



Friends of Matakohē/Limestone Island Annual Report

Presented by
Pam Stevens (Chairperson) at the meeting 12 March 2008

There is never a dull moment when it comes to this little island. 2007 passed in a flash and along the way there were some interesting and varied challenges. Now looking ahead we have a few more looming.

New Shelter First on the list is the new shelter. We now have completed the archeologically dig, have Whangarei District Council and ASB funds as well as the Building Consent approved, so everything is ready for the construction to start some time this year. Rotary generously gave us funding for signage for inside the shelter, which will include informative display boards. Recently Te Warihi, a master carver, has visited and is putting some thought into a design for a welcome to the island and shelter.

New boat harbour /Landing Thanks to Steve and others we had the Resource Consent ready for the boat harbour and landing and suddenly the dredging happened a few days before Christmas, it caught us by surprise as the petrel and lizard transfers were in full swing. It has a little more work to be done before completion and that will happen in the next few months when they return to work on the Onerahi jetty. Our thanks to Total Marine Services, Red Bull Powder Co. and WDC for the funding. Already the rangers tell us it has made the managing of the boats much easier.

More petrels This year, it will be the 5th and final translocation of the Grey faced petrel. WWF funding helped us again this year. We may then consider the transfer other types of petrels. A sound system is being designed and constructed to call in our precious chicks.

Lizards The shore lizards were also transferred just before Christmas from Mimiwhangata following years of an enormous team effort. It was at such a busy time that some people barely knew it was happening, so Cathy will report more on the transfer later and explain the next lizards and geckos we are looking at moving on to the island. We now have a weta hotel and looking into maybe giant weta some time in the future.

Looking back over the year Cathy and Pete have just had a well deserved break off the island with the help of a much appreciated team John Ward and Karin, Donna & Riaan, Paul Cornell, Ken, Ross and Pagey. Everyone agrees that Cathy and Pete are outstanding rangers on the island. They welcome a wide range of people onto the island and people comment on their knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment to the project. They have brought a professionalism which has improved the visitor experience and consequently visitor numbers are growing. Samples of some of those that have visited this year are, Auckland University Teacher Trainees, Northland Regional Council Primary and Secondary Teachers Course. Schools including, Glenbervie, Onerahi, Maromaku, Whangarei Intermediate, WGB High, Tikipunga HS and groups like the Masonic Walkers, NorthTec, Museum, Kamo Cubs, Bream Bay Gardening Club and the Hash House Harriers

Kiwi Kiwi farming continues unabated, although it has been a little slower this year reflecting not such a good year for chicks in our region. However, we have about 25 on the island at present and the total number that have gone out to the Heads nicely fattened up has reached 40. We have another

application for funding due to the BNZ Save the Kiwi which has consistently supported the Kiwi Nest Egg programme and are valued sponsors.

Petrels The petrel translocation this year took an enormous effort, previous years we have been lucky with the weather, not so this year. However, to cut a very long story very short we were successful. But Cathy will fill us in on the detail later. However I would like their heroism noted. Wet, stranded and running out of food these people remained cheerful. Tamsin from the Cape Kidnappers project, Tanya Munro a key player in the vital feeding. Lawrie, Grant, Daniel and most of all Cathy, the Project leader. Martin Hunt and his boat Manaaki also deserve mention.

Plants & weeds The plants have had a perfect summer and are growing well. The planting starts in May again and our thanks to Iain and others who make this happen annually and manage the nursery. Olly, Gerry and some applied science students have set up vegetation monitoring transects around the island, something that has been sorely needed and was a major step forward. Weeds have had a good summer too. Containing and destroying weeds is a constant task with pampas, blackberry, periwinkle, mexican devil sprayed. Thanks to Ken for keeping his well trained eye on Motuotaua and following up on the weed destroying.

Predators & Pests The refining of the buffer zone trapping regime that Pete has set up is helped by NRC Funding, rodents have been significantly reduced and unwanted paws are not even getting to the island. New DOC standard traps were purchased and are proving more successful. After a visit to Matui/Somes Island by some committee members it was suggested we tighten our quarantine system. Those of you who visit the island will be aware that Pete gives you a little talk and inspection on board the barge. Our freezer has a large pile of ice cream containers full of rabbit bait courtesy of the Poroti Pub shooting event and a lot of cutting and salting by Dwane and Pete. All ready and waiting to go in the traps. There are also frozen ants in there at present too, the result of the annual Argentine Ant Survey.

The historical structures have had a Condition Document prepared by a heritage architect and the next step is a Conservation Plan and then hopefully some action. Big thanks to John Barber who keeps this project ticking along. The Work Wednesday teams have cleared our precious kilns of any damaging vegetation. Joan organised the archaeological dig and we had an impressive team of experienced diggers from HPT, DOC, and Museum. Nothing of significance was found, but some shells found in a midden layer have been sent away for carbon dating. Joan fills an invaluable roll on our committee and things would be much tougher for us without her commitment and watchful eye.

