



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report May 2015

Howdy everybody, hope you are all well over there on the mainland and the rain has been helping your plants grow..

As usual I have had another fabulous, busy month on the island; sometimes I do not know where to start but once I do I wonder where has that day has gone!

I have had some great news this month re GFP's or grey faced petrels, four actually! There are a few substandard burrows at the site and whilst fixing some I found 212633 there in his regular burrow. Another bit of good news is the return of a new bird, 277355 which is our first 'definite' bird back from the 2008 year.

The other highlight of my month was the National Kiwi hui organised by Kiwis for kiwi. There was a sell-out crowd and a whole bunch of kiwi-loving folk turned up with much to discuss and heaps to learn. Just a few of the many topics covered were Predator free NZ, Kiwi and Community, Working with 1080, Advocacy and Kiwi and Predator Genes. This year the hui was held at Marsden Bay so I did not have too far to go: a brilliant event and, hopefully, I will be able to attend another in the future.

Kiwi

- Loads of kiwi happenings this month keeping me on my toes once again. Not only are they waking me up calling around the house (gotta get that one), the kiwi hui and a transmitter change, but also a release both on and off the island starting with the release on the mainland of two chicks from Matakohē-Limestone Island, numbers 116 and 117, Blossom and Daisy. There was a record turnout for the blessing at the Onerahi Yacht Club on a perfect Sunday. This was followed by a Kiwi Coast event at Tahere Farm where the Landcare Group at Taheke are doing a great job trapping the predators. The two 'teenagers' were then released at Kauri Mountain where they should outlive me.



Fred Tito sending two island kiwi graduates on their trip with a blessing

- You may have noticed some new 'Meet a kiwi' signage around Whangarei. I spent some time making these new signs, cutting ply, making stands and painting and the large turnout at the blessing was a great outcome. This kiwi release on 3 May was a spectacular event attended by a whole bunch of excited kiwi folk. Todd Hamilton, son Jack and I were up early on a cracker day to track the little fellas and have them ready for the blessing at 9am at the Yacht Club. Once again our Te Parawhau kaumātua, Fred Tito, gave them a heart-warming blessing to send them on their way.
- Before the start of the National Kiwi hui some of the participants took up the offer of a couple of field trips around some local conservation projects. One was at the Brynderwyns (Marunui) and the other started at the Onerahi foreshore and then progressed around to Whangarei Heads. I gave a talk about our crèche project and the guys from Backyard Kiwi, Manaia Landcare group and Bream Head spoke on their activities in that area. Paul, the administrator for Kiwis for kiwi spent the night on Limestone Island after the hui and we went for a kiwi walk, spotting a couple then the next day checking out the ruins, petrels and lizards.
- More great kiwi news is that we are about to get some new dads supplying chicks for the Matakohe Limestone Island crèche. Todd Hamilton from Backyard Kiwi and a couple of Kiwis for kiwi guys have been busy running around looking for them. Not surprisingly, they tracked down five beauties from Rarewarewa, a kiwi stronghold. Surprisingly, though they found a kiwi chick whilst looking so the little fella was transferred to the island at the last minute to grow big safely.
- Sadly, I found a poor dead kiwi chick at the bottom to the hill behind the ruins; this little fella was a recent addition to the island from Riponui. RIP LC1410 ☹



Paul from Kiwis for kiwi thinking the Manager's house is pretty sweet

Visitors and Volunteers

- Our regular Wednesday Volunteers are absolutely amazing. Almost a full boatload rocked up this month and I had a bit of a treat up my sleeve for them. They got to see a real wild kiwi as Sir Ed needed a transmitter leg change with Rolf from DOC. After this dozens of jobs were carried out including the petrel burrows, release spraying, collecting flax for translocation, and of course the never-ending beach clean-up, flax trimming and periwinkle/wattle annihilation.



Sir Ed doing a headstand for the volunteers

- Whangaruru Tramping Club folk turned up on a glorious sunny morning and had a ball wandering around the island for a few hours.
- The Onerahi Lions who donated funds for the Suters skink translocation last year were long awaited visitors to the island. Unfortunately I wasn't able to show them one of these beauties as the numbers are still too low and they are still getting settled. I was able to put some traps out so we managed to see some of our more plentiful Shore and Moko skinks.
- A 14th birthday party for a young fella was held on the island. Apparently he came up with this idea himself and I think a much better one than going to the movies or other traditional spots. Judging by the screams around the manager's house loads of fun was had and I got to spread my biosecurity and conservation message around further as well.

- I had a lovely visit from my friend and ex-committee member Lorna, her two kids Finn and Morgan and her niece Joy. We went for a dawdle over the island, had an excellent lunch, it turned out a lovely day and Joy got some great photos.
- Robin from Opus came over to give the trig at the top of the hill a rejuvenation as they still occasionally use these apparently. I would have thought them superfluous with all the new GPS technology. Tony from Electrosound came the same day to install the petrel caller solar panel and make sure all was tickety-boo up there.
- In conjunction with Kiwi North I spent a fun afternoon entertaining a boatload of young people from Kamo High School. We had a great time walking around the island checking out the Pa, the petrel station and sliding down the slippery hill track to check out the ruins. They went home a little richer in their conservation and the historical knowledge of the island.
- I had a bunch of 'littlies' and their carers from Kingdom Kidz over for an island visit. These little guys loved running around and screaming - I think the conservation message is a little over their heads (maybe). The adults in the group learnt heaps and we got to check out lots of flora and fauna and most even made it to the pa site, a big walk for little legs.



