



## Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – January 2013

They say that all good things must come to an end. I don't know who 'they' are exactly but it seems they are right as we are sad to announce that the chapter of our lives as island dwellers is coming to a close. The imminent arrival of baby No. 2 has forced us to face reality and we are moving back to the mainland and handing over the role of island ranger to some other lucky bugger(s). As we face up to the prospect of not waking up everyday in an island paradise we can only console ourselves with the fact that we will be staying in the Whangarei area and will still be able to be involved in this special project. We know we will be hard pressed to find somewhere as beautiful and interesting to live, and even harder pressed to find such dedicated and passionate people to work with. We have said it before and we will say it again – the volunteers who make this place run are incredible and have taught us a huge amount about what it means to contribute to conservation and your community. Thank you so much for looking after us so well during our time here and we will miss all of you.

We won't be leaving the island to its own devices as we are fortunate to have Bernie Buhler to step in as the interim ranger until a new island ranger is appointed. Bernie has just completed his BSc at Northtec, did his major project here on mice and has also been trapping and weeding part time, as well as some island minding for us over the Christmas break, so the island will be in great hands.

### A stoat free year!

For what we think is the first time since island trapping began, we can report a stoat free year! Since the buffer trapping was started by Pete, each year the number of invading stoats that make it to the island has been trending lower and lower as the trapping and baiting is tweaked, adjusted, expanded and intensified. There have been a number of years with only 1 stoat caught but never the magic number of 0, so it is a cause for celebration to finally hit the mark. In fact we have not caught a stoat on the island since way back in May 2011. It is a great encouragement to keep on with the increased rat and mouse control in the buffer islands and Greg's hard work in Onerahi to make sure we continue to reach these new lows!



**Penny is currently looking for places to hide so she doesn't have to leave!**

Island life will of course go on without us, and those pesky predators will seize any opportunity so Bernie and Greg in Onerahi will be keeping the trapping and baiting at full steam. The buffer has in fact been quite busy over the last month with juvenile stoats definitely on the move following the breeding season; trap catch for the buffer this month was six stoats, one weasel and a mouse. Greg has also noted an increase in catch rates in Onerahi and has put paid to thirteen rats, three hedgehogs and a mouse since Christmas.



**A great crowd to check out number 98**

## **Kiwi**

- This month we enjoyed our last kiwi release as island rangers. The birds were found by Tohu the kiwi dog. Tohu, a German short haired pointer, came across with her handler, Leslie Baigent, and Todd Hamilton from Whangarei Heads Landcare Forum. Tohu's clever nose sniffed out the three birds where they were holed up in the grass for the day and then Todd and Ben whisked them out (easier than it sounds)., Two were birds that came over to the island via Todd's 'Backyard Kiwi' project and one was Glen's chick from 2010, named K'uber by our awesome sponsors, Uber Group. The release took place on a beautiful Saturday and the blessing was attended by a great crowd.
- These three birds are numbers 96, 97 and 98 and have been released back to the mainland after creching on the island. Stand by for the celebration for NUMBER 100 in the near future!
- In other kiwi news, Glen is still sitting tight on his nest, once again passing the 80 day hatch mark – in classic Glen style we expect him to continue to sit there for a while yet as 100+ day incubation periods seem to be becoming his trademark.
- Kahui Whetu has been caught for her six-monthly biometrics and was looking tip top. She decided to hide in a clay tunnel in a creek bed in the middle of the buffalo grass on the North face, which made for an interesting capture.



**Todd, Leslie and Tohu the kiwi dog**

### **Other flora and fauna**

- Banded rail are curious creatures indeed. For weeks at a time you can see none at all, and then all of a sudden the place is overrun with them. There are at least three skulking around the ranger house every day at the moment and many more that Ben has been flushing out when out and about. We think most of the ones we are seeing are this year's young who have not yet honed their sneaking ability to the impressive levels of their elusive parents.
- Our extremely variable variable oyster catcher is back – the one that is completely white!
- There has been a bit of tension down at the sand barge with a bit of biffa happening between the dotterels. Our resident pair seem to be trying to chase off their own chicks! Clearly these children have overstayed their welcome, something many parents of adolescents can sympathise with.
- Beware! Fernbird are taking over the world! Successful nesting on Knight island is the just start of their campaign.

### **General**

- We were joined for a day on the island by another young-at-heart Probus group.
- Regular volunteer David Fellows, just back from an annual stint in the UK, couldn't wait till February to get back into it and has been over doing some weeding and mulching of last years plantings.
- Lots of mowing, spraying, engine servicing and generally getting everything in tip top shape for Bernie (Bernie has actually done a lot of this himself).

## Upcoming

Your friendly interim ranger Bernie will be running the next Wednesday Wollie day, weather dependent, on the SECOND WEDNESDAY in February. Pick up at the usual time and place, 9am at the jetty.

Well, that's it. We came as 2, we leave as 3.7... seems like a good deal to us!

Signing off for the last time (\*sniff\*)

E noho ra

Ben, Jo, Penny Kohe and pukunui



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.

[www.limestoneisland.org.nz](http://www.limestoneisland.org.nz)