

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

United States

A New Yorker who spent 27 years carving contact lenses became bored after retirement and has taken to carving boulders into Easter Island-like faces. A clutch of them in all sizes and shapes gazes from a hill behind his house, forming an "Easter Island on the Hudson River." The accompanying photo shows 20 somewhat frightening faces, bearing only a vague resemblance to our beloved *moai*.

New York Times Metro Section for 9 November 1996.

Juan Fernandez Islands, Chile

An initiative that involves an investment of US\$2 million to restore the flora and fauna of the Juan Fernandez Islands is under consideration by the National Parks of Chile (CONAF) and the government of Holland. A project for the "Conservation, restoration and development of the Juan Fernandez Archipelago" is expected to be approved. The regional director of CONAF, Juan Pablo Reyes, explained that the initiative was presented in 1992 and will amount to US\$2.4 million. Projects include the elimination of plant diseases, and conservation of species that belong to the endemic flora and fauna that are now menaced by extinction. CONAF plans include 12 programs designed for guided tourism that will permit visitation to the archipelago without causing damage to the ecology; stimulate local island women to "express themselves artistically"; manage and improve herds of cattle; and control introduced species such as the European rabbit and the forest goat, possibly by reducing or eradicating them.

WHAT'S NEW IN POLYNESIA

Pitcairn

Pitcairn's new health center was officially opened on 3 July, 1996. It's 1800 sq. feet contain a waiting room, dental clinic, treatment room, drug store, laboratory and X-ray room. One end of the building has a ward and bathroom.

July was also notable for cold weather accompanied by rough seas, strong winds, and downed trees. Several island homes were visited by frigate birds seeking shelter from the storm.

Between now and 1998, ten new stamp sets will be on sale, featuring a variety of themes from Amateur Radio to birds, to Pitkern (language).

The Pitcairn Miscellany Vol. 39 7-9, 1996

Niue

The annual Polynesian Literary Competition offers cash awards for Polynesian-language writers in order to promote and encourage literary creativity in a Polynesian language. The award area for 1997 is Niue Island. Entries are invited for a modern original poem or short story in the Niuean language, with accompanying translation in English, both of which together are not to exceed 12 double-spaced typewritten pages. A cash prize of NZ \$250 will be presented to the winner. The winning entry will be published in *Rongorongo Studies*.

Please send submission with full name, address and age, via air mail, before 1 June 1997 to Dr Steven R. Fischer, PO Box 6965, Wellesley Street, Auckland, New Zealand.

New Zealand

Maori protesters lowered the New Zealand flag and raised their own red, white and black flag of Maori self-determination at the annual Waitangi Day celebrations. However, there were no confrontations as in past years. Police and security guards watched without intervening as the flags were lowered and raised.

WHAT'S NEW IN HANGAROA

The first taxi on the island was such a roaring success that there are now four of them. More vehicles are arriving weekly, some by air freight. The traffic jams at the airport and (at times) around the village are astonishing.

Public telephone booths have appeared around the village and islanders have direct TV from the continent. The island has been assigned a new prefix: it is now 32. All island numbers are preceded by 100. Thus to send a fax to Entel on the island, one would dial (56) for Chile; (32) for the island, and 100-105 for the number. The 100 numbers replace the formerly assigned "223" numbers.

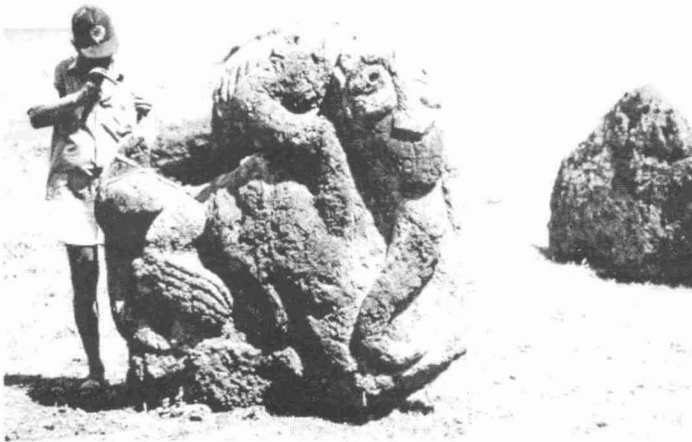
Tapati Festival

The festival parade began one hour ahead of schedule--surely a 'first'. The Tapati Mardi Gras type parade is always the highlight of the festival. Those participating in the parade were resplendent in body paint and tattoo, feathers and *hami*.



