



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – June 2013

What a month! The ponds are overflowing and, as soon as it rains there are rivers running everywhere there shouldn't be rivers. The plus side to this is that the working conditions are definitely cooler and more pleasant and we can carry out the annual island planting. On the negative side, the schnapper population around the island has bombed, although the trevally and kahawai should be showing up soon and there are always flounder for kai. Once again at this time of year the kiwi are calling and I am being serenaded by the harsh guttural calls of a female and the sweet whistles of a fabulous Northland male brown kiwi right next to the house.

As always I am "crazy" busy but still loving most every minute of it (finding pampas and moth plants while running the bait lines in the rain is tiring). There have been some fabulous still nights lately and motoring back from trapping on the buffer it is so calm you can see every fish ripple which is amazing.



It's evenings like these that make being alive choice

Flora

Really cool to see some island plants that almost looked dead after the drought are starting to throw out green shoots and leaves. Also on the plant front, and although almost over by the time this goes to print, the annual planting has started with Tawapou nursery again supplying an awesome array of healthy looking specimens to go in the ground. The island is starting to run out of spaces to put these plants so we will be mainly infilling this year and replacing some dead specimens. In subsequent years we will be changing the focus of these planting days to include search and destroy missions for weeds as these are getting harder and harder to locate among the growing canopy of trees. Many thanks to Dwane, Ken, Gerry, Alan and Dad for your help getting the plants to the island.



Can't see the Manager's house for the trees!

Visitors and Volunteers

- A class from Whangarei Intermediate School came over to learn a bit about the island and tie it in with their native bird study. They were able to see a kiwi "up close and personal" as I asked Rolf Fuchs from DOC over to transfer the transmitter on the leg of one of resident males, Glen, to the other leg. It is always cool to see the looks on these kids' faces when they see a kiwi in the wild as this is rather special and cannot be enjoyed by everyone.
- A group of 31 students from Pompallier Catholic College came over to do some volunteer work as part of a new project, a 'service day' on which they get sponsorship for doing work in the community and the money raised goes to a charitable organisation. The students were great and after a quick run-down about the island's history we got stuck into work. Moving plants, trimming tracks, clearing drains and pulling the dreaded wattles, periwinkle and Mexican devil were the order of the day and all got a thorough thrashing. Cheers guys.



The awesome crew from Pompallier Catholic College

- Other visitors to the island have been few and far between, although on Queen's Birthday weekend the island was a hive of activity as the fine weather brought a number over, including a group who came down the harbour on the M.V. Waipapa.
- This month we have two sad stories, the departure of our building guru and long time island volunteer couple, Tim Grove and Carol Fielding who are moving down to Thames in the Coromandel. Our thanks to both for all the work they have done on the island over the years. Also, Onerahi trapping and baiting hero, Chris Chisnall and his partner, Robyn, are moving to brighter pastures near Ruakaka. Greg has stopped many potential island invaders (rats and stoats) and is probably responsible for the island's stoat free status last year. Thanks, and I look forward to seeing you both when you visit the island in the future.

Kiwi

- The major news for this month was the release of the 99th and 100th island raised kiwi which were released over at Bream Head into the care of ex Matakohe-Limestone Rangers, Pete and Cathy Mitchell who are doing a fabulous job pest controlling the area and making it safe for kiwis there. Check out their website as its almost as good as ours!
- One of the kiwi released was "Badger", named after the late Chris Badger who was general manager of Golden Bay Cement in 1998 and instrumental in obtaining the Company's sponsorship of Matakohe-Limestone Island. His family has taken a keen interest in Badger's progress and came from Auckland to attend the ceremony. Pictured below are from left Jocelyn Badger, Alex Badger, Michelle Creagh (GBC General Manger), Bernie with Badger and Terry Badger.



