Launch of

"NATURAL HISTORY OF RANGITOTO ISLAND"

Friday 24 August 2007, Fort Takapuna, Vauxhall Road, Devonport

A crowd of over 100 Bot Soc members, friends, and invited guests gathered at the old Officer's Mess, Fort Takapuna, to celebrate the arrival of the Rangitoto book. Beforehand, Peter Smith, Bill Trusewich and Dave Veart of the Department of Conservation gave a guided tour of the underground "Fort Takapuna", built in the 1880's to help guard Auckland against a Russian invasion (which never eventuated).

Beau Fraser (Area Manager, Department of Conservation, Auckland)
Beau Fraser opened the proceedings by welcoming everyone to the venue. He said that the book produced by the Auckland Botanical Society would be a valuable contribution to knowledge about Rangitoto Island.

Mike Wilcox (Editor)
Our thanks to Beau Fraser and DoC for the venue today, here at Fort Takapuna. We were looking for a good launching pad, preferably on a cliff top near the sea, with Rangitoto in view. This is the perfect spot.

The Auckland Botanical Society has been around and active for almost exactly 70 years. We study and foster an interest in wild plants in our area, with emphasis on the native flora. We are pleased indeed to share this celebration today with all of you here – from the many different trusts and organisations involved in Hauraki Gulf islands, fauna and flora conservation, and from the councils and government.

From our beginning Rangitoto has always been a popular place for botanical visits. Our Journal records the discoveries and observations made on these numerous excursions. Our pioneer members such as Joan Dingley, Laurie Millener, Lucy Cranwell, Jack Rattenbury, V.J. Chapman, and Marguerite Crookes were active on Rangitoto, and there are strong links also with the University of Auckland and the Auckland Museum. Rangitoto is undoubtedly a great outdoor classroom for geology, seashore ecology and botany. Rangitoto has been the subject of numerous theses from the University of Auckland and we have brought to light in the book some valuable information from these, otherwise inaccessible to the public.

The book started in 2005 with a gleam in the eye of Sandra Jones and Leslie Haines. Our objective initially was to produce a guide book for the Cheeseman Centenary Symposium in Nov. 2006, but didn't manage it in time. The inaugural visit of a "Team Rangitoto" was on 15 August 2005, when Phil Brown organised a great day for use, officially welcoming us to the island – in fact launching the book project. All along we wanted to have the support and encouragement from DoC – this we had through Phil Brown throughout, and with a good working relationship with the then Ranger, Clinton Lyall, and the famous otter catcher, Rodway Puleosi.

Of all New Zealand islands, we think Rangitoto is quite special, precious to Aucklanders and visitors alike. It is easily visited thanks to Fullers ferry service, has interesting ecology, and is a very familiar symbol of our city. So we went into this project aiming to produce something of scientific merit, something of value for the management of the island, and a book of wide and popular appeal. Others will have to judge if we have been successful.

As editor and project leader, my first task was to get a team of contributors organised. This was no problem. We have experienced botanists in our ranks — some New Zealand authorities in their field— already with a good knowledge of the island. Others joined. My instructions were straightforward. Each chapter should have a text (beginning, middle and end), some pictures, and a list of species. The text should be written in English, in the Cranwellian or Mortonian style, bringing the subjects to life, and with some perceptive angle e.g. survival mechanisms, seasonality, etc. Species lists are important to Bot Soc, so these were to be an important part of the book. The contributors were all very diligent and co-operative – their only reward being the joy of field work and discovery in the good company of eachother, and in seeing the results of their work now in print. I thank them all for their patience, persistence and scholarship. Here in this book, for the first time, all plants have been recorded from Rangitoto Island. We say Natural History rather than Botany, because the animal life there is important, too.

This is a work of non-fiction – at least I hope so, and a combination of coffee table book, field guide, scientific reference, and text book for ecology students. As Francis Bacon wrote in his essay on studies "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested". The Rangitoto book fits all !

How was the book produced? Field work was the foundation– observing, recording, photographing, at all seasons of the year on all parts of the island. Then followed documentation of plant records, writing, and assembling the chapters and pictures. I particularly

thank Ewen Cameron, Ross Beever and John Braggins for reviewing the chapter manuscripts.

And so to design and production. It has been a great pleasure to work with Brian O'Flaherty and Julie McDermid of Punaromia Publications. They are professional experts in the business of producing books, showing great skill in setting it all out and helping with picture selection and proof reading, and in organising the printing through Bookbuilders of Hong Kong. We sincerely thank Barbara Nielsen of Bookbuilders for the pleasing result. We are delighted - you have made us look good. I would like to finish with a quote from the book's epilogue, attributed to a resident of St Heliers:

"*Rangitoto is an island in the gulf, green, unspoilt. It is natural, untouched, in its primitive state; and it should stay that way. Visually, it makes the harbour so much nicer, the way the blue sea leads on to the green of the bush. But the feelings go deeper than that. There is something about its presence. Rangitoto is symbolic of the greenness of Auckland, of New Zealand. Everywhere in Auckland, we feel its presence; it's just always there, and looks the same*".