Tapati queen candidates this year were China Rapu and Andrea Araki, with China (seen above) edging out Andrea in a tightly contested race.

Some 200 Maori from New Zealand were expected for the festival and were scheduled to perform but, at the last minute, they canceled out: someone in New Zealand who was



A statue carving contest was a new feature of Tapati. Huge blocks of red scoria were transformed into outdoor sculptures. They will remain at Hanga Vare Vare as part of a permanent outdoor exhibit.

arranging their tickets absconded with the funds.

A new feature of this Tapati was a large statue carving contest. Huge blocks of scoria were set up at Hanga Vare Vare and carvers had a week to complete their entries. The stones were not of equal quality for carving and carvers got them by a random drawing. Some were outraged by the blocks they were assigned and refused to work them. We noted that most carvers used hatchets and files but a few employed electric drills and other electric tools. The final collection of carvings will be permanently set up at the site to enhance the area and make it more attractive to visitors.

Haka Pei (the “banana slide”) was again a spectacular event, one contestant being carried from the field on a stretcher. Other outdoor activities included the triathlon at Rano Raraku, and two nighttime outdoor performances— one



A new *moai* has been added to the waterfront. Carved and raised for Tapati, this latest addition sits on a rise, just above the “free-form” sculptures created for the festival. View is looking north towards Tahai.

at Vaihu, and one at Anakena Beach.

The final event was held at Hanga Vare Vare where a newly carved *moai* was erected by traditional means (levers and rocks). More conservative members of the village deplore the putting up of modern *moai*, feeling that tourists will



The Tapati festival parade featured decorated floats, torches, music, singing, body painting, pretty girls, and some nudity. A good time was had by all.

mistake it for an original statue.

No canoe races were held this year as only one canoe remains on the island; the other was swamped on the south coast and subsequently dashed to pieces on the rocks. The



A Rapanui islander in the festival parade displays body paint that mimics early Polynesian tattoo designs.

crew swam ashore safely.

The paved road to Anakena is a marvel. One can drive leisurely from the village to the beach in 15 minutes. Sadly, not all islanders drive slowly and several bad accidents have occurred. One of these, a fatality, happened during Tapati when a young Rapanui woman hit a retaining wall head-on while speeding to Anakena on a motorcycle.

The new cottage-style thatched roof units at the Hangaroa Hotel are under construction and the first group is due to open in March. The hotel will have 130 new rooms, with each one



The reed boat being constructed by Kitin Muñoz crouches scorpion-like at Anakena beach.

having a phone, fax, minibar, air conditioner, safe, and ceiling fan. Tennis courts are to be built as well as two pools. The old wings will be torn down. Landscaping plans include paths for electric carts. The Hangaroa has been purchased by a chain of hotels from the continent and word has it that when the upgrades are completed, the new Hangaroa will be in the 4 star category. No doubt with four-star prices.

Ahu Huri A Urenga is now off limits to all visitors. Alejandro Rapu, whose family is said to have owned the site, has claimed it, closed off access and chased off visitors with a spear gun. He claims that the family was supposed to have another parcel of land in exchange, but never received it.

Improvements along the shoreline in the village include stone benches and walking paths, and a new swimming area. The latter was created by closing off a small bay near Hanga Vare Vare with boulders that permit the water to enter but make the new "bay" a safe place for swimming.

The island's first art gallery, Galeria Aukara, has opened on Pont Street, just off Policarpo Toro. An opening was held during Tapati. The gallery houses wood carvings by Bene Tuki Aukara and works of art by other artists; the opening show featured oils, pastels and watercolors by Amaya.

The Concorde arrived with an 'around the world' tour that spent only 24 hours on the island. The aircraft circled the island with a roar that brought everyone out to watch it coming in for a landing, looking like a great bird of prey.

Drought in December and January caused vegetable gardens to wither and subsequent fires at Poike made the shortage of edible grass even more scarce. Herds of cattle have been turned loose to forage over the island. Many animals look like *kavakava* figures, with ribs sticking out. Clearly, too much livestock is on the island for the available feed. Despite this, we heard rumors of more milk cows being sent over to begin dairy farming on the island.

