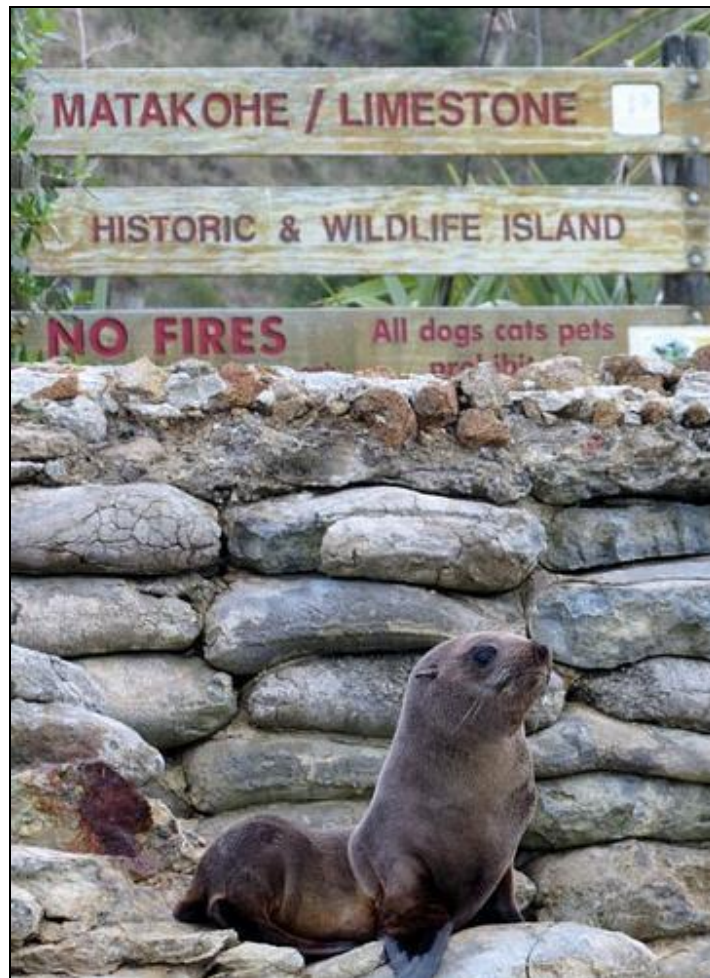




## Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – July 2012

**Get excited!. The Island has been invaded by mammals!** Under normal circumstances mammals (of the non-human variety) on the island send me into a frenzy of war cries, sleepless nights and endless trapping and stalking. However, this mammal invasion is of the good, in fact the awesome variety - the New Zealand fur seal. Thanks to a lack of rain, the harbour is incredibly clear at the moment and we have noticed at least three individual fur seals (two pups and an adult) getting around in the channels surrounding the island. This month is the first time I've seen any seal around the island let alone three so it has been quite exciting. Fur seals "haul out" over the winter months on rocky shores and one of the pups has decided that the old cement bags over at the concrete ruins are a bit of alright and it has been lounging around there endlessly. Its daily activities consist of sleeping, sunbathing, a bit of a scratch, a swim to cool off (sidestroke mainly), more sunbathing, a quick fish and an afternoon nap. If I come back as a seal next life I'll be stoked, especially if I can live on the island.



**Sign, sealed, delivered.  
Clearly good at reading, a New Zealand fur seal takes up residence  
on the wildlife refuge that is Matakohē-Limestone Island.  
Photo: Sandra Whyte**

If you happen to see “our” seal when on the island, please give him a wide berth (at least 10m) and leave your lunch in your bag as we want it to feel comfortable on the island and to learn natural foraging skills. If you want to see more photos of the seal (and other island delights) you can go to our [NEW Facebook page](#). For those of you who are Facebook savvy (and those considering becoming so) if you “Like” our page then you will get live updates when something awesome happens, which is pretty much all the time. To find the page, just go to Facebook (you need to be signed up – which is free) and search for Matakohe-Limestone Island. Alternatively you can follow the Facebook link straight from the website.



**A snapshot of our new Facebook page. I like.**

## **Kiwi**

It is all go with kiwi on the island this month. Read on if you think you can handle the excitement.

