



Friends of Matakohē/Limestone Island Annual Report covering the 2006 calendar year

Presented at the Annual General Meeting by Pam Stevens (Chairperson), February 14th 2007

I am pleased to again to report on another eventful and successful year.

This is a community driven project that Whangarei should be proud of. Projects like this are growing at a rapid rate around the country now and are achieving great successes. It seems the private community groups with the assistance of local businesses have a great drive and capacity. It is wise and prudent for the Department of Conservation, District Council and other agencies to be aware and harness this by giving support where ever they can. In Whangarei we are lucky with our local Department of Conservation Staff and certainly find them supportive and willing to share their technical knowledge and experience. Staff members at the Whangarei District Councils Parks and Reserves endeavour to help wherever they can and most of the City Councilors have now seen our achievements and positively support the project. This was acknowledged this year after we did a presentation in the Council Chambers and they made a commitment to us of funding as part of their Long Term Community Plan. \$30,000 annually to help towards the core running of the island, for Capital works they have promised \$30,000 toward a display and public shelter and \$70,000 toward the long planned all weather landing. However, the island project is a success because of people. The cheerful team of planters that turn up, despite the weather, people who fill the bait stations clambering gallantly through blackberry, give tins of sardines, arrange a trip for their club, pay their subs and donate more. It is a success because of the passion and commitment of many individuals that selflessly give their time and skills and a strong committee who somehow hold it all together

Rangers

Last year Cathy and Peter arrived and were immediately thrown into the petrel programme, when they recovered, they settled in well. They have very quickly proved to be a wonderful asset to the island. The petrel project this year went like clockwork from start to finish, maybe an element of luck with weather, but very largely due to meticulous planning and management. Well done Cathy who was project manager. Colin Bishop laid the foundations for a number of things and Pete and Cathy have built on his efforts. The island is a pleasure to visit with good tracks and signs and looking really well cared for. Cathy and Pete have been very motivated to up-skill and been on a number of events such as the Kiwi Hui, a Sanctuaries workshop and pest management field days. Pete has also gained his LLO barge qualifications and First aid. Cathy's veterinarian skills have proved more useful then we ever thought possible. She moved from cattle to bird handling with ease and this year is doing a year long post graduate paper in Avian medicine. She has already had plenty of bird handling opportunities with the petrels and kiwi.

Wetlands

Colin had done planning for some new dams and wetlands before he left. Early in the year we used a Northland Regional Council grant to co-ordinate a digger and a tug to deliver a barge to the island. They brought a huge digger and an excellent digger driver, Ian Pyke, and the tasks were completed in a day. Because of the generosity of North Tugz and North Port with the costs of the barge and digger, we had some funds left over. We were delighted to be able to use the remainder of the money to purchase a pump, tanks and pipes. We now have a water supply well hidden in the bush that can feed water to almost anywhere on the island. We have bird feeders in mind, but as a spin off the shower pressure in the house has greatly improved and we now have happier and cleaner rangers.

Planting

Thanks to Iain, Dwane and others, the nursery at Golden Bay produces a significant amount of our plants. We started on June the 4th and planted every Sunday till August, around 10,000 plants. We have a loyal hard working team. Helicopter spraying was again done in the Spring so we will be underway again in the Autumn. We look forward to seeing our planters again.

Pests & weeds.

Peter quickly realised the well-run management of the pest programme underpins the success of the whole project. He has built on Colin's previous work and has been refining and improving systems. He does an outstanding job and has a tightly run and managed regime. Following up on Peter's idea, we recently were successful in getting funding from the Northland Regional Council to improve the trapping and monitoring in the island "buffer zone", that is, the surrounding islands and mangrove flats to stop the little blighters even getting anywhere near the island. Ross Mallet continues to help out at Onemama Point with pest control. Driven by Ken and helped by Bio-Diversity funding, Motuotaua has had a severe going over and the infestations of moth-plant and other nasties, that were being wind blown to the island, largely eliminated. Killing weeds is a physically hard task and we need to get as much assistance as we can. The task is far too huge for Peter alone.

All-weather Landing & Public Shelter

This is shortly to be lodged for a Resource Consent and without the skills of Steve Westgate we would have been struggling. Steve gives an often unseen, but very valued contribution. The placement and design of the visitor's shelter is moving forward - hopefully some visible progress later this year.

