

QUARANTINE ISLAND - Half Day Field Trip, Afternoon

This afternoon field trip will travel to Matiu/Somes Island in the middle of Wellington Harbour. This island, which has served as a Maori Pa, human quarantine station, prisoner of war camp, World War II gun site and animal quarantine station, is now a tranquil retreat for wildlife and visitors alike. The island opened to the public as a Department of Conservation scientific and historic reserve in 1995. In 2009, it was included in the Treaty of Waitangi cultural redress for Taranaki Whanui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika A Maui, which returned ownership of the three Wellington harbour islands to iwi. While still protected by reserve status, accessible to the public, and managed by DOC, their future will be directed by a joint governance board composed of iwi, community, and DOC.

The trip includes a cross harbour ferry from Queens Wharf to the island and return. After a baggage search in the Whare Kioire on the wharf to detect any unwanted pests we are free to roam across the island photographing the historic buildings, lighthouse, fortifications, reptiles, birds and plants and panoramic views of Wellington City, the Hutt Valley and the harbour.

Ship rats and other pests were eradicated from the island in the late 1980s. Since that time, the island has become a sanctuary for native plants, birds, reptiles and invertebrates. Since their successful reintroduction, the sounds of the red-crowned parakeet / kakariki and North Island robin/toutouwai can again be heard on the island. Both of these birds used to be quite common across mainland New Zealand but they are now found only in isolated populations. As well as kakariki and robin, other native forest bird populations include fantail, kingfisher and silvereye. The island is inhabited by a variety of seabirds, such as southern blackbacked gull, spotted shag, and variable oystercatcher. The island also provides critical habitat for the little blue penguin / korora.

Eight species of reptiles, found only in New Zealand, occur on Matiu / Somes Island: common skink, copper skink, ornate skink, spotted skink, common gecko, forest gecko, Wellington green gecko and Brothers Island tuatara. Visitors often hear and see skinks along the island's tracks. The nocturnal common gecko and tuatara are less frequently seen, but sightings do occur, so keep your eyes peeled.

Tuatara belong to an ancient order of reptiles, and have no other living relatives. Matiu/Somes Island's original tuatara population was wiped out by the mid-1800s. However, in 1998, more than 50 Brothers Island tuatara were successfully introduced.

There are 500 species of invertebrates on Matiu/Somes and Mokopuna islands, including several species of weta. The Cook Strait giant weta and Wellington tree weta were reintroduced to the island in the late 1990s.

Notes

- Parts of the island are very exposed with limited shelter

- Active fitness and mobility required
- The ferry times are fixed so participants **must** be at Queens Wharf and Matiu/Somes Island wharf on time or they will be left behind
- There are no catering facilities on the island so bring your own food and water and please remove your rubbish.
- Toilets are situated near the main wharf and behind the visitor centre

TIME TABLE

Depart Town Hall and walk to Queens Wharf Ferry Terminal	12.45
Depart Ferry terminal	13.15
Independent time on Matiu/Somes Island	
Depart Matiu/Somes Island	16.25
Arrive Queens Wharf Ferry Terminal	16.50
Walk to Town Hall, tour ends	17.00