



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – November 2009

We have been preparing for the lizard collection trip. We just need to get the report written and the coastal bait stations serviced before shipping all the gear across to the mainland.

Shelter opening

- The formal opening took place this month with the Associate Minister for Conservation, Kate Wilkinson, as Guest of Honour. The day went very smoothly with Jane Winton, ably assisted by Sheryl Mai, managing the day's proceedings. The Minister, DOC staff and Ngatiwai representatives were welcomed on to the site by Te Parawhau and FOMLI, represented by Te Ihi Tito and Pam Stevens respectively.



The Minister and her party welcomed by Te Ihi Tito and Pam Stevens – photos by Malcolm Pullman

- The various speeches were followed by cutting the ribbon and a very nice lunch catered by Top Sail Restaurant. After lunch the Minister planted a Titoki to mark the occasion and most visitors then went for a walk around the island.



- The Committee should be congratulated on a very successful day as lots of preparation and effort is required to pull off such an event.

Kiwi

- Another kiwi chick arrived from Todd Hamilton this month with more expected shortly.
- Glen and Baldric's nest has failed after more than 80 days of incubation by Glen, with two infertile eggs found. Cathy initially candled (shone a bright torch through) the eggs and found they were not developing. She subsequently post mortemed them. Neither egg contained an embryo.
- Sir Ed continues to be very dedicated to his chicks and is still in the nest more than a month after hatch – presumably with the babies.
- Several times this month a young male kiwi has been heard calling up on the ridge near the school site. Cathy jumped out of bed one evening and checked using the receiver but it is not Glen or Sir Ed, possibly the elusive Ahi Kaa.

Fauna

- The variable oyster catchers made a good start with four nests with eggs on or near the old sand barge; unfortunately all nests have since been predated. Harrier hawk and black-backed gull are both patrolling the area at present, no doubt one of them is the culprit.
- On a more optimistic note, the Caspian terns seem to be holding their eggs with 91, and then two weeks later 98 eggs present. The adjacent black-backed gull colony also has eggs; hopefully they can all work together to defend the area from further predation. Four white-fronted terns have also turned up, with small scrapes appearing near the Caspians.

Flora

- The island is starting to dry out quite quickly. Pete checked the rainfall figures recently and currently we are almost 300mm down on 2008 and almost 400mm down on 2007 rainfall. We may be heading for a dry summer.
- Wednesday volunteers were busy again this month helping Pete with a variety of jobs, mostly focused around searching for and removing weeds. There are several roosting sites on the island for sparrows and starlings where weed seeds can be found germinating. This work will continue next month along with checking known moth plant sites for seedlings.
- Last week the helicopter sprayed many of the remaining grass areas on the south face with Gallant spray. This will provide a valuable release for the existing plants and areas for interplanting next winter. In hindsight it could be good to include a bit of carrot weed chemical in the mix for any future helicopter work.
- We both attended a Grow Safe course at NorthTec last week and found it very interesting. The whole classification process for agrichemicals has changed and it is good to know how the new labelling system works to provide hazard information about the product.

Predator Control

- A stoat was caught on the island along the western shore just below the old Edge house ruins. That makes three for the year compared to only one for 2008. Just shows how vigilant we need to be, keeping the traps in top condition with fresh bait at all times. Cathy dissected the freshly caught animal and its stomach contained well digested fur, possibly a rat or rabbit eaten a day or two before swimming to the island.
- In the buffer zone one weasel and three possums have been caught at Onemama Point. Rat and Knight Islands are currently very quiet with no take on the rodent baits.

Visitors

- The weather is still causing a bit of disruption with several postponements again this month.
- Gerry Brackenbury guided a group of students from Te Kura O Te Rawhiti Roa.
- Emma and Jono Craig, family and friends celebrated their son's first birthday on the island.
- Iain Reid has been a weekly visitor with his NorthTec class studying the island's restoration.
- Onerahi School had two classes visit and collected Manuka seed for propagation at the school.
- Whangarei Boys' High School students from Carruth House finally made it over to install the second bird bath on the ridge – a very good job done in a few hours one evening.
- Tikipunga High School has also had a class visiting and we have had two walking groups over, one from Ruakaka and the other from Dargaville.

General

- Thanks go to Ken Massey who has been over shearing the sheep and also to Ian Buckley who spent the best part of a day helping Pete replace some of the island signs.
- The island fire extinguishers have had their annual check – the fire risk could be more of an issue this summer if the dry windy weather continues.

Upcoming

- **Volunteer Wednesday – 2nd December.** Pickup at 9am returning after lunch approximately 1.30pm. Pete is planning to finish off the moth plant sites and trim some of the tracks on the way round – please bring loppers if you have them.

Pete and Cathy



Proudly Supported by; Environmental Northland, Forest Floor Nursery, Harbour Marine Ltd, Marine North Ltd, Northpower, Northland Port Corp, Northland Regional Council, North Tugz, Onerahi Lions, Phoenix Boats, Red Bull Powder Co., Tawapou Nursery

www.limestoneisland.org.nz