

PŪKOROKORO MIRANDA NATURALISTS' TRUST

Report from the Chair: May 2022

Kia ora, koutou.

This is my last report as Chair of Pūkoro Mirānda Naturalists' Trust. More about that below but first an update on our future plans, and what the PMNT Council has been discussing recently.

In the February issue of PM News, I reported that PMNT Council was deliberating on a relationship with "Destination Coromandel" and "Tourism Recreation Conservation" (TRC). We decided to go ahead with the first stage of an engagement with TRC, who may be able to help PMNT to pursue its objectives with the help of a greater focus on tourism. In all of these deliberations we never lose sight of our overarching objective, which is to

KEEP THE BIRDS COMING.

It is easy to say this and easy to understand in general terms. It is not so easy to decide the best way to achieve this objective and particularly to examine our current operation and to decide whether there are things that we can do better. The experience that we offer for visitors to the Shorebird Centre and our reserves is relatively low key at present. It may well be an option to redevelop the Centre and our associated activities to offer a world class eco-tourism, conservation, and education experience to visitors, whether they be locals or tourists, birders or civilians, youngsters or superannuitants. The revenue generated by offering this experience would be used to promote our objectives in the areas of conservation and restoration, local and international advocacy, research, education. The Shorebird Centre itself is a special place for us but it does have its idiosyncracies and deficiencies. For example, there are occasions when we would like to host indoor gatherings of more than 100 people and we just can't do so effectively at present. (Even sixty people look like a large crowd in the Sibson Room.) Therefore, once we are no longer constrained by the current pandemic, we shall need a larger auditorium that will allow such larger gatherings.

Having decided that we wanted to continue the process, we have now had a preliminary meeting with representatives from TRC, one (Debbie) attending our meeting in person at the Shorebird Centre and another (Alistair) attending virtually from Sydney via Zoom. We also had our own PMNT Council members attending via Zoom (Trish from Auckland and Wendy from London). Thanks to Gillian Vaughan's email poll around PMNT Council and thanks to some of the "brain-storming" facilitated at previous meetings by Judith McMorland, we had done our homework prior to this meeting, and we already had a good idea of our priorities and objectives. So far so good and we now await the next stage in this process.

The last 12 months have been a bit of a roller-coaster ride for human beings around the world. We could have been forgiven for believing that we had managed our way through the pandemic quite well in Aotearoa, but SARS-Cov2 has proved to be even more of a

challenge that we thought. The Delta variant was a bit of a shock, but the Omicron variant was even more devastating. It led to cancellation of the January Field Course (first time ever I think) and of the Autumn Migration Day (Farewell to the Birds). Fortunately, the birds have been unaffected by Covid-19 and the godwits carrying satellite transmitters and solar-powered batteries have been entertaining us again through the regular bulletins provided by Adrian Riegen. Other projects that have progressed despite the restrictions of the pandemic include the replacement of the Centre Manager's accommodation (Manager's Roost) largely thanks to generous donations from the membership, restoration of the Robert Findlay Reserve thanks to the frequent visits from Ray and Ann Buckmaster and other volunteers on planting days. We also look forward to the appointment of a Ranger, funded by GIFT (Gulf Innovation Fund Together / Foundation North). This will be a new position and an addition to the complement of staff employed by PMNT. The funding is for a period of 5 years and has been approved by GIFT following the joint application by Keith Woodley for PMNT and Frank Rawiri for the Ngāti Paoa Iwi Trust. This is a welcome development in the relationship between PMNT and Ngāti Paoa and we look forward to further strengthening our relationship in the years to come.

At the next AGM on 22nd May 2022, we shall be re-electing most of PMNT Council but there will be two gaps to fill. The first gap was created by the untimely death of Jim Eagles, whom we are already missing tremendously. The other vacancy is created by my departure for "the Mainland". My wife, Holly, applied for a job at the University of Otago towards the end of 2021, shortly after I retired from my work as a Medical Laboratory Scientist. Holly's application was successful. She starts work in Dunedin on 11th July 2022 after 24 years at Auckland University of Technology and I shall join her there once we sell our house. There are many things that I shall miss on leaving Auckland but the greatest of these is proximity to Pūkorokoro. It is a very special place, and it is the focus of activity for some very special people, and I shall miss you all.

Best of wishes to the new PMNT Council and to all my other friends associated with Pūkorokoro.

Ngā mihi.

William Perry. 09/05/2022.