**An island invasion of knee biters.
Cannot start their conservation schooling too early I say.**

- Pompallier High School popped over for a full on day of vegetation and lizard monitoring. These students were very busy and after a few hiccups (amazing how string can get tangled) they had collected some data. They were comparing the non-vegetated north side of the island with the vegetated south side, will then analyse the data and present their results. We were going to do some quick lizard monitoring but ran out of time and had to run to catch the bus.
- I had a group from Women's International Newcomers (WING's) over for a day of fun as I did last year. This is a great group of ladies (husbands and kids) who look after new immigrants, showing them the sights and sounds of Northland. We had a great day rambling around and I was able to teach these new New Zealanders something about our ecology and conservation.
- Quite a milestone for Matakohē-Limestone Island was the fabulous occasion of committee member, Jane Winton's mum's birthday party. This was very posh, catered for by Topsail Restaurant and by all accounts a good time was had by all. The guests managed to track down some Suters skinks whilst they were there, an adult and a juvenile, the second seen on the island.
- The regular Adopt-a-spot volunteers have been squirrelling away at their sites and, judging by the scratches and dishevelment, have been very busy. They have been mainly attacking the blackberry in their spots, but it will shortly be Mexican Devil pulling season. If anybody would like to adopt a spot on the island please contact me and I will pass your details on to the relevant person.

Predator control

- On a brisk but fine afternoon three intrepid bait processors arrived at an undisclosed location to turn a massive mound of bunny and hare carcasses into neat little salted pieces of mustelid lure. The amount was more than in previous years and it took us some time to process these. Thanks to John Hackett for again allowing us the opportunity to collect these. One amazing sight at the weigh in was the three or four recycling containers of turkey heads arriving, there must be thousands out there. The Wednesday volunteers helped bag these tasty morsels and now our bait freezer is full to overflowing.
- While relocating some traps and spraying on the sand-spit I came across a ship's rat in one of the traps, the first since the end of 2013. This is the second time I have found a predator in a trap before Bevan, our trapper, manages to find them; he doesn't mind, the sooner the trap is functional again the better.
- Bevan has been pretty quiet. He got a rat and two mice on the buffer and unfortunately a couple of banded rail on the island despite our bird 'exclusion' device.

Fauna and Flora

- The petrel burrows are keeping me and many of the regular volunteers extra busy with lots going on up there. Ripping out old flooding burrows and replacing them as well as spraying and weed-eating the area has been high on my list of priorities. New motion cameras and a rejuvenated petrel caller with a larger battery and another solar panel have also been installed. The bumble bees that moved into one of the burrows have disappeared and this burrow is now functional as well.
- More harakeke (flax) translocations with some of the stuff growing next to tracks were targeted - it is being put to better use elsewhere in some of the more rocky locations.
- Finally, as we have been getting some good showers and even some better rain events trees and grass are looking extra luscious. This means we should be on schedule with the upcoming planting season which will kick off soon.

General

- Some of our superfluous fencing has headed out to Bream Head to surround their new ranger headquarters. Evan (ranger) and a volunteer came and gave me a hand to load the barge full and then transfer it on to a trailer. Whilst the barge was being loaded up we took our eye off the lightening barge and it started floating away necessitating an early morning cool dip!
- I have been doing a whole heap of spraying all over the island, more than three tractor loads and numerous backpack sprayings later - we are almost ready for the upcoming planting season. As well as on Matakoho-Limestone I have been attacking the pampas on Rat Island, chopping the fluffy heads off and spraying the rest.
- I am now down to being a one-car ranger with my old Subaru being resurrected as a farm vehicle and it's not a bad one apparently. It went to Gerald's place - I have to thank him for lending his property and offal hole for the processing of rabbits from the Poroti annual pest hunt.
- I have been keeping up with the grading of the hill track when the weather will allow. A word of warning, best to avoid this track after rain as the footing gets a little treacherous. We will be putting some drainage in this area to make walking safer and draw the water away from the flooding petrel burrows. This will be further enhanced by the placement of rock on the top of the crown but that may have to be postponed until early spring. Some committee members and other experts came over to check this out and make some recommendations.
- Finally, I managed to collect some fencing from the Northwest face that the French volunteers had ripped out. This fence was so overgrown I had to spray the grass overgrowing it twice. Great to see this fencing come down as it will make chasing those hairy birds easier! (and it was a bit of an eyesore).
- Mowing, mowing and weedeating, good news is that Dave Webster, a committee member from way back, is keen to mount the orange dragon (tractor). I have not had anyone available or keen to tackle the steep slopes since we lost a good man (Pagey) to hay-fever.

- If anybody noticed the barge sitting out of the water below the wharf a couple of weeks ago, I did not get stuck . It was a good opportunity to move some rocks from the area which could have damaged the barge, finishing the job the regular volunteers started a couple of months ago.

Upcoming

- A big upcoming is the first official planting day for 2015 which should take place on 21 June. We have a huge number of plants to go in the ground this year and will be running planting days over four or five Sundays after that. These events are a great way to get people over to the island for a fun-filled and fulfilling day, you cannot call yourself a real "Whangareite" until you have planted a tree here.
- Volunteer Wednesday, 3 June, 9am at the jetty. Loads of work to do, petrel station, planting preparation, possibly more hole digging (you know the ones) and possibly a sweet treat to finish up.!

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.

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