



THE Hutton's Shearwater CHARITABLE TRUST NEWSLETTER

February 2010

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Inside this issue:

Predator proof fence update	2
Migration Studies	2
Friends of Hutton's Shearwater	3
Returning birds	3
A dawn blessing for the fence	4
'Hutton's History'	4
Wild colony management And more.....	5

Special points of interest:

- Migration study has started.
- Austen Deans prints still available.
- We have merchandise coming
- An event for the Hutton's
- The birds are coming home....

Kia ora,

I am pleased to report that the Trust's first major goal to construct a predator proof fence for the colony being developed on the Kaikoura Peninsula has been achieved. Built by Pest Proof Fences Ltd, it was completed on 17 February. The fence will ensure shearwaters translocated to this site by the Department of Conservation between 2006-08 which return to the colony from Australia, will not be at risk from predators. The land on which the colony is established is owned by the Kaikoura Charitable Trust (KCT) and without their generosity in making this available, the project could not have proceeded. The KCT recently granted the Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust (HSCT) a 'Licence to Occupy'. HSCT acknowledge the KCT and look forward to a continuing close relationship with them in the shared vision both trusts have to successfully establish this third colony. Thanks also to Tai Stirling and others from Te Runanga o Kaikoura who undertook an observer role in case any archaeological discovery was made on-site. I also acknowledge Trustee Lindsay Rowe for the hours of time has put into overseeing the project on behalf of the Trust. A standard fence is about to be built as a buffer to protect the predator fence from damage by stock. The Trust will be undertaking extensive planting of the site this winter and ongoing work will be required to maintain the site. I hope that some of you who have joined 'Friends of Hutton's Shearwater' may like to volunteer for some of the work that we will be periodically undertaking. Support for the fence project has been proof of the tremendous help there has been from the Kaikoura community and beyond; the major funders, and many individual supporters who have given generously, either financially or through the generosity of their time or expertise. Thanks also to Simon Mortlock and Simon Ford of Mortlock McCormack Law for assisting with negotiations for the 'Licence to Occupy'; and to Michael Trotter for undertaking an archaeological investigation at no cost.

This year is going to be another exciting and busy time for the Trust. In addition to the fence project, the Trust has also made significant progress in establishing important research work that will provide further insight into this remarkable species. The Trust has recently collaborated with Oxford University and Microsoft Research when geo-locators were attached to 20 birds from the Kowhai Colony. Read more about this on page 2 of this newsletter. The Trust will also work on preparing a three year plan to guide the strategies it proposes to implement.

The Trust has just received news of a further grant from an international conservation organisation—the MBZ Species Conservation Fund. This is for research and the Trust acknowledges this generous support for our work. In total, the Trust have secured funding of \$350,000 in just over 13 months. This is enabling it to make significant progress in protecting and learning more about Hutton's shearwater.

Paul McGahan

Chairman, Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust.





Predator proof fence completed

On Wednesday 17 February the predator proof fence to protect the Hutton's shearwater colony on the Kaikoura Peninsula was completed. The fence will protect returning shearwaters that have until now been at risk from cats and stoats since the colony was established in 2005. Although slightly behind schedule due to the late arrival of specially made marine grade stainless steel mouse-proof mesh, project supporters can be assured that shearwaters will now be able to establish a colony at this location without risk of predation. The fence was built under contract by Pestproof Fences Ltd with local fencer

Karl Townsend undertaking much of the work on their behalf. The new fence is 540m long, enclosing an area of 2.1 ha and encompassing the original 0.5ha in which the DoC originally established the colony in 2005. A farm fence will be built 5m from the predator fence to protect it from cattle damage. Native shrubs will be planted inside and outside of the fence to provide cover for the birds and to screen the fence. A pest-eradication programme will be undertaken during winter to remove remaining rabbits, rats, or mice that may be present before shearwaters return in October.



What a wonderful achievement—many thanks for everyone's support to date.

From the Trust (and the Hutton's!) - thank you very much.

Above—Karl Townsend of T & T Fencing driving the first post in the ground.

Below—almost finished!

A special big thank you to both sets of contractors—you made a fantastic job!



