

Pīpipi

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Maurice White Native Forest Trust
Newsletter from Hinewai Reserve, Banks Peninsula
Aotearoa / New Zealand

R.D.3 Akaroa 7583

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May 2023

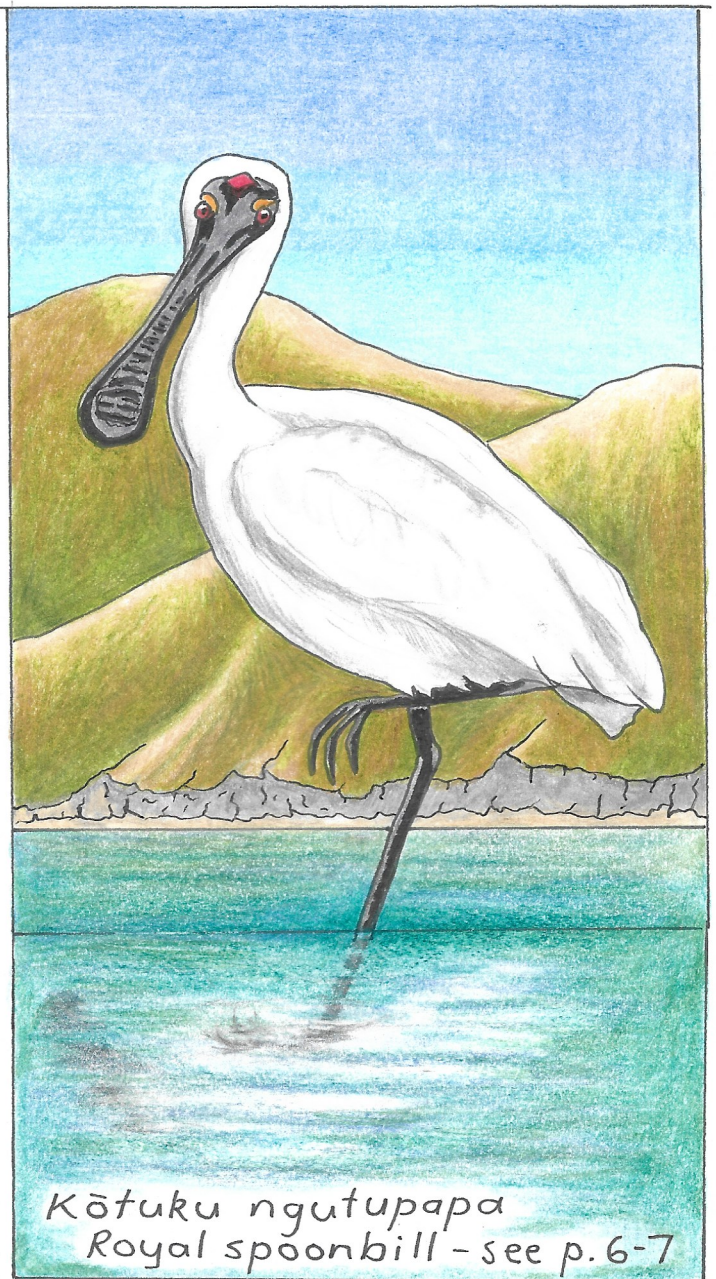
Whatever the weather

On Hinewai, weather is not just a topic for talk when all else fails. It's first and last in nearly every conversation.

Right now, at the end of autumn, everything is looking especially lush and lovely. Summer provided ample rain but no significant further damage. Twice in the past six months Tāwhirimātea teased us with drought but soon relented, decidedly so when the tail end of Cyclone Gabrielle doused us in mid-February.

