



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – June 2009

A big thanks to all the volunteers who have been over so far this planting season. The first two Sundays dawned fine and clear but this week was a little more of a challenge with wintry showers passing through. A small hardy team turned out and another three small areas were finished off, a great effort despite the conditions!

Planting

- The plants for this year arrived in several loads from Tawapou and Forest Floor nursery – many thanks to Sandy and Ian Page, Gerry Brackenbury, and Iain Reid. All had been quarantined and/or poisoned to ensure there were no argentine ant hitch-hikers. A small keen group loaded the plants onto the barge then off again and up beside the Manager's House. All the plants look great and ready to race once they are planted into the ground.
- We have now had three successful Sundays and several mid-week planting days, with good turn outs each time. The ground has been nicely damp, not too soggy, making planting easier.
- The plants are starting to disappear already so don't leave it too long if you are thinking of coming over to enjoy a few hours on the island, in fact this coming Sunday will be the last planting day for the season, so seize the opportunity if you haven't already!



The intrepid team last Sunday braving the cold squally showers – plus Iain Reid lost in the undergrowth!

Fauna

- **Kiwi** – 'Glen' had his annual transmitter change this month. Some of those helping with the plant transport enjoyed the opportunity to catch up with him when Cathy carried this out. 'Glen' is in very good condition, all set for this year's breeding. Males generally start sitting on their first clutch of the season in July/August.
- We continue to monitor the petrel site on a regular basis with the sound system playing each night. We have fences up at the burrow and the chamber entrances, so we can easily see if the burrows have been entered. On two recent checks up to 11 fences were down. Someone has been entering the chambers and in two of the burrows there has been some excavation which we haven't seen before – could this be a petrel? There have been no petrel droppings or feathers, but there have been some kiwi droppings on the site and we know that kiwis will enter the burrows. All was quiet

on a couple of site checks at night – we will continue to make these checks in the hope that we hit the jackpot!

- Cathy spotted a **brown quail** at the old Manager's House recently. It is the first time we have seen one in our time on the island. It seemed to be very relaxed and hopped up the steps and went into the Manager's House as Pete was checking it out. Gerry reports also seeing one several years ago and apparently they are quite common in the Glenbervie Forest.
- Kahawai have been very busy schooling at the north end of the island and around the pontoon. This in turn has brought large groups of gannets, Caspian terns, pied shags and white-fronted terns to take advantage of the fishing.
- We continue to hear the Morepork around the cottage and the banded rail are really enjoying the wet weather, foraging about in the garden and around the Manager's House lawn.

Predator Control

- The island was quiet this month with no trap catches.
- Pete and Cathy have been chipping away at the south end bait stations and have nearly completed the job. We are pleased to report that all the bait stations have been quiet with no mouse sign (no droppings or gnawing on the baits).
- The buffer zone has been busier with three rats, one mouse, one wild cat and a weasel caught.
- Pete is continuing with refurbishment of the stoat traps.

Lizards

- The report on the ornate skink transfer has been completed and posted on the web site. Thank you to all those who assisted with comments, and a particular thank you to Dwane for his proof reading and formatting.



Ian Buckley & Pagey check out a juvenile shore skink, which we suspect is a first generation Limestone Islander!

- Cathy has sent in the Handling Permit application for the Pacific and common gecko translocation which we hope to carry out November/December. In consultation with Ben Barr at DOC Conservancy we are also hoping to gain an amendment to the moko translocation SOP. This will enable us to catch these skinks over several of the islands (at the Chicks) and should, fingers crossed, give us sufficient numbers for the translocation to proceed.
- We continue to follow up on reported forest gecko sightings. Ben Barr is also working to find a source population for the island which highlights how scarce these lizards are and the valuable role the island can play in the future.

General

- We were pleased to assist DOC with the Bream Head planting by ferrying their plants from Urquhart's Bay around to the planting site at Smugglers Beach. The weather cooperated beautifully, being fine and calm with no swell, meaning that the job went very smoothly – though it was a rather cold trip in the open barge down to the Heads at 7am!
- John Barber from the FOMLI committee and two Roof Membrane Contractors came over to look at the Singlemen's Quarters roof with a view to the ongoing preservation of this historic structure.

- Park Care were over for a day and, with Pete, cut the holes in the sprayed areas for this year's planting – a big job which makes the planting so much easier.
- Pete has also taken the barge up to the Golden Bay Cement wharf on two occasions to assist contractors view the underside, with a view to tendering for maintenance work to be done on the wharf.
- The barge has passed its out of water survey by Stork Cooperheat (used to be Nortel). Certification is now up to date for the next two years.
- Pete has carried out some weed spraying, mainly periwinkle and moth plant.
- A new track up to the Pa site has been established and the old track roped off. The new track has a gentler slope making access easier and safer.
- Pete has built a sheep barrier on the back deck of the shelter at the mill ruins which is working well, but isn't that happy with how it turned out. After some discussion an alternative design has been hatched for the front.

Visitors

- Two classes from Whangarei Intermediate School visited the island and enjoyed seeing all the island has to offer on a lovely fine day. They also planted two Pohutukawa to celebrate World Environment day and Pete talked a little about how we live on the island – solar power, water, and composting toilets - 'choice'.
- The Work Wednesday volunteer team put in another good day planting around the petrel site.
- A mixed group from North Haven Hospice including staff, volunteers and two representatives from their sponsors, Meridian Energy, have also been over planting. Thanks to Gerry for co-ordinating their visit. Their primary focus was planting kowhai at Shipwreck Bay but they also had time to plant some Pohutukawa at the south end of the flax field, a great effort.
- Maungaturoto NorthTec students have also helped out planting kanuka on the very steep southern face.

Upcoming

- **Planting – last day Sunday**, pickup at 9am returning at approximately 1.30 pm after lunch. Bring your lunch, good footwear and a shower proof jacket – spades and some gloves provided.
- **Volunteer Wednesday** – will be postponed to **Wednesday 8th July**. Pickup at 9am returning after lunch approximately 1.30pm.
- We will be planting but may also try to weed the Caspian tern site. Please bring a fork if you have one.

Pete and Cathy



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