



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – June 2012

After many hours in front of a screen and two fried computer hard drives, we have finally done it! Our **new website goes live today**. We have been growing this new site for quite some time now, so we are very happy to see it go off out into the big wide world, or at least the big wide web. You will hopefully find the new site easier to navigate, not to mention prettier to look at. It has also been built so that it is easier for the rangers to update; we can now use it to post notices and news more regularly. This means it will be simple for anyone with a bit of tech savvy to check online to see what is happening on the island, like when the next volunteer day is for example, or to check the details of an upcoming kiwi release.

The site was almost entirely produced by self-taught web developer and FOMLI committee member, Dwane Kokich, as a volunteer project, after some design work by a friend of ours. The committee members then chipped in to write the content for the new pages. Dwane had to figure out how to do a lot of the page construction along the way and faced numerous little hurdles but nothing could stop him! It is a great achievement to have been able to do this in-house so a HUGE thank you Dwane. The really great thing about Dwane building it for us is that we are going to be able to continually enhance and develop the site, making it better all the time. In fact, we would love any feedback from you on the site to help us 'iron out' any potential 'wrinkles'. So why don't you go and check the new site out right now at <http://www.limestoneisland.org.nz/> or you can even continue reading the ranger report online at http://www.limestoneisland.org.nz/npages/news_rangerreports.html

Planting



The boys getting their hands dirty in the name of restoration, and posing with a flax

- We have had a couple of truly excellent planting days on the island this month so a huge thanks to all those who have mucked in. The weather gods were feeling benevolent on both days, particularly the later with blue skies and hardly a breath of wind. Kinder still, it rained ever so gently the following day to water the plants we put in.

- Our trial planting of umbrella sedge (*Cyperus ustulatus* to those Latin folk) in the "Folly wetland" last year went berserk so we finished off the site on the first planting day, with 600 more plants and it is already looking amazing. Instead of rank introduced buffalo grass, the wetland is now a healthy mix of native raupo and sedge and will be much more homely to wetland bird species such as the elusive spotless crane.
- We had a veritable army of workers this last Sunday (43 including a heap of kids of assorted sizes) and we mulched and planted 800 flax around the new picnic area facing Onerahi. This site used to be an unlovely mix of falling down macrocarpa, invasive periwinkle and thistle weeds. It would now be at home amidst the pages of "Home and Garden" thanks to the A-team. Being a picnic site, we dined on tangelo juice supplied by Topsail restaurant. Yum
- There is one more planting day remaining for the season, Sunday, 1 July.



**Planting on the island is fun for young and old.
The new picnic site is on the right hand side.**

Pest Control

- Greg "the pied piper" Chisnall has been wreaking havoc on the Onerahi rat population. He has caught a further 41 rats this month bringing his total to 55 plus 7 mice. We have not had a single rat or stoat incursion on the island since this control began, which is not the norm for this time of year so a huge thanks again to Greg and all the Onerahi community who are behind this initiative.
- The rest of the buffer has been relatively quiet as I have closed the rat traps on Knight Island temporarily for a Northtec study. Nevertheless I picked up a weasel on Knight Island and a rat and a stoat on Onemama in the DOC 200 stoat traps.

Fauna

- The Wednesday wollies got a reward for their hard work on the last Wednesday volunteer day; they helped Jo to do the petrel burrow checks and Alison found one at home. Even better it was another new bird, taking the confirmed total of returned birds to six. The bird was from the 2006 year and appeared to be making himself comfy, with some distinct foliage additions to the burrow he was in. These 2006 birds are entering the age at which they begin breeding so we will be watching the site very closely.
- There has been a kukupa milling around near the school site possibly feeding on kowhai leaves. These stately birds are a bit of a rarity on the island still so it is always exciting to see them. No doubt we'll be overrun with them shortly.
- As is usual for winter, the fantails are hanging around in packs as they temporarily lose their territoriality. I don't know if it is just me but they seem to be ridiculously tame at the moment- usually sitting or 'flitting' within reach. Penny Kohe in particular is very fond of them and if they get any tamer one of these days she is going to catch one.
- I was lucky enough to visit three islands in "The Chicks" and Guano rock in the Bream Islands to undertake a lizard survey for DOC. It is amazing to get a glimpse of what Matakohē-Limestone Island could look like in the future. I tracked down some amazing creatures including NZ's largest gecko (Duvaucel's), the very rare Town's skink, the only egg-laying lizard in NZ (the aptly named "egg-laying skink") and some amazing insects including darkling beetles and giant weevils.



The egg-laying skink spends its time foraging in and around rock pools at night.

Inset: Turbott's weevil are a very large endemic insect now only found on offshore islands. Both are candidates for reintroduction to Matakohe-Limestone Island.

Kiwi

- There have been lots of kiwi footprints in the mud around the island. Kahui whetu and Sir Ed seem to be close to one another on the south-east point. Glen and Baldrick have been frequenting the grass around the petrel station.
- Freddy Tito brought over a fantastic group of Gunaikurnai indigenous Australians, which coincided with a transmitter change for one of our kiwi. They were delighted to see our national icon and promised us that they would show us a possum if we visited them in Gippsland, Australia. We have not made any bookings as yet.

Visitors

- Onerahi Primary School got the best of the great weather we enjoyed earlier in the month with three fun packed days on the island.
- A marvelous turn out of Wednesday Wollies despite a grizzly forecast.
- Thanks to Gerry Brackenbury who has been giving me a hand spraying grass and preparing planting sites.

Upcoming

- The last public planting day for the season is on Sunday 1st July. Pick up at 9am at the boat ramp.
- The next Wednesday volunteer day is on Wednesday 4th July. Pick up at the jetty at 9am.
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Hei konei ra

Ben, Jo and of course young Penny Kohe



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