Gabrielle was an ex-tropical storm that headed south to savage an already sodden northern North Island. There it

was apocalyptic. Floods and landslides destroyed roads, bridges, homes, farms and orchards, cut power to tens of thousands, prompted mass evacuations, and killed eleven. Tiring, She reached us



Kōtuku ngutupapa
Royal spoonbill - see p.6-7

2 on the evening of the 14th, still lively enough to scare us anew with persistent heavy rain and southerly gales, not helped by a seismic shake on the 16th. The two days of rain tallied up 189 mm at Skyline rain gauge, which seemed surely close to damage thresholds but which gave us only a useful soaking.

Tāwhiri had not finished taunting the North Islanders though. They were pummelled yet again, and again, and again, in late February, April and early May, hitherto "150-year" events recurring several times in a single year.

Bouncing back

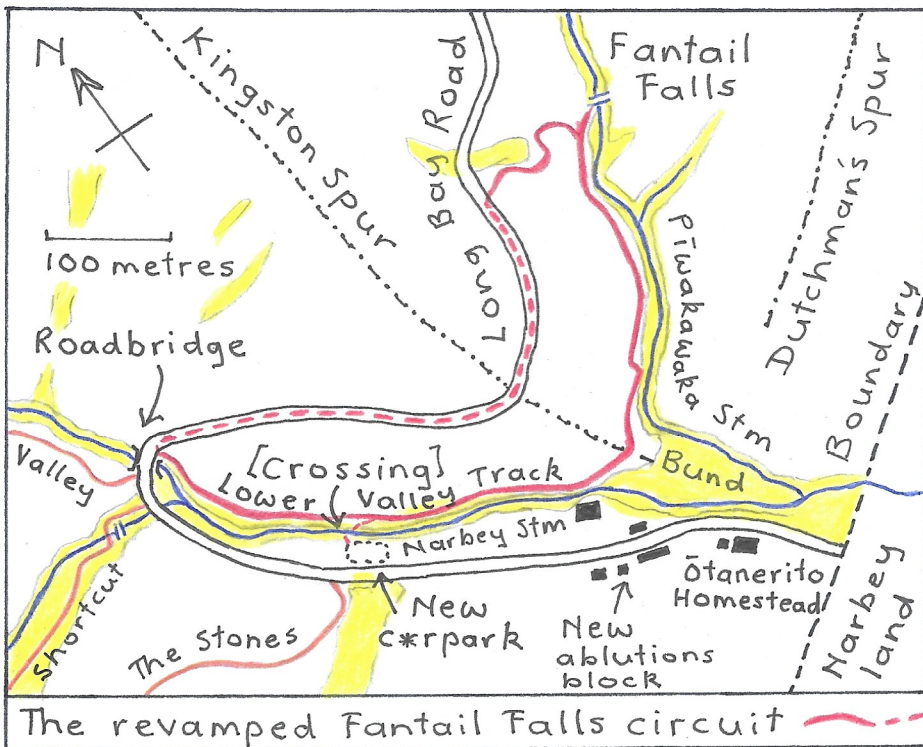
Our own massive slips from the Disastrous Deluge of December 2021 continue to green over. In late March, when we were restoring Waterfalls Track across five giant landslides, we had to cut our way through riotous vegetation well above our heads, a mix of naturalised and native broom, gorse, poroporo, inkweed, māhoe, ngaio, kānuka, sevenfinger, wineberry, fuchsia, fireweeds, etc.

Remember the polar blast of Spring, mentioned in Pīpipi 56, when fuchsia trees were reduced overnight from vernal leafiness to dead-looking winter skeletons? Only twenty days later, even before October had given way to a warm and drying November, the bare twigs were sprouting defiantly again. Soon they were fully leafy and flowering as if nothing untoward had happened.

