

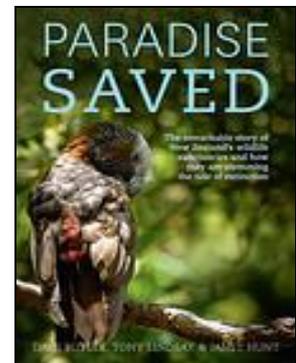


Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report September 2014

Wet wet wet still!

The island is very muddy and all steep areas are creating slides, making walking hazardous. On the bright side though, this has been great for the natives with new growth reaching exponential proportions. I'm sure the kanuka by the house has doubled in the month or so since it was planted. One of the other exciting happenings this month was the arrival of heaps of Tui. There must be about twenty on the island calling from dawn till dusk, chasing each other all over the island. Many plants are putting on a spectacular show with pretty little flowers and the birds are going nuts over them. The karo, kowhai, clematis and ngaio, along with the manuka, kanuka and whau, are all providing plentiful and delicious nectar for the island's fauna.

There is a new book available, "Paradise Saved" by Dave Butler, Tony Lindsay and Janet Hunt, featuring none other than our own famous Matakohē-Limestone Island. It celebrates it and other wildlife sanctuaries around New Zealand. This book, with its very interesting conservation stories and beautiful photos, would be a good addition to any coffee table.



Visitors and volunteers

- I have had a huge number of volunteers over since coming back from my holiday, keeping me busy trying to keep them busy. Twenty-one hardy souls were at the wharf for the regular first of the month Wednesday pick-up. After a quick briefing jobs were organised - mulching, petrel burrows, marking trees and the obligatory beach clean up. I then dashed across the water and grabbed a group of NorthTec students from the beach to clean up some blackberry and Mexican devil on the south side. After lunch we made a trip to Knight Island to clear it of tall weeds for the upcoming Caspian tern nesting season.
- As mentioned last month, we scored the BNZ 'Closed for Good' volunteers and got heaps done. The Mexican devil (again) took a good hit, with some hard to reach areas accessed by this hardy bunch of volunteers. Some of the ladies were even observed swinging on a cotoneaster tree after sawing the big sucker down, thanks guys and gals.
- Ben, our NorthTec practicum student, has been over a few times and the new, improved and organised gecko covers look absolutely magnificent. They look so good I may get him to do the pacific gecko covers as well. He has also been helping with the petrel burrows, done a day's trapping and even carried out some tracking tunnel data entry.
- A huge group of Kamo Primary students (six boat loads over three days) got the grand tour of the island. These big groups are great to get over to the island as I get maximum impact. The trips are also becoming more popular with Onerahi Primary School showing interest in bringing five classes over next term. I have just confirmed Whangarei Intermediate for two days next week.
- I was invited to talk at the Rotary Club of Whangarei South meeting held at A'Fare restaurant. This club is really thriving and there was a large attendance so I hope I got them a little enthused about Limestone Island and conservation. The President and FOMLI committee member, John Barber, is hosting a girl from Switzerland through their exchange programme. Whilst lining up for the delicious dinner I spoke to her in Swiss-German - my first language - surprising her and the Rotarians.

- My Otangarei Trust guys have been over a couple of times and their help is always appreciated. They have been doing a bit of planting and learning about the environment.
- Gerry has been over with Julianne putting some more pohutukawa and kowhai in the ground. They are also checking into the (hopefully) snail translocation, scoping the habitat and writing up the proposal.
- While I was on holiday for a couple of weeks the island was in the good hands of committee member, Dwane Kokich. He got heaps done, planting, drain digging and spraying with reading and relaxing high on the list. Dwane had a whole bunch of volunteers over helping out. Thanks Dwane, nice to come back to a clean island and house.

Kiwi

- There have been a lot of interesting happenings with kiwi this month including a couple of transmitters due for changing and also some new chicks due for the island.
- The Bank of New Zealand as part of their 'Closed for Good' volunteers were also in for a special treat. The Bank sponsors the 'Kiwis for Kiwi' programme and I thought seeing a kiwi up close would be a worthwhile experience. Both Glen and Kahui Whetu were up for new transmitters and as Glen's was a bit of an unknown he was chosen. Rolf and I started to search for him and after a bit of a dig around a big old flax root I saw him and, lo and behold, there was an egg poking out underneath. Cover up and walk away is the general rule in these circumstances as the birds have been known to abandon their nests if disturbed too much.



