



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report – July 2013

Exciting news

It has finally started, the long awaited and much needed all weather, all level, all smooth, and all spectacular track from one side of the island to the other. Monday, 6 July turned out to be one exciting day with a digger and crawler arriving by barge from Whangarei. The benching (widening and rough levelling) was done on the north side in one day. The south side proved a little more of a challenge, being a good deal steeper and muddier.

The benching will be followed by the drainage pipes and channels, then shaping, installation of the steps and finally spreading the gravel mix which will be brought over by helicopter. So soon we will have an all-weather track over the island which will make it more accessible for more people. Apologies, this track will be closed for another week.



The start of the new all-weather, over island track

Kiwi

This month has been a quiet one as far as kiwi are concerned with a late breeding season, possibly due to the stress of the summer drought.

- We have had approval of our application for Kiwis for Kiwi funding of the mustelid portion of our trapping program both on the island and the buffer zone.
- Still no “transmitter-less” Sir Ed even though I have been checking with his supposed partner Kahui Whetu every few weeks.

- Our other island couple, Glen and Baldrick, were staying together last month but in the middle of the month when I went to check on them I picked up a good signal from Baldrick but no Glen. After several days of hunting but still no signal I went out at night and sure enough picked up Glen loud and clear. A couple of days later I was in the area with the boat and decided to check from there. Yes, there was the signal, loud and clear. Upon further investigation while spraying Periwinkle in the area I found his burrow and what a place. A huge cave on a small private beach out of the weather and close to a lawn of worms, nice one Glen.
- I have included a link to the kiwi release from last month. This came out on the farm's website and promotes some ideas and a place for sharing good conservation news.
<http://cuehaven.com/2013/06/16/kiwi-release-on-the-kaipara-25-may-and-11-june-2013/>

Flora and Fauna

- Planting on the island for the winter of 2013 is nearly complete with about 900 of the 1140 plants in the ground all around the island. This is thanks to the wonderful volunteers who turned up on three Sundays.
- We will be getting a rare native Hibiscus, *Hibiscus richardsonii*, to distribute around the island. On 16 July Wendy Holland and Marie Jordan from DOC, Lisa Forrester (plant guru) from the NRC, ex ranger Jo with baby Tim and committee members Pam and Dwane, travelled to the island. The purpose of this trip was to scout out suitable sites to plant this endangered species. If you want to check it out online the New Zealand Plant Conservation Network has a web page www.nzpcn.org.nz/.
- There have been some interesting developments fauna wise, both native and introduced, with the refurbishment of the gecko covers producing bucket loads of weta.
- New, and more cuddlier additions to the island are these two cute lambs suddenly noticed the other day, and it looks as though another one may be on the way to join them.



The new babies on the island

Predator control

- No mustelids have been caught on the island for two years. This shows how effective the extra trapping on the buffer is. Funding from NRC enabled this additional trapping to be established.
- I have also been completing the bait stations for the mouse bust on the forested south side and found several weed species whilst carrying this out.
- The buffer trapping has been fairly quiet with only two stoats, four mice, one weasel, and one rat caught.

Visitors

- Regular pick-ups for ferrying to the island at 0800 most mornings have been Jason and Troy from Parkcare Services who, together with their boss, Paul Butterini, are building the track using a small digger and a power carrier. Murray, our champion track cutter, has also been over.
- Another regular has been "super-pest-knobbler" Jack Vallings who is carrying out the trapping.
- Fred Tito (kaumatua) was over for an early morning petrel blessing.

- Students from People Potential's Agriculture and pre-Services courses came over and were kept busy digging out a new picnic area and installing a sign, as well as clearing around the little harbour.



Student volunteers from People Potential

- John Barber came over to check out the kiln and advised the erection of the safety net to stop people entering the kiln.
- Ken Adams, a Landscape Photographer, recently returned to the North and has always wanted to visit the island so came over on one of the planting days and took the photo below which is a different view and rather spectacular.



- During the month other visitors to the island have been a number of Committee members, the planters and, let's not forget our awesome Wednesday volunteers.
- There are two further groups expected this month, students from NorthTec (volunteers and practicum workers) and also Graham Crook and others from Recovery Solutions.

General

- A new tow-bar for the Ute was built by Wayne at Franklin Enterprises who did this for a minimal fee.
- Fencing Services gave me a good deal on some green wire mesh that was required to fence off the slip on the old railway line, as well as the entrance to the old kiln which is becoming a bit of a hazard.
- Organising the tools in the shed has been a long term project of mine and was helped with the purchase of some cheap pegboard from the Demolition Supermarket and a new shower head was also purchased there at discount rates for washing during the summer when swimming starts again.
- I gave a talk at the Merrivale Rest Home where I met some wonderful people who plied me with interesting questions about the island and even told me some of its early history.

Upcoming

- **Volunteer Wednesday – 7th August.** Pick up at 9a.m. at the jetty, returning after lunch approximately 2p.m. We may be building steps and installing them so I would like to put the call out to get anybody good with a hammer to please come along: this part of the track work is being done by FOMLI.

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