The infamous reed boat being built by Kitin Muñoz' sits

on the beach at Anakena, still unfinished. It is 30 meters long and is 7 meters wide (see RNJ 10(3):63 for more information). Muñoz' plan is to cross the Pacific, stopping in Papua New Guinea and then sail to the Philippines. There the boat will be re-constructed before beginning the second part of its voyage, which will hopefully end in Japan. He predicts that it will take 20 days to reach Mangareva from Rapa Nui and, depending on the weather, the voyage will have two phases of 7 months each. The launch date from Anakena beach is moved ahead, perhaps to May or June. However, bugs are eating the *titora* reeds, feral cats have left fleas, and other insects--such as cockroaches--have moved in. The insects that feed on the reed were carried into Anakena along with the reeds and now are causing rashes among those using the beach. The area will have to be fumigated. Locals question it's floatability and some speculate it will never get into the water.

Last year 10,586 tourists came to the island, with the peak tourist months being October-February. At this time, the island has 833 beds in the various hotels and pensiones.

The latest news from Easter Island is an example of how things are perceived, depending upon point of view and/or political expediency. In December, a grass fire raced through the interior of the statue quarry, Rano Raraku. Initial reports appeared in headlines on mainland Chile where it was announced that 47 statues were damaged and one was destroyed by the fire. The single guard at the site, CONAF Park Guard Julio Haoa, had battled the blaze for hours before giving up and going into the village for help. By 10 p.m. more people were combating the fire but because of the inaccessibility of the place, they had to use rubber sheeting to suffocate the flames. The island's fire company could not reach the area because of its location, there was no pump to obtain water, and so on.

The National Park blamed a lack of funds as they do not have radio transmitters nor any means of getting word back to the village. Park Administrator José Miguel Ramírez stated that around two hectares (4 acres) of grassland were burnt including all the southeast interior slope where there are 97 unfinished *moai*. Many of the island monuments were not heavily damaged but it is said that 47 were affected by the heat and smoke, and visible damage can be seen on the heads of the figures. To repair the damaged *moai* would be very difficult because the treatment of consolidation with chemical products costs US\$ 15,000 for each statue. Ramírez was widely quoted in the press to the effect that islanders are running too many head of cattle which break down fences. The soil of Rapa Nui is such that each head of cattle needs three hectares (6 acres) of grassland for grazing. The park guards have to run them off instead of attending to other duties. Ramírez noted that this year CONAF invested US\$ 12,000 in this national park to maintain the paths for public use and to close off the area to cattle. CONAF has only 8 park rangers and three trainees on the island.

Furthermore, Ramírez stated that the care and management of the island's resources would be easier if the islanders

had more land for their animals. The complaint went on to chastise a committee from the continent which had not turned in a report that is now two years overdue. What connection this had with the fire is not clear.

The following day, Chilean papers reported that island Mayor Pedro Edmunds called the fire a tragic event, stating that CONAF has neither the human resources nor materials to maintain the island's archaeological park and urgently requested more resources: "Someday in Chile, as a nation, they will realize that they have a great treasure in the South Pacific. We are going to continue with risks of this kind for much longer." He was referring to the general deterioration and permanent erosion that the *moai* suffer. "These statues ought to be preserved and maintained. As a Municipality, we are maintaining these places for the first time." However, the Vice Governor of Easter Island, Alfredo Tuki, stated that the media magnified the damage to the *moai* and they were only covered with soot and were not burnt as the news reported. And he added that the island is continually in danger from young islanders who toss lighted cigarette butts in the vegetation. As for CONAF's lack of resources and materials to prevent and combat emergencies, Vice Governor Tuki said that the problem is incumbent on the inhabitants of the island since they have the mission of being constantly vigilant for the preservation of the *moai* and all the monuments on Easter Island. Authorities are making a study to determine how many of the fires are set intentionally, as that could have been the origin of the fire.

Ramírez maintained that there was damage, it was visible, and that there could be invisible damage, now covered by ash, that could accelerate the process of erosion.

