



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – January 2009

It seems hard to believe but true, the last sardine smoothie has been blended and syringed! – well for our Grey-faced Petrel anyway. With all the expertise that has been built up over the five years there may well be another seabird translocation investigated in the future.

Grey Faced Petrel

- Yes - the birds have all fledged and the petrel translocation is now complete. This year 41 birds were collected, with 38 successfully fledging. This makes a total of 151 birds fledged from the site over the five years; this should provide a good base population for the colony.
- Pam and Grant hosted a Petrel Party to celebrate the end of the project and to thank the many helpers over the years. We would also like to thank the many volunteers that have assisted us with the birds over the past three years, especially the regulars; Grant Stevens, Laurie Mead, Tanya Munro, Tim Grove and Carol Fielding, and our son Matt.



Fat, fluffy and on its way to a whole new world.

Kiwi

- Glen sat briefly on his new nest, which was located right next to the ruins toilet. Cathy checks both Glen and Sir Ed regularly over the summer to see how the nests are going. Glen seemed to lose interest after quite a short time and on closer inspection we discovered two rather smelly eggs.
- Last year DoC issued the island with a holding permit for kiwi eggs and we have cleaned out the shells ready for wax filling. The wax filled eggs are less fragile and have a similar weight to the real thing. They will be great to show visitors when Pete is talking to the school children and various other groups.

Predator Control

- Once again many thanks to the hard working Wednesday volunteers who helped bait the north end bait station runs this month and then went on to help make a start on cleaning up the Shelter building site.
- The island traps have produced a stoat and a Norway rat, this is the second stoat caught on the island for the summer. In the buffer zone two stoats, two possums and a Norway rat have been caught.
- The tracking tunnel network was also set for three nights with no rodents tracked. Several other creatures were evident by their prints including; lizards, ants, snails and birds (looks like a kiwi chick and a banded rail). Lizard footprints were present in 38% of tracking tunnels, the most we have seen, indicating a widespread and active lizard population.

Fauna

- The Banded rails have been very busy around the cottage in the past few months with two or three second clutches now scurrying about – in fact it can be difficult to go outside, especially first thing in the morning without causing havoc in the rail world!
- Currently the scale of the vegetation seems to be providing a real haven for the ground nesting birds and the smaller bird species such as Fern bird, Grey Warbler, Silvereye, and Fantail, not to mention all the non-natives. Presumably as the island matures in the future larger birds will also discover our little slice of paradise.



Banded rail chicks with a slightly nervous parent very near the cottage.

- Knight Island update; The Caspian Tern's continue to fledge their chicks with little sign of predation and the White Fronted Terns now have several tiny chicks – some in nests and some well hidden under the vegetation. The small Red Leg gulls are also consistently present with at least one nest. Great to see these colonies develop and grow.
- The New Zealand Dotterel pair on the old sand barge has hatched all three eggs, with the chicks rapidly growing to look like small adults already. The adults are very protective, herding the wayward chicks back onto the sand barge whenever danger is imminent. The chicks appear to forage for themselves from a young age, which means they spread about on the grass and along the beach making the adults life a lot more stressful!

General

- The new Visitor Shelter is now finished with some of the signage due to go in shortly. Thanks to Freddie Tito and Te Warihi who blessed the new building in a pre-dawn ceremony when the builders had finished. The committee is planning a more formal opening later in the year.
- The island flock of seven sheep have been shorn and drenched for worms. Thanks to Ken Massey for bringing his shearing gear across and removing their woolly jumpers.
- The barge has had its 400-hour service as part of the Safe Ship Management Plan.
- Pete has also serviced the Ute and other small motors on the island and fitted new blades to the big mower.

Upcoming

- **Volunteer Wednesday – will be POSTPONED UNTIL Wednesday 11th February.** Pickup at 9am returning after lunch approximately 1.30pm. Pete is planning to tidy up the Managers House ruin and the Singlemen's Quarters, along with removing the rest of the Shelter off cuts/rubbish.

Pete and Cathy



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

www.limestoneisland.org.nz