

# Matiu Really Matters

April 2013



## A Word From The Chair

I first visited Matiu/Somes in 1988. I had recently joined the Wellington Branch of Forest and had set up one of the pilot Conservation Corps projects. Among our suite of activities were two on the island: building a track and erecting a short fence around the gun emplacements. We went over on the MAF boat, the island was mostly bare but the Lower Hutt branch of F&B had eradicated the rats and were starting to get stuck into the revegetation programme.

A couple of weeks ago, some 25 years later, I went over to the island with Yolanda Vogel from DOC, and the regional staff from the Historic Places Trust to discuss what needed to be done to restore what remains to remind us of the island's rich human history. It's fair to say the island has been through a metamorphosis. It's now mostly covered by a green native cloak. A whole range of threatened flora and fauna now have a safe haven and the island is emerging as an increasingly popular tourism attraction. Most recently, fluttering shearwaters are being translocated to provide a vital stimulus to the ecological productivity of Matiu/Somes.

The island is now owned by Taranaki Whanui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika and managed by the Department of Conservation under the direction of the Harbour Islands Kaitiaki Board, comprising representatives of the Port Nicholson Settlement Trust and the Department.

Thanks to the hard work of a lot of people most of the ecological restoration has been successfully completed. While there will always be ongoing work and perhaps even a few more species translocations, the days of large volunteer involvement and high profile projects are probably gone.

In my opinion, it's time to address some of those other areas which have received a lower priority thus far, in particular, its built heritage and cultural values. To this end and, as a first step, the Trust Board tonight asked Yolanda to draft business cases for the restoration of the old barracks and stables, so we can seek the necessary funding.

These projects will also provide opportunities for volunteer involvement and support from local businesses. It is my intention that much more will follow. We will keep you posted.

**Colin Ryder**, Chairperson, 17 April 2013

**Welcome to this newsletter**  
from the Matiu/Somes Island  
Charitable Trust:

*Colin Ryder Chair, Mark Te One,  
Liz Mellish, Fred Allen, Ray Smith,  
Erini Shepherd, Jan Heine.*

And from Rangers Jo, Emma,  
and Daryl, thank all of you  
who are involved in the island  
for your time and efforts on  
this jewel in Te Whanganui a  
Tara.

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## Rangers Ramble

Wow what a summer! Is there really any more to be said?

After spending this amazing summer wandering the country I (Emma) have returned to Matiu to see that I was not the only one that's been busy.

Every day since I have returned I am amazed by what has been achieved and by how much things have grown. Credit must be given to all those who have worked and volunteered here. Unfortunately I didn't get a chance to meet many of you but your mark has definitely been left. Thank you!

So what I have been up to? I spent four and a half months going for a little walk. Along with two friends we completed Te Araroa – the long pathway. From Cape Reinga to Bluff, 3064km in 136 days. We managed to complete the trail with no major injuries and still remain friends. It was an amazing and humbling experience. I truly believe this is something every New Zealander and those with a love for this country, should complete. Ok, maybe not in one go, as that challenge isn't for everyone, but bit by bit as you can. New Zealand is extremely beautiful but also very diverse. One of the aims of the trail is to show this which it does well. We were also blessed with amazing hospitality from friends, family and complete strangers. As were all other walkers we meet along the way. This makes me so proud to be a Kiwi and hopefully this will continue for the years to come. I could fill the entire newsletter with tales of my travels (e.g. Lake Constance from Waiau Pass) but that's not the purpose, so if you want to know more about my trip please check out our blog <http://teararoatoru.wordpress.com> or just get in contact, I am more than happy to talk about it.

So I am now back, trying to adjust to normal life and catch up on the goings on. Here are a few highlights I have found from the summer.

A few big events brought new visitors to the island. The second Taiaha Wananga was held in January, bringing 50 boys and men out to train in the discipline and art of the Taiaha. The Solander art exhibition was a real treat, with workshops run voluntarily by the artists really adding value. And the showing of the play, *Tempest*, by Bard Productions, was well received. Their use of the quarantine station really brought a new and magical dimension to the building.

