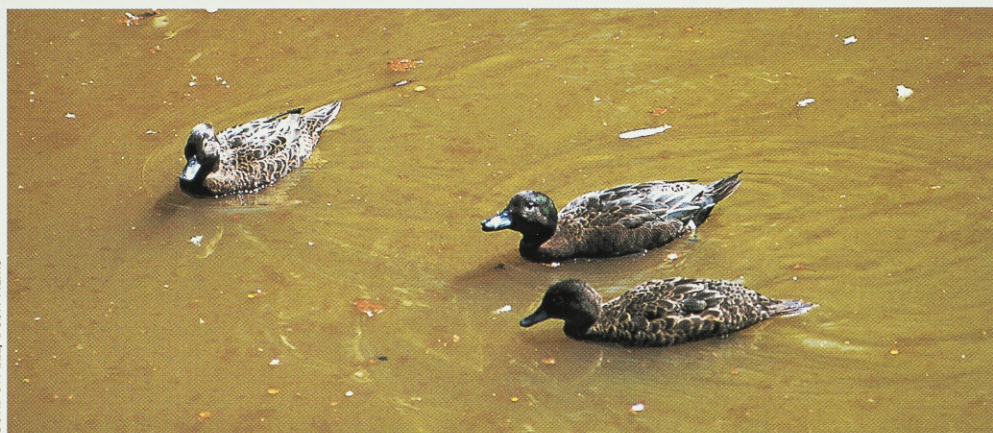




North Shore Forest and Bird marked its 25th anniversary by funding half the cost of restoring this lighthouse keeper's cottage as accommodation for visitors.



Brown teal are an endangered species which usually skulk under cover in daylight.



Food-bearing plants, such as this coprosma, were planted widely to provide for the birds.

forest still can't offer a year-round diet of suitable feed for all species. Without this supplementary feeding, stitchbird (formerly restricted to Little Barrier Island) could not sustain their population.

Nest boxes are another unusual necessity. Parakeets and saddlebacks are among hole-nesting species introduced to the island. As the forest is so young, there is a shortage of natural sites, hence the boxes hammered to suitable trees.

The North Island robin is one bird which has been particularly successful, breeding sufficiently for some young birds to be captured and shipped over to the mainland where there is more room for them. The pied tit, which usually competes with the robin for food, has not been introduced to Tiri because of this.

Saddleback, too, have flourished. Birds bred on Tiritiri Matangi have already been released on Mokoia in Lake Rotorua, the Bay of Islands (unsuccessfully), and into the urban sanctuary in Karori, Wellington.

Other small forest birds feed 'in the wild'. The whitehead, for example, is a 'gleaner' picking insects along with the pied fantail but able to feed off berries too.

The island's track system converges on the lighthouse area where the ranging staff live and store their equipment. Among the neat white buildings is a keeper's cottage now reserved for visitors, work parties and students staying over. North Shore Forest and Bird put up half the funds to refurbish it to mark the branch's 25th anniversary.

The nursery is here too, an area under shade cloth, where more than 300,000 trees have been raised over the years. There is also a shelter shed where visitors can make a cuppa in return for a gold-coin donation. Barbara Walter is there, answering questions, selling souvenirs of the island, including a fine series of T-shirts bearing portraits of the island's birds.

Sitting on the plastic chairs looking out past a giant tecomanthe vine — a rarity from the Three Kings Island — the visitor



The island has six breeding pairs of takahe raising chicks in the wild.

may lunch watching tui bathing in a bird bath, flitting fantails or the unexpected kakariki, or inquisitive old takahe (the eldest retain a memory of being hand-fed in their southern youth).

Beyond the lighthouse, the island stretches for a kilometre or more back toward the mainland. Walk along the spine of the island, following the firebreaks between young forest. Birds sweep overhead; pukeko strut in the grass. Off to the north, the seductive shores of Fisherman's Bay offer an alternative anchorage for visiting 'boaties'. There are cliffs, rock stacks, sea caves and reefs, a population of little blue penguins.

This is where the tropical morning glory flowers, in a tangle with New Zealand's own coastal convolvulus. The deep purple flowers are a striking feature adorning the sun-baked rocks above the sea. They are said to have been brought to New Zealand tangled in the roots of kumara in the canoe migrations from the islands of Polynesia.

The main track along the crest of the island extends to Kawerau Point, named for the Maori formerly in possession of this place. Signs of their settlements can still be