



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – March 2012

Last month we were sure Glen's chicks were going to hatch in early March. The radio-transmitters our adults wear send out a signal that lets us know if they are incubating eggs and how long they have been doing so. Generally male kiwi will need to sit on an egg for around 80 days before it hatches. Glen's radio-transmitter had reached over 100 days on the incubating signal, so I was thinking he was sitting on an infertile egg and after building him up in last month's Report I was not excited about breaking the news to you all. How dare I doubt Glen! A last ditch nest check on day 107 revealed egg shells at the burrow entrance. You little beauty! Pete Graham (DOC) came over to insert a microchip into the chick and copped a thorough growling, a few stomps and more general protesting (in the form of a poo to the hand) from Glen. So without further adieu, I give you Glen's chick, the youngest kiwi on Matakohē-Limestone Island.



In the brown trunks weighing in at 300g, Glen's chick. You're a legend Glen

This will be the last island born chick for the breeding season and the adults will get stuck into some grub and put on some weight for a few months before giving it another crack in winter. Thankfully the ground is very wet so they should have no trouble probing for worms and other tasty morsels.

- We have had one of Sir Ed's chicks on standby on the island and she went AWOL last month due to her transmitter frequency getting too much interference. Thankfully I bumped into her again when doing the monthly signal checks as I happened to be right next to her. Needless to say, I changed the transmitter and the "Hash House Harriers" got a chance to see her.
- Todd Hamilton came over to help me clear off some older crèche birds. It is much easier to find them when the bush "rustles". As it has been so wet, we didn't have any success although we briefly heard a couple making off into the undergrowth.
- I went to the Northland kiwi hui and there were some very interesting subjects including ferrets killing adult kiwi, increasing call counts in Whangarei and the ongoing dog problem.

Flora

- Even more exciting than kiwi is the very significant piece of work that Dr Olly Ball has completed for the island - 2011 Vegetation Monitoring Report. Overall he recorded that exotic grass cover in replanted sites has halved, while leaf litter from native plants has increased tenfold. He also noted a "doubling of wood", i.e. there is twice as much wood on the island now than there was in 2007 - maybe we should apply for carbon credits? Olly states "Invertebrates would be expected to benefit from these changes and this will in turn benefit species that prey on these invertebrates such as insectivorous birds, reptiles and larger predatory invertebrates". Thanks very much Olly.
- Last year I found a silver-eye nest that was lined with moth plant "Kapok", which meant there was an adult plant lurking around spreading seed. We launched a grid search to find it with the "Wednesday Wollies" but had no luck. You will have noticed the moth plant flowers heavily in March so I took the barge out and scanned the forest with the binoculars. Hey presto, I found the bugger. It was positively huge with a vine as thick as a wine bottle neck. It had probably been there for many years and I felled it with glee. I also picked up some flowering pampas grass while doing the barge weed survey.



If you poke your head above the canopy I will find you!! Muhahaha (evil laugh)

Fauna

Last march we found an *Acanthoxyla* species stick insect on a pohutukawa. Bug enthusiasts will remember this species doesn't need males to breed... weird. This month (one year later) we found about six while out looking for geckos - as you do. They were quite widely distributed around the island from the "Edge house ruins" to up below the pa site. It would appear they are gaining a foothold on the island, which is excellent news.

Predator control

- We found a male Norway rat on the island this month, which was annoying. On the bright side, our capture rates on the island are significantly down on this time last year and the rat in question had an empty stomach... and a squashed head.
- We received a grant from the NRC biosecurity team to ramp up our pest control at Onerahi. We expect this will reduce our invasion rates significantly and will no doubt contribute to the birdsong at Onerahi. Thanks NRC.
- The buffer is still busy with two rats and a weasel caught at Onemama Pt, and a rat and five mice caught at Knight Island.

Visitors

Various groups have come to the island including Out and About, Hash House Harriers, and Otaika Primary pupils who visited for "sea-week". The wet weather has slimmed down independent visitors a little although there are still many folk making use of the ski-lane, or kayaking over for a picnic or a stroll. Good on ya.

General

- The stately karaka at the ruins lost a large branch so I chopped it up and the ever-fantastic Wednesday Wollies distributed the wood into the forest to create habitat for bugs and lizards. This has proved very successful in other areas on the island, with woody debris becoming hot real estate for copper skinks, weta, slaters and native bush cockroaches. The Wollies also gave the tracks a good tidy up and some spread some native seed around.
- Bryce from Absolute Gasfitters fixed our gas regulator.
- Murray gave the tracks a good seeing to.
- I've been continuing with exotic grass spraying under the canopy, as well as spraying general weeds, baitstations and fencelines.
- The rain came a falling this month... including nearly 200mm last weekend.

Upcoming

Wednesday volunteering on April 4th - 9am at the jetty.

Hei konei ra

Ben, Jo and Penny Kohe



Proudly Supported by; Environmental Northland, Forest Floor Nursery, Harbour Marine Ltd, Marine North Ltd, Northpower, Northland Port Corp, Northland Regional Council, North Tugz, Onerahi Lions, Phoenix Boats, Red Bull Powder Co., Tawapou Nursery.

www.limestoneisland.org.nz