In further fall-out about the fire (but seemingly unrelated to it) the press of Chile quoted various government officials who, after bemoaning the fire and the tragic "destruction of the statues," trumpeted personal grievances: there should be a limit on the number of paved roads because they destroy the natural ambiance and divert rainfall; there are too many vehicles; and too many items of plastic and other non-recyclable garbage. Finally, the articles stressed the importance of the island for Chilean "maritime extension," for which reason the construction of a port "is essential:" a port will allow more tourism and open new "possibilities for fishing." Again, what this has to do with the fire is obscure. It is obvious that government officials are hot for a new port (which will destroy the archaeology on the north side of the island) and, as for allowing "more tourism", only about 3 tourist ships a YEAR come to the island, and they stay but a few hours. The fire became an opportunity for airing opinions.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 2- 5, 13 December 1996

The King of Spain, who visited Easter Island in November, declared that "We should preserve the patrimony of Easter Island." King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia, traveling with Chilean President and Mrs Frei, enjoyed a short visit to the island. Before leaving, the monarchs visited the beach at Anakena and inspected the boat of *tora* reeds built by Spanish adventurer Kitín Muñoz and 10 Aymara Indians. The King was impressed by it all—the history, the legends, the

moai and how they were made and transported from Rano Raraku. He noted that when the first Spaniards arrived in 1770, they baptized the island San Carlos in honor of King Carlos III.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 21 November 1996

Padre Ramiro Estévez Tascón, the Easter Island priest for almost three years, died on December 22, 1996 after a short illness; he was 69. Born in Lautaro, near Temuco, Chile, he was for three years a student of architecture at the Catholic University in Valparaíso before studying for the priesthood. He was long attached with the Espíritu Santo parish in Temuco, worked for a number of years in the hospital in nearby Pucón, and was deeply involved in assisting the Mapuche Indians, many of whom live in the area. In February 1993 he became the Easter Island priest and remained there before returning to Pucón early in 1996.

A motion before the Chilean Senate states that land on Easter Island will only be given to ethnic Rapanui. This is an effort to prevent that which has happened on other Polynesian islands where native territory has been acquired by foreigners to build resorts without regard to the natives. Thus, "resorts," 5-star hotels, and other works that are far from the culture of the Rapanui, cannot be built on the island. The ruling will safeguard the cultural values of Rapa Nui. The initiative, which was approved by a majority of members of the United Commission of the Government, assures that state land on Easter Island only passes to members of the Rapanui community. The law will modify articles 66 and 69 of the Law of Indigenous People which states that anyone who has "cultural links" with the island can acquire property, a catch-all that could include anyone who knows how to dance the *sau-sau*, or cook in an *umu*.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso 16 December 1996

An underwater sanctuary in the waters adjacent to Easter Island was proposed to the sub-Secretaries of Fishing, of Navy, and other organizations by the First Naval Zone, by Vice Admiral Couyoumdjian who has observed a rich aquatic fauna at depths from 12 to 15 meters. He has proposed an underwater preserve with tourism in mind. It would be an area of no more than 100 by 400 meters and would not affect the fishing industry. It is expected that tourists who enjoy scuba diving will appreciate such a sanctuary and now the plan is being studied to locate the best place for it. Governor Hey and Mayor Petero Edmunds are enthusiastic about the plan but success would depend in large part on the responsibility of local fishermen.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 15 November 1996

The commander-in-chief of the Armada, Admiral Jorge Martínez Busch, said that the naval supply ship, *Chacabuco* will go to Easter Island to take water samples in the area where the Russian Mars probe fell, in order to look for traces of plutonium. They will pass through a point situated 720 miles southeast of the island at latitude 31 South, longitude 96.5 degrees West. The admiral said that there are few ships and fishing activities in this area and downplayed the pluto-

nium risk to humans. He stated that something fell in that area, but it is not known if it was the plutonium capsule or only a piece of the probe.

The following day it was reported that a B-707 Condor, an electronic vigilance plane of the Air Force, was headed for the zone where the probe fell. This report stated that a portion of the probe landed some 1,255 nautical miles northwest of Santiago at latitude 31 South, longitude 93 03 West.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 21 November 1996

Editor's note: other latitudes and longitudes have been stated in Chilean papers, and none are quite the same as either of the above. There was also a report that a piece of the probe landed off the coast of Peru or maybe in the desert of Northern Chile.

