



Motu Kaikōura

Update - from the acting chair:

First of all, please accept my apologies for the long delay in publishing this newsletter.

The unexpected passing of trustee Lynette Hoey Samuel and then our chairperson Mel Galbraith came as devastating blows for the Trust. This issue of *Kākā Comments*, somewhat bigger than normal, therefore is dedicated to the memory of our departed friends. Helping prepare it brought back once again feelings of shock and of sadness but also has reminded me of just how remarkable and special these two people were.

On top of this double punch the Trust has had to respond to the unexpected withdrawal of DOC Community Conservation Funding which we have relied upon to fund our rat control work since 2015. However we are pleased to be working with DOC on ways to sustain the operation. Motu Kaikōura is managed by a trust board of unpaid volunteers, who make up the administering body of the island scenic reserve purchased by the government on behalf of the people of New Zealand.

On the bright side I am pleased to report the island post-pandemic is becoming increasingly popular with visitors, students and volunteers. The hardworking Oruawhāro-Medlands Ecovision volunteers who came over in December were especially welcome – you can read Lotte McIntyre's report in this issue. The group reportedly fell in love the island and I can report the feeling is mutual. We were also very pleased to receive funding from the Aotea / Great Barrier Local Board for maintenance of the vital wharf pontoon pylons, and we were also fortunate to receive funding from Auckland Council for a biodiversity survey focusing on invertebrates and reptiles. This took place in conjunction with the traditional pre-Christmas bird count expedition initiated by Mel. Poignantly Mel's doctorate was conferred as the survey took place. As a result, a comprehensive list of biota is being compiled, including a new lizard species, the ornate skink, recorded on the island for the first time. Like the gecko sighted in 2021, the appearance of new and cryptic species indicates effectively removing ship rats and keeping kiore at low levels is having the desired restoration effect. As we progress may well yet uncover further new wildlife 'discoveries'. Thank you for your patience and support.

Mike Lee acting chair

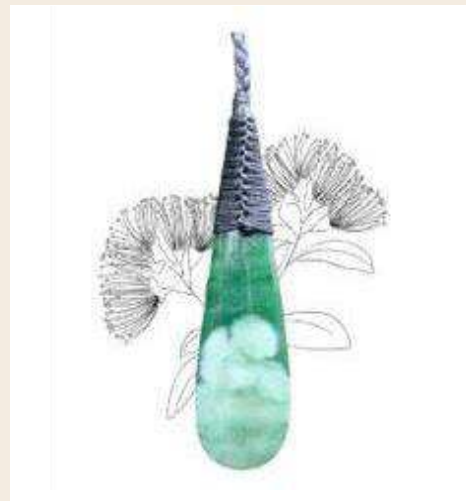
Kua hinga ngā tōtara i te wao nui a Tāne *The totara have fallen in the forest of Tane*



Lynette Hoey Samuel
1964-2022



Mel Galbraith
1953-2023



Roimata image used with kind permission of Catherine and Warren Woollett, Shades of Jade. Greymouth



August 1995. Lynette Hoey and Ngāti Rehua kuia Eileen Ngawaka and Whetu McGregor sailing to Motu Kaikoura. (The writer is partially obscured at left). Photo. M.Lee collection.

*Kaore te aroha ngau kino I roto ra,
Ki te waka I pakaru,
Ki te hoa ka riro.*

*Alas, the bitter pain which gnaws within,
For the canoe which was wrecked,
For the friend who has gone.*

Tribute to Lynette Hoey Samuel

The passing of our much-esteemed trustee Emma Lynette Hoey Samuel, (Ngāti Whakaeke, Ngāti Hine, Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Rehua o Ngāti Wai o Manaia) was a terrible shock for all of us. I first met Lynette when she was growing up on Waiheke Island in the 1980s, (which is why I was privileged to address her as ‘Lynnie’). She later moved to Aotea and we lost contact.

