



Matakohē-Limestone Island Ranger Report July 2015

What a month - very important visitors, this year's planting season kicking off, reports due, new and old friends visiting and courses attended.

The highlight of this month was the visit of a Minister of the Crown to the island and the first official planting day for the year. The day kicked off nicely with the arrival of more than 20 hardy folk keen to plant some trees on the fabulous Matakohē-Limestone Island. This first boat-load was dropped off on the north side and quickly briefed then left in the capable hands of several committee members. The day was made more special as all had the opportunity to see a real live kiwi because Glen required a transmitter leg change.

The second boat load included the Minister, Jo Goodhew, wearing her Minister for Community and Volunteer Sector hat and opening Volunteer Week on the island. Other special guests included our Mayor, Sheryl Mai, Bart from Volunteering Whangarei and other dignitaries, reporters and staff. We took the barge to the ruins side of the island and from there walked to where Rolf and Emma had a firm grasp on not one but two beautiful kiwi. Baldrick, Glen's mate was found with him so double kiwi fun. After dealing with these we planted a few trees. The trip wound up after this as the Minister had a heavy schedule, but not before I managed to show off one of our gorgeous moko skinks.



A couple of kiwi smiles

Flora and Fauna

- On a fine, but cold Friday morning, whilst picking up the Friday walking group planters, I spotted a small 'log looking' object floating about. Upon further inspection it turned out to be a small seal, a juvenile *Arctocephalus forsteri* to be exact. They come into the harbour occasionally and probably were more numerous in the old days. A nice bonus for these 'gals' and guys.
- I have been getting some great shots from the petrel cameras, petrels and kiwis and banded rail and even snails. Interestingly, the cameras show petrels coming in late in the season and not entering the burrows, could these all be new birds? Who knows - they all look the same.

Volunteers

- The first official day of planting amazingly also included some planting! With all the sites planted a while ago showing good growth, only rocky, tough sites left. This requires a strong tough breed of planters and I have not been disappointed. These volunteers got stuck into a hard site on the Onerahi side of the Island, recently earning the name of Pam's Spot (her Adopt-a-Spot).



Planters come in all sizes, even Australians, thanks to all of them
Photos thanks to Tanya Cook

- We had a great volunteer Wednesday again with almost a full boatload. Due to the recent tracking of mice on the north face, half the day was spent carrying out a mouse bust and a beach clean-up. After lunch, complete with complimentary dessert, we attacked the area above the oak tree, planting heaps of trees, releasing last year's and pulling any wattles or periwinkle we came across.
- The second, third and fourth Sunday planting days went down without a hitch with the third proving to be a more intimate occasion - the torrential rain put a few off methinks. As this year the Sundays have proved particularly cold for the planters, the addition of the morning tea mulled wine stop has been welcomed. I have had a few other groups planting - cheers Forest and Bird Whangarei, Wednesday volunteers, Friday walkers, some young fellas from Youth Horizons and all the Sunday planters.
- Horahora Primary School has agreed to adopt a spot up near the old school site which has a myriad of weeds. Dwane was happy to look after these kids as they ripped through making short work of some of the weeds in the area. They kept him busy, full of questions so he did look a little frazzled at the end of the day.
- The Friday walkers were happy to attack an area of the bush where plant expert and flax snail saviour Gerry has a special site. He is planting a special mix of plants here as habitat for this underrated species. We are, hopefully, getting these in the not too distant future. There are a few committee members in this walking group and with Gerry it almost felt like a reunion.

Visitors

- I had Otamatea High School drop by with, what seemed like, half the school over four days and eight boat trips, phew! These year seven and eight kids were a great bunch and a pleasure to show around the island. They were full of questions and enthusiasm during a walk around with the wetas proving to be a hit as usual. A special thanks to all the teachers, aides and parents who helped get these kids here - the future for conservation.
- An old island friend came for a visit, singing the line from Hotel California "you can check out any time you want but you can never leave". This seems to ring true for Nick and Matakohē-Limestone Island. He was a great help, setting up for the second Sunday's planting and winning a few hands of a new monopoly card game I purchased, thanks.

- A group of kids were over on a gorgeous, if slightly windy day, for an educational visit. This was a holiday programme organised by Amanda of My Movement for a whole range of ages. We went for a big tramp up to the Pa site, checked out the weta and had lunch down by the Shelter. After checking out some traps we then 'found' a kiwi (that toy is coming in handy, Michelle) over by the Manager's House – what a laugh
- The Mountains to Seas Trust, Drains to Harbour Division spent a wonderful day on the island under the expert tutelage of Kim, Harriet, Anton and me. This holiday programme was open to any kids or parents who were interested with two boatloads rocking up on the day. This enthusiastic group carried out a couple of pollution activities on the island, did a beach clean-up, and went for an informative walk, what an amazing day!



