



Motu Kaikoura

Update - from the chair:

2024 was always going to be a challenging year for the Motu Kaikoura Trust. Happily thanks to support from DOC, Foundation North, Auckland Council and the Lottery Grants Board – and excellent team work by trustees and our dedicated ranger Clint Stannard, we came through. I might add - came through with flying colours.

Our major funding challenge, worrying as it was, turned out to have a positive side. The crisis was motivation for the Trust which has always preferred to keep a low profile – to get out and actively make our case, highlighting the conservation gains of our island restoration work over the past 20 years. Now conservation managers have a much greater awareness of the strategic value of ship-rat free Motu Kaikōura - and the negative consequences if this hard won achievement were allowed to become undone.

Our relationship with the tangata whenua Ngāti Rehua has always important for the Trust. Last year I met with old friend and the then chair of the Ngāti Rehua – Ngāti Wai ki Aotea Trust Board, Opo Ngawaka to brief him on our work. Opo has since stepped down to focus more on his conservation role so we greet the incoming NRNWKA Trust Board chair Fletcher Beazley and look forward to meeting him.

In December another comprehensive biological survey was undertaken by volunteer scientists, following on from the successful 2023 survey. These have added significantly to the records of the island's biota.

Over the past year, thanks to generous grants from the Aotea – Great Barrier Local Board, ranger Clint Stannard has replaced the barn roof guttering thereby boosting the island's gravity-fed water supply, complementing our solar powered pump system. Clint has also comprehensively renovated the toilet and shower block and also added the finishing touches to the new Lodge by crafting his own stone-work steps at the main entrance. And as well as managing our rat control operation, including ongoing intensification, Clint has also upgraded the island's main walking tracks. Having come through a most difficult 18 months, we are greatly encouraged to begin 2025 with the island's built infrastructure in arguably the best shape it's ever been - and very ready to welcome visitors. Moreover armed with an inspiring plan to accelerate ecological restoration, work on the island (the 8th biggest in the Hauraki Gulf) which is already underway, we are beginning 2025 with a flying start.

Mike Lee



A frequent visitor Spirit of Adventure - a view from the Motu Kaikoura Lodge (photo David Gauld)



Meeting with Ngāti Rehua. Mike Lee, Opo Ngawaka, Elaine Ngawaka, Marilyn Stephens (photo Clint Stannard)

Dropping in on the neighbours: meeting with Tū Mai Tāonga



Meeting with board members of Tū Mai Tāonga in November. From left to right, Izzy Fordham, (chair Aotea-Great Barrier Local Board), Mike Lee (Motu Kaikoura Trust), Jim Wii, Maryilyn Stephens (Chair), Sue Daly, Kate Waterhouse & Opo Ngawaka (photo Makere Jenner)

In November Motu Kaikoura Trust chair Mike Lee and island ranger Clint Stannard paid a courtesy call on the Port FitzRoy offices of Tū Mai Tāonga and its inspirational lead Makere Jenner. Tū Mai Tāonga is a new conservation organization on Great Barrier proceeding under the leadership, guiding vision and tikanga of Ngāti Rehua Ngāti Wai ki Aotea.

The project aims to protect and restore native species and ecosystems on Aotea through feral cat removal and intensified rat control, initially in the Aotea Conservation Park and Northern Aotea area. It is also removing rats from the neighbouring Broken Islands. The meeting was a valuable opportunity for information sharing. Makere, Clint and Mike had a useful discussion on our common cause – island restoration. The Trust fully supports Tū Mai Tāonga. A ship rat-free Motu Kaikōura is vital for safeguarding the success of Tū Mai Tāonga's rat eradication work on the Broken Islands.

Kaikoura Island – the old days



Wairahi local Ian (Horrace) Newton donated this lovely postcard to Clint Stannard. It shows the original house at Crawfords Cove. From a 1912 image with colour added. It's the only image of the house and a valuable record for the island.