Reclaiming tracks

All 20 kilometres of our publicly-accessible track network are more or less walkable again. Work in recent weeks has revived Fantail Falls Nature Walk (at Ōtānerito) and Waterfalls Track (to Whakamate Falls), both of them routes we had initially feared might be lost causes. On lower South Track we replaced the undermined bridge over Slumphole Gully with a longer con-

struction. That still leaves a key crossing unbridged - Narbey Stream near Ōtānerito Homestead. How, we wonder, will our bridge-making prowess span a gap twice as wide as it was before? As an interim measure,



Major areas of landslide and stream bed scouring shown in yellow

a new sign at the recreated carpark suggests two options for reaching Lower Valley Track on the far bank: (1) if the water level is low, boulder-hop carefully across the stream, or (2) walk five minutes back up the road to the roadbridge. Fantail Falls, currently toppling down a bared rockface some 12 metres high, is reduced to a trickle in prolonged dry weather.

More access tracks now thread their way across Hinewai and Purple Peak Curry Reserve. They have been heroically cut by the "Pest Free Banks Peninsula" team. Their major blitz on possums is already underway in the southeast corner of the Peninsula's "Wildside" and will reach us this winter. The routes traverse challenging terrain and are unsignposted, their entry points obscure. They are definitely not for general public use.

Teamwork

Ash Lennon rejoined the Hinewai team on 5 December, reboosting the force to four (augmented

4 once a week by Peter and Annabel Joyce, as helpful and eager as ever.)



Max and Ash after restoring the track to Wairuru Falls.

How old are these workers? Hugh is round about 78, Peter 70, Paul 54, Annabel somewhere in between, Ash 31, and Max 28. That's quite a range. How long would it take (one might ask) for the oldest and youngest to return (say) from the Ōtānerito roadbridge to the Visitor Centre? This was tested scientifically. Starting at exactly the same time, Ash and Max strolled home via Valley Track and East Track; they took 51 minutes. Hugh biked

home up the road; he took 105 minutes. [Really? - Ed.]. In his defence, Hugh has suspected that "they [who are "they"? - Ed.] have been steepening and lengthening the roads. Long Bay Road is definitely steeper and longer than it was 30 years ago".

Hundreds of people from all over the world have offered to join our work team in paid or unpaid positions. This is lovely, but we've found that what mostly works well for us is a small paid team, aided by only a few tried and tested regular unpaid helpers. Peter is one, Margaret Quigley, our "City Agent", another. For the newsletter mail-outs she organises small squadrons of volunteers.



Let them eat cake!
For several years

now, large, immaculate fruitcakes have been ⁵ arriving regularly in the rural mailbox, put together and posted by long-time Hinewai hero Jean. They please and power the proletariat for days. A chocolate cake from neighbour Sue appeared on the very same February day [Hugh's birthday - Ed.] that Ash and Max concocted a lavish apricot loaf. As their departure day approached at the end of April, Annabel conjured up a richly-iced carrot cake, hoping perhaps to lure them back next summer.

To pee or not to pee - that was the question.

A small rustic hut near Ōtānerito Homestead had housed a couple of loos and showers for decades, much to the relief of generations of horse-trekkers (pre-Hinewai), track walkers, cabin-stayers, and the general hoi polloi. The December 2021 Deluge left it a half-standing wreck. Paul N., with help from Ash and Max, dismantled and disposed of the remains. Insurance meant we could consider a replacement. Bruce organised a pre-built substitute, not expecting that a simple rural loo would throw up so many hoops and hurdles. He persevered, though, and eventually (mid-April) a big truck delivered the brand new ablutions block on to foundations prepared by local builder Andy. Plumber Matt and Sparky Todd are joining up a few pipes and wires and the final touch will be a ramp negotiable even by the aged and infirm.

To hear or not to hear - that was the problem.

We watch and record birds - native, naturalised and nomadic - all the time, but twice a year (January and July) we systematically watch and listen at 12 fixed points, hoping that the data might reveal significant trends. Many variables, however, can bias the results - weather for example [there we go again - Ed.], periodic singing and silences, the skill and alertness of

6 different observers, etc. For greater consistency, one person (Hugh) has been the regular recorder. But this is the same Hugh who reckons the hills are getting steeper. Lately he also suspected that Hinewai's riflemen had diminished or for some reason had fallen silent. "Yeah no" cried neighbour Mark N, echoed by Max and Ash. "The riflemen are flourishing. It's



your ears that are failing." It appeared to be so. Hugh read [in the "Listener" of all things - Ed.]: "After the age of 20 we lose about one hertz per day of our hearing range. If the upper range when we are young is around 20,000 hertz, by our 50s we don't hear much beyond 10,000 hertz."

