



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – August 2010

Spotlight on the Wednesday Wollies

This month we thought we would pay homage to the Wednesday volunteers or the “Wednesday Wollies” as we like to call them. The Wollies are a small but dedicated group of volunteers who give up the first Wednesday of every month to come over to the island and get stuck in. This last Wednesday was shaping up to be one of the worst days of the year with a nasty front bearing down directly on the island. We had over 35mm in a matter of hours, the driveway turned into a river, drowned Jo’s vegie garden and threatened to rip the spouting off the roof but still Wollies came. We promised them wet weather activities. Carol, Marjorie and Alison were kept busy making mouse trap covers out of corflute donated by the NRC EnviroSchools group. This was on our deck out of the rain mostly, until the rain started coming in sideways. These trap covers and their corresponding traps make up the mouse incursion contingency kit. If we detect any mice on the island the kits allow us to respond quickly and systematically search and destroy. While the ladies enjoyed the views over the harbour Master Craftsman Tim squirreled himself away in the garage oiling all the new traps and gluing them to their base-plates as well as fixing the dinghy trailer which was starting to split.



Carol, Marjorie, Alison and Tim hard at work

If you would like to join the Wednesday Wollies just come down to the **Onerahi pontoon at 9am** on the **first Wednesday of every month**. For more information or to find out what’s happening, just give us a call on 436 0923. You can come as often as suits you. There are always plenty of interesting jobs to do and we have a fun time and enjoy a nice cup ‘o’ tea. Jo and I reckon the Wollies are just ace and we would be lost without them.

Fauna

- This month Bryce Lummis from DOC Whangarei came over and we sprayed the weeds on the sandy shoals of Knight and Rat Island. The Knight Island shoal is one of the best nesting colonies for the Caspian Tern in New Zealand. This large tern requires bare sandspits to nest on so it’s crucial that we keep them open and free from rank grass and weeds. These shoals are also important nesting sites for NZ dotterels and oyster catchers.

- We also had Liam and his carer, Jim, back on the island this month and they did a great job clearing weeds off the sandspit. This is done for the same reason as for the Knight Island site, keeping the shell banks clear of weeds to encourage shorebirds to breed, most of whom prefer open sites so they can see trouble coming.
- A pair of kukupa have been regularly seen in the macrocarpa by the visitor shelter looking very relaxed on their predator free island. We say "their" island as they seem to be staying overnight. Ben has spooked them when returning from the wharf at night after catching some tea. With any luck they will nest on the island this summer and we may see some island born pigeons.



Looking fairly relaxed and at home. Hopefully the Kukupa are finally realising what the starlings already know; Matakoho is the safest place in the harbour

- Tui have been over showing off to the volunteers, no doubt feeding on the large number of karo flowering at the moment.
- Ben has spotted a few young shore skinks making use of the crisp August sun.
- Many of the bird species are switching into breeding mode. Nest scrapes were observed on Knight Island. The three happy go lucky pukeko that live on the manager's lawn seem decidedly frisky and have started chasing each other around. A white faced heron has been spotted with nesting material so is no doubt building somewhere.
- While dropping off Northtec volunteer Ruari Flynn at Onerahi, about six dolphins swam past in the shallows. They were probably chasing baitfish up the harbour. Apparently they had been putting on a bit of a show further up, jumping and displaying.

Dotterel Naming

- We have received the following excellent suggestions for naming our dotterel - the one who has the band combination **M-OGW**

Margow	A very pretty name for a very pretty bird
Mowgli	As in M etal, O range, W hite, G reen, L imestone I sland or as in the character from 'The Jungle Book'
Moggie	Ironic, naming a threatened bird after one of its threats
Kevin	This is Ben's suggestion. He likes naming animals with inappropriate human names

Someone suggested a vote on these suggestions so please send your votes to limestonerangers@gmail.com.

Kiwi

- We are coming up to nesting season for the kiwi but so far no-one has settled down to the business. This time last year they were both already underway on their first attempts.
- Sir Ed and Kahui Whetu are as thick as thieves and have been acting *very* suspiciously, holing up together for days on end. We know this because Jo has been checking on them very regularly hoping to get Kahui Whetu on her own for a transmitter change. That will hopefully happen sometime this week before her transmitter runs out of battery. Baldrick proved tricky to locate in the normal monthly check getting Jo a bit worried that she had jinxed another transmitter. Fortunately she was located a couple of days later, her transmitter working perfectly.
- The kiwi have also been very regularly disturbing the petrel site. We have been monitoring the site regularly to check if we had any potential nesters back. We did see a lot of disturbance but most could be attributed to naughty kiwi, as they frequently left large fresh calling cards, and I don't just mean feathers.

Predator Control

- We completed baiting of A-M lines this month along with lots of clearing and weed control. Ben did most of the hard stuff, being the dreaded southern side, and now many of the lines are much easier to follow. Ben also felled some very large cotoneaster on the southern face along the way which would have been the source of a lot of the seedlings we are seeing.
- Tracking tunnels were run with help from volunteer Ruairi Flynn from the Northtec Environmental Management course – all clear thanks Ruairi.
- Very quiet month on the island and in the buffer. Nothing caught anywhere. Bait take in the buffer has also slowed right down.
- Thanks to Rentokil who supplied us with two 10kg buckets of Maki rodent bait. We are trialling bait take on the buffer areas to determine which of the poisons the critters prefer.

Visitors

- Gerry Brackenberry came across with volunteers from Hospice to do some infill planting at the Hospice kowhai site they had released earlier this year. A crew from Channel North also came too to film some planting in action.
- As well as the regular Wednesday volunteer day, we also had Dwane, Angela, Tim, Carol and Gerry across for an impromptu vollie day. Dwane, Angela and Carol went weed pulling on the Southern face. Tim went to work in the garage making more pegs for the traps out of good ol' number eight wire that he had donated to the island and finishing off the mouse trap bases. Gerry went on a releasing mission over by the shelter spraying the rank grass in the coastal planting and around the ruin. It was an awesome day's work – thanks heaps guys.
- We also had a visit from Jo Ritchie who wrote the island's original Restoration Plan, Hugo Van In from Treescape, and Brent Beavan who works for DOC on Stewart Island. We took them on a tour of the island and talked about future restoration potential and got some good feedback and ideas.

General

- We gave an update on what has been happening on the island in the last few years to the monthly meeting of the Whangarei Native Forest and Bird Protection Society. We met some lovely and very interesting people who had been involved with the island for many years.
- Jo and Theda Hall had a great brainstorm session with Dwane Kokich, who designs, updates and manages the website for us, looking at how we might give the site a bit of a face lift. Watch this space.
- Ben has done a huge amount of mowing, weedeating and spraying this month. All of the remaining bait stations and trap sites in open areas have been sprayed to keep them from becoming overgrown and less appealing to stoats and rats (not to mention invisible to baiters and trappers).
- Graham from Palmer Canvas came and installed a brilliant clear screen for the deck on the Ranger's cottage. We can now venture outside when the SW blows. Thanks team.

Upcoming

- **Spring!!! Hurrah**
- **Volunteer Wednesday, 1st September.** Pickup at **9am at the Onerahi pontoon**, returning after lunch approximately 2pm. We are still trying to get that weed hunt done so fingers crossed for fine weather. If we get to do it, it will be great fun – like a treasure hunt but looking for the opposite of treasure

Hei konei ra

Jo and Ben



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