Motu Kaikoura rat management update

The Motu Kaikoura Trust has been undertaking a ground-based rat control operation (baiting and trapping) on Motu Kaikōura (564 ha) since March 2014. This with the objective of managing rat numbers at or below 5% index level and then ideally down to zero. In 2019, after 5 years of operations, a survey by British biologist Thomas Bodey in association with Auckland University, revealed the previously multitudinous ship rat population had collapsed. Subsequently ship rats have been effectively eliminated from the island. However given the high numbers of these rats on the nearby Great Barrier mainland, attempts by ship rats to reestablish can always be expected. Happily, as the past three years has demonstrated we have the infrastructure in place to prevent this.

Meanwhile the second rat species on the island, the Pacific rat or kiore, previously almost undetectable, has increased in numbers, seemingly attempting to fill the void left by ship rats. Smaller and a less destructive predator, especially of birds, kiore also have a much smaller foraging range than ship rats. In order to eradicate them we will need a much more intensified grid, ideally 50m. This would require 4 times the number of our present stations. A major logistical effort. While mindful that ground-based rat eradications in the past have generally succeeded on islands much smaller than Motu Kaikōura, the same principles apply. We have developed plans on how to do this and are seeking support from DOC CF. In the meantime we have already made a start. Late in 2024 ranger Clint Stannard added 141 stations to the island's 14.5 km perimeter track (with support from Lotteries) creating a 100m x 50m band around the island. That is just the start of what is shaping to be a very busy year.

In the meantime we are pleased to report rat numbers on Motu Kaikōura are tracking about one tenth the level of rats on the nearby mainland.

(for further information please see our website <https://motukaikoura.org/index.php/reports/>).



Kiore or Pacific rat – now the dominant rat species on the island & now our number one target (photo Dick Veitch)

Bio survey 2024



The 2024 bio survey party. Left to right: Rosemary Barraclough, Brian Gill, Barbara Hughes, Ian McLean, Trina Smith, Sean Clancy, David Gauld, Peter Maddison (Sean Clancy collection)

Our annual bird count and biological survey initiated by the late Mel Galbraith took place in December. Trustee Rosemary Barraclough reports:

Eight surveyors participated in this year's conservation outcome fieldtrip, 16-19 December. Trustees Rosemary Barraclough and David Gauld were joined by bird count regular volunteers Barbara Hughes and Trina Smith, as well as Birds NZ Auckland regional rep Ian McLean. The party was boosted by reptile and bird specialist Brian Gill, and entomologists Peter Maddison & Sean Clancy (the latter a moth expert). Bird counts, reptile, terrestrial invertebrate, and moth surveys were conducted, as well as on-going botanical and general biodiversity searches. Several new photo-points were also set up for tracking changes in vegetation.

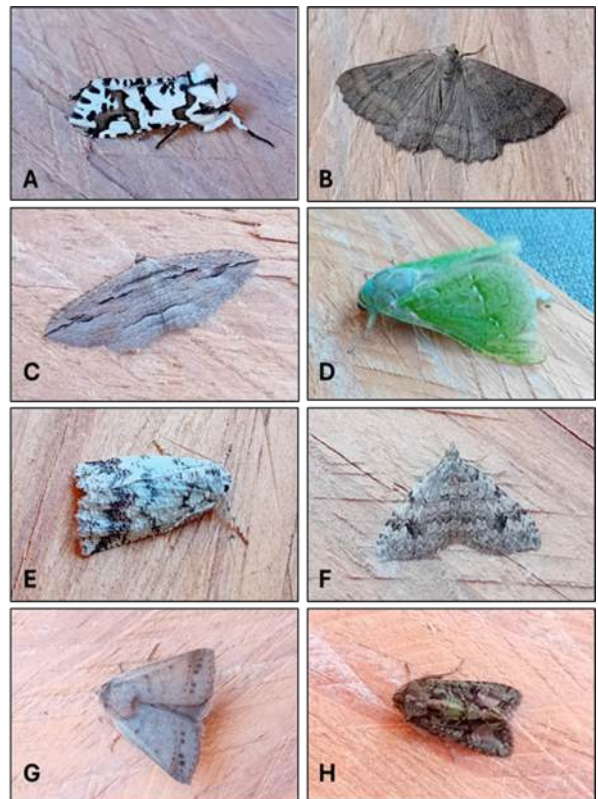
Peter and helpers collected 200-300 invertebrates (beetles, flies, wasps, stick insects, spiders, freshwater bugs, slaters) + 1 native harvestman (Opiliones, spider-like), a large watermite and some marine life (crabs, barnacles, Mollusca).