Kahui Whetu being a star – before she pooped on me

- A transmitter change was then all on Kahui Whetu's shoulders and fortunately she was located less than a metre from a comfortable seat. She was quickly bundled up and her star qualities shone through as she was a shining example of her species (until she projectile pooped on me). This is a defensive manoeuvre of the kiwi and judging by the smell, very very effective. The BNZ guys really appreciated being able to be involved in such a special moment and it was a great opportunity to give something back to this deserving bunch.
- Todd Hamilton brought me a couple of bundles of fluff, LC141 and LC142. These guys arrived after a 'full on' day getting the dinghy welded (again) and giving our sponsors, Golden Bay Cement, our yearly update. I only had time to give a few folk at the Onerahi wharf a quick peek before darkness fell. I then whisked the birds over to the island and they were despatched into penguin boxes for a happy, though brief stay on Matakohē–Limestone Island.

Flora and fauna

- The flowering has started with the kowhai especially prevalent and the white clematis flowers looking absolutely amazing. The tiny burgundy karo flowers are really plentiful and the Tui seem to be particularly attracted to these. Most of our native flowers are small and inconspicuous but look close and you will see they are amazingly complex and beautiful.





- Some of the trees have decided to give up and lie down on the job which is fine, unless they do it on the tracks. This has necessitated tree surgery and kept the chainsaw busy. The sawdust etc. all breaks down and is great fodder for the island's detritivores.
- There are still some petrels coming back to the burrows with a few showing up on the cameras and their gorgeous smell remaining in at least one burrow. The amount of other wildlife that these cameras record is extraordinary with over 100 hits on one camera. The nesting season is probably over with no eggs this year, a combination of badly timed storms and wet burrows possibly a contributing factor.
- There are five or six eels hanging out in the six pack quarry.

Predator control

- The predator numbers have been pretty low lately but there is a spring flush expected any day now. Bevan has nailed quite a few rats and mice on the buffer and I got a stoat and a rat at Onemama.
- Ben has double checked the tracking tunnels and entered the results on the island computer and again the amount of life (footprints) around the island blows me away. Almost every tunnel was hit by a bird or lizard and invertebrate footprints were as usual dominant. No mammalian tracks were noted so I can breathe a sigh of relief.
- We are getting short of rabbits for bait so if you have any on your land please get hold of me and I will shoot out and take care of the problem. We go through a whole heap of these pesky critters and are always looking for them. Alternatively, chuck any you shoot in your freezer, give me a call and I will pick them up any time. I have managed to secure a few over at Hewlett's Hideaway which is a short ride away.

General

- The good folk at Transfield Services have affixed some new rollers to the pontoon/wharf so now they are extra "roll-ery". They have also installed some extra steps at the bottom of some washed out sections of the boardwalk. Steve and co have promised to install a seat at a rocky point with a beautiful up harbour view.
- I have fixed the door on the ute, sussed out where it was leaking oil and tightened those bolts. I bought a new battery and then the ute would not start but seems to have fixed itself now. The solar system has now gone on the blink and it requires a new regulator circuit board. The dinghy is now leak free after Martin Wallace Ltd, engineers extraordinaire, came on board and fixed it, free of charge, way to go guys, island life does test you sometimes!
- A good outcome from the solar business was that I met a nice electrician who is going to carry out the labour - free of charge. Thanks Dave Liddington Electrical - remember to support these generous donors.
- Bit of water blasting the house over my holiday. The deck was getting a bit green and slippery after the wet winter.
- The barge has a flash new rope so it's less likely to float away, just pulled it out for its monthly check, all was well.

- While on holiday I had a great week up north checking out some fishing spots around Mangonui and some properties in Peria, what a spot. Also spent a great day in the big smoke with a lunch of Yum Char then an afternoon at Cirque du Soleil (absolutely fabulous and recommend it to all). Carrying on the Asian theme we then went to Shaolin Kung Fu noodle house, where they hand pull their own noodles, mmmagic.

Upcoming

- Volunteer Wednesday on **October 1st**. Pick up at the jetty at the usual time – **9am**. Some of those trees need mulching and marking. If it is really calm some of us will go to Knight Island. Otherwise I'll think of something else as the work never runs out!!!..

Hei konei ra
Bernie



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