



No. 1: 2018

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P.O. Box 401072
Mangawhai Heads 0541

Our website: www.fairytern.org.nz
Email: info@fairytern.org.nz

Dear Members,

In this issue: Fairy tern news; Events: Waipu, Mangawhai, Papakanui; Coming Events; Fish Study; Te Arai.

First, welcome to new members: Bevan Smith of Auckland and Sheila Coombs of Waikanae.

Fairy Tern News

Summary of breeding results for 2017-18 season

(2016-17 season in brackets)

TOTALS: Eggs laid: 30 (19) Eggs hatched: 13 (7) Chicks fledged: 6 (6)

Waipu: Eggs laid: 6 (2) Eggs hatched: 5 (1) Chicks fledged: 1 (1)

(4 infertile eggs replaced with eggs from Mangawhai – chicks lost; then from Papakanui – 1 hatched and fledged; 2 fertile eggs hatched – chicks lost)

Mangawhai: Eggs laid: 9 (4) Eggs hatched: 5 (4) Chicks fledged: 4 (4)

(2 eggs transferred to Waipu, replaced with 2 from Pakiri – 1 hatched -chick lost; 3 eggs failed to hatch)

Te Arai: Eggs laid: 0 (2) Eggs hatched: 0 (1) Chicks fledged: 0 (0)

Pakiri: Eggs laid: 6 (0) Eggs hatched: 1 (0) Chicks fledged: 1 (0)

(3 clutches laid by new pairing of resident Pakiri male and female from Te Arai; 2 eggs to Mangawhai; 2 to Papakanui; 1 of remaining eggs failed to hatch.)

Papakanui: Eggs laid: 9 (13) Eggs hatched: 2 (1) Chicks fledged: 0 (0)

(2 infertile eggs, 7 eggs to Zoo, then 2 to Waipu; 5 at Zoo failed to hatch or chick died after hatching; 2 from Pakiri hatched but died at 14 days.)

There will be more detail about each site when extracts from the wardens' reports are available in the next newsletter.

Events

Waipu Highland Games

Held on New Year's Day every year in Waipu since 1871, these games celebrate the area's Scottish history. Scottish dancing and bagpipe competitions feature along with caber tossing and other tests of physical strength. A highlight is the parade of massed pipe bands with its stirring music and all the colour of various tartans.

This was the first year the Trust had taken its display to these games and it was pleasing to see how much interest there was in the plight of the fairy tern from generally supportive visitors from many parts of the country and overseas.

At the Games these two Highland men offered their support and protection to NZ fairy terns



Picture: Ria Kemp

Mangawhai Gala:

The annual Gala was held the next day and we had our stall there too. We have been going there every year since the Trust was formed – ten years in all.

The population of Mangawhai is growing so fast that there are always new people to talk to about the fairy tern and the importance of protecting the bird and its habitat.

Papakanui Visit

It was pouring with rain, but not to be deterred, volunteers from Waipu and Mangawhai climbed into vans and trucks and set out on their field trip to Papakanui, NZ fairy terns' most remote breeding ground at the south head of the Kaipara Harbour. DoC staff, Lesley Judd, Tony Beauchamp, Alex Wilson, Ayla Wiles and intern Evan had organised the trip as a way of saying thank you to the volunteers who had helped the rangers with monitoring fairy terns during the breeding season.

After a long trip, starting from Whangarei, picking people up at points along the way, heading south to Helensville, then heading north up to Papakanui, we arrived at base camp, where we were greeted by Helen and Greg Smith, who live nearby and who have been involved for many years with fairy tern protection. Greg explained that the building there was HQ for the Forest Service, DoC rangers and the Defence Force. (They have a bombing range there).



Outside Papakanui HQ before heading out on the Spit.

L to R: Volunteers Joy Wilson, Diane Piesse, Gayle Forster, Paulette Whitford, Janet Snell, Jane Vaughan, Susan Steedman, Deb Edsall, Roy Vaughan, Jenny Price, Marion Thomas. At back: DoC staff Tony Beauchamp, Lesley Judd, Ayla Wiles. *Picture: Heather Rogan*



Map of our 4WD trip made by Dave Cullen, volunteer trapper at Waipu

Morning tea, then into 4WD drive vehicles for a wet, bumpy ride out onto the Papakanui Spit. What a place! Vast tracts of sand are totally exposed to the west wind and tides - it's a miracle that any fairy tern nests survive there. Because of the rain, it was hard to see much, but the east coasters were able to gain some understanding of the immensity and ruggedness of the site. It remains an important breeding site for fairy terns because, although not many chicks survive to fledging there, the resident pairs do produce several fertile eggs which can be transferred to other, less vulnerable sites.

After lunch back at HQ it was time to head home. The volunteers were all very appreciative of the opportunity to see this remote place and hope to return to Papakanui in the sunshine some day.

Coming Events

Fairy Tern Recovery Planning Workshop discussing ways of implementing the recommendations of the Fairy Tern Review is to be held in mid-March. Representatives from the Trust and the *About Tern* volunteer groups will take part along with other interested parties.

Te Arai Regional Park Plan: The Trust submitted ideas to protect the habitat for NZ fairy tern and other birds. The draft management plan is being developed and a further round of consultation is expected in April.

Proposed Regional Plan for Northland: The Trust's submissions focussed on protection of fairy tern foraging in Mangawhai Harbour. After a further round of submissions, it is expected that hearings will commence in July this year.

Mangawhai Museum: Our Trust celebrates its tenth birthday this year and to mark the occasion the Mangawhai Museum is putting on a special exhibition about the NZ fairy tern and the work of the Trust. Trustee, Bryan Clark is co-ordinating the project, so please contact him if you have any materials or information that might be of interest.

