



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report April 2015

Need I say it, where did that month go! Thank goodness I keep a daily diary or I would not remember all the good happenings in the month and my Ranger Reports would not be half as exciting as they are. I hope you had a great Easter break. As usual, I had a lovely lunch with my Mum and Dad and their friend Syd.

There were some great highlights this month but also an unfortunate lowlight that was out of my hands but demonstrated how reliant we, even me being semi isolated on an island, are on modern technology and lost without it, let me explain.

I was about to do my report last month but when I opened the island laptop up I was confronted with the "blue screen of death", as the pro's call it. Not thinking it too bad I took it to the repair guys in town. Bad news! They could not repair it as quickly as usual and a nasty virus was diagnosed. After a few days I had the laptop back but upon trying to open any folders was confronted with nothing - oh no! A partial happy end to this sad tale is that I had backed the files on to the external hard-drive at the end of 2014. However, I still seemed to have lost photos, some programmes, the GPS coordinates and a whole bunch of data. Thanks to James, a committee member's friend's son, some of these have been retrieved and a month later I am almost back running at full capacity.

Let this be a reminder, backing up your files is critical: if I had not I would have lost thousands of hours of work, crucial data and a whole bunch of amazing photos! I back it up in three places now to be extra careful!

Now to the good stuff, and there has been a whole bunch happening on the island this month (as usual). If you have not had one of the legendary Bernie briefings on the way to the island, I often say I have the best job in the world and if I was rich enough would do the job for free, and I mean it, despite the computer problems.

Kiwi

On the kiwi front, I have been busy, not only with the two teenage kiwi that came off and went to Bream Head, but also trying to snaffle a couple more. Our regular monthly kiwi check was a 'doozy' with all the birds in easy to find areas. Sir Ed and Kahui Whetu were in the same area, probably cuddling up together how sweet! After writing this I went for a walk with Committee member, Dwane, and managed to find another one - off you go LC138. Come and see him on 3 May.



**Look at that little guy,
Twilight is his name.
Looks a little bleary-eyed after a big day -
just like me I guess.**
photo courtesy of Soundwave on the road.

Predator Control

- Bevan, trapper extraordinaire, has been over a few times. This guy actually runs the trapping line and can do the island check in a couple of hours. He has not had any hits on the island but continues getting stoats, rats and mice on the buffer around the island. Just a couple of weeks ago he scored a trappers' double, two stoats in one trap, way to go!
- A not so great find was the my discovery of a male mouse in a ridge line rat trap which necessitated checking the surrounding bait stations for signs of any more mousy presence. No more evidence was found, the baits in the area were still in good condition as we had changed them only two months previously and there was also no sign in the recent tracking tunnel round. I put some additional poison around the area just to be safe though.
- The bait-stations in the quarries, around the flax fields and in the ruins have been refurbished as these sites have so many hidey holes for rodent incursions. The cockroaches and snails which eat the bait seem especially prevalent here as well. This job was carried out by my keen French volunteers while they were here. We also got up really early one morning to catch the tide and clean out all the coastline stoat traps and check their settings, an annual chore that's a bit easier with my petrol water-blaster.
- I have been lucky enough to receive a whole bunch of rabbit for bait which I have been busy processing as the filling of stoat traps (70+) every two weeks requires a whole lot of these furry pests. I spent a lovely evening with a couple of friends and their kids over at Hewlett Point where I managed to procure a whole bunch more.
- The March release was where I met my latest French island volunteers who were very keen to see more kiwi in the wild. As we have a release coming up at the beginning of May any kiwi that proved handy will be a lucky graduate from the safe crèche that is Matakoho–Limestone Island. I managed to grab three whilst on these nightly walks, two were too small with one perfect for the upcoming release. LC134 will be heading off, hopefully joined by a friend to add to the genetic variation out at the Heads .

Visitors and Volunteers

- I had the pleasure of bringing some VIP guests over to the island. These folks were tracing a relative, George Edge, one of the first Europeans to set up house on the island and the first to have a child here. Valerie and Vern Petit and Pat Bowers had a brilliant day and I showed them a couple of sites where their ancestors lived while working at the cement works in the late 1800's. The day really turned it on for them proving sunny and calm, another gorgeous Motu-Matakoho day for these special visitors.
- I had some awesome volunteers this month starting with a French couple, Claire and Vincent who stayed for a week, got heaps of work done and had a great time. They especially got a buzz out of an evening fishing just off the island when we caught dinner one night. I seem to be attracting a heap of French people, the funny thing being that none of them seem to know one another. I don't mind, I like a bit of company – occasionally - and they are great workers, the more they do, the more gets done, and the food and wine is great.

**Claire and Vincent relaxing on
the deck:
love the duck face Claire
Thanks guys**



- The M.V.Waipapa (Whangarei Harbour Cruises) has had a bumper season going from strength to strength, running more trips every year with more people on board all the time. Tony, the owner totalled the numbers up for the FOMLI AGM in March and they came in at a staggering **1364** people. At this rate we will be catching up to Tiritiri Matangi Wildlife Sanctuary soon. We now need a whole bunch of trapping going on between us and the Bream Head scenic reserve so we get some of their spectacular birds flying this way ☺.
- Speaking of the AGM, we had a great one this year with Pam Stevens, our Chairperson, somehow cleverly squeezing all the island's doings into a short speech. Adam Willetts, Bream Head head Ranger gave a very interesting presentation on the great work they are doing out there and stressing the important connection with Matakohe-Limestone Island. Adam and family came for a walk around the island during the Easter break, where we shared cake, dessert and a cuppa tea, mmm.
- Another large group of visitors came to the island for a well coordinated Northland Regional Council Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) Workshop. The group comprised more than 20 teachers from Mangawhai in the south to Mangonui in the north. These teachers will take what they learnt to pass on to over 1400 kids, hopefully changing behaviours for a sustainable future. The trip to the island proved a hit and good advertising as I have already had a few enquiries for visits to the island. These trips give me the opportunity to get the conservation message across to kids in a fun and practical way: the island is a wonderful outdoor classroom.
 