Migration study initiated

Very little is known about 'at sea' movements of Hutton's shearwater. Although large flocks of these birds can be seen offshore along the Kaikoura coastline most evenings, less is known about where these birds spend the rest of their time. A new research project initiated by the Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust is about to change this. It is known that during winter these birds leave the Kaikoura area. Counts recorded by Albatross Encounter over the past five years of pelagic seabird watching show a clear pattern of activity in Kaikoura waters throughout the year. During the winter very few Hutton's shear-

waters are seen. However in September numbers rapidly build up as birds return to prepare for breeding. The numbers remain high throughout the breeding season but start declining in March. They are almost entirely absent by the end of April; the same time as when the chicks are fledging from the colonies. From recoveries of birds banded at the Kowhai colony it is known that during the winter these birds migrate to Australia. Some researchers believe that the birds circumnavigate Australia in an anti-clockwise route, although there is much speculation as to this hypothesis.

In collaboration with Microsoft Research and Oxford University the Trust is investigating the migration behaviour of these birds. In January, 20 shearwaters were banded with an attached geo-locator. A geo-locator is a tiny recording device which records the time of sunrise and sunset. A computer programme uses this data to determine a birds position. In November these same birds will be recaptured, the geo-locators removed, and data downloaded. It is then possible to see where these birds spent the winter. Watch this space for an update in 2010.

Above—Prof. Tim Guilford (Oxford University) and Dr. Robin Freeman (Microsoft Research) fitting a geo-locator on a shearwater.

Below— fitting the device on the birds leg.



In collaboration with Mi-

'Friends of Hutton's Shearwater'

This promises to be a very exciting year for the recently inaugurated *Friends of the Hutton's Shearwater* and the Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust now that the future of the new peninsula colony has been secured with a predator proof fence. This is an important milestone in the goal of the Trust to protect this species. Kaikoura can be very proud of its achievement.

The long term survival of these birds is a key aim and to have the support of so many people, groups and entities is extraordinary. An event to celebrate completion of the fence will be announced in the near future.

The Trust is also planning annual events to mark the return of the shearwaters from Australia in late Au-

gust and to farewell them from our shores in March to mark the start and end of each breeding season.

We have also secured the support of adventure racer and endurance guru Steve Gurney. He has agreed to put his name alongside our iconic endurance bird – the celebrity fit seems good and will help raise the profile and awareness nationally.

We have finalised our membership certificates and application forms. This quarterly newsletter and our website help us to stay in touch with our highly valued *'Friends'* and supporters.

The Trust is also considering a Facebook page for Hutton's as we think it would be fun for our younger supporters (and older too of course!).

Facebook has proven very successful for Sirocco, the Kakapo. We are looking for a face book name so suggestions from our readers can be emailed to nicky@kaikourawilderness.co.nz with the name 'Hutton's Shearwater' in the subject line.

If you find yourselves at the Kaikoura A&P show look out for the Hutton's Shearwater display and purchase a Hutton's shearwater T-shirt.

Our third newsletter is scheduled for May.

Thank you all again for your support.

Nicky McArthur

Convenor *'Friends of Hutton's Shearwater'*



The *'Friends of Hutton's Shearwater'* was launched at a champagne breakfast in August 2009. The Seaward Lions of Kaikoura did a fantastic job as did Mayor Kevin Heays in running a highly entertaining auction!

Join the *'Friends of Hutton's Shearwater'* for a low annual fee of :

\$15 Individual ; \$20 Family.

By doing so you will be helping secure the long term future of this species.

To do so, simply send your name, address and email contact details to Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust, PO Box 58, Kaikoura.

Returning birds

The success of the translocation project depends on shearwaters that fledged from the Peninsula colony returning from Australia to breed. Of the 270 translocated chicks presumed fledged from this site between March 2005 and March 2008, we expect between 10 - 20% to return from age 3 onwards – i.e. a total of between 30 — 50 birds.

Visits to the colony to check if birds were coming back have been infrequent and low key to minimise frightening birds away. The first definite sighting of a

returning shearwater was in December 2008 when one of the birds that left in March 2006 was found. The summer of 2009-10 saw birds back from both the 2006 and 2007 batches. There has been no evidence of bird arrival from the 2008 translocation, but it is possible. With some of the birds back earlier than expected we are learning that we don't know as much as we thought we did about the shearwater's movements.

Three birds were found dead in the enclosure in early December 2009, hav-

ing been killed by a cat or stoat despite control measures. The predator-proof fence will prevent such re-occurrences and is essential for the development of this new colony.

Aside from finding dead birds, we can determine that birds are returning using the following method. Three pins are placed at both ends of each nest box tunnel. Birds entering the nest box knock these over. From this and bird sign (like feathers, we know they have been visiting a particular nest box.



