



Friends of Matakohē/Limestone Island Annual Report 2009 [covering mostly the 2008 calendar year]

Written by Pam Stevens (Chairperson) for February 16th 2009 AGM.

[Report read at the Annual General Meeting by Sheryl Mai (Chairperson appointed for the meeting in the absence of Pam Stevens)]

The 2009 summer has been lovely weather, hot and sunny. Matakohē/Limestone Island has been noticeably busier this year with casual visitors going every day by boats, kayak and yachts. More of the community are realising what a wonderful asset is developing out in our beautiful Whangarei harbour and using it for recreation. There has also been a raising awareness that we have a harbour that is worth caring for. With the dry weather there is always a fire concern. Pagey has updated our annual fire plan and leaflets have been put around the community. Storms and king tides over the winter created havoc with traps and signs. A large amount of rubbish washed up on shore from our town. As is Pete's style, he worked like a trojan to repair, tidy broken branches and sort the rubbish. The island looks better every month and is a credit to the Rangers and a varied group of volunteers who put in so much effort. Special mention needs to be made of our two partners in our Memorandum of Understanding, an extremely worthwhile relationship we need to play our part in. Individuals that we are especially thankful to are Te Ihi Tito, Freddie Tito, Te Warihi and Janet Hetaraka, Richard and Rosemary Drake, and new to Ngatiwai Trust, Rowan Keys.

Projects

December saw the **shelter and interpretation centre** completed by the builders from Homeworld and, no sooner was it blessed at dawn, two days before Christmas, than it was being used as a sun and rain shelter. This has been built with funds from the ASB Trust and the Whangarei District Council and planned since 2003. The interpretive signs are taking sometime but should start appearing soon. The shelter looks great and I am sure will become a useful asset for visitors and events. Some very hard working volunteers heaved and puffed all the gear and materials to the island on a couple of occasions Tim, Greg, Theda and many others. Top Sail Restaurant generously put on an outstanding meal and drinks for all the weary workers. Thanks also to Grant and Gareth from Richardson Stevens. Paul Gosling from Branching Out Treecare trimmed the dead bits off the 100 year old macrocarpa adjacent to the shelter.

The **all tide landing** was also something that has been planned for a while and finally happened. It became rather protracted however, as marine projects seem too. There is a lot of co-ordination as there are so many aspects. Trying to get the gear, the barge, the workers and then throwing the tide and weather into the mix is very challenging. The landing now looks good, is very useable and has eased daily life for the rangers. A big thank you to Red Bull and Marine North Contractors who have been very generous with their time, it was not an easy project.

The BP Community Trust gave a group of Whangarei Boys High boarders an award for fine looking bird watering stands. With Pete's assistance they were designed and installed. The boys look very pleased with their achievement as they posed for photos. Pete is great at encouraging the young people to undertake tasks on the island. He also motivates the North Tec Conservation Corp on their visits. The new owner of Arnold Franks and his wife attended the presentation on the island and was so enthused they said as we came off - "rip up the bill". Business support like this is often unseen but hugely valuable.

Flora and fauna

An enjoyable petrel party to celebrate the fledging of the last Oi in January was held and well attended on a calm summers evening. The Taranga team met the feeders and the boat people for the first time. Five years of many people giving generously of their time when it is so busy over Christmas and New Year. A well earned breather while we wait for their return. The sound system installed last year by Tony and Kevin from Electro Sound will soon be turned on again.

Pete and Cathy write an excellent monthly Ranger Report which goes out to all on the e-mail and Dwane promptly posts on our website. I and many others are able to enjoy the antics of the flora and fauna happenings – fantails, Australasian gannets , pied shags , gray warblers, banded rails spoonbills, fern birds, dotterels, Caspian terns , kiwi. All those stories are music to our ears. A lot of work happens off the island by various sub-committees. Planning, funding applications, taxes, wages, post outs, seeking sponsorship. So we love these updates, they give us all a boost.

We depend on a nationwide network to gather and share information for a lot of what happens. Gerry and Olly have put time and effort into discussing habitat and species introductions and a possible timeline. This and other information we are hoping will be pulled together soon by Jo Ritchie who wrote our restoration plan. The committee have identified it as a priority this year.

The ornate skinks were collected from Whataupuku Island and released safely after quarantine and protocol was followed. We hope the Moko will follow shortly. Big thanks to John from Anchorage Marine and Dean from Marine Charters - they were awesome when we *SOSed* them. The lizard and skink transfers are sponsored by the Harbour Restoration Trust.

The kiwis continue to come and go with the support with funding from the BNZ Save the Kiwi funding. This year kiwi number 50 went off the island. A seat was installed by the Badham family above the quarry. Godfrey Badham a local Onerahi GP and island supporter passed away not long after. His family shared the ramp with 25 others as 6 kiwi came off the island and they met island born bird, which was named Badham in memory of him.