We are continually surprised and grateful for the help that comes from business and community, from unexpected quarters. Pak N Save gave us 300 cans of sardines, Onerahi and Glenbervie School also collected sardines and donated a life jacket. Bryant tractors gave us an excellent deal on a brand new tractor and attachments; all purchased with Pub Charity funds. Whangarei Native Forest and Bird have been very long time, and valued supporters, helping us with funding and an annual book donation. Rentokil has supplied us with Rid Rat Bait. Firestone fixed our tyres at no cost. Cathy and John Barber sold orchids and donated the proceeds.

On the boring, but essential, side of things we have met Charities Commission requirements and are nearly officially registered as a Charitable trust. Our barge successfully passed a Safe Ship Management inspection and we now have a monthly Health & Safety report imbedded in our monthly minutes. On the not so boring side, we now have a toilet much closer to the house thanks to Dwane and Tony. Pete now does informative laminated signs in strategic places around the island regarding bird and other activities to improve the casual visitor experience.

Ron, Russell and Ivan from North Power took time to examine and discuss improvements to our very essential solar power set up at the ranger station with recommendations being implemented with help from Ross Gordon. Between Dwane and Jane we now have a more reassuring back-up system to our archives.

Memorandum of Understanding We have an MOU with Ngatiwai which we agreed to review annually and have pencilled in with them in for August for a review. Ngatiwai have just released their environmental policy document which we will look at in the next couple of months but, at first glance, contains some similar goals as FOMLI as far as restoration of flora and fauna. The Memorandum of Understanding is three way and the other partner is Te Parawhau who have a long connection with the island and are Manu Whenua. We appreciate the essential support especially from Te Ihi and Freddie Tito, usually at very short notice as with the lizards and kiwi movements. Te Ihi contributes in many ways in our community but still manages to fit us in.

As usual the 'thank-you' list is long. Sandy our treasurer is consistently and reliably there for FOMLI. We are at the level of a small business and all the associated financial things are done in her spare time. Thanks to Dwane for keeping the records. He is now in Croatia for two years and will keep in touch. Jane, Sheryl and Michele, a big tick for the brochure and many other contributions. Sheryl is our minute taker at meetings and the envy of voluntary committees. The minutes are done on the spot and e-mailed, often arriving in the e-mailbox at home before we make it back home from the meeting. David contributes with valuable skills. Olly and Ken are very valued and help in very practical ways. Thanks also to Richard and Rosemary who I pester at times for advice and draw on their wisdom and experience. Gerry for his knowledge and passion for the flora and fauna on our planet. Iain also of course. Paul and his skills. John Ward who is not only our health and safety committee but is a hands on helper. Joan our historian, as mentioned before, Lynne, Steve Westgate who made a huge contribution in obtaining a Resource Consent for our new landing. John Barber, who can always be relied on to help when it's needed.

I would like to make special mention of Tim Clarke who Sandy and I took to the island last year, to what, he saw as his last visit, we had a lovely few hours with him. He has now been moved to Auckland so family can take care of him. We can only imagine what a terrible wrench that must have been. The book *Matakohe/Limestone Island - More than just a little island* he researched and wrote about the island has been enjoyed by hundreds (in fact over 1000 copies sold) and added a great deal of credibility to our project at a crucial time. I would also like to acknowledge the passing of Peter Emerson, a tragic loss, he has been key to getting our petrel teams safely on and off the tricky Taranga island over the past four years.

We also could not do with out the assistance of a number of people in DOC. Andrea, Donna, and Bryce etc. We are looking to review how we can interface with DOC after a challenging Lizard application which stretched over a number of years.

It is a very significant year in our relationship with our major sponsor **Golden Bay Cement**. It has been ten years since they took a big punt and gave us secure funding. It is very hard to imagine the project without them clearly in the centre frame. Their consistency of funding, the length of it and the trust they had in a community group is admirable. With that core money we have not only managed to employ high quality Rangers but we have used it as a keystone block to draw in other funding both regionally and nationally. We are at present undertaking a review of what we have achieved and would dearly love the sponsorship and long association to continue. As I said it is hard to imagine the project without their profile on and associated with island. We have achieved a huge amount over the ten years and should be proud of that.

Finally I wish to acknowledge our cheerful volunteers. Bob, Heather, Greg, Elizabeth, Marina, Carol, Tim and many others. Its great having a team on the island helping with a variety of tasks. It makes it enjoyable and it is always surprising what can be achieved, tracks cleared, poisons replaced, trees planted. We look forward to seeing everyone on the island again this year.

Pam Stevens
Chairperson