



Matakohē-Limestone Island Rangers Monthly Report – October 2008

A busy month on and off the island with more of the same for the next two or three. This month we attended the Sanctuaries Workshop and the Northland Kiwi Hui, which were very interesting. Good to catch up with some of the latest research, information, products and also hear what the other projects have been up to.

Sanctuaries Workshop hosted by Bushy Park

- The most relevant papers to the island were:
- Ecological change and proposed indicators of Restoration Success – looking at how to measure outcomes in a simple, repeatable and meaningful way.
- Ship Rat incursion - Matt Maitland presented information about the recent incursion at Tawharanui and lessons learnt.
- Predator dog trials - showed dogs to be very effective, locating up to 80% of rodents presented.
- Detecting pests at low density - once again very relevant to the island and ultimately comes down to cost versus benefit.
- Group discussion - always interesting, with the DoC representatives at the workshop recognising the depth of knowledge and expertise within community groups today.



Our Bushy Park guide about to call in a pair of Nth Island Robin with meal worms, and Cathy helping to rescue Paradise ducklings from behind the fence

Northland Kiwi Hui

- Once again several very relevant speakers.
- Avi Holzapfel - Kiwi Recovery Group Leader spoke about the place of Northland Brown Kiwi in the national picture – the group now recognising wider goals than the original aim of 500 birds under active management.
- Al Bramley - who runs the Bank of New Zealand Save the Kiwi Trust funding workshops, spoke about funding, but also about his own outdoor environmental education program in the Hawke's Bay.
- Kiwi Care also presented a new long life (2 yr life in the field) rodent control product that they are currently trialling at Trounson park before applying for rodent registration. They also make a non-toxic version with the same long life properties that can be used as a prefeed/monitoring tool. Could be very useful for the island in the future.

Kiwi

- The new chicks for the season have begun arriving. Todd Hamilton, the Whangarei Heads Landcare trapper, has brought over 2 chicks (Georgie and Steph). These 2 are siblings, hatched in the wild by one of Todd's monitored males.
- We also received a chick via the Native Bird Recovery Centre and DoC. Robert and his team successfully hatched the chick after the father abandoned his nest. This chick has been named Red Bull; in recognition of the company's commitment to complete what proved to be a very difficult blasting job for the new All-tide Berth within budget.
- We are also expecting an imminent arrival on the island! Sir Ed is sitting on an egg, which Cathy checked several nights ago while he was off the nest. Cathy candled the egg which looked to be fertile with a well developed chick inside. Sir Ed is doing well as he is a young bird himself, having arrived at Matakohē as a chick in January 05.
- Glen, our other resident male, is also incubating with his clutch due for checking in late November.

Predator Control

- Thankyou to the Wednesday volunteers who helped poison bait the north end of the island this month – a very important part of our predator program.
- The island traps have all been quiet again this month – good news! As usual there have been a number of catches in the buffer zone – 1 hedgehog, 4 possums and a small male stoat. Interestingly our stoat catches in the buffer zone seem to have slowed down this year despite the potential for reinvasion from the rest of Northland!
- There is still some sign of mouse activity on Knight Island but Pete will continue with fortnightly visits while the Caspians are nesting, then move back to weekly over the summer.



Caspian Terns take to the air on Knight Island and their beautiful eggs in a shallow nest on the sand bank

- The 48 tracking tunnels were set for 3 nights this month. Peanut butter is used as an attractant and this was replenished on the third day. Nothing untoward was tracked (some skinks and small passerines went for a wander through). Once again good news. In the 3 years we have been on the island the tunnels have been set for a total of 720 tunnel nights and have only tracked one set of mouse prints.

Fauna

- The four banded rail chicks reported last month are virtually indistinguishable from the adults now and the parents were seen mating a few days ago so may have a second clutch before too long.
- The NZ Dotterels pair on the Sand barge appear to have had their first clutch predated and have currently left the site. The Caspian Terns have laid a good number of eggs but are also having trouble with predation – we suspect by the black back gulls. Last year once the black backs started nesting they left the other birds alone and in fact helped to defend the general area from the Harrier hawks.

General

- Pete has been busy weed spraying this month after the wet winter with; pampas, periwinkle, blackberry, German ivy, bait stations and tracking tunnels all getting some attention.
- All Tide Berth – Tim Yeates and his team have been back this month and we are looking forward to the final dredging in two or three weeks time to complete the excavations.
- Pete and Pam had a construction meeting with Homeworld last week for the Visitors Shelter with a start date set for this project.
- Pete also made a presentation to the Inner Wheel Club this month heading across the channel in wet squally weather for the evening meeting.

Visitors

- After the wet winter with lots of postponements and cancellations it has been nice to have some good weather to show off the island.
- Visitors this month have included Employment Plus from the Salvation Army, Jim Kettlewell and family, a local ladies 'walkie talkie' group, and Park Care whose trip coincided with the arrival of a baby kiwi.

Upcoming

- **Transporting of building materials for the new Visitors Shelter October 24th starting at 3pm.** We are looking for a good number of helpers to load the barge at the Onerahi Yacht Club and unload on the island. Starting at 3pm, but if you can come after work please do, a fresh pair of arms might be just what we need by then!
- The first Petrel trip of the year will take place on October 18th – weather permitting! The aim of this one day trip is to locate as many chicks as possible. The chicks found will all be weighed and measured, which will give us an early indication of their expected fledging dates. We also get a good idea of the number of chicks available this season, as it can fluctuate year to year. The collection trip will be carried out in early December.
- Our lizard translocations also continue with Moko and Ornate Skink translocations all set to go. Both of these skinks will be collected from Whatupuke Island in the Hen and Chicks group. A team of 5 will collect the skinks at the beginning of November. From there they will go down to Massey University, Albany Campus for quarantine, while disease screening is undertaken. Once the all-clear is given they will be released at pre-selected sites on Matakohe-Limestone Island hopefully before Christmas.
- **Volunteer Wednesday – will be postponed until the following Wednesday 12th November.** Pickup at 9am returning after lunch approximately 1.30pm. Please bring loppers, secateurs and pruning saw if you have them.

Pete and Cathy



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