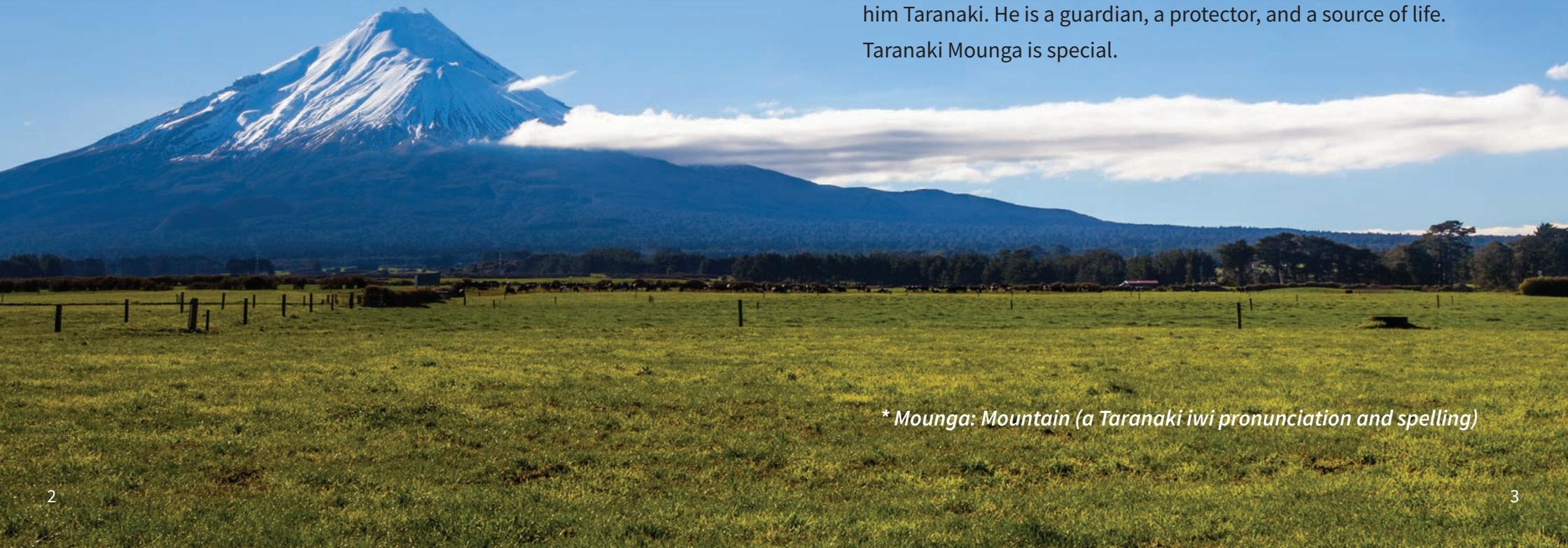


Taranaki Views



by **Steph Matuku**

(Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāti Tama, Te Ātiawa)



The legend of Taranaki

Long ago, Māui caught the great fish Te Ika-a-Māui, which became the North Island. His brothers argued over the fish and tried to cut it up. Their cuts became mountains and valleys. Rain filled some of those cuts and made lakes. Great forests grew.

In those days, Taranaki Mounga* was known as Pukeonaki. He stood in the centre of the North Island with the other great mountains: Ruapehu, Tongariro, Ngāuruhoe, and Pihanga.

Pukeonaki and Tongariro were both in love with gentle Pihanga. The two mountains fought over her. Tongariro won, and Pukeonaki fled to the far west of the island. There he stands today, waiting for his chance to return to Pihanga.

Those who came to live in the shadow of the mountain called him Taranaki. He is a guardian, a protector, and a source of life. Taranaki Mounga is special.

* *Mounga: Mountain (a Taranaki iwi pronunciation and spelling)*

Taranaki – the volcano

Taranaki Mouna is part of the Pouakai Range. The mountain is 2,518 metres tall – the second highest peak in the North Island. It was formed more than 120,000 years ago.

Taranaki Mouna is a “stratovolcano”. This is the name for a volcano shaped like a cone. Scientists have studied the layers of rock on the mountain. They now know that it has erupted lots of times in the past. The last eruption was in 1854. There hasn’t been any sign of activity since then, but scientists think there will be more eruptions in the future. Taranaki Mouna is a **dormant** volcano – he is not dead. He is only sleeping.

