



## Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – June 2011

Planting has started...and nearly finished. Thanks to a brilliant turn out on Queen's Birthday weekend and a HUGE turn out last Sunday we have already safely bedded in nearly 1800 plants. Planting conditions were almost *too* soft with the ground still boggy after so much rain. Shouldn't complain though - no worries about the plants getting enough water to settle them in this year.

It was also great to see many new faces amongst the planting crowd, as well as the old (and not so old) faithful. Lots of kids too who did a fantastic job on some slippery slopes.



A medley of young planters (*including* Paul from Golden Bay Cement!)

We did however have a bit of an ant scare during our first planting day. Observant planter Donna spotted some suspicious ants in the soil of one of the plants as she was planting and raised the alarm. The plant was quarantined from the rest and the ants collected for ID purposes. Fortunately they were confirmed as not being the dreaded Argentine Ant, but it goes to show we have to maintain our vigilance. We think that the ant treatment applied to the plants before they were brought over may have been diluted and washed through with the very heavy rain while the plants were standing out on the island, and the island ants had subsequently moved in seeking higher ground. All the plants were re-treated just to be on the safe side.

We still have some plants to plant, due to go into a wetland area. This area is currently under about two feet of water so we are going to have to wait for the rain to ease a bit before we tackle this. We will let you know when we intend to run our next and probably last planting day for the year.

We also wanted to say thank you to the volunteers who turned up to help us move the plants to the island a couple of weeks before planting. The many hands made light work so thank you Ken and Dwane for collecting the plants and Marjorie, Colin, Ian, Pat, David and James.

### **Fauna**

- We have again had confirmation of petrels up at the site and inside burrows on at least two occasions this month, but can't confirm if they are new birds. We also know that there were at least two of them up there together one night and that they got the chance to mingle – hopefully not both boys. We also spotted a bird sitting inside a burrow entrance on one of our night checks but it was just out of reach so we left it in peace to enjoy the 'serenity' of the petrel caller.
- The next nine forest geckos are all set to join us, having been cleared for diseases and will be on the island by the time you read this. We will update you on the release next report.
- The harbour has been a very interesting place lately. As well as the dolphins that escorted the plants to the island, there has also been a large turtle near the pontoon and reports of a seal. Curious indeed.
- Morepork calls are still ringing out all night and there seems to be a bird who has taken to 'haunting' the Hill track. We have flushed him out twice in the early evening when walking by.
- Due to the very wet weather the whole island has something of a wetland feel to it at the moment. The local frog population is making the most of it and can be found roaming the tracks.

### **Predator Control**

As we start to reach proper winter temperatures the predator catch numbers appear at last to be dropping off and there were no predators trapped on the island this month - hurrah. We are however keeping a close watch on things to be on the safe side.

In the buffer we also had a reduced catch with three rats and three mice caught.

### **Kiwi**

- Resident male Glen was caught for his transmitter switch and six-monthly biometrics earlier this month. As we suspected he is doing very well, weighing in at a whopping 2550g, which is BIG for a boy. He felt positively soft and squishy with all those delightful fat deposits (no offence Glen). Hopefully this will put him in a good position for the upcoming breeding season.
- We also had an unexpected capture. Ben was making some dinner when he heard a bird calling out down below the manager's house. We knew it wasn't one of our resident adults, meaning it had to be one of our 'chicks' trying out his voice and starting to get a bit territorial. This usually means its time for them to leave us, so Ben put his gumboots on over his PJs and headed out. He was back in less than five minutes with a kiwi. It turned out to be one of Sir Ed and Kahui whetu's chicks from 2009 – now much larger and not too long off becoming a breeding adult himself. He was named 'Te Rata' by the Whangarei District Council and will be blessed with the forest gecko shortly before heading off to Whangarei Heads.



**Jo talking to a rapt audience about what kiwi talons are for!**

### **Visitors**

- A big group of 16 Wednesday wollies attacked a mountain of work last volunteer day, completing the A-M north side baiting, the petrel site sand-bagging and trap maintenance on a large chunk of our DOC 200 trap network. All the traps were stripped down, cleaned up, re-oiled and painted to get them back in to tip top condition. The ones from the buffer had been getting a bit of a workout lately with the higher catch rates so were definitely in need of some attention. So great to have so many willing hands to help, especially when it is a bit grey and overcast. Thanks guys.
- Dwane Kokich came over and stayed on the island to do a few days volunteering. He got up to all sorts of tasks, including installing a new seat and spreading a huge amount of seed into some of our more mature planted areas. Thanks Dwane.



**Just some of the seed Dwane had collected for the island**

## General

- Ben gave a talk to the Mangakahia Gardening Club at the Quarry Gardens and was rewarded with a generous donation for the island and some fruit and preserves.
- Ben finished prepping all the planting sites to make planting a breeze on the planting days.
- Ben also finished sprayed the many bait stations to keep them from disappearing under the grass.
- Barge, tractor, truck and pumps all serviced.
- Mowing, still. It is easing off though!

## Upcoming

- Planting ... but not for a while yet. Once we get a spell of dry weather we can finish that last site but we will let you know.
- **Volunteer Wednesday – 6<sup>th</sup> July.** Pickup at 9am at the jetty, returning after lunch approximately 2pm. See you there!

Hei konei ra  
Jo and Ben



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