



## Motu Kaikoura

*An open sanctuary promoting wilderness education, ecosystem restoration and public recreation on an offshore island*

# KAKA COMMENTS

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MOTU KAIKOURA TRUST SUPPORTERS' NEWSLETTER ISSUE 4. JUNE 2008

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### **From the Chairman 2008 – Year of the Rat**

In the Chinese Zodiac, 2008 is the year of the rat. In that astrological system the rat is associated with *aggression, wealth, charm and order, yet also associated with death, war, the occult, pestilence, and atrocities*. I tend to associate the rat with the latter two characteristics – pestilence, and atrocities. Particularly atrocities against our feathered friends not to mention the regenerating bush, lizards, and insects.

For the Motu Kaikoura Trust, 2008 will also be the year of the rat. The year that we successfully eradicate, we hope, all the rats from the island. Preparation for this event has been going on for more than 18 months. Planning, resource consents, logistics, monitoring tracks, base surveys all needing to be completed. Finally all done and the aerial bait drop programmed for sometime between July and September. But it was touch and go. We received our final resource consent from the Auckland City Council at the beginning of May only days before the last deadline for placing the order for the rat bait.

The operation will involve some 18.5 tonnes of Pestoff 20R – a brodifacoum based poison which will be spread aurally by helicopter. While the drops themselves (two) should only take a day each we need fine weather either side of each drop to give the bait time to do its thing. The bait quickly breaks down when wet. We like to think, of course, that it will be all over by the end of July but hope for the best but prepare otherwise. This is the reason we will be closing the island for so long. As you can imagine all of this is quite costly. We expect to spend over \$250,000 on this project alone and are indebted to the ASB Community Trusts for the grant that enables us to make it happen.

My thanks also to our two consultants Jo Ritchie and Phil Thomson for the expertise and enthusiasm that they have brought to this project.

Here's hoping for success and of course being able to keep the island rat free – a further challenge for the Trust and the visitors to the island.

Regards and thanks for your ongoing support.

Harry Doig

## Tena ra koutou katoa,

The long settled summer weather has broken and the countdown to rat eradication is on. There are still a few tasks to complete but nothing that is going to hold us up.

The local hunting team have just completed another period on the fallow deer and are confident the remaining numbers are very low, perhaps a dozen animals at most. We will continue to feed maize and hopefully remove a few more before the start of the rat eradication. With numbers so low economics play a part and we believe the 'softly softly catchee monkee' approach to be the least expensive at this stage. We will monitor the deer population after the rat eradication and may plan another hunt in Oct/Nov.

Watching the regeneration of plants and grasses etc is really satisfying given the long history of fire and high stock numbers; **muehlenbeckia** on the coast, **kumerahau** on the slips and clay banks and lots of **young kowhai** coming up in the long grass in the inner harbour bays. Also **young tawapou** and **mairehau** noticed during hunting by Stan.

Our weed program this past summer has seen the **periwinkle** treated at Bradshaws Results show about 80% killed. This should be repeated next summer and become a volunteer digging program to finish it off.?

**Elephant ear** is down to small plants and shoots and will need a few more years to eliminate it completely.

**Apple of sodom** on the point is still regrowing each year but it's a small area and easy to keep an eye on.

**Pampas** was given a major hit this year with the help of the DoC weed team. All the major coastal sites were treated and most of the isolated ones. They also treated Nelson Island and Motuhaku. I was impressed with their efforts, (I suggested a helicopter) often putting in an hour or more preparation into rigging ropes and safety lines to attack an area over the edge of our coastal cliffs. They also found and treated several moth plants including a large one in a steep gully west of Bradshaws. Moth plant will need a plan of attack for next summer, and Pampas will be on going, but the DoC team have given us a real boost this year on some ugly sites. **Thanks to Gorge Wilson and his team of Alex, Hiku and Jordan.**

**Young pines** appearing on our slips and exposed clay banks are to my eye a pressing weed problem that needs attention and a long term plan. Thanks also to the ARC team for the recent weed team visit.