Scientists on Taranaki

In recent times, Taranaki Mouna has always been peaceful. It’s easy to forget that one day, it will probably erupt again. To help us to know if an eruption is going to happen, scientists have put **seismometers** on the mountain. These measure and record any volcanic earthquakes or ground movements. GeoNet staff also collect **samples** from the mountain and make observations. Any changes on the mountain, such as a landslide, gas escaping from a hole, or chemical changes in the water around it, could mean that an eruption is on the way. This data should give us lots of time to prepare.

Taranaki Mouna from the the top of the Pouakai Range. On the left of the photograph, in the distance, are Mount Tongariro, Mount Ngāuruhoe, and Mount Ruapehu.



Plants and animals on Taranaki

When a volcano erupts, it throws out a shower of rocks, **lava**, and ash. Over thousands of years, these materials turn into very good soils. This means that plants grow well around Taranaki Mouna. On the lower part of the mountain, there are forests of leafy shrubs and trees. Higher up the mountain, the plants are smaller and tougher. This helps them to survive in the colder, windier conditions.

View from Taranaki Mouna lookout



Toutouwai/the North Island robin
(one of the native birds that can be
found in Te Papakura o Taranaki)

Te Papakura o Taranaki is the name of the Taranaki Mouna **National Park**. Scientists have counted over forty different kinds of birds in the park. This includes twenty-eight kinds of native birds. There are also many plants, insects, and small creatures that are very rare and only live in Te Papakura o Taranaki.

To help protect these plants and animals, the Department of Conservation spends a lot of money trapping, poisoning, and hunting **predators** and pests. They also work to get rid of weeds in the park. Many volunteers, community groups, and schools help to take care of the mountain's special environment.

Naming Taranaki

Taranaki Mouna is named after Ruataranaki, one of the first ancestors of Taranaki iwi.

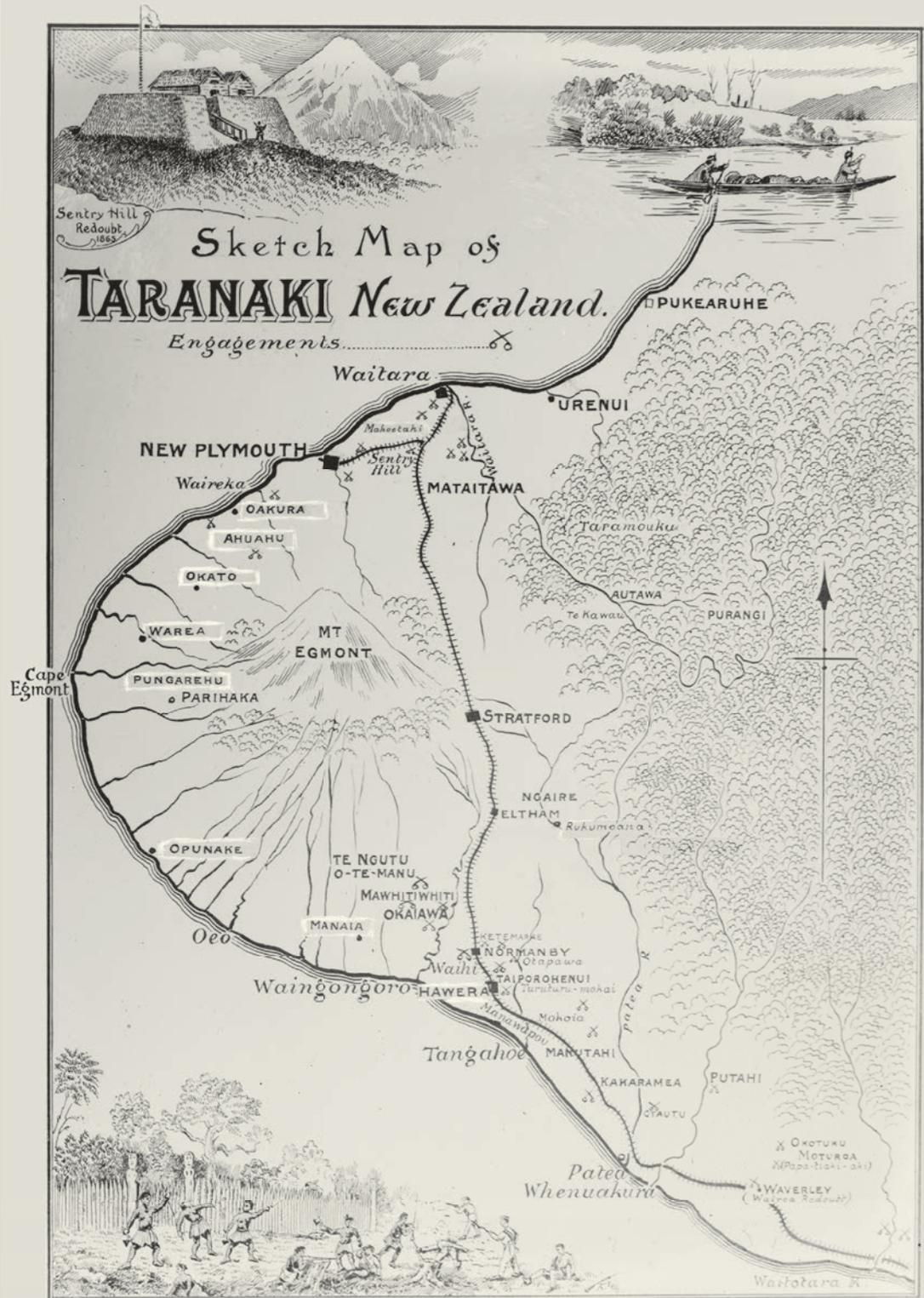
Although the mountain already had a name, when Captain Cook sailed by in 1770, he called it Egmont. He named it this after his friend the Earl of Egmont. (Egmont is a place in Ireland.) At that time, European explorers usually gave places new names and ignored the names that **tangata whenua** had already given them.