Sean, with input from Landcare's Robert Hoare, identified 107 species of moth (including 3 unnamed species and 104 named) from this trip.



Lodge becomes lab. Peter & Sean analysing the day's specimen collection (photo Brian Gill)

A highlight for Sean was a moth species (*Pseudocoremia dugdalei*) caught during the day near one of the ponds, which he had not seen before. For many years this moth was only known from a single example, but recent work means that there are now a hand-full of reference specimens in entomological collections, mainly from the Waitakere Ranges. The eight moth images shown here give an indication of the moth colour and pattern diversity on the island. The team wishes to thank Great Barrier Airlines for its support.



A: North Island Zebra Moth (*Ipana atronivea*)

B: Kawakawa looper (*Cleora scriptaria*)

C: *Austrocidaria gobiata*

D: Puriri moth (*Aenetus virescens*)

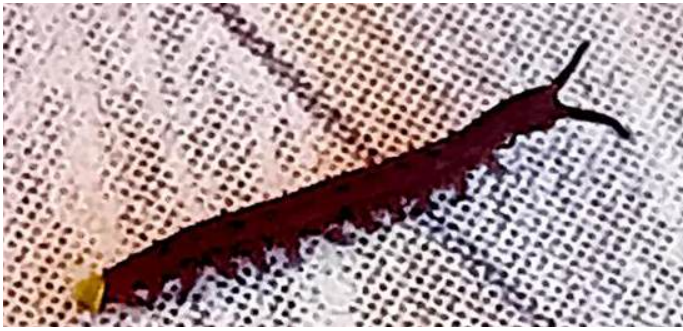
E: Forest semilooper (*Declana floccosa*)

F: *Helastia cinerearia*

G: Noctuid moth (*Pantylia sparsa*)

H: *Ichneutica plena*.

(photos Sean Clancy/Rosemary Barraclough)



Other interesting finds by the group included a peripatus (velvet worm), as pictured. This sighting confirmed an earlier report of velvet worms on the island. These wonderful creatures that look like a cross between a caterpillar and worm, sense prey (e.g. spiders or beetles) with their antennae (photo Sean Clancy)

Birding highlights:

- Counting the karuhiruhi/pied shag (*Phalacrocorax varius*) colony from the water (20 individuals over 4 trees including 2 young and 1 fledgling).
- Encountering an unusually coloured kaka (*Nestor meridionalis*) that is resident on the island. It has particularly dark colouring over its head and neck and ruddy brown plumage over its back. This kaka was one of a bumper crop that fledged from the island last summer
- We watched matuku moana/reef heron (*Egretta sacra*), plus saw many potentially suitable coastal sea cave nesting places for this species.
- As ever, we saw numerous banded rails *Gallirallus philippensis* on the island.
- On one particularly calm evening, we were lucky to see some korora/little blue penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) feeding activity in the water beyond the home bay; with groups of c.10 Korora porpoising through the water in arrowhead formations to feed.
- Finally, we twice witnessed unusual pipiwharau/roa/shining cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx lucidus*) behaviour, with at least 7 birds highly visible and loudly vocal as they interacted intensely with each other high in the trees; flying in, out and around the tree canopy. This species known for its distinctive call and, as its name suggests, its iridescent plumage winters in the Bismark Archipelago and the Solomon Islands to where it migrates via eastern Australia.