- As some of you know, Matakohe–Limestone Island would love to get the legendary giant weta, or wetapunga, crawling all over it, but unfortunately we do not have enough habitat here yet. So when we were approached by a NorthTec business student about doing a business plan for these awesome insects we leapt at the opportunity. Sylvia and her friend, Andy, came for a visit this month to take some photos and get a feel for the place. Any help towards achieving our goals is always appreciated, especially free help! We are looking forward to checking out her plan.
- I gave a talk at the Otaika Valley Garden Club which brought back memories as not only did I see folk I remembered from the past, but also the talk was given in the old Otaika Valley Hall. Otaika Valley Primary School was my old primary school and behind the hall was one of my favourite swimming holes as a kid. I also remember many a Christmas play in the hall and receiving some presents from Santa there, good times, good times.
- The guys from the Otangarei Trust have been over a couple of times in the last month and it was good to catch up with Jason and Tira as I had not seen them since last year. The boys and girls got a great deal of work done including designing, filling and concreting the barge harbour steps. They have also been busy digging the holes that last month's regular volunteers started near the sand barge bird nesting area. These rock filled holes are for a more permanent fence giving the birds a bit more room next summer.
- I had the privilege of attending an extended version of the CBSM workshop that was held over two days run by the Northern Regional Council. This workshop was led by Doug McKenzie-Mohr, a Canadian environmental psychologist who approaches behaviour change in a different scientific way. The workshop was attended by a diverse group of people including NRC staff and a whole bunch of NGO's. I look forward to applying the knowledge learned not only on the island but also for my conservation advocacy future work.
- Attending the CBSM workshop were a couple of staunch island supporters, Tim Grove and Carol Fielding, who have now moved down to the Coromandel to carry on their good work there. Committee member, Dwane, had a great time showing them around and` they were amazed by the growth in some of the areas they had planted. They also checked out some of the other projects they were involved in and were generally happy with the work I have carried out whilst here (sorry about the petrel burrows Tim☺).
- Our Volunteer Wednesday was a huge success as usual even though it was postponed to the second Wednesday of the month. We got a myriad of jobs done including a trip to Knight Island pulling and spraying a bunch of weeds for the Caspian terns next spring. Potting about 200 small flax and cabbage trees the French volunteers had gathered and bagging the salted rabbit was other work also completed.

- To finish the day we all gathered dry leaves for the petrel boxes and then went to check out some Moko skink traps I had put out the day before. The reason for the dry leaves was during last year's translocation we had some heavy rain and some burrows were flooded. As it was so wet finding dry leaves to raise the chicks above the damp ground was impossible so this year I will be prepared. Speaking of which, I have started building new boxes to replace the old collapsing ones. The birds will be back any day to start prospecting for the upcoming laying season.
- Now for the second group of French volunteers I had visiting the island for a few days, Claire, Jérémie, Marion and Theo stayed for a few days and got heaps done. Claire and Jérémie are world travellers and have a great website called soundwaveontheroad check them out. These guys were super keen to see a kiwi chick in the wild and we went out every night to see if we could see one. Two full moon nights which kiwi do not like and coincidentally a solar eclipse, blood moon, nothing, although we did hear a female and a male calling nearby. On the third night we went out early and managed to see a small one and then the bigger one mentioned earlier that was fit for release.



LC134 with some shameless GBC promotion.



Happy Matakohē–Limestone volunteers chillin' with great wine and food

Photos courtesy of Soundwave on the road

- I had a great group of visitors who missed out last year due to the weather turning a bit nasty on the day. This small group of intrepid travellers from North Able arrived on a warm but overcast day, perfect for a jaunt around Matakohē–Limestone Island. This trip was very special as Denise, the organiser, was leaving for greener pastures and this would be her last outing with her special charges. They loved the boat ride over and, after a quick snack at the shelter, we went for a walk up the school track past the weta hotels to the Pa site to marvel at the fantastic views. A great day was had by all and I had a ball walking them around the island.



My buddies from North Able, we had a great day out!

General

- My thanks to Franklin Enterprises who again welded the grader blade on the cheap. The blade has been great for refurbishing the tracks but I seem to be very good at breaking it. Dad has fixed it a couple of times and I have broken and had to replace a few pins on it as well.
- The unusual warm weather (plus the occasional downpour) has been great, not only for visitors and volunteers to the island but also for making the trees and grass grow like crazy. While this is great for some it means that more mowing is in order with twice a month almost becoming the norm - a nice job where I get to let my mind wander, enjoy the spectacular harbour views and observe the plethora of less than graceful fern-birds I flush out with the tractor. The brilliant weather has also enabled the weeds to flourish at the Hibiscus sites necessitating a thorough weeding from all my awesome French volunteers.

Upcoming

- ***We have a couple of teenage kiwi coming off the island on Sunday, 3 May so will be having a blessing at 9.00 a.m. at the usual spot by the Yacht Club on the grassed area under the pohutukawa tree. Be there or be square!***
- The regular Volunteer Wednesday will be on **6 of May**. I have a bunch of jobs lined up, and who knows what treats await, black plum and chocolate cheesecake last month.

Hei konei ra

Bernie



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