



**Friends of Matakohē/Limestone Island
2014 Annual Report
(Presented by Pam Stevens, Chairperson at the Society's
Annual General Meeting on 25 March 2015)**

Two more kiwi came off the island last week. A small gathering at the Onerahi Yacht Club welcomed them back to the mainland after a stay on Matakohē-Limestone Island. One was 18 months old and had been with us for two years. They headed off to a day of school visits and a public release safely in the care of Todd and Bernie. FOMLI is an essential part of the Kiwis for Kiwi programme. It is a reminder of the growing number and importance of the relationships we have developed over the 20 plus years with many groups like `Backyard Kiwi', Whangarei Landcare Forum, Bream Head Trust, Department of Conservation, and the Kiwi Coast Initiative. Our efforts have helped the Bream Head's Kiwi numbers go from 80 to 500 with the annual count soon to take place.

Bernie Buhler, our Ranger, does an excellent job with his monthly newsletter which gives an insight into daily happenings. Each year this annual report is a short summary of the past year for the record.

During the past year very welcome visitors to Matakohē-Limestone Island have included a number of , Whangarei Intermediate, Onerahi Primary, Kamo Primary and Westmount School from Kaipara, French ecologists, Horticultural tutors, Hash House Harriers, the sub-Editor of Woman's Weekly and family, Tech students, weekly visits from the MV "Waipapa", Connor from University of West Florida, Whangarei Camera Club and Otangarei Trust. With such a wonderful summer the island has had lots of casual visitor,s well over 1000 but in fact really too hard to count. Bernie has done 19 trips with schools, over 600 students and other groups reaching similar numbers. The "Waipapa" has had an increase of patronage and recorded 1364 passengers. Off island talks by Bernie included the RSA, Lady Lions, Red Cross, Masonic Lodge and Merivale Retirement Home.

Kiwi North now has a LOTC teacher (learning outside the classroom), Dr Shirley Peterson. You may have read in the paper that they are planning to take school groups down the harbour from the Town Basin, with the island being a destination and an opportunity to relate activities to the school curriculum appropriate to different age groups. On the Regional Council website Bill Shepherd states "Matakohē-Limestone is a great example of the actions of a growing number of people in the Whangarei Harbour's catchment which increasingly contribute towards improving harbour health. " Twenty two teachers from around the North are meeting this week and using the island to showcase what can be achieved when communities take long term action.

The translocation of another two years of oi/petrels was approved just in time, although all the planning had to be done way ahead by Cathy Mitchell, Bernie and others in anticipation of all the correct permits. It really is an enormous undertaking for a voluntary group and we were lucky to receive funding from the Community Conservation Partnership Fund. We did our usual style of stretching every dollar and Cathy, now living on Little Barrier, put in a lot of hours. The teams that went on to the island faced very challenging conditions in our wet spring which continued on to the day of translocation and the first few days of feeding.

Thanks go to Cathy, Tanya, Bernie and John Ward who did a seamless job of rostering on a large team of volunteers who helped over the busy time of Christmas and New Year. The 'sardine smoothies' fed the birds nicely and we have the Onerahi Primary, the Onerahi New World, and Pac'nSave to thank for all the tins of sardines. A big thanks also to the team who took annual leave to go on to Taranga and Collette and Nick who babysat the island, Trevor the boatman, Martin the boatman, and Tristan for lending Manaki for the all-important task of bringing the birds home on transfer day. Thanks also to the volunteers under Bernie's supervision who slaved away improving the burrows and petrel station area in readiness.

While we are on the acknowledgments, thanks to -

Michelle and Ross who pest trap and poison in the Beach Road area: their tally is - stoats 0, rats 136, mice 58, hedgehogs 22;

Bevan who tracks the traps on the island and buffer almost weekly, buffer tally - stoats 11, rats 19, mice 20, weasels 3, ferret 1;

The island tally is impressive at 2 mice;

Thanks to Dwane for upgrading the island website and his and Angela's hard work on the island;

Ian Page for tackling the maze of new rules to complete the Fire Plan.