BNZ Save the Kiwi

BNZ Save the Kiwi helps us with funds for looking after all the kiwi on the island. We continue to be part of the all important Nest Egg programme. We have our special island born birds, Ahi Kaa and Kahui Whetu, who stay on the island. However any island birds born subsequently are taken off when they reach the correct size. This year two island born birds were named. One was called Marge Maddren the other Joyce Ryan, which was subsequently identified as a male, so quickly became known as JR. Both of these women have played a significant role in the past in the very beginnings of the island project. On separate occasions they met their name sakes on the Onerahi foreshore before the chicks were sent to the Heads. It was also a way of acknowledging the contribution of a number of older people who have been part of the project in the past. We are aware that they cannot physically help out anymore but are always there in spirit. Last week we took, a now frailer but still very feisty, Tim Clarke to the island. His book has continued to sell and was a wonderful contribution to the district. To any visitors to the island it is very evident that the island was a significant Pa for Tangata Whenua in the past. We acknowledge that that significance has not diminished. We have a Memorandum of Understanding with Te Parawhau and Ngatiwai in place and do our best to stay true to the principles expressed in that. Our thanks to Te Ihi, Freddie Tito, Winnie Heihei, Te Wharahi Heteraka, Tanya Munroe, Tui Shortland and others for advice and support. Especially to Te Ihi who turns up, often at short notice, to make sure the kiwi get the appropriate send off. Thanks to Richard who often chases him down on our behalf.

Ruins & Structures

We had a day looking at the ruins and manager's house with a specialist architect, Dave Pearson, an engineer from Golden Bay Cement and a people from the Historic Places Trust. We are soon to receive a report on the state of each of the structures and recommended action to be taken with them. We are conscious of our responsibilities here but want to be careful that we take the appropriate steps. The sheep which received a haircut from Ken before summer are keeping the grass down around the ruins and more are being revealed. Sandy's climbing whanau removed some of the damaging trees from the risky places.

Communications

Jane injected new enthusiasm into our communications sub committee and we had a very successful afternoon at the Yacht Club where 60 locals turned up to hear about the island. Subsequently a number of them have joined and I have a phoning list who I call when the kiwi are on the move. The data base is much better and easier to use. The island is at last connected to the Internet now, something that used to frustrate Colin, networking with others in the field is invaluable.

The many helpers

Its quite over whelming looking back over the year and realising all that action fitted into one year. I would like to quickly thank a number of people and it will give you a taste of some of the action:

- Tony Pierce for new petrel boxes, watering system. & toilet repair after a visit from vandals. Sutherland Security for the advice and discount on installation after the break in
- Robert Browne who did a fern survey
- Cathy and Michelle for the all important annual Argentinean ant survey
- Bev Woods for her help & Forest and Bird for maintaining the Molly Stevens Grove
- John and Dwane for the Health and Safety Plan and Ian Page for keeping the fire plan up to date
- Whangarei Native Forest & Bird for the annual book donation
- Richard Lang from Phoenix boats and Dave Cochran from Marine North for help maintaining the boats. Dave has supported us since the very beginnings and has moved on, we wish him well
- Park Care for helping maintain the tracks and mowing - hard physical work
- Martin and Heather Hunt for the use of their launch Manaaki to transfer the petrels
- Graham White from Fish and Game for his help with the wetlands
- Weeders & sardine donators and feeding helpers, Greg & Heather Stump ,Carol Fielding, Tim Grove ,Keith & Eileen Hansen, Mary, Susan from Mt Tiger, Godfrey & Jane Badham
- Elizabeth and Marina for mouse busting, planting and bringing friends along
- Daimian a hard worker and cheerful Bob Smith and the Work Wednesday team
- Conservation Corp who regularly help and are building an all tide track at present
- The Kiwi team, Huge Robertson the guru, Emma and the kiwi dog team James & Natasha
- Rentokil is now a new sponsor for our poisons
- We rely on local businesses for support and in particular acknowledge the long term commitment of Golden Bay Cement who still contributes funding to the project
- Lawrie,Paul,Grant and Tanya for such a huge contribution in time and effort to the petrel project

Looking to the future

We had a planning meeting last year. Eileen Piggott-Irvin gave her time and we discussed a number of ideas like the possibility of a fulltime educationalist to use the island in the school curriculum. We would like to get Ian Lawler up again and help us with the Maori garden discussions and consult widely to find the best thing to do with the North face grass slope. We would like to improve signage and have a self guided trail. Peter has been developing this already. We need to replace the tractor and mower this year and up grade all the traps. As well as complete a visitors centre and hopefully start the landing. We have more translocations in mind of course.

We need a multi skilled committee to deal with everything and we certainly have one. Sandy our superb treasurer. Iain & Dwane for everything practical, Sheryl who has a great can do approach, Jane for her fresh enthusiasm. John Ward and John Barber for the many skills they bring. Rosemary & Richard for support and advice. Gerry for hanging in there with the proposed lizard translocation. Olly, Lyn, Winnie and Joan our historical advisor. Michelle who has been a huge help to Peter with daily tasks and the petrel project. David for his word milling skills and advice. Paul from Golden Bay Cement. We have a lot to be proud, a lot yet to be done. I for one just can't wait till our first petrel's return, that will be time to really celebrate.

Pam Stevens
Chairperson



Supported by; Forest Floor Nursery, Marine North Ltd, Northpower, Northland Port Corp, Northland Regional Council, North Tugz, Onerahi Lions, Phoenix Boats, Rentokil, Tawapou Nursery