Tititipounamu / riflemen are New Zealand's smallest birds, weighing in at only 6-7 grams

and measuring only 8 cms from a cutely upturned little beak to a tail so tiny that youthful eyes are needed to confirm it's even there. Recently Mark, Ash and Max have joined in the January surveys, hearing easily the high-pitched 'tsit tsit tsit' of the wee ones. Once alerted, Hugh sees them too.

It's cheering to know that tititipounamu are continuing to thrive on Hinewai. They seem so small and vulnerable, and so unlikely to have coped at all with the perilous and troubled world.

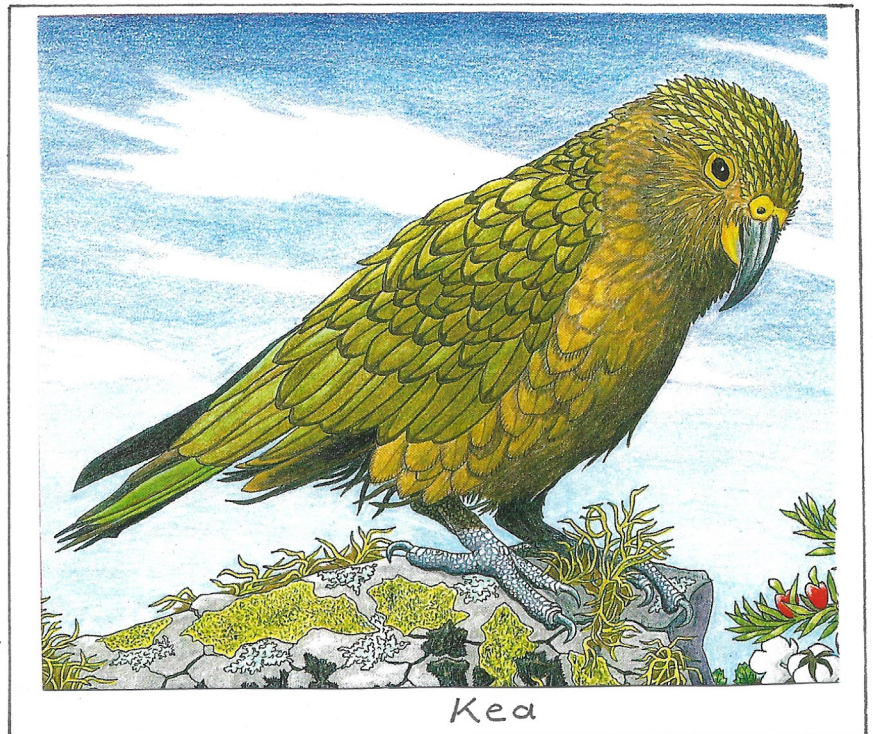
Royal encounters

Once very rare in Aotearoa, royal spoonbills - kōtuku ngutupapa - have increased dramatically in the last four or five decades. Now a

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familiar sight on Banks Peninsula, up to 12 often roost together at the head of Akaroa Harbour. This summer for the first time, one graced us with a royal visit. Down at Ōtānerito Beach Tina and Penny watched it feeding at the mouth of Narbey Stream, along with 3 Caspian terns, 4 black oystercatchers, 4 paradise shelducks, 35 Canada geese, and the usual (but lovely) red-billed and black-backed gulls.