The team has been busy sprucing the island up, continuing building maintenance, making the quarantine station bird-proof. The monument has also received a well overdue tidy, weeding, lichen removal and the fence has been sanded and repainted. Even the lighthouse hasn't been forgotten, it is currently being repainted by Greater Wellington Regional Council.



In general the Island is looking great and despite the dry weather the plants have grown a tremendous amount. The tuatara have been visible and active over the long summer. It is likely that 2 out of 5 eggs laid under the Whare Mahana lawn have hatched.

This years fluttering shearwater translocation went without a hitch, all 80 birds fledged thanks to a huge volunteer effort. Some research has been carried out on the Giant Weta. Looks like the total numbers are up, and they have a preference for the middle and southern end of the island. We are continuing to support Cape Kidnappers Sanctuary with translocations of 15 Kakariki chicks and 41 Giant Cook Straight Weta from Matiu to help establish populations there.

The big dry or endless summer forced the island into half day closure at the end of March. This hasn't happened for a number of years. It made a small impact on the visitor numbers but we are still well above previous years. Now the cooler weather has arrived but things don't appear to be slowing down. With regular day visitors and volunteer groups still keen to get involved in protecting the taonga that is Matiu/Somes.

Queens Birthday Weekend is coming up, when a hydrogen-cooked sausage sizzle and soup sale run by Project Jonah and other volunteers, will be a fundraiser for the island. Come and taste the difference.

Hope you see you out here soon, Island Rangers

**Jo, Rob and Emma**

## ***The Island family home***

I've spent the last couple of years wandering around beautiful parts of this small planet, seeing, doing, and taking part in some incredible things. One of which has been having a home for the last 2 months on Matiu/ Somes Island as a Summer Ranger.

While here I've seen and worked with amazing wildlife – whether it's carrying out coastal bait station and secondary plantation checks, feeding fledgling fluttering shearwaters, or helping film makers for a top US documentary on tuatara. I've learnt to tell the difference between native and non-native plant species, how to carve wood, build a fence (eventually), and how to cut flax properly – as well as got to know some of the fascinating history in this special place. And hopefully I've helped visitors enjoy themselves too, and in some small way contributed to the ongoing success of Matiu/ Somes.

So I'm a lucky guy, right? Indeed I am. But just because you're doing wonderful things doesn't mean everything in life is wonderful. I've had some tough times while I've been out here, and so my experiences could have been very different – if it weren't for one aspect of island life that has kept me balanced, sane, and constantly reminded me to appreciate what I've got.

That one thing is the people here. My surrogate family for my short stay are pictured – Jo (and Iain, not around because he was off being man-of-action in his Ugg boots), Daryl and Fiona, and recent addition Rob. So this piece of writing is really a thank you to them, for being great colleagues and putting up with me, and always having positive things to say and make me laugh. They have truly made a difference in my life, and I will never forget my time here because of how they, and Jo in particular for actually giving me the job, have given me memories I will never forget. That's no 21 grams – ask them to tell you what that means next time you see them...

I'll finish with the words of a much greater writer than myself, Peter Matthiessen, from his book 'The Snow Leopard':

*"I feel gratitude for being here, for being, rather, for there is no need to tie oneself to the snow mountains in order to feel free. I am not here to seek the "crazy wisdom"; if I am, I shall never find it. I am here to be here, like these rocks and sky and snow, like this hail that is falling down out of the sun."*

Keep in touch, friends,

**Mark**



## ***Forest & Bird Report***

that in fact there is very little to report. Regulars continue to enjoy monthly visits to Matiu to work in the nursery and have welcomed several new volunteers to the group.

Nursery work is regularly enlivened by encounters with numbers of geckos disturbed when removing covers from potting mix bins and also giant weta disturbed among the plants.

At present some two thousand plants are being raised with over half this number ready for planting out this winter.

**Alex Kettles**

## ***EFRangers Need Recruits***

The Rangers aim to provide one Guide for each 15 persons on Guided parties. We can be stretched to provide this number of Guides.

If the number of tours continues to increase, we may need to recruit more Rangers to act as Guides, preferably those who would be available mid-week.

