu Kaikoura Supporters

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

Sir Peter Blake

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