



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – August 2009

The island is still ticking along in winter mode with the last of the extra plants going in this coming Wednesday. The new plants generally look good, enjoying the drier, sunny weather of the past few weeks. Interestingly, looking at the rainfall recordings over the past three years there has consistently been less rain this year. We have been down to the Hawkes Bay this month to the Sanctuaries of NZ workshop. Lots of good information and a very interesting visit to Cape Kidnappers Preserve. On the way home we were also fortunate to spend half a day looking at the restoration work being done at Young Nicks Head, just south of Gisborne. See attached summary.

Kiwi

- It has been a busy kiwi month. James Fraser and Percy came over on a kiwi catching mission. We caught three birds on the Wednesday night, 'Kahui Whetu' and two juveniles. The next morning we had another try in the daytime, and were able to search part the south-western face of the island before the scent lifted. This is a difficult area to search at night, as the kiwi can move through the vegetation faster than Percy and the team can manage. This day hunt was also successful with two more juveniles caught



Phoenix from Onerahi School and her Auntie helped Pete locate and capture Kahurangi on a beautiful clear Sunday morning

- One of the juveniles caught was 'Kahurangi', recently named in a competition run at Onerahi Primary School. The winning student was Phoenix and her prize was to come to the island and help capture 'Kahurangi' on the morning of his release at Whangarei Heads. Phoenix and her aunt really loved the opportunity to come and catch two of the birds going off, despite the early start on a very cold morning!
- The kiwis were transported across for the blessing at 9.30am – 3 of the birds went to Bream Head and one returned to its original home at Marlow. One of the three was the other island born bird, which was named 'Pam'. Thank you to Freddie Tito for blessing the birds as they headed off on their new life.

- James and Percy are due back shortly to attempt to round up a few more 1200gm teenagers before the new chicks start arriving.
- In consultation with Clea Gardiner from DoC we are now able to transmitter 2 more of our permanent resident birds. This will give us more advocacy opportunities as we aim to tie in transmitter changes at times when island visitors can see the birds. 'Kahui Whetu' now has a transmitter on again after catching her the other night. She is 'Sir Ed's' mate and they continue to be a cuddly young pair. She is always close by or with him during the day as he incubates their current clutch – very cute.
- Cathy had trouble picking up Glen one day recently, his transmitter was coming in loud and strong one minute then nothing the next. We took the opportunity when in the Hawkes Bay to get the gear checked out at Kiwi Track Ltd. It turned out the aerial was faulty and the helpful guys at Kiwi Track fixed it for us on the spot – thanks guys.
- Pete has completed the final Bank of New Zealand Save the Kiwi Trust report for the year and we are also pleased to report that our funding application for 2009/10 has been successful. They will continue to fund the predator trapping for the coming year and have also provided funding for a new kiwi information sign – more than \$11,000 in total. The ongoing predator control is a critical part of our work and the Trust has generously supported this program for several years now.

Flora

- Many thanks to the Committee and the Wednesday volunteers who have been helping to put in the extra plants purchased – should all be in by the time you are reading this report.
- Pete spent a bit of time this month cleaning up after the second storm, the strong south westerly one, but fortunately there was only minor damage compared to the heavy storms a couple of winters ago. The new plants have also coped well, being planted in predominantly sheltered sites this year.
- Spring must be on the way with the first Kowhai blooming up at Molly Stevens – we look forward to the day when the tui from Onerahi spot the yellow hue and head over en masse!

Fauna

- The shore birds are also beginning to show territorial behaviour in anticipation of the spring breeding season. The NZ dotterel pair on the old sand barge are back most days staking their claim and the variable oyster catchers are back to their usual raucous antics as they fend off 'fly by' invaders. At times it seems that the other VOC in the area just fly past to stir up a bit of trouble, day and night!
- As mentioned in the summary Young Nicks Head are successfully monitoring/capturing geckos in small plywood boxes. Pete has made some the same and we have placed them at likely sites for forest geckos in the Whangarei Heads area – it will be very interesting to see what turns up.

Predator Control

- The tracking tunnels were set for three nights this month with no tracking encountered.
- The island traps have been quiet and only two rats have been caught in the buffer zone.
- There was some very interesting mouse correspondence on the email following the Sanctuaries workshop – check the summary. This new research may have implications for the rodent control program on the island in the future. It may be possible to use a more extensive grid to successfully control invaders meaning less poison and fewer labour inputs.

General

- The pontoon has been reinstated and looks almost like new. The Whangarei District Council funded these repairs.
- The first two signs for the shelter have arrived and will go up shortly. Many thanks to John Barber who has patiently worked through this task.
- Pete made a presentation to the Baptist Church community group with approximately 100 people present

Upcoming

- **Volunteer Wednesday – 2nd September.** Pickup at 9am returning after lunch approximately 1.30pm.

Pete and Cathy



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