

Perimeter Fence

Thanks to the donations from a number of organisations the Trust has now received \$7.2 million toward the pest-proof fence around the whole mountain. Recently Environment Waikato donated \$2.1 million.

In terms of fundraising we have reached half-way and are therefore able to complete half the perimeter fence this year.

The proposed fence line follows the bush margin to a large degree but a number of farmers have allowed the fence to encroach onto their land to enclose environmental features such as wetlands and also for practical construction purposes. Wherever the fence will impact on private land individuals and/or Trustees/representatives will be contacted to identify any special requirements such as access gates or water supplies.

MEIT has set itself a challenging goal to complete 50% of the main perimeter fence this construction season with the balance completed by August/September 2006. There is still, however, a great deal of flexibility to work with adjoining landowners to determine the most suitable timing for them.



A section of the pest-proof fence along the south east bush line of the maunga.

Hochstetter's frog

You may have heard in the media that we have rediscovered Hochstetter's frog on Maungatautari. Only a few were located and they were living in a fragile area, near the Pukeatua summit. Rooting by feral pigs raised concerns about the frog's safety as the area was outside

the enclosures. We need to get the fence completely around the mountain and save them and any other species that are struggling to survive on Maungatautari in numbers too small to detect.



One of the Hochstetter's frogs found on the maunga

At only 48 mm long, about the length of a female adult little finger, Hochstetter's frogs are well camouflaged and nocturnal making them particularly hard to find. As the picture shows you could easily mistake this tiny creature for a lump of soil! Dr Matt Baber stumbled upon the frogs by accident while he was looking for insect life on the maunga. It is wonderful to think that this population of Hochstetter's frogs has survived on the maunga despite interference from pests and humans. New Zealand's native frogs have a comparatively slow reproductive rate but are long lived, with one female being studied for 33 years. They have several unique features which make them very different from frogs elsewhere in the world. Originally there were seven species of native frog in New Zealand, now there are only four.

Unlike most frogs New Zealand frogs don't croak, have no external eardrum and have round pupils in their eyes. They don't have a free-swimming tadpole stage. The embryo develops inside an egg, and then hatches as an almost fully-formed frog. The young of most species are cared for by their parents. In other words they are special!

If you have not visited the mountain recently – we recommend you do, even though it is still 'work in progress'.

If you would like one of the trustees or staff to meet with you and explain the progress please contact the office on 07 823 7455.

Yours sincerely

Jim Mylchreest
Chief Executive

OUR VISION IS...

To remove forever, introduced mammalian pests and predators from Maungatautari, and restore to the forest a healthy diversity of indigenous plants and animals not seen in our lifetime.

Maungatautari Update

March 2005

Kia ora koutou katoa

Together with local Marae we would like to keep you up-to-date with the project to remove, forever, introduced mammalian pests and predators from Maungatautari, and restore to the forest a healthy diversity of indigenous plants and animals not seen in our lifetime.

Those who attend monthly Marae hui get regular reports from their Marae representatives but we appreciate that not everyone can attend these hui. It is hoped that we can send an update like this out at least twice a year.

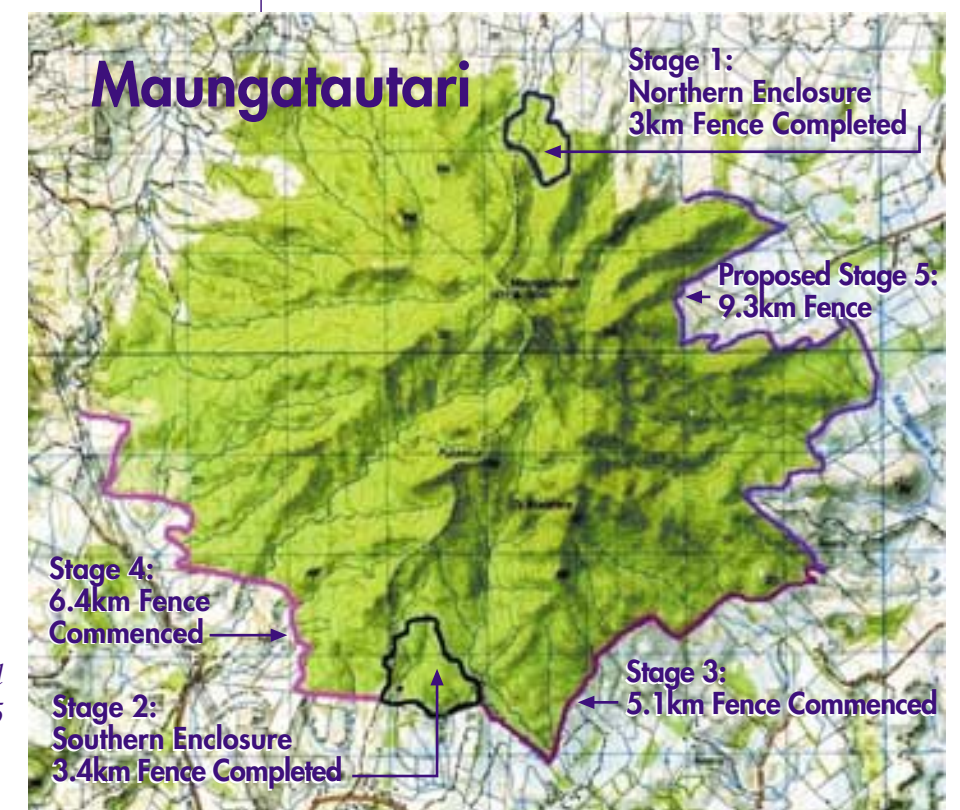
We would love to get your feedback on the project and how we can keep you all informed on progress to protect this taonga for future generations.

