

Brown Teal Release Ceremony

Tawharanui Regional Park

2 February 2008

Greetings Minister of Conservation, Chair Parks & Heritage, Councillors, Regional Conservator, General Manager Parks, Chair TOSSI honoured guests.

On behalf of the ARC welcome to Tawharanui Regional Park - to Tawharanui Open Sanctuary. Today is a very auspicious day. My fellow Councillors Rose, Morrissey and I have just come from the North Shore Busway which was formally opened this morning by the Prime Minister. If any one here lives anywhere near that magnificent new facility I urge you to use it.

This is also a special day for us here at Tawharanui because we are welcoming the new Minister of Conservation Hon Steve Chadwick onto the Park and we are honoured by her presence here today with her husband John.

This also happens to be World Wetlands Day, and if that was not enough this is also the launch day for DoC's 'Pateke Survival Guide' booklet.

And finally the *piece de la resistance* today we release pateke or brown teal into the Tawharanui Open Sanctuary.

These birds are rare and endangered - there are only 1400 left and they are battling extinction. These are remarkable birds. There is a term *anthropomorphic* - which means to project human values or characteristics onto animals. This is generally frowned upon. However could I say (and anyone who has had a close encounter with these birds would agree with me) that these birds are seriously 'cute'.

Today these birds will join 40 North Island brown kiwi, several dozen whiteheads and North Island robins and hundreds of bellbirds in this magnificent regional park sanctuary. The presence of bellbirds here is quite interesting - remarkable in fact. Bellbirds have been absent from the northern North Island mainland since the 1860s. Normally when native wildlife is translocated from one site to the other there is a complicated procedure to go through. Approval from recovery groups, consultation with iwi (at the source site and at the release site), approval from DoC conservancies (at the source site and at the release site), expensive blood testing for disease screening and so on. However in the case of the bellbirds - they just turned up from Hauturu in early 2005 most likely because of DoCs eradication of kiore on that island in 2004 caused a population boom. So I want to say "thank you very much bellbirds - you saved everyone a whole bunch of paperwork".

Ladies and Gentlemen the Auckland Regional Park network is one of Auckland's proudest possessions. 25 Parks covering 40,000 hectares and 150km of prime coastline. Our mission is to both (1) extend the network and to do this we are in a race against time to secure suitable land while it is still available; and (2) more intensively manage the land we already have.

On parks like Tawharanui this means repairing habitat, revegetating the land, removing or controlling pests and predators. In order to repair and reactivate damaged or disrupted ecosystems and to provide safe habitat - to enable the reintroduction of native wildlife, birds and lizard species as we are doing today.

The ARC is proud to be a local government leader in the field of conservation biology - It is a role we first assumed in the early 90's when the Council at the time made a political decision to step in to save the small and rapidly declining population of kokako in the Hunua Ranges - which was rapidly heading for local extinction. Since 1993 the ARC has gained an enormous amount of expertise in habitat repair and managing and translocating native wildlife. The ARC has acquired this expertise by working in close cooperation with our

friends and colleagues in the Department of Conservation. That expertise enabled us to create this open sanctuary.

Tawharanui therefore is one of the brightest jewels in the regional parks crown. It is also quite unique in New Zealand because here a terrestrial wildlife sanctuary lies adjacent to a no-take marine protected area. Separated only by a superb and very popular surf beach.

Minister we have been working for many years through the process to have the status of this marine protected area upgraded into a full marine reserve and we await anxiously for your final approval for this to happen.

I would like to close by thanking everyone involved in this happy event today. Our dedicated ARC staff, the volunteers of TOSSI, the Pateke Recovery Group, Department of Conservation and Banrock Station Wines and everyone else involved.

To you all – our heartfelt thanks.