Brian McLaughlan our Whangarei District Council representative for the new sign by the Onerahi ramp and for his donation of drainage coil.

Local businesses who have given discounts include, BNT Auto, Auto North, Scooters Plywood, Martin Wallace Fabricators, Pit Stop, Longview Wine and the Cheese Truck.

Murray and Andrew from Northland Park Care keep the track maintenance in hand.

Gareth Turner, Dwane, Chris and Graham for the rabbit bait.

Very big thanks to the Lions for financing the suter skinks, signaling the completion of the Gecko and lizard transfer with possible top ups planned for some in the future.

Rentokil have been loyal and valued supporters over a long period supplying poison.

WDC for their continued support, adding on to the boardwalk, erecting a seat and other repairs.

The volunteers who cleared weeds and rubbish from the coastline surrounding the island resulting in seven large bags of rubbish coming off the island.

Ken Massey for shearing the sheep again.

Endowment Fund Trustees Stuart, Irene, Colin, Grant and John.

Fred Tito and Te Warihi for valuable cultural support and advice.

We cannot thank enough our long-time loyal supporters, Golden Bay Cement, who are looking to celebrate 100 years soon. The Company has been and continues to be, a major employer in Northland employing over 150 locals and, fortunately for us, still values its historical links with the island. GBC also supports other local initiatives stating that they are aware "cement manufacturing affects the physical environment and it works to minimize the impact."

The job for the Ranger on Limestone Island may seem idyllic, but is a surprisingly tough one. A big thanks to Bernie for his enthusiasm and hard work, especially with the big challenges of the petrel translocation. You have to be multi-skilled and adaptable. Bernie is very practical and seems to have upgraded everything, with help from his Dad, which is fantastic. He has done up the caravan, the alarm system was attended to, LED lights installed, and the caravan moved to a more suitable site. Seven fire extinguishers have been checked. A brand-new gas fridge has been installed. Northpower contributed batteries and Dave Liddington did some free work on the solar system. A PLB is to be purchased soon and permanently attached to the Rangers belt, one is on loan at present. Bevan has done a great job helping Bernie with the trapping and tracking and the weeding and the task of mowing is constant.

Our project has been extremely lucky to have had such a consistent and stable committee for over 20 years, underpinned by loyal supporters and some long-term volunteers. Big thanks to the whole team. Too many people to name, but I do need to mention Sandy, Carla and Jan who make sure all the paperwork and administration is done to a very high standard. Thank you to Paul Bonetti for organising this venue, the Madhatters Football Club Rooms, for our meetings.

The installation of the Pou was a really exciting and major step. Thanks to the team down at the carving shed at Hihiaua and a number of helpers who carried out the tricky transporting and erecting in place ready for the blessing at dawn - it certainly was very memorable and they really look stunning. Te Warihi and his team worked like trojans to get them installed in time for Matariki . A manuka palisade is planned adjacent to the pou - another great task for some keen volunteers.

The island has a few pages in a new book, alongside lots of other great projects, called 'Paradise Saved. The Remarkable Story of New Zealand's Wildlife Sanctuaries and How They are Stemming the Tide of Extinction" by Dave Butler, Tony Lindsay and Janet Hunt."

For the coming year we have the following challenges: we need to replace the truck, top up the shore skinks and others maybe, review and upgrade the signs, continue to evaluate the energy requirements. Dwane and Paul Butterini are planning to GPS the tracks. We will continue our winter tree planting and hope to put in a similar number of trees to last year, 5,000. We will also continue to support other projects like planting at the Heads and helping with trapping lines at Mount Manaia.

To finish I would like to acknowledge the loss of Ian Buckley who contributed to the island in a practical way, especially in the building of the Ranger Station some years ago.

Pam Stevens
Chairperson