Above—X17115 (banded March 2007) in nest box 97 on 19 January 2010.

Below—feathers in box 106.





Members of the Kaikoura Charitable Trust during the dawn blessing out on the Peninsula.

A dawn blessing for the fence

A dawn blessing at the Peninsula colony site prior to construction work starting took place on Saturday 31st October 2009.

Hutton's Shearwater Trustees, The Kaikoura Charitable Trustees, and family and friends gathered in the dark and made their way to the site. They were greeted with the Hutton Shearwater bird calls echoing through the darkness (well done

Mike Morrissey DOC for an effective sound system – many attendees started to think the birds were already present and active!). Each of the four fence pathways including the entrance way to the site were individually blessed by Spencer Kahu, following karakia, himene and waiata (prayers, hymns and songs). The blessing provided the opportunity to have the land and materials cleansed and cleared the path

for those building the fence to work within a robust environment.

All present were appreciative of the efforts of a large number of people to make this project a reality; and for the strong relationships and shared vision the respective Trusts have for the protection of Hutton's shearwaters at this special site.

A shared meal followed the blessing.

Shearwater Stream—a dangerous place

'Hutton's History' by Geoff Harrow.

Hutton's History will become a regular feature of our newsletters—stay tuned for Geoff's often amusing recounts of the 'earlier days' in the world of the Hutton's.

Below—Geoff's son Paul with the Black eyed gecko discovered at Shearwater Stream.



Shearwater Stream where the second remaining mountain breeding colony of Hutton's Shearwater is located on private land at Puhi Peaks Station. It is an area that has to be traversed with caution.

The first time I climbed up to it on my own was in early August 1967. It was choked with avalanche snow, with the stream nowhere to be seen. While in the lower reaches, I became aware of a loud rumble. Frantically I looked about for shelter from the avalanche of snow I expected to thunder down on me at any moment. The rumbling continued unabated and I realised that the noise came not from above me but directly below my feet! I was standing on top of a twenty metre waterfall that roared away under its canopy of winter snow.

A few years later, in December 1969, I was back climbing up Shearwater Stream with my 12 year old son Paul and his class mate Guy Mowat, my brother in law Derek Morse

and a mountaineering friend, Alex Buchanan. On the second waterfall where I expected to rope the boys over, I found it choked with recently fallen boulders. I felt uneasy. The familiar had become unfamiliar. A sudden movement, and to our mortification, a huge rock shattered down the bluffs straight towards our party. Frantically we shepherded the boys back with us a dozen paces and hoped. The boulder bounded through where we had been and on into the stream.

Hardly had we begun to congratulate ourselves on this near miss, when the faces above belched a barrage of boulders, some as big as a bull. Rocks thundered down the slope towards us. There was nowhere to go this time—there were too many. I was sick with fear, not so much for myself but for the boys who had put their trust in me. We pushed the boys flat on a shingle slide as boulders crashed about us, shaking the ground as they blasted and splintered into smaller boulders

leaving an acrid gunpowder smell stinging in our nostrils. Suddenly all was silent. Trembling with apprehension, I began to count my companions as they stood up. To my astonishment and joy no one suffered a scratch!

With some misgiving I was encouraged by Derek to carry on as planned to my shearwater study area and camp site. I especially wanted to obtain better data on chick hatching dates. It was very fortunate that we didn't turn back as my son Paul found a gecko swimming around in my camp water tank. We took the gecko home for identification and after much research and help from Tony Whitaker, it was found to be the first specimen of an entirely new species—the Black Eyed Gecko. It was to be another 14 years later that Tony Whitaker found further specimens; this time just west of Blind Saddle in the Kahutara Valley.

Management update of the two wild colonies

Pig trap Kowhai colony

This new trap installed by DoC covers several hectares in size and has its own water supply. It does not have to be checked as frequently as a smaller cage-type pig trap. The new pig trap has been operational for 10 months and so far has caught nothing. This is good news and indicates that pig numbers in the area may be low. The trap was baited with goat carcasses at the beginning of the shearwater breeding season.

Stoat trapping Shearwater Stream colony

Last season trap boxes were chained to firmly secured warratahs. When the traps were revisited for the first time following last

winter, all traps were still in place with none lost to avalanche/rock fall.

A further improvement instigated during the trapping season was the use of artificial eggs as bait. Last season hen's eggs were used but had to be replaced frequently as they were not lasting in the extreme weather conditions.

