

# Pollen Island Permanent protection sought

by Mark Bellingham



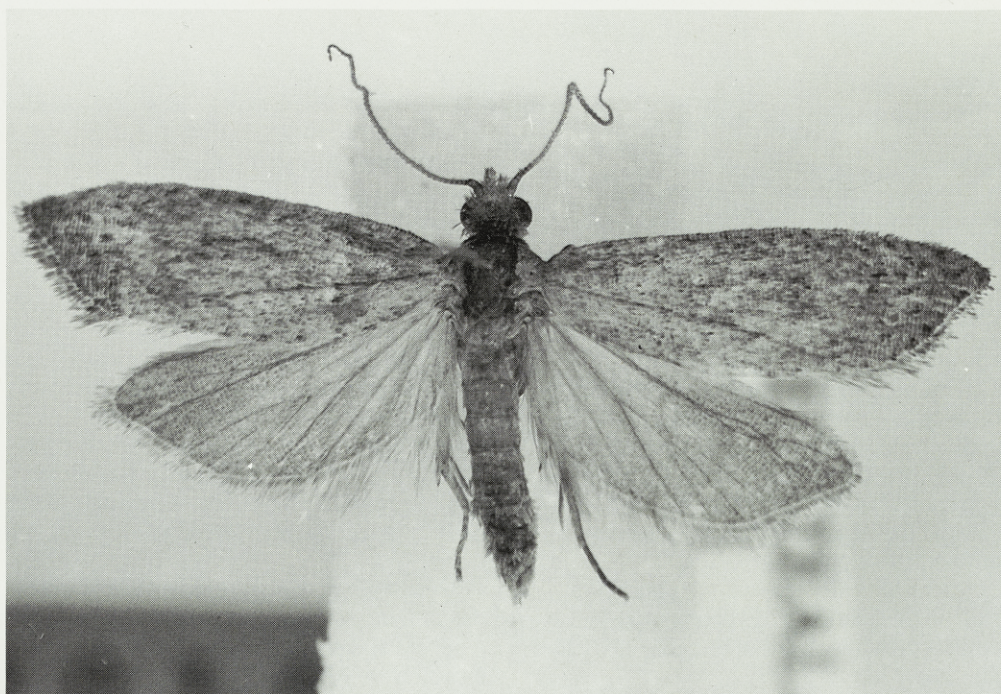
*Pollen Island – a marine reserve within sight of Auckland Harbour Bridge? Photo: Sylvia Donohue*

**S**INCE THE END of the last glaciation about 10,000 years ago there has been a small shrubby shell bank island in the mudflats of the Waitemata Harbour. It has been eroded by storms, and then built up again, with the flax, rush and *Olearia solandri* communities re-establishing.

The island has been a stable feature of the Waitemata landscape and has seen many changes: the periodic eruption of the Auckland volcanoes, the arrival of Polynesian settlers 1,000 years ago who named it Motu Manawa, and finally the arrival of European settlers 150 years ago. The latter cut a motorway through its sister island and earmarked Pollen Island for a container port.

Waitemata Harbour has changed dramatically in the past millenia and Pollen Island is now one of few remaining natural coastal systems left in the harbour. It is flanked by salt marshes, mangroves and tidal flats – havens for wildlife. Fernbirds are found here within 7km of the heart of Auckland city. When the tides are out banded rail and wading birds come out of their island roosts and feed on the extensive mud and sand flats.

At high tide flounder, snapper and mullet move into areas to feed and breed. The waters around the bay are an important nursery area for juvenile fish that later move out to form part of the important Hauraki Gulf fishery.



*The only habitat in the world of this moth (Bactra sp) is Pollen Island., Photo: Peter Maddison*

The mangroves, saltmarshes and coastal vista are important also for the thousands of Waitemata City residents who commute into Auckland, past Pollen Island. The golden hues of the rushes, greens of the mangroves,

the birds and the tidal flats provide a touch of sanity in their busy day.

Pakeha colonisation has had a profound effect on Waitemata Harbour. Harbour Board politicians and officers in particular have de-