



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – August 2011

I think I may have spoken too soon about the signs of spring. As I write it is sleeting outside and feels as if it might snow. Hopefully the weather clears up as Ben and I have an important engagement on the mainland to attend to.....heading to Whangarei hospital some time in the near future to have a baby. As a consequence of this (and taking some time off) next month's report may be a bit brief but we will let you know when the new ranger arrives.

Book Offer for Members

This month we have a special offer for financial members of Friends of Matakohē-Limestone Island, for the new book and CD package 'New Zealand Bird Calls', published by New Holland Publishers. The book is being offered to members for the generous discounted price of \$20 with free p&p within NZ (usual price \$29.99). It features bird calls recorded by John Kendrick and photos by Geoff Moon. John Kendrick is a Friend of Matakohē-Limestone Island.

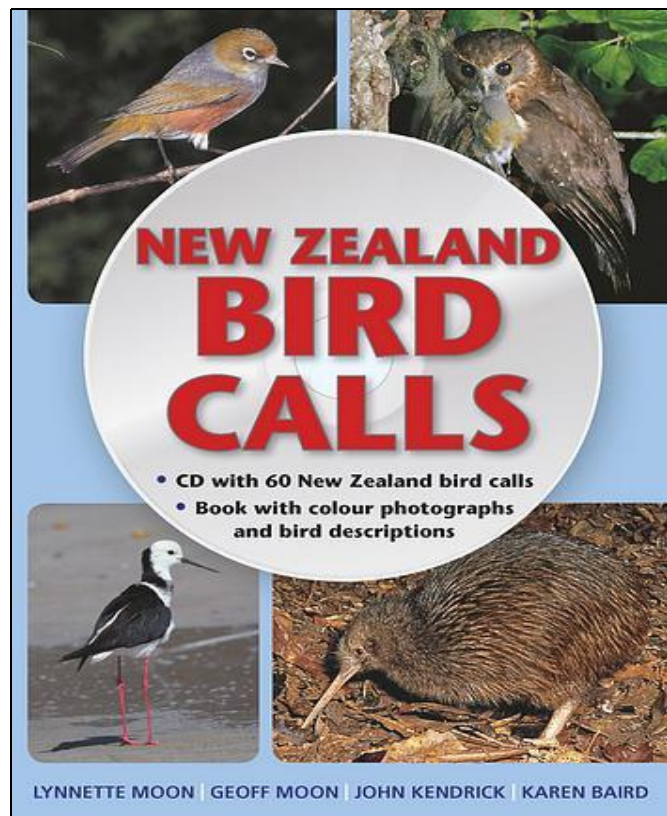
Paying by cheque

Cheque made out to: **Random House New Zealand Ltd**, and send to: Limestone Island/NZ Bird Calls offer, PO Box 34 321, Birkenhead, Auckland 0746

Paying by debit/credit card

Phone New Holland Publishers direct 09 481 0210

For more information about the book, phone Jane 4340245 or email jabarr@clear.net



Kiwi

There has been lots of kiwi activity again this month.

- Sir Ed is still sitting tight on his egg, like the good dad he is, with just over a month to go and Glen's egg timer transmitter has at last flicked over to tell us he is incubating after over a month of sitting in the same place deciding if it was really suitable.
- We also managed to catch up with Baldrick when she finally took a brief break from keeping Glen company. She was positively enormous, with an egg on board. Within two days she was back with Glen, laying that egg which we hope is a second.
- We have had not just one but two kiwi calling near the house again, a male and a female. It is a lovely treat to be able to hear their duets every now and again. Depending on their age, there is the distinct possibility that they might be breeding so we will have to decide what to do if we manage to track one of them down in case they have a nest somewhere.

- After evading capture last month, taking refuge in one of the few old hollow puriri where Ben's long arms cannot reach, Kahui whetu decided to give us a break and was found sitting in one of the penguin boxes. We decided not to look a gift horse in the mouth and did her six-monthly biometrics and changed her transmitter. She was a bit skinnier than normal which is not surprising given that she has laid two very large eggs recently.
- We heard back from Auckland Zoo and unfortunately Sir Ed's egg was infertile/failed to develop. It was always a long shot so we can't be too disappointed and he will hopefully do a good job of the egg he is incubating now.



Jo, Kahui whetu and the bump

Fauna

- Even though it is clearly still winter, those signs of spring are real. Ben spotted the dotterels at the sand barge mating so the breeding plumage is not just for show.
- The grey warblers are more active and definitely more vocal. They are busy collecting nesting material already for the coming breeding season. They obviously need to start early because those nests look very tricky to make.
- We have had at least one more bird visiting the petrel site in late July on two different nights. This is likely to be a younger bird still scoping the site out, similar to what we saw in August/September last year.
- The gannets can be seen again cruising in the harbour and diving off the northern point of the island.