In 1995 during the first campaign to buy Motu Kaikōura, then owned by a U.S syndicate, as chair of the Auckland Regional Parks committee I visited the island with a group of parks managers, accompanied by scientists from DOC and Auckland Museum, and local conservationists, including members of the ‘Save Our Island Trust’, a group of which I was also a member, formed specifically a few weeks before to secure Motu Kaikōura in public ownership. The chair of ‘Save Our Islands’, was the late Whetu McGregor, a senior lady of Ngāti Rehua o Ngāti Wai who was also the chair of the Auckland Conservation Board at that time. With Whetu were a number of Ngāti Rehua o Ngāti Wai kuia - and young Lynette who was there to support and assist her whāia rangatira, Whetu.

It was because of Motu Kaikōura that Lynette and I were destined to stay in contact thereafter. Because nine years later after a long public campaign, the government purchased the island in 2004, the Motu Kaikoura Trust formed to administer it, with PM Helen Clarke opening the island to the public in May 2005. A few years later Lynette was appointed a trustee. Over the years her contribution to the Trust Board was always constructive, her views inciteful and her advice sage.

Te Ao Māori and Ngāti Rehua / Ngāti Wai was always close to her heart as was her kaitiakitanga mo te Taiao and special aroha towards her ancestral Aotea and its islands, including Motu Kaikōura.

In recent years Lynette lived near Hamilton studying Māori resource management at Waikato University. She also served for 10 years on the Tangata Whenua Roopu for National Kauri Dieback Response along with her brother Peter. In 2022, not long after successfully graduating with her Master’s degree in Applied Indigenous Knowledge she secured an important position with the Department of Conservation. It was a dream come true for her. Things could not have been going better when in December 2022 she was suddenly and tragically taken from us.

After her tangihanga at her home marae Motairehe, she was laid to rest in the family urupā. Last October with the blessing of her brother Peter, I travelled up to Motairehe to pay my respects at her graveside situated on a little hill overlooking the marae. It is a quiet, peaceful, rather beautiful place in a glade of protective trees. I noticed Lynette’s resting place is close by that of the rangatira she attended so dutifully that day on Motu Kaikōura, all those years ago, Whetu McGregor. On behalf of Motu Kaikoura Trustees and the Stannard family I once again express our sincere condolences to her whānau, and to Ngāti Rehua o Ngāti Wai for this terribly sad loss. Our late chairperson Mel Galbraith in paying tribute spoke for all of us when he said, ‘*Lynette was our leading kuia, and provided us with calm guidance following the principles of Mātauranga Māori. We extend our sincere condolences to Lynette’s iwi and whānau on their loss.*’

Mike Lee



Mel Galbraith as many will remember him. The dedicated ornithologist and inspirational teacher. Photo. Josie Galbraith collection.

Tribute to Mel Galbraith

Mel Galbraith's untimely passing was another sad blow. I first met Mel in the winter of 1991 when I was dispatched to Tiritiri Matangi by Professor John Craig, under whom I was studying at Auckland University. John, along with Neil Mitchell, was the architect of the Tiri Open Sanctuary. I was to assist with a whitehead mist-netting operation. Also in the team was a young schoolteacher and dedicated ornithologist Mel Galbraith. Mel was to have a life-long association with Tiritiri Matangi.

He and I were to bump into each other time and again over subsequent years. For example, Mel was one of the community leaders of the campaign to secure coastal land at Chelsea Point on Auckland's North Shore. I recall around the year 2000 as a member of the ARC being guided by Mel on an inspection of Chelsea Point. The campaign succeeded. In 2008 the Auckland Regional Council, ASB Communities Trust, North Shore City and the government purchased the land to become the present Chelsea Heritage Park. And of course, both of us were founding members of the Motu Kaikoura Trust Board. Mel immediately took a keen interest in monitoring the island's bird life as it, along with the island's ecosystems slowly regenerated. This research resulted in an important paper published in *Notornis* Galbraith & Jones (2010) 'Bird Fauna of Motu Kaikoura New Zealand'. Mel's annual bird counting expeditions to the island were to become a popular feature of academic life at Unitec, especially with ecology students for

whom Mel was an inspirational senior lecturer.