Two years later, a French explorer named Marion Du Fresne decided to call the mountain “Pic Mascarin” after a volcano in France, but that name didn’t stick.

Then, the name Egmont began appearing on maps. Soon, Mount Egmont became the “official” name for the mountain. However, Taranaki Māori battled to bring back the original name. In 1986, after a lot of debate, the New Zealand Geographic Board decided that both Taranaki *and* Egmont would be the official names for the mountain. Then, in January 2020, the name Egmont was dropped. Taranaki Mouna was restored as the mountain’s only name.

Soon, Taranaki Mouna will be granted legal personhood. This means that the mountain will be seen as an ancestor and a citizen. It will have the same rights as you and me. Nobody will own it – it will own itself.

A 1920s map of the Taranaki region, showing Taranaki Mouna as Mount Egmont



What does the mountain mean to you?

Taranaki Mounga isn't just pretty to look at and to photograph. For iwi and hapū, and the people from the Taranaki region, the mountain means much more.

Tui MacDonald works for Taranaki Mounga Project. The project aims to protect the environment, **mauri**, and mana of the mountain.

“We help to get rid of stoats, ferrets, rats, possums, and goats,” Tui says. “These animals eat our native birds and plants. If we get rid of predators, our native plants and animals will live and grow.”

Taranaki Mounga Project needs lots of volunteers to help. Every two weeks, the volunteers tramp through the bush for three or four hours to check traps. There are now a lot fewer predators, and the area is free of wild goats.



The project also carries out bird **translocations**. The eggs of native birds, such as kiwi, are taken from their nests and hatched in safe places. When the birds have grown, they're tagged and put back into the park. These bigger birds have a better chance of staying alive in the wild.

Tui says, “Māori are the traditional custodians of our land, so all the things we do have a Te Ao Māori focus. From a Māori point of view, iwi and hapū are looking after their ancestor.”

Tui loves walking in the bush. It's a time for her to relax and enjoy nature. “What we do will never end because there will always be predators. But in a way, that's good – we should always be looking after our mounga.”



Top: A kiwi
Middle and bottom: Releasing native birds back into the park
Page 10: Checking traps





Nigel Ogle created and owns the Tawhiti Museum near Hāwera. He makes models and displays that tell Taranaki stories, from the musket wars to farming and cheese making.

“We’re looking for ways to connect people to the stories we’re telling,” Nigel says. “We make the displays look

like a local landscape. They have the kinds of trees and bush you see in Taranaki. We also use pictures of our mountain in the background so that people know straight away that this is where the story takes place. The mountain is such a strong image. It’s an easy way to immediately connect people to the region.”

Part of a display showing a scene from the New Zealand Wars



Students at Green School in Ōakura help with predator control and bird translocations. They also tell people why it’s important to protect the mounnga.

Sophie



“The mountain means home to me. I like to protect our native animals by setting possum traps.”

