



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – December 2012

Merry Christmas

I love the sounds of the festive season; the 'clinking' of plastic picnic cups, the munching of a shared lunch, the screeching of protective shorebird parents and the melodious Christmas bells of the tui! For at least three weeks we have been enjoying the glorious sights and sound of a tui who has made the ranger house garden its home. Each year, as the vegetation matures, tui are becoming a more prominent feature on the island and a sign of things to come in the future.

It has been another magic year on the island and, as always, we thank the highly committed Committee and venerable Volunteers who make the island tick. We had a delicious Christmas lunch with the Wollies on the last volunteer Wednesday which made a very nice change from pulling weeds and catching critters.

More Special Visitors

With the relentless excitement and good times to be had on the island it was only a matter of time before it was inundated with celebrities. The first to arrive was the Mayor of Whangarei, Morris Cutforth and Mrs Cutforth who, together with some members of the District Council, came to welcome on to the island a kiwi chick from Tanekaha near Riponui. The locals at Tanekaha are just kicking off a predator control initiative and we will be delighted to crèche some of their birds.

The next to arrive was long time conservation champion, author, fellow lizard enthusiast and all-round nice guy, Rod Morris. Rod was involved in the amazing search and rescue missions around Fiordland for the kakapo and takahe and also the incredible conservation story of the Chatham Island black robin. He also discovered the first alpine gecko in New Zealand before I was even born. To have Rod on the island was a great privilege. He was very impressed with FOMLI's initiatives, which is high praise indeed. I borrowed him from Todd Hamilton for the afternoon and after our island visit we went out to Whangarei Heads to continue looking for lizards, as you do!



Two happy campers, Rod Morris and me checking out a gecko at Whangarei Heads

And finally we were graced with the presence of golden shears legend, man mountain, the eternally young and handsome Ken Massey who very kindly came out to give our friendly sheep a haircut. Our tireless lawn mowers and ever vigilant guardians of the ruins are looking very happy with their summer coats thanks Ken.



You don't get arms like this from writing emails. Ken Massey getting stuck in

Predator control

You can't attract celebrities if you don't do the groundwork.

- Greg Chisnall hit another milestone this month and caught his first stoat in Onerahi - what a Christmas present. We knew these kiwi killers were lurking around so Greg's perseverance has been rewarded. It's amazing to think these nasty pests are getting around in Whangarei suburbs, just waiting to snatch up a tui or some other tasty native morsel. There is now one less thanks to Greg - one less that won't be swimming out here or migrating out to the Heads to hassle those "Backyard Kiwi".
- We also caught a stoat and a weasel over at Onemama Pt, but nothing else in the buffer. I have been getting a hand with the trapping from North Tec graduate and mouse man, Bernie Buehler.
- The hard work trapping in the buffer has allowed us to stay pest free for quite some time now, which is very rewarding. Our tracking tunnel pest monitoring this month revealed only good guys - a truck load of native invertebrates and skinks.
- We have also installed a line of mouse traps in our landing areas this month. It seems quite possible that mice are hitch-hiking in from boats that have been housed in garages over winter. We hope a barrier at key areas will pick them up before they can do any damage on the island. *If you are coming over to the island please have a good look in the cracks and crevices in your boat (keep an eye out for ants as well!).*

Kiwi

- Just the one chick came on this month, as mentioned above.
- Glen is still nesting. Go boy
- Sir Ed threw a tantrum and dropped his transmitter so I suspect he is nesting but we now don't know where he is. Hopefully we can catch him on the run and reattach his transmitter. He didn't come down in the last shower though, so it is going to take some doing.

Other flora and fauna

- Gerry Brackenbury happened upon a gravid shore skink on Shipwreck Bay. Good eyes Gerry. Yet another cohort of shore skinks due next year.
- I undertook the annual Caspian tern survey for Forest and Bird, with the help of Sue and Don Davy. There are probably between 70 and 90 birds, with at least 20 juveniles.
- Watch your step at the ski lane and the sandspit, there are variable oyster catcher and dotterel chicks everywhere.
- We did a walkabout with the Weds wollies and found the small native nettles we planted for butterflies are doing well in some places and have even set seed.



A very healthy nettle specimen just asking to be eaten by an Admiral butterfly caterpillar

General

- It's now well and truly fire season so Ian Page and I have been reviewing the Fire Plan. A Friendly reminder: **if you see smoke on the island please call 111 immediately** and the appropriate response will be organised immediately.
- Tim Grove and Carol Fielding were over lending a hand with weeding and seat repairs.
- Bernie has also been giving us a hand with spraying and will be looking after the island over Christmas.

Upcoming

The next volunteer Wednesday will be in **February**.

Enjoy the festive season, be safe on the roads, swim as much as possible and we'll catch you next year.

Hei konei ra

Ben, Jo, Penny Kohe and puku



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