Far from usual and far from home, a kākā was seen on several occasions at scattered sites

across the Peninsula, although almost certainly the same bird. In late October it was seen near Ōte-
auheke, little more than a kilometre from Hinewai's southern fringe. Kākā were abundant on Banks Peninsula until the late 1800s, then vanished, along with their old-growth



forest homes, as Pākehā colonists swapped trees for pasture. In the South Island they now persist chiefly west of the Main Divide, but the bird books note that they "wander occasionally to coastal Canterbury and Otago." Their cousins the Kea are also known to stray rarely from their mountain homes. One was seen several times in late summer around the Port Hills. Ex-Hinewai worker Andrew made some nostalgic walks on the reserve in late March, and told us he had not long before watched in wonder as a Kea swooped and called above his Heathcote Valley home.

Rare plants

White mountain orchid (*Caladenia lyallii*), though

8 common elsewhere in Aotearoa, is vanishingly rare on Banks Peninsula. We last saw it here on



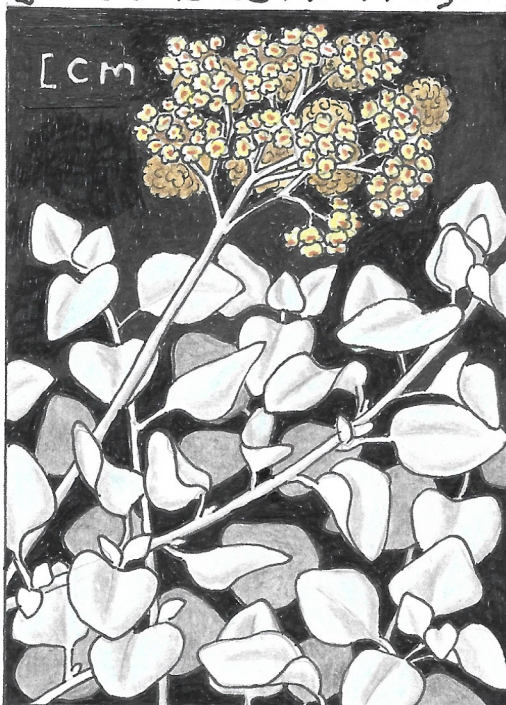
Hinewai 30 years ago. It couldn't hide from Max though. He spotted a single plant in November, hiding under a kānuka on Purple Peak Track. [Was he alerted by its high-pitched call? - Ed.]

Velvet fern (*Lastreopsis velutina*) is another Hinewai rarity. Two robust patches beside Fantail Falls Track disappeared in December 2021 along with the

track and the sheltering trees. Happily Mōkimoki Bush, at Stony Bay, features several flourishing congregations of this softly furry singular fern.

A wayward weed

Helichrysum petiolare is an attractive South African climber. Although long cultivated in New Zealand gardens for its greyish white or very pale greenish leaves, it was not recorded as wild in this country until 1991. In March 2006 Hinewai's neighbour Farmer John asked about a puzzling patch of strikingly white foliage blanketing a gorse bush. Hugh named it, and John zapped it.



In 2014 we zapped the first patch of our own, near Stony Bay Saddle. This summer another patch, blindingly obvious against dark green kānuka below Quarry Bend, virtually waved and shouted at Hugh as he was biking home: "Come and get me". So we did. But it won't be the last. Some plants sit meekly behind garden fences for decades before escaping, but once they taste freedom they

can be hard to restrain.

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Above Quarry Bend, Paul N. continues to zap wilding pines on challenging Kahukura Bluff. He also sought out once again, successfully this time, the wily wilding above Ōpātuti Track first mentioned in Pīpipi 52.

Baneful browsers

Diverse native insects chomp, browse and suck at Hinewai's vegetation. Some birds, too, especially kererū, eat a lot of foliage and fruit and disperse billions of seeds. In the past, some much larger birds such as moa and adzebills would have consumed much plant material. These native animals are vital parts of Hinewai's original ecology. We love them all, even the māhoe stripper moth which has had a particularly busy summer. We mourn the missing.