Anyone interested should contact Ray Smith at 562 8587 or at [rsmith@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rsmith@xtra.co.nz) and have a chat about what is involved.

**Ray Smith**

## The Cape Sanctuary

The Cape Sanctuary in the Hawkes Bay is New Zealand's largest privately owned and funded sanctuary now home to forty-one giant weta translocated from Matiu Somes Island.

During a mid-March weekend a team of three from The Cape Sanctuary, staff member (Kahori Nakagawa), volunteer (Nick Cabot) and land owner (Liz Lowe) were joined by Te Ati Awa/Taranaki whanui representative, long-time island volunteer and summer ranger (Terese Mcleod) who collected the weta within several hours from the southern side of the island.

There was a mixed collection of mostly female, some male, two babies, including a couple of 'old timers', identified because they had numbered tags on their heads, which hasn't been done for years, said Ranger Jo Greenman. Island overnights joined in the weta hunt allowing sanctuary staff to choose some healthier breeding females. Once measured, weighed and gender identified they were carefully boxed spending the night in the Whare Mahana with the translocation team.

A BMW then transported our weta to their new home in carefully controlled air-conditioned style. "The air-con was kept to an average of 13-15 degrees with their minders continuously checking the containers with a glue-gun-looking thermometer to ensure they were optimally comfortable. Because it was so cold in the car we were rugged up like a mountain expedition as we headed into the scorched Hawkes Bay", said Terese.

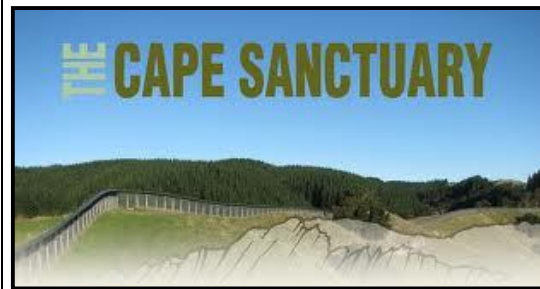
"Majestic and mind-blowing is how I would describe the Cape Sanctuary at Cape Kidnappers, it's an epic and dramatic location with a fantastic kaupapa and the owners (Andy & Liz Lowe and Julian Robertson) clearly have infinite love for conservation", said Terese.

The Sanctuary are doing astonishing stuff, our weta are in a protected fence within another larger protected fence similar to Wellington's Zealandia.

Among speeches, waiata and karakia our weta were released to their new home. Terese gifted the Cape Sanctuary with a beautifully framed extreme close up photograph of a Giant Weta taken on Matiu Somes Island by foundation Whare Mahana and island volunteer Owen Calder (see below). Ranger Jo and Terese gave them a collection of Matiu Somes Island related books. Terese was given a bouquet of Takahe feathers from the Sanctuary which will be framed for the Whare Mahana.

**Terese Mcleod**

**Right: At The Cape Sanctuary: Matiu Somes Island's Terese Mcleod releasing Matiu Somes Island weta, with owners Andy and Liz Lowe, sanctuary staff and volunteers. Courtesy Cape Sanctuary.**



<http://www.poutiri.co.nz/partners/te-matau-a-maui-cape-kidnappers-sanctuary/>  
[http://www.haumoana.com/images/cap\\_eheader\\_800px.jpg](http://www.haumoana.com/images/cap_eheader_800px.jpg)  
Photo courtesy The Cape Sanctuary



Image used for gift to the Sanctuary  
**Photo Credit: Owen Calder**



**Ranger Jo, Sanctuary owner Liz Lowe and staff worker Kahori Nakagawa just before departing Matiu Somes Island.**

*Photo courtesy of Terese Mcleod*



## ***Geckos & Games – gateways to conservation conversations***

### **DOC @ Wellington's Waitangi Day**

Geckos and games featured at this year's Waitangi Day DOC stand.

Fun, food and a freebie is typically what people want at these events: we weren't about food but we did provide fun and freebies, said Matiu Some's Island DOC Summer Ranger and stand volunteer Terese Mcleod.

