



Chairman's Annual Report 12 months ended 30 June 2010

Introduction

It has been an exciting and challenging year at Pukaha Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre with the translocation of thirty kiwi from Little Barrier Island and fund raising and planning for the upgrade and redevelopment of the kiwi/nocturnal house. We operate the visitor experience to Pukaha Mount Bruce in challenging times for the tourism sector and I am pleased to report that we have held our own well with visitor numbers being maintained.

Visitation/visitor experience

Pukaha Mount Bruce continued to have strong visitation during the year. However some impacts have been felt by the marked downturn in international visitor numbers to New Zealand but my Board was very pleased that we were able to hold our own in the current market place. Around 40% of our visitors were international travellers, 13% came from the Wairarapa and 28% from Manawatu and Wellington. This is a similar trend to the previous year.

Free admission was available to Wairarapa residents as a thank you for all of those who had supported us in our major fund raising efforts. More than 800 attended on that day in early May.

Upgrade of the Kiwi/Nocturnal House

The Board identified four years ago a programme of upgrades to the visitor experience at Pukaha Mount Bruce. Stage One was the upgrade of the Visitor Centre incorporating to a new interactive gallery and interpretation. This project was successfully accomplished and opened to the public in December 2008. Stage Two has seen the planning and fund raising for the upgrade and refurbishment of the Kiwi/Nocturnal House.

Feedback from our visitors told us that seeing a kiwi was a most important part of the visit to Pukaha Mount Bruce. The existing Kiwi/Nocturnal House was built more than twenty years and now does not meet the expectations of visitors and was at times subject to flooding.

Working with our Project Manager and Architects – Proarch Architects the broader visitor experience needs were reviewed and it was decided to add several new features to the experience. These include the construction of a small theatre that will seat about fifty people and will show a range of short films that have been especially commissioned. In addition it was decided to relocate the existing Operation Nest Egg programme into the Kiwi/Nocturnal House providing greatly improved incubation and brooding rooms with a capacity to meet current and future needs and to align the programme with best practice protocols and provide viewing opportunities for the visitor. We also plan to improve display facilities for the tuatara and we display additional nocturnal species including NZ frogs, weta, weevils, skinks and geckos.

The total cost of the project including building construction, professional fees and fit-out will be \$1.3m.

The construction contract was let to D.R.Borman Ltd and work commenced on site in early August 2010. The project is due for completion prior to Christmas 2010 and should be reopened for the busy summer season.

Track extended

The track – Te Arapiki o Tawhaki, developed by the Department of Conservation has been extended and the new loop was open to visitors in December 2009. This track provides a great one and a half hour walk for our visitors through the forest and an opportunity to enjoy the birdlife and then at the summit experience commanding views across the valley and the forest. The Department of Conservation plans to install seating and new track signage during this next summer.

Fund raising

A number of major fund raising events were held to assist with the Flight of the Kiwi project and the forest restoration and predator control work.

The Breadcraft Long Lunch was held on April in a giant marquee in the grounds of the Copthorne Hotel, Masterton. This proved a highly successful event with more than 300 guests attending a more than \$30,000 being raised. A highly motivated group of volunteers worked on the project and we are very appreciative of their support. This same group has reformed to plan the next Breadcraft Long Lunch which we are planning to make an annual event.

A major campaign of funding raising for the Kiwi/Nocturnal House was mounted. We are indebted to the following organisations for their significant contributions to the project;

Trust House Charitable Trust,
New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, Lottery Environment and Heritage
Committee,
Eastern & Central Community Trust
Central Energy Trust

Ministry of Tourism, Tourism Facilities Grants Programme
Tararua District Council
Masterton District Council
New Zealand Community Trust
Pelorus Trust
Prime Community Trust.

We also value the support of the Heseltine Trust, South Wairarapa Rotary and G Murfitt for their donations towards the project.

Further fund raising continues and includes a Bird and Garden Tour of several private Wairarapa Gardens on 30 October 2010.

Forest restoration programme

The Department of Conservation undertakes the pest control programme and forest restoration on behalf of the Board.

A vast infrastructure of bait stations and traps are set within and adjacent to the reserve providing a high level of protection for native bird species. In the last year 34 ferrets, 46 stoats and 75 feral cats had been caught.

As part of an ongoing process to improve pest control in and around the forest, an independent review of the programme by Lincoln University ecologist, Dr James Ross, was commissioned before the end of the financial year.

It was with great sadness that we lost 12 kiwi to ferret attacks in July and August 2010. This, along with the findings of the review and subsequent actions will be covered in the 2011 Annual Report.

We are committed to continuing what is an ongoing process of making sure we have the optimum pest control measures in place to protect our native birds.