Thanks for coming today. Hope you enjoy our book. Kia ora mai, kia ora tātou katoa.

Jessica Beever (for contributors)

E te whaanau, teenaa koutou.
Koo te mea tuatahi, e whakaiti ana ahau, ki raro i te taumata koorero oo te Maaoritanga, naa te mea, he wahine kee, i piki ake teenei mahi koorero whakahirahira, ki runga i ahau. Nooreiraa, e ngaa iwi, e ngaa reo, e te whaanau, Tihei Mauriora.
Araa, koo ahau te kaikoorero, moo maatou i whakatuitui, i whakahono
ngaa rauemi ki roto i te pukapuka nei. E maumahara ana taatou, ki aa raatou, I paa ringaringa ki teenei pukapuka, aa kua whetuurangitia.
Nooreiraa, e ngaa mate, e moe, e moe, e moe.
Kaa huri ake ahau ki a koe, e te maunga Rangitoto, e tuu ki roto i te Moana Nui a Kiwa. E te whaanau, teenaa koutou kaatoa.

Greetings to you all.
As I have said in my *mihi* I speak for the contributors to this book, the 16 of us who are jointly authors. I spoke of the *rauemi* – the knowledge we have been able to gather. And I acknowledged those who have gone before us. I think in particular of the three botanists to whom the book is dedicated, Marguerite Crookes, Lucy Cranwell, and Laurie Millener, all of whom I knew. I think also of my mother, who took us to Rangitoto as children, and told us stories of her visits as a child.

Today we also acknowledge many others – those who collected specimens from Rangitoto, and placed them in herbaria, and those who looked after them subsequently. More recently we are indebted to those who created and maintained electronic databases of the specimens. For myself, interested in mosses, I was able to examine the specimens collected by Lucy Moore and Ruth de Berg over 50 years ago. As contributors we acknowledge our *kaumatua*, Mike Wilcox, and his great skill in keeping the waka moving forward. Now our waka has reached the shore, and we feel very proud to have had this opportunity to be its paddlers.

Fig. 1. Dr Jessica Beever speaks on behalf of the contributors (Ross Beever).

Leslie Haines (for sponsors)

When the idea for this book was developing, we recognised three things: we had a good project concept; there was obvious community support; and we needed funds to further the concept. So it is my pleasure on behalf of the Auckland Botanical Society to thank all of the supporters that made the book possible.

Firstly we would like to thank the organisations that recognised the community, educational and scientific value of the project, and kindly provided letters of support:

- Stella Chan, Chairperson of the Chinese Conservation Education Trust
- Peter Maddison, President of the Forest and Bird Protection Society of NZ
- Michael Fitchett, General Manager of Fullers Group Ltd (Fullers ferries have been essential

to the project, providing the bridge to get us to and from the island on numerous occasions - and never once leaving us behind !).

Secondly, with a worthy project and community support we were able to obtain funding that allowed us to have the book well designed and printed to achieve a quality output. We would like to thank the following for providing financial support

- NZ Lottery Grants Board Environment and Heritage Fund
- The Lion Foundation
- Auckland City Council Community Group Assistance Fund
- Auckland Regional Council

This generous community and financial backing has enabled the Auckland Botanical Society to fulfil its goal of producing a substantial publication on Rangitoto. Thank you all again for having faith in us. We hope the book will be widely enjoyed.

Fig.2 Peter Hutton and Carol McSweeney, selling books (Ross Beever).

Brian O'Flaherty, Punaromia Publications (book design layout and production management)

I and my partner Julie McDermid have been involved in the design, layout and production management of the book. Julie and I were very pleased to be working on this book with Mike. I had worked with Mike before, completing John Salmon's *Exotic Trees – The Conifers* (as John was ill). We drove all over Auckland photographing trees. On that book I was the editor and Mike was the pine nut.

With the Rangitoto book, Mike has been the editor, Julie and I have done the design work. The production of the book owes a great deal to Mike's organisation and management skills, and his patience and good nature. Many projects involving multiple authors have resulted in much falling out or falling over. So it's also a credit to the authors and the many people who have otherwise assisted in a great collaborative effort.

There are 101 steps in the design, layout and production of a book and I'm not going to tell you about all of them. Mike's organisation of the manuscript and photos made Julie and my job much easier. One of our main tasks, however, was to reduce a very large pool of photos to a more manageable number. This process was more painful for the photographers than for us. However, as the number of photos reduced, the number of species grew each time Mike arrived after another Rangitoto trip.