On the Motu Kaikoura Trust, Mel served for many years as deputy to chair Harry Doig and then Rod Miller. Mel also undertook the exacting task of organizing the building of the new Lodge on the island. When he assumed the role of chair in late 2020 his thoughtfulness, unflappable calmness and patience were greatly valued by trustees. Mel was a person I found easy to work with and support.

Among his many, many roles Mel was for a number of years president of the New Zealand Ecological Society and a national councilor for the Ornithological Society of NZ (Birds NZ). However, in terms of recounting Mel's life and achievements I defer to the magnificent obituary written by Keith Woodley, manager of the Pūkoro-Miranda Shore Bird Centre and published in its latest Journal. With Keith's kind permission please see the link:

https://shorebirds.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/PMNews130_digital.pdf

Motu Kaikoura Trustees and island staff, Clint and Jacinda Stannard and family lament Mel's sad passing. We once again extend our condolences to his wife Sonya, and daughters Josie, Maria, Tessa, Sarah and whanau.

Mike Lee



Groups visiting Motu Kaikōura:

Oruawhoro Medlands Ecovision working bee –
Lotte McIntyre reports:



Advance guard of the Oruawhoro Medlands volunteers on their way.
Photo Lotte McIntyre.

At the beginning of December a group of 10 Aotea based environmentalists, Lotte McIntyre, Raoul Stuart, Clara Safioti, Jennifer Neads, Kim Bannister, Frances McClure, Peter Jemmett, Margaret Jemmett, Prue Smith and Barry Scott, set off for a working bee to Motu Kaikōura.

This trip was a much-anticipated end of year ‘thank you’ to the people who regularly volunteer for Oruawhoro Medlands Ecovision for our weekly Wednesday working bees, restoring the Department of Conservation wetland in Medlands.

We were warmly welcomed at Port Fitzroy harbour by Clint Stannard, Motu Kaikōura ranger, who ferried us and all our gear over to the island in two lots. It probably looked as if we were planning to move in for good, but all the tools we brought were used and most of the food consumed. The weather was not exactly stunning, so spare clothes were much needed.

Clint and Jacinda made us feel at home and the Lodge is such a comfortable space to relax in after a good day's work. There were some great tasks planned for us to help with while we were there and we got cracking right away. There is plenty of work to get stuck in to on the island and volunteers are always welcome. During the two days we were there we cleared vegetation around the cabins and the loop track, dug out and replanted around 70 harakeke, cleared about 60 rat traps along 10 km of tracks, and dealt to some 200 wilding pines in the Bradshaws valley.

Our group really enjoyed our visit and were pleased to see a bartailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) on Bradshaws Beach (a first record for the island) and to hear Cook's petrels flying in at night, just above the Lodge. Moko skinks and a copper skink were also spotted in and around the plywood rat motel trap boxes as well as a beautiful banded tunnel web spider.

Our group noticed a few kauri seedlings and some beautiful flowering trees we thought were kamahi, but it turns out they are more likely to be towhai due to the geographical location. One of the little tracks we walked along to get to the pine seedling area was sprinkled with beautiful horned orchids and the understorey is slowly coming away all on its own.



Volunteers hard at work, pine pulling and flax transplanting
Photos Barry Scott & Lotte McIntyre.

Motu Kaikōura has so much potential to be a nature haven and its location lends itself to being a seabird hotspot. With no feral pigs or feral cats the island is already miles ahead of Aotea Great Barrier when it comes to predators and with consistently low rat densities this increases many fold.

We were amazed at how much infrastructure is there waiting to be used and we will certainly be back to this nature lovers' haven at the outer edges of Port Fitzroy harbour.'

Thanks for having us! Lotte McIntyre.



If you would like to learn more about Oruawhoro Medlands Ecovision you can follow us on facebook [Oruawhoro Medlands Ecovision](#) Or visit our webpage: www.omeaotea.co.nz

Bio survey 2023 Motu Kaikōura



Biodiversity survey party members. Entomologist Peter Maddison, Motu Kaikōura Trustee David Gauld, ecologist Trina Smith, ornithologist Barbara Hughes, Trustee & team leader Rosemary Barraclough. Photo Clint Stannard.