Harriet from DTH helping spread the message of pollution in our waterways

Kiwi

- As usual at this time of the year, it is fairly quiet on the kiwi front with the adult birds due to get into the nesting cycle. I have been seeing quite a few around the place and could almost guarantee a sighting of a wild kiwi should you walk around quietly at night. The double kiwi viewing with Minister Jo Goodhew was a bonus, particularly as we do not have a transmitter on Baldrick any more. Kahui Whetu and Sir Ed are hanging around the north-west corner of the island, sometimes together sometimes apart.
- Kiwis for kiwi has again agreed to sponsor part of the stoat trapping around the island. This sponsorship is much appreciated and really critical for keeping the little birds safe from these extremely destructive predators. Thanks to all the girls and guys down there at Kiwis for kiwi, keep up the great work.
- The final report and invoicing for last year's funding from Kiwis for kiwi is due and some interesting data has been collected. The number of school students has almost tripled when compared to last year. Not as many other groups seem to be coming over to the island, although the totals are much higher than in previous years.

Predator control

- Bevan, our trapper, has now finished his applied science degree at NorthTec and I am sure that is a weight off his shoulders, congratulations dude. During the last couple of weeks the relief to get away from assignments was evident on his face. The trapping on the buffer has been steady with the expected drop off in stoat numbers occurring, but rats and mice still around in good numbers.
- The baiting of the whole island is nearing the end with the regular volunteers completing the north face and I have been doing the rest. As the last south face bait-station filling was being carried out by volunteers I sprayed these bait-stations as it has been a year since this was done. Another reason I have carried out this cycle personally is it gives me a chance to locate and GPS weed locations, heaps of moth plant, pampas, Taiwan cherry.

- Whilst over at Motutaua – Rabbit Island for a weed check I found two mice trapped in a DOC 200 (Stoat trap) The little beggars must still around in good numbers. A blitz is planned in the next few weeks in conjunction with a search and destroy mission on the numerous moth plants there.

General

- As Volunteer week was during June, Bart from Volunteering Whangarei was running a stand in Whangarei's Cameron Street Mall. I was helping to man the stand during the day and was amazed to see the extent of volunteer work out there. The feedback and people signing up to volunteer has definitely spiked with more regular volunteers and adopt-a-spotters keen to become a part of this Island project.
- Thanks to Dwane and Angela for island-sitting whilst I had a weekend off the island attending a birthday party in town for a friend. I had a great time catching up with a few mates and even attempting some Island dancing (fail).
- Finally finished the upgrades to the petrel burrows - a big job checked off the list - they are looking very spiffy. New boxes, lids and drainage at the site with continued planting and track building as well. This project would not have been possible without the marathon effort of a whole bunch of volunteers. Thanks to you all.
- You will see some of the signage around the island being replaced as the old ones are a bit out-of-date and holding water. I am also replacing some of the Ranger Notice signs as the exposed corflute ones only last a couple of years.
- Because of the VIP visit to the island I had a bit of a tidy up around the Ruins and Shelter. The grass was looking a bit shaggy in the Shelter and I was unable to get the tractor over there so it was a pleasant afternoon weed-eating the grass; looks extra good though as the Stihl gets into parts the tractor cannot reach.
- For the first time since I have been here I have experienced frosts! Yep, even on this island paradise. On the day of the fourth planting it was so still and chilly that some areas were still white until after the planters arrived.
- I was lucky enough to attend an outdoor first aid course at Matapouri organised by Ngaire Tyson from Kiwi Coast. This was a great time to review my skills and check out any new technology. I learnt a whole heap from this course, one thing being the D.R.S.A.B.C. now has an additional D = defibrillator. For those who do not know, or have forgotten, D = dangers, R = responsive (are they)? S = send (for help), A = airway (open), B = breathing (normal)? C = CPR (start) and now the added D on the end. The course was also a great chance for a bit of networking as well with managers and trappers from all over the North. A huge thank you to Ngaire for organising this I'm not sure where she gets all her energy from - those kiwis are great motivation.



Some of the fabulous attendees at the first Kiwi Coast outdoor first aid course

Upcoming:

- Don't forget we possibly have **One** more planting Sunday coming up - **Sunday , 26th July**
- Weather permitting; the boat pick-up is from the Onerahi boat ramp at **9am**, returning at approximately **1.30 - 2 pm**. You will need to bring your lunch, a drink, good sturdy footwear for muddy conditions and a shower proof jacket. Spades and some gloves provided. Pass the message on to your friends and family

Volunteer Wednesday

- **5 August.** Pick-up at 9am at the jetty, returning after lunch approximately 2pm. Some of the work in store is that hit on Rabbit Island I was meaning to do last time and a surprise for some of the very strong and fit.

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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