The President of the Court of Appeals in Valparaíso, Manuel Silva Ibáñez, is urging the construction of a prison on Easter Island, saying that the project should be given a high priority and professional prison guards should be stationed there. He noted that now the *carabineros* guard the jail, something that they are not trained for nor normally expected to do.

The current conditions are deplorable. The regular jail annex is more than 70 years old, there is no section for women prisoners, and it is located inside the area where the *carabineros* live with their families.

In 1996, Silva Ibáñez stated that 180 criminal cases and 230 civil cases were handled by the local court; 71 involved minors, 58 cases involved inebriation, and there were 212 minor police actions (presumably traffic tickets). The most common arrests are for robberies and fights resulting in injuries.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 13 December 1996

The Toromiro (*Sophora toromiro*): an international program to assess, manage and restore biodiversity

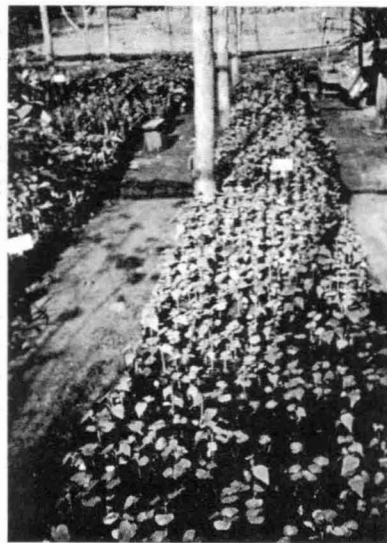
*Alistair Culham, Wolfram Lobin, Mike Mauder,
Catherine Orliac and Georg Zizka*

The Toromiro (*Sophora toromiro*) is a species of the leguminosae, Faboidcae, endemic to Easter Island. The history of this treelet by now has become quite well known: For decades (since the beginning of this century), there probably remained only one living plant on Easter Island. This last specimen disappeared in the 60s, and the species seemed to have become extinct. By chance, 5 plants survived in the Botanical Gardens of Göteborg, Viña del Mar and Bonn.

The international Toromiro Management Group was founded to combine various fields of expertise and research to prepare the reintroduction of the Toromiro to Easter Island and—if possible—assure its future survival in combination with conservation and restoration of the remaining idiochorous flora.

The few surviving specimens were propagated by various methods and, in the first step, distributed to additional Botanical Gardens to assure the species' survival. The specimens were successfully propagated by seeds, cuttings and in vitro. After few unsuccessful attempts in the past, 170 offspring

were brought back to Easter Island in 1995 for experimental plantation. With the recent upcoming of other "Toromiros" of doubtful origin, a fast and absolutely reliable identification of species and genotype became an urgent need. The best methods to identify the specimens—even to the single clones—turned out to be DNA studies (RAPD and Microsatellite). For future management of as high genetic variety as possible, the documentation of the represented genotypes is of vital importance for propagation and reintroduction.



The CONAF plant nursery at Mataverí, Easter Island (photo: José Miguel Ramírez)

Of importance for the intended reintroduction has been the production of a flora of Flowering Plants and investigation of its changes through Man as well as wood-anatomical and archaeobotanical studies of subfossil plant remains to reconstruct the former flora and vegetation of the island. Important information was also taken from palynological investigations by John Flenley and collaborators.

With the data and the plant material in hand, for the future survival of the Toromiro and of the few other remaining endemic and idiochorous species of the island, the TMG is supporting the setting up of a Botanical Garden on Easter Island. This garden could also be used to collect and conserve the old local cultivars of plants used by the islanders and thus contribute to education and agronomy of the Island.

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

The second technical mission to Orongo, which WMF had tentatively scheduled for the past month of October, had to be delayed in order to resolve technical and logistic problems.

The objective of this second mission is to determine the exact location of the sound rock front into which the retaining wall has to be anchored. The construction of the retaining wall along the sea-side and the reconstruction of the original platform around the Mata Ngarau sacred precinct were the solution proposed for the stabilization of this site by the first WMF mission to Orongo in 1995 (1, 2). This mission was carried out by Profs Vouvé and Clement of the University of Bordeaux I, with the collaboration of Prof. Marchetti of the University of Chile.

To determine the sound rock front behind the weathered exposed basalt, analysis of drillings taken at the site are necessary. These drillings require equipment sufficiently powerful to bore deep enough without inducing any damage to the site. The identification of such equipment (drilling