Exotic mammalian browsers and grazers are not part of our desired scenario, however. We have persistently pummelled the possum population, and now Pest Free B.P. is aiming for Peninsula-wide elimination. The last goat was seen off Hinewai as long ago as 1999. Deer, cryptic and elusive, are the new nightmare. Three have been shot, and élite assassins are searching for others with the help of heat-seeking scopes, fixed cameras, and firearms. Over the summer several deer have been seen, both stags and hinds, both red and fallow. Autumn produced a hint of pig, so far unconfirmed.

Straying sheep continue to graze Ōnīkautahi, but Fencer Guy's timely barrier at Peacock Stream seems to have prevented multiple invasions further inland up Stony Bay Valley. Now Guy is close to starting work on a new fence to replace the 800 metres or so destroyed by the December 2021 deluge.

Face to face

Masked and distanced after a December brush

10 With covid, Hugh chatted with a young German woman who had visited Hinewai twice before, but years ago. She was wowed with seeing the reduction of gorse and the expansion of native forest cover.

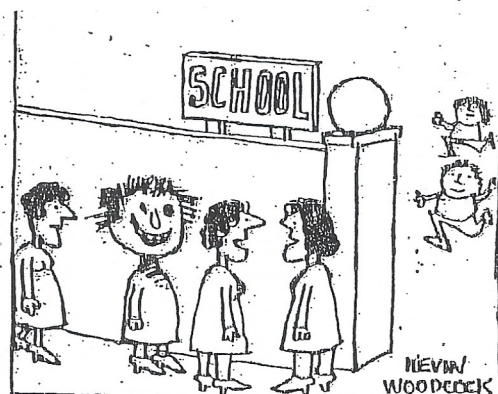
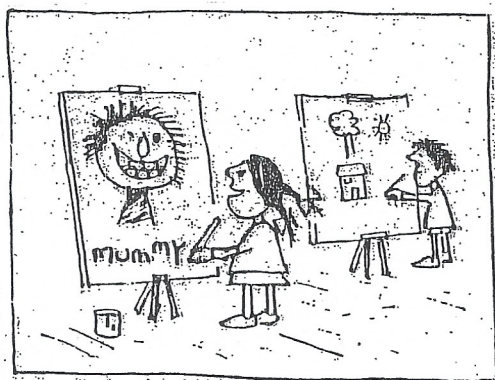
Three scientists from Hawai'i visited the reserve after attending the 4th International Congress of Biological Invasions in the c*r-infested Swamp. They were particularly interested in gorse as a nurse canopy for native regeneration because (new to Hugh) gorse is a mid-altitude, supposedly intractable weed on the main island. One of the scientists was a native Hawaiian, and the conversation veered off gorse to comparisons of Hawaiian and Māori words, to Hugh's great interest and delight. To top it off, the next day brought a Tahitian scientist along, together with a Māori speaker of Ngāi Tahu descent, and again the Kōrero leapt about from botany to linguistics. Weather was barely mentioned.

After a visit to Akaroa Primary School, Hugh was sent a charming book, put together by the tamariki, with their own drawings, photos and comments. All of these were marvellous, but here are three choice literary selections:

"Birds Poo thousands of times and it can get a bit messy. The trees grew through the gorse and then the gorse dies because the trees shaded it. So it dies."

"He rode his Bike from Auckland to New Zealand."

"Mr Wilson can sing a bell bird song that's better than a real Bell Bird." [Really? - Ed.]