Protecting kiwi and other native birds from predators is a complex and challenging task. Creating an unfenced sanctuary is an ambitious but necessary programme to ensure long-term self-sustaining populations of kiwi and other native birds on the mainland.

The total cost of forest restoration activity in the 12 months ended 30 June 2010 was \$116,000. Following action taken as a response to the Ross Report this will rise further this next financial year. To mitigate some of these potential increases it is proposed to develop a Volunteer Programme to add value to the forest restoration being undertaken. It remains a significant challenge to raise these funds on an ongoing basis and the Board is projecting that a portion of the visitor admission income will be directed to this restoration programme.

We are indebted to Transit Coachlines for their commitment to a further five years of funding at \$10,000 per year and to Higgins Group and Farmers Mutual Group (FMG) for

each contributing \$5,000 and Printcraft for a donation of \$2,000 towards the forest restoration programme this year.

Further funds have been generated through the Hectare Donor Programme with individuals and smaller groups sponsoring a hectare and in the year 2009/10, \$12,471 was donated.

We make special mention of the National Wildlife Centre Trust who made a donation of \$20,000 towards “The Flight of the Kiwi Project”.

We are also indebted to Greater Wellington Regional Council and Horizons Regional Council working with adjacent land owners for their excellent support with pest control on the bordering properties to the forest.

Membership

This year we updated our membership programme and introduced several new categories of supporter. We now have, individual, couples, family, extended family, gold and platinum memberships available which have resulted in a steady increase in new members at all levels.

Membership at the Gold and Platinum level as well as offering admittance to Pukaha Mount Bruce has a significant portion of the membership directed to the forest restoration programme.

Education

The Board continues to operate an extensive education programme at Pukaha Mount Bruce. This year we launched the “Whack a Rat Save a Native Bird” programme and distributed more than 100 education resource packages to pre schools and schools and colleges in the Wairarapa and Tararua regions. This programme which was linked to a fund raising programme for our kiwi transfer project raised awareness of the need to eradicate the predators from our forest for our birds to survive. Additional resources were distributed fortnightly to schools during term one and this linked to a special full page in the Wairarapa Times-Age where the conservation message was continued to be highlighted and where we also reported on fund raising efforts by schools. This will be a permanent resource now available to schools in the region.

I want to express my deep appreciation for the fund raising efforts put in place by the children and students with the support of their parents and teachers and several thousand dollars have been raised through this programme.

We are indebted to the Masterton Trust Lands Trust for their funding assistance for the programme development programmes we deliver to Masterton children.

Scholarship

We awarded the inaugural Pukaha Mount Bruce – Elwin Welch Memorial Scholarship to Rachel Riley who is currently undertaking her MSc thesis at Massey University. Rachel spent time at Pukaha Mount Bruce in early May researching her subject.

Department of Conservation relationship

The Board has continued to have a very good working relationship with the Department of Conservation who undertake on behalf of the Board the day to day operation and management of the visitor centre, café and shop. The Department of Conservation also undertakes the forest restoration programme that is funded by the Board. I should like to record my appreciation to Kathy Houkamau – Field Service Manager and the team for the work they do at Pukaha Mount Bruce.

Marketing

This year we have continued to work on the profile building and marketing of Pukaha Mount Bruce. In November 2009 we launched our new website which also incorporates an electronic payment system that enables the purchase of memberships, make donations and purchase product online. Regular updates of our website are undertaken and the website will continue to be enhanced and improved.

As part of our communications and marketing plan we have developed a valuable electronic database and newsletters are distributed to subscribers on a regular basis.

Many positive newspaper articles, feature stories and media coverage was achieved during the year providing support to communicating our messages to a wide audience and broader profile building.

Accountancy arrangements

We are indebted to Sadler, Oakly, Newman who undertake the accountancy services for the Board and the contribution they make to us in the form of sponsorship.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank the Board and Pukaha Mount Bruce staff for their excellent support and contribution to the successes at Pukaha Mount Bruce over the last twelve months.

I am very appreciative of the partnership relationship we have with Rangitane o Wairarapa and the support they give to the work at Pukaha Mount Bruce.

During the year we have continued to work well with the National Wildlife Trustees and we are appreciative of their continued endeavours as they redefine their role as key supporter of Pukaha Mount Bruce.

We are indebted to Bob Macfarlane who continues his association with Pukaha Mount Bruce by acting as the voluntary secretary of the Hectare Programme. We also thank John Gilberthorpe our Executive Officer who has made an excellent contribution and has been responsible for a significant number of new innovations and initiatives. To my Board my sincere thanks for your great contribution during the year.

Conclusion

It has been a highly successful year with a number of major highlights and challenges and the momentum continues as we seek to develop Pukaha Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre into a world class eco tourism visitor attraction.

Bob Francis
Chairman
4 October 2010