The big news is that the project has well and truly started. The map to the right shows you the progress that has been made during the past year. You can see that the pest-proof fence has been built around two enclosures – one on the northern side (stage one) of the maunga and one on the southern side (stage two on the map). The perimeter fence has also started along the south east side (stage three on the map) and the earthworks are in progress along the south west side (stage four on the map).

On 1 November 2004 we held the Haka Powhiri and Whakatau at Maungatautari Marae.



Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust members and invited guests



Map showing proposed fenceline for 2005



After a brief gathering at the northern entrance formal hiki te tapu rituals were undertaken for the entire maunga.



The first sod was turned by members of parliament Nanaia Mahuta, Dianne Yates and Martin Gallagher. A week later the first piece of fence was built overlooking Maungatautari Marae and Karapiro.

On 30 April we celebrated the completion of the 35 hectare northern enclosure, sponsored by Scottwood Trust. More than 3000 local school children joined hands with tangata whenua and invited guests to give the enclosure a group hug.



It was wonderful to see our kaumatua, pakeke, rangatahi and mokopuna embracing the maunga. A memorable day was had by all – the maunga glistened in the sunshine, which was immediately followed by torrential rain, minutes after kai hakiri.

Whanau were most grateful that Heeni was able to attend on behalf of Te Arikinui who flew to Fiji to be with Rata Sir Kamisese Mara's whanau



Heeni Katipa with matua Rubal Rapana and whaea Minnie Tupaea-Webster

Southern Enclosure

Funding from the Lion Foundation meant that 65 hectares on the southern side of Maungatautari could also be pest-proof fenced. This was completed in early November 2004. The celebration was held on 7 November – it was a fabulous day with more than 1000 people from around the region visiting the project.



Matua Haki Thompson delivered the karakia at the southern enclosure.

Walking Tracks

There are two wide metalled tracks in the southern enclosure each approximately 2km long. While the bush is silent the rata looked radiant this year – already being protected by the decrease in pest numbers.

In the northern enclosure there is one loop track which takes about 35 minutes to walk. A kereru is often seen at the entrance and a tomtit often flits

along the start of the track with visitors. Tui can be heard throughout the walk – though not many.

For those wanting a more invigorating walk the track over the mountain is always to be recommended. The track from Tari Road to Pukeatua Peak is currently being upgraded courtesy of Waipa District Council.



If you visit the enclosures remember to take your camera!

Pest Eradication

In accordance with a specially developed Code of Practice, approved by the New Zealand Food and Safety Authority, cereal pellet baits laced with Brodifacoum poison were aerially spread within the two enclosures on 8 September and 21 October. A concern was raised about possible contamination of waterways so the Trust undertook an extensive water testing programme where more than 200 water samples were taken from the four affected streams and they were then sent for testing by an independent laboratory at a cost of \$30,000. Residues of Brodifacoum could not be detected in any of the samples.

The poison drops eliminated the majority of the pests however, members of Maungatautari Marae, pupils from six local schools, and over 70 individuals are checking 793 tracking tunnels in the enclosures for signs of pests each week. Six rats detected by this monitoring were trapped within days of detection. This intensive monitoring programme is another New Zealand first and will continue weekly until the end of March 2005 and then monthly until at least October.

Each team checks tracking cards with ink centres placed in long black tunnels – anything which wanders through the tunnels and over the ink centre leaves a print which is then checked by experts. The tracking cards are now covered with invertebrate prints, such as weta and spiders, instead of rats!!

Maungatautari Marae is the collection point for the tracking cards from the northern enclosure. It has been just fabulous to have the use of the Marae throughout the last six months.

Certainly it appears that the cats, stoats, weasels, ferrets, possums and rats have been eliminated although it will be several months before this is confirmed.



This rat was caught two days after it was tracked on these tracking cards.

Reintroductions

This is the exciting part – to bring back the dawn chorus to Maungatautari. As I am sure many of you are aware there are very few birds, lizards and frogs left on the mountain.

Recently Waikato -Tainui and Tuwharetoa met to discuss the possibility of a kiwi reintroduction.

Kei te mihi tonu atu kia Ngati Tuwharetoa oti ra kia Ngati Hikairo no ratou i whakaeatia te hokinga mai o nga kiwi ki runga kia Maungatautari. I roto i tena ka oho ake to tatou maunga i roto i te reo o nga manu Tioriori. Ka rongo te motu ki te hari koa o Maungatautari.