Contact Bryan at: bryansandraclark@gmail.com or phone 021 672 806.

Fish Study

Every month since October last year, Ian Southey and his team of helpers have been collecting and measuring fish for Ian's fish study, undertaken on behalf of the NZ Fairy Tern Trust.

Once every month the same four sites in Mangawhai Harbour are visited around low tide. At each site three drags of the net are done and the contents collected, identified, counted and measured. The catch is then returned to the water to continue growing.



18 February

The net is pulled in.

Ian, wearing white hat with black band and helpers examine the catch.

Ria Kemp, standing, brings a tub of water for the catch.

The study aims to throw light on the question:

“Why do Fairy terns arrive at Mangawhai Harbour, claim and vigorously defend nesting and feeding territories, and then leave as soon as the chicks are able to fly well?”

There are two alternative hypotheses:

1. That potential prey fish species are present in Mangawhai Harbour at a suitable abundance and size for this period of time only and are absent or scarce in autumn and winter.
2. That suitable fish are still present in Mangawhai Harbour all year but better fishing is presumably available elsewhere once Fairy Terns are freed from the constraints of a nest and able to cover bigger distances foraging.

Addressing these alternatives is a matter of assessing the species of suitable prey fish in the harbour, their numbers and sizes, and how that changes over the course of a year as fish grow, recruit or die and move in or out of the harbour during different seasons.” (from *Ian Southey’s Fish Study proposal*)

The collected fish are counted and measured. Jane Vaughan records the data



Pictures: Heather Rogan

Most of the fish caught in the first five sessions have been gobies, which have been confirmed as making up roughly 80% of fairy tern diet. Next most numerous were flounder and sole. Others identified were tiny mullet, estuarine stargazers, whitebait, snapper and parore larvae, a tiny red gurnard, a spotty and clingfish. Tom Trinski at Auckland museum has assisted with identifying fish.

Last weekend 1,269 fish were measured. A stupendous 6,056 gobies were counted along with 96 fish of other species

The dates and times for the next three sessions are:

March 18 1pm. April 15 11 am. May 13 9.30 am

All helpers warmly welcomed! Meet at the bottom of North Avenue, Mangawhai Heads.

Contact Ian at: iansouthey@yahoo.co.nz

Te Arai

The saga of the illegal dam/weir on Te Arai Stream goes on.....

We are grateful to Mahurangi Matters for giving us permission to reprint the following article and cartoon which appeared in the February 14th. edition

Environment groups furious after cosmetic changes to controversial weir

Environmental groups and farmers are furious that a controversial weir on Te Arai stream remains largely intact after being led to believe that it would be removed entirely by the end of January.

The groups say the weir, installed by developer Te Arai North Limited (TANL), poses a threat to endangered New Zealand native birds by restricting fish passage upstream, which the birds depend on for food.

Their fears were confirmed by Auckland Council ecologists Matt Bloxham and Tim Lovegrove who investigated the weir last year.

It's feared the weir could completely wipe out the New Zealand fairy tern, with a population of only about 40 birds.

Local farmers are also upset about the weir, blaming it for creating a water choke point that has exacerbated flooding on local farms.

The expectation that the weir was on its way out came after Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) granted TANL permission to access Crown-owned land to return the stream to its pre-2013 state when no weir existed.

LINZ spokesperson Steven Law says permission was granted when Auckland Council informed LINZ that TANL were required to undertake the works to comply with a Council abatement notice.

But when environmental group representatives visited the stream to inspect the work earlier this month, they found the weir was still there and recent modifications to it only cosmetic.

Those checking out the work were the convener of the Fairy Tern Charitable Trust Heather Rogan, Save Te Arai chair Aaron McConchie and the vice-president of the Te Arai Beach Preservation Society Reg Whale.

They say it looks as though some rocks and concrete had been chipped off the top of the weir, marginally reducing its height and making it look more natural, but this has done nothing to address the ecological problems it has created.

Ms Rogan, who previously expressed delight at the prospect of the weir's removal following the news from LINZ, says she is "very disappointed."

"Fish won't be able to get back upstream and the threat to the Fairy terns remains," she says.

Local farmers are equally dismayed.

Dairy farmer Jill Parsons says prior to the installation of the weir, any flooding on their land would dissipate within hours.

Now it takes two to three days before the waters recede.

She says the minimal weir modifications will make no difference.

The concerns of farmers have been taken up by Rodney Local Board member Colin Smith.

Mr Smith says it's imperative the weir is removed entirely to stop massive flooding.

“The Council needs to stand up, get some balls, and pull this stinking thing out,” he says. But TANL maintains concerns about the weir are entirely unfounded. Spokesperson David Lewis says TANL’s engineering advice is that a landform downstream of the weir, which throttles storm flows, is the primary cause of upstream flooding, not the weir. He says that the original construction of the weir included the installation of a fish passage structure, which both Department of Conservation and Auckland Council ecologists confirm is working. He says the weir has had no detrimental effect on fish passage or bird life. He adds that the Council abatement notice only related to work TANL carried out from 2014 and the Council has never required TANL to return the stream to its pre-2013 state. *Mahurangi Matters* approached the Council for comment on this story, but received no response prior to going to press.



Mahurangi Matters 14 February 2018.

Finally, thank you to all our members who have continued to support us with subscriptions and generous donations. Your ongoing support and generosity is much appreciated.

Best wishes,
Heather Rogan,
Trust Convenor, on behalf of the Trust Committee.