

A Rocha New Zealand Initiative Group Newsletter

January 2007

The Initiative Committee for A Rocha New Zealand held its second planning meeting in December. So far we have a set of goals and a mission statement, and are poised to register as a charitable trust! We decided that locally we would be known as “**A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand**” to reflect our place in the Pacific and our intention to develop in partnership with Maori. We decided to begin running practical days (tree planting, field trips, etc.), even while we are establishing ourselves, as this will help us bring people together and develop partnerships with existing conservation groups.

We also decided to organise a colloquium in May 2007 to discuss concepts, theology and practice of “Christians in conservation.” We agreed we would apply for official adoption by A Rocha International at their April 2007 meeting, and nominated two people to attend the A Rocha Leaders’ Forum in Kenya in April. Our first major event for 2007 will be a stand at Parachute, Christian music festival on 26-29 Jan. *Richard Storey, Chairman.*



A Rocha New Zealand Initiative Committee.



Maungatautari Ecological Island.



Gerben and Eelkje Visser and their daughter Hinke from The Netherlands, A Rocha NZ first volunteers.

A Rocha Initiative Group working day at Maungatautari ecological island.

On Saturday 2nd December 2006, 9 volunteers visited Maungatautari Ecological Island for a weed eradication working day. *A Rocha* has a strong emphasis on practical conservation and working in partnership with other organisations. We therefore organised the working day to start contributing something practical to a conservation project while we are still in the “vision-forming” stages, and also to get to know and be inspired by an existing project.

It was a great day! Tony Rolley guided us to Albert and Elwyn Andree-Wiltens’ farm on the east side of the mountain. Sipping coffee on the deck in the sun, we were told about the Maungatautari project: its origin, the phase it is in now and the challenges lying ahead. Following this we all climbed into Tony’s ute and enjoyed a beautiful ride up the slopes of the mountain. At the fence, we worked the rest of the day fighting *Buddleja*, a dominant weed that grows at forest edges and other places with a lot of light, and leaves little space for native plants. Looking back on the working day, it was wonderful getting to know both the people and the project. The Maungatautari project is a great inspiration!

Gerben Visser, A Rocha NZ first volunteer from the Netherlands, resided in Raglan for 3 months.

We are currently looking for seed funding to cover the costs of setting up A Rocha. If you would like to help us find/apply for seed funding, or would like to make a donation yourself, please let us know. The A Rocha international DVD is now available with a \$10 donation.

If you would like to know more or get involved please contact: Richard Storey (richard@creationcare.org.nz) or Kristel van Houte-Howes (kristel@creationcare.org.nz)