



## **Matakohē/Limestone Island Rangers Monthly Report – April 2008**

### **Kiwi**

- While out and about one evening recently Pete caught a kiwi called Runga. Runga arrived on the island from the Native Bird Recovery Centre last March. At that time he weighed just over 300 gm - now he is 1700 gm and in very good condition. He is due to leave us next weekend as part of a BNZ Save The Kiwi formal release with their key sponsors. In the meantime we have a transmitter on him and are checking his whereabouts daily to ensure he does not get tangled in the Buffalo grass or Muehlenbeckia.
- Weather permitting; Pete Graham will come over this week with his Kiwi dogs Manu and Rua to also catch birds for the release. It is always very interesting to see which birds they manage to find!
- The kiwi returning to the mainland will be blessed at the Onerahi foreshore at 7.30 am on Sunday April 20<sup>th</sup>. All welcome, yes it is daylight by then!
- Cathy also carried out the 6-monthly weighing and transmitter check on Baldrick and Sir Ed earlier in the month. Both birds are well. Baldrick, as usual, was quite stropy and wriggly while her transmitter was changed over.

### **Fauna**

- Kevin and Tony from Electro-Sound have installed the sound system at the Petrel site. This plays Grey-faced Petrel calls at night to help any returning birds find the site. The guys have done a great job building a very compact unit, which has been functioning very well despite the wet & cloudy weather of the past few days. We could even hear the calls at the cottage on a recent clear southeasterly evening.
- The burrow sticks have been put up and we are checking the site most days for bird sign. This autumn will hopefully see the first birds returning, though it will be a few more years before they begin to breed.
- With the Shore Skink translocation complete, background work is now underway for the next stages of the lizard translocation. Collection of Green and Forest Geckos from the mainland will be an ongoing process taking up to 2 years to get the numbers we need. Planning is also underway for translocation of Ornate and Moko Skinks from the Hen and Chickens group of islands at the end of this year.
- Earlier this month we heard another Morepork around the house, for about 10 days. We were hoping it was setting up camp but has been quiet more recently so was probably a temporary visitor.

### **Predator Control**

- There is never a dull moment on the island and the Ship Rat we reported swimming near the island last month caused more than a few ripples. DoC has notified its own island managers of our incursion and Jo Ritchie who was about to embark on the eradication of rats on Kaikoura Island (near Great Barrier) sent us an amusing e-mail. "I heard you have been training Shippies to do marathons. This is a plea to ensure that all training and racing is kept within the confines of the Whangarei Harbour!"

- We have also trapped 2 mice and another Ship Rat on the island this month, which goes to show how little we really know about what is going on 'out there'. These are the first mice caught on the island for many years although we did track an individual this time last year. Both mice were caught in the rat traps baited with chocolate, which we purchased 2 years ago and have been continuously set since then. The mice were approx. 150 metres apart on the ridge and despite setting tracking tunnels around the area for more than a week no others have been detected. The bait stations in the area were also freshened up & the baits monitored, but no bait take has been detected.
- We also set the rest of the island tracking tunnels, baiting the ridgeline ones with fresh rabbit in addition to the regular peanut butter. No rodent or mustelid tracking was encountered, but we did find the usual lizard tracks especially along the ridge & southern shoreline.
- Our personal interpretation is that it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to ever declare the island rodent free but under the current program rodent numbers appear to be controlled to very low levels.
- In the buffer zone 2 stoats & 1 Norway rat were caught this month.
- Pete has now completed fitting all the stainless steel DoC 200's in the island trap boxes & has started to upgrade some of the buffer zone using the old zinc plated DoC's.



**Rabo Bank staff helping out with filling bait stations on the island.**

- Thankyou to Rabo Bank staff who spent 2 days on the island last week helping with the North End bait stations – quite a change from their normal working day! We also managed to fit in a bit of sand bag dragging up at the petrel site, a really good effort.

## **Flora**

- The Gallant spraying for winter planting has now been completed. The areas for this season are; around the Edge House Ruins, along the coastal strip below the Maori gardens & in the basin beside the Hill Track. Pete has also booked Park Care for hole cutting next month so the sites will be ready for early June. Check next month's Report for planting dates & times.

- Pete has continued chasing pampas this month with blackberry & Mexican devil also on the list. Ken Massey & the Betta Contractors team were also booked to carrying out follow up spraying on Motuotaua (Rabbit) island; pampas & moth plant. Ken put four days aside but unfortunately showers every day meant they were unable to get the job done.
- Thanks again to the Wednesday Volunteers who this month spent the morning releasing trees that were planted last winter. This proved a very worthwhile exercise with many small plants 'reappearing' out of the under growth. The YHA then filled the gaps with 30 new plants the following Saturday, as part of their Anniversary celebrations.

### General

- Thankyou also to Donna & Riaan for looking after the island over Easter.
- The tractor has had its 50hr post-delivery service and can now move to annual servicing.
- Park Care have been over weed eating the tracks & doing a fantastic job as usual. Pete has also booked them for hole cutting next month in preparation for planting.
- Cathy has completed the Argentine Ant survey with none detected.
- Cathy has also completed the Shore Skink Post Translocation Report with copies sent to DoC, Te Parawhau, Ngatiwai & NRC.
- We have also given four presentations this month between us, all good advocacy for the island & the project. Generally the response is very positive with most people surprised at what is happening here right in their back yard.

### Up coming

- **Volunteer Wednesday – will be on Wednesday 7th May.** Pickup at 9am returning after lunch approximately 1.30pm. We might continue with more release weeding of last year's plants & there are also some signs that need a touch up paint if the weather is fine enough.

Pete & Cathy



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