



## Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – August 2012

We love living on an island, but being an 'islomaniac' also has its technological challenges namely fuzzy phone lines, slow internet and nasty bills for the aforementioned mediocre services. Being a wildlife refuge we do not generally support the killing of birds, but an amazing locally owned and operated company has allowed us to kill not just two but three (proverbial) birds with one stone. Thanks to our friends at Uber Group we now have mind-alteringly fast internet, crystal clear phone reception and to top it off they have supplied their services to the rangers' cottage for free, yep... no dollars. Good buggers! If you want better services and to be free from the shackles of faceless multinationals get down to 53 Port Rd, sign up and support this local business. Better yet, if you contact us we can refer you and the team at Uber will give the island a cash donation. Even better than better yet, they have super competitive deals and they can supply your phone and internet to urban or remote homes and businesses such as farms, your bach, or islands in the harbour (if you have one). And if that's not enough, you will not have to talk to an automated robot, you'll talk to Kerry, who lives at Onemama Pt and whose husband voluntarily traps rats and stoats for us so they don't get on to the island... now that's service.

	<b>CONTACT DETAILS</b> 53 Port Road, Whangarei 09 438 5472 0508 BROADBAND PO Box 5083 Whangarei, New Zealand ultrafast@ubergroup.co.nz
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**Support local, support the island, get better internet and phone!**

### Sanctuaries of New Zealand Workshop

- I attended the SoNZ workshop in Taranaki and heard some inspirational talks on topics ranging from seed dispersal in lizards to 'A pest free New Zealand'. There was a mini-symposium on mice and I got some good ideas about different ways of detecting invaders, knowing where they came from and how to get rid of them.
- The field trip was held at Okareka Scenic Reserve which is a 230ha catchment surrounded by a pest-proof fence. Kara Prankerd and the team there are doing an amazing job and have kiwi, tomtits, fernbirds and bellbirds amongst other things.
- No trip to Taranaki is complete without viewing the local lizard fauna. I went out fossicking with local herpetologist Trent Bell and we found the enigmatic goldstripe gecko in the flax. It was the first time I had seen this species on the mainland and had to cartwheel for 10 minutes to burn off my excitement.



**Taranaki's goldstripe gecko. They also have a large mountain down there.**

### **Kiwi**

Both our resident male kiwi are sitting on nests now. Yehaa! Glen has decided once again that he will nest in flax right next to the track. We get really nervous when Glen is nesting as any dog illegally walking on the island could easily get him without the owner even knowing. If anyone sees a dog even so much as looking at the island remind it that it is a kiwi zone and dogs are not permitted.

### **Other fauna**

- We discovered young Penny Kohe playing with a tree weta on the deck. While many parents would be horrified we were very proud of our little entomologist. The weta however was horrified so we moved her somewhere safer (the weta, not Penny).
- One seal has become two. Our furry friend is still hanging out over at the old wharf and has got himself a friend. They seem to be foraging for crabs in the shallows at dawn and dusk and look right at home on the old cement bags.
- The NZ dotterels have started making nest scrapes so no doubt they will be laying their first eggs soon. This time last year they had an early nest.
- The three of us got a great surprise when a pod of orca swam past the island while we were crossing to the mainland. There was one large bull and there appeared to be some calves too. No doubt they were on a stingray hunt. Penny was very taken with them and wanted to join in on their activities.



### **Flora**

- Jo happened upon a fruiting kiekie plant while doing some weed reconnaissance work. The fruits are called tawhara and are a prized food of Maori. It is very rare to encounter tawhara on the mainland these days as possums eat them all. The kowhai has burst into flower and the tui have started coming over to gorge themselves. If you look over at the island you will be able to see little yellow blobs of colour and hopefully lots of little black dots moving around in the yellow.

- Greg Prinsloo (Northtec) has been checking his seedling plots and has uncovered all sorts of interesting exotics, many of which have been brought over by the starlings and mynahs including Taiwanese cherry, ivy, and Chinese privet. Good work Greg.
- The Weds wollies did a sterling effort tree planting this month, including ngaio along the south coast. We also attacked periwinkle in Gerry's folly and I am pleased to announce it is very hard to find there now.
- I discovered another couple of adult moth plants and collected three rubbish bags full of pods! A few had already burst but I caught the rest just in the nick of time. Phew! Thanks to Gerry and Dwane for helping out here.



**A kowhai on the ridge track in full flower**

### **Pest Control**

- No nasties on the island and reasonably quiet in the buffer with one stoat and a couple of rats at Onemama.
- My main man at Onerahi, Greg has been going above the call of duty and has been chasing down Norwegian rats on the foreshore as well as his normal trapping routine (current tally: 92). If you are a rat and live in Onerahi, I suggest you give up and go live in town... your days are numbered with Greg on the loose.
- Dwane and new volunteer Thalia Sachtleben have also been giving me a hand flagging and GPSing some of the bait station lines on the island.

### **General**

- The rain has been relentless this month, which is good for our new plants after that dry June. All the wetlands and dams are absolutely chocka and we have a good supply of water should it be a dry spring or summer. I need it to dry off just a little bit though so I can do some mowing.
- I gave a talk to the lovely folk of the combined Probus of Whangarei, and convinced them you're almost never too mature to come to the island... just bring a walking stick and some good boots and be aware of the slippery tracks.

## Upcoming

- Volunteer Wednesday on **September 5th**. Pick up at the jetty at the usual time – **9am**. Weather permitting we'll be clearing up the Caspian tern nesting area on Knight Island.

Hei konei ra

Ben, Jo and of course young Penny Kohe



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