- Sir Ed and Kahui Whetu are making a bid to reclaim their title as the most prolific of our island breeding pairs and have started nesting nice and early. With any luck Ed will “knock the buggers off” and get cracking with a second nest later in the year.
- Glen and Baldrick will not be far off nesting but are probably enjoying a rest after a busy season last summer.
- We’ve been working to take off some of the older ONE kiwi to make room for new kiwi chicks that will be coming on in the next few months. NRC biosecurity officer, Kane McElrea, brought across some high-tech night vision and along with the deadly duo of Todd and Jack Hamilton we snuck up and put transmitters on two sub-adults. “Drummond” originally from Rarewarewa had reached the magic 1200g and was released at Kauri Mountain to rapturous applause by the Whangarei Heads Landcare Forum. The other was one of Sir Ed’s chicks whose transmitter unfortunately failed before we had a chance to ship her off. So she gets to remain in paradise for the time being, but we will no doubt catch up with her again.

## **Other Fauna**

- Don and Sue Davy located four NZ dotterel pairs in breeding plumage on the island while doing a beach clean up, as well as nine pairs of variable oyster catchers.
- There have also been a number of tui enjoying life on the island and a pair of kukupa have been hanging around again in the large macrocarpa at the visitor shelter.



**Todd Hamilton of WHLF holds "Drummond" after a blessing from Freddy Tito (left) to wish it well for its future life at Kauri Mountain.**

### **Pest Control**

- We received the good news this month that our BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust funding application was successful. BNZSKT will once again be sponsoring the mustelid trapping portion of our predator control programme on the island and in the buffer zone. This funding makes a huge difference to the project and means we can maintain our trapping programme at the highest level.
- The buffer has been surprisingly busy for the middle of winter with three stoats caught at Onemama plus a rat and a stoat and a weasel on Knight Island. It is possible the calm and mild weather has encouraged the pests to get out and about.
- The calm weather is also the time when pests swim to the island. Our surveillance and trapping on the island came to the fore this month with Bernie and Collette from Northtec detecting a rat in the tracking tunnels. We then caught two Norwegian rats, one right next to the tunnel and another in a stoat trap nearby. Bernie has finished his fieldwork on mice so I will reopen the Knight Island rat traps and poison, which is where these two rats may have come from.
- Greg Chisnall has slain another 20 rats in Onerahi this month and has expanded the control to fill a few gaps where it was needed. The capture rates are slowing down in Onerahi suggesting that Greg is getting control of the population. Fantastic job Greg.

### **Flora**

- Dwane and Angela Kokich and Carol Fielding have been getting stuck into Mexican devil weed at Onerahi School site.
- Mouse-man Bernie has been giving us a hand with weed spraying round at the ruins.
- Dwane and Gerry have been assisting me to get rid of rank grass beneath the canopy to release native seedlings along the north coast. So far it is working a treat with large numbers of kawakawa, cabbage tree, karaka and taraire seedlings getting a well deserved break.
- Greg Prinsloo (Northtec) has been installing seedling plots to determine what type and how many weeds the roosting starlings and mynahs are bringing to the island.



## General

- Paul from Divisional Fencing, Ken Massey and Dwane Kokich put in a mammoth effort helping us with the design and installation of the visitor shelter fence. It is now a sheep-free area and has access down to the beach with epic views to the upper harbour and the Heads, making it a brilliant area to picnic and frolic, safe in the knowledge you will not be sitting on sheep poo. I cannot, however guarantee the picnic area will be seal free so please continue to exercise caution while frolicking.
- I gave a talk to the Shackleton Cubs who suggested I may need to consider Rhinoceros as a potential pest on the island.

## Visitors

- The Whangarei tramping club had a great run around on the island (one of the members took the brilliant seal photo).
- The Waipapa has been running regular trips and making the most of the beautiful, calm winter days.
- Heaps of kayakers have been making trips to the island. If you do kayak to the island please check your yak for Argentine ants as they often nest in them and then jump off when it comes to rest on the beach.
- A cautionary note - Be very careful on the tracks as they EXTREMELY slippery at the moment.

## Upcoming

Volunteer Wednesday on **August 1st**. Pick up at the jetty at the usual time – **9am**.

Hei konei ra

Ben, Jo and of course young 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.

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