



## Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – September 2008

As you can see by the photos below (Kowhai and Kaka Beak) spring has definitely arrived, Pete even put the gumboots away this week! The Kowhai have been particularly prolific this year, which hopefully indicates a good summer ahead, but may also be a sign of the trees maturing and feeling more established.



Finally it's feeling like spring

### Predator Control

- The island traps continue to be quiet but the buffer zone has produced a large male stoat and 2 Norway rats. Pete placed a log as access to the 'high rise' trap photographed in last months report and caught a rat a few days later, so has decided to leave it elevated in the meantime – catering for the up and coming rodent!
- Thanks to Northtec Conservation Corps (Whangarei and Dargaville groups combined) who helped rebait the south end bait stations this month.
- Pete has also been busy clearing some of the south end bait station lines. Regeneration/growth is so dense in some places servicing the lines was becoming very difficult.

### Kiwi

- Both Glen and Sir Ed continue to hold tight on nests. Cathy has let the boys do their thing at this stage but will be checking both nests next month to see how they are progressing.
- James and Percy have been back to the island for another kiwi capture night, turning up six young birds suitable for transfer back to the mainland. These birds all had transmitters fitted on the night and Cathy checked them daily until they were ready to go. We also turned up a large bird not carrying a transmitter, but it managed to give us the slip after a high speed chase along the board walk track, probably one of the 'over stayers' we've been trying to catch up with.

- One of the six young birds caught was the island-bred bird captured last month, which was up to weight this time. The young kiwi has been named 'Badham' in recognition of Dr. Godfrey Badham's long association with the island.



**Ti Ihi Tito and members of the Badham family wishing 'Badham' well for his new adventures at Kauri Mountain**

- The kiwi were recaptured early on Sunday morning and blessed by Ti Ihi Tito on the Onerahi foreshore. Approximately twenty-five people attended the blessing including members of the Badham family.
- Three females were picked up by the Auckland Regional Council and taken to Tawharanui, a fenced peninsula reserve just south of Omaha. These birds of known parentage were selected by Hugh Robertson (DoC Kiwi Scientist) to help provide genetic diversity to the recently established population there. The other three males, including Badham, were released at Kauri Mountain into a private block of bush owned by Zak Smith, and managed with assistance from the Whangarei Heads Landcare Forum.
- Thank you to Ti Ihi Tito, Te Parawhau Kaumatua, for blessing the birds and Richard Browning for helping catch the kiwi on Sunday morning.

## **Fauna**

- We have had four banded rail chicks around the cottage for the last few weeks. They have grown incredibly quickly from fluffy little ping-pong balls to scrawny looking teenagers, two-thirds the size of their parents – something to be said for a steady diet of worms.
- Andrea Booth and Bryce Lummis from DoC, along with Gerry Brackenbury and Pete spent a morning searching for Flax snails (*Placostylus hongii*) at the 2002 release site above the board walk track. As expected, no snails were found and the original translocation is assumed to have failed. Gerry is now working with Andrea to see if a follow up translocation can be carried out.
- The NZ Dotterels on the Sand barge and the Caspian Terns on Knight Island are very busy scratching and scraping; the first eggs can't be too far away.
- Pete heard a Tui at Onemana Point this month for the first time since we have been working there. Hopefully a sign the predator control is making a difference. In addition to the stoat catches which we record, Pete and Ross Mallett have also caught many possums and several wild cats in the past three years.

## Flora

- The University of Canterbury conducted a national pollination survey this month utilizing members of the Sanctuaries of NZ group. The purpose is to 'measure the health of bird-plant mutualisms throughout NZ using the pollination service for tree fuchsia as an indicator'. At this stage there is only one tree fuchsia on the island, a sample of 15 was requested. The data we did collect and submit showed the pollination rate to be low for this particular plant perhaps reflecting low numbers of nectar feeding birds. For further information check out the web site; [www.biol.canterbury.ac.nz/pollination\\_survey/index.shtml](http://www.biol.canterbury.ac.nz/pollination_survey/index.shtml)
- The volunteer Wednesday group did something a little different this month. Carol Fielding donated approximately forty Pohutukawa plants she had grown from Manganese Point seed. These were planted on Motuotaua Island (Rabbit Island) and on the foreshore at Onemana Point to help enhance the corridor between Portland and the island for birds, hopefully Tui and possibly Bellbird in the future. They also continued with releasing some of the 2007 plants, which were struggling to compete with the grass. A very worthwhile day all round.

## General

- Pete has crutched and drenched (wormed) the sheep this month. Thanks to Todd Hamilton for lending us their electric hand piece for clipping the wool. The sheep have come through the winter well and are in good condition.
- Thank you also to John Ward who checked and graphed the compass deviations for the barge as part of the Safe Ship Management Plan.
- Park Care have been over weed eating the tracks and the petrel area. They are back on the regular monthly booking now that the weather is warming up.
- Pete has carried out some temporary repairs to the island pontoon after the recent storms, but fortunately it is due for a more extensive refit this summer when the WDC contractor becomes available.

## Up coming

- The Northland Kiwi Hui is scheduled for 28 September and the one-day survey trip for the petrels is booked for mid October.
- **Volunteer Wednesday – Wednesday 1 October.** Pickup at 9am returning after lunch approximately 1.30pm. The north end bait stations (this is the easier end!) and tracking tunnels both fall due at the end of the month so may well be on the list.

Pete and Cathy



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