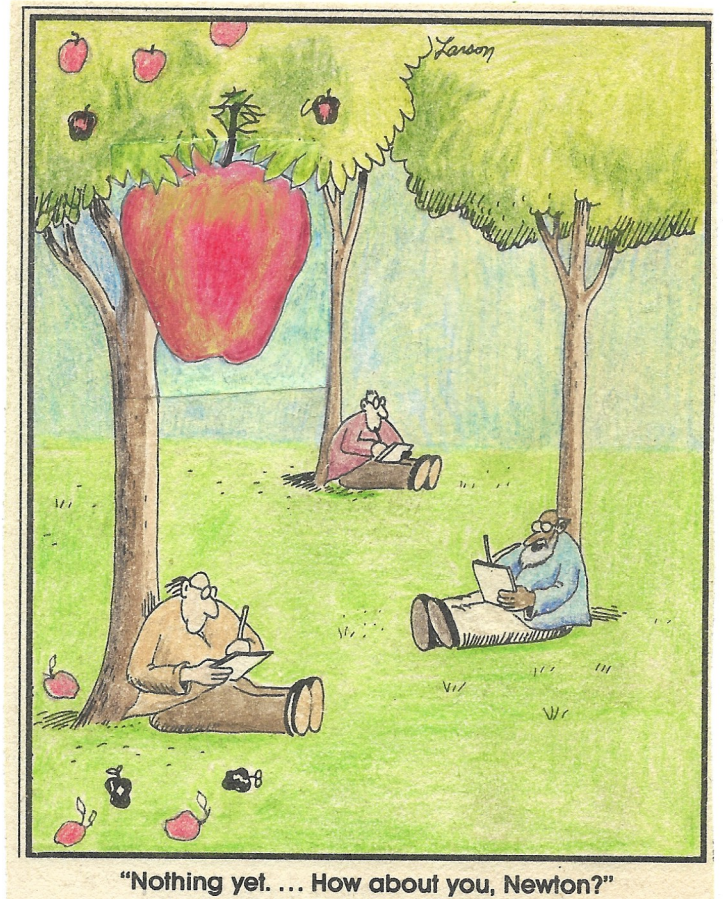
Ōtepatatu and the fairy flutes

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Local artist Steve Helps donated an impressive artwork to our Visitor Centre. He depicts both the landscape about Purple Peak Saddle (Ōtepatatu) and the words of an ancient waiata (song) closely associated with this place. Tītī or sooty shearwaters used to breed in burrows here, and magical flute music is said to have issued from legendary fairy folk (patu-paiarehe) dwelling in the upland forest. This thrilled the Ngāi Tahu composer of the song. She called on the birds and the music-makers to return. At least one aspect of this story is backed up by science. The soils of Ōtepatatu still hold unmistakable marine-sourced nutrients that can only have come there via centuries of burrowing seabirds. Steve's big diptych is now hanging on the east wall and can't be missed. It's a nice nod to a local legend.

Who owns the land?

"Who owns this land?" some walkers ask. "Everyone and no-one" is our standard reply, "the land owns us". When you think about it, how can transient little monkeys like us own land? In the Māori world view "land is a mother who never dies; land alone endures." ("Toitū he whenua" runs the proverb.). The wise American ecologist wrote in 1949: "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community



12 to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

Under prosaic New Zealand law, however, Hinewai is "owned" by our Charitable Trust, set up by Maurice White and Colin Averill in 1977. (Maurice died in 2019, aged almost 96, and Colin earlier this year (2023) aged 87.) The reserve is protected in perpetuity by legal covenant, mostly as "Protected Private Land" orchestrated by the Department of Conservation. Hinewai also now embraces small pockets of land covenanted earlier by the Q.E. II National Trust. Will this name now have to change to the K.C. III National Trust? That's unlikely. Monarchs and peasants flare briefly and go out. The Land Alone Endures.

Looking up

A strange object appeared in the late afternoon sky one mid-April day. Like a small bright moon it seemed motionless, but it migrated from near Taraterehu north-eastwards against a very strong wind so we thought it must be very high up. Next morning the radio explained that it was a NASA scientific balloon, the size of a football stadium, launched from Wanaka, 325 kms away to our WSW.

Pīpīpi appears twice each year. There is no sub and no obligation to donate, but donations of any size are hugely helpful and much appreciated. We will post a receipt but need your postal address if we don't already have it.

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Korimako
bellbird

Pīpīpi 57
CC11107