



Matakohē/Limestone Island Rangers Monthly Report – May 2008

Kiwi

- Two island-raised birds were successfully released back to the mainland at Mount Manaia this month as part of the Bank of New Zealand Save the Kiwi Trust's formal release with their key sponsors. To help capture the birds Pete Graham from the local DoC office came over for 3 days with his specially trained kiwi dogs, Manu and Rua. Interestingly the day searching proved more difficult than night searching with lots of scent on the ground, old and new. They did find one bird but unfortunately it only came to the island in December and was too small to be taken. Pete had already caught a kiwi called Runga while checking the petrel site one night the previous week, and it was hoped to have at least one more for release on the day. An evening spotlight turned up Violet and she was taken off the island with Runga the next morning.
- Both birds left Matakohē-Limestone Island early Sunday. Special thanks to Te Ihi Tito for blessing the birds as they set off on their new life and to Richard Drake for his ongoing, invaluable assistance. Todd Hamilton reports that the release went very well and the sponsors enjoyed the opportunity to see kiwi at close quarters.
- Cathy carried out the regular monthly checks on our resident kiwi. Unfortunately Baldrick's transmitter has failed so we can't locate her at present. We are hoping to catch her next time the kiwi dog comes over at night.
- Pete has completed the annual BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust funding application. This funding is very important to our operation as a kiwi creche and has covered the cost of stoat control on Matakohē-Limestone Island and also in the buffer zone for many years.

Predator Control

- Thanks to John Ward who picked up rabbits from the Poroti Hunt. Unfortunately Pete was unwell that day so John currently has 40 rabbits filling his freezer. Pete & John have the gutting and processing to look forward to shortly!
- The island traps have been quiet, which is a bit of a relief after the last couple of months.
- In the buffer zone one very large male stoat has been caught on Knight Is.

Fauna

- We have been checking the petrel site on a regular basis. The sound system continues to operate very well. We are looking to see if the little stick fences in front of the tunnel entrances are down and for any other signs that we have had visitors. At this stage all is quiet, though possibly it is a bit early in the season yet. Cathy spoke to Graham Taylor recently and he thinks May to August is the most likely time to see birds returning.
- Cathy has completed the report for the 2007/08 petrel translocation and has forwarded it to Andrea at DoC Conservancy for final comments.
- Cathy and Pete visited Tawharanui this month to assist with some ongoing lizard monitoring – and pick up some tips for the island translocations. While there we did some spot lighting with Chris Wedding for green and forest geckos that were released almost 2 years ago. Unfortunately the geckos were feeling shy and we didn't see any.
- We also assisted Marleen Baling with her ongoing shore skink work. The skinks were caught in a series of pitfall traps set on and behind the sand dunes. There is a very healthy population of these skinks behind a predator proof fence.



Cathy & Marlene record the pitfall catches: the blue page and black/grey/white strip are for taking photo ID's., the black rectangle are electronic scales for weighing and you can just see Marleen's ruler for measuring snout/vent length. The monitoring work is being carried out to see how this source population responds to a translocation.

- We also discussed with Marleen & Chris the shore skink monitoring on Matakoho Limestone Is., which will hopefully confirm over time that the skinks are surviving and successfully breeding on the island.
- Armed with the information from this visit, the Wednesday Volunteers installed 12 pitfall traps at the shore skink release site, ready for monitoring in a months time. The traps will be baited and set for 5 days with captured skinks weighed and marked in case of recapture.
- Pete also assisted at the Tawharanui planting day while we were there. They focus on one big planting day with lunch provided and then use their regular volunteer days to finish off. On balance the island system of planting every Sunday and on Volunteer Wednesday stacks up pretty well, certainly providing a good range of days for planters to attend.
- Pete spotted 10 NZ dotterels on the Sand Spit earlier this month, gathering up in their winter groups and the Spoon Bills have also begun returning for their winter break.

Flora

- **Planting: will begin on Sunday 1st June** and will continue for 5-6 weeks approximately. Pickup at **9am** from the Onerahi pontoon returning after lunch around 1.30pm. Good footwear and a jacket for the boat are recommended. We look forward catching up with the planters again this year.
- Paul Gosling from Branching Out Tree Care has been over with his team trimming the old macrocarpa, estimated at around 100 years old, at the cement ruins. He climbed the tree and has removed the dead wood, greatly reducing windage, and stress on the trunk. Hopefully it will go on to survive many more years. Thanks to the Wednesday Volunteers who helped clear away the old branches.
- Pete has continued with weed work this month spraying periwinkle, blackberry and Mexican Devil. Thanks to NorthTec Conservation Corps who worked hard pulling Mexican Devil on the southern face for a day.

General

- Cathy made a presentation to the Kamo Lions this month.
- Pete & Max from Richardson Stevens Consultants surveyed the island pontoon to assess repairs required. Max is currently seeking prices for the work and approval to go ahead from WDC.



Paul Gosling testing his skills to prune out dead wood and reshape the old macrocarpa at the cement ruins.

- Members of the committee; Pam, Sheryl, Sandy, Richard, and Pete also made a presentation to GBC this month seeking renewal of their ongoing sponsorship. **Golden Bay Cement** have provided operational money to the island over many years and it is hoped this generous sponsorship will continue. Sponsors normally like to fund specific projects or purchases, but operational (running costs) money is much more difficult to find.

Up coming

- **Volunteer Wednesday – will be on Wednesday 4th June.** Pickup at 9am returning after lunch approximately 1.30pm. We will clean up the last of the macrocarpa prunings, bring your loppers if you have them, and also carry on with interplanting the coastal strip on the northern side.
- Pete has the barge booked for its annual survey and is also attending the Red Cross first aid refresher course this coming month.

Pete & Cathy



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