Rosemary Barraclough



Herpetologist Brian Gill landing on the Overlook coast (photo Brian Gill collection)

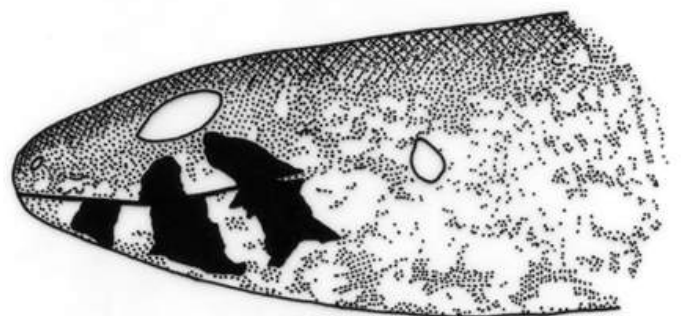
The survey party this year was joined by the former curator of land fauna at Auckland Museum, Brian Gill – a recognised herpetologist and ornithologist. The team's reptile survey targets this year included shore skink (*Oligosoma smithii*).

Visiting the Overlook coast where these lizards are known to be present, the team counted 12 individuals here plus another sighting confirmed in a second bay. Island ranger, Clint has previously sighted this species in a 3rd cove.

The two other lizard species encountered elsewhere on the island were the moko skink (*Oligosoma moko*) and copper skink (*Oligosoma aeneum*) (pictured below). A search for the chevron skink, reported anecdotally from the island on two previous occasions, within the limited time available, was not successful.



From left: Shore skink *Oligosoma smithii*. Centre: Copper skink *Oligosoma aeneum*. Right: Moko skink *Oligosoma moko* (Photos Rosemary Barraclough)



Lateral view of the head of the chevron skink *Oligosoma homalonotum*. "Drawn by Brian Gill"

Ablutions block transformed after major do up

Visitors to Motu Kaikoura tend to be impressed with our rather splendid Lodge, built by the Trust and formally opened by former Minister of Conservation Hon Chris Carter in 2019. Alongside it, the ablutions block dating from the early 1980s has looked rather tired - and in need of a major upgrade. The spacious building, subdivided into female and male sections, featuring four showers and four toilets in each, plus a laundry area, is a very important visitor amenity. After a day volunteering or exploring the island, a hot shower is always appreciated.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Aotea-Great Barrier Local Board, a major renovation organized and to a large part carried out by our talented, multi-skilled ranger Clint Stannard in September. The building was gutted, its plumbing, fittings and fixtures, showers, toilets, hand basin replaced or renewed, re-lined and repainted, with new custom made vanities and benches installed, so as to transform it into a gleaming as-new facility - a fitting partner to the Lodge. Speaking of which as noted, Clint also crafted two large stonework steps at the Lodge entrance.

Both facilities are ready to welcome our summer guests.



(photos Clint Stannard)

Motu Kaikōura accommodation rates:

Children under 5: free
15 years old and under: \$20 per person per night
16 years old and older: \$40 per person per night.

Further details see our website
motukaikoura.org/index.php/accommodation/



Thanks for support from:



Motu Kaikōura people



Clint off to work with red-billed gull on foredeck acting as lookout (photo Rosemary Barraclough)



The Stannard family, Clint, Tazmyn, Soren & Syra (Photo Mike Lee)

The Motu Kaikoura Trust Board



Mike Lee, Chair



Michael Ngatai, Deputy chair



Harry Doig, Treasurer



David Gauld, Secretary



Rosemary Barraclough



Chris Ollivier

The Motu Kaikoura Trust:

Founded in 2004 the Trust Board is the administering body for the Motu Kaikoura Scenic Reserve. It is a registered charitable trust. All trustees are unpaid volunteers. The Trust has no administration staff. All monies received are invested in the island, In our mission of ecological restoration for Motu Kaikōura we welcome any support.

Information for donations:

Direct credit is via our ASB Motu Kaikoura Trust account: 12 3077 0580668 00
Please contact us if you make a payment so that we can issue you with a tax deductible receipt:
motukaikoura@gmail.com



The Lodge, Motu Kaikōura.