December was a busy month for the island, no sooner had the Oruawharo Medland volunteers departed, than a party of five arrived on Motu Kaikōura to conduct biodiversity surveys. The multi-disciplinary operation took place over 4 days, combining with our annual bird count. The group included Trustees Rosemary Barraclough (trip leader) and David Gauld, entomologist Peter Maddison, and two long-term Motu Kaikōura bird counting volunteers Trina Smith and Barbara Hughes, supported by island ranger Clint Stannard. Trina and Barbara confirmed the presence of kākāriki (*Cyanoramphus novaezealandia*) and were able to ensure that the bird counting survey retained consistency by following Mel Galbraith's methodology. Mel's absence, being a continuing sad reminder of what we have lost. Other work carried out on the island during this visit included an invertebrate inventory undertaken by Peter, a reptile survey by Rosemary, Trina and Clint, and fresh water eDNA sampling by Rosemary, David and Clint.

Lizard discovery – a first for Motu Kaikōura

*During the December 2023 biodiversity survey, our reptile survey detected ornate skinks for the first time. The ornate skink (*Oligosoma ornatum*) was not found in three previous reptile surveys (2008, 2010, 2011), despite being on the list of lizards that might potentially inhabit the island at that time. Now, after years of consistent rat control, we can see that the ornate skink is indeed present, and at multiple sites. This finding along with the Pacific gecko detection in December 2021 (and tantalising glimpse of a possible chevron skink in December 2022) provide nice evidence of the biodiversity gains we've made through our on-going rat control on the island.*

Rosemary Barraclough



Ornate skink (*Oligosoma ornatum*). Photo Clint Stannard.

Veteran island entomologist explores Motu Kaikōura

A sudden phone call - and thanks to Mike Lee - I am off to spend four days on Motu Kaikōura. The task - to inventory the invertebrate fauna of the island. So, in the limited time, I decided to concentrate on those animals living on and in the trees and buildings surrounding the Lodge. So no light-trapping and no time to arrange for sampling of the litter and soil fauna. The list includes what was found in the samples from kanuka and a few other trees and from the various outbuildings at the Lodge. A few other samples collected by Clint and others in the team and a few past records from 'Kaka Comment's and Trustees are included.

The full inventory will be published on the Motu Kaikōura website but so far, a total of 75 insect species have been recorded. This is just a start and it remains to add the results of Clint & Jacinda Stannards' soil sampling work, the pitfall trap findings (12 traps were set up) and then searches of Auckland Museum and other collections. Also the eDNA sampling and lizard survey will add further records. Thanks go to the rest of the team plus Clint and the Stannard family for their help on the island. To enable a more complete understanding I have also undertaken a comprehensive compilation of all fauna and flora records of the island to date - this has resulted in a number of extra bird species and a few extra plants.

Peter Maddison

Dr Peter Maddison has worked as a specialist entomologist on seven Pacific Island groups and was a long serving scientist in the DSIR/Landcare Research, Entomology Division. He also served as national president of the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society and was awarded the MZNM for services to conservation. He wrote the chapter 'Land & Freshwater Invertebrates' in the 2001 book *Great Barrier Island*.

Rat Control:

Last year was a challenging one for rats with kiore numbers on the island spiking over the late summer, coincident with the extremely wet weather of that period. Despite this, our 2023 annual rat management report indicates rat numbers on Motu Kaikōura still are tracking about one tenth the level of rat numbers on our nearby mainland control site:

<https://motukaikoura.org/index.php/reports/>

The good news however is that last year's results confirmed the 'near eradication' of ship rats from Motu Kaikōura. This has been the situation since 2020. But as long as ship rats continue to infest nearby Aotea we can expect continued incursions by swimmers attempting to re-establish.