The geckos were our public relations superstars with visitors excited and enthralled by seeing them so close. We also created a simple animal identification and Te Reo pronunciation game for prizes. The geckos and games provided a neat gateway to big or small conversations about conservation, said Terese.

About 100, mostly family groups visited DOC's stand at Wellington's waterfront Wharewaka, a key venue for Waitangi Day celebrations. The DOC stand was staffed by Matiu Some's Island rangers (Jo Greenman and Terese Mcleod), Eastbourne Forest Rangers (Derek Sole and Jan Heine), and DOC Community Relations (Julie Buchanan).

### **DOC Waitangi Day stand visitors**



## Taiaha tradition grows from strength to strength on Matiu Somes Island



**TAKU TAIHAHA: Students studying the Māori martial art, mau taiaha, January, 2013.**

One hundred years of mau taiaha wāngana on Matiu Somes Island is our aim, said wāngana organisers.

The Te Ati Awa, Waiwhetu Marae-based group who are mana whenua of the island are in their second year reviving mau taiaha on Matiu Somes Island and it's going from strength to strength, said wāngana and DOC organisers.

The four-day wāngana has up to 40 male participants ranging in age from 7 to 60+. The training combines technique, drills and fitness within the unique setting of the island which provides a place free from 'mainland' distractions and a 'living classroom' to develop conservation kaupapa matauranga. Future plans include participants travelling to the island on waka and an Iwi Junior Rangers programme, a spin off for wāngana participants indicating strong interest in conservation.

For the last 35 years Rotorua's Mokoia Island has hosted one of the longest running mau taiaha wāngana in the country. When Te Arawa Kaumatua, Mita Mohi, began the wāngana on Mokoia very few tribes were teaching the ancient fighting form. The wāngana has aided the resurgence of taiaha throughout the country producing 20,000 graduates. Some of those graduates now run the mau taiaha wāngana on Matiu Somes Island.

The mau taiaha wāngana is held annually in January. A small senior men's wāngana will be held in winter. A women's wāngana focusing on raranga and karanga is being developed.

**Terese Mcleod**

## 16 - not out!

Waitangi Day on 5<sup>th</sup> February marked the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Eastbourne Forest Rangers' involvement on Matiu/Somes. Although we have several long-serving Rangers, Ray Smith and Jan Heine are the only two involved from the start. We now have 22 active Rangers, but with the increasing number of visitors and guided tours two Rangers will be on duty during the Winter season instead of one as in the past. **BUT We need more help.** We have a waiting list of people who can work only at weekends but we urgently need recruits who can be available mid-week. It can be a very interesting and rewarding experience, meeting and talking to people from all round the world.

To find out more contact Ray Smith by phone 562 8587 or e-mail – [rsmith@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rsmith@xtra.co.nz). Last year 22,000 people visited the island. The popularity continues with 500 visitors in January this year, a record number. No signs yet that the number of requests for guided tours is falling off. We have bookings running into May so far. The fees for tours totalled over \$2500 last year. The money finances projects such as new benches, EFR uniforms and updated notes for the guides.

**Ray Smith & Derek Sole**

## 2013 a successful translocation

We are now well into the 2013 season and everything went very well.

On 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013, 80 chicks were transferred to Matiu/Somes Island.

After several days, one chick (burrow 91) was discovered to have a head injury. This was a gash across the back of its head which appeared to have occurred well before collection but was not noticed during the collection process. Advice was sought from "The Nest" (Wellington Zoo) and treatment was delivered to this chick on the island. The wound is healing well, the bird is putting on weight and appears perky and alert.

The first blockade was removed on 17<sup>th</sup> January and this chick (burrow 1) disappeared that same night. This bird may have fledged or was hiding nearby. It was of good weight to survive and fledge in a few days even if it did not get any more food.

The next blockade was removed the following night (burrow 21). This chick stayed around a lot longer coming out of the burrow each night to look around.

Currently (as at yesterday) the total is:

48 blockades removed

6 fledged chicks

5 others have gone walk about on their first night (like the bird from burrow 1).

All other chicks are progressing well and we are on track. The chick from burrow 91 is still on the island and continuing to recover from the head wound. Our aim is to have most of the chicks fledge around or after 29<sup>th</sup> January, after 18 days on the island.