Traps were checked every third week where possible, but this was challenging due to frequent poor weather conditions at the site. To date only one stoat (female) has been caught this season

The Trust acknowledges the support of ECan, and the work undertaken by the DoC, and landowner,

Nicky McArthur, her family and manager Lance Godfrey for their continued efforts to protect this colony.

Animal numbers

As a result of increased pressure on browsing mammals (goats, chamois and deer) in the Kowhai River catchment there is less physical damage happening to shearwater burrows. Work is also occurring in the Shearwater Stream colony to deter animals from camping within the colony.

Breeding success

Work is continuing on measuring breeding success in both colonies to determine the impact of stoats in the smaller Shearwater Stream colony.

The next newsletter will report of this season's burrow scoping results.



Above—Adult bird incubating an egg in its nest chamber—Kowhai Colony November 2009

Below—Mike Morrissey from DoC with some 100 marked burrows in the Kowhai Colony area, during burrow scoping work, November 2009



Your very own Austen Deans



In 2009, renowned mountain landscape artist Austen Deans (age 94), was commissioned by Geoff Harrow to paint the Seaward Kaikoura mountains with Hutton's Shearwater flying at sea level in the foreground.

Geoff then arranged for Austen to sign 50 personally numbered prints that could be sold to fund-raise for the Hutton's shearwater project.

Support the Hutton's shearwater project by purchasing your own individually numbered and signed print for just \$250 from Trustee Geoff Harrow (9 Alderson Ave, Christchurch 8022, 03 332 4534;

or by emailing:

admin@huttonshearwater.org.nz.

Prints dimensions: 620mm x 420mm

Money from the sale of prints goes toward the protection of the shearwaters.

34 of 50 personally signed Austen Deans prints have been sold to date.

Order your print now

Merchandise

We plan to have merchandise available soon for those many people who have asked!! Initially we will have t-shirts and possibly caps. If you have any ideas or suggestions, we would love to hear from you. Here is a sample one T-Shirt. It reads 'Kaikoura's Hutton's Shearwater.....their last place on earth...Kaikoura, New Zealand'.



Hutton's house keeping

Where have we been, what have we been up to?

Biodiversity Bonanza—Kaikoura March 2009. This was a one day event aimed at raising awareness of Biodiversity and to show case some of the great biodiversity efforts happening here. The Trust were involved on the day and also offered a field trip the following day to the peninsula colony.

Canterbury Restoration Field Days—held in September 2009 at the Motukarara Nursery. This was a day of displays, demonstrations, presentations, networking and the likes, around Canterbury's biodiversity. The Trust had a stand and talked all things Hutton's with anybody and everybody! It was a very successful day attended by close to 300 people. It also gave us a few ideas for displays in the future.

Presenting to the Environment Canterbury Councillors—Environment Canterbury assisted in funding the predator proof fence on the peninsula. The opportunity was taken to present to the Councillors during their November Council meeting. Trustee Geoff Harrow gave his presentation solo in the

end as the other expected trustee had a last minute emergency to deal with. Geoff did the Trust proud and gave the councillors a great insight into Hutton's and the work the Trust is progressing with the funds. A huge thank you to Environment Canterbury for their generous support in this project.

Here are some up coming things to keep an eye out for:

Kaikoura A&P Show—we will be there with bells on (well not quite!). Look for our new promotional material.

Celebration Event—we are planning on 'opening the fence' to celebrate all that has been achieved to date. This is quite exciting! Watch this space—we will be in touch!

Welcoming back the Hutton's—we would like to create an annual community event based around welcoming back and/or farewell of the Hutton's. A similar event can be found in Christchurch for the bar-tailed godwit. It's a great opportunity to raise awareness of the unique bird—after all this is the only place left on earth where they nest.

That's pretty special and worth celebrating we think! We welcome any suggestions around this idea.

We need to know more—particularly once the birds leave land, where they feed off the coast line, where they go and what they get up to once they leave NZ shores. We also want to know more about the impact of set netting on the birds. The Trust has a 'scientific and research committee' who are charged with tackling these sorts of issues.

Other things on the radar this year are the International Year of Biodiversity and Conservation Week later in the year.

We would love to hear of other opportunities out there to raise the profile.



Our main sponsors—many thanks

World Wildlife Fund for Nature New Zealand
NZ Lottery Grants Board and.....

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The Hutton's Shearwater Charitable Trust was established in 2008 to: *encourage and promote the preservation, conservation, research, public education, and sustainable management of the Hutton's shearwater.*