



Inside the Wattle Valley forest where young native trees are 'inter-planted' to create a new forest.

located. These were the people who originally cleared most of the forest: the extensive beds of bracken fern would be the source of aruhe, or fern root, a staple food.

One valley of the old-time coastal forest survives. This is the source of seeds for revegetating the island.

A wooden walkway traverses the valley floor. In the creek bed, fat native fish — grown-up whitebait — find shelter amongst the rotting leaves and branches. Soaring above, the spreading heads of ancient pohutukawa are masked from the ground by the bright green understorey of trees such as wharangi and kohekohe, trees which suffer on the mainland from the depredations of possums. Pest-free Tiritiri Matangi is a boon for trees as well as birds.

At length the track emerges on the southern coast among flax and manuka, overlooking rocky coves and sandy beaches. It's a short return from here to the island's wharf, but there is interest along the way.

Variable oystercatcher occupy the headland reefs, nesting in summer on the beaches. Flocks of white-fronted tern — the 'kahawai birds' which follow the feeding fish — sweep by just offshore, as do the gannets and petrels which patrol the gulf.

In little perspex-topped tunnels, several built from cemented stones by members of the Kiwi Conservation Club, little blue penguins brood. In the hatching season, their fluffy brown chicks can be seen in the gloom below.

Tiritiri Matangi has always been a landmark in 'the approaches to Auckland'. It is also now a symbol of what people can do to save rare and endangered species through community effort.

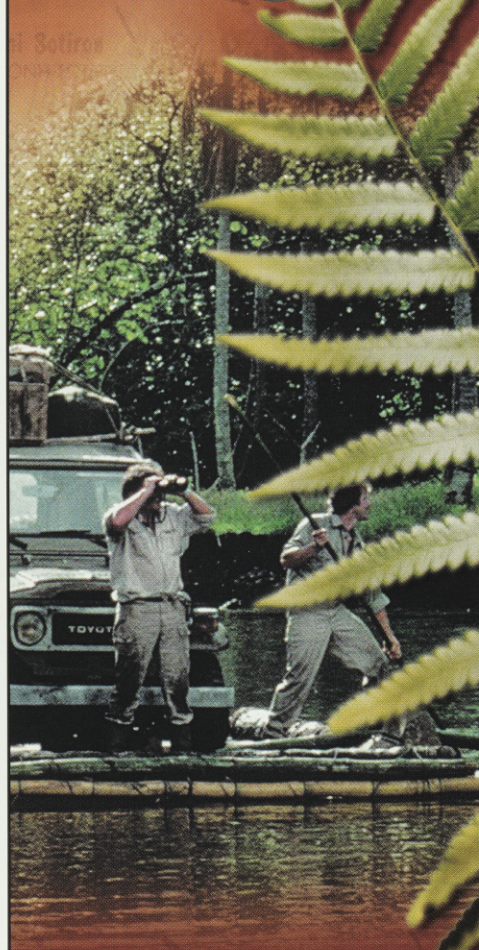
— GORDON ELL first visited Tiritiri Matangi before its restoration and wrote about what was planned in *Wild Islands, Exploring the Islands of the Hauraki Gulf* (Bush Press, Auckland 1982).



Cabbage trees, flax and manuka are among the plantings to provide more habitat for birds.


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