Also, somewhere between native orchids and exotic vascular flora, we realised the very large vascular plants chapter was unwieldy and needed splitting up, which meant considerable reorganisation. But this is where a book editor can be useful, we can be like someone who looks over your house after you've built it, and is able to tell at a glance that you've left the front door off.

The authors and the Society can be proud of this book. Everyone in Auckland feels an attachment to Rangitoto, and the book does justice to the place. The book's a bargain price today at $30. Please buy at least 2 copies each.

Barbara Nielsen (Printers)

Bookbuilders were proud to be associated with such a beautiful publication. Producing a book involves a large team of people and the printer is the last in the line, so the quality of the book depends very much on all those who go before. Special thanks to Brian O'Flaherty and Julie McDermid of Punaromia Publications for their professional input to the editing, design and project management, and congratulations to the Auckland Botanical Society, the authors, and everyone involved.

Mike Lee (Chairman of the Auckland Regional Council)

Toituu te Marae o Taane
Toituu te Marae o Tangaroa
Toituu te Iwi - Tihei Mauri Ora.
e ngaa mana, e ngaa reo, e ngaa kaiwhakatipu raakau, teenaa koutou
e ngaa moutere ataahua Rangitoto teenaa koe. Rangatira maa ngaa mihi nui ki a koutou.
Naa reira teenaa koutou, teenaa koutou, teenaa koutou katoa.

Distinguished guests, ladies & gentlemen, greetings. Could I first of all express my heartfelt thanks to Dr Mike Wilcox President of the Auckland Botanical Society and the committee of the Auckland Botanical society for affording me the great honour of launching this superb book – *Natural History of Rangitoto Island*

To launch a book researched and written by so many distinguished Auckland botanists and biological scientists is a special thrill for a former biological sciences student like myself. I want to therefore acknowledge the book's editor Mike Wilcox and contributing authors Dr Jessica Beever, Dr Ross Beever, Dr Dan Blanchon, Dr John Braggins, Phil

Brown, Dr Rhys Gardner, Leslie Haines, Dr Peter Johnston, Dr Andrea Julian, Rick Kooperberg, Carol Lockett, Dr William Malcolm, Dr Nicholas Martin, Shirley Tomlinson, again Dr Mike Wilcox (also a contributing author), and Maureen Young.
Congratulations to you all - you have, as Ewen Cameron has pointed out in the foreword, created a superb scientific work, beautifully presented and thus attractive and user-friendly to the widest possible readership. Again as Ewen points out, the book contains a meticulously compiled inventory of 1181 plant & fungi species. Ranging from the most primitive groups (algae) to the most advanced (orchids) – recording virtually every living thing on this remarkable island. And Rangitoto is remarkable - so unique that it has its own ecological district.

Fig. 3. Cr Mike Lee, Auckland Regional Council Chairman (Ross Beever).

"Iconic" is a word somewhat overused, nowadays but I can think of no better way to describe Rangitoto's dramatically beautiful ever-present visual influence on Auckland and its people. More than any other natural feature this much loved island provides a distinctive and unique sense of place for Aucklanders.

Last Saturday evening, as it happens, I was asked to launch another book *'No Left Turn'* - A political history of New Zealand by Chris Trotter (highly recommended by the way). In my speech at that function I noted that history was rather like geology, with the diligent historian uncovering the hidden formations and tapping away here and there to reveal the patterns in the sedimentary layers of human generations. And in unlocking the secrets of the past, the historian, like the geologist can tell us profound truths about the present. Of course I pointed out, that geological time scales totally dwarf human history. But isn't it funny - it seems there are exceptions to not only every rule but even to self-evident truisms like human history versus geologic time. Because at only 600 years Rangitoto is a landmass that is much younger than human history, younger than even the relatively short human history of New Zealand - the most recently permanently settled landmass on the planet. So in sharp contrast to its millions-of-years-old neighbours, Rangitoto is incredibly young in historical terms and I note John Braggins refers several time in his chapter to Rangitoto's "youth".

The question of the age of this volcano and its time of eruption has in the past has provided some scientific debate. A debate that was effectively ended by Prof Laurie Millener who secretly cut down an old pohutukawa tree and counted the rings. Also subject to some debate has been the state progress and age of the vegetative succession on Rangitoto.

In that regard it is useful to recall that the first person to write about Rangitoto's vegetation was the French naval commander and explorer Dumont d'Urville in Feb 1827. D'Urville of course was an accomplished botanist and entomologist and also he had with him on the *Astrolabe* a number of first rate naturalists: Jean Rene Constant Quoy teacher and naturalist - navy physician Joseph Paul Gaimard staff-surgeon and naturalist Pierre-Adolphe Lesson surgeon younger brother of the more famous René Primèverre Lesson who visited New Zealand (Bay of Islands) on the earlier *Coquille* expedition with d'Urville in 1824.