**Banded rail** numbers have grown around the lodge and I wonder if it is the meat in their diet that helps as during hunting periods we have often found them in the bones and scrap bins at the back door. I also found that **Kaka** don't eat peaches, they just mash them up for the juice. This was discovered after the Mule was left parked under the peach tree for two days. What a mess with peach pulp blobs all over it.



Hunting coincided with a lot of **Kereru** action in the first week along the western bays and inner harbour. These were adult birds with young ones doing their first flying and some not too graceful landings in the trees. It shows we have a healthy breeding base for the future.

Our **Blue Reef Heron** showed up again recently around the pontoon, visiting every year, alone.

If we have bees on the island and on Motuhaku does that mean we don't have the varoaa mite out here? I put this question to our local bee keeper Bruce White who has hives about two kilometers away on Stellins property. Bruce doubts very much that these would be his bees so it is possible we have wild hives that are varoaa free.

I was involved in some of the preliminary work on LBI pre rat eradication but left before the project started so I am looking forward to our project this winter and most of all, the privilege of being able to observe the changes.

Recently we have all heard of the rats getting on to Motuihe and Motuora which makes me nervous. Of more alarm was the rat found on a ferry leaving a marina for Tiritiri Matangi. It makes me repeat a question I have asked of beauracrats before. Why isn't there local body rules in place to make it mandatory for all marinas and wharves to have active pest control programs in place?

There is now a huge investment in pest free areas in and around the gulf. They demand some better insurance to help keep them that way.

Regards  
Will Scarlett

1 May 2008

**CONSTRUCTION OF THE TOP AIRFIELD, KAIKOURA ISLAND,  
FITZROY HARBOUR, GT. BARRIER ISLAND**

Contribution from Sue and Alan Gray, Gt. Barrier Island.

Date: 14 April 1997 to 17 October 1997.

Early one evening Sue and I were at Whangaparapara to collect our groceries and the barge "Tasman" arrived. The barge had some earth moving machinery on board: D6 bulldozer, scraper, digger loader, a small grader and an old Holden, etc.

We were introduced to Don Fasher of Orewa and also Renton Foote, a contractor from Tairua, and his helper Colin Nicholson, who were on their way to Kaikoura then by road from the old village to Bradshaws Bay to use the old cottage there as their headquarters and to start the airfield construction the next day.

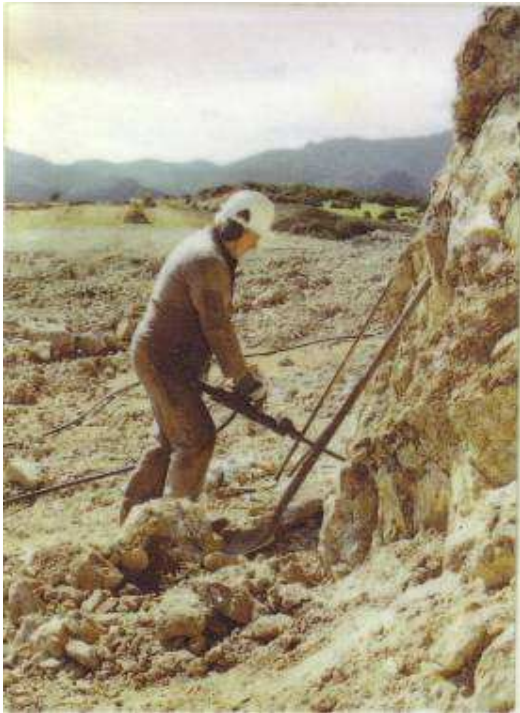
I was asked to do any construction blasting required if necessary to progress the development. The start date was late due to Resource Consent delays and was heading for the 'no work' in winter because of run off of silt potential.

I agreed to look at the scene if required to do so and thought no more about it. Some weeks later the phone rang and Renton was in trouble with a large volcanic plug in the middle ridge and it had to be removed with explosives. I made a visit and assessed the situation. Not a simple job – like a large thumb sticking up, Andesite agglomerate, rotten stuff to blast, about 600 cu.m – good fill but not needed in the middle of an airfield development.

