



## Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – June 2010

This month definitely belongs to the trees. We have about 2800 trees to go into the ground over the next few weeks and we got underway on Sunday on our first tree planting day with a bunch of keen planters. The soil was soft thanks to good rain over the last six weeks and volunteers were even heard to describe it as.....“lovely, easy planting”. They had not even been drinking.

We have a nice mix of plants to go in from Tawapou and Forest Floor nurseries and the plants are in great condition. We also have a few specialist things such as carmine rata, which will be planted in a suitable niche site.

The planters managed to bed in almost 650 plants on Sunday; 650 down, 2150 to go. So come on and join us each Sunday in the month of June. It has multiple benefits, the witty company, the unavoidable fresh air and invigorating exercise, a chance to off-set your carbon footprint without having to buy your own credits, good karma and, of course, the special sense of wellbeing that can only be achieved by taking a small plant and setting it on its way in the world. See you Sunday, in fact every Sunday in June.



## Kiwi

- The kiwi checks have proved very interesting this month.
- Sir Ed and Kahui Whetu were found holed up together in the exact same spot as they were two weeks ago. We did the extra two week check because the first check found them rather close to the planting site which was due to be scrub cut in preparation for the planting day. Sure enough they were still there, so Ben gave them a wide berth when doing the site prep. It is still a bit early for them to be nesting but we will be keeping a close eye on them all the same.
- Glen now has the fanciest accessory on the island with a new egg timer transmitter fitted to him this month. These clever little devices look the same as the ordinary mortality transmitters but, as well as telling you if the bird is alive, they are able to detect the activity pattern of the bird and tell you if the bird is nesting or not. When tracking the birds the egg timer transmitter emits a certain frequency and pattern of beeps and from this you can work out if the bird is incubating and exactly how long they have been incubating for. Very handy.
- Jo had a scare with Baldrick this month. Her transmitter was giving off the dreaded mortality signal. With heart pounding Jo tracked her down, hoping to find a dropped transmitter and not a dead bird. Instead, she found Baldrick, distinctly alive and as feisty as usual, but with yet another faulty transmitter. This is her second in a row so we think she must be developing a technique for destroying them. Shannon from Parkcare was scrub barring the track near where she was found so he got to hold on to Baldrick (easier said than done) while Jo checked the burrow for any obstructions to make sure Baldrick couldn't have been trapped. Fortunately, Cathy had a replacement transmitter on hand and was able to come out the next day to replace the faulty one. According to the signal now Baldrick is alive and well – long may it last.



**Shannon from Northland Parkcare keeping an eye on Baldrick**

## Fauna

- No more petrels have been spotted but there has definitely been activity up at the site with tunnel sticks being disturbed. The site also got some attention from the Work Wednesday volunteers. They re-bagged sandbags, removed thistles and re-set some of the tunnels and burrows that had moved due to subsidence caused by the drought. They have also modified some of the existing burrows – following advice from seabird translocation expert Helen Gummer - cutting a door in the back of the artificial nest chamber so that the birds can burrow deeper if they feel the need.

- Twenty-one royal spoonbills were spotted feeding as a team down on the mud flats last week and Ben and I squelched out through the mud to try and get a photo. They would not keep still enough to get a really good one but while we were out there we also spotted two bar tailed godwits. These are not that common around here and it is likely these were juveniles, as the rest of their friends should be somewhere in the northern hemisphere by now.
- The rain has brought the frogs out of hiding. We have seen four Australian green and golden bell frogs in the last three weeks.



**The royal spoonbills taking a momentary break from chasing small fish**

### **Predator Control**

- No captures on the island this month, despite putting out a number of our new mouse traps around the site of the last mouse capture.
- Busy in the buffer with three Norway rats, two stoats and a hedgehog.

### **Visitors**

- Gerry Brackenbury and volunteers from Hospice came over and released the kowhai planting near Shipwreck Bay. Most of the kowhai seemed to have survived the drought and are now visible again.
- Jamie Hancox and Iain Reid brought over another group of Northtec students to get some field experience.
- 26 students and teachers from Whangarei secondary schools came over as part of the Northland Regional Council Enviroschools Sustainability Programme. These were all super keen students and they spent the day with Jo checking traps and baiting.
- Murray and Shannon from Northland Parkcare to deal to the autumn grass growth (and cuddle a kiwi).
- The volunteer crew who moved all those plants and checked them for ants and rainbow skinks; Ken Massey, Ian Page, Dwane Kokich, Pam Stevens, Jan Frederick, Rosemary Drake, Steve and Pip from Bella Vista Motel and Gerry Brackenbury.
- The Wonderful Work Wednesday Wolunteers

### **General**

- Mowing, spraying and weed eating to deal with the autumn growth. You can almost see it growing.
- The driveway was re-metalled to keep it nice and dry
- The petrel caller went on a trip to town to make sure it is functioning as it should.
- The trim for the barge motor has also been in for some service and parts.

## Upcoming

- **Volunteer Wednesday – 7<sup>th</sup> July.** Pickup at 9am at the jetty, returning after lunch approximately 2pm. We will most likely be finishing off the planting, particularly some of the more specialist plants.

Hei konei ra

Jo and Ben



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