Olly and Michelle put a lot of time and effort into setting up vegetation monitoring and photo points which will have long term benefits.

Visitors & Groups

Cathy and Pete also do presentations to groups. Some for example this year, the Ornithological Society, and NZ Landcare Trust in Kerikeri, Mangwhai Probus, Sanctuaries NZ workshop, Northland Kiwi Hui, and Kamo Lions. Cathy spoke at the annual conference of the Captive Management Group about lizard translocation. Her expertise is something we value very much.

Organised groups from all round the region continue to visit the island. In just one month after the winter storms Pete and Cathy hosted on the island:

- Teacher trainees from Auckland University
- Hospice nurses
- Whangarei Boys High with Te Warihi
- Hukernui walk group
- Auckland YHA 50th Anniversary
- Onerahi walking group
- St. Francis Xavier School

Trapping & Pests

Pete does an outstanding job of what we call “our knitting”, that is the trapping and tracking of the island and buffer zone, he treats it as a priority as it underpins our whole project.

Thanks to Carol Fielding who grew some pohutukawa from seed from Onemama Point which were planted by the cheerful Wednesday volunteers on Motuotaua to take advantage of the improved habitat now that Ken has dealt a serious blow to the invasive weeds. We still have to be vigilant and deal to wattle, periwinkle, pampas, moth plant, and Mexican devil and others.

Committee

Unfortunately we had David and Michelle resign this year. They have contributed a lot and we hope they do not take their talents too far away. We do have a large committee but the island has many facets and draws on a wide range of skills. We have a couple of committee “walkabouts” during the year to make sure committee members and families get to enjoy their achievements and discuss the next moves. 2009 will have its challenges.

Some of things we hope to complete:

- Signage for the new shelter
- A display board to record all our sponsors on the side of the shelter
- Welcome carving if our funding application is successful
- Get the WDC pontoon repaired
- Review the Restoration Plan
- Hold a major event to officially open the shelter
- Develop an operational manual to ensure a smooth Ranger transition
- Improve communications with the media and members
- Keep the ruins and garden issue trucking along
- Keep the popular planting days which may become plant and release days
- Fill up the Endowment fund with heaps of money to secure our future

Sponsors

Jane is to be congratulated on getting Rentokil as a sponsor within this year, they are giving us \$10,000 toward our Endowment fund and \$5000 worth of products. We had some of the management team to the island and they are great bunch of people and we enjoyed sharing our passion about the island with them. Whangarei Native Forest and Bird Protection Society gave us \$7000 at a time we were feeling particularly troubled about funding. We are extremely grateful for their generosity. Golden Bay supported us again this year and we continue to work hard to continue and extend our long term relationship, this was our eleventh year and with out them this project would not have achieved as much as it has.

Workload

We became aware a number of years ago that the work load on the Rangers has increased and is too much. Ideally we would like to employ a part time relief ranger; also the administered side of the island could do with underpinning support for the chairperson and treasurer. To have an office doing some of the regular tasks would be a dream. Sandy, Jane and I worked on job descriptions for both positions. However at present this is not possible as our energies now need to go into securing funding for our present operational budget which included our ranger's wages. Until we are in a position to employ extra help we do our best but as busy volunteers it can look a "bit hairy round the edges" at times. But we get there, it just takes longer than we hope sometimes. Pete and Cathy work a lot of extra time and we struggled this year to find "island sitters" with boat skills. A very big thank you to Donna, Riaan and family and John Elliot.

Thank you to the committee. Sheryl for her cheerful and practical support. Sandy our reliable treasurer, Iain who quietly takes care of the plantings, Gerry and Olly for their invaluable work and motivation to resolve the "what next" on the species front. Paul for assistance in the tricky realms of "what to do with the ruins." Thanks to Dwane who looks after the website from Croatia. Rosemary and Richard for always being there to help with the curly bits. Jane for her enthusiasm and support. John Barber who has taken on some big tasks and quietly works away at them. Ken for his practical help. Lyn for her long term knowledge and advice, Diane and John Ward. Te Ihi and Freddie and Te Warihi who we saw a lot of before Christmas with the building project and the arrival of the petrels and lizards. Joan when needed and it's been great to have Theda join us. To Pete and Cathy, an especially big thank you on behalf of all the Friends and visitors to the island. I have no doubt that we are in for a really busy year.

Thanks to whoever reads this [at the AGM], my apologies for not making the meeting.

Pam Stevens



Proudly Supported by; Forest Floor Nursery, Harbour Marine Ltd, Marine North Ltd, Northpower, Northland Port Corp, Northland Regional Council, North Tugz, Onerahi Lions, Phoenix Boats, Rentokil, Tawapou Nursery

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