



## Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – September 2009

There is never a dull moment on the island but this month it got a little too interesting one evening. Pete tied the barge up to the Onerahi pontoon at 6 pm and when we returned at 8 pm it was gone – vanished. Whangarei marine radio was notified and a call was put out to all shipping but no sightings were reported. After a quick search of the foreshore Grant launched his boat for a check down towards One Tree Point, however, it was too dark to spot the barge. Grant then dropped us off home on the island. Next morning Pete headed off at first light and found the barge safe and sound beached near the boat ramp at One Tree Point. It appears someone untied the two mooring lines and let the barge drift away on the outgoing tide. Pete has now fitted a chain and padlock so we can lock the barge to the jetty in future.

### Kiwi

- Todd Hamilton from the Whangarei Heads Landcare Forum and James Fraser with Percy returned to the island for another kiwi hunt at the beginning of the month. We had a quick night search and caught up with one juvenile. The next day we had a search through the southeast face and caught two more birds that were ready to go.
- One of the birds caught was Red Bull, named after the Red Bull Powder Company who helped with the blasting of the all-tide berth. 'Red Bull' came on to the island in November and now weighs a hefty 1800gm – a great growth rate and for that reason we suspect that the bird is a she! On the day the juveniles left the island, Peter Shapiro and Wayne Baird from Red Bull Powder Company came over to help with catching the chicks. Peter had driven up from Auckland that morning especially to be there. Both of them really enjoyed their morning on the island and appreciated the unique opportunity of catching and seeing kiwi in the wild.



**Peter Shapiro from Red Bull Powder Company really enjoying his close encounter with Red Bull the Kiwi.**

- Peter also took the opportunity to present Pam with a cheque for \$1000 to help with the work carried out on the island. We owe a big thank you to **Red Bull Powder Company** for their generous sponsorship of the all-tide berth blasting and now this cash donation.
- Thank you also to Freddy Tito and Te Warihi Heteraka who blessed the birds and wished them a safe journey throughout their adult lives.

- Glen and Sir Ed, our resident males, continue to sit tight on their nests. Sir Ed's clutch is due first – being a younger pair it is most likely that there is only one egg in this clutch. Hopefully Glen is sitting on two eggs.
- Pete attended the Kiwi Taxon Plan Meeting up in Kerikeri recently. This plan is being developed to provide direction for the conservation of Northland's own North Island Brown Kiwi over the next 10 years.

## Flora

- Many thanks to the Wednesday volunteers who worked back-to-back Wednesdays at the beginning of the month to finish off the planting. Special mention goes to Tim Grove, Carol Fielding, Greg and Heather Stump and Gerry Brackenbury for their dedicated support, thank you.



**Carol Fielding, Tim Grove, Heather Stump, Sandy Page, Ina May ... almost finished on the final planting day for '09**

- We had such a good turn out on the last day Pete asked Gerry to lead part of the group to continue transplanting flax into the flax field site at the old cement ruins' quarry. A great day's work all round, very nicely finished off with afternoon tea at Top Sail Restaurant – generously provided by Ian and Debbie.
- Pete has been making the most of the fine weather catching up on weed spraying, mostly targeting periwinkle – one of those never ending jobs!
- The kowhai flowering reported last month suffered from the windy wet weather but the signs of spring are well and truly here with lots of new growth and the oak tree leafing up in the past week – magnificent.

## Fauna

- This month a wood pigeon has been seen roosting on the island on three separate occasions. This is the first wood pigeon we have seen in the four years we have been here! A very tuneful tui was also heard at the cottage and later at Gerry's Folly one day this month.
- The seabirds are also busy with the Caspian terns making the first move, gathering on Knight Island and scraping shallow nests – no eggs yet but won't be far away.
- The dolphins have also been up the harbour putting on a show for a group of fourteen kayakers as they left the island, jumping and splashing all round them for several minutes.
- Lizards: Pam and Cathy had a meeting with Northland Regional Council this week to discuss funding for the up-coming translocations. The original proposal was to move five species in two years and all going well, that will be achieved – as long as those slippery little moko's play the game! We are planning to catch Pacific and common gecko in November with a follow up trip to the Chicks in December to supplement the geckos if required and catch the moko. Our moko capture area has been greatly extended and we are optimistic we will succeed this time. Ben Barr from DoC Conservancy visited the island to look at lizard habitat and was very positive

about the lizard translocations undertaken and proposed. He also gave us some advice on how to monitor the ornate skinks and Pete has ordered two sheets of Onduline to make artificial refuges.

- The lizard boxes Pete made last month have proved very popular with the Ocean Beach insect populations but no geckos! If you have seen geckos on your property we would be keen to lend you a box. The forest geckos have been particularly difficult to locate with no mainland source population currently identified.
- We had a generous donation from Steve Hay of another Weta box, and this has been installed close to the School site with the idea of transferring wetas from the north end to the south end of the island.

### **Predator Control**

- The island traps have been quiet and one stoat was caught in the buffer zone.
- Pete has added eggs to a third of the island traps as an extra bait for the spring period.
- The south end rodent bait stations have been serviced with the Wednesday volunteers making a good start - Pete and Cathy finishing them off.

### **Visitors**

- The island continues to be a little quiet for visitors but forward bookings are starting to pick up.
- A team from GBC/Fletcher Building was booked to visit but unfortunately had to cancel at the last minute due to a problem at the Plant. We look forward to hosting them in the future.
- Shackleton Sea Scouts visited the island recently helping Pete clear weeds from the sand spit to encourage sea bird nesting there.
- Whangarei Boys' High School sent two science classes over to check out the island.
- ASB Charitable Trust trustees visited the island for an afternoon on their way to a meeting in Kerikeri. Despite the windy, slightly damp afternoon they all enjoyed the opportunity to have a look around. The Trust has generously helped to fund the Ranger's cottage and the Shelter

### **General**

- Pete ran the barge, barge trailer and small boat beach trolley up to **Phoenix Boats** in Hewlet Street last week – a much easier job now that we have done it a couple of times! Many thanks to Richard Lane and his team for donating several hours of their time and expertise, welding new anchor locker hinges on the barge and repairing both trailers.
- Park Care have been over and the boys did an outstanding job this month, weed eating the tracks and some areas still inaccessible to the tractor due to wet ground conditions.
- The first two signs have been put up at the shelter and look great. The Tangata Whenua sign is almost ready and Olly Ball is working hard to complete the geology information.

### **Upcoming**

- **Volunteer Wednesday – 7th October.** Pickup at 9am returning after lunch approximately 1.30pm.

Pete and Cathy



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