



## Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report October 2013

Another month has flown by and just when we seem to be getting things under control, off they go again. Spring has well and truly sprung with unbelievable grass and tree growth. A couple of fine days allowed the island to dry so grass maintenance on the tracks could be carried out - could have baled some hay! The spraying of bait-stations was done; this was well overdue as the growth in these usually bare areas was knee-high.

A highlight this month has been the planting of the threatened native hibiscus *Hibiscus richardsonii* with 500+ of these beauties planned for the island. The day of arrival was preceded by the selecting of sites, spraying, plotting and photographing and the weeding, cumulating in the shipping and planting during our regular volunteer Wednesday day. Some of the plants were a little small so will be kept over the summer in our custom-built, all-spectacular, snail-proof Hibiscus shelter.



**Oscar Kippenberger with his dad's new island babies  
the fabulous *Hibiscus richardsonii***

### Kiwi

- There is some great kiwi news this month - Glen is finally settling down on an egg - 30 days and counting. This could, potentially, be my first and only island kiwi chick with Sir Ed missing in action. Hopefully Glen will see it to term! Baldrick, Glen's partner is hanging around in the same area and may be providing some moral support.
- Another kiwi happening was the arrival of three chicks to be "crèched" on the island. These came via the always busy Todd Hamilton and had the exiting call signs of LC 131,132 and 133. There were a few spectators to see the chicks released. However, one chick was unwilling to leave the comfort of its box so was left to exit in its own sweet time.

## Other Fauna

- Hatching season is here with all the birds looking after chicks and flying furiously around catching their dinner. We have our first dotterel chicks on the barge with Mowgli and partner proving to be excellent parents. It's quite funny seeing a small bird chasing off a black-backed gull five or six times its size. Feeling sorry for these guys I put out some old pallets to give them something to hide under.



**One of the day old dotterel chicks**  
Photo courtesy of Sue Davy

- Petrels are still visiting the island with E-212688 visiting Burrow No. 1 a week ago. These visits should increase the chances of breeding during my second year as ranger.

## Trapping and tracking

- Trapping and baiting is still one of the most important jobs without which all the hard work that has been done to keep the island predator-free would be wasted. Bevan, our trapper, has been busy catching predators on the buffer with a ship's rat, two weasels and a stoat caught there.
- On a disappointing note, our traps on Knight Island were tampered with and ineffective for up to a week. This could be devastating as these traps regularly catch pests whose next port of call would be Matakohē-Limestone Island.
- We ran the tracking tunnels this month and are happy to report that there were no nasties tracked. Quite amazing is the number of birds tracked as almost every card is marked with their footprints.

## Visitors, Talks and Volunteers

This month many! so I have made a collage of a few.



**Clockwise: Westmount School, Chris and friends, Hibiscus planters, Whangarei Intermediate School, Ruakaka trampers.**

- Glenis Goodall and her merry band of Whangarei Intermediate School students had an awesome day doing a range of activities. These included an island talk and walk, eating fresh carrots and chasing the sheep into the pens. Ken Massey, our sheep wrangler extraordinaire carried out these important jobs and the kids had a ball running around.
- I gave a talk at the Onerahi Community Hall to the Onerahi Garden Club. It was well received with some of the locals teaching me a thing or two about the island, never too late to learn. This delightful group plied me with tea and biscuits and then loaded me down with more as well as jam, fruit and sweeties, thanks. I'll come back any time!
- Another school group that came for a visit was students from Westmount School in Dargaville. These kids were spotlessly turned out and they behaved impeccably, following me around – I felt like mother duck! The kids were full of questions and especially enjoyed the stoat traps as they all jumped at the loud bang when I set it off.
- The first year class from NorthTec was also over and proved a great help setting out tracking tunnels. There was a bit of excitement with this group as the weather was a bit rugged and I had a good opportunity to test my rough weather drop-off skills.
- A memorable trip was had by the Ruakaka Tramping Club with a walk around the island. The island really turned it on with oily calm waters and the birds showing off. The group enjoyed lunch on the deck of the cottage and then finished the day with a stroll back to the boat and glassy trip back to their cars.
- The island has been fortunate to have the regular and some casual volunteers over. The three practicum students from Northtec (my angels) have been coming over frequently and completing a myriad of jobs. Gerry Brackenbury was over conducting a small experiment with mulenbekia release spraying. Chris, his dad Dwane Kokich and a couple of his friends came over for another full on day working.
- A "new" visitor to the island was Sven Mor from Germany who is in New Zealand for eight months for his 'gap' year. Sven is a passionate conservationist and enjoyed seeing kiwi at night, weta and gecko hunting. He spent five days on the island and helped me with a variety of jobs. I even managed to take him fishing as there have been mullet jumping in the shallows; he only got a small schnapper.



**Sven Mor, Matakoho/Limestone Island friend from Frankfurt at the Whangarei Falls**

- The most exciting day was, of course, with the regular Wednesday Volunteers who had a great time planting our *Hibiscus richardsonii*. 250+ plants were planted at four sites around the island and will be closely monitored. This unique species occurs naturally at only two sites in New Zealand, Te Pahi and Mayor Island. Several plants around Whangarei gardens allowed for the species to be propagated and planted here. This is thanks to the hard work of Phillip Kippenberger and Marie Jordan.



- The Wednesday Volunteers also did a fabulous job clearing the weeds from above the barge area that had grown to huge proportions and needed a bit of a trim (understatement)! Flax clearing has also been on the agenda with the encroachment on to the tracks getting ridiculous: going away for four weeks in spring really shows the growth on the island.
- An exciting event which I attended was the launch of Volunteering Whangarei, a volunteer coordination centre. This has been a long time coming and is a real credit to Bart van der Meer who runs the organisation from the Municipal Building (old town hall).

## General

BREAKING NEWS!! A tui has just been seen building a nest in a macrocarpa tree near the shed which (fingers crossed) means chicks soon! These beautiful melodious natives are very aggressive when defending their nest and hopefully will chase away the Indian mynahs that roost in the vicinity.

## Upcoming

The next volunteer Wednesday is on the first Wednesday of November (the 6<sup>th</sup>) at 9am at the Onerahi jetty. Let's see if we can beat the last day's numbers (33). There will be plenty of jobs available to suit different tastes and skill sets. Hope to see you there!

Hei konei ra,  
Bernie



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