However we have proven over the last few years we have the ability to readily deal with these as long as our control programme continues,



eDNA survey:

On 12th - 14th December Trustees Rosemary Barraclough and David Gauld with assistance from Clint Stannard took samples for eDNA analysis from above the mouths of four streams on the island: eDNA means 'environmental DNA' and an eDNA survey is matter of isolating and identifying the DNA shed from organisms moving through, living in, or in close proximity to the water body sampled.

'Four sites were chosen to ensure that we had good coverage of the island. The collection filters we used were designed by Wilderlab, who have also analysed our samples. A summary of our eDNA results will be available on our Motu Kaikoura website once we have processed the data. Apart from confirming very high water quality (11 caddis fly species), we can say that in addition to the endemic New Zealand longfinned eel (Angilla dieffenbachia), a close relative, the Australian speckled longfinned eel (A. reinhardtii) was also detected. The freshwater reed Southern Cattail (Typha domingensis), a close relation to the raupo and a potential invasive which was also recently discovered on Great Barrier. The individual raw information and reports for each stream currently being analysed will be available on our website and on the Wilderlab website Wilderlab.co.nz. Our thanks to Auckland Council for the bulk of the funding and Matt Knox, mEpiLab, Massey University, for financing one of the eDNA stream surveys.

David Gauld & Rosemary Barraclough

Born in Kaikoura, (Te Waipounamu) I grew up in a small farming community near Raglan. I travelled extensively overseas (Africa, Europe and North America) in my 20's before returning to NZ with a passion for sailing. As a permanent crew member with the Spirit Of Adventure Trust I was introduced to the Hauraki Gulf and Aotea Great Barrier from 1980. I later embarked on a career as a Marine Surveyor, trained by Lloyds in cargo and small craft surveying, loss adjusting, insurance and risk management. This took me ultimately to Australia for 15 years before I returned to Aotea in 2006, owning and operating a charter business in the waters around the island to this day. I have observed the changes occurring to our environment (both good and bad) and have become a passionate advocate for conservation. I am an elected member of the Aotea / Great Barrier Local Board, represent Aotea on the Hauraki Gulf Forum and have recently joined the Motu Kaikoura Trust. I believe my broad experience in the loss and risk management area, my 30 years as a self-employed businessman combined with my passion for the Hauraki Gulf and Motu Kaikōura, will help guide the Trust in protecting the island and its surrounds into the future.

Chris Ollivier



A view out towards Hauturu o Toi / Little Barrier Island over the Grey Group. Photo Rosemary Barraclough.

Groups visiting Motu Kaikōura (continued):



Open air classroom on Motu Kaikōura. Great Barrier Schools Years 7 & 8.
Photo Clint Stannard.

Outdoors education for young people was one of the key motivations for securing the island in public ownership. It is why this is a key objective in our 'Motu Kaikoura Scenic Reserve Management Plan'. This year in addition to our regular guests Hillary Outdoors and the Spirit of Adventure Trust, we also hosted a very successful visit of the year seven and eight students and their teachers from all the Great Barrier Schools who came to the island to undertake a range of team building exercises as well as explore and learn about the island.

Clint Stannard



Photos Maisie Ramsay.

Weed control:



Arum lily. Photo Clint Stannard.

The Auckland Council contracted weed team made several visits to the island through 2023 and ranger Clint has been consistently working on weed control. Including:

January:	Moth plant removed from around Northern cliffs. Elephant ear removed from around lodge and roadsides. Wild ginger removed near lodge
March:	Wild ginger removed from lodge area
May:	Kikuyu grass and Senna plant control
June:	Elephant ear from Crawfords Cove. Senna removed from pest control intensification area
August:	Kikuyu and gorse control
September:	Arum lily removed from Crawfords Cove. Onion weed and Tradescantia at Bradshaws Cove
October:	Arum lily, Kikuyu and Vasey grass
November:	Arum lily follow up at Crawfords Cove, Kikuyu and Vasey grass
December:	c200 wilding pines uprooted in Bradshaws valley by Oruawharo Medlands volunteers.

Motu Kaikōura new accommodation rates:

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/

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