I arranged to get my equipment delivered to Kaikoura and eventually, with Sue's agreement, took myself and explosives to the island.

Renton and Colin had set themselves up in the old cottage at Bradshaws (Old Home Bay) and had made a reasonable pad out of a 'pig's ear' scene – no wood fire, no water, faulty chimney, etc. You name it and it didn't work but we all made the best of it- introduced a gen. plant, a calypso hot water gas caliphont and were able to have a shower at the end of the strenuous work days.

Cooking was on a 2 burner old cast iron gas ring thing and I seemed to get most of the cooking jobs as I got home first after my day of drilling and blasting.



It took me nine days to demolish the rotten thumb and I was pleased when it was time to go home. The west and north-west wet, cold wind screamed over the top of Kaikoura on a regular basis including much rain. Not good when loading holes and wiring up for blasting. However, I got it done.



The potential for lots more to do re blasting became apparent as the bulldozer and scraper operation pared the surface down toward the airfield grade pegs. The Camel side of the field at the base of the Camel was rotten rock to start with and the scraper couldn't dig it out. Some weeks after I had gone home I was rung by Renton to come and blast some more rock which he was unable to remove.

I thought "Can I do some more in those horrible conditions?" but I had left my gear there and explosives in the magazine on the possibility that this scene would occur.

The rotten rock scraped from the Camel end was spread on the newly formed road from the village to the cottage at Old Home Bay and is still a good road.

When I returned to Kaikoura and saw the magnitude of the rock removal job on the Camel end of the airfield I nearly said "No" but got stuck in and with extreme difficulty spent several weeks before we had to stop for the winter, beginning to remove the 2 to 3 thousand metres of hard and rotten rock from the area.

We returned to complete the job in August of the same year when the Resource Consent allowed us to do so. I had to make three launch trips to Waitawa to obtain extra detonators and explosives during the job – a long journey in an 8 knot per hour launch and thanks to the Mabey family for their skill and assistance in this activity. Also, thanks to others who got me on to the island – Brent Baker and Paul Francis.

Renton did a magnificent job with an Abney level to finally complete a fine facility which I know will enhance the Fitzroy scene in the future. Thanks to Rod Miller and Will Scarlett for the efforts they have put in with dedication and considerable amount of personal sacrifice and expense to get the island fauna and flora predator free in conjunction with the Motu Kaikoura Trust and DoC.

My special thanks to my darling wife, Sue, who made life easy for me to be away on the island during many weeks of my involvement with the airfield construction and a couple of visits with Rod Miller recently. We had Renton and Colin home at Awana for a number of visits when the weather was too bad for us to work there and as a result have made lasting friendships with them.

There are many facets to this resume as described and photos that Rod has recorded from my albums which I am sure are available somewhere.

Sue and I pledge our total support of efforts to re-establish the original beauty of Motu Kaikoura as a place to visit. Hopefully Sir Peter Blake's name will be displayed there in respect of his great achievements for New Zealand.

**It is wonderful to see assets such as Kaikoura remain in New Zealand hands for posterity – money well and correctly spent.**

With aroha,  
Sue and Alan Gray.

15 May 2008



Airfield – Today's airfield is a great testament to Alan Gray, Renton and his team's blasting of airfield from such a rugged ridge. Flying is immensely valuable even more so to Kaikoura than to Gt.Barrier itself due to Kaikoura's added remoteness.

Rod has now completed his 108<sup>th</sup> flight having again carried every imaginable support item for Kaikoura's restoration.

**VOLUNTEERS WANTED** to construct another 50 rat motels. Please contact Rod Miller 09 4255612 or email [hellorodmiller@hotmail.com](mailto:hellorodmiller@hotmail.com).

This month I flew Vodafone and Arrow International technicians to commission the windmill and recording gear on Vodafone site. You can look at the site on (for live data)

<http://view2.fatspaniel.net/Vodafone/HostedEndUserView.html?&eid=103633>

The reptile flight last weekend brought my total flights to 118. The airfield is a very useful part of the operation.

