



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – May 2012

LOVE IS IN THE AIR!!!. I've had this 1979 John Paul Young disco classic stuck in my head all week after a major discovery at the petrel station. "Crikey! a two-headed grey-faced petrel!" I thought as I lifted the brand new, insulated, architecturally-designed burrow lid. The two heads gave me an ever so slightly bashful look. Thankfully, on closer inspection, each head belonged to a different bird - our beloved oi are returning again for the year, enjoying each other's company so much that they are hanging out in burrows together! 2006 was obviously a good 'vintage' as both these birds came from that year. Bird number one, E212633, has become a regular up on site – one of the first birds we found in May 2010 and has now been found on site five times, four times in the same burrow! Bird number two was a new returnee, E 212679, bringing the number of known birds that have returned to five. We can only hope this already close friendship blossoms (and is not a same sex couple) as we inch closer and closer to the goal that has soaked up countless volunteer hours, occupied our dreams, not to mention the phone calls and emails, boat trips, stormy nights, and endless cans of sardines.



**"Hey mate, we really like what you've done with the place
but do you mind, we're busy?"**

And it has not been just this one visit either. Fittingly, petrel box enthusiast Tim Grove found the first return of the season (familiar face E212633) a couple of days prior and a stealthily placed stealth camera has snapped birds lurking about on six other evenings (see photo below). The birds at this time of the year are prospecting for suitable burrows and looking for suitable mates – a key time in determining whether they will stay and breed. Thanks must go to the hard work all the volunteers have put into the "Petrel Station" over the last couple of months, in particular Tim Grove who has painstakingly assembled new lids and burrows again in his spare time this month. The Wednesday

Wollies have also done a heap of hard graft and the site is now looking fantastic, with the rank grass under the scrub cleared and nice clear exits to and from the site for arriving and departing birds, as well as a much safer benched track to the shelter. In addition to the newly modified existing burrows, there are also five new palatial 'natural' burrows situated in the bush. Oi that have a penchant for renovation can extend these soil burrows anyway they wish. It is great to know all this hard work was not in vain and is now making the site much more appealing to the returned birds. We would also like to thank our fantastic partners and sponsors, in particular Golden Bay Cement and Whangarei District Council for their continued support of the island, which makes all this possible. Pats on the back I say.

While the petrels are back and making important life decisions we ask people to avoid disturbing the Petrel Station unnecessarily. With a bit of peace and quiet who knows what might happen lay an egg you little beauties!!! You know you want to.



You're on candid camera! Two petrels squawk with delight.

Pest Control

- No pests on the island again. Yessss!
- Reasonably quiet in **most** of the buffer with a Norway rat caught on Rabbit Island, a stoat on Onemama and four mice caught on Knight Island. Greg has done his first round of the new Onerahi traps and caught a whopping 14 rats plus four mice. There is absolutely no doubt this initiative will stem the flow of pests on to the island. If you see Greg around Onerahi, give him a high five!
- Michelle Martin kindly came out and attended to pampas grass, Selaginella and other nasties.
- I attended the NZ Landcare Trust Trapper's Workshop in Kerikeri. There were some interesting talks about resetting traps, rat control and lizards.

Flora

Big thanks to Owen Mitchell who has grown and donated the island a bunch of very healthy looking plants from locally sourced seed. They'll fit in very nicely on the island.

Fauna

- While checking the petrel site I happened across a kiwi chick making use of the designer burrows. It has been on the island since September last year and has gone from 180g to 1080g - must have been getting into some good tucker. It is still just shy of the 1200g target when we are sure that it can defend itself against stoats so we will look after him for another few months.

- The royal spoonbills are back for winter and are busy feeding up around the foreshore on the island. If you haven't seen one of these amazing birds, chance a trip to the Onerahi foreshore on low tide. They really are spectacular.
- The banded rails have been very noticeable of late, including one that is often caught scurrying around on our deck trying to get into the compost bin. It seems they are increasing in number on the island so this one has had to set up its territory around the house and is definitely habituating to our presence; we would never normally have been able to get a photo – usually they disappear if you so much as raise an eyebrow, let alone a camera. I had only seen one on the mainland before we moved to the island and now it is a daily event. Pest free islands are awesome! So are banded rails.



**A cheeky banded rail surveys the scene and the compost bin.
Kind of like a small, timid weka but they can fly (when really motivated).**

Visitors

- The Entomological Society conference had a field trip on the island and undertook the slowest circumnavigation ever recorded. No rock/log/miscellaneous piece of debris was left unturned. It was really eye-opening to see what they found and what the rest of us overlook. There were all sorts of strange spiders, earwigs, mites to be fussed over. We also got some excellent input into the invertebrate restoration of the island. Thanks bug botherers!
- An enthusiastic group of YHA members visited.
- Whangaruru tramping club did, as their name suggests, all around the island.



**A garden orbweb spider
with a successful catch**

General

- Mowing, but much less of it.
- Murray and the Parkcare team gave the tracks, in particular the petrel site an extra short trim so we do not need to disturb returning birds too much.
- Ken Massey was over measuring up for the sheep fence modification.

Upcoming

- Planting days! We will email out planting day details shortly.
- Volunteer Wednesday on **June 6th**. Pick up at the jetty at the usual time – **9am**. We will probably tackle some of the planting that requires a bit of experience.
- The launch of our new website.....stay tuned.....

Hei konei ra

Ben, Jo and of course young Penny Kohe



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