- Other interesting kiwi news was the capture of the last kiwi from the three we rounded up for the release of the 100th. Thunder, as he was known, headed off to Glorit which is on the Kaipara Harbour. There is an area there where the locals have been trapping predators and providing a safe kiwi habitat, as well as erecting a shade cloth fence to provide a barrier to keep dogs out and kiwis in. This kiwi protection is expected to be extended and taken on board by the larger community when the shade cloth deteriorates (about a year). There was a huge community turnout with 200 people filling the Glorit Memorial Hall and then heading to Kevin and Gill Adshead's 1300ha harbour side farm at Mataia. Thunder was released along with eight kiwi raised on Motuora Island in the Hauraki Gulf and these kiwi join five others released at Glorit last month.
- I went to the national Kiwi Hui last month and really enjoyed it as it was a great opportunity to network with other passionate kiwi folk and a break from the island for a few days. The trip to Maungatautiri was a real eye opener with regard to the amount of money needed to build and maintain this fence and the community relations required to keep everyone on board. Makes me glad to be on my own little island paradise in Whangarei where most parts of this conservation project are more manageable. There were some interesting discussions covering the best methods to hold kiwis, a brainstorming session on kiwi in Northland and the use of motion detection cameras in kiwi work.

Other Birds



NEW ZEALAND BIRDS ON LINE

- I have been passed an awesome link to a new native bird encyclopaedia website compiled by the Department of Conservation (DOC), Te Papa's Natural Environment team with the backing of the Council of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ). This is a fabulous website which is full of interesting facts about New Zealand's special bird species. Just remember that before it was invaded by mammals this country of ours was known as the islands of birds.

There are many birds we have on Matakoho-Limestone Island that are worth checking out here. See what we have on the island next time you're here. <http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz>

- **More petrels.** Well not new ones but some old ones returning again and now there is a couple sporting the latest in petrel fashion. This involves "twinking" their heads as recommended by Helen Gummer, petrel expert, so I don't have to pick them up to check their band numbers every time I see one in a burrow, photos coming soon! Another exciting happening with the petrels was the discovery of nesting material in burrow 23 where I saw two together last month. Breed breed breed pleeeese!!!!
- At this time of the year the fantails are very active and plentiful and I am always amazed when they land on the ground but they have no fear of predators here. These Piwakawaka are awesome birds and I am accompanied by six or seven while walking along the ridge-line, ah what a paradise. The New Zealand dotterels are also in full breeding plumage again and one of those special things that make a trip to the island worthwhile – to see them with their rusty chests and looking fine for the females. There are three hanging around the old barge. Other birds visiting were a couple of kereru who decided to land in the ngaio right outside my house while I had some visitors.

Pests

- The quarterly(ish) mouse-bust was carried out this month and it turned out to be a washout with the day starting out relatively calm and nice but then as it progressed the skies opened and everyone was drowned, like the proverbial rats. Although the day was cut short these awesome regular vollies and a special team of enthusiastic helpers from Recovery Solutions led by Graham, battled through and got a quarter of the island done - a fabulous effort. I have been carrying out the rest myself since and this provided a good opportunity to do a weed search and destroy at the same time. As mentioned earlier, the finding of heaps of moth plants, pampas, tree jasmine, palm trees and other nasties means more work dealing with these killer weeds.
- Trapping has been pretty quiet of late with the occasional rat and mouse caught and a huge stoat squashed flat over at Onemama Point. I also walked the pest trapping line at Onerahi and GPS'ed all the traps and bait stations over there. This reinforces my earlier mention of the wonderful job that Greg Chisnall has been doing over there as it is quite a tramp around that whole headland on some awesome locals properties. While checking some stoat footage on U-tube I came across some BBC 1 footage of just what brutal killing machines they are. Check it out but be warned it's brutal! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNbqvqf3-14>

Upcoming

Wednesday wollie day will be happening on 3 July and there's a plethora of work to be done. See you at the wharf at 9 am for another lovely day on the island. Have I mentioned that without these guys the island would be lost.

Hei konei ra,

Bernie



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