Kora



“Whenever we come back after being away, and I see the mountain again, it’s like a relief for me that I’m home.”

Samantha



“We went to a sanctuary in Taupō and brought home a kiwi. We put it back in its nest on the mountain. It was so special.”

William



“Rats can kill two or three birds a day. Stoats kill even more. Since I’ve been trapping, I’ve saved thousands of birds and eggs.”



Vicki Fairley works for Venture Taranaki, an organisation that helps to promote the region to visitors. She says that Taranaki Mounga attracts lots of tourists. A lot of people want to climb it or walk its many tracks and trails. And of course, it's beautiful to photograph.



Ivan Bruce is the president of the Taranaki Alpine Club. He guides groups of climbers up the mountain and uses the cliffs and slopes to practise rock climbing and mountaineering. He says, "As a climber, you use the mountain to test yourself. It's a really good

mountain to train on. It's not an easy climb. It's quite dangerous in some parts, especially if you're climbing in winter."

Ivan has noticed that there are more people wanting to explore the mountain, but that means there's more rubbish left behind. More people also means more **erosion**, which is a problem because it can make slopes unstable and dangerous.

"I have a strong feeling of respect for our mountain. If you go climbing, and you're unprepared, you could get hurt. People have died up there. The weather can change in an instant. It's better to be safe than sorry."



Wayne Capper is a Kaitiaki Whenua ranger for Taranaki iwi. His work involves helping to control predators and weeds and looking after archaeological features on the mountain.

“The mountain helps our farming and brings tourism to the region,” Wayne says. “These things provide financial support for our families. He is also our identity – as tangata whenua the mountain is our ancestor. He is the heartbeat of Taranaki. The rivers and streams are like the arteries of the heart, feeding life to our community. Our mountain gives us crystal-clear water. But as soon as the rivers leave the National Park and move through farmlands and towns, they become polluted. The mountain provides so much for us, and we need to give back. He is like

a father figure, watching over us. If we look after our mountain, he’ll look after us.”



Taranaki Mounga means different things to different people, but all agree it’s special. Is there a place in your town or region that you feel is special, too?



Glossary

dormant: as if sleeping; not active

erosion: wearing away of the land

lava: melted liquid rock

mauri: life force, spirit

national park: an area that is protected by law to preserve the landscape and the birds, animals, and plants that live there

predator: an animal that hunts and eats other animals

sample: a small piece that scientists collect to test

seismometer: an instrument to measure ground movement

tangata whenua: local people; the people who belong to the land in a tribal area

translocation: the movement of animals or plants from one place to another

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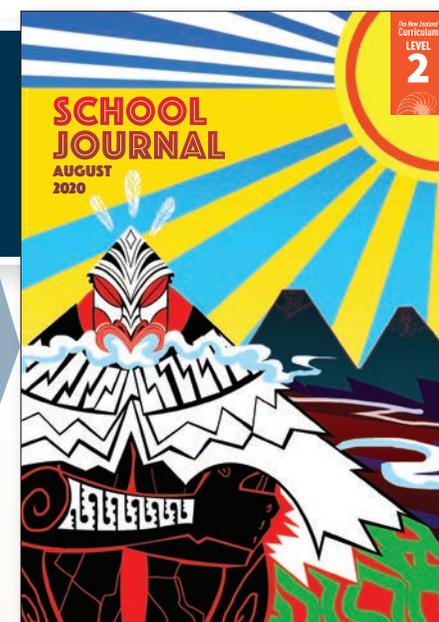
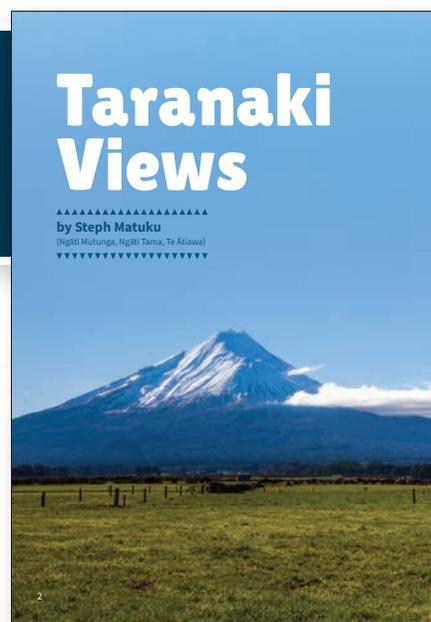
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