

Seabirds Inspire Voyage . . .

Neil Rusch reports . . .

LAST month ornithologist Gerry Clark arrived in Cape Town aboard his research yacht *Totorore* after a three and a half year voyage which began from Keri Keri, New Zealand in February 1983.

Not the usual cruise this, for it had its beginnings at the Law of the Sea Conference held in Wellington by member nations of the Antarctic Treaty. The *Totorore* Expedition appropriately is a New Zealand contribution to the above ecological alliance as a great deal of the country lies within the sub-Antarctic region.

Totorore, which is the Maori word for the Antarctic Prion, a tiny pale blue ocean traveller rather like a petrel, leaves Cape Town to sail via the islands Marion, Crozet, Kerguelen, Macdonald, MacQuarie and back home.

The *Totorore's* mission was to explore the chain of sub-Antarctic islands that ring the southern latitudes. Special emphasis was on seabird observation and Gerry Clark and his Keri Keri-built sloop have the backing of the Ornithological Society of NZ, the Australian Seabird Group, the Forest and Bird Preservation Society of NZ and is recognised by the International Council for Bird Preservation.

Totorore's crews have been recruited through university contacts. Some stayed only a week or two others for the better part of a year. On arrival in Table Bay she had a crew of three, the skipper and expedition leader Gerry Clark, another Kiwi, Chris Sole, and Julie van Meyer who joined the crew in Chile.

A fortnight before departure the sloop was being made ready for her Southern Ocean voyage by Christine Hanel a SANCOB (South African National Foundation for Coastal Bird Conservation) member from Cape Town and Paul Scofield, a student from Auckland Univer-

sity.

Gerry Clark's eyes light up with respect when he tells of author Peter Harrison who joined the *Totorore* at Punta Arenas for the spell the expedition spent in Southern Chile and Cape Horn.

Harrison, who is responsible for the authoritative Identification Guide to Seabirds, had at time of shipping out with Clark just completed a series of lectures aboard the *Lindblad Explorer*, a ship which takes wealthy Americans down to the Antarctic.

Both ornithologists Harrison and Clark have besides their interest in birds no formal training in their field of interest. Like Harrison, who is working on a follow-up book featuring photographs of the 1 600 seabirds which appeared as colour paintings in the original book, Gerry is also committed to produce a book of his voyage and discoveries for Hutchinson of London.

At home in Keri Keri Gerry's wife has been patiently running their small farm and collating all the material sent back by her husband.

In six months time though the two will be united after an odyssey which began in Keri Keri more than ten years ago when Gerry started with the design and construction of the 30 foot sloop.

All in all, an olympian effort which saw *Totorore* round Cape Horn, traverse the Antarctic pack ice, and overcame a dismasting in the roaring forties.

Author of *Seabirds* Peter Harrison doing a watercolour of a cormorant aboard *Totorore* as an autograph in skipper Gerry Clark's copy of the classic seabird guide.

***Totorore's* crew for the Southern Ocean voyage back to New Zealand, from left, Paul Scofield, Christine Hanel and expedition leader Gerry Clark.**