If you want to take part on any of these flights on a shared cost basis please contact me.

Rod Miller



## Signs

6 track signs were made and put in place prior to Christmas along with information brochures and the island was used quite extensively over the summer with people walking across the island mooring their boats on either side. Also walking on tracks cut for deer and rat eradication. Good walks with great views. (Junior supporter Rochelle Austin preparing the signs)



Vodafone's cell site (photo)  
 Certainly a magnificent structure totally self sufficient now run by solar and wind.  
 A valuable investment for the Fitzroy Harbour residents as well as improving cell and data services for Kaikoura.  
 To illustrate the magnitude of the project 40 cu.metres of concrete was helicoptered from the barge to the site to supply a secure base for the wind generator tower.

## I REMEMBER WHEN

In the early sixties I was the Public Health Nurse on Gt. Barrier Island. It was not easy – no doctor so I carried Merck's Manual – a doctor's manual about medical problems and treatment.

In those days the roads were rough, narrow and very dusty. I drove a 4 wheel drive land rover. There were six telephone exchanges. When they knew that I was on my way, usually at speed, to an emergency they rang from one area to another and so the residents were ever so careful

I also went to Little Barrier island when the navy vessel called to weigh babies.

Then there was Kaikoura Island. I had flown over with Capt Ladd and my impression was it seemed to be guarding the entrance to Fitzroy Harbour. The Public Health Nurse's house was at Port Fitzroy.

There were farmers also living on Kaikoura Island and I remember visiting them probably on "The Lady Jocelyn" which would be distributing stores to them. I would take the opportunity to look into their health needs, especially the children.

When visiting babies in places like Little Barrier and Kaikoura Island I weighted them by putting a hook into the knot at the top – like a sling.

I am now 83 living in Algies Bay and can look at Little Barrier Island and in the distance Gt. Barrier and dream of those hard but exciting days.

Jocelyn Perry

## I REMEMBER WHEN

### A CATTLE MUSTER ON KAIKOURA ISLAND

One weekend in 1963 I was invited to help round up some cattle on Selwyn Island, as Kaikoura was often called then.

Reg Connor was using the place as a “run-off” for a number of dry stock and it was time to send them to the “mainland”.

Reg’s son David and Fred Mabey’s son Murray, and several others were on board the “Westwind” when we set out from Cooper’s jetty in Port Fitzroy.

I was the local school teacher and regarded as the ‘spare hand’ in the weekends! Also out for the day’s entertainment were several of the older school pupils, Dick and May Wii’s children.

We arrived at the wharf in Man-of-War passage, and after some hasty strengthening repairs to the stockyard we fanned out to see what beasts we could find. Being an absolute greenhand at moving half-wild animals which hardly ever saw a human being from one year’s end to the next, my only instructions were to look out for myself.

Fortyfive years ago Kaikoura had much more grass and many open spaces. However, the gullies were well wooded with scrub, manuka and kanuka, so where did the stock take refuge? Yes, they cunningly hid themselves and remained quietly still in the depressions. The dogs of course worried the animals and harried them until they burst from cover. At one stage I noticed Murray and David had clambered on top of a huge boulder, the better to see what was happening and to whistle instructions to their dogs. I was at the base.

Suddenly they yelled at me “Watch out Mac! Watch out!”

An enraged steer pounded into sight from around the rock and with lowered head charged towards me. I just had time to pick up the closest piece of wood and as I fell sideways, swung my weapon across his skull. The wood powdered to dust – it was a completely rotten branch! Fortunately for me the beast was more intent on escape than attack. Of course the two blokes on top of the rock roared with laughter. Also, in the background were some of my pupils.

The day ended without further incident, with enough animals corralled for a scow load.

Monday morning at school was news time when written stories were called for. One youngster who had been on the round up headed his report “Sir Our Champion Bull Fitter” (Fighter)

Ian Mackenzie.