Here are two interesting excerpts from d'Urville's Atlas of the voyage: The first from chapter 2 and 3.

25th Feb 1827
Two hours later we entered the channel which had excited our curiosity. On the left is an island (*Rangitoto*), *flat at both ends, with a high peak in the centre and covered with flourishing vegetation that forms a curious contrast to the bare land on the coast opposite.*

Translated by Olive Wright 1950
And from the Hydrography chapter– This directly from the French which I found in the National Library.

"Rangitoto est la plus méridionale et la principale de ces iles; c'est un cône
surbaissé, de 10 milles de circuit, entierement boisé depuis las base jusqu'au
sommet, qui offer un double mamelon peu prononcé. Ou l'apercevait des le
point du jour; nous en etions alors a 8 ou 9 lieues."

"Rangitoto is the most southern and the principal of these islands. There is a smooth cone, 10 miles around, entirely wooded from the base almost to the summit which offers double hillocks which are slightly pronounced. It could be seen at the break of day when we were 8 or 9 leagues off."

And in contrast: *"A l'O règne une côte uniforme, taillée a pic, triste et stérile, qui vient terminer au S. par la pointe de Taka-Pouni."*

"To the west dominates a uniform level coastline, with sharp cliffs, sad and barren, ("triste et sterile") which comes to an end in the south with the headland of Takapouni" (Takapuna)."

It is a great pity that d'Urville and his colleagues didn't manage to get ashore on Rangitoto to botanise. At that stage of the voyage d'Urville was much more focused on geographical discovery and map making. He was very much interested in finding a way through to the west coast and his expedition travelled up the Tamaki estuary and crossed to the Manukau. The volcano d'Urville attempted to climb was Mt Eden.

Meanwhile Quoy and Gaimard were busy collecting and describing characteristic marine invertebrate species such as the oyster borer *Lepsiella scobina*, *Trochus* and *Myadora striata* d'Urville's name however remains associated with Rangitoto's flora with the crevice colonizing plant *Peperomia urvilleana*, and the grass *Paspalum urvillei* and of course the coastal tree houpara *Pseudopanax lessonii* – collected and classified by Lesson the elder.

If the vegetation cover on Rangitoto in 1827 was so extensive as reported by d'Urville, then this raises the question of human impacts direct or indirect on the progress of succession. And sure enough we read in the book about 19th century fires, herds of fallow deer, herds of goats and then the thousands of possums and wallabies of recent memory.

What a fantastic achievement by the then newly-formed Department of Conservation to embark on a programme in 1990 to totally eradicate possums and wallabies - and to achieve that enormously difficult task within 10 years. But the removal of those pests enabled, or at least coincided with, the expansion of other invaders - especially the woody weed, evergreen buckthorn *Rhamnus alaternus.* We would also all be very mindful, despite the vigorous recuperation of the pohutukawa/rata forest, of wider ecological dysfunction. That remaining animal pests, principally ship rats are disrupting what would be natural and fundamental plant/bird/invertebrate ecological processes and severely restricting the range of wildlife species which would naturally be present. That is why it was so heartening to be present on Motutapu in early June 2006 to hear the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Helen Clark and the Minister of Conservation Hon Chris Carter
announce government plans to progressively remove all animal pests from both Rangitoto and Motutapu to create an open sanctuary. A wildlife sanctuary of 3881 ha significantly bigger than Hauturu (3083ha), Kapiti (2000ha) and nearly 20 times bigger than Tiritiri Matangi (197ha). The Auckland Regional Council strongly supports the Rangitoto/Motutapu open sanctuary project for the following reasons:

• The intrinsic benefits of increasing native biodiversity;
• The benefits for research and education – including the opportunity of enabling pupils
from low-decile schools, for instance from south Auckland, to experience at first hand
native bird and wildlife species they are most unlikely to experience in their normal lives;
• The economic benefits wildlife sanctuary a mere 5 nautical miles from the Auckland
CBD would bring for instance for our visitor industry
• The enhancement of Aucklanders' quality of life such a sanctuary so close to the marine
suburbs would bring in having our most loved iconic volcano truly come to life with
native birds, lizards and invertebrates –
• Finally a Rangitoto/Motutapu sanctuary would breathe life into the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park

Finally to return to the book, can I once again congratulate Mike Wilcox and the contributing authors and the many other people who helped in its publication. Can I thank Punaromia Publications and also the printers – Book Builders. To the authors I say as botanists and natural scientists in expanding scientific knowledge you have followed in the footsteps of your spiritual ancestors, Thomas Kirk, Thomas Cheeseman, Leonard Cockayne and others such as Professor Arnold Wall, Marguerite Crookes, Lucy Cranwell and Laurie Millener and of course Dumont d'Urville and his intrepid colleagues. Auckland is in your debt.
Naa reira teenaa koutou, teenaa koutou, teenaa koutou katoa.