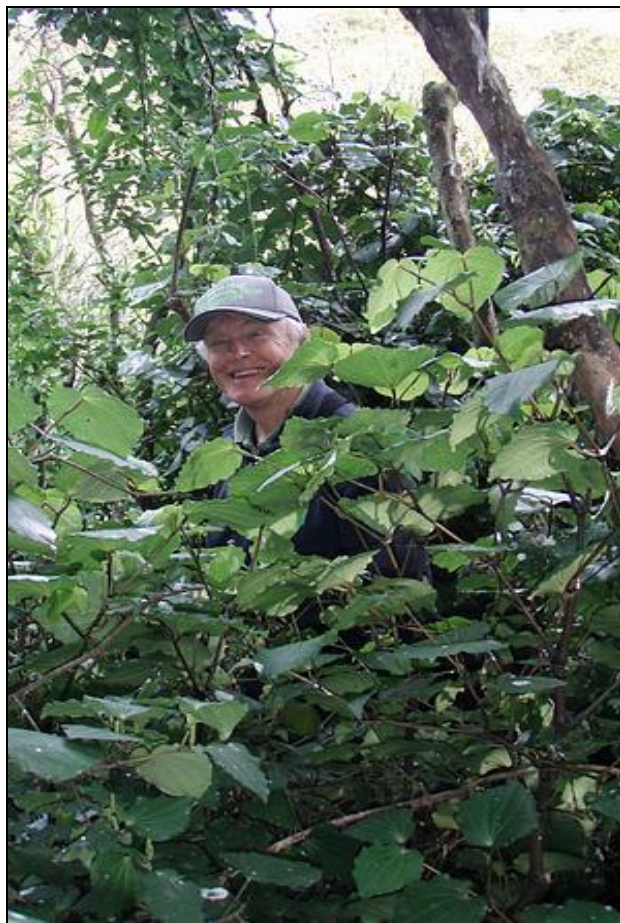
Predator Control

No predators trapped on the island again this month which is always good. We did, however, have another dog on the island briefly that came over with some boaties. We explained the risk to our wildlife including the kiwi and they were happy to head back to the mainland. In the buffer Ben trapped three mice, two Norway rats and one ship rat.

- Our island wide '**Mouse bust**' is also underway thanks to the brilliant volunteers who turned out last Sunday morning despite the indecisive weather. We had to cancel the afternoon trip though, due to the wind. We have baited just over half the island (including the majority of the trickier stuff) with the alternative pesticide and hope to get it all completed in the next week with help from some more vollies.

Visitors

- We had a large walking club group over this month, back visiting after a number of years. They very cleverly picked the nicest day in the whole month – blue sky and no wind. Many of the group hadn't been to the island since before the shelter and toilet went in so they were very impressed with island developments.
- The Wednesday wollies had an off island adventure this month, first heading to Knight Island and then to Motuotaua (Rabbit island). At Knight island they helped Ben to clear weeds growing on the shell bank to increase the size and appeal of the nesting area for the Caspian terns. Then it was over to Motuotaua with Jo to deal to moth plant and do a beach clean. There were a huge number of seedlings and some gnarly adult plants in two parts of the island but we are starting to make good progress there which is great for the island itself, as well as for Matakoho. The vegetation there has really come away in the last few years as you can see in the photo below.
- Ian Buckley was back to complete the job on the sleep-out roof so it is weather tight once again. Thanks Ian.
- Nick, our polytech student, has been over volunteering again this month, helping Ben.



**Wednesday wollie Greg amongst the regenerating kawakawa
and moth plant on Motuotaua**

General

- Jo gave a talk to the RSA Bowling Club Past Presidents and enjoyed a very nice lunch *and* dessert. Thanks for having me.
- Many thanks to **Planet Honda** for the good deal they gave us on a new generator after the last one konked out. Very glad to have one that works again.
- Ben installed some new curtains and underfloor insulation to keep us (and the baby) warm. Many thanks to the Friends and the committee for funding these.
- Ben dismantled the old cattle yards in preparation for the tree work coming up (see below).

Upcoming

- **A baby and some time off for us.** This means **no Volunteer Wednesday** in the first week of September but there may be one later in the month. We will keep you posted.
- The Whangarei District Council has organised for Treescape to undertake some management of the old macrocarpas on the north side of the island. Limbs that have become dangerous and trees that are now unsafe will be removed. This will be happening very soon and we will update you in the next report as it will be quite a substantial job and will make a big difference to the island.
- The last of the plantingthe wetland site is nearly ready so long as folks have tall gumboots.

Hei konei ra
Jo and Ben



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