Thanks to the teams that have been to the island feeding the chicks already. You all have been excellent!! This makes Helen's (Gummer) and my job so much easier.



### Thanks everyone

Again I thank everyone who has assisted this year. Your enthusiasm and willingness to do jobs has been outstanding. We have made fantastic progress, better than could be expected.

To everyone, on behalf of the Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust, we really appreciate your efforts and thank you. Till next year then (well later this year actually) and to those who haven't been there yet, you will enjoy it.

**Shane Cotter**

## The Weta Wanderings return

Corinne Watts and Danny Thornburrow from Landcare Research in Hamilton and Ian Stringer returned to Matiu-Somes Island in early February to repeat a survey done in 2008 for Cook Strait giant weta. They set out six "tracking-lines" of 12 footprint tracking tunnels set about 30 m apart on the tracks around the island and checked the papers daily. They then searched the tracking lines around the island each night for weta. Giant weta footprints were found in 41% of the tracking tunnels and a total of 417 weta were found. The tracking tunnels also recorded beautiful sets of skink and gecko footprints as well as the messy footprints of tuatara.

Cook Strait giant weta were found commonly eating clover, plantain, stinking chamomile and grass as well as a variety of other plants as well as bird faeces. In February 2008, adult weta were most frequently found along the paths and on the lawn at the northern end of the island and few were found at the southern end of the island. A different distribution was found in February 2013 when adults were most often found at the southern end of the island and few were found along the path that leads up from the wharf at the northern end. Similar numbers were found overall in both years but more search effort was made in 2008 than in 2013, suggesting that the population may have increased. In addition, our results also showed that tracking tunnels are more effective for detecting adult giant weta than searching for these insects at night and that baiting tracking tunnels with peanut butter increases their effectiveness for detecting weta. Plant nutrient analysis are currently being carried out to determine whether the plant species which the weta are feeding are higher in nutrients at the southern end of the island.

**Corinne Watts**

### Overnight stays for Friends

We now have a variety of overnight accommodation available for Friends of Matiu. If interested check out the DOC website [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) for information and bookings.

Forest and Bird Members can get a 25% discount on any Island accommodation. Contact the DOC Wellington Visitors Centre [wellingtonvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:wellingtonvc@doc.govt.nz)  
04 384 7770

### Karobusters for 2013

done and dusted so far, but for more trips to come, please contact Dave Cox: [coxfamily@paradise.net.nz](mailto:coxfamily@paradise.net.nz)

### Guided Walks

Interested? Check out the DOC website [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) or email Jo or Emma at [matiusomes@doc.govt.nz](mailto:matiusomes@doc.govt.nz)

### Matiu Really Matters\* – Newsletter

Issued c.3 times a year, and as required

\*Name based on that used in Wellington Botanical Society Newsletter, by kind permission of Stan Butcher, Lower Hutt Branch Forest & Bird, Wellington Botanical Society

Thank you to all contributors – without your input it would not be the interesting read it is. And thanks to the team on Matiu/Somes of Jo, Emma & all.

To have your say, why not email [janheine@xtra.co.nz](mailto:janheine@xtra.co.nz)  
**Jan Heine NL compiler**



**Next issue is July 2013:  
Deadline due 01/06/13 or some time**

### Would you like to help with projects on Matiu/Somes Island

Please give us details of your name, email address, and phone number and we will send you notices and news of projects and events. If you do not have email but would like to contribute to conservation projects on the Island, please give your postal address and we will send you newsletters from time to time (about 3 times a year).

Then we can invite you to:

- take part in hands-on conservation projects
- work with like-minded people on Island projects
- receive newsletters
- stay overnight as part of a 'work' weekend

Name: .....

Email address: .....

Telephone: .....

Postal address: .....

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### Your donation will help the Trust initiate projects on the Island

Donation .....

Please send to:  
**Matiu/Somes Island Charitable Trust**  
C/- PO Box 39294  
Lower Hutt 5045

Do you want to help the Trust?

Why not fill in this form?

