



## **Friends of Matakohē/Limestone Island 2010 Annual Report**

(Written and presented by Pam Stevens, Chairperson at the Society's Annual General Meeting on 16 February 2011)

As with everywhere in Northland, the island was affected by the recent rain event Cyclone Wilma. The greatly improved members' list that Jan has been working on over the past year helped us to successfully put out an urgent call to all members at very short notice. The result was that at 8am, on a very hot Saturday, a hardy team of 13 people, plus wheelbarrows and spades, turned up and worked hard to form two new tracks. Any plants that could be rescued were, and the bare ground seeded and planted with flax. The sheep were secured with repairs to the fence, gate and stile as the slip had also destroyed them. At midday a bedraggled team was treated to a very reviving lunch by Ian and Debbie at *Topsail*. For over 20 years the success of this project has always, and continues to be, driven by the willing volunteers from our community, well supported by local businesses.

Our rangers Jo and Ben settled in really well in their first year. They have enthusiasm, energy and are a pleasure to work with. There is a surprisingly large workload associated with the island and it takes real commitment and plenty of initiative. We are lucky to have their wide range of skills. The last year was even more challenging with the 190 Beach Road mainland base being out of action. They are doing a grand job of updating the Ranger Manual which is helpful for the future and useful for our wonderful team of island sitters: John Elliott, Carol and Tim, Donna and Riaan, John and Carin. We are always looking to make living on the island easier and have now installed a well vented gas heater for the cottage and added a shelter on the end of the deck to cut out the cold SW wind in the winter. The gas fridge continues to stagger along and will need to be replaced one day. Jo and Ben also continued to network on our behalf, attending the Sanctuaries Workshops and Kiwi Hui and Ben has just returned from a Lizard and Gecko Conference. Many members mention how much they enjoy Jo's informative and entertaining monthly report.

There is constant trapping, mowing and weeding not only on the island, but in a large buffer area. We have been extremely lucky to have a wonderful volunteer in James who turns up almost daily to work alongside the Rangers, a huge thank you from us all. Ben speaks very highly of his contribution. Thanks also to those who answer the call for mouse busting. Thanks to Ken and Betta Contractors for weed control. As part of the restoration review a long term weed plan is being developed.

We continue to plant every winter but in considerably less numbers than in previous years. However, still nearly 2800 this year. Planting will probably start again and be every Sunday in June. It's a great community activity, but these days you have to be quick or you miss out.

We have had a number of positive comments about the signage in the shelter and hope to shortly add the long awaited one on geology. Thanks for your part Olly. The new one on kiwi looks great. Maybe one day a sign about our precious lizards and geckos will be added. Big thanks to John and Rotary for his time and patience.

In early May we had a really exciting event when Cathy, Pete, Jo and Ben witnessed the return of the oi. I received a very excited call at 9.00 pm May 10. One bird was identified as Ivan the Terrible and the other E212657 with no known reputation. The petrel caller can be heard from Onerahi on a calm night. We look forward with real excitement to this May. We have recently had a generous donation from Graeme who is happy that we purchase and install a motion triggered camera at the petrel site.

The lizards report was given to Andrea Booth at DOC, has some interesting reading and represented a lot of work by Cathy and Pete and others. Thanks to Rachel Ropata at NRC for assisting with funding. Ben and Neil have spent a couple of dark nights trying to locate forest gecko but only finding greens. Juvenile Pacific Gecko have been observed on the island by our resident lizard expert Ben.

There has been a slow down in the kiwi coming to and from the island, but some island born chicks have gone off and our residents Glen sports a fancy transmitter and Sir Ed, Kahui Whetu and Baldrick continue to be monitored. Todd is soon to return to search for any off-spring to relocate to the Heads. Fred Tito and Richard are invaluable in making all the kiwi movements go so smoothly.

Awareness of the island is increasing and depending on how it is portrayed in Marcus Lush's programme on TV 1 South, Sunday 7.00pm, may be more nationally known soon.

A sampler of this year's visitors illustrates the wide variation of visitors we get. The Tramping Club, Horticultural and Plant Ecology students from North Tec, Seventh Day Adventist School, Freedom Walkers, Hospice, NRC teachers and students from the Environ School Sustainability Project, Paul MacDonald and his WDC team from Parks and Reserves, Maori Land Court, Hillary Challenge students, Kaurihohore School, Tikipunga High, Whangarei Intermediate, 12 Canadians from Rotary, Channel North with Gerry making a CD on kiwi, and recently every Sunday the 'Waipapa' from the Town Basin by a local ferry operator.

Looking ahead to this coming year. The small boat will need replacement or major work, the barge gets a regular check and Marine North did some work on it. Paul has got much closer to formalizing the Endowment Trust Fund document. One day we may get a shag roost. The undermining of the rail track requires attention. The website is undergoing an upgrade. Action on the singlemen's quarters is still in the planning stages.

The Restoration Plan is now under review by Jo. The committee reconfirmed the key management in accordance with the constitution,

**“To ensure the effective management and development of Motu Matakoho/Limestone Island in accordance with the Whangarei District Council Management Plan, so that its natural, recreational, historic and cultural features and values can be protected and enhanced to the benefit of the Whangarei District.”**

Theda and Paul gave Ben and Jo a guided tour of our major sponsor Golden Bay Cement's works at Portland. They came away much brighter than when they went. Beach Road residents that keep a watchful eye on them are now blinded by fluo gear, socks, hats, shirts and steel capped gumboots. Thank you to Golden Bay for their continued vital support. Rentokil, also a significant sponsor, keep in touch and are very helpful working with Ben on a rodent monitoring programme as well as supplying bait. BNZ Save the Kiwi continues to support us as well as the Community Conservation Fund. We noted with real sadness the passing of Steve Bol from Bella Vista, he and Pip had recently become sponsors and enthusiastic volunteers.

Thanks to Ken for dealing to the sheep again. Ian and Sandy Page for the Fire Plan and the updated notification that goes out to residents in view of the island every year before summer. Thanks to Parkcare for their hard work helping with mowing. John and Gerry helped deal to the rabbits from the Poroti Pub shoot. Ben has needed more this year supplied from different sources. Tim Grove is part of the wonderful Wednesday volunteers and has modified traps entrances and is presently

plotting a new design to keep the oi burrows cool. Donations have come in from various sources Kiwi North, Graeme Edgeley and Environment North and others.

We look forward to getting our tracks-upgrade integrated into the Whangarei District Council Long term Community Plan. In the spring we received an excellent assessment of the condition of the macrocarpa and pines on the island. It was done by the tree pruning branch of Parks and Reserves and we look forward to having some safer trees sometime.

A big thank you to the committee. The fact that we have a loyal and stable committee has great benefits to the project and a special acknowledgment of our treasurer Sandy, not an easy task at times. Carla, thanks for doing a grand job of the minutes after Sheryl's departure, Jan for all her excellent communications management and the others who help in whatever way they can manage.

Pam Stevens

Chairperson



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